

May-Len Skilbrei and Marianne Tveit

Facing Return

Perceptions of Repatriation among Nigerian Women in Prostitution in Norway



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Preface

This report is based on a project funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and the Police under the Norwegian Government's "Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking (2005-2008)". The report is aimed at exploring the prospects and needs of Nigerian women in prostitution in Norway with regard to voluntary return or deportation to Nigeria. This study directly succeeds the report on the situation of Nigerian women in prostitution in Norway, "African Dreams on European Streets"¹, launched June 2006. Both studies are carried out as part of Fafo's focus on migration and human trafficking. Several researchers at Fafo work on the issue of trafficking, and in this particular project and report, the assistance of Anette Brunovskis was especially valuable.

In conducting this study, we have relied on the cooperation of NGOs and professionals working directly with the women. The help and assistance of Pro Sentret has been of utmost importance in establishing contact with Nigerian women in prostitution in Oslo, and recruiting informants. We are also grateful to the employees of the Church City² Mission Nadheim in Oslo for helping us find informants and letting us use their facilities. In Stavanger, we received invaluable contributions from the Church City Mission Albertine, both through discussions and assistance contacting the women working in the city. We also thank Unni Kiil at ROSA, as well as the many employees at women's shelters that assisted in recruiting informants and facilitating interviews.

Finally, and most importantly, we want to thank all the women that have been willing to talk to us and share their stories, thoughts, fears and dreams during this process.

Oslo, January 15th 2007

May-Len Skilbrei and Marianne Tveit

¹ Translated from Norwegian, original title is "Afrikanske drømmer på europeiske gater".

² Kirkens Bymisjon.

Executive Summary

The prostitution arenas of larger Norwegian cities have in the last few years seen an influx of Nigerian women. Some of the women have entered Norway illegally and risk deportation; others might wish to return to Nigeria, but have problems doing so on their own. This report deals with the issue of repatriation of Nigerian women in prostitution in Norway. To find out more about what measures should be taken in a potential repatriation process, we have interviewed Nigerian women operating in prostitution arenas in Norway, and we have accompanied social workers working with the women in prostitution settings. We sought to learn more about the women's attitudes towards repatriation in Nigeria, and to investigate some underlying causes and motives for these attitudes. Secondly, we wanted to assess the women's expressed needs, fears, and wishes connected to returning to Nigeria, and the possibilities for receiving assistance in the repatriation and rehabilitation process. What do the women return to? Have their possibilities and prospects in Nigeria improved or deteriorated after their migration and stay in Europe? What measures should be in place to prevent the women from yet again becoming vulnerable in the migration process?

The women have different experiences and deal with their problems in Europe in different ways, but all had as their starting point that they wanted to improve their own and their families' lives by migrating from Nigeria to Europe. Though many of the women we interviewed knew about the possibility of ending up in prostitution in Europe before leaving Nigeria, they did not seem to have enough information or knowledge to assess the realities and conditions of the work. Different agents were involved in the migration process and their prostitution debut, and all of the women had at some point been without alternatives to prostitution, because of debt to different agents – some of which are traffickers – and family obligations. The report is set against the backdrop of the rights and needs of women that are victims of trafficking. Norwegian authorities are obliged to ensure that the rights, safety, and dignity of the women are protected, and that it is possible for them to return to Nigeria under such conditions. This obligation applies regardless of whether repatriation is voluntary or involuntary. The women might need assistance in building a new life back home, protection from traffickers, and help in dealing with their experiences.

We find that it is difficult to draw an exact boundary between trafficking and other forms of exploitation and migration, and we advise against dividing women into one category with rights as victims of trafficking, and another category without, as this

could have grave consequences for their life chances back in Nigeria. During their migration and life in prostitution, the women have been victims of various crimes, and need to be returned under certain precautions. All of the women risk being stigmatised because of their experiences with prostitution, and may be shamed if they are perceived as returning as 'failed' migrants. This may afford them few opportunities than to try to migrate again, outside legal channels; and migration in turn renders them vulnerable to traffickers and others.

When analysing the variations of the women's feelings towards their lives and futures in Europe, and potential repatriation to Nigeria, it is possible to identify some general patterns. The women can be divided into four groups according to needs and attitudes. Those who have just arrived in Europe and not begun to fulfil the plans they migrated to reach are generally very negative towards a possible return to Nigeria. Their reasons for and attitudes to migration have not changed and, if returned, they will perhaps migrate again under uncertain circumstances. The second group of women have tried their luck in Europe for a while without having reached the goals they thought they would attain. They realise that it is harder to make it in Europe than they thought, and some of these women are quite positive to return to Nigeria if there are prospects of money or jobs there. They stress that they would be dependent on having a secure income in Nigeria in order to go back. The third group consists of women who, after several years in Europe, have let go of the belief that they can make it here. They find themselves forced to work in prostitution in order to provide for family in Nigeria and/or to repay traffickers and others, and see no end to their current life situation. These women feel helpless and miserable, and many would be ready to return if they believed a return to Nigeria might improve their situation. They will need substantial help and support to start a new life in Nigeria, as they would come back without money and self-confidence, struggling with personal traumas and depression. The last group consists of women who feel that they, at least to some degree, have accomplished what they came to Europe for. Their goals may have been adjusted in the process, but they are confident that their current situation is better than if they had not left for Europe. They have papers and/or an economic situation that enables them to choose independently whether or not to go back to Nigeria. These women will likely figure as attractive role models for other girls and women in Nigeria that dream about migrating to Europe.

For the women in all four groups, certain factors influence their attitudes towards return and perceived possibilities in Nigeria: their reasons for leaving Nigeria in the first place, their autonomy in the migration process, current ties to Nigeria, legal status and number of years in Europe, age, accumulated debt, and provider responsibilities. As there are substantial individual variations in this regard, the needs of the Nigerian women in prostitution in Norway in a return process will vary. It is important that repatriation and rehabilitation efforts are sensitive towards these variations, in order

to hinder exploitation, stigmatisation, or prosecution, and, not least, to increase the women's chances to make a better life for themselves upon return.

The majority of the women in this study emphasise that their needs in a return process are of practical nature. They need work, skills, and money. A significant finding, however, is a complete lack of trust in Nigerian authorities among the women. This means that, even if Nigerian authorities are able to meet their needs adequately, it will be difficult to make the women interested in using the available facilities and projects. As the scepticism towards Nigerian authorities and Nigerian organisations is high, a major challenge for the Norwegian authorities is to build a repatriation system that is predictable, in order to create trust in the system and diminish the possibilities for corruption.

Sammendrag

De siste årene har et stort antall nigerianske kvinner kommet til Norge for å jobbe i prostitusjon i norske byer. Noen av kvinnene har reist inn i landet ulovlig og risikerer å bli returnert til Nigeria hvis de pågripes av norske myndigheter. Andre igjen kan ha et ønske om å reise tilbake til hjemlandet, men er forhindret fra å gjøre dette. Denne rapporten tar for seg problematikken rundt hjemsendelse, repatriering, av nigerianske kvinner i prostitusjon i Norge. For å kartlegge hvilke behov og tiltak som bør ligge til grunn i en slik repatrieringsprosess har vi intervjuet nigerianske kvinner på det norske prostitusjonsmarkedet. Vi har også fulgt arbeidet til ulike organisasjoner som jobber med støttetiltak for kvinner i prostitusjon i Oslo og Stavanger, og vært med ansatte på oppsøkende arbeid blant kvinnene. Vårt mål har først og fremst vært å lære mer om de nigerianske kvinnenes holdninger til repatriering i Nigeria, og å forsøke å kartlegge underliggende årsaker og motiver for disse holdningene. I tillegg har det vært viktig å forstå hvilke bekymringer og behov kvinnene har i forhold til i en slik returprosess, samt hva som finnes av assistanse og hjelpetiltak i Nigeria. Hva kommer kvinnene egentlig tilbake til? Har mulighetene og situasjonen deres i Nigeria bedret seg eller blitt verre som følge av migrasjonsprosessen? Hva slags tiltak bør iverksettes for å hindre at de forsøker å reise tilbake til Europa under vilkår som gjør dem utsatt for menneskehandel?

Kvinnene har ulike erfaringer fra migrasjonsprosessen de har vært igjennom og forholder seg til vanskelighetene i livet i Europa på ulike måter. Det de har til felles er at de alle forlot Nigeria for å skape et bedre liv for seg selv og/eller familien sin. Selv om mange av kvinnene visste at de sannsynligvis måtte jobbe i prostitusjon i Europa, hadde de ikke nok kunnskap eller informasjon til å vurdere eller forutse forholdene og betingelsene de skulle jobbe under. Ulike agenter har vært involvert i migrasjonsprosessen og prostitusjonsdebuten, og alle kvinnene har på et tidspunkt vært uten andre alternativer enn prostitusjon for å klare personlig gjeld og forpliktelser overfor familie i Nigeria. Utgangspunktet for denne rapporten er rettighetene og behovene til kvinner som er ofre for menneskehandel. Norske myndigheter er forpliktet til å sikre at rettighetene, sikkerheten og verdigheten til nigerianske kvinner som er ofre for menneskehandel ivaretaes, og at en eventuell retur til Nigeria skjer under slike forhold. Denne forpliktelsen gjør seg gjeldende uavhengig av om returen skjer frivillig eller tvunget. Kvinnene vil trenge hjelp til både å starte et nytt liv i Nigeria, til beskyttelse mot menneskehandlere og til å bearbeide opplevelsen og erfaringene fra Europa.

Vi finner imidlertid at det er svært vanskelig å trekke et klart skille mellom menneskehandel og andre former for utnytting i en migrasjonsprosess og prostitusjon. Vi vil derfor råde mot å dele kvinnene inn i to grupper hvor kvinnene i den ene gis rettigheter i egenskap av å være ofre for menneskehandel, mens kvinnene i den andre ikke får en offerstatus. En slik gjensidig utelukkende todeling vil kunne få alvorlige konsekvenser for kvinnenes liv i Nigeria når de vender tilbake. Som kvinnelige illegale migranter og prostituerte har mange av dem vært ofre for ulike former for forbrytelser og overgrep, og vil derfor ha behov for spesiell hjelp og assistanse i en tilbakeføringsprosess. I tillegg til at alle kvinnene risikerer stigmatisering i hjemlandet på grunn av prostitusjonserfaringene fra Europa, vil mange også kunne bli møtt med forakt fordi de vender hjem som 'mislykkede' migranter. Dette kan lede til at kvinnene føler at livet i Nigeria er uten muligheter, og at de heller vil forsøke å reise tilbake til Europa og igjen blir sårbare for utnytting av menneskehandlere og andre.

Gjennom analysene av kvinnenes følelser og tanker om livet og framtiden i Europa eller Nigeria, har noen mønstre trått fram. Kvinnene kan grovt sett deles inn i fire kategorier etter uttrykte behov og holdninger. De som akkurat har kommet til Europa og ennå ikke har rukket å prøve lykken er jevnt over veldig negative til å reise tilbake til Nigeria. Ettersom årsakene til at de ville migrere i utgangspunktet ikke har endret seg, vil disse kvinnene være svært disponerte for nye migrasjonsforsøk, og dermed også sårbare for utnytting. Den andre gruppen består av kvinner som har vært i Europa en stund, men ikke har nådd målene sine ennå. De innser at dette vil ta lenger tid og være hardere enn de trodde, og noen av disse kvinnene er relativt positive til å returnere til hjemlandet – vel og merke hvis det finnes utsikter til penger eller arbeid der. De understreker at de er avhengige av en sikker inntektskilde i Nigeria hvis de skal kunne reise tilbake. Den tredje gruppen kvinner har etter flere år gitt opp håpet om at de noensinne kommer til å lykkes i Europa. De føler seg tvunget til å prostituere seg for å betjene gjeld til ulike agenter eller for å forsørge familien i Nigeria, og ser ingen ende på sin nåværende situasjon. Disse kvinnene framstår svært hjelpeløse og fortvilte, og mange av dem vil nok kunne være interessert i å returnere til Nigeria hvis de forespeiles en bedre livssituasjon der. De vil imidlertid trenge en god del hjelp og støtte for å etablere seg på nytt i Nigeria. Det vil ikke være lett å komme tilbake uten penger og selvtilitt mens de samtidig sliter med traumer og depresjon etter opplevelsene i Europa. Den siste gruppen består av kvinner som føler at de, iallfall til en viss grad, har oppnådd det til kom til Europa for. Målene deres har muligens blitt justert underveis, men de er likevel overbeviste om at de har det bedre i dag enn de ville hatt om de aldri hadde forlatt Nigeria. Disse kvinnene har gyldige opphold i Schengen og/eller en økonomisk trygghet som gjør dem frie til å velge om de vil reise tilbake til Nigeria eller ikke. Det er spesielt disse kvinnene som framstår som attraktive rollemodeller for andre jenter og kvinner i Nigeria som drømmer om å migrere til Europa.

Noen felles faktorer påvirker holdningene til retur og antatte framtidige muligheter i Nigeria hos kvinnene i alle fire kategoriene: årsak til migrasjon, medbestemmelse og selvstendighet i migrasjonsprosessen, nåværende bånd til Nigeria, oppholdsstatus og antall år i Europa, alder, samlet gjeld og forsørgerbyrde. Ettersom det forekommer store individuelle forskjeller blant disse faktorene, er det åpenbart at kvinnenes behov i en returprosess vil variere tilsvarende. Det vil være essensielt at repatrierings- og rehabiliteringstiltak er sensitive og åpne overfor kvinnenes ulike behov hvis hensikten er å ikke bare returnere dem, men også beskytte dem mot utnytting og stigmatisering og ikke minst hjelpe dem til et bedre liv i Nigeria.

Majoriteten av kvinnene i dette studiet understreker at de først og fremst trenger hjelp til praktiske ting hvis de skal reise tilbake til Nigeria. De trenger arbeid, yrkesrettet trening og penger. Imidlertid uttrykker alle kvinnene vi har snakket med en total mistillit til nigerianske myndigheter. Dette betyr at selv om nigerianske myndigheter er i stand til å imøtekomme kvinnenes behov, vil det være vanskelig å få kvinnene til å benytte seg av statlige nigerianske prosjekter og hjelpetiltak. Ettersom skepsisen til nigerianske myndigheter er så høy, har norske myndigheter en stor utfordring foran seg når det gjelder å etablere repatrieringstiltak i Nigeria som kan skape tillit til systemet og forhindre mulighetene for korrupsjon.

1 Introduction

Since the summer of 2004, Nigerian women have dominated street prostitution in Norway – in the capital, Oslo, as well as in other cities – in both numbers and public attention. Accordingly, in the first half of 2006, the Ministry of Justice and the Police funded a project aimed at creating knowledge about the situation of the women from Nigeria, including under what circumstances they came to Norway. The resulting report, "African Dreams on European Streets", was released in June 2006 (Skilbrei, Tveit og Brunovskis 2006).³

This new report succeeds "African Dreams". It aims at creating more extensive knowledge about the women's wishes and prospects for the future, in order to understand what influences whether or not they wish to return to Nigeria, and under what circumstances repatriation and rehabilitation should be undertaken. We have conducted a qualitative study among Nigerian women working in prostitution in Norway, comprising interviews and observation in prostitution arenas of Oslo and Stavanger. Through this fieldwork, we have sought to explore what it will take for the women to voluntarily return to Nigeria, including the kinds of assistance and support that the women themselves believe would ease and facilitate such a return.

The backdrop of this report is the question of repatriation to Nigeria of Nigerian women that are a) in prostitution in Norway and, b) victims of trafficking.⁴ Although in this report we focus on questions of repatriation and rehabilitation, we also emphasise the importance of victims' rights in Norway. It is important to note that assistance to victims of trafficking cannot and should not be limited to repatriation to and rehabilitation in their home country: there are many measures that can and should be carried out in Norway to ensure the wellbeing and safety of victims, such as counselling and health care.

³Translated from Norwegian, original title "Afrikanske drømmer på europeiske gater". The report was based on qualitative interviews with 13 Nigerian women in prostitution in Norway. In addition, a two-month-long fieldwork was conducted in street prostitution arenas in Oslo and Stavanger, consisting of observations and interviews with women. Altogether, more than 80 women from Nigeria were interviewed, in addition to representatives from the police, social workers, border controllers, lawyers, and other professionals working directly with the women.

⁴The study focuses on trafficking for prostitution purposes. Women, men, and children can also be trafficked into other forms of sexual purposes, forced labour, war service for a foreign state, removal of organs or begging, as defined in section 224 in the Norwegian Penal code.

The report examines the women's attitudes towards repatriation to Nigeria, and suggests some causes and motives for these attitudes. We then attempt to assess the expressed needs, fears, and wishes connected to returning to Nigeria, including the chances of receiving assistance in the repatriation and rehabilitation processes. What would the women return to? Is it likely that their opportunities and situation in Nigeria have improved or deteriorated after their migration and stay in Europe? What measures should be in place to prevent the women from being exploited? But in the first sections of the report, we describe the research process, Norwegian and Nigerian authorities' obligations towards victims of trafficking and the women's backgrounds, migration and current situation.

2 Methodology

2.1 Need for Knowledge

Our previous report, “African Dreams on European Streets”, described the difficulties of the Nigerian women in prostitution in Norway. These findings generated a need for further knowledge in order to find solutions to the problems and dilemmas they face. With particular regard to the possibility of repatriation programmes, it is important to understand which circumstances influence whether or not the women wish to return to Nigeria. As noted by Skrobanek et al. (1997), victims of trafficking are rarely asked what they want and need when policies towards them are made. This report is an attempt to bring the voices of the victims themselves into the ongoing debate about what can and should be done about the situation of Nigerian women in prostitution in Norway. The underlying argument is that an understanding of victims’ situations and views is central to the development of strategies to help victims of trafficking, whether through repatriation and rehabilitation schemes and/or through alternative means. The success of a return programme to Nigeria will depend upon the degree to which the assistance provided is concurrent with the women’s needs, and the degree of trust and confidence in the assistance programmes.

The main focus of the report is to map and analyse the women’s wishes, thoughts, and prospects for the future. What incentives are needed for the women to go back to Nigeria voluntarily? What measures can be made in order to make sure that the return is as safe as it can be and that the women have a chance of having a good future? How can we minimise the risk that returned women are re trafficked to Europe? Because this report is a companion piece to “African Dreams”, we will not here describe fully every aspect of the women’s situations, nor the Norwegian authorities’ obligations towards victims of trafficking or how trafficking is dealt with in Nigeria.

2.2 Sources

To create knowledge on these issues, we have conducted a qualitative study among Nigerian women working in prostitution in Norway. We have performed in-depth interviews with 12 Nigerian women working in street prostitution, and conducted interviews and discussions with approximately 70 more women. We met and interviewed the women in prostitution areas in Oslo and Stavanger with the help of several organisations: Pro Sentret, a social service centre and national competence centre on prostitution; the Church City Mission⁵ Nadheim in Oslo; the Church City Mission Albertine in Stavanger; ROSA, a project with responsibility for implementing the government's assistance and protection measures aimed at victims of trafficking; and various women's shelters that house identified victims of trafficking. We have also made use of interviews from the previous study among Nigerian women in prostitution, particularly those interviews with women that are irregular migrants, i.e. women in Norway without a legal Schengen residence permit.

As part of our fieldwork, we accompanied the different organisations in their out-reach work among women in prostitution, during which time the employees helped us to establish contact with Nigerian women. In addition to interviewing women while accompanying the various social service centres and NGOs, we observed the women's daily lives in the prostitution arenas. We talked with social workers, health professionals, and volunteers about their experiences with the women. Cumulatively, we conducted 22 individual stays lasting between two and six hours each time, with each stay comprising a mix of accompanying social workers, interviews, and observation.

Norway has a long, strong tradition for social service centres and NGOs working with women in prostitution. These aim to reduce harm and maintain contact that will enable women to receive health-related assistance and report violence and other crimes. These organisations have gradually established trust in this environment, potentially making it possible to reach otherwise elusive categories of women, such as irregular migrants. In this second study on women from Nigeria, we hoped to interview such women: their opinions on possible repatriation and rehabilitation are particularly important, because they risk being sent out of Norway involuntarily if they are discovered. However, it was very difficult to access women that are in Norway without a legal Schengen residence permit. A police clampdown on street prostitution in Oslo during the summer of 2006 meant that documents were checked more thoroughly and more often than usual. We were told that this had consequences on both the numbers of women without documents, and on how openly women dared to talk about lacking a Schengen visa. Although the women we interviewed and met mainly reported having legal documents from Italy and Spain, we suspect that some of the women might not

⁵ Kirkens bymisjon.

have had such documents, but were unwilling to reveal that information. Conversely, in the first Fafo project on Nigerian women in prostitution in Norway, we met women that are irregular migrants in Europe. They had been able to enter Norway with no or false papers, making them particularly vulnerable because of the need to keep clear of police officials and others that could discover their secret. Being an irregular migrant in Norway may be particularly difficult because it is hard to hide in such relatively small and transparent milieus.

In the course of "African Dreams" and this study, we interviewed or discussed the issues at hand with approximately 150 different women, which is likely about one-third of the total amount of Nigerian women that have been in prostitution in Norway during 2006. We aimed at interviewing women that are in different situations and might have different needs in possible repatriation and rehabilitation schemes. Due to a range of constraints – such as a short project period, lack of access to women outside networks already accessed through the organisations, high turnover of women, and hidden activity – we have had to be pragmatic in our approach. Even though we have reached a great number of Nigerian women in prostitution, we do not know whom we have not reached. The women least willing to talk to us, or women frequenting neither the social service centres nor the traditional prostitution arenas in Oslo and Stavanger, may be in different, and possibly more vulnerable, situations than the women we interviewed. However, due to extensive fieldwork, we also managed to establish contact with women that were reluctant to speak with us initially. For example, women that would not talk to us with other women present, or expressed a negative and reserved attitude initially, sometimes opened up and talked to us at more private occasions later.

Altogether, we have talked to a wide range of women representing differences in age, length of stay in Europe, migration history, and personal needs and worries. We believe these women constitute a representative selection of Nigerian women working in prostitution in Norway, and that these women's collective contributions are vitally important in creating knowledge about the implications of possible voluntary return or deportation to Nigeria.

2.3 Research and Ethics

Our starting point in meeting women from Nigeria in prostitution in Norway has been that they can be or have been victims of trafficking. We knew from previous work that the Nigerian women have generally gone through a long and complicated migration process, arriving in a country they know little about. On the basis of this background, we assumed that most women have been or are indebted, and that someone other than themselves organised their travel and current prostitution – whether pimps, traffickers,

people smugglers, or others. We adhered to the World Health Organisation's (WHO) ethical and safety guidelines for interviewing trafficked women, particularly emphasising the women's need to be protected and their freedom to refuse to give information about themselves or their situation at any time. To ensure the women's safety and privacy, we have given the women new names and removed all identifying details.

When interviewing vulnerable people, it is important to be aware of and prepared for the needs that informants may have in relation to the interview. In this study, the women we interviewed could be vulnerable for multiple reasons, being both migrants and in prostitution, in addition to possibly being victims of trafficking or pimping. Undertaking the interviews through social service centres and NGOs and with the advice of staff meant that help was immediately available should the women require it during or after the interview. Moreover, most of the women knew well the social workers that facilitated the interviews, which seemed to make them more comfortable with the process.

3 Return and Rehabilitation of Victims of Trafficking

The process of repatriation and rehabilitation starts with identifying victims of trafficking. That is easier said than done. Although there has been significant focus on trafficking, and Norwegian authorities take their obligations in this area seriously, there are still few identified cases in Norway. Even fewer victims have made use of the special systems put into place for them, such as the reflection period⁶ and protection in the ROSA project. The most important reason for this is the problem of identifying victims. Professionals like police officers, social workers, and NGO workers might not come into contact with women that are victims, or recognise them as such, while the victims may for many reasons not identify themselves as victims of trafficking (Simeunovic-Patic 2005). Even when the women have heard of trafficking, many do not identify themselves as victims of it: "As long as the women do not understand that they are, or have been, victims of trafficking, they will continue to believe that existing assistance and protection measures are irrelevant to them. Most are therefore unaware of these measures" (Norli 2006:46 translated in Skogseth 2006:10).

Difficulties in identifying victims aside, the next step after identification is establishing that person's rights. Thus, before describing and discussing how our informants view the possibilities of returning to Nigeria, and what kind of assistance they think would help their situation, it is necessary to state what rights the women have and what concerns should guide Norwegian and Nigerian repatriation and rehabilitation efforts. In the following section, we therefore describe the legal framework that Norwegian and Nigerian authorities must relate to.

⁶In the "Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Women and Children (2003–2005)", Norwegian authorities established the right of potential victims to a delayed return (at least 45 days) to the country of origin. During this period, the victim is supposed to receive information and assistance and, if he or she wishes, assist in legal proceedings against their trafficker. In the new plan of action, "Stop Trafficking (2006-2009)", issued in December 2006, a six-month-long reflection period was established.

3.1 Whose Responsibility?

The most important document framing Norwegian authorities' activities towards human trafficking is the «Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children» (hereafter the Palermo Protocol). The Palermo Protocol is a voluntary supplement to the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime. The protocol's 20 articles outline the ratifying parties' obligations to prevent trafficking, prosecute traffickers, and protect and rehabilitate victims of trafficking. Its articles six through eight deal with the status and treatment of victims of trafficking. In this case, the most important obligations lie in article eight, which deals with the repatriation of victims of trafficking in persons. Article eight's first two paragraphs detail the proper course of action for the state that identifies a victim of trafficking, and establish the rights of the victims to return to their country of origin. In our context, the first paragraph concerns the responsibility of the country where the women are nationals.⁷ The other paragraph in this case relates to Norwegian obligations in returning women to Nigeria.⁸ Norwegian authorities are under obligation to make sure that the safety of the victim is ensured and that return does not interfere with e.g. prosecution of traffickers. It is also stated that the return should ideally be voluntary.

Nigerian authorities' obligations are also framed by international agreements. The Nigerian state, having signed and ratified the Palermo Protocol, is obliged to accept and secure the safety of victims of trafficking returned from the countries where they were identified.

It is not only Norwegian and Nigerian authorities that have obligations towards the women. In both this study and "African Dreams", we found that women often had a residence permit for either Italy or Spain, and thus had the legal right to stay in Norway via a Schengen tourist visa. In such cases, the women are "third-country nationals", and are the responsibility of the country of their entry into Europe, following the Dublin Convention.⁹ For women found in prostitution in Norway that do not have

⁷ § 1 reads: "The State Party of which a victim of trafficking in persons is a national or in which the person had the right of permanent residence at the time of entry into the territory of the receiving State Party shall facilitate and accept, with due regard for the safety of that person, the return of that person without undue or unreasonable delay".

⁸ § 2 reads: When a State Party returns a victim of trafficking in persons to a State Party of which that person is a national or in which he or she had, at the time of entry into the territory of the receiving State Party, the right of permanent residence, such return shall be with due regard for the safety of that person and for the status of any legal proceedings related to the fact that the person is a victim of trafficking and shall preferably be voluntary".

⁹ This convention came into force in 1997. It regulates the relationship between asylum seekers and states that have signed the convention, and declares that the country first entered has the responsibility to examine the asylum application. The full name of the convention is "Convention determining the State

legal residence in a Schengen country, Norway is the country of entry, and the women is therefore the responsibility of Norwegian authorities.

Many of the women had arrived in Europe as irregular migrants, but had received residence permits of various lengths through different means: through the amnesties awarded irregular migrants from time to time in both Italy and Spain;¹⁰ through marriage to a Schengen citizen; or, for many women entering via Italy, through Italian immigration law, specifically article 18 in the law of 6 March 1998 (40/98). This article grants social support and aid to victims of trafficking. Identified victims can obtain temporary residence and work permits, which may become permanent over time.¹¹

With a legal permit to a Schengen country, the women are allowed to travel freely within Schengen for a period of three months, as long as they fulfil entry conditions (such as possession of a valid travel document), are able to demonstrate a purpose of the journey, and have enough money for subsistence for the entire stay. According to the Dublin Convention, Norwegian authorities are to return women identified in Norway as victims of trafficking to Italy or Spain (or other Schengen countries) if they have permanent residence permits there.¹² In considering how to deal with Nigerian women in prostitution in Norway that might be victims of trafficking, it is therefore also important to discuss the terms under which the victims should be returned to other European countries, because that will be the case for most of the women. It is outside the scope of this report to discuss that fully here, but we will return to the issue briefly in the chapter “Filling the gaps”.

responsible for examining applications for asylum lodged in one of the Member States of the European Communities”.

¹⁰ Italian and Spanish authorities have conducted national regulation and legalisation programmes, in which irregular migrants can apply for legal residence and work permits. In Italy, 700,000 migrants applied for amnesty during the most recent programme in 2002, while in Spain 800,000 received amnesty in 2005 (Perez 2003).

¹¹ To get a residence permit through article 18, the women must give a credible account of the human trafficking process to the Italian police, and commit themselves to a rehabilitation programme that includes living in controlled shelters and obligatory participation in language classes and vocational training. Achieving a permit through article 18 is a long process. Importantly, if a woman drops out of the programme or continues/goes back to prostitution, she will immediately lose her permits and face deportation (JURK 2005).

¹² If the women have applied for asylum in another Schengen country, Norwegian authorities can apply to transfer the asylum application from the entry country to Norway, therefore undertaking entry country obligations.

3.2 States' Obligations in Rehabilitation

The Palermo Protocol, the Schengen agreement, and the Dublin Convention provide the framework for Norwegian authorities' obligations to deal with women who are or might be victims of trafficking. Other regional legal tools also come into play. For example, Nigeria is a member of the Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS), and has signed its "Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons (2002-2003)", which was revised in July 2006. While the plan is not legally binding, it is supposed to guide Nigerian efforts to combat trafficking and its consequences. To this end, Nigerian authorities established the National Agency for Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP) in 2003. We will return to the question of the priorities and content of NAPTIP's work later.

In the Palermo Protocol, the victim's rights to return to the country of origin are established, and return must be conducted with the victim's safety in mind. Sub-paragraphs three through five of article seven in the Palermo Protocol also deal with the return issue. The ratifying parties are obliged to take responsibility for the victims' physical, psychological, social, practical, legal, and security needs. In our context, this applies to Norwegian authorities' obligations when victims are identified in Norway; to Nigerian authorities' obligations in receiving victims who voluntarily or involuntarily return to Nigeria; and to the transfer of victims from one state's responsibility to another's.

The Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings (hereafter "Council of Europe Convention") also guides the obligations of Norwegian authorities. Norway has signed and is soon to ratify the convention. Several of the articles in the convention apply to the question of the treatment of victims of trafficking after identification. Article 12, on assistance to victims, requires that signing states must install measures to "assist victims in their physical, physical, psychological and social recovery" while in the country. Article 13 concerns the recovery and reflection period, while article 14 concerns resident permits. These articles are both sensitive to the needs of victims in the period after identification, and to governments' needs to obtain information in cooperation with identified victims.¹³

The Council of Europe Convention regulates many of the same issues related to the treatment of victims as the Palermo Protocol, but goes further on some points. Article 16, which deals with repatriation and return of victims, is particularly relevant for our purposes. It states that the country of origin has to accept the return of victims of trafficking "with due regard for his or her rights, safety and dignity", and that the country returning a victim of trafficking has to do so "with due regard for the rights,

¹³ However, article 12 states explicitly that help offered cannot be dependent on victims' willingness to bear witness against their traffickers.

safety and dignity of that person and for the status of any legal proceedings related to the fact that the person is a victim". Again, return "shall preferably be voluntary".

The same article states that the signing parties have to cooperate in ensuring that the repatriation is possible, and establishing repatriation programmes involving relevant national or international institutions and non-governmental organisations. Hindering exploitation and victimisation must be a goal in this cooperation, with the aim of eventual reintegration into the home society.

Children's needs are particularly catered for, and the Convention states that:

With regard to children, these programmes should include enjoyment of the right to education and measures to secure adequate care or receipt by the family or appropriate care structures (...). Child victims shall not be returned to a State, if there is indication, following a risk and security assessment that such return would not be in the best interests of the child.

Both the Palermo Protocol and Council of Europe Convention bind Norwegian authorities in its efforts to prevent and combat trafficking and protect and assist victims. These conventions and documents regulate the range of options and obligations for Norwegian authorities, in terms of helping the women while they are in Norway; returning them to another European country; or returning them to their country of origin. Norwegian authorities are obliged to offer victims of trafficking assisted return to their home country, and must take security and reintegration considerations into account if they are to repatriate victims involuntarily.

4 The Complex Situation of the Nigerian Women

We now turn to examining the situation of our Nigerian informants, including their migration processes and current living conditions, as well as the vulnerabilities they face as female (and possibly irregular) migrants. The material in this section also illustrates the fine line between the different types of irregular migration assistance and crime. Nevertheless, the women we have interviewed generally share similar vulnerabilities regardless of how their migration process is defined and categorised. The premise of this section is that knowledge about the similarity, complexity, and diversity of the women's migration out of Nigeria and recruitment into prostitution is important in order to assist the women in improving their current situations.

4.1 The Migration Process

Leaving Nigeria

In both this and our previous research (Skilbrei, Tveit and Brunovskis 2006), we found that Nigerian women end up in Norway in different ways, but generally have common reasons to leave Nigeria. The women talk about individual poverty and family responsibilities, and living in a society where they trusted no one outside their families and where the future is uncertain. The decision to migrate was not always their own. For some of the women, the migration process started as a family decision: sending a family member to Europe was seen as an investment for the whole family, in addition to (hopefully) improving the life of the migrant herself. This is not a surprising finding, but it illustrates that research on trafficking in human beings can benefit from recourse to research on migration from and within Africa. Truong notes (2006:61): "They point out that the decision-making process to enter migration networks in order to improve livelihood (or to prevent its erosion) is based on a careful assessment of household resources. Calculations are made of assets, gains and losses within a particular livelihood system and temporal frame".

The needs of the family are emphasised in most women's stories. Many carry a great deal of responsibility for their younger siblings and/or their own children, and become the family's representative in Europe when they migrate. That women end up in prostitution after having been sent from the home community to support their family is also familiar from research on women in prostitution from Thailand (Lisborg 1998).

Several of our informants say that the migration process was initiated after a deterioration of their family's life situation, for example by the loss of a parent or provider. Both Natalie and Kate explain that they decided to migrate after their fathers died, in order to help their mothers care for their younger sisters and brothers. Kate says she wants to put her younger siblings through school, while Natalie stresses that her mother was not able to feed the whole family herself. Both are the eldest daughters in their families, as are the majority of women we talked to. Although some of the women have elder brothers, their going to Europe to work does not seem to have been an issue in the decision process.

It varies whether the women claim that they and their families knew that they would sell sex in Europe. Even if they were aware of Nigerian migrants working as prostitutes in Europe, some say that they did not really believe it, or that they thought they would do better for themselves. Natalie says that her mother was convinced she would get a decent job, reasoning along the lines that, because everything is better in Europe, it had to be better than Nigeria no matter what. When Valerie left Nigeria seven years ago, she thought there were a lot of jobs in Italy as a babysitter or cleaner. The fact that Nigerian women in Europe sold sex was a well-kept secret, she claims. However, she believes that the knowledge about Europe has changed since then. Now, she says, you can see stories about women working in prostitution in Europe being deported: it is on the news, on the television, and everybody knows what is going on. Alice says that it was common knowledge when she left Nigeria four years ago, but it still did not prevent her from going:

- I had heard. Even the child will know that coming to Europe means you will become a prostitute. But my life was so critical in Nigeria, so that I cannot even feed myself, you know? I cannot even feed myself and take care of my children.

While many women claim that their families initiated or encouraged their migration, others say that no one but themselves was involved in the decision process. Aisha, who left when she was nineteen, explained that she just woke up one morning and decided she had had enough. She felt she had no future; she had no education and her only prospect was to get married to some man she did not want to marry. She decided to go to Europe to get an education and make a better life for herself. Dina, like many

other women, says that she had heard about the prosperity in Europe for a long time, and that she believed in the European dream: “When I was young, or before I left, I heard a lot about Europe, people came back from Europe with money”. Dina decided she wanted to migrate, and asked around for somebody to help her. Finally she found someone that would take her to Europe for 50,000 U.S. dollars. Lydia does not think it is possible to warn girls and women against the risks of going to Europe, as the longing for a better life is too strong, and the idea of Europe contrasts everything they do not like in their own country: “Europe is good, and you want to see it for yourself”.

After the decision to leave Nigeria is taken by the women/girls, or taken for them by family members, traffickers, or others, the question remains how to get from Nigeria to a European country. Getting a residence permit or tourist visa to a Schengen country is very difficult for Nigerians (Carling 2006). Nigeria is considered a risk country, meaning that Nigerians have problems migrating to Schengen countries. This means that many have to migrate illegally, becoming irregular migrants dependent on human smugglers or criminal networks.

The stories about how the women came in touch with the people that arranged their travel to Europe vary. Some, like Dina, actively sought information and assistance. Others say total strangers contacted them on the street, while a large group met the “travel agent” through family, friends, and personal networks. Lilly had never thought about going to Europe before she was approached by a neighbour while working as a maid in her aunt’s house:

- She see[s] me and say hi, are you coming to Europe? Me, I never enter Europe before. At that time, I don’t know how to write my name. So I tell her, I don’t go to school, I don’t know how to write, she said no problem. She gave me money to go and snap picture of myself. She prepared everything for me and gave me paper.

Many of the women say that it is not unusual for agents to contact Nigerian parents offering help for their children to migrate. Lydia says that families with young daughters are approached by agents from a “travel agency”, offering to help their daughters to Europe for a fee: “If your father pay 10,000¹⁴ or 20,000 naira, we can take you to Europe”.

The women typically claimed that their families had to borrow money or sell something to pay the agent’s fee. If the women made the deal themselves, they had to put themselves into debt. Often the sums they discussed, like the ones Lydia mentioned, was not very high by Norwegian standards. However, the girls that described smaller initial sums usually experienced a rapid increase in debt and expenses during their travel to Europe. According to women we talked to, the final debts vary between

¹⁴ 10,000 Nigerian naira equals approximately 61 euros (exchange rate as of 8 December 2006). In December 2002, when Lydia left, 10,000 naira equaled approximately 79 euros.

10,000 and 60,000 euros, often closer to the latter sum. Some knew the whole sum from the time they made the deal, but may not have had an accurate idea of how much money it actually was, or what they had to go through to fulfil their obligations. They agreed to the deal partly because they believed it would be easy to pay the sum once they got to Europe, but also because they had no choice if they wanted to migrate. As Camilla says: “I knew it was too much money. But there is no other way that I can leave Nigeria except this”.

The Journey to Europe

The kind of service the women buy from the agents in Nigeria differs. Some of the women’s agents only sold information about how to migrate, but did not offer transport or any other kind of practical assistance. Other agents arranged the whole trip, including airplane ticket, false passport, and visa for the destination country. This latter assistance is significantly more expensive than buying only information, but much simpler overall, and may make the travel itself less dangerous and traumatising for the women.

The women that only bought information in Nigeria typically left on their own, usually by bus through West Africa, then over land or by boat to North Africa. This trip can take a long time, and the women were occasionally conned by the people who sold them the information. For example, Lydia’s trip took much longer than her father was told when he made the agreement with the agent: it took Lydia four years to get out of Africa. She describes those years as a living hell, and says that, in that period, she was unable to get in touch with her family. Grace travelled out of Africa by foot to Morocco via Mali. She travelled alone, but met other migrants on her way. She claims that many people died en route, and that they could go up to three weeks without food.

In North Africa, the women often ended up in camps along with other migrants from sub-Saharan Africa. These camps do not have a status as refugee camps, but contain thousands of Africans waiting for a possibility to get to Europe. Women reported to have stayed in those camps from one to four years. The situation in these camps is hard, especially for female migrants. They have few possibilities to feed themselves, and, without using the term “prostitution”, Lydia claimed that women had to trade sex to get a piece of bread or coffee. Many of the women we talked to were very uncomfortable when discussing this period. Wendy reacted strongly when we asked about the stay in North Africa, and said she had decided never to talk about the time in the camp because it made her so sad.

The women reported having been brought from North Africa to Europe by boat, a journey that cost a considerable amount of money. Rachel told us that agents actively approached migrants in the camps in Morocco. She says that she thinks agents in North Africa call contacts in Europe and ask them if they need women. Female pimps in Europe could for instance answer: “Yes, cross two women over the sea for me”. What

Rachel was told was, “You are pretty; you should work in Europe”. She told us that she found it flattering and relieving to be picked out like this.

To travel from North Africa to Europe, most migrants are dependent on assistance in getting both documents and transport. This creates a market for human smugglers who offer their service for money, either paid in advance or when the customer arrives in Europe. Because this does not necessarily require exploiting the migrants’ situation, human smuggling is sometimes considered a “victimless crime”.¹⁵ There is, however, a danger that smugglers exploit their power controlling the life and destiny of the migrants. Thus, migrants who use smugglers risk being victims of trafficking. Moreover, if the transport from North Africa to Europe is arranged in the way that Rachel describes it above – someone contacting vulnerable female migrants with the intention to recruit them into prostitution – that person will be guilty of human trafficking, not smuggling.

For those women that bought some information and help in Nigeria and the rest along the way, there is little evidence implicating the agents in Nigeria as recruiting them intentionally to exploit them, for example in prostitution, in Europe. However, this situation is particularly complex, as the initial agents (or even traffickers) are often relatives or people the women knew beforehand (UK Home Office 2006). This may entail that the women are more reluctant to categorise their experiences as exploitation. Overall, it is impossible for us to say whether the different agents the women met on their journey had planned to recruit them into prostitution. The women we talked to interpret this assistance as separate parts of the migration process, and not as part of organising their entry into prostitution, which happened later. Still, regardless of the sum the women borrowed from each agent or how much each agent knew about her accumulated debt, it is reasonable to believe that a significant number of these agents must have been aware of the women’s lack of possibilities to repay the money without entering prostitution in Europe.

Legal Entry and Residence in Europe

An important reason why the women have to receive assistance from different agents is that legal entry into Europe is virtually impossible for them, coming from a ‘risk country’ like Nigeria and lacking the education and resources that could merit a visa or residence permit. They need help in crossing borders illegally and obtaining documents that can pass as legal documents, such as fake passports that will give them access

¹⁵The United Nations’ “Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air” defines human smuggling in the following terms: “Smuggling of migrants’ shall mean the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident”.

to legal permits. As described earlier, there are different roads to legal documents in Italy and Spain. Anna explains:

When I come to Italy, they shared papers generally. I got info that the Italian government would give us papers. I have papers for two years now. I will get new papers, and after ten years I will get permanent stay.

Many of the women are unable to explain exactly how the system of obtaining residence and work permits functions in Italy and Spain, and the way they describe the process varies. Some say that the “madam”¹⁶ helped them with the papers, while others say they did it all themselves. More than one gives the impression that it is not very difficult to get a residence permit in these countries, and that this is well known. Aisha says:

In Spain, there are many ways to have your papers. If you have been there for three years, you sign. You go for something called asylum, so if you have been staying there for three years you are writing for asylum and all that.

Lilly explains how she started to work as a babysitter before she got her papers:

It was a black job. If you need the work, you can still work, if you get the paper or don't get paper. Black job, it is dangerous sometimes, but is still good. Cause working on the street was too hard for me.

But even if the women argue that it is fairly easy to get an initial temporary residence permit in Italy or Spain, many of the women we met worried about renewal of their permits, and the possibility of finally obtaining a permanent residence permit. Renewal of the residence permit often depends on whether you have a permanent job and are able to support yourself. Heather does not have a work contract in Italy at the moment, but hopes to be able to buy one on the black market before her residence permit expires. Another possibility to secure continuation of the residence permit is to marry a Schengen citizen. Some of the women we talked to were or had been married to a European man, and many more hoped to marry one in the future.

Illegal Entry and Residence in Europe

In addition to women that operate in the Norwegian prostitution market with residence permits from a Schengen country (and thus have a right to stay in other Schengen countries for up to three months), there are women that stay illegally in Norway. According to information given by the women we interviewed, irregular migrants consi-

¹⁶The term “madam” is often used by the women and in literature on Nigerian prostitution to describe a female pimp. She can constitute the top of a larger network, just an intermediary in such a network, or she can operate alone.

tute a minority of the group, and the number is said to increase or decrease according to the rate of document checks. We cannot assess whether this information is true or false; it might be that women under-report not having proper documents, a problem that would be exacerbated in times when the women feel threatened or insecure due to frequent police controls. However, findings by the police indicate that there are quite a few Nigerian women without legal papers in Norway every year. When the police at Oslo Airport Gardermoen suspect false documents, travellers are checked against international registers. In 2005, falsified Nigerian documents constituted 13 out of a total of 50 false documents registered. Since the document checks at the airport are done unsystematically based on suspicion, this number of false Nigerian documents cannot be used to estimate the actual distribution of false documents among the Nigerian women. Interestingly, however, most of the women caught with false Nigerian papers turned out to have genuine Italian documents. This might mean that the women have been able to obtain genuine Italian papers by using their false Nigerian ones as identity documents, or that the Italian papers are bought illegally without showing correct Nigerian papers.

As already mentioned, we met fewer women who admitted they were in Norway illegally during this research period than the last one. The fieldwork for "African Dreams in Norwegian Streets" (Skilbrei, Tveit and Brunovskis 2006) was conducted from February to April 2006, while the fieldwork for this project was conducted six months later, in September and October 2006. According to the women, the document checks over the summer may have deterrent and preventive effects for some time afterwards. Camilla has permit of stay in Italy and has been to Norway several times. She said of the effect of the raids:

When police started arresting, controlling in the streets, from July to August, those that don't have permit of stay they should go back. You know, they arrest them. So lot of girls ran to Italy, Spain or the place they came from. Because lot of them don't have papers. There was a lot of girls, now it is not much as before.

The intensified document checks in July and August 2006 may have affected the number of reported unauthorised stays in the second stage of research, either because many of the women without legal documents left, or because they lied about their status in fear of being caught with false or no documents. However, when Oslo police did a raid against various apartments in a pimp case in late 2006, they found several Nigerian women without a residence permit for any Schengen country. Those women lived alongside women with permits, and demonstrated that, even when the police have practiced quite strict document control, women have managed to escape the scrutiny of immigration control.

4.2 Debts and Obligations

As described above, the women's stories are complex and their travel long, making it difficult to differentiate between human trafficking, human smuggling, pimping, and other forms of participation in the organising of the women's migration and prostitution debut. Nigerian women, like others from sub-Saharan Africa, have few possibilities to migrate legally to Europe, and are dependent on some sort of assistance, often in the form of human smugglers (Carling 2006:9). Women might also be more attractive for human smugglers because they have a better chance of repaying debt (due to participation in prostitution in Europe). Indeed, in the previous study on the experiences of Nigerian women in Norway (Skilbrei, Tveit and Brunovskis 2006), we were told that human smugglers charged women more than men for this reason, and that they preferred female clients.

The women we interviewed had all borrowed money to get to Europe, but reported variations in levels of debt to agents and traffickers. As previously mentioned, our informants reported debt up to 60,000 euros upon arrival in Europe. This is consistent with findings in other reports (e.g. Okojie 2003; UNODC 2005).

Many of the women are reluctant to talk about their debts or their agreements with different agents and madams. While they may be scared of punishment and sanctions, many also emphasise that they have made an agreement, and that it is only fair that they keep it. Brenda has been in Europe for two years, and is working on reducing her debt. She says she pays whenever she has money for it, and will not get in trouble if she is not able to pay for a month or two. The important thing is that she pays the whole amount in the end. She does not identify herself as a victim, and refuses to talk about whether or not the agent or agents is exploiting her:

In Nigeria, if you want to travel, you can borrow money and then you pay it back, a promise is a promise. If somebody give you money you must pay it back. You have to pay, it is fair. I have to fulfil my promise, I don't want problem.

Brenda admits that both she and her family will get into trouble if she doesn't pay, but does not want to elaborate because non-payment is not an option.

Anna says she also has to pay her debt regardless. However, the sanctions she fears are neither secret nor mysterious: she says she borrowed money from the bank, and if she doesn't pay back in time, the bank will take her family's house. Whether she means a bank in the European sense, or some other unauthorised money-lending firm, is unclear. To borrow money from banks or other legal money-lending institutions, you usually have to possess some property or other form of collateral. The majority of our informants seem to have borrowed money informally from private agents or madams. The agreements or pacts are sealed through signing a contract and/or through oaths and vows at shrines conducted by juju priests. Jane explained what happened when

her madam took her to a juju priest as part of sealing the agreement before they left Nigeria:

She took me to one man, in Nigeria. The man is a spiritualist. They call them juju in Nigeria. So the man said I should take an oath that I would pay back the money. Honestly, I thought that I would do a good job and pay back the money so I took the oath. And she said it is not enough, then cut my fingernails and the hairs of my private parts. I didn't really bother because I think anybody can struggle for life and work and you pay back what you owe. So now she said ok, if you don't pay back this money it is going to hurt on you. Either you die or we will kill you, and they said a lot of things. I swore and left.

Several women say they have been taken to a juju priest before they left Nigeria, but how the women relate to the function and effects of the juju rituals vary. Some women sincerely believe in the power of the juju rituals they have gone through, while others consider it a mere contract ritual with no magic powers. Lilly's subjective fear is real enough when she explains how the madam referred to the juju rituals when she did not pay the money she owed:

She started threatening, she starting talking what would happen to me, they would do this and this... Because they have my picture, they have my hair, they have part of my body. She say she will use it for me. The native doctor. She want to wound me, she want to do this... she talk many rubbish of which I panic. It was very, very terrible for me.

Lilly says that she doesn't believe what the madam and the 'native doctor' believe, but still she is very afraid of what the madam can do to her even if she is miles away. She claims that she has had severe feelings of being choked when the madam has called her on the phone, and one time she even fainted. She thinks that the madam may have put something in her mouth when she called her, something that could jinx Lilly over the phone line. They can do that in Nigeria, she says.

Some of the women we talked to said that their belief in juju had faded after some time in Europe. Although Aisha's madam threatened her with jinxes when she stopped paying, Aisha felt safe after one year in Spain:

I don't think it is dangerous. The fact is that it is psychology, they will say, I am going to do voodoo for you, I am going to kill you, I am going to do all that. The only way they can kill me is paying somebody to come and kill me at night. But doing voodoo and all that, I don't think they will kill me. But the family in Nigeria have the fear because they are living inside that psychology. But I don't believe in that.

Even though Aisha did not believe in juju against herself, she was worried about her family in Nigeria. She said that the madam was very dangerous, and feared that

she would send somebody to harm or kill her family. Her family in Nigeria was “very, very afraid”, and eventually they had to move to a different state to feel safe. Aisha said she was confident of her own safety because she lived in Spain and could turn to the Spanish police if she had problems. When asked if her family had contacted the police in Nigeria, she did not show the same trust in the police in her home country: “Police in Nigeria is very, very corrupt, so no need! I think a policeman will even come and kill you”. Like Aisha, Vanessa does not think the police in Nigeria can help her. She is convinced that her madam will come after her if she reports the madam to the police in Nigeria – even if the madam goes to prison, she will still have people on the outside. Further, Vanessa says that the police will only help those who can afford to pay bribes, which her madam surely can. In Italy, she has heard stories about a women’s family that had been beaten, and is very worried about what the madam might do to her family if she doesn’t pay: “Because she have people around her. She have boys she can send, to go and beat. Beat, beat, beat. Painful”.

Many women did not mention fear or threats as reasons why they paid their agents or madams. As stated above, the women often referred to the agreements they had entered as reasonable. However, there were exceptions: some women we met had consciously chosen not to pay their debt because they considered the sum to be far too big, the working conditions unbearable, or both. Aisha said that she just decided that enough was enough. After one year, she told the madam that she was through paying and moved out of the apartment they shared.

Dina asked around for somebody to help her to get to Europe in Nigeria, and took an offer from an agent who said she had to pay nearly 60,000 euros for papers and a direct flight. When she had settled in Italy, she realised how much money this was, and refused to pay more than 20,000 euros. Her sponsor sent men to come and beat her, but she still did not pay and instead reported the sponsor to the police. She says that she had never been in contact with the Italian police before, because she intended to pay all the money and did not want to get the sponsor into trouble. When she approached the police, they took her seriously and arrested the sponsor at first, but he managed to return to Nigeria before trial. Dina says it was difficult for her family in Nigeria in the beginning. But when they understood that the sponsor had not kept his part of the agreement, they would not let him harass them anymore:

At first my family was afraid of the sponsor because I owed a lot of money. But, he did not tell me it was so hard, so now my family fight with the sponsor. They are not afraid of him anymore. My mother is very angry with him and yells at him. My sisters and brothers fight with him, he bring people to fight, they have a lot of fight, but they are not afraid. Before they were afraid, they had to move from the house. But after they understood the man also broke his promise to me, they are not afraid anymore.

For Aisha and Dina, standing up to the traffickers has seemingly worked. Others find that the consequences are too grave. Camilla agreed to a debt of 44,000 euros for being brought directly to Italy by air, even though she doubted from the start that she would be able to pay the madam back. She started to work in the streets, but ran away after one week without paying anything. She was eventually granted stay under Italy's article 18, but has since lived in constant fear of reprisals from her madam. Moreover, she cannot return to Nigeria without endangering her own and her family's safety. Although she made a choice not to sell sex to pay back the money, she feels that the consequences are too tough. She has been through the rehabilitation programme of article 18 in Italy, but does not feel that the Italian or Nigerian governments are able to protect her or her family against retaliations from her trafficker. She says that if she ever gets a sufficiently well paid normal job, she will start to repay her debts, little by little, so that she can see her family again.

Finally, some women have been able to repay the large debt, but that doesn't necessarily mean that they are free to do what they like and, for example, quit prostitution. Natalie has been in Europe for six years, and says she now uses all her money on planning a better future for herself and her family. Although it was very difficult, she managed to repay all of her debt in the first three to four years. She is extremely anxious to get a regular job, but, as she has to provide five younger sisters and brothers in Nigeria with food, clothing, and school fees, she still cannot quit prostitution. Several women we met explained that they had finished paying their debt while in Italy and Spain, before coming to Norway and selling sex for the sole reason of supporting their families in Nigeria. The continuous need and demand for money by the family in Nigeria makes it difficult for the women to move on, even if they have are debt-free. The normal jobs they are able to get in Italy and Spain seldom cover both their own living expenses and remittances. Thus, the women see no other solution than making ends meet through the sex market. Some also state that their relatives in Nigeria are greedy, claiming that the family back home has great demands, and they are expected to support family members they have never met, such as fathers' new children by another wife. One of the women we met had gone back to Nigeria on holiday, and found it difficult to see that her family lived in relative prosperity because of her prostitution money. Others again talked about how much they longed to visit their families to see the fruits of their labour themselves. Most of the women emphasised the satisfactory feeling of knowing that they could help their families have a better life, but some felt that it was too big a sacrifice. One woman was bitterly looking forward to the day when she would face her parents and tell them how she had made the money they had lived well on all these years.

4.2 Life in Europe

All the women we interviewed arrived in Norway by air, but we know that others come by train or bus through Sweden and Denmark. Most of the women we spoke to in both studies came directly on low-budget internal Schengen flights from larger cities in Italy and Spain. Most of them had already obtained a permit to stay in another country, and some even received assistance as victims of trafficking; however, they claim that life in the country of residence, mainly Italy and Spain, did not enable them to fulfil their needs and obligations. The women report poor working conditions, low wages, and involuntary part-time hours in service work in Spain and Italy. They know that Italy and Spain are wealthy societies with welfare schemes unavailable to them, and are coming to realise that the European dream is for Europeans only. As Joanne puts it: “Italy is ok, but not ok for me”. Moreover, she claims that the rights awarded to irregular migrants are generous only up to a point, and that old problems are replaced with new ones as irregular migrants’ status is regularised in Italy and Spain: “It is a good idea to give papers to the girls to not have problems with the police – but later we have problems with job”.

Camilla’s story exemplifies the dilemmas the women face. She has a residence permit in Italy that she acquired after being identified as a victim of trafficking. She stayed in a shelter and was given immediate assistance. However, after exiting the programme, she found that she could not earn sufficient money in legitimate jobs – yet her residence permit was conditioned on her leaving prostitution. She could not therefore return to prostitution in Italy (she also feared being found by relatives of her trafficker), but had few other means to finance her own living expenses and remittances. Camilla said:

As I am living in Europe, my people are supposed to live more better than the way the lived when I was [in Nigeria]. But I can’t send even for my mother to pay her house rent, she can’t pay. Started cry, you know? There is no way out. A friend of mine came to Norway for prostitution. She told me, Camilla, instead of you to remain like this, why can’t you come and try Norway. I said, what job actual job are they doing there? She say, prostitution, I said ok. I didn’t want to come, but I can’t find my life... It is not easy for me to live there you know. So I decided to come, to Norway.

Camilla’s story illustrates that, for many, entering prostitution in Norway is worth the gamble. If it doesn’t work out, they can return to their Schengen entry-country.

In a slightly different twist, Heather explains that she has come to work in prostitution in Norway because it is safer to sell sex in Norway than in Italy. This is not only due to the conditions of her residence permit; she says that there is less violence, criminality, and pimps in Norway. Some of the women also explain that, when they

are in a position where they feel forced to sell sex for a living, it is easier to do so in a foreign environment than in their own country or neighbourhood.

Nearly all the women are disappointed over the money they earn in prostitution in Norway. They had either been promised or had assumed that there would be more clients in Norway, and that the work would generate more income. Several women are also frustrated by the future prospects in Norway altogether. They were hoping that – after the initial inevitable sex work – they might obtain a permanent stay and a regular job in Norway. They have seemingly come in the mistaken belief that it is possible to obtain work or residence permits in Norway in the same way as in Italy and Spain. In Italy and Spain, rumours about “better” countries and opportunities circulate among the Nigerian women, along with practical tips and information. Many women depend on other people for information about the possibilities in other countries, and this information is often for sale: we heard from several women that information on how to enter the sex market in Norway costs up to 1,000 euros. The women report cases in which the organisers, whether pimps, traffickers or others, pass on faulty information. This in some ways mirrors the initial migration process from Nigeria to Europe.

The women we met primarily commute to Norway on tourist visas to sell sex, either regularly or on special occasions to solve immediate economic difficulties. Some stay in Norway for three continuous months, others for only a couple of weeks. What they have in common is that they do not seem able to leave prostitution permanently, due to lack of other means of sufficient income. Anna says:

I thought good things would happen in Europe. It is harder in Europe than I thought. If we work in the streets, we get something, if not, you get nothing.

5 Attitudes Towards Returning to Nigeria

Though many of our informants confirmed that they were aware, before leaving Nigeria, of the likelihood of ending up in prostitution in Europe, they did not seem to have the requisite information or knowledge to understand the realities and conditions of the work. Very few of the women we encountered in our two research periods have been content or happy with their lives in Europe. Some express relative satisfaction stemming from their arrival in Europe from Africa, emphasising that helping their family at home makes their struggle worthwhile, and claiming that they feel happy and lucky to have escaped the poverty and corruption. Yet many underline that they continue to struggle, and have not achieved the life they were hoping for. A common factor for the majority of the women is being in a state of continuous transition, constantly shifting to another place or another way of living – caught in limbo, hoping for a change in one direction or another. Some have plans for making a better future for themselves, while others feel powerless and confused. Some remain positive towards a future in Europe, others are disillusioned: they wish for a better future, but cannot realistically see how it will happen. A few believe the solution to their problems is to go back to Nigeria, but most of the women feel that – after finally making it to Europe – they have no choice but to remain and endure for at least a substantial period of time.

Analysing the variations of the women's feelings towards their lives and futures in Europe or in Nigeria, it is possible to identify some patterns. The younger women, often those who have been in Europe the shortest time, seem to be most optimistic. Either they believe that it is possible to live a good life in Europe, or they plan a successful return to Nigeria once they have saved enough money. The older and/or more experienced women are usually more realistic or pessimistic. They know that life in Europe is difficult, have been unable to leave prostitution, and do not see how life will improve. Even among this group, however, can be found some who feel they have succeeded: they have made enough money to have a good life, and are free to choose whether to live in Nigeria or Europe. More common are those who feel they are not particularly successful but, after many years in Europe, have achieved independence and relative predictability, and thus come to terms with things their situation.

Following from this, we divide the women into four rough categories:

1. ***Just started*** – Women that have been in Europe for a short time, remain optimistic, and do not know how difficult it will be to reach goals and fulfil obligations (send money home, pay debts, get a normal job, live a normal life)
2. ***Not there yet*** – Women that have stayed in Europe for some time and realise it is difficult, but still have hopes for the future and feel they have not completed their mission
3. ***Disillusioned*** – Women that have stayed in Europe for some time, and have no hopes for a better future
4. ***Confident agents*** – Women that have stayed in Europe for some time and feel that their goals are reached and expectations met, *or* have learned to master and accept the situation even if it is not what they initially wished for

In all categories, we find both positive and negative attitudes towards returning to Nigeria. Importantly, the reasons and arguments for wanting or being able to go back vary significantly according to each woman's personal situation. We will describe the categories in more detail here, and return to the issue of how these categories relate to the needs of the women in chapter 8, "Filling the gaps".

5.1 Just Started

We did not meet many women that had just started out in Europe. This is compatible with the finding that many women live first in Italy and Spain to obtain a legal residence permit, before travelling to other parts of Europe; which is in turn further strengthened by findings from a registration process conducted among Nigerian women by the Norwegian police department Kripos¹⁷ in 2004. Of the 27 women registered by Kripos, 19 had residence permits in Italy, four in Spain, while four were not registered by country of residence. Twelve of the women with Italian residence permits had been in Europe for an average of 6.5 years before travelling to Norway.¹⁸

This category is therefore somewhat secondhand, reflecting what our informants told us about their feelings and expectations when they first arrived in Europe. As alluded to above, most seemed to think they would only have to work in prostitution for a short time to pay their debts. They then expected to get a regular job and be free to explore and benefit from the advantages in Europe. Irene said that when she first

¹⁷Police Chief Inspector Terje Nordtveit, Kripos (Norwegian National Criminal Investigation Service), 10 May 2006.

¹⁸Arrival information was not available for the other women with Italian permits.

came to Spain she did not think about the debt, having been so happy to arrive. After some time she discovered the hardships of her new situation. When we asked her if she would do it again if she knew what she knows now, she said:

But even if they told you, you won't believe it, you say it is a lie. It is a lie. I know that, you will not believe it.

Brenda is one of the few girls we met that, sincerely or not, continues to express great optimism towards life in Europe. She is young, having only been in Europe for two years, and gives the impression that her "real life" in Europe has not yet begun. Brenda left Nigeria at the age of twenty and now has a residence permit in Italy. Her living and working conditions in Italy do not seem better than the other women's, but she is not similarly frustrated:

Life in Italy is okay. I have two jobs. I work with cleaning and make maybe 400 euros every month. They call if there is work, sometimes they don't call.

Brenda says she would like to go back to Nigeria to visit her family and for holidays, but she does not want to live there, at least at present – although maybe sometime in the future. However, Brenda did not want to discuss her debt level or who assisted her migration, saying only that she borrowed money to travel to Europe, and emphasising that it is only fair that she pays it back. When we asked her what would happen if she went back to Nigeria without finishing paying her debt, she only answers: "You have to pay it". All the same, she did not anticipate that she would get into any trouble if she returned to Nigeria. Finally, Brenda says that her family is aware that the situation in Europe is difficult, and understand if she is unable to send money some months.

What seems to characterise the women in this group is that none of them want to go home. Many will not even think about it or discuss it: they have only just arrived in Europe, and will do everything in their power to stay and realise their dreams and obligations. At this point, they would most likely require prospects of a particularly good future in Nigeria to consider voluntarily going back.

5.2 Not There Yet

After the women have stayed in Europe for some time, most realise that life in Europe is tough – but that doesn't necessarily mean they are ready to give up. The majority of the women we met belong in this group. These women, even those that have been deceived by traffickers, talk of making the best of their situation. Some have plans, which they believe are attainable with patience and intelligence; others cling to the hope that their luck will eventually change. Yet others have come to the realisation

that, regardless of their wishes, they must endure life in Europe until they are able to secure a better life for the family in Nigeria.

Claire's father has six wives and 25 children, but almost none of the other family members have paid employment. If Claire did not send money home, their lives would be very different. Thus, she explains, she cannot go home unless she can find other means of providing for them. Relatedly, many women claim that they would voluntarily go back to Nigeria if they could save enough money to start a profitable business there. Significantly, all of our informants emphasise the lack of stable employment and incomes in Nigeria, making entrepreneurship seem the only viable solution. Claire says she would need between 10 and 20 thousand euros to start a business in Nigeria – that is, a business grander than the tiny, provisional shop her mother runs in front of their house, which generates only a small amount of income. The money would go to establishing and renting the business premises. In Nigeria, 20 thousand euros go a long way, and the sums she and others believe are necessary to start up a business, means that they have ambitions to a whole other life than is common in the areas of Nigeria they come from. Kate also estimates that she would need 20,000 euros to open a shop in Nigeria. She explains that it is very difficult to open a business without this money, because you cannot get a loan without security in a valuable house. Natalie, 31 years old, describes her aspirations as follows:

I want to go back to Nigeria and open a shop where they store fish! I am saving money; I put some money every month in my own bank account at Western Union. I hope to save 30-50.000 euros before I go home.

Natalie worked part-time in a similar fish shop when she lived in Nigeria, and says she knows that there is a good market for this trade. But obtaining suitable premises, with a cold-storage chamber and warehouse, is expensive. Natalie saves money systematically, and seems proud that her future enterprise would create work for others. She talks in great detail about her plans for the shop and warehouse, but also seems doubtful. As we prepared to leave the interview, she sadly asked whether we believe that she will ever be able to open her shop.

Another obstacle that many women cited is the difficulty of returning to Nigeria so long as they only have a temporary residence permit in a European country. Without a secure income in Nigeria, they cannot risk being prevented from returning to Europe. Women claim that they cannot even return on holiday, because of the fear that their documents will be stolen. Some say they would go back to Nigeria temporarily if they had the assurance of a permanent stay in (and guaranteed ability to return to) Europe. The dilemma of longing for, but staying away from, Nigeria is most acute for women separated from their children. Sue has two children who live in Nigeria with her parents. She misses them greatly, but going back is currently not an option:

There is nobody that does not want to stay with their family. But I never thought about going back. My children go to school now, but if I go back to Nigeria they would not go to school, there is no money.

In this category, there is a difference between those that left home on their own initiative, and those that did not. While both groups send remittances, the former group's future prospects seem more focused on their individual possibilities in Europe: they have left Nigeria for a better life, and going back is not an option. They are looking for solutions and loopholes to improve their living conditions in Europe, and most are not willing to even discuss going back to Nigeria as an alternative. Aisha is an example. Despite missing her parents and siblings greatly, she claims that she never thinks about going back, and will do anything in her power to stay in Europe: "After everything you passed through, you like to fight for yourself". After four years in Europe, she is no longer paying her madam and plans to save money to finish her education. Her future lies in Europe, not Nigeria:

I have better future here than in my country I think. 'Cause you can see young girls, twenty years, just getting married without being knowledged and all that, without knowing so many things, being treated by the husband and... I don't want to pass through that. I better stay.

Aisha emphasises that it is especially difficult to be a woman in Nigeria. She says that some men treat women "very, very bad". For her, it feels impossible to return to such a state of affairs.

Common among the women in the "not there yet" category is that they have hopes and strategies for a better future. However, their dreams and goals may be very different, both in course and feasibility. Edith is one of the handful of women we met that has been back to Nigeria to visit. She misses her children when she is in Europe, but keeps her spirit up because she has a plan to change the direction of her life. Edith has been working a great deal in Norway the last year, in more and longer periods than she legally is entitled to. She sends her income to her parents and two children in Nigeria, but considers this only a temporary solution. When she returns to Spain in a few weeks, she plans to find a regular job. She says that she will write letters to different factories, sending "her name and address and everything". When she has found a job, worked for two to four years, and demonstrated a stable income, she will apply for family reunification for her children. However, she does not want to stay in Spain with her children, as life there is too difficult. Rather, she has made an arrangement with her sister in the United Kingdom, such that her sister will come to Spain and bring Edith's children back to the UK on the sister's children's passports. When the children are settled in the UK, Edith will join them. The final step would be for Edith's boyfriend in Nigeria to also join them. Edith is soon going home to Nigeria to visit, and says that,

if she should get pregnant this time, she would go to the UK to give birth. The baby could then live there with her sister until Edith has succeeded in bringing the other children safely to Europe through Spain. Edith's plan exemplifies the plans of many of the women, in that it is complex and dependent on many external factors that they cannot all control themselves.

Finally, in this group of women, there are great variations as to whether they wish to return to Nigeria. Many would like to go home if they could do so in an economically viable way. For some, this means continuing to support their families while living in Nigeria; for others, it means being able to pay off their debt so they can return without fear of retaliation from agents and organisers. However, as described above, several women that do not have children in Nigeria and initiated the migration themselves do not wish to return to Nigeria, but want to continue struggling for a better life in Europe. Common to all women in this, seemingly largest category is that they are tired of and frustrated with life in Europe, and are constantly searching for a better solution. They cannot give up yet, but realise that reaching their goals takes much longer and is much tougher than they thought. They also tend to feel that something must change within a certain period of time.

5.3 Disillusioned

Some of the interviews during our fieldwork were harder than others. We heard many difficult and moving stories, but despite their hardships, many of the women retained high spirits and had hopes for the future. But some of the women seemed incapable of such optimism. These were usually among the 'elder' the women (i.e. in their late twenties or older) that had been in Europe for several years, found their situation unbearable and did not see any solutions or means of improvement when realistically assessing their own situation. They showed signs of being depressed, and had few or no illusions when it came to their own abilities to do something about their own situation. Neither a future in Europe nor in Nigeria appeared as viable options. Women in this state reported that it was impossible for them to go back to Nigeria, either because of unpaid debt or because they had nothing to go back to. After several years in Europe, they could still not find a way out of prostitution, no matter how hard they tried.

Alice has two children in Nigeria. She ran away from her madam because she did not want to work in prostitution. Nevertheless, when she could not find any other way to make money in Europe, she found herself forced into selling sex. Now she cannot go back to Nigeria because she has not paid the debt to her madam and, if she does not continue to sell sex, her children will starve. She says she cannot apply for a family reunification because her regular job does not pay well enough for her to support her

children. The conditions of her residence permit forbid her from selling sex in Italy, so she commutes to Norway to make money. She misses her children terribly, and relates an incident when her eleven-year-old daughter called her crying from Nigeria, demanding to know why her mother had left them. Alice believes she can never go home because of retaliations from her madam. She feels totally helpless:

When I see the families, families that are well organised, well loved, I have to... I can't even... If I killed myself, then my children would still remain you know, their life will remain miserable, so I am not so much... I am not so happy. You know. So I don't know what to do. And I can't, even if I have the money, I can't go to Nigeria because of my problem. So you know my life is just a...I don't know what to do really, I don't know what to do.

Julie, who is in a similar position as Alice, said that the only solution she could imagine to her problem was to marry a European man. That way she would have a permanent residence permit and be allowed to apply for family reunification for her children. She said she prays that God would give her a kind man who understood her situation, but knew it would likely never happen:

It is not that it is very hard to get a man, but... As I am working in the street, I can't get a responsible man. As I am working in the street, no man will like to take me. Because I am working in the street. You know.

Vanessa tells us that this is her second time in Europe. She stayed in Italy for some years earlier, but was deported back to Nigeria because of false documents. She describes her return to Nigeria as very traumatic: although her mother and sisters had been happy to see her, other relatives and neighbours had laughed and said "shame on you" because she came home with no money. The situation grew worse during the following months, and she felt she had nothing: no money, no work, no status, and no property:

My situation is very bad. Cause I wanted to hang myself. I wanted to hang myself. I was coming home with empty hand, everyday cry, cry, cry. So my mother tried to raise her hand on me, slap me. She said, how many years am I going to cry for. I say, I am still crying for my property but... I am crying, I don't know how to read, I am crying where am I going to start? I am crying for many things.

Vanessa ended up migrating illegally back to Europe, by buying new services from the same woman provided her with false documents the first time. The second time around she promised Vanessa a residence permit and normal job in Norway, after Vanessa insisted she did not want to work in prostitution. When she got to Norway, however, Vanessa learned that she did not have any papers and had to work in prostitution after all. Vanessa knows that if she contacts the police, there is a risk she will eventually be

sent home to Nigeria again, a destiny she finds unbearable. But as she cannot bear to work in the streets, she has no idea how to make a living in Norway either.

The most unhappy and distressed woman we met was Maud. Maud said she had been tricked and trafficked into prostitution by a woman that had promised her good work in a restaurant in Europe. After arrival in Norway, she managed to escape her trafficker and contact the police. At the time of the interview, her application for asylum had been turned down. Maud said she had lost her parents and brother when she was a teenager and, because her family had moved many times, she had also lost contact with other relatives. Now she said she had nobody in Nigeria, and she deeply feared both the trafficker and having to manage alone. She cried repeatedly and described suffering from anxiety attacks. Maud's distress clearly has many causes, and it was obvious that the failed asylum seeking process also had taken a toll. Maud was deeply and heartbreakingly depressed:

I see my life, I have nobody now. I don't have mother and father. I don't have nobody to help me now. If the Norwegian government don't help me now.... It is so difficult for me. I hope they understand that they can help. It is very very difficult. The world is so unfair to me.

The women in this category are very confused and miserable. They feel helpless, and do not see any ways to influence or improve their own situations. Although it may not be forthcoming, these women are in need of close follow-up and long-term extensive assistance.

5.4 Confident Agents

Some of our informants feel they have succeeded: they have made enough money to have a good life, and are free to choose whether to live in Nigeria or Europe. More common are those that, while not especially economically successful, are nevertheless independent and living with relative predictability, and have come to terms with their situation. All these women are quite positive towards returning to Nigeria, either for holiday/shorter periods or for good. The common factor in their situation is choice: they have obtained a permanent residence permit in a European country and/or are economically independent, and thus possess a feeling of autonomy. Christina says she found that life in Italy did not meet her expectations, and decided to commute to Norway to work in prostitution to save money to return to Nigeria. When we met her, she was preparing to return to Nigeria in a month's time:

I will go back to Nigeria to stay. I feel very comfortable and happy to go back, there is no place like home. I decided to go back because I am not living a normal life. I was working in Italy for nine years, hoping to save some money. I was living on less than 500 euros every month. The possibility to go home was not there. I could not even buy the ticket to go home. So I decided to go to Norway to work in prostitution to save up a little money to go home, I have done this the last two years.

Christina is more resourceful than most of the other women we met, and appears to come from a family with some assets. She paid her debts years ago and has not been burdened with difficult economic obligations to her family, and thus has had the chance to save up some money before the return to Nigeria. Even if she mentioned saving money to buy plane ticket home in the quote above, she clearly also meant saving up a substantial amount of money to bring home with her. As far as we understood, she had managed to save several thousands of euros in addition to the ticket fare. She says she migrated out of ignorance rather than necessity; she had a good job when she left Nigeria, and is confident she will find a similar job when she returns. Resourceful women like Christina benefit from their qualities during their stay in Europe, as well as also upon a return to Nigeria.

Some women we met had not necessarily reached their initial economic goals, but had come to terms with their situation and reached a certain degree of independence, safety, and confidence. These women had typically obtained a permanent residence permit (or had good prospects of obtaining one), and thus did not have to worry about their right to stay in Europe. Claudia, for example, has a regular full-time job and a house and mortgage in Italy. She is in her late forties and, after fifteen years in Europe, has an Italian passport. She has grown children living in other European countries, and has travelled to Nigeria to visit other family members several times. Claudia had been to Norway three times, but only for two weeks at a time using her holiday time from work. Through our conversations we were not able to assess whether Claudia felt content or not, but she did not talk about necessary future improvements or changes in life like most of the women described in the other categories.

What characterises the women in this last category is that they express a feeling of mastering their situation: they perceive themselves as independent agents with freedom of choice. Of the four groups, these women seem to be the least in need of assistance, as they seem to be in a position to make choices based on their own will and without coercion. They have papers and/or an economic situation that enables them to decide independently whether to go back to Nigeria. They can also go back to Nigeria for a trial run, returning to Europe if it does not work out. Yet regardless of their relatively fortunate position, they too may face problems if they choose to return to Nigeria, connected to the shame of having worked in prostitution in Europe. The fact that some of them were not forced to migrate to Europe of economic reasons initially, may make it

even more shameful. For Christina, it is of utmost importance that her involvement in prostitution is not revealed when she goes back to Nigeria:

I will not talk about the work in prostitution when I come back. You can talk about all the things you have done in Europe, but not work. You have a lot of good things to tell, forget about the bad. My family don't know what I do here.

6 Fears and Dangers in Repatriation

All the women we talked to express some fears connected to a return to Nigeria. These are concerns shared by many women who are victims of trafficking for prostitution. Simeunovic-Patic writes of the repatriation and rehabilitation of victims of trafficking in Serbia:

Some trafficked women want to return home as soon as possible, while others want to stay in the country/place of destination. Reasons for staying in the destination country include the fear of stigma attached to prostitution, rejection from family and community, fear of reprisals from traffickers, or a perception of a better life for themselves and their families in the destination country (2005:32 and 33).

The women's fears and reluctance in connection to a return home are many and diverse, as seen in the quote above. Whether there is substance to the women's fears, or they are a consequence of a lack of knowledge about Nigeria today – or a way of claiming a right to be in Europe – is a difficult question, and outside the scope of this report. What is important is that the women's expressed worries and fears are taken seriously in a repatriation and rehabilitation process. As the women have different backgrounds, and thus different worries and problems, they attach varying levels of significance to many challenges related to repatriation. Still, there are particular issues that recur when the women discuss a possible return to Nigeria.

6.1 Poverty and Lack of Possibilities

To understand the women's attitudes towards returning to Nigeria, it is important to consider what they left behind, what they have invested along the way, and what it takes to make it all worthwhile. The more they have invested, and the more they have risked and undergone, the greater the reward or outcome must be in order to have succeeded. Thus, the will to return to Nigeria, and not least the will to stay there, is for many women dependent upon whether they feel their migration has resulted in some kind of improvement – all relative to how much they have invested. This is important to their self-esteem, and is likely to be crucial to how well they will cope with a return to Nigeria. If they have been able to save some money to bring back to Nigeria, they

can likely continue to generate income and reap the benefits of their investment over the coming years. But having sent a few hundred euros home to the family every month is not necessarily enough to ensure a better future in Nigeria when the money stops coming. The money the women send home might be sufficient to support the family's daily life – but once she is back in Nigeria without a job or savings, she, and her family, will be back at square one. Their assumptions about how it would be to return to Nigeria is also highly influenced by the fact that living in Europe for many years have changed their outlook and expectations. It is also influenced by the information they get from relatives back home on how their lives are. For many, contact with family consists of calls from relatives painting a bleak picture, perhaps also exaggerating, in order to receive higher remittances.

The women seemed convinced that their only path to a better life in Nigeria required returning home with a significant amount of money. Most of the women did not assume that education would help them in Nigeria; indeed, many said that they knew plenty of people with higher education that were still unemployed. Natalie, who has some university education herself, stressed that she constantly told her siblings to get practical vocational training. She claimed that knowing an independent craft or trade is essential to “making it” in Nigeria, as opposed to spending resources on acquiring theoretical knowledge that only makes you dependent on others for a job.

As described earlier, poverty is an important reason Nigerian women end up in prostitution in Europe, whether in connection with trafficking or not. The women claim they left because it was not possible to build a good life in Nigeria, due to poverty, uncertainty, and the consequences that poverty and uncertainty has on social relations. Some probably planned to migrate permanently, others to stay abroad long enough to earn enough money to improve their lives back home. The original plans are of course influenced (and for some altered) by their subsequent experiences in Europe, as well as by how their family relationships are affected by absence and dependence on remittances. The way in which remittances are used may also affect the length of a woman's migration: if families have been unable to make longer term investments, as noted above, the family will stop benefiting once the woman returns from Europe. Indeed, a woman's return may actively worsen her family's financial outlook.

Thus, in considering whether to go back to Nigeria, the women must judge whether the situation at home will have sufficiently improved to make their return viable and worthwhile. The women are well aware that they are probably the family's main breadwinner. Dina has been in Europe for many years, and is planning to apply for asylum in Norway. Her struggle to stay in Europe revolves less around her individual happiness than the assistance she is able to provide her family:

I support 16 people at home in Benin City, 14 younger sisters and brothers, my mother and my son. They all live in two rooms. I cannot go back, I have to help

them. Before, they could only eat chicken in December, now they can eat chicken every month. Before we had no TV, we had to sneak and look through the windows of my neighbour. Now we have a TV. They can eat three meals every day, and my sisters and brothers can go to school everyday.

Dina feels that there are no other alternatives, because the adult members of her family are unable to find work at home. She is also reluctant to let other family members follow in her footsteps:

They want to go to Europe; they will go if they find an opportunity. But I say no, wait, I will bring you to Europe later. My sisters will not work as prostitutes. If I get married in Europe, I can send them an invitation and they can come here and get real work. Now I tell them not to go. If anybody ask them, I have told them to say that they have a sister in Europe who will help them. I will bring them here when it is safe.

Another aspect of the equation that the women must consider is whether they think Nigeria has changed for the better while they have been away. Many of the women are quite sure that this is not the case. Some base their assumptions on information they get from relatives they are in frequent contact with; others rarely get new information about the situation in Nigeria, but have seemingly given up on the country's capacity for positive change. In our previous study (Skilbrei, Tveit and Brunovskis 2006), we interviewed Felicity, who emphasised both the material and relational consequences of poverty. When we asked her why she left Nigeria, she answered:

When you go to Nigeria and land in Lagos you'll see that people are reduced to animals. If someone lies in the street, no one will help him; no one will care. It's because of poverty; people's lives are worth little.

The women emphasise that Nigeria is a violent society, and one in which the police and other agents of the federal and state governments can actually increase a citizen's insecurity. This should be considered in addition to the fear women feel towards traffickers or others involved in the migration process. Overall, the women were critical of the Nigerian authorities, demonstrating little faith that the government cares about improving the living conditions of poor people. Many pointed to the fact that Nigeria, like Norway, is an oil-rich country, but cannot even feed its own citizens. Although she plans to return soon, Christina remains highly sceptical towards Nigeria:

Nigeria is not a poor country, but the masses are suffering. When a girl finish university with a good certificate, she will not get a job. But a girl with a bad certificate from a rich family with contacts will get a job. This is the biggest problem in Nigeria. The problem is that they don't do thing according to the laws. In Nigeria it is so

corrupt, if the Church City Mission¹⁹ was in Nigeria, you could not get support unless you were the sister of one of the social workers.

The women are right to accuse Nigeria of being corrupt (see e.g. Transparency International 2005). The women's views that Nigeria is riven by poverty, inequality, and a lack of economic opportunities also seem to be correct.

Alongside poverty, corruption, and political and economic disenfranchisement, the women express frustration with the lack of gender equality in Nigerian society. Aisha describes a society in which men have power over women, and women are unable to circumvent male domination. Aisha says that men in Africa treat women badly, and reflected on how her time in Europe has changed her view of gender relations:

Sometimes I think that had I been in Nigeria, maybe I would not know this. I would be living in our culture; I would support them [the men]. You understand me? I would support. I would even support the men that is treating the women bad. Maybe. Because it is within that culture. You have communicated with people, you have travelled, you have learnt more cultures... and that is my own view. I did not know when I was there. But since I have travelled and seen all that I say, I like it. Women have to fight.

Here Aisha actually describes what could be called a feminist awakening, an experience echoed by other informants. Some mentioned that they found Norwegian men to be more considerate to women than Nigerian or Italian men, and that they would like a Norwegian husband because of the way Norwegians treat women. Although women in prostitution are vulnerable to violence, often witnessing the worst aspects of men, many of our informants nevertheless described Norwegian men as kind. However, they spoke little of their own male family members, except to occasionally say how the men take advantage of them -- for example, that their fathers expect them to pay school fees for children they have with their second wives. Arrangements that seemed perfectly reasonable when they lived in Nigeria, seems more and more exploitative for the women. Gender relations in Nigeria are indeed very different than in Norway, including in legal aspects such as inheritance and land tenure (Okojie et al. 2003). Female circumcision is also quite common in the areas of Nigeria where many of the women working in Norway are from, such as Edo State.

Thus, because their experiences in Europe have changed them, life in Nigeria may actually appear considerably worse to many of these women. In particular, they claim that they would find it harder to deal with elements of society – such as gender inequality and corruption — that they did not find unacceptable before. Being away makes them realise many of the constraints operating in the Nigerian society, and forces them to realistically assess their chances if they were to return home.

¹⁹Kirkens bymisjon.

6.2 Arrest and Detention

The specific concerns that the women express about returning to Nigeria may be closely related to the discussions that the women have had amongst themselves, or to recent events experienced by friends or acquaintances. One such concern is the prospect of facing punishment and arrest in Nigeria. Many of our informants had heard of women returning to Nigeria only to face arrest and potential prosecution. When women are expelled from a European country, Nigerian airport and police officials tend to attribute this to involvement in prostitution. It is illegal for Nigerians to sell sex abroad (Okojie et al. 2003), and the women repeatedly spoke of this fact. Camilla explains:

When they come back to Nigeria, first and foremost, they put them in prison when they get to Nigeria. First. Because, when they caught them here, the information go to Nigeria that they caught them in the streets and that they are prostitutes you know. When they get there they have to put them in the prison first. And the parents have to look for money to come and bail them out from the prison.

Camilla's last point is crucial. When the women describe the likelihood of detention upon return, this does not necessarily mean they will face a trial and prison sentence for prostitution. Detention is more likely to be related to corruption: airport and/or police officials can detain women returning from Europe and demand a bribe to release them, potentially a profitable source of income. Dina had also heard of this occurring:

The police arrest the girls that are deported when they come to the airport in Nigeria. It is true! I know this, I know girls it has happened to. They take the girls away, keep them and make their family pay 100,000 naira²⁰. I don't know if this is allowed, maybe it is corruption. The girls will get arrested as soon as the European police leave her! They do it, ask everyone!

Dina also claims that this situation can lead to further indebtedness on the part of the woman and her family:

The families have to walk around and borrow money to bail out their daughters. They must borrow money, they cannot leave their daughters there.

One of the women we interviewed had previously returned to Nigeria, and describes how she was supposed to bribe the officials at the airport:

They say if I have something there, I should give them, so that they should go and stamp my passport. It is for the deportation. If they leave me for the police to catch

²⁰ 100,000 naira is 611 euros as of 8 December 2006.

me I will pay big money and I will suffer. I should give them something so they would not give me to the police.

Q: Do you think it is true that the police will arrest you, or do you think they are just threatening you?

I hear many news, so me I fear. I fear, I shake. So when they take me to office and ask, I pay three hundred euros.

Kate feared we didn't believe her claims that the Nigerian authorities treated repatriated victims (or possible victims) of trafficking this way. She said:

The government is lying if they say something else. The Norwegian government must not go to Nigeria. The Nigerian president will be lying; will be lying to the Norwegian president, saying only the good things. But nothing good will happen afterwards. The Nigerian government don't like the girls that hustle. The girls will start suffering. Last week, 100 Nigerian girls were carried from Italy to Nigeria. They were all arrested when they came to Nigeria. Their families had to come and bail them out. Not everybody had money. One of the girls had called her friend in Oslo, cried and asked if she could send her money for food, she was starving. They all probably just looked for ways to get out of Nigeria again.

Several of the women referred to this particular case, and the news obviously influenced the women's concerns about possible return.

For the Nigerian government to treat identified and possible victims of trafficking this way is a breach of its obligations. Because our fieldwork was only carried out in Norway, it was impossible for us to independently verify these stories. However, it is worth noting that Nigerian women in Denmark have told similar stories about detention at the Lagos airport when returning to Nigeria. One story concerns so-called "AIDS certificates" that must be presented to the airport police, in order to avoid being arrested. The certificate is supposed to prove that the woman is HIV negative. However, no such certificate exists, meaning that women asked for one are bound to be arrested (Holm 2005:15). Furthermore, numerous reports on the situation in Nigeria mention some form of incarceration of women returning from Europe. Okojie et al. (2003) describe how the women try to, and sometimes succeed in, avoiding confrontation with the police. A worrying consequence, however, is that the women's efforts to elude arrest may mean that they lose access to social workers and rehabilitation programmes:

According to the Liaison Officer, the end result of their lack of capacity to cater for the needs of the victims is that as soon as the Immigration or Police bring them in through one gate, the victims escape through another gate almost immediately. They can only watch helplessly as they have no security staff to keep them there (Okojie et al. 2003:81).

It is highly problematic that the women forsake professional help and rehabilitation programmes in their desire to escape the authorities; it is perhaps even more problematic that the authorities' provoke such (well founded) fear in the first place. Okojie et al. (2003) criticise the way the women are approached by the police at the airport, and especially how security personnel are used to keep the women from escaping interrogation. Okojie claims:

If the purpose of this project is to protect the human rights of victims, these rights should be protected in the manner of repatriation. As it is, the victims are treated more as offenders [being in Italy without papers] rather than as victims of traffickers [who have seized their travel documents] (2003:130).

It is possible that Nigerian authorities' treatment of identified and possible victims of trafficking has improved since 2003. Yet a Danish fact-finding report from 2005 stated:

According to [Nigerian NGO] BAOBAB deported victims of trafficking are detained upon arrival to Nigeria. During this time the NPF [Nigeria Police Force] and immigration authorities extort money from the women (2005:46).

The Danish NGO Reden-STOP Kvindehandel (RSK) describes an incident at the airport in Lagos in connection with the deportation of a fifteen-year-old girl. A cultural mediator from RSK that escorted the girl from Denmark to Nigeria perceived the airport police to be very suspicious and threatening in their behaviour. The police wanted to detain the girl, and as many as 30 men were involved in this process. She ultimately escaped detention, likely because of both legal documents and, more to the point, the company of Danish authorities. In connection with this episode, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) noted that detention of Nigerian women arriving by air from Europe was common, and that the airport police force was generally corrupt (Holm 2005:15).

6.3 Stigmatisation

In addition to facing detention and corruption upon return, the women fear possible social consequences of being associated with prostitution. Having been in prostitution is typically considered shameful, even when having been trafficked. Dina is well aware that people in Nigeria suspect that Nigerian women in Europe make their earnings from prostitution. This makes her family worried about her life:

People in Benin City know that prostitution is common work for Nigerian girls in Europe. But when I was in Italy I said no to my family, I am not doing that job. I never tell the family the truth. They will be so sorry and my mother will not let me sending her the money. My sisters want to come, but I don't tell them what I do. I tell them that it is very hard to get a job. My family tell me, don't try the street! I say that I have never tried it.

Reports on the views towards women returning from prostitution differ. The Danish Immigration Service (2005) claims that there is little stigmatisation of returning women, mostly because they earn people's respect due to the money and prosperity they have or are associated with. This is of course dependent upon the women returning with money. As Vanessa explained earlier, she found it very difficult to come back to her family members without money:

Some were happy, some were laughing. They say shame on you. Being in Europe, come home empty handed.

The explanatory report of the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings states that there are good reasons for not focusing solely on immediate return (2005:50): "For the victims this means having to start again from scratch – a failure, that in most cases, they will keep quiet about, with the result that nothing will be done to prevent other victims from falling into the same trap". Adepoju relates what faces women returned to Nigeria:

When deported, their reintegration is made difficult by the stigma of failure, and the local communities are wary that the repatriated victims may spread diseases they contracted abroad. Many such victims of trafficking end up engulfed in, rather than escape from, the trap of poverty, bringing in its wake personal trauma and dishonour to their families (2004:83 and 84).

Truong writes about how women that have already been to Europe are subjected to pressure to migrate again, often being pressured by family members (2006:63). Similarly, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Skogseth 2006) cites Orakwue Arinze, of the Nigerian National Agency for Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP), who states that there are great problems involved in coming home from Europe without money. The women therefore want to return to Europe as soon as possible (in Skogseth 2006:16). Hence, rehabilitation plans and facilities need to be in place to prevent women from entering local prostitution markets or trying to return to Europe under uncertain circumstances, which places them in risk of (re-)trafficking.

It is difficult to know whether women's experiences with prostitution in Europe will have serious consequences for their prospects of a new life in Nigeria. Prostitution brings stigma upon women in most countries in the world and, in Nigeria, the

trafficking of women into prostitution is even claimed to stigmatise the country as a whole, as it dents the image of Nigeria internationally (Bamgbose 2002). Bamgbose writes that women with prostitution experiences from Europe are even more vulnerable to prejudice upon return to Nigeria, due to the international attention (2002:587): “There is no opportunity for the reintegration of prostitutes into the society without the stigma and label of prostitution”.

The women fear that they cannot hide their prostitution experiences if they return to Nigeria. Because of information campaigns and newspaper articles, women returned from Europe are considered by many to have taken part in prostitution. However, the risk of exposure is influenced by how the women are treated and what steps are taken for their care.

6.4 Retaliation and Revenge

As described above, the women voiced concerns about whether Nigerian authorities would help or obstruct their reintegration into Nigerian society. The women were also worried that they would face problems if they returned to Nigeria without having paid back the money owed to different agents, some of which will be traffickers. As described in an earlier chapter, many of the women feared some sort of revenge, but the type and concreteness of the perceived threats differed. Telling the police of their experiences and failing to pay their debt were both mentioned as actions that could bring retaliation. Another fear is of witchcraft, or juju. Again, reports as to the veracity of the threats Nigerian women face vary. In the report from the Danish Immigration Service (2005), most professionals interviewed claimed that revenge upon victims by traffickers is rare, and that the returning victims face intimidation at worst. Furthermore, there is conflicting information about the ability of traffickers or madams to seek reprisals against victims upon their return to Nigeria. While some reliable sources believe that there is a real risk of such reprisals, they have no knowledge of this having happened; other sources are aware of rare (one or two) such incidents (UK Home Office 2005:10). Regardless, most women are not willing to put themselves at potential risk, not to mention risking the lives of their family members. Some women also say that they cannot return so long as they owe money, because the traffickers may then steal their documents to use for trafficking someone else. To then return to Europe would mean starting anew, again accumulating debt in order to return to Europe.

Alleviating women’s fears, and the potential danger of their situation, is difficult. One obvious solution is to prosecute traffickers, so that they no longer are free to hassle and scare the women. However, the women seem unconvinced that this would help – claiming that, even if they reveal the identity of their traffickers in Nigeria, he or she

will not be jailed for long, even if convicted. This is a valid concern considering that, as the British High Commission in Abuja has claimed, the party with the most money tends to decide whether cases go to trial (in UK Home Office 2006:51). The ease of eluding prosecution by travelling to another Nigerian state is also a factor.

6.5 Lack of Network

Another issue for some of the women is the lack of family or other social networks in Nigeria. This may be exacerbated for women who have spent many years in Europe. Christina, who herself plans to return to her family in Nigeria in the near future, claims that life in Nigeria is very difficult for a single woman:

It is difficult if you don't have a family to stay with. Maybe the family live in the village, but you can't live in the village if you have lived in Europe for many years.

Aisha's concerns are the same. She has a residence permit in Spain, but was asked to imagine how it would be to return if she did not have a family back home:

I don't know. Worst imaginable. Imagine, I am a girl, I will just... any man that talks to me on the street, I will agree. Because I need a shelter, I need help; I need somebody to be on my side, somebody to talk to me, somebody to help me.

We were often surprised by how impossible the women said it would be to succeed in Nigeria without family help and support. They said that living without family and community puts great stress and demands on women. Our informants adamantly insisted that, in Nigeria, you are nothing without your family. In Europe, perhaps, this is less of an issue, because societies are safer and there is a financial safety net (welfare state). Yet in a dangerous and uncertain society like the Nigerian one, people without family networks would be extremely disadvantaged, lacking both the financial and social resources needed to, for example, start a business. The importance of family makes relocation within Nigeria as a means to protect and reintegrate the women difficult. In addition comes the potential stigma of being without a family. ACCORD/UN-HCR (in UK Home Office 2006:45) writes: "Leaving their family signifies social and economic exclusion for the large majority of Nigerians and in particular for women. There are NGOs who might take her in for a while, but they will not be able to support her forever. The only option for women in such cases would be prostitution". Entering local prostitution markets would increase the women's marginalisation and make them vulnerable for different forms of exploitation.

6.6 Exploitation

If the needs of the women are not sufficiently met when returning to Nigeria, they might try to migrate to Europe again, and in that process be exploited or accumulate debt again. Life at home will likely be hard, and they may face both financial and social difficulties related to lack of income and possible stigmatisation. They may also suffer from trauma, complicating their efforts to make a good life for themselves. All of this can make migration again attractive, and in that migration process they are also vulnerable. Many of the women talked about the chance of repatriated women ending up as victims of trafficking. Dina does not have a residence permit in Europe, and is highly at-risk of being sent back to Nigeria herself. She says:

If I was deported to Nigeria, I would of course go back to Europe as soon as possible. I would have to borrow more money, that would be difficult because I still have only paid 20,000 of the other money, but I would still find a way to go back to Europe. I know girls that are deported; they come back to Europe again.

Aisha believes it is easier to return to Europe when you have more information and better contacts; women are not as vulnerable:

Yeah, it is more easy to go second time, very, very easy. Because you know the way, you know everybody and all that, you won't be afraid of anything. [...]. I think I will come back! Because many people have done it. They have sent them to Nigeria, but I think they come back. They have already known people and maybe they might help in coming back. If I have a friend for example that is just deported, and I have money or even if I don't have the money I will share and send her money to come.

7 Assistance in Nigeria – What can they offer?

Because we been unable to study the rehabilitation and protection of victims of trafficking in Nigeria first-hand, the following section is based on different sources, particularly reports from fact-finding missions/evaluations undertaken by funding bodies such as international organisations and foreign governments. Our description in the following is therefore not comprehensive, and might include discrepancies due to the variation of the facts described in these reports.

Nigeria has signed and ratified the Palermo Protocol, which legally binds them to establish means for the prevention of trafficking, prosecution of traffickers, and rehabilitation and protection of victims of trafficking. Accordingly, they have passed an anti-trafficking law, the Trafficking in Persons Prohibition and Administration. This law also made it possible to establish in 2003 a federal organ, NAPTIP, to take responsibility for prevention schemes, legal investigation and prosecution, and the rehabilitation and protection of victims.

NAPTIP is also the party that negotiates with governmental representatives of other countries, for example to prepare bilateral agreements. These bilateral agreements concern different aspects of the trafficking problem, mainly to ensure and strengthen cooperation between signatories on issues such as repatriation and rehabilitation of victims and prosecution of traffickers. Nigeria has various agreements in place with European countries, including Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom. The most important of these agreements is probably the bilateral agreement between Italy and Nigeria, signed in 2000.

Several organisations cooperate with NAPTIP in different ways. UNICEF helped establish NAPTIP; since then, NAPTIP has also cooperated with international organisations such as the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the Programme Against Forced Labour and Trafficking in West Africa (ILO-PATWA). Its trafficking prevention and rehabilitation facilities are co-funded by many different bodies, including foreign governments.²¹

²¹ Italian authorities have funded United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) projects, and an IOM project; the Swedes have funded a UNICEF project and an IOM project; Belgium has funded an IOM project; and the US has funded ILO and IOM projects, among other things (Ume-Ezeoke 2003).

7.1 NAPTIP's Repatriation and Rehabilitation Programme

NAPTIP's first responsibility is helping countries repatriate Nigerian citizens who might be victims of trafficking. Women expelled from Europe are to be met by NAPTIP at the airport,²² where an interview is conducted to decide whether they are victims of trafficking (Skogseth 2006). Women can also contact NAPTIP on their own accord. When NAPTIP has established whether the woman has been trafficked – and whether she is still in debt to traffickers -- the organisation decides what the woman needs in terms of both rehabilitation and safety. We have not been able to find out what criteria NAPTIP uses to assess which women to assist. After having been identified, NAPTIP's Council for the Rehabilitation of Victims offers repatriation and shelters for victims of trafficking. NAPTIP is not nationwide, but focuses its work primarily in Lagos and Benin City.

The NAPTIP shelters are run together with local NGOs, international organisations, and foreign aid agencies, and are partly financed by external donors (Skogseth 2006:20). There has been a Norwegian fact-finding trip to Nigeria, which identifies three NAPTIP run shelters. The delegation visited all of them: one in Lagos, one in Benin City, and one in Abuja (Skogseth 2006).

Lagos State Rehabilitation Centre opened in 2004 with 120 beds. It was initially run by the IOM, but is now NAPTIP-run. The shelter offers food, medical treatment, and some counselling. It is also supposed to offer skills training for women and girls. The US Agency for International Development (USAID) is an important funder of this shelter. In 2005, an evaluation by USAID recommended the acquisition of equipment for the shelter's skills training unit, on the basis that training is important in preventing re-victimisation (USAID 2005:vii). However, when the Norwegian fact-finding mission visited the same shelter a year later, the equipment still had not been purchased (Skogseth 2006), despite a significant increase in funding for anti-trafficking work in Nigeria over the intervening year (USAID 2005:14).

The victim's shelter in Benin City has 24 beds. Victims stay there for up to two weeks, after which time they are supposed to be integrated in the community. IOM also started and initially ran the shelter, but it has been run by NAPTIP for the last two years. However, the 2005 USAID report found that only 35 victims had lived in the shelter since its opening in 2002. Taking into account that victims only live there for approximately two weeks each, this shelter must have been empty or almost empty for much of the time it's been open.

²²NAPTIP depends on notification of the women's arrivals from the Nigerian Immigration Service.

There are no details about Abuja centre in either the Norwegian fact-finding or US-AID reports (the latter report preceding the centre's opening in November 2005).²³ Cardinal, who visited the shelter in August 2006, relates that the shelter has capacity for 50 women at a time, but that only 9 women stayed there during her visit (Cardinal 2006:48). Employees at the shelter said that the average length of stay in this shelter is anywhere from two weeks to two months. They expressed a concern about the lack of adequate rehabilitation of the women during their stay, and indicated that more funds are needed to offer the women vocational training or educational opportunities (Cardinal 2006:48).

7.2 The Efficiency of NAPTIP

Most important for the efficiency of a trafficking rehabilitation programme is to localise and identify victims. As stated earlier, NAPTIP is supposed to meet potential victims at the airport. However, this does not always happen (Skogseth 2006). There are many reasons for this, including an unstable electricity supply, which may hinder communication because e-mail and faxes get delayed (if they arrive at all). NAPTIP employees have also explained that, because the organisation in Lagos has only one car at its disposal, there are limited possibilities to pick women up at the airport (Cardinal 2006:12). The Norwegian fact-finding report quotes advice from Rosanna Paradiso from TAMPEP (Transnational AIDS Prevention Among Migrant Prostitutes in Europe Project), who warns European authorities against deporting women without getting a clear confirmation from NAPTIP beforehand (Skogseth 2006:32).

Once identified and enrolled at the centres, an essential factor in the rehabilitation programme is counselling. While the Norwegian delegation was visiting the shelter in Abuja, the women were offered "moral lessons/anti-trafficking talk and counselling", aimed at informing the women about their rights and making them understand their worth, as well as discussing the possible return to their families (Skogseth 2006:23). NAPTIP's emphasis on counselling is commendable, as victims of trafficking or other abuse need help in dealing with their experiences as part of the process of starting a new life. That said, we are not familiar with the content or quality of the counselling offered, and generally speaking the Nigerian society seems poorly equipped to deal with psychological illnesses (UK Home Office 2006). Moreover, an obvious problem with the counselling given at the shelters, in addition to a lack of trained personnel, is

²³ Prior to this time, some assistance was given from NAPTIP's administrative offices in Abuja (Cardinal 2006).

its limited timespan. Women with longer term psychological problems will get only limited relief during the short stays in shelters.

One of NAPTIP's expressed priorities is to aid the women in getting back in contact with their families. As stated earlier, it is difficult for women to get by without the help of a family, meaning that – in addition to the love and support the family could offer – it is important to make contact for practical economic reasons. One issue may be that the women are ashamed to contact their families. Representatives of NAPTIP or an NGO can assist by mediating and/or explaining that, for example, the woman had few income opportunities in Europe besides prostitution. At the same time, re-establishment of family contact should be case-sensitive: as noted above, in some cases relatives and neighbours were involved in trafficking process.

While counselling and mediation can be greatly useful if properly done, it is not itself sufficient: another key in rehabilitation is to enable the women to take care of themselves. Skills acquisition is the normal means to accomplish this. As noted above, however, several reports found a lack of proper facilities to this end in the NAPTIP shelters. Although the women housed in these shelters are supposed to receive skills training, this doesn't seem to be occurring (Skogseth 2006, USAID 2005, Cardinal 2006).

The US Department of State's evaluation²⁴ of NAPTIP in 2005 says of the Nigerian government's rehabilitation efforts²⁵:

The government made modest efforts to protect trafficking victims over the reporting period. The government continued to operate two shelters and established a victim rehabilitation centre, though these facilities operated below capacity. Authorities also referred victims to NGO shelters for assistance through an established screening and referral system. The government provided vocational skills training to 12 victims and helped eight victims return to school. Incidents of re-trafficking, however, remain high.

Regardless of the quality of the assistance offered by NAPTIP, it seems unarguable that its capacity is very low. According to the UK Home Office (2006), 73 victims benefited from NAPTIP's services for shorter or longer periods in 2005. This number refers to all types of trafficking victims, not only women returning from prostitution in Europe. The Norwegian fact-finding mission found few adults with prostitution experiences from Europe among the victims in the three NAPTIP shelters (Skogseth

²⁴The US Department of State issues an annual report on states' ability to deal with trafficking. Countries' placement has consequences on getting US funding for trafficking projects. For more information about the evaluation process, see: <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2006/65989.htm>

²⁵This quote is from the one page long evaluation on Nigerian authorities' efforts: <http://www.gvnet.com/humantrafficking/Nigeria-2.htm>.

2006:23). These findings are consistent with the USAID report's findings, which states that, of the 63 residents in the Lagos shelter, 40 were children intercepted on their way from Niger State to Lagos (2005:v). The different reports indicate that the clientele is mixed, but dominated by children intercepted en route to being trafficked into domestic labour in neighbouring states (e.g. Skogseth 2006; Cardinal 2006).

7.3 Problematic Mix of Roles

NAPTIP's responsibilities are multiple: it is in charge of investigation and legal services and prosecution, as well as rehabilitation. As stated above, however, seemingly only a few victims of trafficking have actually been rehabilitated through NAPTIP-run shelters. Furthermore, victims are typically reluctant to testify in court cases against traffickers (USAID 2005). There are probably many reasons why women do not take advantage of the assistance and legal options in place. One is that the victims are afraid of retribution from traffickers if they enrol in the victim protection and rehabilitation schemes, or testify against their traffickers in court cases. Many reports also name the victim's own understanding of what has happened to her as a reason for not using the assistance offered. Women do not identify themselves as victims, and do not want to prosecute their traffickers. A USAID report states (2005:5): "Many victims of trafficking, both children and adults, do not recognize the criminality of what has happened to them and refuse to cooperate with the police. Victims often feel that police have interfered with their opportunity for prosperity and if rescued are almost immediately plotting to leave again".

Having the same organisation both prosecute traffickers and rehabilitate victims is potentially problematic for the rehabilitation process. Women might want assistance but are afraid to enroll in a NAPTIP programme, because they fear having to testify against traffickers. In this respect, there is a danger that NAPTIP is more focused on prosecuting traffickers than assisting victims, which could lead staff to treat victims instrumentally (i.e. more like possible witnesses than people with problems and needs not relating to a court case). Similarly, convincing the women to contribute to prosecutions might be prioritised over skills acquisition and employment programmes. Indeed,

much of NAPTIP's funds go into investigating trafficking cases and police training (Skogseth 2006:19), and this might indicate that prevention and rehabilitation are not given enough priority. For example, the Nigerian federal budget from 2005 (Federal Government of Nigeria 2005) shows 5,000,000 Naira (28,465 euros²⁶) on office equipment, 500,000 Naira (2,847 euros) on security equipment, and 500,000 Naira (2,847 euros) on medical treatment and accessories.²⁷ In short, the relative de-prioritisation of rehabilitation could convince victims that they have a better chance at building a new life through re-migration rather than a NAPTIP shelter.

An additional possible consequence of this mix up of roles is that victims might be kept in shelters longer than necessary, awaiting court cases and testimonies. They may even be kept against their own will. Both employees and users of NAPTIP shelters have said that women in the shelters are not free to move around as they choose. Residents in the NAPTIP shelter in Lagos have also claimed that they are not allowed to leave or make phone calls; thus, the stay in the shelter is perceived as house arrest (Cardinal 2006:45). Cardinal notes that it is a fine line between protecting women by keeping them in a controlled environment, and detaining them against their will due to their value for prosecuting traffickers (2006:45).

It is also noteworthy that NAPTIP is concerned with the interests, not just of victims, but of the nation. This may take its work in directions that are unacceptable from a Norwegian point of view. Okojie et al. writes about how victims behave at the airport:

This [the fact that they arrive with little else than the clothes on their back] partially explains the angry and wild behaviour of victims while at the Screening Centres at both the Immigration Service and Human Trafficking Unit (Police) which are not conducive. These centres are converted detention rooms for suspected criminals. There are no beds, they have a few mattresses donated by the IOM and UNICEF (2003:80).

The women we interviewed in 2006 describe similar treatment to that related by Okojie et al. in 2003. Cardinal expresses concern about a growing stigmatisation of deported women within the network of service providers. During fieldwork in Nigeria, she experienced that NAPTIP and NGOs described deported victims as “angry”, “troublesome”, “hard to deal with” and “greedy” (2006:19). She suggests that this perception of women returning from Europe may cause organisations to switch the focus away

²⁶ As of 1 January 2005.

²⁷ This also shows how little money is spent on the issue of trafficking, in a country of almost 140 million inhabitants with a huge trafficking problem. 6.000.000 Naira equals approximately 34,000 euros. In comparison, Italian authorities are said to have donated a net worth of 20.000.000 Naira (130,000 euros) in 2006 (This Day Online 15.04.06).

from externally trafficked women, and prioritise the assistance of women trafficked internally in Africa. Moreover, she claims that there is a growing consensus among service providers in Nigeria that externally trafficked women willingly and knowingly go abroad to work in prostitution, and that this, in combination with their reluctance and scepticism to receive assistance, make it easy to allow these women to slip through the cracks (Cardinal 2006:21).

There might also be a conflict between NAPTIP's protection/assistance and prevention tasks. In 2004, for example, Nigerian authorities showed women deported from Italy on television and in newspapers to warn others about trafficking (Danish Immigration Service 2005). This has been criticised as compromising the women's security, dignity, and possibilities to build a new life in Nigeria. The Nigerian NGO BAOBAB For Women's Human Rights argues that such action on the part of the Nigerian authorities is less about preventing trafficking than showing off their success (ibid. s. 45).

There are reports of HIV tests being mandatory at the shelters, and earlier reports claim they were mandatory upon arrival in Nigeria for women deported from Europe (Okojie et al. 2003:80). We have heard that Italian social workers helping women in Nigeria say that such tests are still be conducted. Furthermore, Paola Monzini writes (2005:149 and 150): "In Nigeria, no adequate reception facilities exists for the 3-4000 victims of trafficking who are forcibly repatriated each year. The women are detained for a couple of days while they undergo personal data checks and medical tests – then, if they show no sign of sexually transmitted disease, they are released and left to their own devices". The use of mandatory HIV testing is problematic. According to UNAIDS/WHO,

UNAIDS/WHO do not support mandatory testing of individuals on public health grounds. (...) The voluntariness of testing must remain at the heart of all HIV policies and programmes, both to comply with human rights principles and to ensure sustained public health benefits (2004:2).

7.4 The Women's Views on NAPTIP

In our research, we sought to determine if the women had themselves been in contact with NAPTIP, knew someone who had, or had otherwise formed an opinion about NAPTIP. We typically asked all the women we encountered about NAPTIP, whether in an in-depth interview or shorter conversation. Most of the women had not heard about NAPTIP. Dina has been in Europe for many years:

NAPTIP? What is that? We don't have anything to help the girls in Nigeria. There is no help. If there was such an organisation, my people would go there! We live in Benin City; we would know if there was such an organisation there. We do not have any place we can get help. But you have to be in Nigeria to understand.

The women that had heard about NAPTIP were very sceptical. We asked Kate if she thought it would be a good idea for Norwegian authorities to cooperate with NAPTIP:

NAPTIP – nooo!! You know the leader, the wife of the governor?²⁸ The governor has lots of money, he has a lot of planes, they eat the money! They go to London to celebrate the son's birthday! So much corruption! And they don't do nothing, NAPTIP is only talk!

Many had a good impression of Norway and Norwegian authorities, and did not distrust them in the same way they distrusted Nigerian (or even Italian) authorities. Brenda thought it was a good idea for Norwegian authorities to help Nigerian girls:

If the Nigerian and the Norwegian government work together, maybe it could be ok, but the Nigerian president only think about himself. Best to help the girls in Europe and forget about Nigeria.

Kate was also much more positive towards Norwegian authorities than Nigerian, and was afraid that Norwegian officials are too naïve when it comes to the relationship between what is said and what is done in Nigeria:

You should go to Nigeria yourself, go and see what it looks like. Norway can go there, establish work and then bring girls over. If you send the girls home first and then give Nigeria money to help the girls, the government will eat the money!!

Lily has been back to Nigeria and we asked her if she had heard of an organisation that helps women returning from Europe

I hear it when I was little a long time ago, they say if they deport anybody, the person will go to there. There is sewing there, there is school there, there is many children. But no, it is not existing. It is them; those rich people, it is them that bring their people inside. We poor people, [if] they deport us, we are going to start from square one. I don't go there, but I hear when I was in Italy. About the chief's wife built big house for anybody they deport from Europe, so they will go there – no!

²⁸Two Nigerian non-governmental organisations involved in anti-trafficking work, WOTCLEF and IDIA Renaissance, were founded by the wife of the Vice President in Nigeria and the wife of the governor of Edo State, respectively. Kate might have mixed up these organisations, or believe that the same first ladies also started NAPTIP, or that NAPTIP controls all the anti-trafficking organisations.

Q: You don't think?

It is there, but it is for them, for the big [rich and/or important] people. It is them that will be inside, it is not for our side [poor people]. I can't just go like this: Please they deport me, help me.

It seems that Lilly has heard of the shelters put in place for rehabilitation of victims of trafficking, but believes that someone like her would not get to live there.

8 Filling the Gaps

In this report, we have described the formal obligations Norwegian and Nigerian authorities have towards victims of trafficking; how the functioning of repatriation and rehabilitation schemes seems to work; and the backgrounds of the women, including the differences between them that might influence how repatriation and rehabilitation should be discussed and designed. In this final section, we will describe what the women themselves emphasise when being asked about their needs. Lastly, we will discuss the ability of the repatriation and rehabilitation schemes to meet the needs of the women.

8.1 What we Would Need – Direct Suggestions from the Women

It was difficult to get the majority of the women to talk even hypothetically about returning to Nigeria. They generally do not wish to return to Nigeria – not because life in Europe is so easy, but because life in Nigeria is so hard. We managed to get past the women's unwillingness only by asking very concrete questions about what they would need if they had to return to Nigeria. In response, they often described very practical needs: work, skills, and money. Their distrust in Nigerian authorities intersects with all these needs, and they would only believe that those things would be afforded them in Nigeria if Norwegian authorities guaranteed and organised it.

Almost all of them started by saying they could live in Nigeria if they had a job there. Lilly missed Nigeria, and would contemplate returning if there was something to return to:

What would be a good help for me, is my country. I cannot deny my country, even though Europe is nice for me. If there are nice Norwegians there, nice company there, my own work, I would be very, very glad to stay in my country and to work. I am a cleaner. If I can get nice work, office to clean, have my own home. And my family is ok. It is my country, I will stay.

But the women didn't think they could actually find work in Nigeria. Several of the women explained that you have to bribe someone to get a decent job in Nigeria, and they did not think this had changed since they left. Anna explained:

I can go back to Nigeria, no problem. But I cannot go back without a job. The Norwegian government need to help people to help themselves. We will get nothing if we go back, no job, no food. If the Nigerian government help us, we don't want to stay in Europe, we don't like the work on the streets. But we must get some help in Norway or in Nigeria. If we go back to Nigeria, we will need jobs!

Many of the Nigerian women were looking for ways to leave prostitution. They are aware of the fact that Norwegian authorities and the Norwegian society consider their involvement in street prostitution to be a problem, and suggested that this problem could be easily solved if they were offered something else to do. Realising that the Norwegian authorities would not actually be willing to offer Nigerian women residence or work permits en masse, they suggested other ways of ensuring Norwegian involvement in a possible process of repatriation and rehabilitation, along with the constraints that such involvement may face. As stated earlier, the women were very negative towards the Nigerian authorities, and were sceptical that they would spend possible Norwegian funding as planned. Camilla said:

If the Norwegian Government have a plan to send money to Nigeria, or they want to set up a company there, it can't help the poor. It can't help the poor, absolutely.

Some were also worried that a close Norwegian involvement would be impossible for public relations reasons. Kate said:

Do you think the Nigerian government will allow it? The Nigerian president will not allow others to do this by themselves. Because all the media, CNN and others, will say that Nigeria cannot take care of their own girls. They will not allow it. Nigeria is big, but if you want to help, you should go to Benin. In Benin, people are suffering, many of the girls are prostitutes. All of the girls here come from Benin. Education does not help; many Nigerian girls in Europe have education. Why Benin is so poor, why it is so difficult to live there? You ask the president! He will only show Norway the good places, not the bad places.

Christina stresses that measures need to be taken in order to secure that support and assistance goes to the people it is meant for:

If Norway is going to help the girls coming home from Europe, you have to provide these girls with a certificate that proves that they have been in Europe. It must be a card or something, something that cannot be duplicated. Otherwise, only people with contacts will be able to get help from such a project. Rich people will benefit

from it, not the poor girls that have been to Europe. They will need something to show that they have been to Europe.

She is afraid that rights and resources being afforded to victims of trafficking will, through corruption and fraud, be allocated instead to people that already have enough in Nigeria.

Not everybody believed that assistance from Norwegian authorities would help them find work in Nigeria. We asked Victoria if she would return if the Norwegian authorities gave her a loan to set up a business back in Nigeria. She didn't like the idea:

In Nigeria? No, I don't want to. Because even – just for example, a student, a boy or a girl, the people that finish university in Nigeria now. Even they can't find a job. All of them are looking for a way to come to Europe to come and... maybe they will get their own future, bright future. For me, because my parents was poor, they didn't give me good education. So, even though I go back to Nigeria, my life will be worse than it was before.

Nevertheless, without efforts being undertaken to make sure the women get jobs, the women were convinced that repatriation and rehabilitation would be in vain. Kate knew of women that had been deported to Nigeria, and was sure that they were looking for a chance to return to Europe:

Now so many girls are deported from Italy to Nigeria. They are only looking for possibilities to go back again. If you want to hear my opinion: don't give the money to Nigeria, give the money to the girls that are asylum seekers here in Norway! Give the money to the girls in Norway, the girls without papers, they need it!

Kate, and many with her, would prefer it if Norwegian authorities helped Nigerian women in Norway, instead of repatriating them and spending money on helping them in Nigeria. Christina is about to return to Nigeria. She is a resourceful woman and thinks she will be able to get work and manage, but she has many thoughts about the needs of returned Nigerian women in general:

What we need is medical care, maybe loans and training in skills – hairdressing, tailoring maybe. Should be Norwegian-managed. It take maybe six months to one year to be a good hairdresser or to work in a beauty salon in Nigeria, but maybe they could also offer shorter courses.

Q: Is it a good idea to provide equipment from Norway? For example, give them a sewing course and a sewing machine to bring home?

Yes! To buy a machine is very expensive in Nigeria. If you get training with machine in Norway, you can go back to Nigeria.

Returning with some money to start a new life is portrayed as the best way of making sure the women do not leave for Europe again. Dina says:

If girls are deported back to Nigeria, they need to establish business, they need something they can get a little money on every day. They have nothing, and they are taking care of their family. If they come back empty handed it is terrible. If a girl should go home, it is most important that she have money to establish her own business. If you had a place to call home, you must have money to establish business. Then you can make a little money everyday to live on and maybe support family. 10,000 euros will be enough, then you can open a shop and sell something there. That money would be ok for me.

As we see above, Dina thinks 10,000 euros will be enough. The women often mentioned these large sums (often larger than this) as necessary to be able to set up business back home and to return to Nigeria with dignity.

The women did not bring up other kinds of needs on their own accord but, when asked explicitly, said that they thought other kinds of help were necessary as well. We asked Anna if she would need medical and psychological assistance if she returned to Nigeria:

Yes, it is important. I would say yes to talk to doctors and social workers. Because life in the streets is not easy. I would also like shelters, safe houses. Not for protection, but for comfort (laughs). I would like to stay in a shelter because that is more comfortable, I will get food, nice bed etc, then I will go home to visit my family.

As we see, she also brought up the issue of shelters. Very few other women did; and those that did, did not bring them up in a protection context (e.g. to hide from traffickers or others). The life they envision in shelters is perhaps in line with what they (or women they know) have experienced in Italy or other European countries, but the shelters that operate in Nigeria today do not seem to offer the comfort they hope for, or the freedom to be useful as a base for visiting family and finding work. Those that said they could not live in a shelter in Nigeria, linked it to the fact that they would have to continue working in prostitution to repay debt:

You cannot hide in safe houses, you need money, you must pay your debt. You borrow money to go to Europe, you must pay!

Christina was very sceptical towards the chances of getting good medical help in Nigeria, and suggested that that be made a priority in rehabilitation of victims of trafficking:

Medical care is important – good doctors are very expensive. Maybe you will not have enough money to pay for a doctor. It is not so important to talk to anybody, psychologist or social worker. It will be difficult to go back, you always have prob-

lems. You always need vaccination, medicine for malaria etc. If you don't have money, you have to drink the water, it is not clean.

Here she points to the fact that ordinary medical treatment is scarce, but that she is not that concerned with getting counselling for what has happened during her years in Europe and in prostitution. She is more worried about the general lack of medical facilities in Nigeria. Christina and others were no longer accustomed to Nigerian standards of health and safety.

8.2 Challenges and Recommendations

In establishing agreements and routines for voluntarily or involuntarily repatriating women to Nigeria, a key consideration is whether the women's rights, safety, and dignity are secured – both in Norway, in transit, and in Nigeria. As noted above, if the needs of the women are not sufficiently met when returning to Nigeria, they will be in high risk of migrating under uncertain circumstances again. In this respect, taking an undifferentiated approach can make the situation worse. Demleitner deals with the issue of how victims of trafficking are treated (2001:276): “Anthropological and sociological studies exist that document dramatic differences between trafficked women, but often a ‘one size fits all’ model drives prescriptions to assist the victims”. As described earlier, there are substantial differences between the women in our study in terms of their actual and perceived situations, their attitudes towards returning to Nigeria, and their needs in case of return. If the differences are not taken into account, there is a chance that life in Europe and return to Nigeria will accentuate the socioeconomic divisions that exist between the women, with the likely effect that the same women that struggle most in Europe will struggle most in Nigeria.

Different Views on Repatriation and Needs in Rehabilitation

The women in the four different categories that were described in the chapter, “Attitudes towards returning to Nigeria”, have different needs regarding what it would take to improve their lives and possibly return to Nigeria. The women in the first category, Just Started, are characterised by the fact that none of them want to go home, even including those women that may have been deceived by traffickers. Many will not even think about it or discuss repatriation with us: they have only just arrived in Europe, and will do everything in their power to stay and realise their dreams and obligations. These women have not begun to fulfil the plans they migrated to reach, or to reap the benefits of their risky investment. At this point, they would most likely require

prospects of a particularly good future in Nigeria to consider voluntarily going back. It is important that, if returned, these women end up in a better situation than that they had before leaving Nigeria. Otherwise they are likely to try to migrate again and take risks in that process.

The second category, *Not There Yet*, consists of those that have tried their luck in Europe for a while, but have not reached the goals they hoped to reach, and have seen enough of Europe to know that it is harder to make it here than they thought. Some of these women are quite positive about returning to Nigeria if they were to have money or jobs there; indeed, some say they wish they could go home immediately. However, all the women stress that they would need a secure income in Nigeria. This is especially important for those with large burdens as breadwinners. Moreover, those with remaining debt say they need to repay it before returning. A very few women say that they want to go home as soon as they have repaid their debt, even if they have not saved up sufficient assets to change their lives back home. However, most women declare that, if they are not convinced life in Nigeria will be better than before, they would rather stay on in Europe. There are indications that the attitudes towards returning to Nigeria in this group differ according to personal attachment to Nigeria, and to whether the decision to migrate was their own or not. Younger, independent women without children in Nigeria, who initiated the migration process themselves, seem less willing to consider going back to Nigeria as an option.

The third category, *Desillusioned*, includes women that have stayed a while in Europe, and lost the belief that they can make it here. Lacking further illusions, they see that, by the time they repay their traffickers and send money to their families, there is little left for them. They find themselves forced to work in prostitution in order to provide for family in Nigeria and/or repay traffickers, and see no end to their current life situation. Some may be grieving because of children they are not able to see; others do not have any close relatives and do not see how they can make it on their own, whether in Europe or Nigeria. These women feel helpless and miserable, and many of them might be ready to return if they believed that a return to Nigeria would improve their situation. However, they will obviously need quite a lot of help in starting a new life in Nigeria, as they would likely return without money or belief in themselves.

The last category, *Confident Agents*, consists of women that, at least to some degree feel, that they have accomplished what they came to Europe for. Their goals may have been adjusted in the process, but they are quite secure that their situation now is better than it would have been if they had not left Nigeria. Even though they have faced exploitation and uncertainties on the way, they believe it was worth it. This might also

have something to do with their outlook towards life: they are insistent on making the most of their situation. With this attitude, the women have every chance of improving their situation back home if they choose to return to Nigeria. These women express a feeling of mastering their situation: they perceive themselves as independent agents with freedom of choice. Of the four groups, these women seem to be the least in need of assistance, as they are in a position to make choices based on their own will and without coercion. They have papers and/or an economic situation that enables them to decide independently whether to go back to Nigeria or not. However, since these are the women best off in Europe, returning to Nigeria can also be a big disappointment. As they have adapted to European realities, they are more and more removed from life in Nigeria. Another problem might be that the empowerment they feel might stand in the way of dealing with the more problematic sides of their experiences, but it will also be an asset in returning to a society that welcomes successful migrants back. On the flip side, these women will also likely be attractive role models to other girls and women in Nigeria, and it is important that the women are aware that what they say can affect others' willingness to take risks in the migration process.

Identification and Repatriation

As noted above, the first step in the process of repatriation and rehabilitation is identifying victims. Identified victims of trafficking that are in Europe illegally are offered a reflection period, after which time they are supposed to return to Nigeria if they do not apply for or receive a residence permit or asylum in Norway. Before leaving Norway, it is important that the women are prepared for their return, for example through counselling on the forthcoming process. This is necessary for the women make an informed decision about whether to receive assistance in Nigeria.

The women also have rights and needs while they are still in Norway. Housing, food, and security are such needs, and these fall within the purview of the ROSA Project. Importantly, some identified victims of trafficking are not in this project. However, in their day-to-day lives they are in contact with different social service centres and NGOs set up for helping women in prostitution, which also have a mandate to look after the needs of women that might be victims of trafficking. They get food, counselling, contraceptives, and some medical help in some of these projects, as well as the possibility to take Norwegian classes. Although women in prostitution get medical care in Oslo and Stavanger, it is quite basic. Yet many of the women have medical problems that need attention over time. Others have taken medical matters into their own hands, which is potentially very dangerous. There have been several cases of Nigerian women hav-

ing abortions induced by pills (such as Cytotec, which induces labour prematurely).²⁹ We have met women who have been pregnant but could not afford an abortion in Norway, and could not return to Italy or Spain because someone else ordered them to stay in Norway until they earned a certain amount of money. If they are third-country residents, they have rights for acute medical treatment in Norway, but have to cover expenses for e.g. abortion themselves, which would cost them around 7.500 NOK.³⁰ Some have to borrow money with interest to pay for abortions in Norway, and this adds to the debt that keeps them in prostitution.

Importantly, immediate repatriation can stand in the way of preventing others from migration under uncertain circumstances, as the women might stay quiet about what has happened to her. Repatriation should also not be rushed, in order to allow Norwegian authorities time to adequately determine whether there is risk to the victim upon return. An additional reason to delay returning victims of trafficking is that states like Norway need the women's help in prosecuting traffickers. The Nigerian cases seem particularly complicated, and this means that the Norwegian police and prosecutors are in dire need of information from the victims themselves.

When a decision to repatriate has been made, it is important that transportation to Nigeria be undertaken in a secure and dignified way. This involves questions about who accompanies them and which other groups they travel alongside. Cardinal (2006) describes that victims are treated like criminals, and returned together from Italy with Nigerians deported because of crime. This is in line with neither the Palermo Protocol nor the Council of Europe Convention, which both state that victims of trafficking have to be treated as such, and not as criminals. As described in the chapter, "Fears and dangers in repatriation", Nigerian women returning from Europe are vulnerable to corruption. Although representatives from the Nigerian authorities insist that NAPTIP officials make sure the women are received as victims, not criminals, reports differ on the question of how the women are actually met. This should be explored further. The women need to be made aware of their rights in Nigeria before leaving Norway, and should be talked through the repatriation process. When the general trust in Nigerian authorities is so low, being met in the airport by an organisation they do not know, representing the authorities, hardly makes the women willing to cooperate. Thus, if it is a goal to make women return to Nigeria voluntarily and use NAPTIP's services, it is important to be aware of both this lack of knowledge and negative attitude towards Nigerian authorities, as this distrust was a common finding in both our

²⁹ One woman explained that Nigerian women get the pills in Italy, and that some have brought them with them to sell in Norway. The pills are not originally sold for abortion purposes, but the women know they can be used that way. This complements the explanation we got from medical professionals, which is that Cytotec is normally used to prevent gastric ulcers.

³⁰ 7,500 NOK equals approximately 890 euros.

studies. The women's situation in the repatriation process would be further alleviated if a liaison officer, or representatives from NGOs or other organisations the women know, guides the women through the process. As the women lack trust in Nigeria authorities and Nigerian efforts to alleviate the situation of victims of trafficking, a representative from Norway would also create a bridge. We want to emphasise that this is only recommendable if Norwegian authorities are sure that women will be received and treated in a secure and dignified manner at the other end. The women's trust in Norwegian authorities will deteriorate quickly if the women get the impression that they deceive them.

It is difficult to differentiate between trafficking, people smuggling, pimping, and assistance in the organisation of the women's migration, prostitution debut, and everyday lives in prostitution in Europe. It is impossible under these circumstances to differentiate between Nigerian women that are victims of trafficking, and women that are in prostitution in Europe without being victims of trafficking. The latter group can also be victims of various crimes and are in need of being returned with certain precautions. It would not be possible to divide Nigerian women about to be returned to Nigeria into victims and non-victims. We therefore advise that Norwegian authorities do not differentiate between the status of women from Nigeria that are being deported. The women will regardless have many of the same needs, and differentiating between them will leave women without the "victim" label vulnerable for prosecution in Nigeria.

Due to the risk of stigmatisation, it is important that steps be taken to ensure that repatriated women's involvement in prostitution is not known. As described earlier, there are cases where women's identities and experiences are revealed in the media, ostensibly to prevent other people falling prey to traffickers. Even if victims consent to this practice, it is problematic, and it is important that Norwegian authorities get assurance from Nigerian authorities that the identities of women returned from Norway are not revealed in such a way.

Rehabilitation

There are many concerns about Nigerian authorities' capacity for handling the rehabilitation of victims of trafficking in line with Norwegian priorities and obligations. What goes on in the rehabilitation facilities? Are they operating in line with how the Norwegian authorities would want victims of trafficking to be treated? Much of the activities aimed at rehabilitation seem to be handled by NGOs. Is there a system in place to monitor and evaluate the shelters run by NGOs? There is also a lack of oversight over victim rehabilitation and protection schemes undertaken by NAPTIP and

national and international NGOs in Nigeria,³¹ as well as a lack of analysis of the efforts thus far, or comparison of the different forms of programmes. Altogether, while there is a lot of existing experience related to the cooperation between Nigerian authorities, Nigerian NGOs, international NGOs, and foreign governments in the handling of different aspects of trafficking, this knowledge has not been collected and analysed properly. Thus, it is not easy to assess which elements in these cooperations have been effective and fruitful, and which have not. As Italian authorities and NGOs have already established long-running contacts with Nigerian authorities and Nigerian NGOs, there is much to learn from them for countries that are starting up such cooperation. We therefore recommend that steps be taken to collect information on these experiences, and to evaluate how Norwegian authorities and NGOs can learn from others' experiences in their own work.

Okojie et al. concluded in 2003 that the Nigerian government didn't seem to be willing to match their promises with actions. This might have changed, but we still see a lack of initiative on the government's part to meet funding bodies' demands and suggestions to make rehabilitation efforts more realistic. European and U.S. evaluations of the infrastructure and political will to combat trafficking in Nigeria point to serious deficiencies, such as lack of possibilities for skills acquisition, lack of facilities, lack of other leisure activities for children (besides television), lack of electricity (making investigation and safety assessments difficult), and lack of follow-through on court cases against traffickers, because there were no funds for witnesses to travel to the courthouse. People generally do not improve their situation by sitting isolated in a shelter watching television. After reviewing reports on the rehabilitation facilities in Nigeria, it seems the women are not from far wrong when they dismiss Nigerian authorities' ability to help them, and ask: "Home to what?" The women emphasised the need for jobs, skills, and money, but all reports so far indicate that NAPTIP is not able to help them with these needs. The lack of funds makes the rehabilitation, protection, and prosecution structures in Nigeria vulnerable. With a new amendment to Nigerian legislation, a Victims Trust Fund has been established. The money in the fund will be used for rehabilitation and restitution of victims (Skogseth 2006), and this will hopefully improve the chances of rehabilitation of the victims.

There are some non-governmental organisations that assist women in getting jobs, acquiring skills, and accessing and micro-credit, but these schemes seem to be very small, serving only a very few victims. The numbers of assisted victims in shelters altogether, and particularly women, seems alarmingly low, especially considering that the numbers of deported Nigerian women from Europe are high. Where do the rest of the women

³¹ There are several national and international organisations working in the area of trafficking in Nigeria, and it is difficult to get an overview of who offers what.

returning from Europe go? Are they offered help, but don't get any? Do they decline assistance? There are many questions left to answer.

There is for example a danger that some of the content of the rehabilitation schemes is downright damaging. It is not clear who is doing the counselling. Prostitution is a stigmatised phenomenon and shelter employees might be influenced by prejudice towards women returning with prostitution experiences. Training staff to be sensitive towards these issues is therefore important. There seems to be a lack of trained personnel working in the shelters, and a professionalisation of the work being done there is necessary for the women's needs to be met.

In addition to the fact that the content of the rehabilitation schemes seem inadequate to deal with the problems the women face in returning to Nigerian society, there are some problems involved in the prioritisation of these schemes. We are sceptical towards victims returning to Nigeria being tested for HIV/AIDS, and we hope the views of UNAIDS/WHO will be taken into consideration in Nigeria's efforts to repatriate the women returning from prostitution in Europe. We advise that Norwegian authorities bring up the issue of HIV tests, especially under what conditions they are undertaken with NAPTIP: Are they voluntary, and is a positive test result followed up with medical and psychological counselling? Women in prostitution have been blamed for the transmission of HIV/AIDS even in countries where no such link has been documented, and it is important not to increase prejudice against women in prostitution by mandatory testing – particularly if testing is only a control measure for protecting public health, not aimed at helping women. A positive result not followed up by any sort of counselling will add to the burden these women are already carrying, and make it more difficult to build a new life.

It is also important to be aware of possible conflicts between NAPTIP's different responsibilities, especially the relationship between investigation and prosecution on one side, and victim's safety and rehabilitation on the other. What is in the best interests of the victims is not necessarily in the best interest of the Nigerian state. Norwegian authorities have to be aware of a possible conflict between prosecution and rehabilitation within NAPTIP.

The women told us they need jobs, skills, and money to be able to establish a better life for themselves in Nigeria. Many talked about starting up a business to create their own jobs. For that they need money. Many of the women we met emphasised that it was very difficult to save money for starting a business upon return. The family could perhaps help in this, but as stated above, getting financial help from the family might be difficult, both because they are impoverished and because it is shameful to ask for that help after returning from Europe. Some, such as the National Council for Women Society (NCWSC), emphasise the need for developing micro-credit schemes for returned victims of trafficking. The Norwegian fact-finding mission also raised the issue with NAPTIP representatives, which stated that NAPTIP didn't have enough

funds to start up a micro-credit scheme (Skogseth 2006). There are some micro-credit schemes in place organized by NGOs such as Italian TAMPEP, but these have so far a limited scope and have not been evaluated yet.

The alternative of aiding the rehabilitation of victims through micro-credit needs to be considered in light of the Nigerian context and the particular needs of the women. The women we interviewed brought up the need to have some money to start up a new life if they were to return to Nigeria. But the sums they mentioned are much larger than what is available through micro-credit schemes. They might of course be able to set up business with less money, but the plans they made while being in Europe are important for them, and they need to feel that they can accomplish more than they could if they had just stayed in Nigeria in the first place.

There is also the issue of the way debt has already complicated their lives. They have great experience with having debt, and this might make a difference in how they engage with micro-credit versus other groups. Micro-credit schemes would in their case be only one of many creditors, and it might be argued that – even though the women need money to return with dignity and to build a new life in Nigeria – it is not more loans they need. There are for example reports of women being trafficked after running away to escape debt to micro-credit schemes (Ahmad 2005: 213). Significantly, there is also a danger that the women, as members of a stigmatised group, will not be able to take full advantage of micro-credit schemes. It takes time for micro-credit to give the planned effects of poverty alleviation and empowerment, and its success is conditioned to a great extent on the holders' social capital (Murthy et al 2005). As women expelled from Europe with prostitution experiences, and as unsuccessful migrants, they likely lack the requisite social capital, as defined as networks and social standing in their local communities. This might imperil micro-credit schemes.

The women could of course be given rather than lent money. Bjerkan describes an arrangement that could be explored further (2005:160): “The Italian government has provided financial support that grants each woman who agrees to voluntary return through IOM a total amount of 1500 euro. The amount is paid in three allotments, throughout a period of minimum six months of assistance”. In this scheme, the women receive counselling while still in Italy on how to spend the money upon return (i.e. career and financial planning advice). The money is supposed to enable the women to return with dignity, as bringing money home is most important indicator of a successful migration. Both the fact that the money allows the women to plan and realize a new future, and not be met with stigma as a failure, probably reduces the risk of the women taking chances in migration anew. We recommend that the women are counselled on building a new life in Nigeria while still in Norway, and talked through their different alternatives and the dangers of them. It is important that this counselling is sensitive to the realities the women will meet back in Nigeria.

In this report, we have been dealing specifically with the situation of adult women. We have only interviewed adults, which reflected the population accurately: even though many travelled out of Nigeria while still children, most are adults by the time they get to Northern Europe. However, it is important to also look into the particular needs of children. Norwegian authorities are under obligation to treat child victims differently than adults, and to make sure that actions taken are in the best interest of the child. This might mean that Norwegian authorities should not return children that are victims of trafficking to Nigeria. If Norwegian authorities consider repatriating children, it is important that they are aware of the fact that there seem to be poor facilities for them. Children have other needs than adults, and suffer more from the ban of going outside and the lack of in-doors recreational areas, as in the Lagos shelter. One of the conclusions in the USAID report reads (2005:22): “Given the trauma victims have already suffered, and their need for emotional release, the current atmosphere at the shelter may prove dangerous for the psychological well-being of residents, especially the young children”.

In sum, the success of repatriation and rehabilitation schemes in Nigeria will depend on many different factors. Women’s experiences in Europe and individual resources will greatly affect their subsequent situation in Nigeria, possibly even including the social networks open to them. For rehabilitation schemes to work, there must be the right types of help available, in line with the needs of women with different experiences and resources. Rehabilitation schemes also depend on the trust and respect – and this must be earned. The women emphasise that their needs are of a practical nature: work, skills, and money. Their distrust in Nigerian authorities intersects with all these needs, and they therefore need Norwegian assurance that the needs will be met. We found a complete lack of trust in Nigerian authorities among the women. This means that, even if Nigerian authorities are able to meet their needs adequately, it will be difficult to make the women inclined to use the facilities and projects. As the scepticism towards Nigerian authorities and Nigerian organisations is so high, it is important to build a repatriation system that is predictable. This will build trust in the system, and undermine the possibilities for corruption.

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Appendix 1

Retur Nigeria – intervjuguide

1. Stay in Norway

- Stayed in Norway for how long
- First time in Norway? If not, how many times before?
- Perception of stay in Norway, living conditions etc.

2. Hopes for the future

- Plans and wishes
- Realistic goals
- Possibilities and prospects
- Obligations and debts

3. Return

- Attitude towards returning
- If you returned now, what would happen?
- How would network react, family, friends, community?
- Do you know anybody who returned? What happened?
- What would it take for women to return voluntarily?
- Forced return, what would make it more bearable? (shelters, new settlement, education, work, loans? – support from Norwegian Government, return attaché?)
- What do you know about shelters, and the work of NGO's?
- Do you know anybody who has been to a shelter?
- Trust in Norwegian/European Government and social services for help
- Trust in Nigerian Government and social services for help
- Thoughts about future prospects in Nigeria for returned women, quality of life (work, social), risks of/willingness to remigration

4. Path from Nigeria to Norway

- How long since leaving Nigeria? Age when leaving?
- The trip: for how long, travel alone or accompanied?
- Lived in other countries? How long?
- Which country feels like 'home' at this point?

- Legitimacy of stay in Norway and/or other European countries (legal/illegal papers)
- Debts and other obligations in Norway/ Europe/Nigeria

5. Relations to Nigeria

- Family in Nigeria, what kind of current contact with whom? (Frequency, quality of ties, economic obligations)
- Childhood and adolescence, fostered by whom?
- Work/education of family members included self
- Reasons for leaving Nigeria
- Initiative taken/recruitment by whom?
- Family's reaction/response to migration
- Friends in Nigeria, current contact? (Frequency, quality of ties)
- Family and friends' knowledge about life in Europe, possibilities for confidentiality etc.
- Current knowledge about Nigeria, life and politics

Appendix 2

Fafo Research on Nigerian Women in Oslo

We are researchers at the Fafo Institute for Applied International Studies in Oslo and currently doing a study on behalf of the Norwegian Government among women from Nigeria working in the streets in Norway. We are interested to find out what the women think about their future, what are their plans and wishes. What do the women need in order to live a happy life, in Europe or in Nigeria?

When the study is finished, we will write and publish a report with the results. The report will be read and used by the Norwegian Government in the work in developing projects to try to support Nigerian women. Interviews with women such as you will give a better possibility to understand the situation of the Nigerian women involved and how to meet their needs. When we write about what you have told us we will make changes so that the police, neither the Government nor even people that know you can identify you. If we ask you something you don't want to answer, just let us know. We want the situation to be as comfortable for you as possible, and if you for some reason want to end the interview, you can.

If you have any questions, comments or corrections later, just call us at 22 08 87 22 and 22 08 86 94.

May-Len Skilbrei and Marianne Tveit

Facing Return

This report deals with the issue of repatriation of Nigerian women in prostitution in Norway, and aims at creating knowledge about what influences whether they want to go back to Nigeria or not. Some of the women have migrated and entered prostitution in a way that constitute trafficking, and all the women has suffered from some form of exploitation in their way from Nigeria to Norway. Norwegian authorities have certain obligations towards women that are identified victims of trafficking, and repatriation to the home country has to take place in a safe and dignified way. The report Facing return: Perception of repatriation among Nigerian women in prostitution in Norway is based on a qualitative study among Nigerian women in prostitution in Norway, and it describes and explores Nigerian women's views on the future and the possibility of returning to Nigeria.

As there are substantial individual variations in regard to the women's experiences and attitudes, the needs of the Nigerian women in prostitution in Norway in a return process will vary accordingly. The report states that it is important that repatriation and rehabilitation efforts are sensitive towards these variations in needs in order to hinder stigmatisation or prosecution, and, not the least to increase the women's chances to make a better life for themselves upon return.



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