



Suuntaus project

HUMAN TRAFFICKING OF NIGERIAN WOMEN TO EUROPE

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INTRODUCTION

This theme report is part of the ERF-funded Suuntaus project of the Country Information Service of the Finnish Immigration Service which aims to identify the most significant country information themes and anticipate future information needs better. The method was to review asylum interview protocols systematically by using a form designed for the purpose. The countries examined were Nigeria, Iran, Iraq and Russia, and another theme was stateless persons. On the basis of the analysis of the protocols, the theme of this report has been one of the most recurring grounds for seeking asylum. However, the report does not contain references to individual records; instead, all information is based on public sources.

1. RECRUITMENT OF VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING¹ IN NIGERIA

“Edo girls went to Italy on visas to work picking tomatoes, but ended up in prostitution. Some came back rich, and became examples of success.” (Sister Florence, Committee for the Support of the Dignity of Women (COSUDOW))²

Human trafficking from Nigeria is strongly concentrated in Edo State.³ According to Beatrice Jedy-Agba from NAPTIP⁴, it appears that the first people that made it across to Europe and were successful in human trafficking were from Edo State. They started to bring their relatives, friends and other people into the trade, and these activities started to gain strength from the 1990s onwards.⁵

The great majority of victims trafficked to Europe for prostitution belong to the Edo⁶ ethnic group⁷ and come from Benin City, the capital of Edo State,⁸ and the surrounding areas inhabited by Edos, namely Oredo, Ovia, Orhiomwon and Uhumwode.⁹ The other victims come from the Esan and Etsako Local Government Areas in Edo north and central districts, as well as from the states of Delta, Ondo and Lagos.¹⁰ Women are also trafficked from some of the other big cities in Nigeria, such as Lagos, Ibadan, Sapele and Warri.¹¹ Yorubas, Igbos, as well as women from ethnic groups of the Niger Delta have also been registered as victims of human trafficking.¹² The majority of Nigerian traffickers are also Edos from Edo State.¹³

1.1. Awareness of human trafficking in Benin City and Edo State

Everyone in Benin City knows someone who has been or currently is working in Europe.¹⁴ According to Okojie et al., human trafficking is so ingrained in Edo State, especially in Benin City, that it is estimated that virtually every Benin family is somehow involved in trafficking either as a victim, sponsor, madame or trafficker.¹⁵ Barrister Abiodun from NAPTIP (NAPTIP Benin

¹ This report uses the term “victims of human trafficking” or just “victims”; however, these persons do not necessarily consider themselves victims.

² Landinfo 5/2006, p. 13

³ Carling 1.7.2005

⁴ The National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and Other Related Matters, Nigeria

⁵ Voice of America 21.11.2012; Carling 1.7.2005

⁶ When using English, Edos may call themselves Binis.

⁷ Aghatise 2002, p. 7; Landinfo 5/2006, p. 9

⁸ USDOS 2014, p. 297; Okojie et al. 2003, p. 108–109; HRW 26.8.2010; CNN 1.4.2011; Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 30; Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 42

⁹ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 118

¹⁰ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 109, 118; HRW 26.8.2010

¹¹ Buker 2007 in: Cherti et al. 1/2013, p. 25

¹² Landinfo 5/2006, p. 9

¹³ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 108; Baye 2012, p. 25; Aghatise 2002, p. 4

¹⁴ Voice of America 21.11.2012; Economist 22.4.2004

¹⁵ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 50

Zonal Office) states that one out of ten families in Benin City is involved in trafficking in the sense that these families have one or more of their daughters, wives or close relatives working as a prostitute abroad.¹⁶ According to Sister Florence (COSUDOW), half of all victims of human trafficking have been trafficked by their own family or by close relatives. The victims are often being trafficked with the full consent of their own father, mother, brother, boyfriend or even husband. However, few of these are aware of the realities to which they are sending their family members.¹⁷ According to Aghatise, Edos do not traditionally accept prostitution or promiscuous behaviour. Women have been ostracised for this, both by her family and society.¹⁸

The decision on a woman leaving to work in Europe is often a family decision, and parents encourage their daughters to do this,¹⁹ as it is seen as an investment for the whole family.²⁰ Many families pride themselves on having their daughter, sister or other relation in Europe earning money, pointing to things acquired with the money sent by these women.²¹ Sending daughters abroad has become a sort of status symbol for some families.²² Women who return from Europe wealthy do not necessarily hide the fact that the money stems from prostitution and this has become socially acceptable in Edo State.²³ The success of many women who went to Europe is visible—for instance, in the form of grand houses—and this tempts others to leave for Europe.²⁴ These successful women easily become role models for young girls.²⁵ According to Cherti et al., as the pressure to succeed financially increases, human trafficking has become an accepted, even respected, way to earn money,²⁶ and families involved in human trafficking are ready to sacrifice one or more family members as long as it is lucrative for them.²⁷

As trafficking women to Europe is so common in Edo State, nowadays many people there are aware that the women go to Europe to work as prostitutes.²⁸ Some girls take photographs of themselves for the future work before they leave the country.²⁹ According to one of the women interviewed by Skilbrei and Tveit, stories about prostitutes being deported from Europe can now be seen on the news and the television, and consequently “everybody knows what is going on”.³⁰ The Nigerian media and film industries (“Nollywood”) have covered this issue extensively.³¹ Women interviewed by Plambech for her research knew before their departure that they would have to work hard for 2–3 years as prostitutes in order to repay their debt and hoped that after the repayment, they could finally start earning money for themselves and their families.³² Even if the nature of the work were known in advance, many of those leaving do not necessarily know or understand the actual size of the debt or working conditions in practice, such as harsh weather conditions, the length of the working days, the duration of the work and violence they face. Some girls also think they can trick the traffickers and have a different life.³³

¹⁶ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 30

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 29

¹⁸ Aghatise 2002, p. 7

¹⁹ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 83; Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 25; Attoh 2010, p. 7

²⁰ Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 25

²¹ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 50; Attoh 2010, p. 7

²² Aghatise 2002, p. 7

²³ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 6; The Independent 7.4.2011

²⁴ Carling 1.7.2005

²⁵ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p.31

²⁶ Cherti et al. 1/2013, p. 41

²⁷ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p.31, 48

²⁸ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 31; Carling 1.7.2005; Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 22; Landinfo 5/2006, p. 9;

Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 5; Plambech 2014, p. 389

²⁹ Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 22

³⁰ Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 26

³¹ Landinfo 5/2006, p. 16

³² Plambech 2014, p. 389

³³ Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 22; Carling 1.7.2005; Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 5; Plambech 2014, p. 389

Those who are aware of going to work as prostitutes may be lied to about actual earning opportunities and some are lied to about the legality of residence in the country.³⁴

However, despite general awareness, not everyone knows what awaits them in Europe.³⁵ Due to lack of economic capacity, literacy and education, some do not have the capacity to question offers made, even if they are suspicious.³⁶ Some victims have been assured that the work would not involve prostitution, and so convincingly that the victims have not suspect this.³⁷ Some of the victims of human trafficking interviewed by Skilbrei and Tveit did not believe, before gaining personal experience, that Nigerian women really worked as prostitutes in Europe.³⁸

Some are lied to about the true nature of the work. Girls have been promised studying opportunities³⁹, modelling careers, education and a better life,⁴⁰ work as housekeepers or nannies and maids, trading in African products and attires, hairdressing, work in factories, farms, industries and restaurants⁴¹, and work as apprentice hairdressers or tailors.⁴² Young girls have also been deceived by promising success in the fashion industry, in show business or in well paid jobs.⁴³

Despite a national education campaign, many Nigerians do not understand what human trafficking is in reality.⁴⁴ The general opinion, even among educated people, is that the victims are in fact immoral women and it is believed that they would have had a choice in selecting their work.⁴⁵ Few Nigerian victims identify themselves as victims,⁴⁶ and the fact that considerable sums of money must be paid for getting to Europe is considered a normal practice, not exploitation.⁴⁷ Instead of calling them traffickers, travel agents are referred to as “sponsors”, “guides” or “madames”.⁴⁸ Victims perceive themselves as immigrants who must repay a debt to their facilitators. According to Europol, victims often become members of the human trafficking network exploiting them, ultimately assuming the role of a madame in the exploitation of others. This reduces the likelihood that victims would cooperate with the police.⁴⁹

1.2. The structure of Nigerian human trafficking networks

The type, the size and the organisation of Nigerian groups, organisations or networks exercising human trafficking vary amply. The size and degree of organisation of networks may be dependent upon the size of the operation and the number of women being trafficked,⁵⁰ the financial strength of the groups and how well connected they are with officials. Some groups operate a loose network using mostly family members to recruit victims. Others are well structured; right from recruiting and travel agents to the law enforcement agencies, professional forgers, financiers and exploiters.⁵¹

³⁴ Economist 22.4.2004; Landinfo 5/2006, p. 9

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ CORI 12/2012, p. 92; UNODC 4/2013, p. 39

³⁷ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 57, 64

³⁸ Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 26

³⁹ Economist 22.4.2004

⁴⁰ ECPAT UK 29.10.2012

⁴¹ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 57; Baye 2012, p. 33; Voice of America 21.11.2012

⁴² HRW 26.8.2010

⁴³ UNICRI 2010, p. 40

⁴⁴ Bowers 4.9.2012, p.2; Cherti et al. 1/2013, p. 25

⁴⁵ Bowers 4.9.2012, p.2

⁴⁶ Landinfo 5/2006, p. 10; Plambech 2014, footnote 18; Baye & Heumann 2014, p. 88

⁴⁷ Landinfo 5/2006, p. 10

⁴⁸ Plambech 2014, viite 18; Baye & Heumann 2014, p. 88

⁴⁹ Europol 1.9.2011, p. 12

⁵⁰ UNODC 9/2006, p. 57

⁵¹ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 108; Cherti et al. 1/2013, p. 5

Prominent players in Nigerian human trafficking possess specific skills, have cultivated important contacts with officials, for instance, or have themselves brought together a network organising human trafficking. They may exercise a great deal of influence in the network but the network rarely is structured.⁵² As temporary networks are formed around specific projects and their composition changes constantly, West African criminal organisations do not carry any name of their own.⁵³ A loose and flexible structure often makes the network very effective and, at the same time, more difficult for the police to disperse. It may be hard to identify the key players and their elimination from operations does not necessarily have a sufficient impact on the operational capacity of the network as networks reform themselves quickly.⁵⁴ The key to the effectiveness of the networks is their ability to operate independently while drawing on an extensive network of personal contacts.⁵⁵ According to a report by UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), published in 2005, the networks are not temporary but well organised and relatively solid and durable.⁵⁶

In principle, anyone who is involved in human trafficking and who in any manner participates in or benefits from the exploitation of the victim can be called a trafficker. The following English terms, among others, are applied to persons related to human trafficking: *madame* (*maman/mama, mama Lola*), *agent, trafficker, trolley man, middleman, racketeer, sponsor* (often applied in Benin City).⁵⁷ Besides traffickers, there are many other individuals who help facilitate operations, such as transporters, receivers, brothel keepers, forgers of documentation as well as corrupt border guards and embassy officials.⁵⁸

A madame is the most important person in Nigerian human trafficking and often also the sponsor financing the journey. Madames are women who organise human trafficking⁵⁹, may recruit girls themselves⁶⁰ and monitor the trafficking process closely from recruitment to exploitation.⁶¹ Often there are madames both in Nigeria and in the destination country.⁶² The madame in Italy is responsible for the victims after their arrival in Italy, and victims usually live and work under her control.⁶³ The madames in the countries of origin and destination are closely connected and often related.⁶⁴ A man can also operate in the role of a madame; in this case, he is called “boss” instead of madame.⁶⁵ In Italy, madames are typically between 25 and 30 years old.⁶⁶ At times, madames in Italy recruit the victims and take them personally to Italy in order to manage the subjugation period. Sometimes, these women live in Italy on a permanent basis and regularly travel to Nigeria to recruit new victims who they bring to Italy with the help of escorts.⁶⁷ In Nigeria, madames are also called *Italos* because they organise everything for their victims for the arrival to Italy.⁶⁸

⁵² UNODC 9/2002, p. 42

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 42-43

⁵⁵ Europol 1.9.2011, p. 12

⁵⁶ UNODC 2005, p. 27

⁵⁷ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 21; Achebe 2004, p. 178

⁵⁸ Cherti et al. 1/2013, p. 40

⁵⁹ UNODC 2005, p. 27; Carling 2006, p. 27

⁶⁰ UNODC 9/2006, p. 52

⁶¹ Europol 1.9.2011, p. 12

⁶² Carling 2006, p. 27; Carling 1.7.2005

⁶³ Carling 1.7.2005

⁶⁴ Carling 2006, p. 27

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Carling 1.7.2005

⁶⁷ UNICRI 2010, p. 38

⁶⁸ Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 6

The terms *trolley*, *racketeer* or *middleman* are used for referring to local traffickers in Nigeria⁶⁹ who are responsible for smuggling victims, among other things.⁷⁰ The victim usually travels with young men called “brothers”, *trolleys* or *dagos*.⁷¹ Often these men may subdue new victims and exploit them sexually.⁷²

The smallest human trafficking network type is a network that consists of one madame and a husband or a fiancé loyal to her and exploits one or more women. A two-person “network” may exploit up to three women at a time. According to a report of the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI)⁷³, this is the typical structure and the most representative of Nigerian human trafficking. The partner of the madame may not necessarily be involved daily in the exploitation and the madame may also receive help from her so-called factotum, when needed.⁷⁴ An example of a certain kind of human trafficking network is a family with several wives and children located in various trafficking transit and destination countries in Africa and Europe.⁷⁵

The madame in Italy often has a male assistant, business partner or lover who is called *madam's boy*, *madam's black boy*, *black boy* or *maman-boy*.⁷⁶ These boys are young Nigerian men who often are madames' “contract husbands”⁷⁷. They undertake certain tasks in human trafficking,⁷⁸ such as monitoring the victims,⁷⁹ running errands for the madame, going to airports and train stations to collect the victims on arrival⁸⁰ and acting as bodyguards for the madame.⁸¹ Madames pay large sums of money to men to act as “contract husbands” for an agreed number of years (up to USD 300,000), during which time the men have to obey all of the madame's orders.⁸²

A madame may be assisted by a single person who undertakes several different tasks, or she may have several different assistants, each of whom has his/her own dedicated tasks. The madame's factotum and the courier can be either a man (*master* or *boss*) or a woman (*vice-maman*).⁸³ The bodyguard is often also the driver and the escort/warden who keeps an eye on the women while they are working on the street and brings them back home after their “shift” is over.⁸⁴ The wardens are tasked with protecting the victims from violent clients and other criminal organisations. They may work upon call as the need arises and thus work for more than one madame at the same time. Often this kind of warden is the link between different human trafficking groups.⁸⁵ When the warden works for only one madame or organisation, the structure may manage more than ten women. In this case, the madame has already reached a very influential position.⁸⁶

⁶⁹ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 20

⁷⁰ Carling 2006, p. 27

⁷¹ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 56; UNICRI 2010, p. 45

⁷² UNICRI 2010, p. 38

⁷³ United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI)

⁷⁴ UNICRI 2010, p. 48

⁷⁵ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 86

⁷⁶ Carling 1.7.2005; Okojie et al. 2003, p. 65; UNICRI 2010, p. 45; Carling 2006, p. 27

⁷⁷ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 56

⁷⁸ Carling 1.7.2005

⁷⁹ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 65

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 56

⁸¹ UNICRI 2010, p. 45

⁸² Okojie et al. 2003, p. 66

⁸³ UNICRI 2010, p. 45

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 48

⁸⁵ UNICRI 2010, p. 48–49

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 49

A madame's personal assistant and the girls' warden is usually one of the prostitutes. If the assistant is a young man, they are generally helped by grown men, especially when they must use violent means for protecting the women.⁸⁷

According to Godwin E. Morka (Head, NAPTIP Lagos Zonal Office), the madames abroad are in strict control of each step of the trafficking process.⁸⁸ They control and organise the groups, comprising usually 10–15 women, and collect their profits.⁸⁹ Some of the madames have themselves been victims and become madames after repaying their debt.⁹⁰ UNODC reports most madames have started as prostitutes. According to Jane Osagie (IRRRAG), some victims return voluntarily to Nigeria after the debt has been paid and some of them might end up as traffickers themselves. They are usually among the most brutal and vindictive traffickers.⁹¹ According to Europol, the number of women operating as traffickers is increasing.⁹² However, madames depend on men for forging travel documents and escorting the girls to their destination.⁹³ In some cases, madames themselves take their victims to the destination country where they sell the victims to pimps. By doing this, they do not need to wait two or three years for the victims to repay their debt.⁹⁴

Nigerian organised crime groups are proficient in the production of falsified and counterfeit travel documents for human trafficking, and the victims often use genuine documents issued to "look-alikes". The visa regime and the asylum system are also abused. Some discard their documents on arrival in the destination country and allege citizenship of an unstable country. Once at a refugee reception centre, they abscond and meet their trafficker or madame.⁹⁵ In many cases, Nigerian human trafficking groups use Italian or Spanish residence permits – either falsified or obtained through bogus marriages, for instance – which allow the victims to travel within the Schengen zone.⁹⁶

In Italy, the features of human trafficking networks are different in different parts of the country as they have adapted to local circumstances. The networks operating around Rome are less structured and sophisticated than those in Castel Volturno, Bari, Foggia, Venice and Mestre, Turin and Asti, where the madame is assisted by her partner, the factotum, the escort and the warden. Larger networks, made up of more members, are scattered throughout Italy.⁹⁷

According to a report by UNICRI, the madames who exploit minors are involved in territorial cooperation, in which each one of them performs a specific task: one controls that everything is going smoothly, one organises how to better exploit the girls and eventually their trade, one rents the stretch of the road where the girls will work, one takes care of logistics and buying food, clothes and shoes for all. The report indicates that men oversee these activities and madames constantly keep them up to date.⁹⁸

1.3. Recruitment of victims of human trafficking

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 46

⁸⁸ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 20-21

⁸⁹ UNODC 9/2006, p. 57

⁹⁰ Baye 2012, p. 25; Aghatise 2002, p. 4

⁹¹ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 21

⁹² Europol 1.9.2011, p. 7

⁹³ UNODC 2005, p. 27

⁹⁴ Baye 2012, p. 14

⁹⁵ Europol 1.9.2011, p. 10-11

⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 12

⁹⁷ UNICRI 2010, p. 49

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 49

According to Okojie et al., the majority of the victims are under 20 years of age at the time of victimisation.⁹⁹ Madames usually search for girls who are not virgins. According to Pascoal, if the girl is a virgin, she may be gang raped, which is considered a “favour” to the girl from the madame.¹⁰⁰ Recruitments of minors have increased as adult women, especially in cities, now realise the risks to which human trafficking exposes them.¹⁰¹

Many victims meet the “travel agent”, that is: the trafficker/agent/madame, through family members, relatives, friends or other personal networks,¹⁰² and recruitment usually takes place in an environment that is familiar to the victim, such as at home, in the neighbourhood or at the workplace.¹⁰³ Recruitment is ordinarily carried out by agents of the madames living in Italy or a sponsor in Nigeria who makes all travel arrangements and sells the victims to madames in Italy.¹⁰⁴ Some victims are recruited by a total stranger who approaches them on the street,¹⁰⁵ and who, in many cases, is a person who was once part of the community but had migrated and returned with wealth.¹⁰⁶ This person may be a madame living in Europe, also known as an *Italo*.¹⁰⁷ Less frequently mentioned places of recruitment are bars, restaurants, hotels and schools.¹⁰⁸ Schoolteachers may also be involved in human trafficking.¹⁰⁹

The agents of traffickers may contact girls’ parents directly and offer help for their daughters to migrate abroad for a fee (10,000 or 20,000 naira, for instance).¹¹⁰ Some recruiters assist in facilitating travel documents and may also have other people helping them to expedite the process.¹¹¹ The information and help received from agents in Nigeria differ. Some arrange the whole journey, including transport and documents, but others only offer information about how to migrate to Europe.¹¹²

After the initial contact with the agent, the victim is put in contact with a madame, the most important person in the human trafficking network in Nigeria and often also the sponsor financing the journey.¹¹³ The madame usually lives in a hotel and wants to familiarise herself with the girls there.¹¹⁴ After the initial contact, successive discussions about travel arrangements are ordinarily carried out in hotels.¹¹⁵

Some women actively seek information about migrating to Europe as well as financing for the journey.¹¹⁶ In Benin City, there are two nightclubs that the girls are set to visit when seeking means to get to Europe. They are called Italy and Spain, in reference to the destinations of the girls.¹¹⁷

⁹⁹ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 9

¹⁰⁰ Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 23

¹⁰¹ UNICRI 2010, p. 40

¹⁰² Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 27; Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 30; Carling 1.7.2005; Okojie et al. 2003, p. 55; Carling 2006, p. 27; Landinfo 5/2006, p. 14

¹⁰³ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 56, 58; Okojie 2005, p. 5

¹⁰⁴ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 119

¹⁰⁵ Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 27; Cherti et al. 1/2013, p. 39

¹⁰⁶ Cherti et al. 1/2013, p. 39

¹⁰⁷ Landinfo 5/2006, p. 9; Okojie et al. 2003, p. 56, 119

¹⁰⁸ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 56

¹⁰⁹ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 31

¹¹⁰ Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 27

¹¹¹ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 56

¹¹² Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 28

¹¹³ Carling 1.7.2005

¹¹⁴ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 58

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 56, 58

¹¹⁶ Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 27

¹¹⁷ Pascoal 2012, p. 6

Some victims have also been recruited through audiocassettes or letters purportedly written by relations or acquaintances already in destination countries.¹¹⁸ Victims have been deceived by showing purported videocassette recordings from friends and relations in destination countries, describing life as being very promising and inviting victims to come and join them.¹¹⁹ Occasionally, young women have also been deceived into migrating by recruiting them as performers in musical troupes; instead, they have ended up in prostitution as victims of human trafficking. Sports competitions and religious festivals abroad have also been used as an aid in recruitment.¹²⁰ Furthermore, traffickers residing in Europe have been reported to have legally adopted teenage girls with the consent of their biological parents to facilitate the procurement of visas for the girls.¹²¹

Often, the families need to borrow money or sell their assets to pay the fee requested by the agent for the journey. If the women make the deal themselves, they have to put themselves into debt.¹²² It is reported that lawyers in Nigeria have drawn up so-called “friendly loan agreements” that secure the victims’ consent to debt bondage with their traffickers. The loan is “friendly” because it is interest-free; in Edo State only licensed moneylenders are entitled to lend money with interest.¹²³ The victim and her family may also sign a formal contract with the trafficker, using the family’s assets, such as their house, as collateral.¹²⁴ The victims must produce a family member to be their guarantor either to sign legal papers or at the shrine so that the traffickers have someone to harass if the victims become uncooperative.¹²⁵

Some victims have been initiated into secret cults to which their madames belong. The members of the cult must swear an oath to protect one another like blood brothers. This is done to ensure that the victims or their family do not jeopardise the businesses of the madames by reporting them to officials.¹²⁶

According to the Danish Immigration Service, the normal procedure is that the trafficker in Nigeria brings the victim from Benin City to Lagos and hands her over to another trafficker who is responsible for the next step. The whole procedure may last up to two years. Within this string of traffickers the network is very strong. Each madame and her traffickers do not usually have close cooperation with other madames and their traffickers.¹²⁷ According to Sister Florence (COSUDOW), the traffickers do not have a strong network in Nigeria and they normally operate underground, keeping a low profile and avoid being exposed.¹²⁸ According to Barrister Abiodun (NAPTIP Benin Zonal Office), traffickers in Nigeria do not necessarily know the future madames or destination countries of the victims, and the madames do not necessarily know who the traffickers in Nigeria are.¹²⁹

The traffickers appear to have contacts or agents along the routes to Europe. A particular activity, such as recruitment, preparation of documents and transportation of victims, may involve only a few active members of the group at a time.¹³⁰ In many trafficking transit countries, there are “camps” of Nigerian traffickers, used by several agents from different groups. In these countries, local people assist traffickers in their operations. According to Okojie et al., the

¹¹⁸ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 55

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 65

¹²⁰ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 55

¹²¹ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 113

¹²² Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 27–28

¹²³ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 108

¹²⁴ Carling 1.7.2005; Okojie et al. 2003, p. 66

¹²⁵ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 109

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 20-21

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 21

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 86

traffickers would have a map of Africa, with transit camps and names of agents. The map is usually given to persons accompanying victims or to victims themselves. The existence of such a map would suggest that some of the groups are very well organised.¹³¹ The victims often know that the recruiter, the trolley and the madame are in league together. According to an informant, Italians buy off victims from Nigerian madames for prostitution. The same informant also reported that young men are trafficked for prostitution to Europe. Nationals of transit and destination countries are involved in human trafficking.¹³²

Victims may set off with one person, an escort/trolley, who takes them to Tripoli, Libya, where they are handed over to another person working for the same human trafficking network.¹³³ Victims are kept in safe houses and hotels along the way while waiting for travel arrangements to proceed. In Spain, victims frequently stayed in such houses for days or even months. The time spent in Ghana and the Benin Republic is sometimes up to three months. The local law enforcement agents seem to connive with traffickers to obtain false documents and render assistance at the airports to smuggle people into the country. According to one victim, her sponsor knew a lot of people at the airport and also seemed friendly with Italian airport officials. Another victim reported that her agent took her through an unconventional route out of the airport building.¹³⁴ Human trafficking groups sometimes use the services of professionals, such as lawyers and immigration officers.¹³⁵

The sexual exploitation of victims may already start in Nigeria where traffickers may rape them or teach them to service clients before they commence their journey. Sexual exploitation also takes place during the journey. Some become pregnant, while others have to start prostitution during the journey to survive.¹³⁶ For some, the journey to Europe may take years. Life at the camps in North Africa is hard, especially for female migrants who may have to trade sex in exchange for food. Many are traumatised and unable to contact their families.¹³⁷

2. USE OF JUJU IN NIGERIAN HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Voodoo—referred to locally as juju—is a traditional religion in West Africa where it has been practised for centuries.¹³⁸ Spirits are said to govern the Earth and every aspect of human existence. They may protect people or destroy them.¹³⁹ For many, witchcraft is reality and not superstition, and it is not considered as a clear opposite of the science-based view of the world.¹⁴⁰ Juju is deeply ingrained in society in Edo and practically everyone, regardless of social class or level of education, believes in it.¹⁴¹ Many Nigerians carry amulets to ward off evil spirits and bad luck. However, only a witch doctor, i.e. a juju priest, can use the powers of juju.¹⁴² Juju is often blamed if someone falls ill or dies. It is thought that someone uses juju to put a curse on them.¹⁴³ Everything from accidents, madness and divorces to infertility and other misfortunes are perceived as the handiwork of child witches.¹⁴⁴

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid., p. 87

¹³³ Voice of America, 28.11.2012

¹³⁴ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 87

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 88

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 67

¹³⁷ Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 28

¹³⁸ The Independent 7.4.2011

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Harrop 12.9.2012

¹⁴¹ The Independent 7.4.2011; Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 23

¹⁴² The Independent 7.4.2011

¹⁴³ BBC 7.7.2011

¹⁴⁴ Think Africa Press 17.9.2012

The use of juju to control victims is a prevailing factor in Nigerian human trafficking.¹⁴⁵ A juju oath works as a form of psychological control as the fear of consequences of breaking the oath, i.e. a punishment by the spirits, is extremely strong.¹⁴⁶ The purpose of the oath is to prevent victims from revealing the identity of the traffickers or the details of the juju ritual and to ensure they pay their debt as agreed without creating problems. For their part, traffickers pledge to take the victim to the destination.¹⁴⁷ The oath can also be referred to as an oath of silence.¹⁴⁸ Due to juju, Nigerian women experience less violence from their traffickers compared with victims from other countries as the fear of juju keeps them in control.¹⁴⁹ Swearing a juju oath reinforces the pact between the trafficker and the victim¹⁵⁰ and many traffickers require their victims to swear the oath.¹⁵¹ According to Isoke Aikpitanyi,¹⁵² many girls also do not swear a juju oath because they are Christians.¹⁵³

Rituals for sealing the oath are performed at a juju ceremony at a shrine in Nigeria,¹⁵⁴ but sometimes they are also performed in the destination country.¹⁵⁵ The ceremony is performed by a juju priest, one of the most central person in Nigerian human trafficking.¹⁵⁶ In different sources, a juju priest is also called *ohen*¹⁵⁷, *baba-loa*, *native doctor*, *père-savant*, *woodoo minister*¹⁵⁸, *medicine man*¹⁵⁹ and *head priest*.¹⁶⁰ Juju priests may often be accomplices of traffickers and participate in controlling victims through juju.¹⁶¹ Juju is a lucrative business for them and they may earn up to GBP 120 for the day's ritual.¹⁶² In Nigeria, there are numerous shrines¹⁶³ that have also established branches internationally.¹⁶⁴ In Benin City, the most potent shrine is *Aru'Osun Oba*.¹⁶⁵

Fear of traditional deities and ancestors makes the exploitation of victims easy¹⁶⁶ as victims often sincerely believe in the powers of juju.¹⁶⁷ Breaking the oath would anger the deities, which might lead to the death of the oath breaker.¹⁶⁸ The loved ones of the oath breaker may also be in a mortal danger.¹⁶⁹ In addition to death, breaking the oath may result in nightmares and madness.¹⁷⁰ Fear of juju may be so strong that "saving" victims from the streets may prove impossible as they are so fiercely committed to repaying their debt to their madames. In trials held in Europe, victims have gone into fits and trances in the witness box due to fear of juju.¹⁷¹

¹⁴⁵ USDOS 2014, p. 297; Think Africa Press 17.9.2012; Europol 1.9.2011, p. 6; Cherti et al. 1/2013, p. 43

¹⁴⁶ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 66; Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 18; Think Africa Press 17.9.2012

¹⁴⁷ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 22-23; Aghatise 2002, p. 5; Carling 1.7.2005; CNN 1.4.2011

¹⁴⁸ ECPAT UK 29.10.2012

¹⁴⁹ Aghatise 2002, p. 5

¹⁵⁰ Europol 1.9.2011, p. 6; Skilbrei & Tvei 2007, p. 32

¹⁵¹ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 22-23

¹⁵² Isoke Aikpitanyi is a former victim of human trafficking who now helps other victims in Italy and has written two books about human trafficking.

¹⁵³ Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 18

¹⁵⁴ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 68; van Dijk 2001, p. 569; UNICRI 2010, p. 38

¹⁵⁵ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 66

¹⁵⁶ Carling 2006, p. 27; Okojie et al. 2003, p. 68

¹⁵⁷ Carling 1.7.2005

¹⁵⁸ UNICRI 2010, p. 37 footnote (See: Sennett R., Authority, New York: Norton W.W. & Company Inc., 1993)

¹⁵⁹ Achebe 2004, p. 182

¹⁶⁰ CNN 1.4.2011

¹⁶¹ Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 14

¹⁶² Landinfo 5/2006, p. 15; The Independent 7.4.2011

¹⁶³ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 68

¹⁶⁴ Landinfo 5/2006, p. 15

¹⁶⁵ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 68

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 37

¹⁶⁷ Skilbrei & Tvei 2007, p. 33

¹⁶⁸ van Dijk 2001, p. 570; Economist 22.4.2004; Think Africa Press 17.9.2012

¹⁶⁹ Voice of America 21.11.2012

¹⁷⁰ Think Africa Press 17.9.2012

¹⁷¹ CNN 1.4.2011

All women participating in juju rituals do not necessarily believe in juju but consider it a mere contract ritual with no magic powers. Some women's belief in juju may also fade after some time in Europe.¹⁷²

According to Godwin E. Morka (NAPTIP Lagos Zonal Office), the use and influence of juju has decreased lately.¹⁷³ In contrast to Morka (NAPTIP Lagos Zonal Office), Bisi Olateru-Olagbegi (WOCON, The Women's Consortium of Nigeria) considers that the belief in juju is still common and the victims who have sworn a juju oath are often traumatised as they feel strongly bound by their oath. It seems that the feeling of being bound by the juju oath exists regardless of the level of education of the victim. It is difficult for a Christian priest to annul the oath by exorcism or for anyone else to convince the victim that she is not really bound by the oath.¹⁷⁴ According to Carling, pacts made in juju rituals are frequently also sanctioned with prayer rituals in the Pentecostal churches to which most of the victims belong, further broadening the pact's legitimacy.¹⁷⁵

2.1. Juju ceremony

According to the sources, there are several ways in which a juju oath is sworn, what the rituals are like and which items the victims are required to provide for the rituals. Rituals serve numerous purposes. Some aim to instil fear of terrible reprisals, such as death and madness if the oath is broken, while others are intended for attracting clients or protecting the victim against HIV/AIDS.¹⁷⁶ The rituals are also said to make the woman stronger, more balanced and better fitted for obeying the spirits.¹⁷⁷

At his shrine, a juju priest performs the juju ceremony, in which he invokes the spirits.¹⁷⁸ A significant part of the ceremony is the assemblage of a packet or packets. The packets often contain symbolic artefacts and items embodying a whole range of meanings and functions.¹⁷⁹ The packets serve as a medium linking the priest with the victim even after she has left the country.¹⁸⁰ Some of the following items are usually collected from the victims: hair, pubic hair, armpit hair, fingernails, toenails, blood, menstrual blood and used underwear that may be stained with menstrual blood.¹⁸¹ In cases where the victim has been recruited by a person pretending to be her boyfriend, the packet may include items mentioned above from both of them.¹⁸² In some cases, the packet also contained sperm from the intercourse between the victim and her boyfriend who, in reality, was a trafficker.¹⁸³ The victim and the boyfriend may also eat from the same cola nut and pronounce oaths before the deities.¹⁸⁴

In addition to items collected from the victim, the packet may include cola nuts, pieces of twisted metal, powder and soap.¹⁸⁵ Sometimes, a small bowl, herbs and small bags evidently containing

¹⁷² Skilbrei & Tvei 2007, p. 33

¹⁷³ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 23

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Carling 1.7.2005

¹⁷⁶ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 22-23; van Dijk 2001, p. 571

¹⁷⁷ UNICRI 2010, p. 38

¹⁷⁸ van Dijk 2001, p. 569; UNICRI 2010, p. 38

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ UNICRI 2010, p. 38

¹⁸¹ Carling 1.7.2005; van Dijk 2001, p. 569-570; Economist 22.4.2004; ECPAT UK 29.10.2012; Okojie et al. 2003, p. 66; Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 22-23; UNICRI 2010, p. 38; CNN 1.4.2011; Achebe 2004, p. 182

¹⁸² van Dijk 2001, p. 569

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 570

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 564

tablets of the malaria drug chloroquine are placed in the packet.¹⁸⁶ Large quantities of chloroquine and small quantities of soap have been used in various part of Africa to perform abortions. The method is cheap but not necessarily effective.¹⁸⁷ The packet may be wrapped up in cloth.¹⁸⁸ The priest may give the victim a note with instructions on how to use the various items.¹⁸⁹ The packet has magic significance. It or the items included in it embody personal and spiritual power, beauty and sex appeal, protection and success and make the woman attractive to men or otherwise support the fulfilment of the pact.¹⁹⁰ Pieces of twisted metal refer to the power of the *Ogun* deity, soap and powder enhance beauty and sexual power and the kola nut is an exchange of faithfulness between lovers.¹⁹¹

Some victims have been given the packet to take with them to Europe¹⁹², after which they are obligated to “guard” it. In some cases, traffickers have carried the packet to Europe.¹⁹³ For some, the packets are left at the shrine until the debt was repaid.¹⁹⁴ According to UNICRI, rituals involve the assemblage of several small packets instead of just one, which are given to the woman and, at times, to her father or mother as guarantors and witnesses of the pact and to the madame. Once the debt has been repaid as agreed, the victim will receive the packets back as a proof that the pact has been respected.¹⁹⁵ The packet may also be sold to the madame who purchases the girl in Europe, transferring the spiritual control of the victim to the madame in question.¹⁹⁶

In the ceremonies, the victim may be cut with a razor blade on different parts of the body, such as chest and forehead,¹⁹⁷ and medicines may be rubbed into the wounds. The purpose of these medicines is to enhance the victim’s beauty and afford travel protection.¹⁹⁸ In addition, the victim may be made to swallow different objects and sacrificial blood.¹⁹⁹ The rituals sometimes involve offerings of money²⁰⁰ and the slaughtering of animals, such as goats and white chickens, to ensure a safe journey. Animal blood is sprinkled on victims.²⁰¹ Dried chameleons and chickens are often used in the rituals.²⁰² Some are forced to drink the water used to wash a dead person’s body.²⁰³

Examples of different juju ceremonies:

*In a ceremony on a river bank, the minister asked the girl to kneel down, lit some candles and started praying to the “spirit of water” (mami-water). He wet her with some of the river’s water and she swore to always obey the madame, who was attending the ceremony. The girl left to the madame and the minister some photographs of her, a sweater and a small sachet made with a piece of the fabric of the dress she was wearing. A lock of the girl’s hair was placed in the sachet.*²⁰⁴

¹⁸⁶ van Dijk 2001, p. 567

¹⁸⁷ van Dijk 2001, p. 568

¹⁸⁸ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 23

¹⁸⁹ van Dijk 2001, p. 568

¹⁹⁰ Carling 1.7.2005; van Dijk 2001, p. 571; Carling 1.7.2005

¹⁹¹ van Dijk 2001, p. 571

¹⁹² Ibid., p. 564

¹⁹³ Ibid., p. 571

¹⁹⁴ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 66; van Dijk 2001, p. 569

¹⁹⁵ UNICRI 2010, p. 38

¹⁹⁶ CNN 1.4.2011

¹⁹⁷ ECPAT UK 29.10.2012

¹⁹⁸ van Dijk 2001, p. 570

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 566

²⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 570

²⁰¹ Ibid., p. 571

²⁰² The Independent 7.4.2011

²⁰³ Aghatise 2002, p. 10

²⁰⁴ UNICRI 2010, p. 56-57

In another ceremony, the priest commanded the victim to undress and wash in a hut outside the shrine. When the victim returned, the priest blew chalk dust over her body and smeared clay over her forehead, marking her out so the spirits can identify her soul that is being offered to them. Then he asked her to kneel before him to swear the oath. After the ritual, the priest lifted the victim to her feet. The victim seemed relieved and said she felt safe in his hands. The shrine of this priest was filled with juju fetishes: rattles, idols made out of feathers, bones and sea shells, crucibles filled with bright powders.²⁰⁵

In a ritual, the girl was stripped and cut with a razorblade so her blood could be collected. Her body hair was shaved off and she was forced to lie naked in a closed coffin for hours. She then had to eat a raw chicken heart. In another case, the girl was taken to a river where she was told to eat white clay, had a rock passed from a priest's mouth to hers, was given black soap to wash with and a raw chicken's egg to eat.²⁰⁶ The purpose of these rituals was to instil terror in the victims and ensure that they do not give any information about their experiences.²⁰⁷

2.2. Effects of juju

The victims regard the oath sworn in the juju ceremony as a solemn oath²⁰⁸ and as a result, are not ready to break it easily. The oath cannot be renegotiated,²⁰⁹ and it is considered to be binding regardless of where the victims are residing.²¹⁰ For this reason, the majority of victims will not cooperate with the authorities in destination countries,²¹¹ which in turn complicates legal action against traffickers.²¹² The belief in juju is often so strong that victims of human trafficking who have been "rescued" from the streets may return there and to their traffickers as soon as possible.²¹³ In the Netherlands in the 1990s, it was reported that underage prostitutes who were controlled through voodoo trembled with fear and even ended up in uncontrollable fits and seizures when interrogated by the police. It was important for the girls to get their "packets" into their possession, and these packets seemed to keep the girls under the control of their traffickers.²¹⁴

Juju rituals may cause the victims severe psychological and even psychiatric problems,²¹⁵ and it may take years for the victims to recover or feel safe from the juju.²¹⁶ Symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) experienced by the victims seem to confirm that the spirits are inflicting retribution for breaking the oath. Nigerian victims often display symptoms of PTSD, and the related mental and psychosomatic symptoms and other potential problems are interpreted as a result of juju.²¹⁷ It is reported that one victim spent several months in hospital after returning from Europe to Nigeria. As she felt that she was going crazy, she was taken to one of

²⁰⁵ The Independent 7.4.2011

²⁰⁶ BBC 7.7.2011

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Carling 1.7.2005

²⁰⁹ UNICRI 2010, p. 38

²¹⁰ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 23-24

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Think Africa Press 17.9.2012; Aghatise 2002, p. 8

²¹³ van Dijk 2001, p. 565

²¹⁴ Ibid., p. 564

²¹⁵ Aghatise 2002, p. 6; Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 22-23

²¹⁶ ECPAT UK 29.10.2012

²¹⁷ Think Africa Press 17.9.2012; Aghatise 2002, p. 8

the Pentecostal churches for “deliverance” from the voodoo oath.²¹⁸ Because of the psychological nature of juju, victims are not safe from the subjective fear of the juju oath. Even though a victim gets a residence permit in the destination country, she may still fear that the juju priest is capable of killing her. Hence, psychotherapy is important.²¹⁹

The Girls’ Power Initiative organisation (GPI) has used Christianity to decrease the power and influence juju priests have over people and to oppose the traditional spirits so that the rituals will no longer have a hold on the victims.²²⁰ NAPTIP has raided shrines in Edo to stop the use of juju in human trafficking, and witness protection has been given to some juju priests who have exposed traffickers.²²¹ In its raids, NAPTIP has reclaimed items that victims were forced to leave at shrines in ceremonies.²²²

Not all victims use the term “voodoo” when describing their experiences of juju ceremonies at shrines, and the rituals are not necessarily experienced as intimidating and coercive as such.²²³ According to Carling, voodoo only becomes an oppressive part of the pact if the woman tries to break the pact.²²⁴ If the victim wants to leave the prostitution network, she may face physical violence and be threatened with juju.²²⁵ According to Van Dijk, some victims use the term “voodoo” when describing frightening rituals performed on them in Europe. He reports that “voodoo” denotes a kind of “inauthentic” ritual, performed solely with the trafficker’s commercial interests in mind and not performed by ritual specialists.²²⁶

Nigerian victims of human trafficking in Italy have described their experiences as victims with the following juju-related expressions:

*“I’ve got a snake in my head”, “There’s a snake in my belly”, “I can feel the water in my head”, “Cool my head”, “I’m possessed”, “Last night there were ants coming out of my feet”, “The other night I went to Benin City and I came back this morning”, “I hear voices that tell me to go back home because my parents are in danger”, “I want to go to sleep and never wake up again”, “Break my head open to get out the poison they made me swallow”.*²²⁷

3. CIRCUMSTANCES OF VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN ITALY

The journey from Nigeria to Italy is often long and rough for the victims of human trafficking, and in some cases, it may take years. Many are raped during the trip.²²⁸ For most victims, the nature of the work may only become apparent in the destination on the day of their arrival²²⁹ or a couple of days after the arrival. Madames may take them shopping for “work clothes” suitable for the new job, i.e. scanty blouses, short skirts, a handbag and a wig,²³⁰ and the victims are told to join those who arrived before them on the streets.²³¹ Women who have been in the

²¹⁸ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 66

²¹⁹ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 23-24

²²⁰ Landinfo 5/2006, p. 15

²²¹ Landinfo 5/2006, p. 15

²²² Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 23

²²³ van Dijk 2001, p. 571

²²⁴ Carling 1.7.2005

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ van Dijk 2001, p. 572

²²⁷ UNICRI 2010, p. 69

²²⁸ Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 26

²²⁹ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 69

²³⁰ Ibid., p. 66

²³¹ Ibid., p. 67

destination country for some time are instructed to encourage and teach the newer victims in their work.²³² The victims may also be initiated into prostitution through violence or rape.²³³

Usually, travel documents are seized from the victims upon their arrival in the destination country in order to make them, as undocumented immigrants, afraid of officials and more dependent on the traffickers.²³⁴ In addition to debt, their illegal status is a prevailing factor in the victims' lives in Italy.²³⁵ The victims feel that they cannot leave their madames due to their illegal status because they have limited chances of finding another job and the debt must be repaid.²³⁶ Traffickers may tell the victims to apply for asylum in Italy by retelling a story they have learned. The decision-making takes six months and the applicants are issued with a temporary residence permit for this period.²³⁷ Baye's findings show that it takes six months before these applications are attended to,²³⁸ and 99% of asylum applications made by Nigerians are rejected as the grounds provided by them do not fall under the criteria for being granted asylum. At least in Turin, the police believe that all Nigerian women are victims of human trafficking.²³⁹ Many of the victims do not know how a residence permit or a work permit is applied for, and there are different ideas on how the process proceeds. Some are helped by their madame in the application process, while others do everything themselves.²⁴⁰

The relationship between the madame and the victim may be both exploitative and protective, but it is never symmetrical and the madame uses it according to her needs only. It is the madame who decides what kind of relationship the victim must have with her, how much money the victim must earn, how the victim must dress and what she must say when coming across officials or other traffickers. The madame may seclude the victim for days if she does not obey. The madame may choose a favourite girl among the victims based on the girl being obedient and making a great deal of money and thus able to keep watch on the other girls. The madame lets her favourite rise within the group's hierarchy, even if she is still in a totally subdued position with regard to the madame.²⁴¹ Nonetheless, many victims see the madame as a benefactor who helped them to escape poverty in Nigeria.²⁴²

3.1. Debt to traffickers

Most victims expect to get into debt to traffickers, but they are informed of the size of the debt only once they arrive in Europe.²⁴³ Some know the actual size of the debt from the beginning but do not necessarily understand how much money it really is or what they must do to repay it.²⁴⁴ Many think that the debt amount they were told in Nigeria was in Nigerian nairas. Only in the destination have they found out that the debt is in euros, or they did not know or understand the exchange rate of the euro.²⁴⁵ Often the victims have not had advance knowledge about how

²³² Ibid., p. 56–57

²³³ UNODC 2005, p. 27

²³⁴ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 65

²³⁵ Baye 2012, p. 25

²³⁶ Ibid., p. 21–22

²³⁷ Baye 2012, p. 23

²³⁸ Ibid., p. 24

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 30

²⁴¹ UNICRI 2010, p. 45

²⁴² Aghatise 2002, p. 11

²⁴³ Landinfo 5/2006, p. 9

²⁴⁴ Carling 1.7.2005

²⁴⁵ Voice of America 21.11.2012; Baye 2012, p. 20; Baye & Heumann 2014, p. 88; Landinfo 5/2006, p. 9

long it takes to repay the debt,²⁴⁶ and they have been given the impression that the sum can be easily earned in a few months.²⁴⁷

Depending on the mode of transport, the journey results in a debt of EUR 35,000–60,000, sometimes even EUR 70,000–80,000,²⁴⁸ although the costs for travel and the required documents are significantly lower.²⁴⁹ Travelling by air is more expensive than by sea due to the travel document procurement costs and airline ticket prices. The resulting debt often amounts to EUR 55,000–60,000 whereas the debt from travelling by sea is EUR 50,000.²⁵⁰ The madame may claim to have invested the entire debt sum for the costs of the journey.²⁵¹ It usually takes from one to three or four years for victims to repay their debt.²⁵² The repayment of a EUR 35,000–50,000 debt normally takes 2–5 years.²⁵³ The debt is sometimes increased as punishment for bad behaviour, or it is attempted to protract the repayment period in other ways.²⁵⁴ Potential abortions and pregnancy increase the debt, and a fine of EUR 10,000 or more may be added to the debt of those women who become pregnant during the trip.²⁵⁵ In contrast to other sources, Aghatise reports that the debt has to be paid in a matter of a few months from the moment the victim starts working, at the risk of violence being used by the madame on the victim or her family in Nigeria.²⁵⁶

Madames collect the money earned by the victims daily or weekly and record the amounts meticulously.²⁵⁷ If the madame thinks that the victim is not bringing in enough money, the victim may be subjected to physical abuse.²⁵⁸ In addition to the debt, the victims must pay the madame each month approximately EUR 100 for food, EUR 250 for lodging, EUR 250 for the work site on the street (*joint*) and also extra costs for clothes, cosmetics, transport and other personal expenses.²⁵⁹ These expenses are usually deducted directly from the earnings.²⁶⁰ If the madame does not live with her victims or near to them, earnings may be sent to her through Western Union or an illegal service, if necessary.²⁶¹

According to Okojie et al., in Italy madames pay the local mafia rent for the joints where their prostitutes work.²⁶² In Castel Volturno, the local Camorra mafia lets the Nigerian mafia operate in peace in the area in exchange for percentages received as the joint rent.²⁶³ In Turin, too, the local mafia is involved in renting joints, but in Palermo the local Cosa Nostra mafia does not seem to participate in this type of activity.²⁶⁴

Often the victims have very little money left to spend on themselves or to send back home after debt payments and other expenses.²⁶⁵ Usually the victims are not allowed to send money home

²⁴⁶ Baye 2012, p. 20; UNODC 2005, p. 27; Baye & Heumann 2014, p. 88

²⁴⁷ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 66; Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 18

²⁴⁸ Baye 2012, p. 20; UNODC 2005, p. 27; Baye & Heumann 2014, p. 88; Bonetti 2011, 266–267; Carling 1.7.2005; Economist 22.4.2004; Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 27–28; Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 17

²⁴⁹ Carling 1.7.2005; Economist 22.4.2004; Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 27–28; Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 17

²⁵⁰ Baye 2012, p. 20; UNODC 2005, p. 27; Baye & Heumann 2014, p. 88

²⁵¹ UNODC 2005, p. 27; Baye 2012, p. 20; Baye & Heumann 2014, p. 88

²⁵² Carling 1.7.2005; Baye 2012, p. 22

²⁵³ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 66; Baye & Heumann 2014, p. 91; Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 18

²⁵⁴ Carling 1.7.2005

²⁵⁵ Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 17, 26

²⁵⁶ Aghatise 2002, p. 5

²⁵⁷ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 67; UNICRI 2010, p. 45

²⁵⁸ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 67

²⁵⁹ Bonetti 2011, 266–267; Maragnani & Aikpitanyi 2007 in: Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 22

²⁶⁰ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 67

²⁶¹ Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 17–18

²⁶² Okojie et al. 2003, p. 87

²⁶³ Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 22

²⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 28–29

²⁶⁵ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 67

until the entire debt is repaid. Some try to hide a part of their earnings in different places so that they could send some money home in secret.²⁶⁶ If they get caught, a fine may be added to their debt²⁶⁷ or they may be physically abused.²⁶⁸ However, sometimes the madames may help the victims send money home, especially if relations have been complaining.²⁶⁹

It is the madame who finally determines when the victim has settled her debt.²⁷⁰ Some madames report their victims to the police just before they finish repaying their debt. In this way, they can remove these victims from the market, from competing with new victims earning money for the madame.²⁷¹ The madames also report women they consider difficult and disobedient to the police.²⁷²

It is common for victims to remain working for the madame after repaying their debt, and many victims eventually become madames or traffickers themselves.²⁷³ Indeed, a typical feature of Nigerian human trafficking is its self-producing organisational structure.²⁷⁴ Even after the repayment of the debt, all victims are not free to do what they like or quit prostitution. Earnings from any other work available to them would not be sufficient for providing for both themselves and their family in Nigeria.²⁷⁵

Some women are reported to stop paying their debt as they consider it unreasonably large, the working conditions unbearable, or both.²⁷⁶ The fact that the pact does not last forever may convince some victims to adhere to the pact in spite of unbearable working and living conditions.²⁷⁷

3.2. Everyday life of victims of human trafficking in Italy

The victims live and work in Italy under the control of a Nigerian madame.²⁷⁸ They often live in cramped rooms, sharing the room, and sometimes even the bed, with 4–5 other girls and at times also with the madame.²⁷⁹ The victims may call one another “sisters” and younger girls “babies”. This gives them the representation of a bond that acts as a substitute of their own families in Nigeria.²⁸⁰ Madames may assume a benevolent role, taking victims shopping or helping them send money home, which reinforces the bond between them.²⁸¹

According to Pascoal, a typical madame usually lives with the girls. Yet, according to a Methodist pastor interviewed by her, the majority of the madames of the victims working in Palermo live outside Palermo and there are also cases in which the madame lives in Palermo and the girl in another Italian city.²⁸²

²⁶⁶ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 67; Baye & Heumann 2014, p. 91

²⁶⁷ Baye 2012, p. 22

²⁶⁸ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 67

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ UNODC 2009: 45

²⁷¹ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 67; Landinfo 5/2006, p. 10

²⁷² Landinfo 5/2006, p. 10

²⁷³ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 67; Carling 1.7.2005

²⁷⁴ Carling 1.7.2005

²⁷⁵ Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 35

²⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 34

²⁷⁷ Carling 1.7.2005

²⁷⁸ Carling 1.7.2005; Achebe 2004, p. 182

²⁷⁹ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 70

²⁸⁰ Pascoal, 19.12.2012, p. 14

²⁸¹ UNODC 2009, p. 45

²⁸² Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 34

The victims' movement and communication with friends and relatives are restricted in Italy. The victims may communicate with their relatives only in the presence of the madame to ensure that the victim does not reveal her real situation.²⁸³ According to Pascoal, the victims regularly change city in order to avoid being recognised by the authorities or establishing bonds with local people who could try to get them off the streets.²⁸⁴

In Italy, Nigerian prostitutes normally work on the streets. Madames have their designated streets or stretches of the street on which their victims work, with payment to the local mafia for that street.²⁸⁵ Some madames also cooperate with other madames operating in the area.²⁸⁶ Illegal status in the country makes the victims vigilant and run when they spot the police.²⁸⁷ The madames' agents monitor the victims' movements through mobile phones and sometimes patrol the streets to ensure that the victims do not try to contact anyone.²⁸⁸

Even though many victims know they will end up as prostitutes, they probably are unaware of the actual conditions on the streets of Italy. They have to wear scanty clothing in the rain and snow and work all night. Their earnings are seized and they experience violence from their madames and clients.²⁸⁹ Work may be carried out in two shifts: the day shift from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. and the night shift from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m.²⁹⁰ The victims stand by the roadside waiting for clients, and when a car stops, they enter the car. The client returns the victim to the same spot.²⁹¹

In the prostitution market, African women are considered second class prostitutes; therefore, they get a lower price for their services. For sexual services in a car, they can charge only EUR 10–15, whereas the Eastern Europeans charge EUR 25 for the same service.²⁹² Nigerian prostitutes are often regarded as more aggressive in procuring clients than other prostitutes. Prostitutes from other countries also accuse Nigerians of selling sex below the "market rate" and being often willing to have unprotected sex.²⁹³

The victims have a high risk of contracting HIV/AIDS, and 10–15% of women working on the street are HIV positive.²⁹⁴ Many victims are afraid of going to the hospital in Italy because they do not have a residence permit or because their madames will not let them go to the hospital for fear of being apprehended by the police. Many are ignorant of the social and medical services available to undocumented migrants. In Italy, it is possible to acquire an official document called *Tesseræ IS/* (Informazioni Sanitarie Immigranti) which allows foreigners to access medical care even if they are undocumented. Despite the fact that prostitutes have various health problems, especially abdominal pains, many still shy away from the hospital for fear of deportation.²⁹⁵

In addition to sexually transmitted diseases, unprotected intercourse and rapes cause unwanted pregnancies followed by forced abortions.²⁹⁶ Many victims have to undergo more than one abortion.²⁹⁷ The victims may be forced to undergo abortions without anaesthetics,²⁹⁸ and

²⁸³ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 64, 66

²⁸⁴ Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 17–18

²⁸⁵ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 87

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Baye 2012, p. 28

²⁸⁸ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 65

²⁸⁹ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 65

²⁹⁰ Achebe 2004, p. 182

²⁹¹ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 67

²⁹² Bonetti 2011, 266–267

²⁹³ Carling 2006, p. 44

²⁹⁴ Bonetti 2011, 267

²⁹⁵ Baye 2012, p. 25

²⁹⁶ Bonetti 2011, 267

²⁹⁷ Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 25

abortions may be made by the madames with mixtures made of blood and herbs.²⁹⁹ An abortion is a very serious matter for Nigerian women as, in their culture, children are a blessing and maternity is highly appreciated.³⁰⁰

Lately, many victims, prompted by traffickers, have opted not to undergo abortion, in order to have better chances of seeking asylum and avoiding deportation.³⁰¹ The babies are an advantage for the victim in being issued with a residence permit, but also for the trafficker who, in this way, can keep the victim on the street in Italy and increase her debt.³⁰²

Children can be used as leverage to extort the victims, by threatening to take the children from their mothers, for instance.³⁰³ The Italian social services may also take the children if the mothers do not get out of prostitution. At the same time, the traffickers threaten the victims' children if the victim leaves prostitution. This makes the situation very complicated for many of the victims. If the madame does not accept a child, the child may be sent to Nigeria to be looked after by the victim's family. In this case, the victim's family may demand the victim to earn more, referring to the child being ill or needing money for school.³⁰⁴

3.3. Violence experienced by victims of human trafficking

The victims often experience physical violence at the hands of madames, traffickers, clients and sometimes the police.³⁰⁵ Often they also have problems with competing prostitutes.³⁰⁶ However, not all victims have experienced violence, especially those who migrated to Italy over 10 years ago.³⁰⁷ Nigerian victims do not experience more violence from their clients than prostitutes from other countries, but they are more vulnerable due to contempt and their lower position in the prostitution market. They also experience violence from competing prostitution groups that may try to scare them off the market.³⁰⁸ The victims are also subjected to verbal abuse,³⁰⁹ and they are intimidated with stories of the Italian police shooting at girls without a residence permit.³¹⁰

Traffickers and madames use violence towards the victims if they refuse to prostitute themselves, especially on arrival in Italy, do not earn enough³¹¹ or are otherwise disobedient.³¹² In addition, the victim as well as her parents and relatives in Nigeria are threatened with violence³¹³ and the victims' families are attacked in Nigeria.³¹⁴

The victims are made to work when they are ill, menstruating or pregnant.³¹⁵ Although violence is common, due to juju it is neither a rule nor a necessity in the Nigerian model of human trafficking.³¹⁶ Threatening with juju may often be enough to make the victims obey.³¹⁷

²⁹⁸ Aghatise 2002, p. 6

²⁹⁹ Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 30

³⁰⁰ Bonetti 2011, p. 267; Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 25

³⁰¹ Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 25

³⁰² Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 30

³⁰³ Aghatise 2002, p. 6

³⁰⁴ Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 26

³⁰⁵ Baye 2012, p. 26; Baye & Heumann 2014, p. 90-91; Okojie et al. 2003, p. 65; Aghatise 2002, p. 10; Peano 2013, p. 9

³⁰⁶ Peano 2013, p. 9

³⁰⁷ Baye 2012, p. 26

³⁰⁸ Carling 2006, p. 49

³⁰⁹ Aghatise 2002, p. 10

³¹⁰ Ibid., p. 6

³¹¹ Baye 2012, p. 26; Okojie et al. 2003, p. 65

³¹² Baye & Heumann 2014, p. 91

³¹³ Baye 2012, p. 13

³¹⁴ Aghatise 2002, p. 6

³¹⁵ Ibid.

It has been reported that madames burn victims with hot irons as a form of punishment.³¹⁸ Some victims have been chained to beds to prevent them from running away while their madames go out.³¹⁹ One victim had been tortured by burning her with a cigarette all over her body, forcing her to kneel into acid and by almost removing her scalp.³²⁰ Victims are raped and also exploited sexually.³²¹ In addition, they are also hired out to make pornographic films and to engage in other sexually perverted activities.³²² A 16-year-old victim was gang raped because she was a virgin and refused to go into prostitution.³²³ In extreme cases, traffickers have killed their victims.³²⁴

The most common forms of violence committed by clients are theft, sexual assault and exploitation, and exceptionally torture and murder.³²⁵ Victims are forced into unprotected intercourse.³²⁶ Victims of human trafficking are easy targets for exploitation and mistreatment as clients know that no-one will help the victims.³²⁷ On the other hand, clients may offer victims assistance by paying off their debt or by taking them to the police, and some get married with victims.³²⁸ On the streets, victims also experience violence from passing youth who may sometimes attack them and throw all kinds of unpleasant objects at them.³²⁹

3.4. Assistance received by victims of human trafficking in Italy

The social protection programme created by the Italian government in 1998 (Article 18 in the Italian legislation) offers social protection and assistance to victims subject to violence and extreme exploitation as well as the opportunity of being granted a legal residence permit on humanitarian grounds (Presidential decree No 394 of 1999). However, the programme only protects victims if they suffer severe forms of violence and if the information provided by them helps in the arrest and conviction of traffickers.³³⁰ One criterion for entering and staying in the protection programme is abandoning prostitution.³³¹ The majority of women are excluded from the programme as they do not meet the requirements for enrolment.³³² The rejection most times leads to repatriation to Nigeria, but many of the repatriated women re-migrate if they have the opportunity.³³³

In the protection programme, a victim can lay a complaint with the police in two ways: through either a judicial or social route. In the judicial route, the victim makes a formal complaint to the police and reports key evidence in a lawsuit against traffickers. In the social route, the victim makes an informal report to the police and does not press charges against traffickers. The

³¹⁶ Carling 2006, p. 48

³¹⁷ Aghatise 2002, p. 10

³¹⁸ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 65; Baye 2012, p. 26; Aghatise 2002, p. 6

³¹⁹ Baye 2012, p. 26

³²⁰ Ibid., p. 27

³²¹ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 64; Aghatise 2002, p. 10

³²² Okojie et al. 2003, p. 67

³²³ Baye 2012, p. 26

³²⁴ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 66

³²⁵ Baye 2012, p. 27; Okojie et al. 2003, p. 66

³²⁶ Aghatise 2002, p. 6

³²⁷ Baye 2012, p. 27

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 70

³³⁰ Baye 2012, p. viii; Baye 2012, p. 3

³³¹ Baye & Heumann 2014, p. 96

³³² Baye 2012, p. 3

³³³ Danna 2007, p. 245 in: Baye 2012, p. 3

police prioritise the judicial route over the social one.³³⁴ Consequently, victims who are relatives, lovers or otherwise bound to the trafficker or the madame do not necessarily report their victimisation to the police.³³⁵ Threats and actual violence are often administered to the victim's family in Nigeria if the woman testifies against her traffickers in Italy, but these threats and acts are not taken in earnest in Italian courts.³³⁶

In practice, the victim is granted a residence permit and access to a protection programme only if she is prepared to press charges against her exploiters, i.e. chooses the judicial route. This is not required by the law and few women are prepared to do this.³³⁷ In order to enter the protection programme, the victim must tell a convincing and dramatic story.³³⁸ In practice, one criterion for entry is the number of years spent in Italy, even though this is not stated in the policy.³³⁹ If the victim has been too long in Italy, i.e. more than four years, it is assumed that she ought to have repaid her debt, which raises doubts.³⁴⁰ In Italy, Nigerian women are generally considered prostitutes or potential prostitutes, which has led to the discrimination of their asylum applications and enrolment into the social protection programme. According to Baye, the dichotomy of "dirty" "loose" voluntary prostitutes and abused prostitutes shapes anti-trafficking measures in Italy,³⁴¹ which are directed against both prostitutes and traffickers. Consequently, their purpose is not solely to protect victims.³⁴²

The victims enrolled in the protection programme have varying experiences of how the programme has met their expectations. Many are pleased about how the programme offered them a new life and helped them become independent.³⁴³ However, in reality, the victims have to repay their debt to the madame, which is why some flee from the protection programme. It is the only possibility they see because in practice they can pay their debt only through prostitution, an activity prohibited from participants of the protection programme. In the majority of cases, the victims accept the help provided by the programme but refuse to denounce their madames. According to UNICRI, this can be considered to communicate a message to the madame: if the victim does not denounce her, in return the madame should not touch the victim's family or relatives.³⁴⁴ The victims seem to be aware of their possibilities to quit prostitution and access assistance and services, if they wish to, when they decide to leave the madame.³⁴⁵

According to a study conducted by J. Cole in Palermo, anti-trafficking projects implemented by churches and various organisations geared to assist victims have yielded limited results. Debt peonage, human trafficking networks and the threat of juju ensure that virtually all victims stay on the streets long enough to pay off traffickers.³⁴⁶

Often, minor victims believe more easily than adults that madames are capable of anything, such as threatening and hurting their parents in Nigeria. Breaking the image of the madame as an omnipotent person is part of the therapeutic work of the protection programme, called "*de-woodooization*" by the workers.³⁴⁷ Minor victims very often declare an age older than their real

³³⁴ Baye 2012, p. 17

³³⁵ Baye 2012, p. 28

³³⁶ Peano 2013, p. 12

³³⁷ Baye 2012, p. 31-32; Peano 2013, p. 12

³³⁸ Baye 2012, p. 30

³³⁹ Baye & Heumann 2014, p. 96

³⁴⁰ Baye 2012, p. 30

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 35

³⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 11

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 29

³⁴⁴ UNICRI 2010, p. 67

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 76-77

³⁴⁶ Cole 2006, p. 218 in: Baye 2012, p. 3

³⁴⁷ UNICRI 2010, p. 68

age because they are afraid of being deported because of their age.³⁴⁸ Consequently, it is impossible for the employees of the organisations to establish the age of the women working on the street since the women have no identification documents.³⁴⁹ The employees rely on their experience-based intuition in the identification of potential minors.³⁵⁰

The women interviewed by Skilbrei and Tveit in their study had left Italy because they were not content with their life there. Also, women who had a residence permit for Italy considered their working conditions and earnings poor and had been forced to do involuntary part-time work in the service industry.³⁵¹ One of the women interviewed said that after receiving assistance, she could not find work in Italy and her residence permit did not allow working as a prostitute. As a result, she decided to go to Norway. Another woman had felt that prostitution in Norway is safer than in Italy as there is less violence, criminality and pimps in Norway.³⁵² Some women said that they travel to Norway on tourist visas to sell sex, either regularly or on special occasions, to earn money for more significant expenses or to solve economic difficulties. The women stayed in Norway for a period ranging from a couple of weeks up to three months at a time.³⁵³

Organisations offering protection and services in Italy include the following: The Città e Prostituzione organisation operates in the Venice-Mestre region.³⁵⁴ The Jerry Essan Masloo medical and social service agency operates in the Castel Volturno region.³⁵⁵ The Liberazione e speranza project operates in the Novara region (further information about the operations of the organisation can be found in UNICRI's report).³⁵⁶ The majority of the girls served by this organisation have a very low degree of schooling and, at times, are almost illiterate. They may also have problems remembering the places and the streets where they worked.³⁵⁷

According to UNICRI, there may be deficits in the financing and personnel training of the organisations offering assistance in Italy.³⁵⁸

3.5. Nigerians' working areas in Italy

In Italy, the well-known areas where Nigerian prostitutes work are the Piedmont region (especially Turin that records a high number of female immigrants from Edo State³⁵⁹), Lombardy, Veneto (mainly Verona), Emilia Romagna and Campania (the provinces of Caserta and Naples). In addition, in recent years Nigerians have also spread to new areas, such as Asti and Novara, the area of Garda Lake, Abano Terme and Mestre in northern Italy. In central Italy, there is a Nigerian presence in the coastal areas, such as the area from Pisa and Livorno to Grosseto and the area of Lazio around Civitavecchia and Ostia, and also inland from Arezzo and Perugia all the way to Terni. In southern Italy, there are a great deal of Nigerian victims in Castel Volturno and Mondragone and on the coast in Battipaglia, in the suburban areas of the major cities in Apulia (Foggia and Bari, Lecce and Brindisi), the Calabria coastline between Corigliano and Crotona and between Lamezia Terme and Tropea. There has also been an

³⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 81

³⁴⁹ UNICRI 2010, p. 65

³⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 65

³⁵¹ Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 36

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Ibid., p. 37

³⁵⁴ UNICRI 2010, p. 79

³⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 82

³⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 79

³⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 80–81

³⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 93

³⁵⁹ Baye 2012, p. 6

increase in the presence of Nigerians in Sicily in the Palermo region and in the coastal area between Messina and Catania.³⁶⁰

In Sicily, the majority of the victims work near the sea, in Palermo near Parco della Favorita, near the Mondello beach and in the Historic Centre near the train station.³⁶¹ Palermo is one of the first cities where the victims arriving in Italy stop to work, but also one of the last ones. Victims that have repaid their debt move there, due to the climate conditions more suitable for working on the streets, from northern Italy where earnings are higher.³⁶²

In the Campania region, the areas most affected by Nigerian prostitution are Naples and Caserta,³⁶³ of which the area of Caserta and above all the Domitian coastal area have more immigrants from Africa and especially from Edo State in Nigeria.³⁶⁴ In the Domitiana, a long road that connects Naples to Rome, and in the Castel Volturno region, there are a lot of African gangs.³⁶⁵ This region is the main operating area of Nigerian criminal gangs in Italy, and they have fought over it with the local mafia. As a result of this, the Nigerians pay protection money to the local mafia in order to be able to run their business in the region.³⁶⁶ In the last ten years, Nigerian prostitutes that used to work in Turin have started to move to Novara and its surroundings.³⁶⁷ In Venice, Nigerians work at the central train station of Mestre, the Piave neighbourhood and on the street that goes to Mogliano Veneto and Preganziol and the other municipalities around Mestre.³⁶⁸ The number of Nigerian prostitutes has increased in the Mestre region.³⁶⁹

4. RETURN OF VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING TO NIGERIA

There are few studies on victims of human trafficking and prostitutes returning home although human trafficking as a phenomenon has been researched extensively.³⁷⁰ The sources contain conflicting information about the reception of victims of human trafficking repatriated to Nigeria, the attitudes towards them at home and potential threats from traffickers.

4.1. Repatriation to Nigeria

According to the sources, victims of human trafficking have been repatriated from Europe to Nigeria in the same scanty clothes in which they worked when arrested.³⁷¹ There are also allegations that the repatriated persons are not permitted to return with their belongings or the money they have earned.³⁷² According to Okojie et al., this contributes to the fact that especially victims repatriated from Italy may often behave in a very wild and uncontrollable manner when repatriated.³⁷³ L. Cardinal notes that NAPTIP and non-governmental organisations in Nigeria consider repatriated women angry, troublesome, greedy and hard to deal with.³⁷⁴ There is a

³⁶⁰ UNICRI 2010, p. 10

³⁶¹ Candia & Garreffa 2011, p. 12 in: Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 28

³⁶² Candia & Garreffa 2011, p. 68 in: Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 35

³⁶³ UNICRI 2010, p. 82

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ The Independent 27.9.2011

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ UNICRI 2010, p. 79

³⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 75–76

³⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 76

³⁷⁰ Plambech 2014, p. 383

³⁷¹ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 93; Olateru-Olagbegi & Ikpeme 2006, p. 26

³⁷² Olateru-Olagbegi & Ikpeme 2006, p. 26

³⁷³ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 93

³⁷⁴ Cardinal 2006, p. 19 in: Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 66

growing consensus among service providers that the victims would have knowingly and willingly gone abroad to work in prostitution, which makes it easy to allow these women to slip through the cracks.³⁷⁵ According to Plambech, the victims receive no assistance upon their arrival in Lagos and many of the women included in her study had slept in the residential areas near the airport until they were able to return to Benin City.³⁷⁶

Many of the informants in Skilbrei and Tveit's study had heard of women returning to Nigeria who had been arrested upon their arrival in the country and released in exchange for bribes paid by their family.³⁷⁷ Some informants had heard about a case in which one hundred Nigerian women had been repatriated from Italy to Nigeria and all of them were arrested at the airport. They had been released in exchange for bribes paid by their parents. Nevertheless, Skilbrei and Tveit could not verify these statements.³⁷⁸ Still, similar statements about arrests at Nigerian airports upon arrival in the country have been told by Nigerian women in Denmark.³⁷⁹ In addition, it may have happened that women arriving in Nigeria have been requested to present an "AIDS certificate" at the airport, supposed to prove that the woman is not HIV positive. However, no such certificate exists, meaning that it is just the airport police's way to request bribes.³⁸⁰ The IOM has also noted that the detention of Nigerian women at the airport and the corruption of the airport police is common.³⁸¹ According to a study by Cherti et al., upon arrival, forced returnees from Great Britain have not necessarily met a party that could have recognised signs of human trafficking and offered them appropriate support. Some returnees have been met at Nigerian airports by traffickers rather than support providers, while others have been detained. Some could not contact the organisations that they had been given the contact details for in order to seek support.³⁸²

4.2. Attitudes of communities and families toward returnees

In addition to arrests, the women being repatriated to Nigeria fear the social consequences of the return. There are both positive expectations and negative attitudes towards people who have returned or been forced to return from Europe. It was the unemployment of the victims and their family members in Nigeria that made the victims leave for Europe to begin with, and it is unlikely that they would find employment when returning to the country. Few victims believe that the employment situation in Nigeria would have changed for the better while they were in Europe.³⁸³

Those who return from Europe wealthy are admired in the community for their money,³⁸⁴ and people who have been in the West are generally respected in Benin City.³⁸⁵ Women who have worked as prostitutes in Europe are met with high expectations from their families because they are assumed to be wealthy and they are regarded as socioeconomically advantaged even when it is known how the money has been earned. In Nigeria, the women are expected to take care of several relatives, and consequently, the relatives expect the victims to help them out of poverty.³⁸⁶ Indeed, families continuously demand money from the victims.³⁸⁷ Women who return

³⁷⁵ Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 67

³⁷⁶ Plambech 2014, p. 390

³⁷⁷ Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 53-54

³⁷⁸ Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 54

³⁷⁹ Holm 2005, p. 15 in: Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 55

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² Cherti et al. 1/2013, p. 9, 73

³⁸³ Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 50-51

³⁸⁴ The Economist 22.4.2004

³⁸⁵ Science Nordic 20.11.2014

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 35

from Europe wealthy do not hide the fact that the money stems from prostitution and becoming wealthy through prostitution has become socially acceptable in Edo State.³⁸⁸ The women are stigmatised only if they return home without money.³⁸⁹ According to Pascoal, when the girls arrive in Nigeria for holidays or return home, Nigerians pretend not to know how the girls have earned their money in Europe.³⁹⁰

People who return or are repatriated to Nigeria without money are received in a significantly different manner than those who return wealthy. Communities may have a widely held negative attitude towards the victims³⁹¹ and the social stigmatisation is high if the victim returns with health problems instead of wealth.³⁹² The victims may face disappointment, contempt and hostility even from their own family members who are disappointed if the girl has not earned enough or at all in Europe.³⁹³ The families may refuse to have them back,³⁹⁴ and consequently, many repatriated victims do not have a place to go in Nigeria.³⁹⁵ The victims may be exposed to psychological and emotional violence from their families,³⁹⁶ and the victims recruited by their relatives or family may be at risk of being exposed to physical domestic violence, too.³⁹⁷ However, there are no known cases where families that disowned their daughter would have exposed the daughter to serious physical violence or killed her.³⁹⁸

According to Skilbrei and Tveit, Nigerians suspect that Nigerian women working in Europe make their living from prostitution,³⁹⁹ and having been in prostitution is typically considered shameful, even when having been trafficked.⁴⁰⁰ Bowers reports that victims are generally considered immoral and they are believed to have had a choice in selecting their work.⁴⁰¹ They are also accused of being greedy.⁴⁰² This stigma has negative consequences for the rehabilitation of the victim.⁴⁰³ There is a lack of empathy for the victims even among educated Nigerians.⁴⁰⁴ Negative stories about prostitution in Europe are generally not told in Benin City because they are associated with shame. Women are expected to return home wealthy and people are not interested in the origin of the earnings.⁴⁰⁵ Anti-trafficking campaigns may be met with resistance and hostility among the population of Edo as many families are actively involved in human trafficking.⁴⁰⁶

Repatriated victims may be derided and rebuked for being fallen victims of repatriation.⁴⁰⁷ They may be told to return to Europe and encouraged to find a husband in Italy.⁴⁰⁸ Many mothers are disappointed with their deported daughters and hardly discuss with them their experiences in Europe.⁴⁰⁹ On the other hand, some victims have got support from their parents after they have

³⁸⁸ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 6; The Independent 7.4.2011

³⁸⁹ The Independent 7.4.2011

³⁹⁰ Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 35

³⁹¹ Cherti et al. 1/2013, p. 71

³⁹² Cherti et al. 1/2013, p. 71

³⁹³ The Economist 22.4.2004; Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 35; Landinfo 5/2001, p. 24

³⁹⁴ Aghatise 2002, p. 18; Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 35; Landinfo 5/2001, p. 24; Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 24

³⁹⁵ Landinfo 5/2001, p. 24; Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 31

³⁹⁶ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 31

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 24

³⁹⁹ Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 55

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Bowers 4.9.2012, p.3

⁴⁰² Cherti et al. 1/2013, p. 71

⁴⁰³ Bowers 4.9.2012, p.3

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., p.2

⁴⁰⁵ Science Nordic 20.11.2014; Pascoal 19.12.2012, p. 35

⁴⁰⁶ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 48

⁴⁰⁷ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 83

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹ Science Nordic 20.11.2014

explained the nature of their work in Europe.⁴¹⁰ The study by Cherti et al. reported cases in which parents had forced their children back into their situation of exploitation when they returned to Nigeria. According to Cherti et al., this may have resulted from the parents' disbelief in their children, need for the money they send or fear of repercussions from the traffickers due to unpaid debt.⁴¹¹

A concern for victims with regard to returning to Nigeria is lack of social support networks; the longer the victim has lived in Europe, the likelier this is. Even if the returnees had a family, not everyone wants to stay with them in a village after living for a long time in Europe. Nevertheless, many feel that it is impossible to succeed in Nigeria without a family and believe that "in Nigeria, you are nothing without your family".⁴¹² Non-governmental organisations and the assistance offered by them are no substitute for social networks and the organisations cannot look after the returned victims forever. For many, the only option to earn a living, after the assistance provided by the organisations, would be prostitution.⁴¹³

The victims may not necessarily be able to admit their failure when forced to return penniless and indebted,⁴¹⁴ and the failure often causes a severe psychological crisis and suffering. The victims may also suffer from traumas resulting from their experiences in Europe.⁴¹⁵ The uncertain socioeconomic situation, lack of opportunities for earning a living and social stigmatisation may cause fear and worry in the victims.⁴¹⁶

Many victims of human trafficking have experienced violence when returning to Nigeria. Women returning to Lagos and Benin City have fallen victim to armed robbery, rape and/or physical violence. According to the women, it is "safer to sell sex on the streets of European cities than to have a food stall in Benin City".⁴¹⁷ Many inhabitants of Edo experience violence but repatriated women are more vulnerable to it⁴¹⁸ as they are assumed to have money, either earned by themselves or received as repatriation compensation.⁴¹⁹ Fair-skinned persons, e.g. children of Nigerians and Europeans, may be vulnerable to kidnapping in Benin City.⁴²⁰ In addition, many fear the consequences of juju.⁴²¹

4.3. NAPTIP

Nigeria's anti-trafficking act, *Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act*, entered into force in the entire country on 14 July 2003. On the basis of the act, a national anti-trafficking body, *The National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and Other Related Matters* (NAPTIP) was established on 26 August 2003. The goals of NAPTIP include the prevention of human trafficking, prosecution of traffickers and protection of victims.⁴²² NAPTIP operates nine shelters intended for victims of human trafficking, with a total

⁴¹⁰ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 83

⁴¹¹ Cherti et al. 1/2013, p. 41

⁴¹² Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 58

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ Aghatise 2002, p. 18

⁴¹⁵ Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 59

⁴¹⁶ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 45; Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 59

⁴¹⁷ Plambech 2014, p. 393

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., p. 395

⁴²⁰ Ibid., footnote 22

⁴²¹ Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 57; Voice of America 26.11.2012

⁴²² NAPTIP fact sheet, p. 5

capacity for 313 victims.⁴²³ The shelters are located on in the following cities: Abuja, Lagos, Benin, Uyo, Enugu, Kano, Sokoto, Maiduguri and Markudi.⁴²⁴

NAPTIP's tasks include identification and reception of victims, sheltering, counselling and training, family tracing, return/repatriation, integration, empowerment and follow-up.⁴²⁵ The victims have an opportunity to receive various forms of vocational training, learn business management skills and benefit trade and financial empowerment. Some victims complete their basic education, and some are also reunited with their families.⁴²⁶ Through the shelters, victims can access legal, medical and psychological services. Victims who require special attention and treatment have an opportunity to receive help from hospitals and clinics cooperating with NAPTIP. NAPTIP's shelters offer short-term care, generally for a maximum of six weeks, but in certain cases, the stay may be extended. NAPTIP collaborates with non-governmental organisations, and victims requiring longer-term shelter and care are directed to the shelters of these NGOs.⁴²⁷ Victims staying at NAPTIP's shelters are not allowed to leave the premises unless accompanied by a chaperone.⁴²⁸

In recent years, NAPTIP has developed an official referral mechanism for victim protection, increased the capacity of its shelters as well as identified and provided services to a larger number of victims.⁴²⁹ However, one of NAPTIP's challenges is inadequate funding.⁴³⁰ Funds allocated to anti-trafficking efforts have not been adequate, especially considering the victims' need for assistance services.⁴³¹ According to Nwogu, the government does not fund NGO efforts to address human trafficking.⁴³² According to the Trafficking in Persons Report by the United States of America Department of State (USDOS), the Nigerian government has yet to implement formal procedures for the return and reintegration of victims of human trafficking who return from abroad.⁴³³ While in theory the penalties for human trafficking may be appropriate, in reality many traffickers avoid prison by paying fines.⁴³⁴ The Nigerian government has yet to pass legislation that would restrict the ability of judges to offer fines in lieu of prison time to traffickers.⁴³⁵

According to the Trafficking in Persons Report by USDOS, officials encourage victims to assist in the investigation and prosecution of human trafficking offences.⁴³⁶ According to Skilbrei and Tveit, it is potentially problematic that NAPTIP is in charge of both the rehabilitation of victims and the prosecution of traffickers. The victims do not necessarily have the courage to seek assistance because they are afraid of having to testify against traffickers.⁴³⁷ It is possible that in its operations, NAPTIP prioritises the prosecution of traffickers over the prevention of human trafficking and the rehabilitation of victims.⁴³⁸

On occasion, Nigerian authorities may have detained individuals involved in prostitution or other unlawful acts before they were identified as victims of human trafficking. Once identified, the

⁴²³ USDOS 2014, p. 298; NAPTIP

⁴²⁴ NAPTIP

⁴²⁵ NAPTIP fact sheet, p. 6

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7; USDOS 2014, p. 298

⁴²⁷ USDOS 2014, p. 298

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 297

⁴³⁰ NAPTIP fact sheet, p. 8

⁴³¹ Nwogu 2014, p. 8

⁴³² *Ibid.*, p. 9

⁴³³ USDOS 2014, p. 297

⁴³⁴ Cherti et al. 1/2013, p. 11

⁴³⁵ USDOS 2014, p. 297

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 298

⁴³⁷ Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 65

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 66

victims have been released and offered appropriate assistance. According to the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act, authorities must ensure that victims are not penalised for unlawful acts committed as a result of being trafficked.⁴³⁹

All victims are eligible to receive funds for training or school tuition, for instance, from NAPTIP's victims' trust fund, which is financed primarily through confiscated assets of traffickers.⁴⁴⁰ However, victims do not concretely receive money from the fund for themselves, unlike many think; instead, when purchasing supplies for starting a business, for instance, they are accompanied by NGO representatives. Consequently, they cannot immediately pay their loans to their family and friends, as they had promised, which may lead into conflicts with them. It is possible that some victims repatriated to Nigeria have to sell sex while waiting to receive money from the fund.⁴⁴¹

4.4. Non-governmental organisations operating in Nigeria

Non-governmental organisations help in the reintegration of victims and conduct awareness campaigns against human trafficking.⁴⁴² The non-governmental organisations that assist victims generally receive weak support and are poorly coordinated, even though some service providers are highly professional and well informed.⁴⁴³ The organisations feel unsupported by NAPTIP and that NAPTIP wishes to dominate and lead all anti-trafficking work and to raise its own profile.⁴⁴⁴

The low capacity of the organisations means that support can be unreliable and lack therapeutic value. In addition, the organisations may not necessarily be able to provide the specialist support that victims require.⁴⁴⁵ The organisations lack grants for victims' school tuition, vocational training or business set up.⁴⁴⁶ The shelter personnel have limited capacity to provide psychosocial and rehabilitation support to mentally handicapped victims, and the follow-up of rehabilitated victims is inadequate.⁴⁴⁷ Although shelters have bars on the windows, they are unsafe. It is common knowledge that the buildings house victims of human trafficking, wanted by traffickers.⁴⁴⁸

Many organisations presume that the best outcome for victims is family reunification.⁴⁴⁹ However, the study by Cherti et al. demonstrates that this is often inappropriate as many have been victimised due to various family situations, such fleeing from abuse or being trafficked by the family.⁴⁵⁰ Emphasising the significance of family reunification may jeopardise the recovery of victims and lead to abuse, violence and re-trafficking.⁴⁵¹

There are many organisations assisting victims of human trafficking in Nigeria, the most prominent of which are:

- Girls' Power Initiative (GPI) (Benin City)

⁴³⁹ USDOS 2014, p. 298

⁴⁴⁰ USDOS 2014, p. 298

⁴⁴¹ Plambech 2014, p. 393

⁴⁴² Okojie 2005, p. 7

⁴⁴³ Cherti et al. 1/2013, p. 72

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 85

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 92

⁴⁴⁶ Nwogu 2014, p. 7

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁸ Cherti et al. 1/2013, p. 72

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 73

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., p. 92

- Committee for the Support of the Dignity of Women (COSUDOW) (Lagos)
- International Reproductive Rights Research Action Group (IRRRAG) (Benin City)
- Women's Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON) (Lagos)
- Women Trafficking & Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF) (Benin City)
- African Women's Empowerment Guild (AWEG) (Benin City)
- Idia Renaissance (Benin City)
- Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria/Caritas Nigeria (Lagos).⁴⁵²

COSUDOW has its own shelter in Benin City and cooperates closely with NAPTIP.⁴⁵³

WOTCLEF offers victims handicraft training, advises of the opportunities for micro credits and other small-scale loans and provides education even up to university level.⁴⁵⁴ In Benin City, the *Nigerian Conference of Women Religious* runs a shelter for women, *Resource Centre for Women*, that can accommodate 18 women at a time.⁴⁵⁵ WOTCLEF has a small rehabilitation centre for minor victims in Abuja, with a maximum capacity for 30 persons, and offices in four other states. The centre faces extreme challenges in terms of space, staff capacities and facilities.⁴⁵⁶

4.5. Risks related to the return of victims of human trafficking

Victims of human trafficking often feel that returning to Nigeria is too dangerous for them for fear of retaliation by traffickers or madames.⁴⁵⁷ The sources contain conflicting information about whether victims of human trafficking returning to Nigeria are at risk of becoming targets of retaliation by traffickers or madames.

4.5.1. Risk-free return

Reverends Benedict Egeh and Victor Agbogun (Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria/Caritas Nigeria) do not consider that persecution of victims of human trafficking occurs in Nigeria. According to them, if retaliation takes place in Nigeria, it has to occur in a very subdued manner.⁴⁵⁸ Victims of human trafficking are not victims of violent persecution or killings by traffickers in Nigeria.⁴⁵⁹ None of the victims assisted by Rev. Egeh and Agbogun's organisation has expressed fear of reprisals from traffickers or received threats from them,⁴⁶⁰ and Rev. Egeh and Agbogun have no records from the media of violent reprisals or killings of victims. On the other hand, the Danish Immigration Service considers it possible that the media in Nigeria might not record such incidents as the media has shown no particular interest in human trafficking. If the family of the victim is responsible for violence, it hardly is reported anywhere. Many killings and kidnappings are never subject to proper investigation and therefore the perpetrators and circumstances of these crimes are often unknown to the public. On the other hand, even if these incidents were reported, the perpetrators and motives are not necessarily known. However, Rev. Egeh and Agbogun (Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria/Caritas Nigeria) believe that the media would report serious reprisals if they occurred.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵² Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 7 (more detailed information about these organisations can be found in the report)

⁴⁵³ Ibid., p. 38

⁴⁵⁴ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 43-44

⁴⁵⁵ Bonetti 2011, p. 271

⁴⁵⁶ Nwogu 2014, p. 8

⁴⁵⁷ Aghatise 2002, p. 18; Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 57-58

⁴⁵⁸ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 28

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

According to two women interviewed by Plambech in her study, traffickers do not need to resort to violence to collect unpaid debt from women deported from Europe as they have so many women going to Europe.⁴⁶²

Sister Florence (COSUDOW) has no information as to whether traffickers have persecuted or killed victims in Nigeria. The main objective of traffickers is to earn money. Consequently, they prefer to send the victim back to Europe instead of killing or permanently injuring her, and re-trafficking is very common.⁴⁶³ According to information provided by Morka (NAPTIP Lagos Zonal Office), threats from traffickers have never resulted in the loss of life of victims since 2003. He states that traffickers are now aware of the law on human trafficking and NAPTIP's capacity to investigate crimes and prosecute traffickers.⁴⁶⁴ According to Morka (NAPTIP Lagos Zonal Office), NAPTIP has no information as to whether a trafficker has been capable of persecuting a victim who has cooperated with authorities and testified in courts abroad.⁴⁶⁵ Nevertheless, Lily N. Oguejiofor (NAPTIP Abuja Headquarters) believes that NAPTIP has the capacity to conduct security risk assessment for victims and their relatives.⁴⁶⁶

Morka (NAPTIP Lagos Zonal Office) does not believe that victims who have testified against their traffickers abroad are at risk although he considers the network of traffickers in Nigeria to be strong.⁴⁶⁷ According to Morka and Barrister Abiodun (NAPTIP Benin Zonal Office), it would be impossible for a madame who is being investigated or imprisoned in Europe to perform acts of reprisal against victims as no trafficker would take such a risk to retaliate against a victim, out of fear of being exposed and imprisoned. Morka (NAPTIP Lagos Zonal Office) states that the whole chain of traffickers is destroyed if the madame abroad is convicted.⁴⁶⁸

Local traffickers in Nigeria do not occupy a strong position in society and they cannot do much else than recruit new victims.⁴⁶⁹ According to Rev. Ejeh and Agbogun (Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria/Caritas Nigeria), local traffickers are not in a position to persecute victims. These local traffickers are not necessarily fully loyal to madames or traffickers abroad. Traffickers have no interest in being exposed and imprisoned for acts of revenge on behalf of a madame or trafficker living abroad.⁴⁷⁰ According to Sister Florence (COSUDOW), traffickers do not have a strong network in Nigeria and they normally keep a low profile. Consequently, they do not take the risk of being exposed in order to take revenge against their victims who testify against them.⁴⁷¹

Sister Florence (COSUDOW) states that the remaining debt is much more relevant to the victim's security in Nigeria than if the victim testifies against her trafficker in court.⁴⁷² According to Rev. Ejeh and Agbogun (Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria/Caritas Nigeria), the traffickers are aware that the victims rarely return to Nigeria voluntarily and thus they consider it unlikely that traffickers would try to claim the debt by the use of threats of violence. The victim is at risk of being re-trafficked if she returns to Nigeria voluntarily before paying her debt.⁴⁷³

⁴⁶² Plambech 2014, p. 395

⁴⁶³ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 26

⁴⁶⁴ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 26

⁴⁶⁵ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 28

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 34

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 26

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 29

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 20

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 20

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 21

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 25

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 23

4.5.2. High-risk return

According to the study by Cherti et al., the return to Nigeria is often high risk for the victims, and they are exposed to the risk of violence or re-trafficking. The close relationship between the victims and their exploiters appears to cause specific difficulties for the victims, particularly if there is still debt remaining.⁴⁷⁴ The victims are afraid of returning to Nigeria because of the juju oath they have sworn and the debt to the trafficker.⁴⁷⁵ Many of the women interviewed by Skilbrei and Tveit fear some sort of punishment or revenge from traffickers if they return to Nigeria before paying back their debt.⁴⁷⁶

Morka (NAPTIP Lagos Zonal Office) is aware of cases where traffickers have tried to intimidate victims.⁴⁷⁷ According to Olateru-Olagbegi's (WOCON) experience, victims have been exposed to reprisals from traffickers in Nigeria due to the remaining debt or their testifying in court.⁴⁷⁸ In addition, there are examples of disappearances of victims in Nigeria.⁴⁷⁹ Traffickers may also employ local criminals to threaten or physically abuse victims or their families in Nigeria if the victims are not cooperative.⁴⁸⁰

According to Grace Osakue (GPI), traffickers and madames have a better opportunity to take revenge against a victim if she returns to Nigeria.⁴⁸¹ Jane Osagie (IRRRAG) considers repatriated victims vulnerable as traffickers will persecute them if they have not paid their debt, and the victims are persecuted in various ways.⁴⁸² According to Rev. Ejeh and Agbogun (Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria/Caritas Nigeria), unpaid debt is more risky for returning victims than testifying against traffickers.⁴⁸³ Carol N. Ndaguba (NAPTIP Abuja Headquarters) considers it possible that a juju priest or an agent of the trafficker would try to collect the unpaid debt from the victim's family.⁴⁸⁴

According to Olateru-Olagbegi (WOCON), although traffickers fear exposure if they retaliate against their victims who have cooperated with the authorities, they nevertheless perform acts of retaliation in order to deter other victims from doing the same.⁴⁸⁵ Olateru-Olagbegi (WOCON) explains that traffickers are using a range of reprisals in their effort to control victims or their relatives. Houses belonging to the victims or their relatives have been burned, they have been physically assaulted and killed, relatives have been kidnapped and intimidated, and the police have carried out illegal arrests.⁴⁸⁶ Olateru-Olagbegi (WOCON) believes that NAPTIP is not aware of these cases because no-one informs the agency about them.⁴⁸⁷ Interviewees in the study by Cherti et al. as well as their families had also been threatened, their houses had been burned and in some cases the victims' family members had been killed.⁴⁸⁸

According to NAPTIP and Rev. Benedict Ejeh and Victor Agbogun (Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria/Caritas Nigeria), reprisals might take place in Europe, too, where they consider the

⁴⁷⁴ Cherti et al. 1/2013, p. 71

⁴⁷⁵ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 23, 26

⁴⁷⁶ Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 57–58

⁴⁷⁷ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 29

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁰ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 108

⁴⁸¹ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 28

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 26

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 24

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 29

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 26, 29, 33

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 29

⁴⁸⁸ Cherti et al. 1/2013, p. 71

victims to be more at risk than in Nigeria when testifying against their traffickers or madames.⁴⁸⁹ Olateru-Olagbegi (WOCON) also considers the risk of reprisals greater abroad than in Nigeria, but, on the other hand, the judicial systems in European countries offer better access to justice than the judicial system in Nigeria.⁴⁹⁰

According to Olateru-Olagbegi (WOCON), victims act as witnesses against a madame or a trafficker only if the madame or the trafficker is not a relative and if they in some way or another have cheated the victim.⁴⁹¹ Morka (NAPTIP Lagos Zonal Office) states that a victim's family tie to the trafficker may protect the victim from violence and killing even if she testifies against the trafficker.⁴⁹²

4.5.3. Possibility of obtaining protection

According to Sister Florence (COSUDOW), even if the debt has not been fully repaid, the victim will always be able to obtain protection from reprisals by traffickers in Nigeria.⁴⁹³ Rev. Ejeh and Agbogun (Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria/Caritas Nigeria) consider that the Nigerian police (National Police Force, NPF) have the capacity to protect victims from traffickers. On the other hand, there is no guarantee of protection as the NPF suffers from corruption.⁴⁹⁴ According to Sister Florence (COSUDOW) and Barrister Abiodun (NAPTIP Benin Zonal Office), the Anti-Human Trafficking Police Unit is not infected by corruption.⁴⁹⁵

Roland Chigozie (Idia Renaissance) states that some people in Nigeria do not go to the police to seek legal redress because the police are considered corrupt and any trafficker could bribe the police and avoid possible prosecution.⁴⁹⁶ Up to 90% of the families in which one of the family members has been trafficked do not call on the police or go to court but will do their utmost to pay the debt. They may even sell their land and other property.⁴⁹⁷ Several respondents in the study by Cherti et al. reported incidents of indifference or even active complicity with traffickers on the part of the authorities when the respondents tried to seek help from the police.⁴⁹⁸ It is also alleged that corrupt police officers help to harass relations of victims to ensure compliance and the repayment of the debt.⁴⁹⁹

4.5.4. Difficulty in obtaining protection

Grace Osakue (GPI) does not believe that any victim who has given evidence against their traffickers abroad would be able to obtain sufficient protection against reprisals by traffickers in Nigeria. According to her, the traffickers are desperate to get hold of the money they have invested in victims and the victims are made to pay the remaining debt. She states that if a victim gives evidence against her traffickers, she will be at serious risk of persecution if she returns to Nigeria. The victim may be punished or even killed. However, there is no evidence that victims who have given evidence abroad or in Nigeria have been killed. In general, victims who have returned are very unsafe in Nigeria and those who have testified in local courts are in

⁴⁸⁹ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 28

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 29

⁴⁹¹ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 29

⁴⁹² Ibid., p. 32

⁴⁹³ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 25

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 18

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 19

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 24

⁴⁹⁸ Cherti et al. 1/2013, p. 11

⁴⁹⁹ Okojie et al. 2003, p. 66

real danger.⁵⁰⁰ The victims are not convinced that the prosecution of traffickers would help in Nigeria because even if they were imprisoned, they would not be there for long.⁵⁰¹ The law does not make provision for the protection of victims and their families, which is why it is difficult to get witnesses to trials.⁵⁰²

In the view of Olawale Fapohunda (Legal Resources Consortium, Nigeria), interviewed by Denmark in 2008, the resources allocated to NAPTIP and NPF are not sufficient for providing victims of human trafficking with protection that meets international standards,⁵⁰³ even if they are genuine in their fight against human trafficking.⁵⁰⁴ According to Olateru-Olagbegi (WOCON), NAPTIP is committed to assisting victims but it lacks personnel and its personnel lack training. Olateru-Olagbegi (WOCON) expresses doubt as to whether NAPTIP is capable of protecting victims against traffickers, due to lack of resources and technical know-how.⁵⁰⁵ Olateru-Olagbegi (WOCON) does not consider it possible that all victims who need assistance would receive it as there are too many victims compared to the resources available.⁵⁰⁶ Babandede (NAPTIP Abuja Headquarters) believes that the existence of this view among NGOs is due the fact that NGOs are competing for funds and they may believe that they can have easier access to funding by representing NAPTIP as not being able to offer sufficient protection.⁵⁰⁷ The situation may have improved after the publication of the report. However, according to the Trafficking in Persons Report 2014 by USDOS, the reality is that many victims returning from abroad are still not afforded proper rehabilitation and social integration.⁵⁰⁸

According to an Italian inspector of police and a consultant who have visited Edo State several times for collaboration, working with NAPTIP and the Nigerian police is frustrating. They report that some police officers have not been willing to do anything to promote cooperation (to exchange information or to develop collaboration, for instance).⁵⁰⁹ Victims have also been told that it would be better if they just paid their debt.⁵¹⁰

4.6. Relocation in Nigeria

In southern Nigeria, anyone who has his or her origin in the northern part of Nigeria is called “stranger”, and in many Nigerian cities, there are special areas for people coming from elsewhere, known as “Sabongari” (literally meaning “the place for strangers”).⁵¹¹ Nigerian communities are known to consider that people who are not original inhabitants of the area or their offspring are not eligible to entitlements such as jobs or political positions. This explains why people identify strongly with and feel safer in their home states.⁵¹²

According to Olateru-Olagbegi (WOCON), it would be difficult for a victim repatriated to Nigeria to relocate to a location other than where she is originally from, in order to avoid potential reprisals from traffickers.⁵¹³ In the new place of residence, the victim might not have no social

⁵⁰⁰ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 27-28

⁵⁰¹ Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 57–58

⁵⁰² Olateru-Olagbegi & Ikpeme 2006, p. 25

⁵⁰³ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 35

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁵ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 35

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 36

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 40

⁵⁰⁸ USDOS 2014, p. 298

⁵⁰⁹ Baye 2012, p. 33

⁵¹⁰ Ibid., p. 34

⁵¹¹ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 51

⁵¹² Ibid.

⁵¹³ Ibid.

networks or members of her ethnic group to support her, and she might not know the local language and be able sustain a livelihood.⁵¹⁴

For their part, Rev. Ejeh and Agbogun (Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria/Caritas Nigeria) and Grace Osakue (GPI) believe that victims who feel threatened can relocate to anywhere in Nigeria but they would require economic support for this. According to De Cataldo (IOM⁵¹⁵), too, reintegration and relocation within the country are possible for victims of human trafficking.⁵¹⁶

4.7. Return to Europe

Many of the victims repatriated to Nigeria may try to return to Europe as soon as possible. They may be pressured or forced to this by the trafficker or the madame, to whom they perhaps have not yet fully repaid their debt⁵¹⁷, or by their family, disappointed with the daughter not being able to fulfil their expectations of becoming wealthy.⁵¹⁸ Even victims who have endured hardships want to return to Europe to fulfil their families' expectations.⁵¹⁹ Due to victims lacking the motivation to return to Nigeria, their rehabilitation is challenging.⁵²⁰ Many of the women repatriated to Nigeria that Peano interviewed in her study re-negotiated their passage to Europe under the same conditions and did so repeatedly.⁵²¹ The close relationship between the victims' families or communities and traffickers may lead to the risk of being re-trafficked even without the victim herself being willing to leave.⁵²²

Some victims may at first try to resettle in Nigeria, but if they find life there to be unsatisfactory, they may try to migrate to Europe again.⁵²³ In connection with this migration, victims may again be exploited and accumulate more debt.⁵²⁴ On the other hand, according to some women, the second migration to Europe may be easier as the customs of the destination country have already become familiar and the women are not as vulnerable as during their first migration.⁵²⁵

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⁵¹⁴ Ibid.

⁵¹⁵ International Organization for Migration (IOM)

⁵¹⁶ Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 51

⁵¹⁷ Plambech 2014, p. 395; Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, p. 31; CNN 1.4.2011

⁵¹⁸ Landinfo 5/2006, p. 16

⁵¹⁹ Landinfo 5/2006, p. 16; Aghatise 2002, p. 10

⁵²⁰ Landinfo 5/2006, p. 33

⁵²¹ Peano 2013, p. 12

⁵²² Cherti et al. 1/2013, p. 9

⁵²³ Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 59

⁵²⁴ Ibid.

⁵²⁵ Skilbrei & Tveit 2007, p. 59

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