International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the Fight against Human Trafficking in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa

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ABSTRACT

Human trafficking remains one of the most persistent transnational crimes and human rights violations confronting Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa. Despite the existence of international conventions, regional protocols, national legislation and specialised anti-trafficking institutions, vulnerable populations continue to experience sexual exploitation, forced labour, domestic servitude, forced marriage and other forms of exploitation. Poverty, unemployment, gender inequality, irregular migration, armed conflict, displacement and weak institutional capacity have further increased vulnerability across the region. The problem is particularly significant because trafficking increasingly operates across national borders, thereby exceeding the capacity of individual states to address it independently. This study examines the role of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in the fight against human trafficking in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa. Specifically, it investigates IOM's contribution to the prevention of human trafficking and examines its role in victim protection, rehabilitation and reintegration through cooperation with governments and other stakeholders. The study adopts the Regime Theory of International Relations as its theoretical framework, emphasising the importance of international institutions and cooperative arrangements in addressing transnational challenges. Methodologically, the study employs a qualitative documentary research design and relies on secondary data obtained from IOM, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the International Labour Organization (ILO), government reports and relevant scholarly literature. The findings indicate that IOM has made significant contributions through awareness creation, capacity building, migration management, data collection, victim identification, referral mechanisms, direct assistance and reintegration programmes. In Nigeria, collaboration between IOM and NAPTIP has strengthened counter-trafficking responses, while regional cooperation has supported more coordinated interventions across West and Sub-Saharan Africa. However, inadequate funding, weak prosecution systems, fragmented data and persistent socio-economic vulnerabilities continue to limit effectiveness. The study recommends strengthened domestic financing for counter-trafficking institutions and improved regional data-sharing and survivor-centred reintegration systems. It concludes that IOM remains an important institutional actor, but sustainable success depends on stronger state ownership, regional cooperation and comprehensive approaches addressing the structural drivers of trafficking.

KEYWORDS

International Organisation for Migration, human trafficking, Nigeria, Sub-Saharan Africa, migration, victim protection, reintegration

I. INTRODUCTION

Human trafficking has emerged as one of the most serious contemporary challenges to human security, human rights and international development. Globally, trafficking in persons involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons for the purpose of exploitation. Such exploitation may include sexual exploitation, forced labour, domestic servitude, forced marriage, child exploitation and other practices associated with severe forms of coercion and abuse (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2024). The phenomenon is increasingly complex because it intersects with international migration, organised crime, poverty, conflict, displacement and gender inequality (International Organization for Migration.

At the global level, the fight against human trafficking has developed into an important component of international cooperation. The adoption of the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, commonly known as the Palermo Protocol, established a major international framework for defining and combating trafficking (United Nations, 2000). However, the persistence of trafficking demonstrates that legal instruments alone are insufficient. Effective responses require cooperation among states, international organisations, civil society organisations, law-enforcement agencies and local communities.

The UNODC's Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2024 demonstrates that trafficking continues to affect all regions of the world, although its forms and patterns differ across countries. Africa faces particular challenges associated with conflict, displacement, irregular migration, limited institutional capacity and socio-economic inequality. UNODC data also indicate continuing challenges in converting investigations into successful convictions and in targeting larger and more organised trafficking networks across African states.

Regionally, Sub-Saharan Africa occupies an important position in global trafficking dynamics. Countries within West, East, Central and Southern Africa serve variously as countries of origin, transit and destination. Trafficking within the region frequently occurs alongside legitimate and irregular migration. Migrants moving across difficult and insecure routes may become vulnerable to exploitation by traffickers and other criminal actors (UNODC, 2024). Women and girls remain disproportionately represented among identified victims in many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, although men and boys are also vulnerable to forced labour and other forms of exploitation. IOM has reported that women and girls constitute a substantial proportion of identified victims in the region, reinforcing the importance of gender-sensitive counter-trafficking interventions.

Nigeria occupies a particularly important position within this regional context. As Africa's most populous country and a major centre of migration, Nigeria experiences both internal and transnational trafficking. Victims may be recruited from rural and economically disadvantaged communities and exploited within Nigeria or transported to other African countries, Europe, Asia and the Middle East. Vulnerable groups include women, children, internally displaced persons, irregular migrants and individuals working in informal sectors. IOM and other international institutions have consistently identified the relationship between migration vulnerability and trafficking risks, particularly among populations affected by poverty, displacement and unsafe migration conditions.

Nigeria has developed an institutional response to trafficking through the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP). Nevertheless, the magnitude and transnational nature of trafficking require support beyond domestic institutions. This is where international organisations, particularly the International Organisation for Migration, have become important actors. As a leading international organisation working on migration, IOM combines migration governance, protection, humanitarian assistance, research and capacity-building activities. Its counter-trafficking interventions involve prevention, protection, prosecution support, partnerships and policy development.

IOM's activities in Nigeria include cooperation with NAPTIP and other government agencies in victim identification, direct assistance, referral mechanisms, awareness campaigns, capacity building and reintegration. In 2023, IOM Nigeria reported identifying 735 victims of trafficking through collaborative processes involving relevant partners, with women constituting the overwhelming majority of identified victims. The organisation also provides psychosocial and protection-related assistance to vulnerable populations, particularly those affected by migration-related vulnerabilities and exploitation.

Beyond Nigeria, IOM has contributed to regional counter-trafficking governance through cooperation with ECOWAS member states and other regional partners. Its work increasingly emphasises evidence-based policymaking and the standardisation of trafficking data. The 2025 IOM publication on trafficking data within the ECOWAS region highlights the importance of improving administrative data systems to understand trafficking patterns, strengthen institutional coordination and develop more effective policy responses across West Africa.

Furthermore, the fight against trafficking has increasingly moved beyond traditional law-enforcement approaches. Contemporary interventions recognise that successful counter-trafficking strategies must address prevention, victim protection, access to justice and sustainable reintegration. Survivors frequently require long-term psychosocial support, healthcare, legal assistance, education and livelihood opportunities. IOM's study on monitoring the reintegration of trafficking survivors, including evidence from Nigeria, reinforces the importance of systematic monitoring of reintegration outcomes rather than treating assistance as a one-time intervention.

It is against this background that this study examines the role of the International Organisation for Migration in the fight against human trafficking in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa.

A. Statement of the Problem

Despite increasing international attention and the establishment of legal and institutional frameworks, human trafficking remains a significant challenge in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa. Governments have adopted anti-trafficking laws, established specialised agencies and entered into regional and international cooperative arrangements. Nevertheless, trafficking continues to thrive because of persistent poverty, unemployment, gender inequality, conflict, displacement, weak border governance and irregular migration (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2024; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2024).

Nigeria has made considerable institutional efforts through the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) and collaboration with international partners. However, gaps remain in victim identification, prosecution, survivor support, inter-agency coordination and sustainable reintegration. International assessments have acknowledged Nigeria's continuing efforts while also identifying weaknesses in some areas of victim protection, criminal justice enforcement and institutional capacity.

The problem is further complicated by the transnational nature of trafficking. Trafficking networks operate across multiple jurisdictions, making unilateral national responses inadequate. In Sub-Saharan Africa, differences in institutional capacity, border management and trafficking data systems make coordinated action difficult (UNODC, 2024). Although IOM has implemented important programmes involving prevention, protection, capacity building and reintegration, questions remain regarding the extent and effectiveness of its contribution within Nigeria and the wider region.

Existing discussions often focus primarily on government institutions or the general causes of trafficking without sufficiently examining the specific contribution of international migration institutions. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by examining IOM's role in preventing trafficking and supporting the protection and reintegration of trafficking survivors in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa.

B. Objectives of the Study

The study is guided by the following specific objectives:

- To examine the contribution of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to the prevention of human trafficking in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa.
- To assess the role of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in the protection, rehabilitation and reintegration of human trafficking survivors in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa.

C. Research Questions

The study is guided by the following Research Questions:

- How has the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) contributed to the prevention of human trafficking in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa?
- What role has the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) played in the protection, rehabilitation and reintegration of human trafficking survivors in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa?

D. Conceptual Review

1. Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a complex social, economic, criminal and human rights phenomenon involving the exploitation of individuals through coercive, deceptive or abusive means. The

internationally accepted conceptual foundation is provided by the Palermo Protocol, which identifies trafficking through three major elements: the act, such as recruitment or transportation; the means, including coercion, deception or abuse of vulnerability; and the purpose, which is exploitation. This definition has provided a common international framework for understanding, preventing and prosecuting trafficking across jurisdictions.

Scholarly conceptualisations emphasise that trafficking should not be understood merely as movement across borders. A person may be trafficked without crossing an international boundary; consequently, internal trafficking is equally important in countries such as Nigeria, where victims may be moved from rural communities to urban centres for domestic servitude, sexual exploitation, street vending or forced labour. Human trafficking therefore encompasses both domestic and transnational forms of exploitation. Human trafficking also differs from migrant smuggling. Smuggling generally involves facilitating irregular border crossing for financial benefit, whereas trafficking is fundamentally characterised by exploitation (United Nations, 2000). Nevertheless, the two may intersect because migrants travelling through irregular and insecure routes can become vulnerable to trafficking and other forms of exploitation.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, trafficking is closely connected to structural conditions such as poverty, unemployment, conflict, displacement and gender inequality. Research involving Nigeria, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo demonstrates that displacement and humanitarian crises may increase vulnerability to slavery-related abuse, including trafficking. Therefore, human trafficking can be conceptualised as a system of exploitation sustained by criminal networks and structural vulnerabilities, requiring criminal justice responses alongside social protection, migration governance and development interventions.

2. International Organisation for Migration (IOM)

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) is an intergovernmental organisation and a related organisation of the United Nations that plays a central role in promoting humane, orderly and safe migration. Established in 1951, IOM has progressively expanded its mandate from migration management to encompass migration governance, humanitarian assistance, displacement, migrant protection, labour migration, health and counter-trafficking interventions (IOM, 2024). Its institutional relevance derives from its capacity to support states in addressing migration challenges that increasingly transcend national boundaries.

In relation to human trafficking, IOM adopts a comprehensive counter-trafficking approach that recognises the connection between trafficking and migration vulnerabilities. Its interventions therefore extend across prevention, awareness creation, research, data collection, institutional capacity building, victim identification, direct assistance, referral mechanisms and sustainable reintegration (IOM, 2023). This multidimensional approach reflects the understanding that trafficking cannot be effectively addressed through criminal justice measures alone.

The organisation also operates extensively through partnerships. In Nigeria, IOM collaborates with NAPTIP, law-enforcement institutions, humanitarian actors and civil

society organisations. Its Nigeria crisis-response programming has included institutional capacity building, strengthening referral mechanisms and providing protection and assistance to vulnerable migrants and trafficking survivors (IOM, 2024). At the regional level, IOM supports cooperation and information sharing among states. Its work on trafficking data within the ECOWAS region seeks to standardise administrative information and strengthen evidence-based policymaking (IOM, 2025).

Conceptually, therefore, IOM represents an institutional mechanism through which states collectively address migration-related challenges that transcend national boundaries. Its importance lies not in replacing national governments but in strengthening national and regional capacities for coordinated, protection-oriented responses to human trafficking (IOM, 2024; UNODC, 2024).

3. Counter-Trafficking

Counter-trafficking refers to organised policies, programmes and institutional measures designed to prevent human trafficking, protect victims, prosecute offenders and promote cooperation among relevant stakeholders. The concept is traditionally associated with the "four Ps" framework: prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership, which provides a comprehensive basis for understanding state and international responses to trafficking.

Prevention involves reducing vulnerability and discouraging trafficking through public awareness, community education, safe-migration information and interventions addressing structural risk factors such as poverty, unemployment, inequality, conflict and displacement. Protection involves identifying victims and ensuring access to shelter, healthcare, psychosocial support, legal assistance and other services necessary for recovery and safety (IOM, 2024). Prosecution focuses on strengthening investigative and judicial capacity to identify, investigate and prosecute traffickers. However, contemporary approaches recognise that prosecution alone cannot eliminate trafficking because criminal justice interventions do not necessarily address the socio-economic conditions that create vulnerability (UNODC, 2024).

Partnership is particularly important because trafficking operates across institutional and national boundaries. Governments therefore require cooperation with international organisations, civil society organisations, communities and regional institutions. IOM's counter-trafficking strategy reflects this broader understanding by connecting migration governance with humanitarian protection, development and international cooperation (IOM, 2024).

The contemporary approach further emphasises survivor-centred and trauma-informed assistance. IOM's work on trafficking survivors demonstrates that successful recovery involves more than returning victims to their communities. Sustainable reintegration requires continuing attention to economic, social, and psychological and community conditions that influence survivors' long-term wellbeing and vulnerability to re-trafficking (IOM & Samuel Hall, 2023). Thus, counter-trafficking can be understood as a multidimensional institutional response combining prevention, protection, justice and partnership to reduce exploitation and promote sustainable survivor recovery (UNODC, 2024).

E. Empirical Review

1. Empirical Review Relating to Research Objective One

A study conducted by Crest Research and Development Institute (CRADI) (2024) examined IOM's evidence-based prevention intervention on trafficking in persons in Nigeria. The study adopted a mixed-methods research design, comprising a community survey of 553 respondents, 74 key-informant interviews and 30 focus-group discussions across intervention states and remote locations. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, FGDs and documentary review, and analysed using quantitative and qualitative approaches. The study revealed that community sensitisation, peer education, dialogue and access to trusted migration information strengthened knowledge and informed decision-making among potential migrants, thereby supporting trafficking prevention. It recommended continued evidence-based behavioural-change communication and community-based prevention interventions.

Another study conducted by IOM (2025) evaluated trafficking patterns and prevention requirements across the ECOWAS region. The study adopted a regional documentary and administrative-data research design, using trafficking administrative records from ECOWAS Member States, complemented by questionnaires and key-informant interviews. Data were analysed through comparative and descriptive analysis. The study revealed persistent child vulnerability, gendered exploitation and weaknesses in trafficking-data coordination, recommending standardised data collection and stronger regional cooperation.

2. International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in the protection, rehabilitation and reintegration of human trafficking survivors in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa

A study conducted by International Organization for Migration and Samuel Hall (2023) examined the reintegration experiences of trafficking survivors in Nigeria and three other countries. The study adopted a mixed-methods research design, involving 100 trafficking survivors and 40 individuals with expertise in reintegration programming. Data were collected through surveys, case studies, key-informant interviews and community advisory-group approaches, and were analysed comparatively to identify factors influencing sustainable reintegration. The study revealed that survivor-centred, multidimensional and longitudinal support is essential for effective social, psychological and economic reintegration. It recommended systematic monitoring of survivors' reintegration outcomes to strengthen protection and assistance programmes (IOM & Samuel Hall, 2023).

Another study conducted by Idemudia, Okoli and Goitom (2021) evaluated the experiences of human trafficking survivors receiving reintegration assistance in Nigeria. The study adopted a qualitative research design, involving 13 female survivors and five rehabilitation officials, including representatives of IOM and NAPTIP. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed using thematic analysis. The study revealed that existing programmes addressed procedural reintegration but substantive reintegration remained incomplete because of structural socio-economic conditions. It recommended strengthening long-term, survivor-centred reintegration interventions.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Regime Theory emerged prominently in international relations during the 1970s and 1980s through the works of John Gerard Ruggie (1975), Stephen Krasner (1982), and subsequently Robert Keohane (1984). Krasner (1982) defined international regimes as principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a particular issue-area. The theory assumes that states, despite pursuing national interests, can cooperate through institutions and shared rules to address problems that cannot be effectively managed individually. It further assumes that international institutions facilitate information exchange, reduce uncertainty, establish common expectations and promote sustained cooperation among states Critics of Regime Theory.

Critics argue that Regime Theory may overstate the capacity of international institutions to influence state behaviour. Realist scholars contend that states ultimately prioritise national interests and relative power, meaning that regimes become effective largely when they correspond with the interests of powerful states (Grieco, 1988). Critical scholars further argue that regimes may reproduce existing inequalities because powerful states possess greater influence over the formulation and implementation of international rules. The theory may therefore inadequately explain situations where states disregard international commitments, lack the capacity to implement agreed rules or selectively comply with institutional obligations.

A. Applicability of Regime Theory to this study

Nevertheless, Regime Theory is highly applicable to this study because human trafficking is a transnational problem requiring coordinated responses beyond individual state capacity. IOM facilitates cooperation among Nigeria, other Sub-Saharan African states, ECOWAS and relevant institutions through capacity building, information sharing, data development, victim protection and policy coordination (IOM, 2024, 2025). The theory is therefore academically justified because it provides an appropriate analytical framework for explaining how shared international norms, institutional arrangements and cooperative mechanisms enable IOM to support collective action against human trafficking while complementing, rather than replacing, national governments.

B. Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative documentary research design, which is appropriate for examining institutional interventions, policies, programmes and documented evidence concerning the role of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in combating human trafficking in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa. Documentary research enables systematic examination of existing institutional and scholarly materials to develop evidence-based interpretations of social and policy phenomena (Bowen, 2009).

Data were obtained from secondary sources, including IOM reports and publications, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reports, International Labour Organization (ILO) publications, Nigerian government documents, policy reports, regional documents and relevant peer-reviewed scholarly literature. Particular attention was given to recent evidence

concerning trafficking trends, prevention, victim protection, migration vulnerability, displacement and survivor reintegration (IOM, 2024; UNODC, 2024).

The study employed qualitative content analysis to analyse the selected documents. Relevant information was systematically reviewed, classified and organised thematically in accordance with the two specific objectives of the study: IOM's contribution to trafficking prevention and its role in the protection, rehabilitation and reintegration of survivors. Content analysis is suitable for identifying recurring themes, patterns and institutional relationships within documentary evidence (Bowen, 2009).

Geographically, the study covers Nigeria and the broader Sub-Saharan African region, with particular attention to West Africa and ECOWAS. Evidence from other African countries was incorporated where it provides comparative insight into regional trafficking patterns. The credibility of the study was enhanced through source triangulation, comparing evidence from IOM, UNODC, ILO, government and scholarly sources.

C. Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Selected Indicators of IOM's Counter-Trafficking Intervention in Nigeria

Indicator	Evidence of Intervention	Analytical Implication
Victims identified in 2023	735 victims of trafficking identified	Demonstrates active victim identification and collaboration
Gender composition	89% female and 11% male	Indicates strong gender dimensions in identified trafficking cases
Major age category	Approximately 75% aged 19–35	Young adults remain highly vulnerable
Institutional collaboration	Cooperation with NAPTIP and relevant partners	Demonstrates the importance of partnership
Protection services	Psychosocial support, referrals and direct assistance	Supports survivor-centred intervention

Table 1 demonstrates that IOM's counter-trafficking activities in Nigeria extend beyond awareness creation to include victim identification and direct protection. The identification of 735 victims in 2023 indicates the importance of institutional mechanisms for detecting trafficking cases that might otherwise remain hidden. The predominance of women among identified victims reflects the gendered nature of many forms of trafficking, particularly sexual exploitation. However, the presence of male victims also demonstrates that trafficking interventions must remain inclusive.

The concentration of victims within the 19–35 age category suggests that young adults remain particularly vulnerable, especially in contexts of unemployment and migration aspirations. The table further demonstrates the importance of IOM's partnership with NAPTIP and other institutions because victim identification and assistance require coordinated referral systems.

Table 2: Major Areas of IOM Contribution to Counter-Trafficking in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa

Area of Intervention	Major Activities	Expected Contribution
Prevention	Awareness campaigns and safe migration information	Reduction of vulnerability
Capacity building	Training government and protection actors	Improved institutional response
Victim identification	Screening and coordinated referral mechanisms	Early detection and assistance
Protection	Psychosocial, health and social support	Survivor recovery and wellbeing
Reintegration	Livelihood and community-based support	Reduced risk of re-trafficking
Data and research	Collection and standardisation of trafficking information	Evidence-based policymaking
Regional cooperation	Collaboration with ECOWAS and regional partners	Improved transnational coordination

Table 2 illustrates the multidimensional nature of IOM's contribution to counter-trafficking. The organisation's approach combines prevention, institutional capacity building, protection and regional cooperation. The prevention dimension addresses vulnerability through awareness and information, while capacity building strengthens the ability of government institutions and humanitarian actors to respond to trafficking. Protection and reintegration are particularly significant because survivors often require long-term assistance. The table also demonstrates the growing importance of data. Reliable and standardised data are necessary for identifying trafficking patterns and evaluating institutional responses. IOM's work on ECOWAS trafficking data represents an important contribution towards evidence-based regional policymaking.

III. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first objective examined the contribution of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to the prevention of human trafficking in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa. The findings demonstrate that IOM contributes to trafficking prevention through awareness creation, capacity building, migration management, institutional cooperation and the development of trafficking-related data. These interventions are significant because effective prevention requires addressing the vulnerabilities that expose individuals to exploitation before trafficking occurs. In particular, the emphasis on safe migration information and institutional capacity strengthens the ability of government and partner institutions to identify risks and intervene at earlier stages (IOM, 2024; UNODC, 2024). The findings are consistent with the empirical evidence of the International Labour Organization (ILO), IOM and Walk Free, which established a significant relationship between displacement and vulnerability to slavery-related abuse and trafficking in Nigeria, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The study demonstrates that conflict-induced displacement, weakened social protection and economic insecurity can increase exposure to exploitation (ILO, IOM, & Walk Free, 2022). This supports the present finding that trafficking prevention should extend beyond conventional criminal justice approaches to address the socio-economic and humanitarian conditions that create vulnerability.

The second objective assessed IOM's contribution to the protection, rehabilitation and reintegration of trafficking survivors. The findings indicate that IOM supports victim identification, referral mechanisms, psychosocial assistance and reintegration through collaboration with government institutions and other stakeholders. This demonstrates that protection constitutes an important dimension of IOM's counter-trafficking intervention in Nigeria and the wider region (IOM Nigeria, 2023). These findings are further supported by IOM and Samuel Hall's research, which demonstrates that sustainable reintegration requires attention to survivors' economic, social and psychological wellbeing. Reintegration should therefore be understood as a continuous process involving safety, social inclusion, livelihood recovery and psychosocial wellbeing rather than simply returning survivors to their communities.

Nevertheless, the findings reveal persistent institutional limitations. UNODC (2024) identifies continuing challenges within African criminal justice systems in converting trafficking investigations into successful convictions and disrupting organised trafficking networks. Consequently, IOM's prevention and protection interventions require stronger national prosecution, law-enforcement and judicial mechanisms.

Overall, the findings support Regime Theory, which emphasises international cooperation in addressing transnational problems. IOM facilitates cooperation, technical assistance, information sharing and institutional coordination; however, international assistance cannot substitute for domestic political commitment, sustainable financing and effective national institutions.

IV. CONCLUSION

Human trafficking remains a major challenge to human rights, human security and sustainable development in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa. Its persistence reflects the interaction of poverty, unemployment, gender inequality, displacement, irregular migration and institutional weaknesses that create opportunities for exploitation. The transnational character of trafficking further demonstrates the limitations of isolated national responses and underscores the necessity of sustained international and regional cooperation.

This study examined the role of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in combating human trafficking, with particular attention to its contribution to prevention and the protection, rehabilitation and reintegration of survivors. The findings demonstrate that IOM has become an important institutional partner through awareness creation, capacity building, victim identification, referral mechanisms, psychosocial assistance, data development and reintegration support These interventions contribute to strengthening both preventive and protection-oriented dimensions of counter-trafficking responses.

The study further establishes that IOM's interventions are most effective when implemented through collaboration with national governments, specialised institutions such as NAPTIP, civil society organisations and regional bodies. Such partnerships strengthen institutional coordination, information sharing and evidence-based policymaking.

However, trafficking cannot be eliminated through international interventions alone. Persistent structural vulnerabilities, inadequate resources and weaknesses in criminal justice systems continue to constrain sustainable progress. The study therefore concludes that IOM remains a critical partner in combating trafficking in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa, but

lasting success requires stronger state ownership, adequate domestic financing, survivor-centred reintegration and sustained regional cooperation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study made the following recommendations:

A. Strengthen Domestic Financing and Institutional Capacity for Counter-Trafficking;

The governments of Nigeria and other Sub-Saharan African states should increase sustainable domestic funding for anti-trafficking institutions, particularly victim protection, investigation, prosecution and reintegration programmes. International organisations such as IOM should complement rather than replace government responsibility. Adequate funding should support NAPTIP and corresponding institutions with trained personnel, modern information systems and survivor services. Governments should also strengthen specialised training for law-enforcement officers, immigration officials, judicial personnel and social workers. Sustainable institutional capacity will improve the identification of victims, investigation of trafficking networks and protection of survivors.

B. Establish Stronger Regional Data-Sharing and Survivor-Centred Reintegration Systems Nigeria;

ECOWAS and other Sub-Saharan African states should strengthen regional mechanisms for sharing standardised trafficking data and intelligence. IOM should continue supporting harmonised data systems capable of identifying trafficking routes, recruitment patterns and emerging forms of exploitation. In addition, governments should institutionalise survivor-centred reintegration programmes providing psychosocial support, healthcare, education, legal assistance and sustainable livelihood opportunities. Reintegration should be monitored over time to reduce vulnerability to re-trafficking. Regional cooperation should connect data systems with practical referral and protection mechanisms across borders.

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