

**'VULNERABILITY' TO
HUMAN TRAFFICKING:
A STUDY OF VIET NAM, ALBANIA,
NIGERIA AND THE UK**

Report of Shared Learning Event held in

Lagos, Nigeria: 17-18 January 2018

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ACRONYMS

APOV	Abuse of a Position of Vulnerability
CP	Child Protection
DV	Domestic Violence
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
GDI	Gender Development Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
HDI	Human Development Index
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPPR	Institute of Public Policy and Research
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NACTAL	Network of Civil Society organisations against Child Trafficking, Abuse and Labour
NAPTIP	National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRM	National Referral Mechanism (UK)
PoCs	Points of Contact (IOM staff in Albania, Viet Nam and Nigeria)
PSG	Particular Social Group
SAP	Structural Adjustment Program
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SLEs	Shared Learning Events
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
VAC	Violence Against Children
VAW	Violence Against Women
WOTCLEF	Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation

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INTRODUCTION

This report describes the first stages of an ethically-led, two-year research study into understanding the causes, dynamics and ‘vulnerabilities’ to and resilience against human trafficking in three source countries– Albania, Viet Nam and Nigeria – plus the support needs of people from these countries who have experienced trafficking when identified as potential ‘victims’ of trafficking in the UK. These three source countries have consistently been the top three countries of referrals of potentially trafficked persons into a National Referral Mechanism (NRM) within the UK.

This study has been conducted in partnership between the University of Bedfordshire and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The research study uses an IOM Determinants of Vulnerability model in its examination and analysis of vulnerabilities to and resilience against human trafficking. This model identifies risk and protective factors for vulnerable migrants across five different levels – individual, household and family, community, structural and situational levels.

The focus of this report is on Nigeria, detailing emerging themes following a two-day Shared Learning Event (SLE) held in Lagos, Nigeria, between 17-18 January 2018. These preliminary themes will help shape the subsequent research.

AIMS OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

1. Explore socio-economic and political conditions plus other contextual factors that create ‘vulnerability’ and resilience to human trafficking in Nigeria, Viet Nam and Albania
2. Utilise and refine the IOM Determinants of Vulnerability model
3. Outline routes taken from Nigeria, Viet Nam and Albania to the UK
4. Review existing academic and ‘grey’ literature on trafficking within and from Nigeria, Viet Nam and Albania
5. Explore the support needs of people who have experienced trafficking from Nigeria, Viet Nam and Albania and have arrived into the UK

STUDY APPROACH

This study is mainly qualitative in its approach with the intention of drawing out the complexities and nuances of human trafficking from Nigeria, Viet Nam and Albania. In each of these countries, and the UK, a minimum of 40 semi-structured interviews will be conducted with key informants and adults who have experienced human trafficking. These will be supplemented by available quantitative data from IOM’s centrally and locally held database on trafficking and data held by partners working alongside IOM. Ethical considerations remain paramount throughout this study, from the design stage through to dissemination. An Ethical Protocol has been drawn up and continues to evolve alongside the research.

SHARED LEARNING EVENTS

Prior to commencing the qualitative and quantitative aspects of this study, Shared Learning Events (SLEs) were held in each country as the first step in ascertaining what is already known about trafficking and contextually-based considerations for conducting research on this topic.

At the Nigerian SLE held in Lagos, twenty-nine stakeholders from civil society organisations and government agencies, such as law-enforcement, children services, and health services participated in the first day¹. These stakeholders were invited to provide presentations addressing the key research aims and questions, helping to ensure that local knowledge was incorporated into the research study at an early stage. These presentations considered the picture of human trafficking within Nigeria, patterns of human trafficking from Nigeria to the UK and factors that shape vulnerability to trafficking. During the second day, a smaller group of stakeholders were invited to discuss research design, methodologies, ethical protocols for conducting the research and the design of interview schedules to be used for data collection with the UK and Nigerian research teams.

¹ See Appendix 2 for a list of organisations involved in the SLE.

NIGERIAN CONTEXT

Nigeria is Africa's most populated country with an estimated current population of approximately 182.2 million (Human Development Report, 2016). Although considerable wealth is generated from oil reserves there are also high levels of poverty experienced by a considerable proportion of Nigerian nationals. Nigeria is divided into 36 States and the federal capital is located in Abuja. The states are further disaggregated into six geo-political zones: South-South, South-East, South- West, North-Central, North-West, and North-East. Nigeria has over 500 ethnic groups with the largest being Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba. While Nigeria is a religiously diverse country, Christianity and Islam are the most predominantly practiced religions in the South and North of the country respectively.

This report details these historical, structural and situational factors relating to Nigeria's post-independence transition and how these relate to migration and, more specifically, human trafficking. To do this a timeline of key political events plus events relating to human trafficking has been compiled, with input from the 29 participants attending the SLE. This historical and contextual knowledge will now inform remaining fieldwork and analysis.

INDICATIVE KEY THEMES AND LEARNING ARISING OUT OF NIGERIA SHARED LEARNING EVENT

A range of key themes and learning points emerged out of the Nigerian SLE and these preliminary themes will now help shape the subsequent research. This intentionally descriptive report provides an interim report for the study, relating solely to Nigeria, which will be followed up with a final report addressing research aims across all three source countries in early 2019.

Issues arose around five key areas – root causes, risks and vulnerabilities; forms of exploitation; support services; the extent, nature and impact of stigma and discrimination against victims of trafficking; and, issues related to data protection plus the collection and recording of data on human trafficking.

The first of these – root causes, risks and vulnerabilities – included:

A key aspect of discussions during the SLE related to media reports exposing auctions of 'slaves' in Libya and the return of Nigerian nationals from Libyan detention centres.

These discussions, plus emerging details of deaths at sea, often and understandably surpassed the purpose of the SLE to explore the link between Nigeria and UK in terms of human trafficking. Edo State had received its first returnees from Libya in November 2017 and this SLE took place in January 2018. As such, the focus of this research study was not a key priority at this point in time.

There was less knowledge about trafficking from Nigeria to the UK and less experience of working with people who had been trafficked to the UK than there was of other forms and geographies of exploitation and trafficking. However, some links are emerging between the Nigerian and UK governments. These links included the Nigerian government signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the UK government on trafficking in persons in 2004 and the British Secretary of State for International Development visiting NAPTIP in 2017.

A clear contextual vulnerability surrounds identification of people as victims of trafficking, both within Nigeria and for those returning from other countries. From discussions during both Days 1 and 2 of the SLE it became apparent that not all people who have indicators of trafficking are being identified or profiled as a victim of trafficking by NAPTIP. There are agencies who work with people who have strong indicators of trafficking who would like a further role is assisting with this non-identification. This relates to resources and capacity and is a clear area in which improvements could be made.

The causes or drivers of human trafficking appeared to be multiple, intertwining and overlapping. Stakeholders highlighted multiple vulnerabilities to trafficking across the different levels of the Determinants of Vulnerability model. These included poverty, unemployment, lower levels of education and literacy, corruption, conflict, the lack of social safety nets, abuse of traditional fostering practices, cultural or religious norms that support exploitation, the erosion of values and limited options for safe and legal migration. Increasing demand for sex and cheap labour were considered an integral part of this.

There is a need to invoke a debate about the ‘root causes’² of human trafficking utilising a development paradigm to alleviate extreme poverty, inequalities, gender-based violence and associated reasons. Not confronting these root causes will ultimately fail to resolve the human insecurity and hopelessness experienced by those who are deceived into human trafficking. Leadership on this is required.

There is a need to create a comprehensive approach towards human trafficking that is both human rights based, victim- and child-centred. The nature of this comprehensive approach should relate directly to causes and vulnerability factors, with inbuilt measures to ensure effective practice.

An extensive range of places of origin were discussed. Participants at the SLE discussed known cases from across Nigeria, not solely focussed on Edo and Delta States. Other States mentioned included Benue, Bauchi, Enugu, Yobe, Anambra, Oyo, Imo, Awka Ibom, Abia, Jigawa and more than another 20 States. Further work to establish the actual locations that have cases of trafficking who reach the UK is necessary.

Gender, gender inequalities, sex discrimination and a lack of good governance were each suggested to be exacerbating factors. Gender imbalances within the society were outlined as key factors for understanding trafficking within and from Nigeria. Further research to understand these imbalances is recommended.

Recruitment methods were varied, ever changing and often related to close personal and family ties. It was suggested that traffickers are rarely strangers and often work within communities with people they are very familiar with. Further research is necessary to understand this aspect.

Migration and human trafficking are linked to post-Independence governance structures within Nigeria. At times participants at the SLE directly related accounts of human trafficking to key historical events, with the reported ‘brain drain’ a result of underdevelopment of the Nigerian economy which has led to economies of shortage, high unemployment rates among Nigerian youths, lack of opportunities and a volatile political climate that can be traced back to the first military coup d’état of 1966. Participants outlined how hope, and being willing to take risks, are factors relating to migration and human trafficking within Nigeria.

There is a need to clarify terminology used within trafficking discussions in Nigeria. A number of categories such as ‘child labour’ and ‘child trafficking’ require further conceptual clarification. There is also a need for awareness around the use of terms such as ‘illegal’ to describe people as well as the key differences around smuggling and trafficking. Some terminology used to describe victims of trafficking is highly value-laden.

There is an implementation gap between the legislative and policy framework in Nigeria with practice in reality. Stakeholders at the SLE highlighted a lack of political will to implement trafficking legislation.

The second of these – forms of exploitation – included:

Forms of exploitation are multiple. Alongside sexual exploitation (sometimes referred to as sex trafficking) as a key purpose of trafficking for adults, other forms included domestic servitude (also referred to as domestic labour); forced labour (also referred to as labour trafficking); organ trafficking; trafficking for ritual purposes and multiple forms of exploitation. For Nigerian children the forms included: Sexual exploitation; domestic servitude; forced labour; illegal inter-country or domestic adoption; ‘baby factories’; ‘orphanage trafficking’; recruitment of child soldiers in conflict areas; and multiple forms of exploitation.

The third key area – support services – included:

² The term ‘root causes’ was utilised during the SLE by a number of participants, including the former Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

There is a gap between the number of Nigerian nationals referred into the UK NRM and the numbers of people accessing support service for trafficked persons in Nigeria. The difference between the numbers referred into the UK NRM and the numbers of Nigerian nationals identified and supported who had experienced trafficking to the UK was stark. Only 6 people over a 5-year period (2013-2017) who had experienced trafficking in the UK were known to NAPTIP. This means that those returning to Nigeria may not be accessing any support upon return. There is a need for further research into the reasons for such differences and potential challenges for reintegration and identification of people returning from the UK to Nigeria.

There has been a traditional focus on the human trafficking of women and girls and, as such, there is little understanding or support for men and boys who have experienced trafficking. The focus of support for women and girls was very apparent with support services within Nigeria focusing almost solely on female victims. There is almost a complete gap in understanding about the causes of trafficking of males or their support needs.

Fourthly – the extent, nature and impact of the stigma and discrimination against victims of trafficking – related to:

The issue of social stigma and discrimination as a result of trafficking were considered key to reintegration efforts. The issue of social stigma and discrimination were outlined as being key issues faced by those who had experienced human trafficking. Adults who had been trafficked for sexual exploitation were routinely referred to in media reports and official accounts as ‘prostitutes’ and other discriminatory labels. There was also reported stigma around adoption and the inability to conceive a child, sometimes linked to trafficking or the reported phenomenon described as ‘baby trafficking’.

Fifthly – issues around data – included:

Data protection, confidentiality and anonymity were under-regarded in practice.

It appears that there is little emphasis given to data protection, confidentiality and anonymity for people who have experienced trafficking across a broad range of sectors within Nigeria, including within media reports. It was not unusual to see media reports with the full names, places of origin and even photographs of people who had experienced trafficking. This is an important consideration given the stigma associated with trafficking and/or return.

Statistics on trafficking could be improved in Nigeria and the UK. Although statistics were available from different agencies, further work to centralize and improve these would be beneficial. The available data on trafficking within Nigeria does not provide a whole picture of the nature and trends of trafficking, nor does it assist in understanding what makes people vulnerable to trafficking. The underlying data in Nigeria requires further work to incorporate individuals identified by organisations outside of NAPTIP’s work, potentially through a profiling mechanism. The available NRM data on trafficking of Nigerian nationals to the UK only focuses on referrals, with no disaggregated data provided for people officially identified as trafficked in the UK in terms of their gender, exploitation type or place of origin.

Finally, it was clear that considerable further research is necessary to explore gaps and key themes raised but not elaborated upon during the SLE. These include ‘baby factories’, ‘orphanage trafficking’ and the issue of victims’ agency and the relationship of this to vulnerability or capacities amongst many other topics raised by participants at the SLE.

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