

NIGERIA FIGHTS THE SCOURGE OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

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The Government of Nigeria has made significant efforts to combat human trafficking. Nigeria, a source, transit and destination country for trafficking in human beings, is particularly afflicted by the trafficking of women and children for forced labour and prostitution. Following its signature to the Transnational Organized Crime Convention and its Trafficking in Persons Protocol (Palermo Protocol) in 2000, **the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP)** was formed in 2003, and a national action plan to address human trafficking adopted in 2006.

NAPTIP is Nigeria's overall focal point for the fight against human trafficking, and coordinates all relevant laws and activities. NAPTIP has specialised operational departments that implement the various areas of its mandate: Investigation; Prosecution; Counseling & Rehabilitation and Public Enlightenment.

The 2003 Trafficking in Persons Law Enforcement and Administration Act established human trafficking as a specific offence in Nigeria, and prohibits all forms of human trafficking. NAPTIP investigates and prosecutes traffickers, with 25 trafficking offenders having been convicted in 2009. An important milestone in the area of prosecution was achieved in November 2010 with the signing of a MOU with the Italian government, which will improve cooperation in the investigation and prosecution of human trafficking cases. Italy is one of the main destinations Nigerian women and girls are trafficked to in Europe.

At the end of 2010 NAPTIP disclosed that it had recorded nearly 5000 victims of trafficking, and in 2009 alone the Government provided care for 1,109 victims. NAPTIP, police, customs, and immigration officials actively identify victims among high-risk persons, such as young women or girls traveling with non-family members, and a central database in NAPTIP's monitoring centre stores victims' data. State authorities provide a range of **services to victims**, including legal protection; temporary stay permits; medical and psychosocial support; housing and shelter; vocational skills training; schooling; job placement; and small business start-up support.

In order to optimise victim care, a committee was formed in 2009 to review victim care policies, with the aim to promote victims' safety in shelters, as well as their freedom of movement. The same year saw the establishment of A Victim Trust Fund, consisting of funds from the sales of assets confiscated from traffickers, from which victims can claim funds. A consultative forum of stakeholders - government agencies and NGOs active in anti trafficking efforts - enables the coordination of all activities and interventions in the fight against trafficking.

NAPTIP's Public Enlightenment department educates the public on human trafficking and has organised **awareness raising and sensitisation programmes** in virtually all states. These programmes are aimed at sensitising people vulnerable to trafficking; informing the general public of the methods and means

employed by traffickers to manipulate victims; and warning parents of the dangers that their children may be facing.

In order to boost prevention NAPTIP convened an international conference on human trafficking, “Providing an African Initiative to the Global War against Human Trafficking”, in November 2010, which commemorated the 10 years of the United Nations Palermo Protocol. The conference highlighted the need for the UN to continue to encourage Member States to ratify the Palermo Protocol and transpose it into national law; the importance of partnerships and networking at local, national, regional and international levels to combat human trafficking; the need to further develop research and data gathering strategies in African countries; and called on African States to ensure that adequate funds are available for anti trafficking efforts.