Peculiarity and persistence of a transregional flow: the evolution of human trafficking for sexual exploitation from Nigeria to Europe

Judith Vorrath

1 Introduction[1]

The specific type of human trafficking analysed in this chapter has been linking an area in the Global South with Europe over an extended period of time. The persistence and some (supposedly) peculiar features of the trafficking of Nigerian women and girls for sexual exploitation to European destinations have led to an increasing interest in the phenomenon. Most notably, a substantial rise in Nigerian females entering Europe around 2013–2015 led to growing attention from policymakers, law enforcement and civil society (Pascoal 2018: 2–3).

Clearly, there have been different perspectives on how to approach the issue – from a human rights, feminist or criminal justice point of view or led, for example, by considerations related to migration and development. However, as this chapter argues, it has been the focus on some particular features of this trafficking that has at times obstructed a better understanding of the dynamics and incentives along the chain – even more so as these keep changing and data on the phenomenon is naturally limited. Several aspects of this kind of trafficking have been at the centre of attention, namely that the Nigerian perpetrators prosecuted in Europe also tend to be female, that there seems to be something like an "end-to-end" control of the trafficking process despite rather flexible criminal networks involved and that so-called juju rituals – usually performed at shrines in Nigeria – are frequently used to bind recruited girls and women to the traffickers. The chapter will start out by placing this particular human trafficking flow[2] in the larger regional and global picture and, more importantly, in

1 I would like to thank my colleagues Paul Bochtler, Viktoria Reisch and Corinna Templin for their support in putting together the data for the graphics in this chapter.

2 The reference to "flows" is not meant to degrade human beings to goods traded across borders, even though this ultimately is what human trafficking amounts

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748935940-133, am 12.10.2024, 06:59:42
Open Access – (cc) BY-SA – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb

the context of the evolution of this particular business model over time. Moreover, it analyses the different stages of the human trafficking process and more recent changes before discussing grey zones of the "licit" and "illicit" along the chain and the types of actors involved.

Before such an assessment, though, it is essential to shed some light on the terminology. In this chapter, "human trafficking" is simply used as a short form of the terms "trafficking in human beings" and "trafficking in persons" that are commonly found in official documents. An almost universally accepted definition is provided by the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children that supplements the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and entered into force in 2003[3]:

> "'Trafficking in persons' shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs" (Art. 3 (a): UN 2001: 32).

Accordingly, human trafficking is not only defined by the actual act and the means employed, but also by the purpose of exploitation, meaning the intention. The purpose of exploitation remains a sufficient criterion even if a victim is rescued before the actual exploitation begins (IOM 2020: 3, 5). If the person concerned is a child (under eighteen years of age according to Art. 3(d) of the Protocol), the means used are not relevant, as underage victims are seen as dependents who cannot make a free decision on such an arrangement. While these criteria might appear relatively clear, the following discussion of the trafficking of Nigerian women and girls will reveal a

---

to, nor should it suggest that flows of persons are "flooding" European countries. It rather indicates the direction and fluidity of actions and actors in a criminal market that converge along a specific route.

3 The EU, its member states as well as West African states are signatories of the Convention, including the Protocol. The key elements of the definition are also part of the definition under the Nigerian Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act (NAPTIP) from 2003, subsequently revised in 2005 and 2015.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748935940-133, am 12.10.2024, 06:59:42
Open Access – (cc) BY-SA – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb

significant grey zone, especially where historical, social and economic drivers come into play.

2 *The larger picture of a transregional flow*

Among victims of trafficking across the world, a minority seems to cross regional boundaries. In fact, less than one victim out of ten identified in 2016 had been trafficked transregionally (UNODC 2018: 42). Usually persons are exploited in the country or (sub)region they are from (according to their nationality). Yet, Western and Southern Europe[4] as well as North America and the Middle East stand out as target regions of significant flows of trafficked human beings from other world regions (UNODC 2020: 59).

As indicated in the map in Figure 1, the respective human trafficking flows largely originate in the Global South.[5] Apart from victims coming from European countries, including Central and South-Eastern Europe, the largest group of victims detected in Western and Southern Europe came from West Africa: about 16 per cent overall in 2016 (UNODC 2018: 54) and 13 per cent in 2018 (UNODC 2020: 135). Moreover, this transregional flow is not a recent phenomenon, as the share of victims from Sub-Saharan Africa detected in Western and Southern Europe has remained largely stable over the last ten years (UNODC 2020: 135).[6]

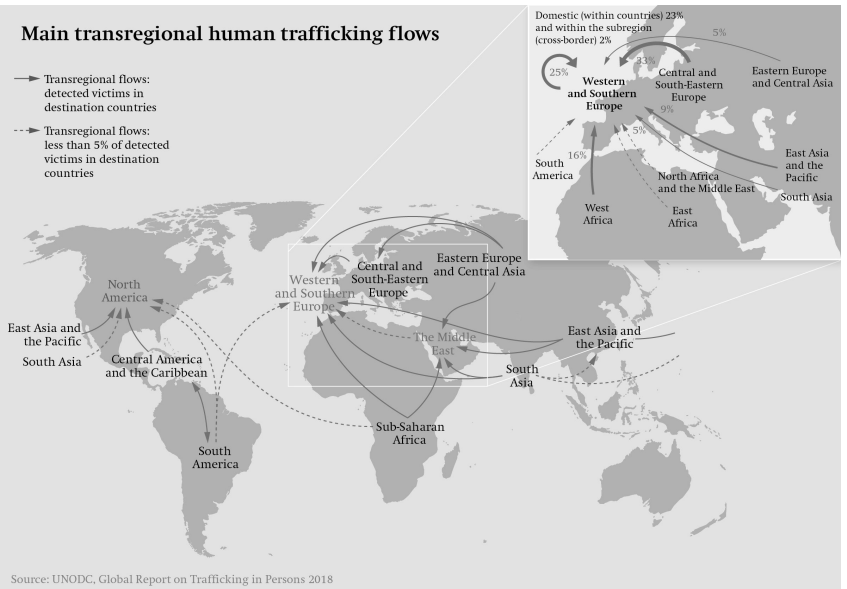
4 According to the UNODC 2020 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, the region of Western and Southern Europe consists of the following countries: Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

5 The 2020 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons by UNODC (2020: 136) shows very similar patterns on its global map as the 2018 Report.

6 There is not yet sufficient data on changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. But there are indications that the routes have changed and Nigerian women and girls are trafficked more within the West Africa region (Interview Precious Diagboya (online), 9 December 2021).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748935940-133, am 12.10.2024, 06:59:42
Open Access – (cc) BY-SA – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb

Figure 1: Main transregional human trafficking flows



This raises the question of what the drivers behind these flows are. There are general factors, most notably those linked to dynamics in an illegal market. The way in which supply and demand link up may change over time, as may the cost-benefit analyses for certain transit routes. Specific factors make countries or areas particularly vulnerable to human trafficking; they fall into categories like governance, socio-economic and political inequality or effects of armed conflict.[7] For transregional flows, the difference in wealth and economic opportunities between countries of the Global South and Europe clearly plays a central role.

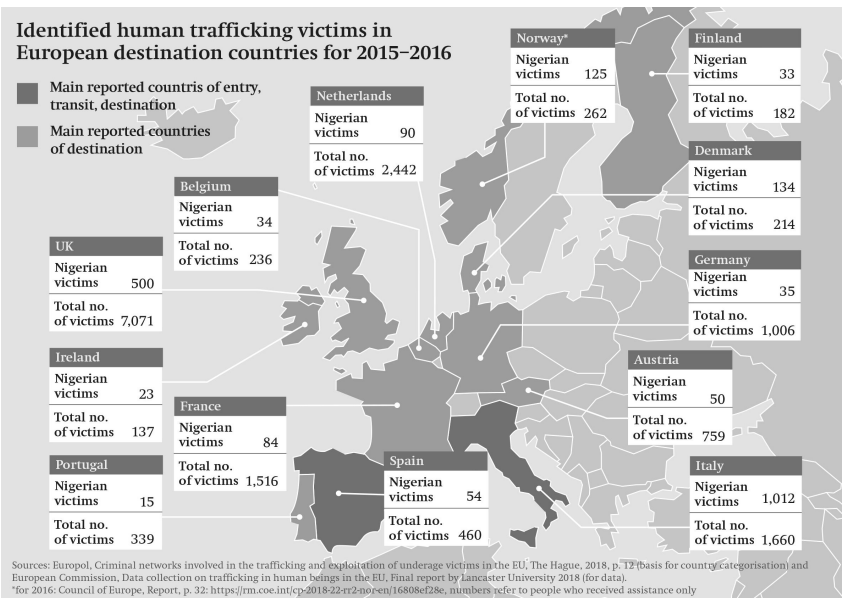
However, such factors alone can hardly explain the pattern that the vast majority among West African victims detected in European countries are Nigerian women and girls trafficked for sexual exploitation. For example, Nigerian nationals were the most commonly recorded trafficking victims in the EU in 2015, apart from intra-European trafficking (US DoS 2020: 382). At the time, hardly any victims from other West African countries were detected in the EU. This is supported by other data, for example

7 The Global Slavery Index 2018 is based on a vulnerability model that uses different dimensions and variables of this kind, see p. 154ff.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748935940-133, am 12.10.2024, 06:59:42
Open Access – (cc) BY-SA – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb

numbers of persons assisted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). In 2016, almost 60 % of the 768 victims assisted in the EU were of Nigerian nationality, followed by Bulgaria (11 %), Romania (8 %), Hungary (3 %) and Thailand (2 %) (IOM 2017: 6). While this is not a complete picture of human trafficking in the EU, it clearly shows that no other significant transregional links come up among assisted victims.

Figure 2: Identified human trafficking victims in European destination countries for 2015- 2016



While comparisons of numbers between European countries should be taken with a grain of salt due to different legal definitions and/or standards of recording and reporting data, what is consistent across most of the countries in Figure 2 is the fact that the number of Nigerian victims detected is the highest registered after European nationalities. Moreover, the Nigerian victims are largely or almost exclusively female – where gender has been reported, which is the case for most countries displayed in Figure 2. This also holds true for countries like Germany, where the

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748935940-133, am 12.10.2024, 06:59:42
Open Access – (cc) BY-SA – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb

overall number of Nigerian victims has been fluctuating at relatively low levels.[8]

The map in Figure 2 clearly shows that the trafficking of Nigerian women and girls is no longer a phenomenon linked to one specific country in Western and Southern Europe. At the time, Italy still recorded one of the highest shares with almost 61 % (and by far the highest absolute number) of Nigerian victims, closely behind Denmark (with a 62.6 % share of Nigerian victims) and ahead of Norway (almost 50 %). In absolute terms, countries such as the UK are clearly relevant destinations as well. Obviously, the map is a snapshot, and relevant shifts have occurred over time. Italy continues to be a major destination country with 72 % of victims identified there in 2019 being Nigerian (US DoS 2020: 277). France, for example, has reported a higher share of Nigerian trafficking victims identified with up to around 50 % in 2018 (US DoS 2020: 382), as has Austria with a 37 % share among female victims the same year (GRETA 2019: 45), while the percentage has been going down in other countries.

Italy and Spain are relevant entry points for human trafficking from Nigeria, also for transit to other European countries (Europol 2018a: 12). Law enforcement operations have also revealed other transit hubs, such as the Netherlands. Most notably, the Dutch Operation Koolvis in 2008 that exposed an entire Nigerian criminal network showed that the country was their port of entry into the Schengen area while the final destinations for sexual exploitation were usually Italy and Spain (European Commission 2015, as cited in EASO 2015: 34). Thus, while the trafficking of women and girls from Nigeria to several European countries has been going on for a long time, the exact routes and features tend to shift due to increased attention from European law enforcement or other reasons for changes in operations by Nigerian traffickers. This fluid nature with a largely persisting business model at its core becomes fully visible in an analysis of the evolution of the trafficking, its modus operandi and the actors involved.

8 The German Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) reported the following numbers of Nigerian victims in recent years, referring to cases in investigations completed by the police: 25 out of 488 (2016), 39 out of 489 (2017), 61 out of 430 (2018) and 16 out of 427 (2019) (BKA 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019). The 2020 report does not provide a specific number for Nigerian human trafficking victims because the number was even lower than in 2019.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748935940-133, am 12.10.2024, 06:59:42
Open Access – (cc) BY-SA – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb

3 Trafficking of women for sexual exploitation from Nigeria: following the chain

The chain of human trafficking includes recruitment, the transport of those being trafficked and finally their exploitation. Various activities facilitating the illegal business along this chain are required. These can range from forging documents for those being trafficked to facilitating the flows of money associated with moving the persons to protecting the business of sexual exploitation at the destination. While human trafficking can be undertaken by single persons or very small networks of individuals with loose connections, the type of transregional trafficking discussed in this chapter tends to be more elaborate and organised. While a common modus operandi has been identified in the trafficking from Nigeria to Western Europe, it has evolved over time.

Some peculiarities of this trafficking flow have drawn much attention, as already mentioned. While these features are clearly relevant, especially with regard to effective countermeasures and protection of victims, they are often presented out of context. Instead, they should be discussed as part of the complex chain and against the historical and spatial background in order to better understand today's trafficking of women and girls from Nigeria to Europe for sexual exploitation.

3.1 Understanding recruitment patterns

The most striking point about the background of Nigerian women and girls trafficked to Europe, at least at first sight, is that the vast majority are from the southern part of Nigeria, mostly from Edo State. And this is not a new observation. Already in the period from 1999 to 2001, an incredible 86 per cent of the 800 sex workers deported to Nigeria from Italy were from Edo State and 7 per cent from neighbouring Delta State (Ellis 2016: 135). More recently, Edo State still figures as the main area of origin. According to an IOM assessment, out of the 5,425 Nigerian women who arrived as migrants in Italy in 2017, an estimated 80 % were potential victims of trafficking and 94 % were from Edo State (IOM 2019). Other federal states of Nigeria have been named as areas of origin in cases exposed or in interviews conducted e.g. by IOM, but these also tend to be in the southern part of the country (IOM 2017: 13).

This observation defies simple explanations. Clearly, factors used to measure vulnerability to human trafficking are relevant. For example, the Global Slavery Index 2018 ranks Nigeria 12th out of a total of 167

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748935940-133, am 12.10.2024, 06:59:42
Open Access – (cc) BY-SA – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb

countries. For this ranking, the factor "effects of conflict" has a particular impact (Walk Free Foundation 2018: 156). This might be due to the huge trafficking issue linked to internal displacement in the northeast and other parts of the country, including the abduction of women and girls for domestic servitude and forced labour by Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa (US DoS 2020: 382). However, Edo State is not a particular "hot spot" of insecurity, though violent conflict is an issue in parts of Nigeria's south as well (see e.g. the Nigeria Security Tracker, CFR n.d.). Other factors like poverty can also hardly explain the prominence of this state of origin. This suggests that human trafficking from Southern Nigeria to Europe must have additional drivers.

Historical evolution

Three common aspects are mentioned in the literature when it comes to how human trafficking from Southern Nigeria has evolved: first, the history of slave trading in Nigeria's southeast and the development of a prostitution business at the time of colonial rule; second, the appearance of the business model of sexual exploitation of Southern Nigerian women in Italy in the 1980s; and third, the evolution of the underlying recruitment and exploitation patterns that reproduced this type of trafficking and extended it to other European countries.

On the first point, Stephen Ellis states in his book on Nigerian organised crime that "[p]eople-trafficking and people-smuggling in the twentieth century reflect the deep historical legacy of slavery and the slave trade" (Ellis 2016: 216). Amongst others, he refers to the particularly developed system of slave trading in the southeast of Nigeria and its underground continuation with shifting patterns after it was banned by the British (Ellis 2016: 35–36). Others rather stress that the continuing slavery in parts of Nigeria under colonial rule veiled the existence of a well-organised type of trafficking linked to forced prostitution called "white slave traffic" at the time (Aderinto 2012: 16). Irrespective of the exact interpretation of the role of slavery, by the 1940s colonial officials confirmed a common organised scheme by which girls from the southeast were forced into prostitution in Lagos or even Ghana, at the time the Gold Coast (Apard, Diagboya and Simoni 2020: 55). This scheme even seems to date back as far as the 1920s (Aderinto 2012: 10). By the end of the 1930s, estimates amounted to thousands of Nigerian women and girls working as prostitutes in the Gold Coast alone and generating significant profits for their communities in Southern Nigeria (Aderinto 2012: 2). Another important observation is

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748935940-133, am 12.10.2024, 06:59:42
Open Access – (cc) BY-SA – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb

that the core business model seemed to be similar to today's, as women with experience in prostitution were returning to their areas of origin to recruit girls under false promises or pretexts of marriage, only to coerce them into the sex business afterwards and take money from them (Ellis 2016: 37).

This model reemerged decades later in Europe, most notably in Italy. However, the initial reasons for Nigerian women to go to Europe seem to have been others than simply transferring an existing practice to a new location. There are different accounts of why Nigerian women particularly from the south started to come to Italy before engaging in prostitution. Some say the stays were linked to the pilgrimage to Rome by Nigerian Christians from the south (Ellis 2016: 134), others refer to relationships between Italians working in the petrol industry in Lagos and the periphery of Benin City with Nigerian women who followed them to Italy (Carchedi 2000, as cited in Pascoal 2018: 9). Other explanations are that Nigerian women went to Italy on visas to work in agriculture, for example picking tomatoes (EASO 2015: 14; Myria 2018: 62) or engaged in legitimate businesses like trading in fabrics, clothes and jewelleries (Braimah 2013: 12). Sometimes these explanations are combined.

What almost all accounts refer to are worsening economic situations of the women while they were in Italy that led them to work in prostitution. Thus, they started to gain an (additional) income by selling sex, often reinvesting their profits back home, for example by trading in fashion items. Apparently, the demand by Italian clients increased at the time, creating incentives for other Nigerian women to come to Italy for prostitution (Myria 2018: 62). This first generation of women not only served as an example for others who saw the wealth some had acquired in Europe, but also started to directly recruit women back in their home area of Benin City – the capital of Edo State – and thus established some control over the entry to this kind of business (Ellis 2016: 134).

This model gained particular traction from the 1990s onwards, supposedly linked to the increasing difficulty of Nigerians to get visas for travelling to Italy. While women could previously often organise the trip by themselves, they became dependent on logistical support and larger loans to pay for the journey. By this time, women who had arrived earlier could earn significant profits from recruiting others back home and facilitating their travel to Italy, where they lived on their earnings from prostitution (Plambech 2014: 34; Ellis 2016: 134). This setup resembled the known patterns, but restrictions on migration to Europe and other factors, such as a lack of economic opportunities in Nigeria, particularly for women,

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748935940-133, am 12.10.2024, 06:59:42
Open Access – (cc) BY-SA – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb

most likely led to the extension and professionalisation of this model while keeping the particular connection to Nigeria's southern states.

Social aspects of recruitment

Overall, social and ethnic ties have been central in the recruitment. A study based on interviews with trafficked women found that 72 % of women had been recruited by someone they or their family knew quite well (Cherti, Pennington and Grant 2013: 5). Some girls also seek ways to migrate to Europe themselves using known contact points in their southern home areas (EASO 2015: 22). The key role of women in the trafficking is also rooted in the tradition in the region that the less privileged place their children with richer relatives (Ebo'o and Tite 2019: 34). These ties and the underlying business model can help explain why victims and those involved in trafficking today still predominantly come from the same region in Nigeria.

Even with trafficking becoming more organised, the so-called "madams" – who were usually trafficked and exploited themselves before – remained central figures in the process. While the women and girls are under their authority in the destination country and they collect their profits from prostitution, the "madams" also order the recruitment of new girls. Sometimes they undertake the recruitment themselves, but it has become common practice to rely on recruiters and sponsors in Nigeria (EASO 2015: 21–22). They offer support for the girls or women to migrate to Europe, including financing the transport as well as providing all necessary (forged) documents and arrangements along the route, though the "madam" can also be the sponsor to cover the costs in advance (EASO 2015: 23). More recently, recruiters often seem to be young men who had to return from Europe and so have a certain experience in migration and contacts along the routes (Henriksen and Jesperson 2019: 27). To make sure that debts are repaid after arrival, an agreement is sealed, commonly involving the visit to a shrine where a juju ritual is performed (Ellis 2016: 182).

More recently, recruitment patterns have shifted towards even younger girls, particularly from rural areas, many only 13 to 15 years old. This seems to be due to the increasing awareness of the trafficking phenomenon and the risks it involves for women and girls in and around Edo State (EASO 2015: 15; Myria 2018: 67). Young girls may also be more likely to believe promises of well-paid jobs abroad as hairdressers, shop workers, babysitters or the like that recruiters commonly make (Europol

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748935940-133, am 12.10.2024, 06:59:42
Open Access – (cc) BY-SA – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb

2018a: 14). In the process of recruitment, the family tends to play a key role. Many are approached with an offer to arrange taking their daughter to Europe for work. This is not only promising due to the prospect of an income for the family, but sending a child abroad is also linked to a higher status in the local community (EASO 2015: 23).

Whether the kind of work waiting for the girl in Europe is known or families are deceived, the pressure on girls to agree to the deal proposed is often high. Not only poor but also middle-class families tend to see prospects of social advancement. The "madams" as wealthy and powerful persons in their community set an important example here – and this despite prostitution still being stigmatised in Southern Nigeria (Apard, Diagboya and Simoni 2020: 57, 68). These social aspects are highly relevant to understanding how the system of trafficking women and girls from Southern Nigeria tends to reproduce itself.

3.2 Transiting from origin to destination

In the process of transporting women or girls to Europe, illicit means usually have to be employed since legal ways of entry to Europe are hardly available. For this reason and due to the long distance victims have to travel, a higher degree of organisation is needed than for trafficking a person within West Africa, particularly as the Free Movement Protocol by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) supports intra-regional mobility.[9] For the transfer of women and girls to Europe, there are brokers or agents on the ground in Southern Nigeria, all kinds of facilitators, persons organising the movement along the route and those bringing the women or girls to their final destination. While Nigerian actors are said to be connected in networks with specialised roles, there has been some kind of "end-to-end" control of the trafficking process. Apart from being in charge of recruitment and exploitation, the "madam" may also pay for the journey and keep in touch with traffickers along the way while outsourcing the transport of the girls and women. Thus, the general assessment is that they are in charge of the core business while (mostly Nigerian) men are having rather supportive or facilitating roles (Europol 2018: 13). Yet, the routes and modi operandi have changed over time.

9 For details see: Economic Community of West African States Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Establishment, 1979, Protocol A/P.1/5/79.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748935940-133, am 12.10.2024, 06:59:42
Open Access – (cc) BY-SA – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb

Shifting routes

As mentioned in the last section, the initial scheme – maybe not (yet) amounting to human trafficking – involved travel of Nigerian women by air to Italy. As the model evolved, travelling by air remained the most common way to bring women and girls to Europe until about the mid-2000s (EASO 2015: 32). The mentioned hurdles to obtain proper visa meant that fraudulent passports and visa were increasingly used for these journeys. Moreover, with increasing controls by Nigerian authorities, traffickers started to send women to Europe via other West African countries like Ghana or the Gambia in order to attract less attention upon departure; but these journeys were usually still by plane (Myria 2018: 64–65).

Over the last 15 years, Nigerian victims of human trafficking have increasingly travelled by land and sea – passing several transit countries before crossing the Mediterranean Sea along the Western or Central route, mostly landing in either Spain or Italy. The reasons for the change in route are the more restrictive migration controls and the intensification of passenger and document checks at airports after 9/11 and thus higher costs for "madams" to bring new recruits to Europe (Myria 2018: 64–65; EASO 2015: 32). According to a common estimation, the difference is substantial, as transporting women and girls by plane would cost an average of €10,000 per victim while the alternative route by land/sea through Libya, for example, only requires an investment of about €2,500 (Myria 2018: 65).

IOM noted that in 2016 the largest group of migrants arriving in Italy by sea were Nigerians, with a particular increase of women and unaccompanied children (respectively 11,009 and 3,040 in 2016, compared to about 5,000 and 900 in 2015). The assessment by IOM that approximately 80 % of these Nigerian women and children were likely to be victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation in the EU (IOM 2017: 9) has been cited widely in the literature to underline the extent of the phenomenon. It should be noted, however, that these numbers dropped in the following years, with a significant decrease of Nigerian arrivals in Italy by sea in absolute and relative terms (UNHCR 2018). Though after a steep decline the overall number of arrivals by sea in Italy from Libya went up again from 2020 to 2021, Nigerians were no longer among the top ten nationalities arriving via that route (UNHCR 2021). The further evolution remains to be seen, particu-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748935940-133, am 12.10.2024, 06:59:42
Open Access – (cc) BY-SA – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb

larly in light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on smuggling routes and human trafficking more generally.[10]

Overlap of human trafficking and migrant smuggling

The overland and sea journey – despite being generally less costly for traffickers – still requires quite a sophisticated logistical process. While a transport agent may plan the travel stages, a male person who is called "boga" ("trolley") can accompany several women or girls, usually up to Libya. The same term can be used for men picking up women in migration centres, where they usually end up after entering Europe (IMO 2017: 7). When travelling by air it has also been common for the women or girls to be accompanied by a man on the flight to provide a cover (e.g. as a husband or brother), but also to collect the passport provided to the victim before immigration controls at her destination for further use by others back in Nigeria. These papers are not necessarily fraudulent, but can be authentic ones issued to women who look like the victims travelling. In this scheme, once the passport is taken from them, the victims present themselves without papers to the authorities at the destination (Ellis 2016: 183).

For the women and girls travelling by land through Libya, the journey can take months or even years. The supervisors on their way can change, yet "bogas" tend to be in close contact with the "madam" in Europe. As a European law enforcement official stated: "Over the past few years, probably hundreds of Nigerians have set up a network composed of intermediaries, drivers and staging posts to take people (generally young girls) to the Libyan coast. The Nigerian 'madam's' choice of network depends on her previous experiences (good or bad), the price, the operation's chances of success, the reputation of those involved, etc." (Franz-Manuel Vandelook, Police Superintendent, Head of the Human Trafficking group, Brussels federal judicial police, External contribution, in: Myria 2018: 79).

Recruited females are very vulnerable to abuses and exploitation along these routes. Those transporting or accompanying them may physically assault or sexually exploit them (EASO 2015: 31). Furthermore, the women are easy victims for armed groups or criminals along the way (Europol

10 In 2018, it was still assumed that the most common itinerary for Nigerian women and girls to reach Europe was via Agadez in Niger on to Zuwara, Sabha or Tripoli in Libya (Myria 2018: 65).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748935940-133, am 12.10.2024, 06:59:42
Open Access – (cc) BY-SA – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb

2018a: 14). In particular, once they reach the Libyan coast and have to wait for the opportunity to get on a boat across the Mediterranean, they are often exposed to all kinds of abuses and frequently forced into prostitution (IMO 2017: 7).[11] It has been argued that ironically Nigerian women and girls may have smoother journeys than those "only" being smuggled through Libya, as Nigerian traffickers still control the itinerary and "madams" or sponsors have a high interest in the victims reaching Europe in order to repay their debts (DIIS 2021: 43).

Yet, women and girls still get trapped in North Africa for extended periods of time. There have also been clear indications that Nigerian and Libyan traffickers sell and buy them (UNICRI 2010: 83). When women or girls fall into the hands of armed groups, these can demand ransom payments to let them move on, which have to be paid either by families or by the "madams". Otherwise they will have to engage in prostitution to pay for making their onward journey (BAMF 2020: 11). In Morocco, women have been found to be forced into begging by traffickers (EASO 2015: 33). These patterns illustrate the link between human trafficking and migrant smuggling, which by definition are distinct phenomena. But the exploitation of Nigerian women and girls as an integral part of the smuggling process has also been interpreted as an indication of the waning influence of "madams" in transit countries, especially in Libya, and thus of a diminishing direct link between the area of origin and European destinations (Pascoal 2018: 14, 18).

Entering and moving around Europe

If women and girls ultimately make it by boat from Libya to Italy or another European country, they are placed into a refugee reception centre or camp. This is where they are usually picked up by another "boga" or trafficker who takes them to their destination country, where the "madam" is waiting for them (Myria 2018: 80). But they may also only be recruited in the centre after arrival. In fact, it has been concluded that the different phases in trafficking have become blurred, so that women arrive in Italy without an understanding of the different stages or knowledge about the identity of their traffickers (Pascoal 2018: 19).

11 Of course, violence and exploitation is similarly faced by male migrants from Nigeria in Libya. Male applicants accounted for the majority of asylum claims by Nigerians in Italy for most years between 2008 and 2019 (Cohen 2021: 19–21).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748935940-133, am 12.10.2024, 06:59:42
Open Access – (cc) BY-SA – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb

Yet, women have still entered Europe through other countries by air if more structured networks are implicated and have then been taken to Italy or Spain as well as other countries for sexual exploitation (Ellis 2016: 181, 185). More importantly, the movement of women or girls within Europe has apparently become a frequent practice (Europol 2016b). Two factors have been named as an explanation for this evolution. One is learning from other criminal networks e.g. Bulgarian ones. Their scheme was apparently mimicked by "madams", who now tend to be more connected with each other and exchange victims internationally, for example between Belgium, Italy, Spain and Sweden (Myria 2018: 64, 89). The other, complementary reason is that Nigerian networks simply respond to increasing pressure by law enforcement in some countries. Thus, victims are moved around once they are tracked by the police, and thus women tend to disappear before authorities are able to establish closer contact (Myria 2018: 73). Additional reasons may play a role, such as declining profits in this kind of sex business. The movement of women and girls around Europe can also be linked to the use of asylum claims upon arrival that will be discussed below.

3.3. Exploitation and control

Apart from expanding links and operations across European countries, the "madams" do not work alone at the destination. They may have several assistants, who may be women who are working for them in prostitution. Moreover, they usually work with a male enforcer or warden (Ellis 2016: 183; Europol 2016a: 17) as well as others working as couriers or money launderers (EASO 2015: 22; Europol 2018a: 15). The control of women and girls by the "madam" is based on their obligation to repay debts from their travel arrangements. This amount, which tends to be much higher than the actual expenditure, has to be "paid back" by engaging in prostitution and leaving all earnings to the "madam". The amounts used to be up to €50,000 or €60,000 but have apparently declined to sums between €20,000 and €30,000, which is explained by lower prices in human trafficking that are partly due to a larger number of exploited girls (Pascoal 2018: 15, 18).[12]

12 The prices in prostitution also seem to have gone down on European streets, e.g. in France, where "a hard discount in prostitution" has been noticed due to low prices taken by Nigerian sex workers (Pascual/Tilouine 2020).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748935940-133, am 12.10.2024, 06:59:42
Open Access – (cc) BY-SA – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb

Debt bondage and juju rituals

The victims usually have to engage in the sex business for years to pay back the money, especially as the amount tends to increase due to living expenses or fines being added to the debt over time. For example, women and girls have to pay fines for abortions and pregnancies or if they try to hide earnings to send them back to their families in Nigeria while still in debt with the "madam" (BAMF 2020: 7; EASO 2015: 25). Often the victims are aware that some money has to be repaid upon arrival but barely know the size of the debt in advance – either because they are deceived about the real amount or because they do not understand how much money it actually is (if only because they have no idea about exchange rates between Nigerian naira and euros) (EASO 2015: 24). Moreover, some women learn only at this point that they will actually work in prostitution. Others may have realised this along the trafficking route; still others may have been aware even before.

An essential aspect of human trafficking is the coercion, dependence and/or deception used to bind victims to their traffickers and make sure they do not run away, potentially cooperating with law enforcement. In the case of Nigerian women and girls forced into prostitution in Europe, there are several ways to control them. The basic means to make women and girls obey and stick to the arrangement have been specified in a Human Rights Watch report. Apart from violence and threats against the victims and their families in Nigeria, this can be anything from "threats of selling them to other traffickers, surveillance, passport confiscation, confinement, and isolation to keep them trapped and terrified, and to avoid law enforcement detection" (HRW 2019: 5). Another, more exceptional means has been the use of the mentioned juju rituals that victims usually undergo before leaving Nigeria. In this ceremony they mainly have to pledge allegiance to their "madam" and swear to repay their debts and not to cooperate with third parties. During these rituals, women and girls often have to drink a mixture including herbs and/or blood from animals while hair, nails or body fluids are taken from them and kept by the juju priest (Aluko-Daniels 2015: 80).

Usually the girls and their families – most commonly their mother – have to be present, while the "madam" participates either physically or by phone, with the priest being the guarantor of the agreement (Apard, Diagboya and Simoni 2020: 63). Not all women and girls undergo this ritual, but apparently it has become common practice. For example, in France among a group of interviewed Nigerian women working in prostitution the share who had undergone such a ceremony was at least 75 % for the

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748935940-133, am 12.10.2024, 06:59:42
Open Access – (cc) BY-SA – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb

period between 2011 and 2013 (Simoni 2013, as cited in EASO 2015: 29). The ritual itself can be fear-inducing in a way that many women have not experienced before (Baarda 2016: 265). Ultimately, the ceremony becomes a core part of psychological control and intimidation once the girls and women start to question the arrangement or do not repay their debts (quickly enough) (EASO 2015: 26–27). The juju priests can threaten "under-performing" or "unruly" victims with physical harm, madness or death (or that of their relatives) (EASO 2015: 25).

In general, juju is an expression of the belief that power comes from the spiritual world, and it is by no means limited to its use in human trafficking. Shrines have exercised judicial functions and have been linked to (secret) societies led by political and traditional leaders in Benin City for a long time (Ellis 2016: 48). In the scheme discussed here, juju priests tend to be accomplices of the traffickers and act in their interest (EASO 2015: 28). In fact, a study has found that according to many observations in different temples in Benin City between 2017 and 2019 the priest or his assistants in almost all cases of disagreement about the accord later on ruled in favour of the "madam" (Apard, Diagboya and Simoni 2020: 76). They have a direct interest in keeping the arrangement going and making women pay back their debts because they tend to receive a percentage of the amount the traffickers receive (Cohen and Diagboya 2018).

After this instrument of control aroused increasing attention, in March 2018 the Oba of Benin, the most powerful traditional ruler in the area, made a declaration for all people from Edo that juju rituals shall no longer be used in human trafficking in the future. He issued a curse on sex traffickers and annulled existing oaths taken in the context of trafficking (Apard, Diagboya and Simoni 2020: 76; US DoS 2020: 382). The results so far seem to be mixed. Some girls and women may have felt encouraged to come out as victims and seek help after the oaths had been revoked. But traffickers seem to be using the limited territorial and ethnic reach of the declaration by the Oba as a loophole and, for example, simply hold the rituals outside his area of authority. In recent cases, victims were apparently also asked to undergo some kind of spiritual ritual that did not involve an oath but was still used to intimidate them (Interview Diagboya 2021). In general, the trafficking and exploitation of Nigerian women and girls has apparently not been significantly interrupted (Apard, Diagboya and Simoni 2020: 78).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748935940-133, am 12.10.2024, 06:59:42
Open Access – (cc) BY-SA – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb

Coercion and enforcement

The strong focus on the use of juju may also have disguised other means of coercion. First of all, concrete physical threats and violence are used against victims as well as their families back home, involving not only juju priests but also relatives or assistants of the "madam" in Nigeria. Ultimately, the repayment of the debts is not just a way of making profits for traffickers, but the key instrument of control. As a starting point, it holds the promise of a potential (social and material) advancement after debts have been repaid – personified by the "madams" themselves – even though most women do not turn into a wealthy "madam" after repaying their debts and are obliged to continue with prostitution to make a living (EASO 2015: 25; Apard, Diagboya and Simoni 2020: 80).

Moreover, social pressure plays an important role. Families tend to openly welcome back women and girls who have made money, but if someone comes back without a visible financial gain, e.g. because they have been deported from Europe, they are often rejected by the family (Pascoal 2012: 24, as cited in EASO 2015: 36). Thus, deported women returning to Nigeria have a high likelihood of being re-trafficked to Europe, particularly if their debts have not been entirely repaid (EASO 2015: 47). Obviously, fear of reprisals against the family and/or the victim plays a key role here as well. Again, social relations are relevant, as the "madam" has relatives or accomplices on the ground in Nigeria. They can transmit real threats and commit acts of violence, including even murders of family members, in order to make families pay remaining debts and/or bring women in line with the trafficking networks (Apard, Diagboya and Simoni 2020: 66). In a prominent trafficking investigation in Belgium, it became clear that the mother of a girl back home was severely beaten by Nigerian police officers who had been paid by the brother of the "madam", as a punishment for the girl's escape (Myria 2018: 72). There can also be considerable pressure from the group of trafficked and exploited women surrounding a victim in the country of destination (Apard, Diagboya and Simoni 2020: 71). Moreover, as outlined above, the "madam" herself may actually be related to trafficked girls, which has been a major obstacle for victims coming forward to testify. In general though, unpaid debts have proven to be more risky for victims than testifying against traffickers (EASO 2015: 45).

Beyond their network of enforcers and assistants, the "madams" can have other support structures within Europe. In Belgium, for example, investigations uncovered contacts by the "madam" to the Nigerian embassy (Myria 2018: 71). Furthermore, Nigerian networks have cooperated with

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748935940-133, am 12.10.2024, 06:59:42
Open Access – (cc) BY-SA – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb

European organised crime groups. The victims work as prostitutes in the streets or in brothels, where particularly underage girls are easier to hide from public attention. At this point, profits may flow to local criminals, for example in Italy, where "madams" may pay a certain fee per month for their girls working in a particular spot out on the street (Ellis 2016: 183). Interestingly, there seems to be cooperation with and a certain compensation of European mafias and other groups, for instance in Spain, rather than outright competition (US DoS 2020: 222–223). These arrangements, as well as the role of Nigerian "cult" groups or confraternities, will be discussed in Section 5 below.

4 *Illuminating the grey zone: intersections of the licit and illicit in the trafficking chain*

In contrast to some illicit trade flows, humans – or rather the control over persons (Campana 2016: 69) – can hardly be traded as "goods" in a legal way these days. Since the adoption of the protocol under the UN Convention, human trafficking has been criminalised almost globally: over 90 % of the UN member states have established a specific offence, and the definition is almost universally based on the protocol (UNODC 2020: 23).

But the illegality of human trafficking may still be disputed or concealed at different stages. Basically, there can be a grey zone around the crime of human trafficking – when (potentially) legal acts or means are part of the business model and/or when a legal setting is used for cover, such as recruitment agencies set up as a façade for labour exploitation (UNODC 2020: 14). In the first case, the actual categorisation of an activity as human trafficking may even be called into question; in the second case, trafficking is simply masked by a legal cover. To the outside, including those using the services of exploited victims, both categories may appear legal.

In the case of Nigerian women and girls who are trafficked to Europe, questions are repeatedly raised about the aspect of coercion or deception during the recruitment phase. Several publications state that Nigerian women sometimes know they will be working in prostitution and be linked to a pimp – if only from the example of other women from the same area. The essential point of this claim is that women are not necessarily tricked or coerced into the arrangement. Stephen Ellis (2016: 183–184) has pointed out that "[t]he system thrives on the fact that recruits for the sex industry are not actually trafficked – meaning, taken against their will – but are socially obliged to take part in a very exploitative business".

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748935940-133, am 12.10.2024, 06:59:42
Open Access – (cc) BY-SA – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb

Many girls and women themselves supposedly also see prostitution as a transitional phase and one – if not the only – way to advance in society (Apard, Diagboya and Simoni 2020: 60).

While this is crucial for assessing motivations, such circumstances of recruitment do not by themselves "legalise" this business model or make it anything less than human trafficking. First, as outlined in the introduction, the aspect of informed consent does not apply to underage girls, which is increasingly relevant as victims have become, on average, much younger. Second, even if those recruited are adults and know about the nature of the work waiting for them in Europe, they barely know about the real conditions. This applies to the working conditions in prostitution, the actual size of the debt they will have to repay as well as the pressure and violence that may be applied against them. As the debt is often raised for living expenses and as a punishment, the "deal" also keeps changing once they are in Europe. In addition, risks on their way as well as in the sex business in Europe are often unknown to women. These points are acknowledged across the relevant literature (EASO 2015: 17, 26; Apard, Diagboya and Simoni 2020: 60–61; Aluko-Daniels 2015: 79). However, the kind of relationship between trafficker and victim as well as the psychological means of coercion used have posed significant challenges for law enforcement (Pascoal 2018: 72).

The second aspect – using legal façades in the process of trafficking – has many facets. Apart from the mentioned covers used in transporting women, there are several relevant aspects upon arrival in Europe. Victims have been provided with falsified residence permits allowing them to travel within the Schengen zone (EASO 2015: 35). More recently, however, traffickers have tended to push victims to apply for asylum once they enter a European country and tell girls to claim an older age in order to be placed in a shelter for adults, where it is easier to escape (Myria 2018: 1, 74; Frontex 2018: 37; US DoS 2020: 279). They may provide the victims with a fake backstory, and even if the asylum claim is ultimately not successful, it does enable applicants to stay in Europe with a legal status for a longer period of time. Another advantage may be that authorities take care of food and lodging for the women and girls (Pascoal 2018: 42; Wallis 2019). However, the victims usually do not stay in the reception centres for long, but are told to call a trafficker who will then pick them up and transfer them to their destination, which can be in another European country (Europol 2018a: 15).

Another cover may come with legal ways to engage in prostitution as exist in some European countries. There is a general assumption that liberal prostitution laws can be a pull factor. Indeed, an analysis including

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748935940-133, am 12.10.2024, 06:59:42
Open Access – (cc) BY-SA – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb

150 countries showed that countries where prostitution is legal have larger reported human trafficking inflows (Cho, Dreher and Neumayer 2013). There are known cases, e.g. in Germany and Austria, where legal covers have been used by Nigerian traffickers, for example women being registered in brothels by their "madam" with a forged passport (Milborn 2020; BAMF 2020: 13). Yet, in view of the most common destinations and ways of sexual exploitation in the EU, these kinds of covers have not (yet) been used extensively by Nigerian traffickers.

Finally, there are different methods to hide and launder the profits of Nigerian networks. The money transfers, usually to Nigeria, can be made in small amounts via official transfer services, but these days the most common way seems to be via systems like the "Black Western Union". This scheme resembles the "hawala" system, and in contrast to the actual Western Union it has the advantage that the money transfer can hardly be traced (Myria 2018: 64). In a case revealed in Belgium, a shop was the hub for sending cash that was later transferred to a beneficiary in Benin City. Basically, those behind this scheme in Belgium frequently travelled to Nigeria with the collected cash and took a 10 % commission for the service (Myria 2018: 92–93). Generally, couriers tend to transfer the money to Nigeria and claim it is for legitimate business purposes when they get caught (Europol 2018a: 15).

In the past, there were indications that the "madams" invested their profits in the legal trade, for example with fabrics. They also opened businesses like hotels or shops in larger cities of their Nigerian home areas and invested in real estate. It has been stated that the "richest generally belong to the first generation of Nigerian women who left for Europe in the early 1980s to work as prostitutes and who, having settled mainly in Italy, were nicknamed 'Italos' on their return" (Apard, Diagboya and Simoni 2020: 57–58, own translation). These investments not only serve money-laundering purposes but are also symbols of wealth and status.

5 A Nigerian mafia?

There is frequent reference to a Nigerian mafia supposedly involved in human trafficking. Clearly, there has been a professionalisation of trafficking to Europe by specialised networks. But the organisation has usually not been centralised and not run along ethnic and family ties, as a deep study of an exposed trafficking network has confirmed. This particular ring was rather a business operation, with transporters acting as service providers to the "madams" (Campana 2016: 80, 82). The study also found that "there is

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748935940-133, am 12.10.2024, 06:59:42
Open Access – (cc) BY-SA – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb

no evidence of a global mafia that is able to internalise trafficking activities across continents, or to provide services like dispute settlement and contract enforcement in every stage of the process" (Campana 2016: 82). The supply of protection (including the enforcement of agreements) beyond simply engaging in extortion is considered a characteristic of organisations like the Calabrian 'Ndrangheta, the Russian mafia or the Japanese Yakuza (Varese 2014: 343, 353).

While the mentioned study found that "madams" largely operated independently of each other, these days they may be more connected, as in the "exchange scheme" mentioned above. In a case exposed in France in 2018, ten "madams" ran a trafficking and exploitation network called "Authentic Sisters" together (BAMF 2020: 6). Moreover, they have set up support structures that link them beyond simply exchanging girls or women within Europe. There are clubs set up by "madams" with branches in Nigeria and Europe that organise events and provide financial support while overall strengthening the ties between the women and their trafficking networks. At events, there is a club code that includes wearing a certain outfit, performing dances and engaging in "money spraying" (Apard, Diagboya and Simoni 2020: 58–59). But these groups hardly conform with the characteristics of a mafia as mentioned above. The traditional European organised crime groups that impose certain fees on Nigerian actors, including for example the Camorra in Naples, are apparently not engaged in the actual prostitution activities (Campana 2016: 82).

The reference to a Nigerian mafia in human trafficking mostly seems to be due to another link, namely the one to Nigerian confraternities, also called "cult" groups. They started out as confraternities at universities and colleges within Nigeria but are today mostly known for being engaged in all types of serious crimes like kidnapping, robbery as well as drug and human trafficking and thus might be seen as "a fully structured crime network" (Ellis 2016: 191). Codes and initiation rites of confraternities are often compared to gang culture, but they have cells and structures far beyond their core areas in Nigeria. As they are often described as being hierarchically organised and particularly violent, they have also been likened to mafia organisations (EASO 2018b: 43). Nigerian media are full of reports about violent clashes among such groups and the major problem "cultism" poses for public security.

With regard to human trafficking, the presence of confraternities along trafficking routes up to the destinations in European countries is relevant (EMSC 2020: 21–22). UNODC has reported that confraternities like Supreme Eiye and Aye have also been active in parts of Spain since at least 2007 and in Italy since 2008 (UNODC 2014: 56). The German Federal

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748935940-133, am 12.10.2024, 06:59:42
Open Access – (cc) BY-SA – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb

Criminal Police Office also named three Nigerian confraternities that were active in Germany in 2019 (BAMF 2020: 16–17), and the German Federal Intelligence Service, according to a leaked internal report, warned that groups like Black Axe and the Supreme Eiye Confraternity are trying to extend their criminal activities to the country (Diehl 2019). Links of the groups to human trafficking have been reported by authorities in Spain and Italy, but also in France, most notably in the mentioned case of the "Authentic Sisters" (UNODC 2020: 44; Apard, Diagboya and Simoni 2020: 66). The Spanish Guardia Civil, the Nigerian National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) and the UK's National Crime Agency together dismantled a Nigerian network in one of the largest operations against human trafficking in Europe. It was operating across multiple EU countries and was linked to the Supreme Eiye confraternity (Europol 2018b). In Italy, there were operations against Black Axe and the Supreme Eiye Confraternity in Sicily and Sardinia around the same time (Wallis 2019). However, it needs to be clarified what character the link between human trafficking and confraternities really has in these cases.

Most often, members of Nigerian "cults" have been seen as recruiters, facilitators or enforcers for the "madams" while also engaging in other types of crimes like credit card fraud, counterfeiting of documents, money laundering or drug trafficking (Pascual and Tilouine 2020; EMSC 2020: 21). More recently, changes in this pattern have been reported, most notably a more important (and violent) role of these groups in human trafficking in Europe. Several reports interpret this evolution as an indication of a declining position of the "madams", partly linked to the withdrawal of the juju oaths by the Oba of Benin effectively taking away this instrument of psychological control and thus empowering more violent groups like the confraternities (Pascual and Tilouine 2020). In a media report, the commander of NAPTIP in Lagos was cited as saying that "cult" groups apparently had even taken over the entire business, leading to endless exploitation rather than repayment of debts (BAMF 2020: 14).

It has also been noticed that "madams" have relocated to other countries like France and Germany, apparently to avoid being arrested. During the first lockdown of the COVID-19 pandemic, Nigerian women in Italy were reported to have been abandoned by traffickers, only with someone around for control and punishment in case they did not continue to work (The Guardian 2020). To what extent these recent observations indicate a greater role of confraternities in human trafficking remains unclear. Yet, even if their influence should have increased, the European chapters can hardly be categorised as mafias. A recent study by Corentin Cohen confirms that confraternities like the Black Axe, Supreme Eiye and the

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748935940-133, am 12.10.2024, 06:59:42
Open Access – (cc) BY-SA – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb

Maphites have established a presence across different continents, but in Europe they mostly function as social institutions (Cohen 2021: 2, 23). He also describes the role of their members in human trafficking as similar to that of subcontractors, without visible involvement of the organisation as such, not even when it comes to the flows of related revenues (Cohen 2021: 26–27). From this perspective, the specific role of Nigerian confraternities in human trafficking to Europe needs further investigation with regard to specific cases, yet without criminalising their members in general.

6 Conclusion

Human trafficking has attracted increasing attention at the international level. The Sustainable Development Goals of the Agenda 2030 include two targets with references to eliminating trafficking and exploitation of women and girls (5.2) or children (16.2) as well as one on eradicating forced labour and human trafficking, in particular the worst forms of child labour (8.7). At the regional level, the European Commission just came out with a new Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings for 2021 to 2025 (EC 2021).

The specific trafficking flow analysed in this chapter has increasingly been addressed by law enforcement operations and cooperation. Since 2012, a European project within the EMPACT framework has been focusing on tackling Nigerian trafficking networks and identifying victims across the EU. Apart from pan-European operations coordinated by Europol, there are also efforts to increase cooperation between authorities in the EU and Nigeria. Various countries in Europe collaborate with Nigerian law enforcement in joint investigations, intelligence sharing and/or prosecutions (US DoS 2021: 426). There are also efforts at the regional level, for example an EU programme[13] supporting the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its members in addressing different types of trafficking in West Africa – mostly human and arms trafficking. The Nigerian government also issued a National Referral Mechanism in 2016, defining roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in support of victims of trafficking (EASO 2018a: 58). The Nigerian strategy is essentially based on the four Ps, namely prevention, protection, prosecu-

13 Co-funded by the German Federal Foreign Office.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748935940-133, am 12.10.2024, 06:59:42
Open Access – (cc) BY-SA – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb

tion and partnership (Ebo'o and Tite 2019: 33). Thus, the focus is not exclusively on a criminal justice response.

Yet, this particular type of trafficking has proven quite persistent, as actors involved adapt to changing conditions. The shifting patterns along the chain and the grey zone around human trafficking of this kind clearly pose challenges for a straightforward implementation of the UN Protocol. More importantly, however, certain features and practices that gain particular attention need to be placed in the context of the historical, social and economic background. Therefore, dynamics and incentives along the trafficking chain have to be better understood – if only to avoid unintended negative consequences of countermeasures.

Finally, the agency of the women and girls, who should not be seen merely as passive victims, needs to be acknowledged. Even if a range of organisations support victims, the ultimate outcome may often be far from satisfactory. As long as the conditions in their area of origin do not change significantly, the situation remains difficult for returning women, especially when they are deported from Europe. In fact, deportation appears to be more stigmatised in Southern Nigeria than working in prostitution, as it is seen as downward social mobility (Plambech 2017: 150). Therefore, these women are at high risk of being re-trafficked. There are different schemes in European countries for them to get the permission to stay – temporarily or permanently – once they have been identified as victims. In France, victims of trafficking from Southern Nigeria are even considered a specific social group and can obtain refugee status, provided they can show that they have been leaving the network (Apard, Diagboya and Simoni 2020: 51). Yet, the right to legal residency for women cooperating with law enforcement is not always coherently implemented. Apart from the need for improvement in this area, it will certainly remain key to counter the more structured networks – without risking to worsen the plight of those being exploited. But ultimately, the links involved in a trafficking chain are multi-faceted and not merely the product of an isolated criminal phenomenon.

References

Aderinto, Saheed (2012): "'The problem of Nigeria is slavery, not white slave traffic': Globalization and the politicization of prostitution in Southern Nigeria, 1921–1955". In: Canadian Journal of African Studies/La Revue canadienne des études africaines, 46, 1, pp. 1–22.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748935940-133, am 12.10.2024, 06:59:42
Open Access – (cc) BY-SA – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb

Aluko-Daniels, Olufunke (2015): "At the margins of consent. Sex trafficking from Nigeria to Italy". In: Massey, Simon/Coluccello, Rino (eds.): Eurafrican migration. Legal, economic and social responses to irregular migration. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 74–87.

Apard, Élodie/Diagboya, Precious/Simoni, Vanessa (2020): "'La prostitution, ça ne tue pas!' projets d'ascension sociale familiale dans le contexte de la traite sexuelle (Nigeria–Europe)". In: Politique africaine, 159, 3, pp. 51–82.

Baarda, C.S. (2016): "Human trafficking for sexual exploitation from Nigeria into Western Europe. The role of voodoo rituals in the functioning of a criminal network". In: European Journal of Criminology, 13, 2, pp. 257–273.

Braimah, Tim S. (2013): "Sex trafficking in Edo State. Causes and solutions". In: Global Journal Of Human Social Science, 13, 3, pp. 17–29.

BAMF, Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (2020): „Länderreport 27: Nigeria – Menschenhandel zum Zwecke der sexuellen Ausbeutung. Stand: 06/2020". Nürnberg. At: https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Behoerde/Informationszentrum/Laenderreporte/2020/laenderreport-27-nigeria.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3 (accessed 13 April 2022).

BKA, Bundeskriminalamt (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019): „Bundeslagebild Menschenhandel und Ausbeutung". At: https://www.bka.de/DE/AktuelleInformationen/StatistikenLagebilder/Lagebilder/Menschenhandel/menschenhandel_node.html (accessed 13 April 2022).

Campana, Paolo (2016): "The structure of human trafficking. Lifting the bonnet on a Nigerian transnational network". In: British Journal of Criminology, 56, 1, pp. 68–86.

Carchedi, Francesco (2000): "La prostituzione straniera in Italia. Analisi dei risultati dell'indagine sulle protagoniste e i modelli relazionali". In: Carchedi, Francesco/Picciolini, Anna/Mottura, Giovani/Campani, Giovanna: I colori della Notte. Migrazioni, sfruttamento sessuale, esperienze di intervento sociale. Mailand: FrancoAngeli, pp. 100–163.

Cherti, Myriam/Pennington, Jenny/Grant, Peter (2013): "Beyond borders. Human trafficking from Nigeria to the UK". London: Institute for Public Policy Research. At: https://www.ippr.org/files/images/media/files/publication/2013/01/nigeria-trafficking_Jan2013_10189.pdf (accessed 13 April 2022).

Cho, Seo-Young/Dreher, Axel/Neumayer, Eric (2013): "Does legalized prostitution increase human trafficking?" In: World Development, 41, 1, pp. 67–82.

Cohen, Corentin (2021): "Les confraternités nigérianes á la conquête du monde?" In: Les études du CERI, 258. At: https://www.sciencespo.fr/ceri/sites/sciencespo.fr.ceri/files/Etude_258.pdf (accessed 13 April 2022).

Cohen, Corentin/Diagboya, Precious (2018): "Le rôle des acteurs religieux dans la traite d'êdes humains entre le Nigéria et l'Europe". Sciences Po: Centre de Recherches Internationales. At: https://www.sciencespo.fr/ceri/fr/oir/le-role-des-acteurs-religieux-dans-la-traite-d-etres-humains-entre-le-nigeria-et-l-europe (accessed 13 September 2021).

CFR, Council on Foreign Relations (n.d.): "Nigerian Security Tracker". At: https://www.cfr.org/nigeria/nigeria-security-tracker/p29483 (accessed 13 April 2022).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748935940-133, am 12.10.2024, 06:59:42
Open Access – (cc) BY-SA – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb

Diehl, Jörg (2019) „BND warnt vor nigerianischer Mafia“. At: https://www.spiegel.de/panorama/justiz/bundesnachrichtendienst-warnt-vor-nigerianischer-mafia-a-1254963.html (accessed 13 April 2022).

DIIS, Danish Institute for International Studies (2021): “Does information save migrants’ lives? Knowledge and needs of West African migrants en route to Europe”. At: https://pure.diis.dk/ws/files/4209801/Does_information_save_migrants_lives_DIIS_Report_2021_01.pdf (accessed 13 April 2022).

Ebo’o, Agnes/Tite, Naomi (2019): “Transnational organised crime in West and Central Africa. The case of the Nigerian ‘madams’”. In: Hilsdon, Anne-Marie (ed.): Gender and human security. African perspectives”. Institute for Security Studies: Monograph 198, pp. 27–37.

Ellis, Stephen (2016): This present darkness. A history of Nigerian organised crime. London: Hurst & Company.

EASO, European Asylum Support Office (2015): “Country of Origin Information Report: Nigeria – Sex trafficking of women, October 2015”. At: https://coi.euaa.europa.eu/administration/easo/PLib/BZ0415678ENN.pdf (accessed 13 April 2022).

EASO, European Asylum Support Office (2018a): “Country of Origin Information Report: Nigeria – Key socio-economic indicators, November 2018”. At: https://coi.euaa.europa.eu/administration/easo/PLib/2018_EASO_COI_Nigeria_KeySocioEconomic.pdf (accessed 13 April 2022).

EASO, European Asylum Support Office (2018b): “Country of Origin Information Report: Nigeria – Targeting of individuals, November 2018”. At: https://coi.euaa.europa.eu/administration/easo/PLib/2018_EASO_COI_Nigeria_TargetingIndividuals.pdf (accessed 13 April 2022).

European Commission (2015): “Koolvis Case, last update 19 August 2015”. At: https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/legislation-and-case-law-case-law/koolvis-case_en (accessed 19 August 2015).

European Commission (2021): “Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021–2025”. At: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/94bfb18f-9e13-11eb-b85c-01aa75ed71a1/language-en (accessed 13 April 2022).

EMSC, European Migrant Smuggling Centre/Europol (2020): “4th Annual Activity Report – 2020”. At: https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/emsc_4th_annual_activity_report_-_2020.pdf (accessed 13 April 2022).

Europol (2016a): “Situation Report. Trafficking in human beings in the EU”. The Hague, February 2016, Document Ref No: 765175. At: https://www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/thb_situational_report_-_europol.pdf (accessed 13 April 2022).

Europol (2016b): “Joint action to tackle West African Human Trafficking Networks”. Press Release, 4 May 2016. At: https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/joint-action-to-tackle-west-african-human-trafficking-networks-0 (accessed 24 September 2021).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748935940-133, am 12.10.2024, 06:59:42
Open Access – (cc) BY-SA – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb

Europol (2018a): "Situation Report. Criminal networks involved in the trafficking and exploitation of underage victims in the European Union". The Hague, October 2018, Document Ref No: 1001370. At: https://www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/23-11_report_child_trafficking.pdf (accessed 13 April 2022).

Europol (2018b): "Trafficked by Voodoo threats: one of the largest operations in Europe rescues 39 Nigerian women". Press Release, 22 March 2018. At: https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/trafficked-voodoo-threats-one-of-largest-operations-in-europe-rescues-39-nigerian-women (accessed 13 April 2022).

Frontex (2018): Risk Analysis for 2018, Warsaw, February 2018, Frontex reference number: 2671 / 2018.

GRETA, Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings/Council of Europe (2019): "Reply from Austria to the Questionnaire for the evaluation of the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by the Parties, submitted on 1 April 2019". At: https://rm.coe.int/greta-2018-26-aut/168094b570 (accessed 13 April 2022).

The Guardian (2020): "Sex traffickers left thousands of women to starve during Italy lockdown". At: https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/jul/10/sex-traffickers-left-thousands-of-women-to-starve-during-italy-lockdown-coronavirus (accessed 14 September 2021).

Henriksen, Rune/Jesperson, Sasha (2019): "Nigeria. Community complicity for wealth". In: Jesperson, Sasha/Henriksen, Rune/Barry, Anne-Marie/Jones, Michael (eds.): Human Trafficking. An organised crime? London: Hurst & Company, pp. 19–39.

HRW, Human Rights Watch (2019): "'You pray for death': Trafficking of women and girls in Nigeria". At: https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/08/27/you-pray-death/trafficking-women-and-girls-nigeria (accessed 13 April 2022).

IOM, International Organization for Migration (2017): "Human trafficking through the Central Mediterranean Route: Data, stories and information collected by the International Organization for Migration". At: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/IOMReport_Trafficking.pdf (accessed 13 April 2022).

IOM, International Organization for Migration (2019): "'Voodoo Curses' keep victims of trafficking under bondage". At: https://www.iom.int/news/voodoo-curses-keep-victims-trafficking-under-bondage (accessed 13 April 2022).

IOM, International Organization for Migration (2020): "Trafficking in persons. Victim identification and assistance-training guide". At: https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/trafficking-in-persons-training-guide.pdf (accessed 13 April 2022).

Interview Diagboya, Precious, French Institute for Research in Africa, Nigeria (online), 9 December 2021.

Milborn, Corinna (2020): „Wenn das Opfer bestraft wird". At: https://www.zeit.de/2020/46/asylpolitik-wien-menschenhandel-nigeria-abschiebung-aufenthaltsgenehmigung (accessed 13 April 2022).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748935940-133, am 12.10.2024, 06:59:42
Open Access – (cc) BY-SA – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb

Myria, Federal Migration Centre (2018): "Trafficking and smuggling of human beings: Minors at major risk". At: https://www.myria.be/files/RATEH-EN-2018-DEF.pdf (accessed 13 April 2022).

Pascoal, Rafaela (2012): The situation of the Nigerian human trafficking victims and their children in Italy, 19 December 2012.

Pascoal, Rafaela Hilário (2018): Stranded: The new trendsetters of the Nigerian human trafficking criminal networks for sexual purposes. CISS – Cooperazione Internazionale Sud Sud.

Pascual, Julia/Tilouine, Joan (2020): "Sur les trottoirs de Paris, des jeunes Nigérianes victimes de la cruauté de leurs proxénètes". At: https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2020/08/04/sur-les-trottoirs-de-paris-l-enfer-de-la-prostitution-nigeriane_6048084_3212.html (accessed 13 April 2022).

Plambech, Sine (2014): Points of departure. Migration control and anti-trafficking in the lives of Nigerian sex worker migrants after deportation from Europe. PhD Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen and Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS).

Plambech, Sine (2017): "Sex, deportation and rescue. Economies of migration among Nigerian sex workers". In: Feminist Economics, 23, 3, pp. 134–159.

Simoni, Vanessa (2013): "'I swear an oath', serments d'allégeances, coercitions et stratégies migratoires chez les femmes nigérianes de Benin City". In: Lavaud-Legendre, Bénédicte (ed.): Prostitution nigériane. Entre rêves de migration et réalités de la traite. Paris: Karthala, pp. 33–60.

UNHCR, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2018): "Italy. Sea arrivals dashboard – December 2018". At: https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/67555 (accessed 24 September 2021).

UNHCR, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2021): "Arrivals in Europe from Libya – September 2021". At: https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/90198 (accessed 7 January 2022).

UNICRI, United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (2010): "Trafficking of Nigerian girls in Italy. The data, the stories, the social services". At: https://unicri.it/sites/default/files/2021-06/trafficking_nigeria-italy.pdf (accessed 13 April 2022).

UN, United Nations (2001): "Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, Annex II: Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime". A/RES/55/25, pp. 31–39. At: https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_55_25.pdf (accessed 13 April 2022).

UNODC, UN Office on Drugs and Crime (2014): "Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2014." At: https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/GLOTIP_2014_full_report.pdf (accessed 13 April 2022).

UNODC, UN Office on Drugs and Crime (2018): "Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2018". At: https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2018/GLOTiP_2018_BOOK_web_small.pdf (accessed 13 April 2022).

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748935940-133, am 12.10.2024, 06:59:42
Open Access – (cc) BY-SA – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb

UNODC, UN Office on Drugs and Crime (2020): "Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020". At: https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tip/2021/GLOTiP_2020_15jan_web.pdf (accessed 13 April 2022).

US DoS, US Department of State (2020) "Trafficking in Persons Report, June 2020". At: https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2020-TIP-Report-Complete-062420-FINAL.pdf (accessed 13 April 2022).

US DoS, US Department of State (2021) "Trafficking in Persons Report, June 2021". At: https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/TIP_Report_Final_20210701.pdf (accessed 13 April 2022).

Varese, Federico (2014): "Protection and Extortion". In: Paoli, Letizia (ed.): The Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 343–358.

Walk Free Foundation (2018): "The Global Slavery Index 2018". At: https://downloads.globalslaveryindex.org/ephemeral/GSI-2018_FNL_190828_CO_DIGITAL_P-1649854280.pdf (accessed 13 April 2022).

Wallis, Emma (2019): "Tricked, trafficked and sold. How criminal gangs are bringing Nigerian women to Italy". At: https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/14725/tricked-trafficked-and-sold-how-criminal-gangs-are-bringing-nigerian-women-to-italy (accessed 19 September 2021).

Young, Mary Alice (2011): "Human cost. Nigerian criminal networks in the UK". In: Jane's Intelligence Review, September 2011, pp. 44–47.

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748935940-133, am 12.10.2024, 06:59:42
Open Access – (cc) BY-SA – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb