

Hibiscus



Nigeria Report 2022



for social justice

Published by
Hibiscus Initiatives
Resource for London,
356 Holloway Road, London,
N7 6PA, United Kingdom

First published 2022© Hibiscus Initiatives

hibiscusinitiatives.org.uk
Twitter: @hibiscuscharity
Instagram: hibiscuscharity

This publication is copyright, but may be reproduced by any method without fee or prior permission for teaching purposes, but not for resale. For copying in any other circumstances, prior written permission must be obtained from the publisher, and a fee may be payable.

Editors: Ella Weldon
Design: Prospectus
Cover image: David Rotimi from Unsplash.com

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
BACKGROUND TO OUR TRIP	5
HIBISCUS 35TH BIRTHDAY	6
POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS	7
ECONOMY AND POLITICS	8
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN	10
MIGRATION AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING	12
EXPERIENCE AND IMMERSION	14
CARITAS	15
WRAPA	16
FIDA	17
CYID	18
NAPTIP	19
BISI ALIMI FOUNDATION	19
CEE-HOPE NIGERIA	20
MANI	21
ETIWA VOCATIONAL TRAINING LTD	22
CLIENT INTERVIEWS	23
CASE STUDY 1	24
CASE STUDY 2	25
FINAL THOUGHTS	26
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	27

INTRODUCTION

Hibiscus is the UK's leading organisation working with Black, minoritised and migrant women and families at the intersection of the immigration and criminal justice systems.

Our work over 35 years has afforded us distinct experience and unrivalled understanding of the intersecting and compounding disadvantages, challenges, and vulnerabilities experienced by our clients.

The communities we work with face multiple barriers to justice such as racism, xenophobia, trafficking, gender-based violence and destitution, which place them at risk of re-traumatisation and being re-exploited. Our person-centred approach empowers our clients in dealing with their multiple and often complex needs.

Our work spans across the community, prisons, courts, and within detention and international resettlement settings. Our work at the grassroots level encompasses three intervention methods:

- Our Practical Support work stream involves specialist casework and tailored support around housing, immigration, entitlements, and legal issues.
- Our Wellbeing work stream provides emotional, mental and psychosocial support, to enable clients to address the trauma they experienced.
- The new Empowerment & Agency work stream creates opportunities for clients to develop agency and empower themselves to change their lives and participate in opportunities to influence systemic change by using their voice and experience.
- This is supported by our Influencing department where we partner with the clients, to provide them the skills and expertise they need to develop as experienced leaders. We create platforms where their voices can challenge inequalities and influence change.

Within the context of the Hibiscus International Resettlement Programme, Hibiscus' immediate priorities are to support livelihoods, social networks and employment opportunities to increase the likelihood of successful long-term resettlement. We strive to assist and support clients to successfully reintegrate in their home countries by extending our referral programme to local support organisations and networks to support resettlement needs, such as securing access to accommodation and seed capital assistance to start small businesses. COVID-19 has added an extra element of insecurity, therefore increasing the need for successful integration programmes.

Our person-centred approach empowers our clients in dealing with their multiple and often complex needs.

Within the context of these aims, Marchu Girma (Chief Executive), Louise Hatch (Head of International Resettlement and Detention Services), Kelly O'Sullivan (Head of Operations) and Waseem Saghir (Project Coordinator) undertook a research field trip to Nigeria in March 2022. Following the trip, some of these positions have changed and some individuals have since left the organisation.

BACKGROUND TO OUR TRIP

Hibiscus has had strong connections with Nigeria since its inception 35 years ago.

Olga Heaven, founder of Hibiscus, began her work as a volunteer in Holloway Prison, where she observed a high number of black, minoritised women, who were predominantly from Nigeria and Jamaica. Olga discovered that the majority of these women were victims of exploitation or drug smuggling and that there was inadequate support they could access in prison. Through founding Hibiscus, she set out to address some of these issues.

Olga set up an initial visit to Nigeria and Jamaica with the purpose of prevention; to spread awareness of the severity of the dangers experienced by women exploited in the drug trade. As well as engaging with journalists and government officials, Hibiscus created an international media campaign and animated video series which was aired on TV stations across a number of countries in West Africa and the Caribbean to highlight the risks of drug trafficking. This new way of working had a huge impact in reducing the number of women being exploited as 'mules' to transport drugs to the UK.

Since these initial trips, Hibiscus Initiatives has expanded to four strands of projects; the Prisons and Community project, the Anti-trafficking Steering Group, the Policy and Influencing team and the International Resettlement work within the Immigration Removal Centres. The impact of this work is reflected in the gradual decline in the number of women from both Nigeria and Jamaica within prisons for similar offences.

To mark the milestone of Hibiscus' 35th birthday and the cumulative impact we have had on the many clients we have been opportuned to work with over the years, we organised another trip to Nigeria in March 2022.

This trip represented a continuation of our close connections to Nigeria and a chance to reconnect with the country where Olga Heaven began her international work and recommit to our vision of building a fair and just society where inequalities are eliminated from the criminal justice and immigration systems.

OUR PURPOSE WAS TO:

- Re-establish connections with specialist resettlement organisations and support agencies in Nigeria with whom we previously met and establish new relationships.
 - Better understand and explore the myriad of 'push and pull' factors of migration from Nigeria to the United Kingdom.
 - Better support our clients in the UK seeking to return to Nigeria.
 - Document the personal resettlement experiences of our clients' who have returned to Nigeria.
-

HIBISCUS

35TH BIRTHDAY

The work conducted on this trip links to Hibiscus' strategic objectives to:

- Increase our knowledge around the specific social and economic contexts of Nigeria to better inform our work with Nigerian nationals
- Build and use an evidence-based methodology that will inform the development of services, respond to partners, and allow us to influence policy
- Make efficient use of our existing resources, networks and contacts to increase our knowledge, and articulate the voice of those we support more effectively
- Share and deploy our knowledge powerfully through commissioning and disseminating analysis, research, and evidence
- Present our messages through informed communications, including those of our partners that reflect the voice of our clients, our mission and impact
- Develop our networks with institutions; both nationally and internationally and to extend our knowledge, influence and reach

The information and data were collected through:

- Expert interviews
- Interviews with clients
- Observation and cultural immersion



POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

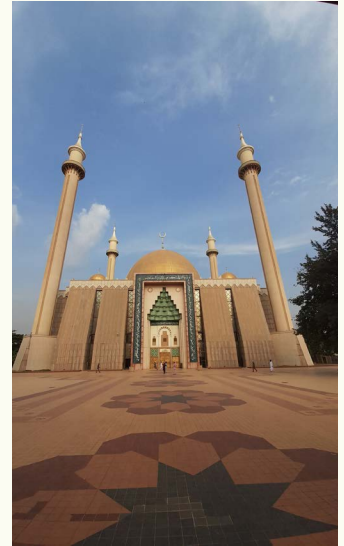
Nigeria is located in Western Africa and shares borders with Benin Republic in the west, The Niger Republic to the north, Chad Republic to the north-east and Cameroon to the east. Based on projections of the latest United Nations data, the current population of Nigeria is over 217 million¹. At the moment, Nigeria stands as the most populous nation in Africa.

The country has one of the highest populations of young people globally, with a median age of 18.1 years¹. The stipulated life expectancy in Nigeria as projected between 2010-2015 stood at 55².

Nigeria is a nation rich and diverse in culture. This diversity is reflected in various dimensions, such as religion, family life, language, tradition. There are an estimated 250 different ethnic groups across Nigeria, with the majority groups being Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo.

With over 500 different languages spoken, Nigeria represents one of the most linguistically diverse countries globally³. Whilst the official language is English, the major native languages spoken are Yoruba and Igbo, with Hausa spoken predominantly in Northern Nigeria. There is also 'broken English' or 'Nigerian Pidgin' spoken widely across Nigeria and easily understood by the majority of Nigerians. Ethnic groups tend to communicate in their local dialect whereas English is used in education and business. In many rural areas of Nigeria, English is rarely taught or spoken³.

The main religions across Nigeria are Christianity and Islam, with the South largely Christian and the North majority Muslim. The two religions are respected in Nigeria, with both Eid and Christmas celebrated as national holidays⁴.



There is relative peaceful co-existence amongst the different ethnic groups in the country, albeit there have been a number of contained periods of conflicts. Currently, the major threat to peaceful co-existence in Nigeria still remains in the Northern part of Nigeria, heavily influenced by Islamic extremist groups, such as Boko Haram⁵.

As much as there are these diversities across Nigerian culture, there are also certain cultural commonalities across different ethnic groups. For example, building strong family ties within the nuclear and extended families is highly valued, giving rise to a culture of familial interdependence. Therefore, it is commonplace for a young person in employment to take on the responsibility of providing for other family members who may not have the means to support themselves financially. Most Nigerians migrating to other countries continue to work to send financial support to their families back home⁶.

¹WorldOmeter. 2022. Nigeria Population. <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/nigeria-population/>

²World Bank. 2020. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.IN?locations=NG>

³Translators Without Borders. 2022. <https://translatorswithoutborders.org/language-data-nigeria#:~:text=Nigeria%20is%20one%20of%20the,with%20over%20500%20languages%20spoken.>

⁴McKinnonm A. 2021. Christians, Muslims and Traditional Worshipers in Nigeria: Estimating the Relative Proportions from Eleven Nationally Representative Social Surveys. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13644-021-00450-5>

⁵Commonwealth Initiative for Freedom of Religion or Belief Country Profile – Nigeria. 2016. <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-artslaw/ptr/ciforb/resources/Nigeria.pdf>

⁶Remittances in Nigeria. Centre for Financial Regulation & Inclusion. 2019. <https://cenfri.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Barriers-to-remittances-in-SSA-vol-6-Nigeria.pdf>

ECONOMY AND POLITICS

The region of Nigeria has been through a number of significant political and economical transitions over the last few hundreds.

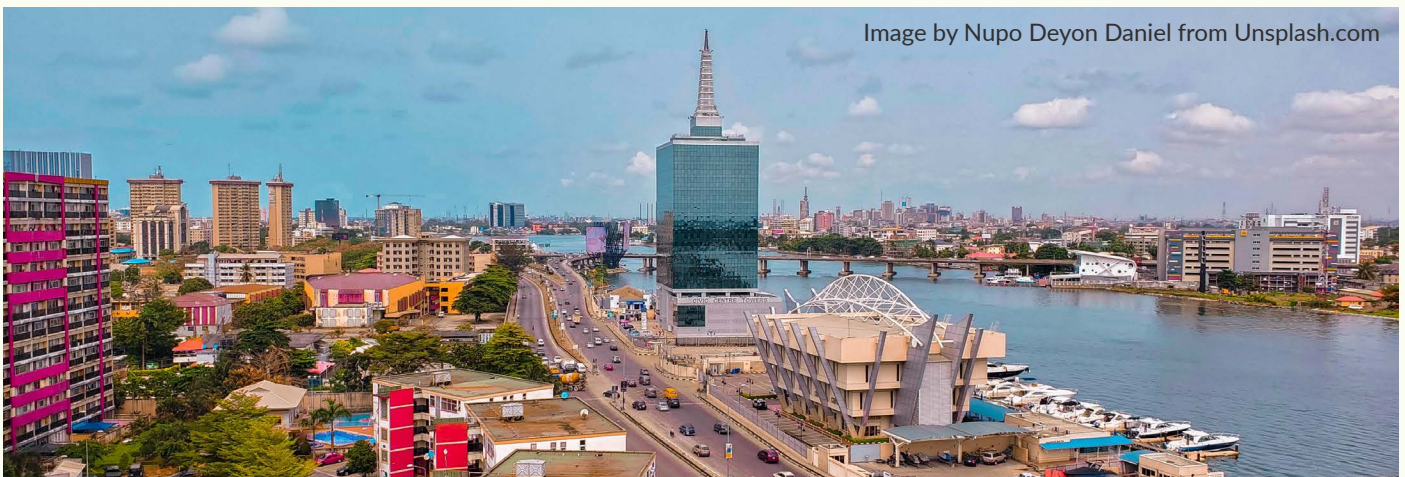


Image by Nupo Deyon Daniel from Unsplash.com

The region of Nigeria has been through a number of significant political and economical transitions over the last few hundreds. A reflection of the diversity of ethnic groups across contemporary Nigeria, the history of pre-colonial Nigeria is a rich history of different kingdoms, civilisations and states⁷.

From the 15th century onwards, pre-existing social and political structures and regional trading patterns were profoundly impacted by the expanding European transatlantic slave trade, in which millions of people were enslaved, sold, and transported from Nigeria to Europe, America and the Caribbean⁷.

The abolishment of slave trade at the start of the 19th century ushered the country into the era of trade of raw materials, with a particular boom for the trade of palm oil, ivory, rubber and other agricultural goods

which were sought after in Europe^{7,8}. The expanding forms of 'legitimate' and increasingly lucrative commerce was coupled with Britain doubling down on their dominance over Nigerian economic affairs and beginning a lengthy period of colonial rule to promote its imperial and trading interests^{7,9}.

Following pressure and resistance from the Nigerian Elite in the 1940s and 50s, Nigeria gained independence and decolonised in 1960⁷. From the post-colonial period onwards, Nigeria's economy has been centred on crude oil production, the largest producer in Africa as of 2021¹⁰. Yet, the 1980s saw a decline in output and price of crude oil in Nigeria, which contributed to a severe recession and led to the nation being classified as a low-income country by the World Bank⁷.

⁷Falola, T. and Heaton, M.M., 2008. A history of Nigeria. Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/history-nigeria-toyin-falola-and-matthew-m-heaton>

⁸Ekundare, R.O., 1973. An economic history of Nigeria 1860-1960. An economic history of Nigeria 1860-1960.

⁹Britannica. Nigeria as a colony. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Nigeria/Nigeria-as-a-colony>

¹⁰Statista. 2021. Oil production in Africa as of 2021, by country. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1178514/main-oil-producing-countries-in-africa>

Despite being rich in natural resources, Nigeria still suffers from significant development challenges, economic instability, and has not seen economic growth distributed equally across society. Many feel that the nation is plagued by a ruling political class who is not doing enough to convert Nigeria's resources into beneficial and equitable economic growth¹¹. Deep rooted issues of political corruption have contributed to pervasive and systemic poverty and economic inequality in Nigeria⁷.

Additionally, it is important to highlight how the structuring of the Nigerian economy during British colonial rule, with a focus on export crop and primary resources to support Britain's growing domestic consumption and an undermining of industrialisation, has also had many long-lasting impacts on Nigeria's contemporary economy^{7,12}.



Despite some progress over the past decades, World Bank data in 2018 suggests that as many as 40% of citizens are living below the poverty line¹³. The current minimum wage is ₦30,000 per month, which was recently calculated by an E-commerce company to not be sufficient to cater for the minimum nutritional needs of an adult¹⁴. Unemployment is

also a pervasive issue; with the National Institute of Statistics declaring an unemployment rate of 33.3% in March 2021¹⁵.

Furthermore, levels of access to basic physical infrastructure such as clean water and improved sanitation, electricity and paved roads in Nigeria are inadequate given its income levels and rapidly growing population.

Poverty and economic deprivation in Nigeria is an intersectional phenomenon shaped by a number of overlapping and compounding factors, such as one's employment status, age, gender, ethnicity, geography, and level of education. Women, as a result of a number of patriarchal factors such as educational and property inequality, are disproportionately represented among those living in poverty in Nigeria, with having higher rates of food and housing insecurity^{16,17}.

Economic instability and issues of unemployment have corroborated with a rise of discontent and internal conflicts, such as the emerging Islamic extremist group Boko Haram. Boko Haram have been responsible for the death of tens of thousands across Nigeria. Their violence and abductions, particularly targeting Fulani herdsman, has led to nearly 2.1 million being internally displaced and nearly 800,000 displaced in neighbouring countries¹⁸, with a significant proportion of those displaced seeking safety in Europe.

The conflict has had profound impacts on schools, churches, local businesses, whole communities, banks and local economies. Furthermore, the economy of the nation as a whole has been impacted, leading to a significant withdrawal of foreign investments for security reasons¹⁹.

Nigeria, like many other nations of the world, was affected by the global economic disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. As oil prices dropped to an all-time low, Nigeria was plunged into a deep recession in 2020 due to its reliance on oil exports¹³. However, the nation is gradually carving its way to recovery.

¹¹Smith, D.J., 2010. A culture of corruption. In *A Culture of Corruption*. Princeton University Press.

¹²Adetiba, A., 2021. What Britain Did to Nigeria: A Short History of Conquest and Rule. *African Studies Quarterly*, 20(4), pp.99-100.

¹³World Bank in Nigeria. Overview. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/nigeria/overview>

¹⁴Picodi. Minimum wage around the world in 2022. <https://www.picodi.com/ng/bargain-hunting/minimum-wage-2022>

¹⁵Oyekanmi, S. 2021. Nairametrics. Nigeria's unemployment rate jumps to 33.3% as at Q4 2020. <https://nairametrics.com/2021/03/15/nigerias-unemployment-rate-jumps-to-33-3-as-at-q4-2020/>

¹⁶Bako, Mandy Jollie, and Jawad Syed. 2018. "Women's Marginalization in Nigeria and the Way Forward." *Human Resource Development International* 21 (5): 425-443.

¹⁷Unicef. Situation of women and children in Nigeria. <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/situation-women-and-children-nigeria>

¹⁸Nigeria emergency. UNHCR. 2021. <https://www.unhcr.org/nigeria-emergency.html>

¹⁹Obiekwe, O., 2018. Impact of Insurgency on Foreign Direct Investment in Nigeria. *Operational Research*, 4(1), pp.275-293. Retrieved from <http://internationalpolicybrief.org/images/2018/JULY/IJORMSSE/ARTICLE1.pdf>

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Nigeria is a patriarchal society with a strong male-dominated culture that generates notable gender inequalities^{20,21}, including violence against women - a pervasive and deeply rooted issue in Nigerian society²².

Domestic power dynamics and cultural beliefs about gender roles and expectations have underpinned the longstanding social acceptance of it being a husband's right to discipline his wife with violence and aggression²². These beliefs extend to law enforcement, who have been known to encourage victims to solve matters privately instead of interfering in cases of domestic violence²³. Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is not limited to any particular culture in Nigeria; it cuts across all ethnic groups.

One 2013 study with a sample of over 20,000 women in intimate relationships, found that 1 in 4 women had experienced IPV²². Corroborating this, the CLEEN Foundation study found that 1 in 3 respondents disclosed being a victim of IPV in 2013²⁴. Research during the COVID-19 lockdowns found that IPV rose by up to 56%²⁵.

There are several deep rooted factors contributing to the high rates of IPV perpetrated by male partners, and the norms of acceptance by women and society at large.

²⁰UN Women. 2022. Nigeria. <https://data.unwomen.org/country/nigeria>

²¹Human Rights Watch. 2022. Nigeria Risks Falling Further Behind on Women's Equality. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/03/08/nigeria-risks-falling-further-behind-womens-equality>

²²Benebo, F.O., Schumann, B. and Vaezghasemi, M., 2018. Intimate partner violence against women in Nigeria: a multilevel study investigating the effect of women's status and community norms. *BMC women's health*, 18(1), pp.1-17. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14680777.2022.2030386#>

²³Amnesty. 2021. Nigeria: Failure to tackle rape crisis emboldens perpetrators and silences survivors. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/11/nigeria-failure-to-tackle-rape-crisis-emboldens-perpetrators-and-silences-survivors/>

²⁴CLEEN Foundation. "National Crime Victimization Surveys". 2013.

²⁵UN Women. 2020. Gender-Based Violence in Nigeria during the COVID-19 Crisis: The Shadow Pandemic. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/4/statement-ed-phumzile-violence-against-women-during-pandemic>.

One contributing factor is the high value that Nigerian society places on marriage, particularly for women, which puts considerable pressure on women to remain in relationships despite experiencing violence and abuse²⁶. This pressure is perpetuated by Nigerian society undervaluing women who have ended their marriages, with commonly held negative perceptions of divorced women being of 'easy virtue' or being unable to keep a home. Cultural dishonour, negative stereotypes and the relegation of divorced women by religious institutions make it difficult for women to remarry, especially those with children. It is typical for women facing abuse to be reminded of the dishonour that divorce would bring to her and her family. Such societal pressures contribute to women often accepting violence within a marriage for fear of backlash. This bestows significant power and dominance to husbands and contributes to the harmful belief that it is a man's right to discipline his wife³³.

One 2013 study found that 1 in 4 women in intimate relationships experience IPV. Research during the COVID-19 lockdowns found that IPV rose by up to 56%.

Rape has also been an issue of serious concern across Nigeria. Harmful stereotypes across society dishonour women who disclose being survivors of rape. This contributes to a culture of silence, where women lack the confidence to speak up about experiences of rape. Furthermore, there is a high degree of victim blaming in responses to disclosures

It is typical for women facing abuse to be reminded of the dishonour that divorce would bring to her and her family.

of rape, with survivors often asked questions that shifts the burden onto them²³.

There is continual concern over the disproportionate risk that girls and women face during religious fundamentalist violence conflict. The abuse of women is a central element of the gendered tactics adopted by Boko Haram, including armed abduction, rape and forced marriage. It has been argued that women are a weapon of warfare in North-East Nigeria²⁷.

In recent years there have been efforts made by civil society groups to tackle these harmful beliefs and norms. Several organisations have worked to increase awareness on the various forms of gender-based violence and gender inequality.

During the pandemic there were large rallies that spread across the nation, united in their protests against rising rates of sexual and gender based violence and law enforcement's failure to investigate and hold men accountable. This movement led to the passing of a bill of law that prohibited the stigmatisation of victims of rape and insurgency²⁸.

It is hoped that this recent intervention and sharpened societal awareness may bring a much needed change with regards to violence against women in Nigeria.

²⁶Wana Udobang, W. 2018. "We are brought up to think suffering this violence is OK': domestic abuse in Nigeria'. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/working-in-development/2018/jan/05/violence-domestic-abuse-nigeria-bullying-husbands>

²⁷Adeyanju, C.G., 2020. The Gender-Based Violence as an Instrument of Warfare in Armed Conflicts. *J. Liberty & Int'l Aff.*, 6, p.57.

²⁸Kulkarni, P. 2020. Massive protests against gender-based violence in Nigeria force government to take measures. <https://peoplesdispatch.org/2020/06/13/massive-protests-against-gender-based-violence-in-nigeria-force-government-to-take-measures/>

MIGRATION AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

During the 1960s, a significant number of refugees fled Nigeria because of political unrest and fear of persecution.

Since the 1980s, many others have migrated as a result of economic downturn and political instability, seeking employment and educational opportunities, economic stability and wellbeing.

The number of Nigerians living abroad more than doubled from 1990-2013²⁹. This increase in emigration corroborates with increasing dissatisfaction with the socioeconomic conditions and employment opportunities across Nigeria.

Reliable data on the proportion and country of residence of Nigerians living abroad is difficult to acquire, however both the US and the UK certainly represent some of the main host countries²⁰. Nigerian migrants primarily transit to countries they are more likely to adjust rapidly to in terms of being able to speak the host country's language.

Like many other former British colonies, Nigeria has been a significant source of migrants in the UK. The Nigerian Diaspora in Britain has been built over centuries, facilitated by a tradition of scholarly migration. It is mostly made up of Igbo and Yoruba people who initially settled in London, attracted

and retained by the presence of long established structures, support and community centres, specialised markets, shops and churches. They have formed long-established communities in London, Liverpool and other industrial cities in the UK³⁰.

Major pull factors include securing gainful employment and better educational opportunities, reuniting with family members and friends and connecting with a diasporic community.

As was mentioned in the previous section 'Population and Demographics', family is the backbone of Nigeria's social system. Extended family is extremely important and the actions of family members can impact perceptions of family honour. Within Nigerian culture, it is conventional to support family members during times of need, both financially and emotionally³¹. Hence, Nigeria is the largest beneficiary of remittances when compared to other sub-Saharan countries³². However, there is on-going debate around the extent to which remittance inflows have been positively harnessed towards economic development in Nigeria.

²⁹IOM. 2014. Nigeria Country Profile. https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/mp_nigeria.pdf

³⁰BBC. 2008. Nigerian London. https://www.bbc.co.uk/london/content/articles/2005/05/26/nigerian_london_feature.shtml

³¹Commisceo Global. 2017. Nigeria - Culture, Etiquette and Business Practices. <https://www.commisceo-global.com/resources/country-guides/nigeria-guide>

³²World Bank. 2022. Personal remittances, received (current US\$) - Sub-Saharan Africa. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.CD.DT?locations=ZG&most_recent_value_desc=true

The myriad of complex and diverse reasons, both personal and structural, that lead people to leave their homes means that many are willing to risk making dangerous journeys, in the face of limited alternative safe legal routes. In terms of irregular migration to the UK, accurate nationality statistics are extremely hard to acquire. Although it is understood that a significant number of Nigerian nationals have made the most perilous journey through Libya and attempted to cross the Mediterranean in small boats since 2016, recent UK Home Office data from 2018-2020 outlines that the vast majority of those crossing recently are from the Middle-East³³.

Nigeria is the largest beneficiary of remittances when compared to other sub-Saharan countries.

Internal and external trafficking is a long-standing issue in Nigeria that has been garnering public attention and intervention since the 90s, due to significantly increasing rates. The vast majority of victims of trafficking are women and children who are sold into different forms of forced labour, including sexual exploitation³⁴. Estimates suggest that thousands of women and children have been trafficked into Europe over the last few decades²⁰. Although Italy historically represents the primary recipient country³⁵, Nigeria has consistently been

Estimates suggest that thousands of women and children have been trafficked into Europe over the last few decades.

among the top countries for potential victims of trafficking referred to the UK's National Referral Mechanism (NRM)³⁶. Victims typically experience extremely traumatic life-threatening journeys and end up in exploitative labour²⁵.

As we discovered whilst meeting organisations working on the ground, trafficking typically centres on coercion and deception in the form of false promises of secure employment opportunities, educational training or marriages. Due to the drivers of migration discussed above, the often gendered nature of poverty and experiences of gender based violence, these promises may offer appealing alternative opportunities for many women²⁷. Although there have been increasing efforts by governmental officials in terms of prevention and persecution, these have been largely on an insufficient scale to eliminate trafficking.

³³Migration Observatory. 2021. Q&A: Migrants crossing the English Channel in small boats/ <https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/commentaries/qa-migrants-crossing-the-english-channel-in-small-boats/>

³⁴Human Rights Watch, 2019. "You Pray for Death" Trafficking of Women and Girls in Nigeria. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/08/27/you-pray-death/trafficking-women-and-girls-nigeria>

³⁵Pathfinders. 2022. NIGERIA: HUMAN TRAFFICKING FACTSHEET. <https://pathfindersji.org/nigeria-human-trafficking-factsheet>

³⁶Hynes, P., et al. 2019. 'Between two fires': understanding vulnerabilities and the support needs of people from Albania, Viet Nam and Nigeria who have experienced human trafficking into the UK. University of Bedfordshire and International Organization for Migration (IOM).

EXPERIENCE AND IMMERSION

Through our cultural observation and immersion, we learnt about the impact, effects and factors of migration and immigration.

DATE	MEETING/EVENT
02/03/2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Caritas
03/03/2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA)• International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA)
04/03/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Centre for Youths Integrated Development (CYID)• National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP)• Cultural visit to Abuja Central Mosque
05/03/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cultural visit to Nike Art Gallery and markets
06/03/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with client
07/03/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cultural visit to Freedom Park• CEE-HOPE Nigeria
08/03/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attendance at International Women's Day event at American Corner, Ikeja.• Meeting with clients• Etiwa Vocational Training Ltd
09/03/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bisi Alimi Foundation
10/03/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mentally Aware Nigeria Initiative (MANI)

In this section, we will outline the work of each organisation we met on our trip and the insights they shared with us regarding the context of migration and trafficking in Nigeria and the support available for returnees and survivors of trafficking.

Caritas Nigeria is a faith based organisation formed in 2010 by the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN).



Its mission is to 'advance the wellbeing of all through participatory measures in line with Catholic Social Teaching'. Caritas work across a variety of fields; migration, humanitarian relief, health, HIV/AIDS, governance and training on project management.

In terms of migration, Caritas have a particular focus on anti-trafficking and also provide resettlement and reintegration related advice to returnees to Nigeria, working in collaboration with the Government and with the IOM.

Caritas runs a refuge in Benin, which was described as a key trafficking hotspot in our discussions. Caritas also runs educational programmes to increase awareness about the risks of trafficking. They speak in churches as well as primary schools to educate children on support available and how to report instances of trafficking. Caritas conducts further training sessions with police to support the identification of victims, working closely with the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP).

Caritas shed light on the different mechanisms of trafficking recruitment they were witnessing across the country. Some victims appear to be highly educated and have the means to pay traffickers, whilst others sold everything in their possession to go overseas.

One of Caritas' members discussed their work as a chaplain for prisoners in HMP Wandsworth and commented on how people in the UK were being trafficked, citing the frequency of false promises and sham marriages.

In terms of returnees, Caritas reported that the majority are returning from Germany, with a significant proportion returning from 'slave markets' in North Africa.

Caritas are able to support a small number of returnees with the funding they received from Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), offering psychosocial support to victims, including counselling. Furthermore, Caritas described a novel project aimed at supporting displaced Nigerian nationals to connect with their families and obtain necessary documentation to be able to work.

However, there are many barriers to Caritas and other organisations providing adequate support for returnees and victims of trafficking, such as a lack of funding and government support.

A lack of support can lead to individuals being re-trafficked or choosing to leave the country themselves. Caritas described the high levels of stigma associated with trafficking when returning to Nigeria and explained how many appear more willing to face difficulties in the UK rather than return to Nigeria.

Caritas explained that long-term sustained funding is necessary to be able to offer long-term support and to be able to understand and measure the impact of trafficking and identify the issues people face.

We discussed the new policy in the UK that requires victims of trafficking to declare so upon first contact with the authorities. Caritas highlighted the challenges that this would pose for those who are still in contexts of trafficking whilst in the UK, particularly if they are threatened by the perpetrator and fearful of repercussions.

Caritas are open to partnership with Hibiscus and international collaboration to support the safe return of Nigerian nationals from overseas.

WRAPA

WOMEN'S RIGHTS ADVANCEMENT AND PROTECTION ALTERNATIVE



Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) supports vulnerable women to access their rights and understand the law.

WRAPA supports women in difficult circumstances including those who have experienced gender-based violence.

Their services include: sheltered accommodation for women and girls needing protection from abusive environments, basic provisions for women facing destitution, legal aid assistance and skills-based training programmes and support for women in prison. They also have a gender and mobility project that specifically supports women with disabilities. Over 23 years, WRAPA have visited more than 20 states across Nigeria, working closely with the police as well as NAPTIP to advocate for women's rights.

WRAPA have a capacity building project to end violence against women. They offer women a platform to share their experiences and have their voices heard through testimonies. Through this work, the organisation hopes to identify and challenge stereotypes against women that perpetuate gender inequality and undermine women's societal opportunities.

WRAPA shed light on rising cases of domestic violence during COVID-19, which led to rallies and protests demanding men to be held accountable. During this time, women were encouraged to report cases to the police and a mobile court was introduced to deal with immediate cases.

However, WRAPA'S experiences working closely with the judicial system has exposed the systemic flaws and biases against women. WRAPA explained how women's cases are often not properly heard in court and even described instances of women being arrested for reporting domestic violence.



WRAPA described the prevalence of corruption and bribery within courts in favour of the perpetrator that can lead to convictions being quashed. Although this is much less common within the police, it is hard for women to establish sufficient evidence to prove cases of domestic violence.

WRAPA feel strongly that ending violence against women is critically dependent on changes to laws and policies and have therefore been focusing on the 'Equal Opportunities Bill' for some time.

To support these aims, WRAPA is also running a political participation campaign, of which one particular focus is demanding that 35% of seats of the national assembly are allocated to women. At a community level, WRAPA encourages women to participate in local politics and educates women to promote political participation.

WRAPA also provides educational classes for school-aged girls and is funded by the Malala Fund, whose objective is to promote girls' access to education. The fund has so far supported 5 girls into school through WRAPA. They also run classes for boys in order to educate them on issues of gender inequality and gender-based violence.

Due to ongoing unrest and conflict, WRAPA described the persistent barriers to girls accessing education in Northern regions of Nigeria as well as the challenges faced by internally displaced women and children.

FIDA

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF WOMEN LAWYERS



FIDA Nigeria is a non-profit, non-political, voluntary association of women called to the practice of law in Nigeria.

They work to protect the rights of women and children and have 40 branches across Nigeria.

They offer pro-bono legal advice for survivors of trafficking and gender-based violence and also provide shelters. They work to hold prosecutors to account and designate courts to limit delays in hearings.

We discussed the contexts of trafficking in Nigeria and FIDA highlighted how the pressure to support one's family is a considerable migration push factor in Nigeria. Initially, irregular migrants were predominantly men, but there have been growing numbers of women over the last few years, which has coincided with women being exploited within these irregular migration routes.

FIDA highlighted how women and girls are often enticed by opportunities and offers of a better life. In reality, most of these promises hinge on deception and women end up being trafficked for purposes of sexual exploitation. They identified Enugu State in the

South-East as being a key area where sex trafficking is at its highest, with growing rates in the North due to internal displacement.

FIDA expressed concern over the lack of policies and laws in Nigeria that support and protect survivors of trafficking, despite the 2015 Violence against Women Act. Through their experience collaborating closely with law enforcement, FIDA feel there are systemic barriers that disadvantage victims, with police often failing to recognise instances of trafficking.

FIDA have worked to alleviate significant court delays and judicial-system adjournments that mean perpetrators could catch up with victims, by assisting with designation of court for hearings to be heard quicker. However, they highlighted how their clients are often afraid to give statements in court.

As a result of a lack of support, when survivors return to Nigeria, they are likely to remain in the vicious cycle and end up being trafficked again. They described their experience of working with women survivors of trafficking who end up in the same position, having only been back in Nigeria for twelve weeks.

Although FIDA does provide a limited number of shelters to protect survivors, they expressed a need for international partners to ramp up the housing support available for women.



CENTRE FOR YOUTHS INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT

The Centre for Youths Integrated Development (CYID), based in Abuja and Lagos, provides reintegration assistance to Nigerian nationals who have been deported or removed from a foreign country, usually from various EU countries.



Their programmes include Enterprise Based Vocational Training (EBVT), counselling and reintegration services. The centre provides case management services and assistance for finding temporary housing and medical treatment for those in need and conducts public awareness initiatives around the risks of trafficking.

The vocational based training classes empowers students and local youths to develop entrepreneurial skills for self-employment. The programme supports people under 25 over the period of a year and offers accredited courses, often connecting students to business funding streams. CYID are hoping to extend their support to include long term accommodation.

CYID is funded by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) to support returnees from Germany.

CYID have assisted Hibiscus by supporting many returnees to Nigeria with arranging emergency accommodation, organising access to healthcare services and providing information to clients in the UK on specific routes into employment.

Through their wide network of partners, CYID are able to help with many other aspects of reintegration support and have representatives in the UK and Nigeria.

NAPTIP



NATIONAL AGENCY FOR PROHIBITION OF TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

The National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) is the Nigerian Federal Government's strategy to eliminate human trafficking.

They work in collaboration with national and international government agencies.

Much of NAPTIP's focus is on prevention and punishment, particularly for the trafficking of women

and children. Our team met with the director general of NAPTIP and heard about NAPTIP's prosecution work that aims to ensure traffickers are held accountable.

They also offer protection, support and rehabilitation to survivors, providing 40 shelters for those who have returned to Nigeria having been trafficked, as well as those internally displaced from the North and East regions.

NAPTIP also conducts research on trafficking to raise awareness of the issues across Nigeria and to advocate for better services and interventions for survivors or those who are vulnerable to trafficking.

BISI ALIMI FOUNDATION



Bisi Alimi Foundation

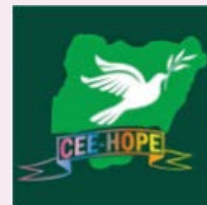
ACCELERATING SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE OF LGBT IN NIGERIA

The Bisi Alimi Foundation advocates for the rights and dignity of LGBTQ people in Nigeria,

working to bring visibility to the community. The foundation conducts research into the societal perceptions of the LGBTQ community, as well as the lived experiences of LGBTQ people. This research informs advocacy work to push positive narratives through the media, to change policy and improve businesses diversity, equity and inclusion strategies.

This is extremely critical work in the face of deteriorating rights for the LGBTQ community in Nigeria and the very real threat of physical danger that many face in their daily lives. Representatives from Bisi Alimi shared concerning stories about their clients experiences of discrimination and how difficult it is to support others whilst fearing for their own safety; hence our need to hold this meeting in a secure location.





Over the last eight years, CEE-HOPE (Centre for Children’s Health, Education, Orientation and Protection) has provided welfare services to survivors of sexual violence, trafficking and domestic violence across Nigeria.

They provide an empowerment programme that offers psychosocial and legal support.

Members of CEE-HOPE also conduct campaign work, rallying against the current gender bill and creating podcast content to advocate for rights of domestic workers.

Due to the serious rise in domestic violence cases during the start of the pandemic and rising cases of women being locked-down in abusive home situations, CEE-HOPE set up a women’s shelter

called Hearts of Hope that focuses on community resettlement.

The shelter was set up to a profound lack of family and government support for survivors of gender based and sexual violence in Nigeria. They described one case in which a father was on trial for abusing his daughter. Due to the family exposure and profound feelings of shame and taboo around gender-based violence, the daughter couldn’t return home and had her entire support system removed, with no continued support from NGOs.

CEE-HOPE were concerned that most shelters in Nigeria were not functioning sufficiently, with examples of women having to relocate outside the country due to continued threats from perpetrators. CEE-HOPE’s shelter provides survivors with necessary psychosocial services due to high levels of trauma, as well as support to facilitate women being financially independent.

CEE-HOPE shed light on recent trends of rising instances of young women and girls being trafficked

from regions such as Abia State, North State and Cadona, deceived by agents' false promise of opportunities and ending up in contexts of extreme exploitation and Modern Day Slavery.

The shelter also offers support for up to 15 survivors of trafficking for around 2 months, providing educational training and support to gain back their livelihood and return to their families. Complex cases are given support for longer periods of 8 months.

CEE-HOPE expressed concern about how difficult it is for survivors of trafficking to bounce back and get their life on track after returning to Nigeria, highlighting how common it is for women to end up in the same situation they started with.

They expressed discontent with the lack of government initiatives and responsiveness to support women survivors of trafficking. For example, they described one example of a woman who was

trafficked and spent 3 weeks at a bus station whilst pregnant. She was referred to NAPTIP but the group of perpetrators who were arrested were let free. CEE HOPE had to collect the woman from NAPTIP and after supporting her, she returned to her village in the north. They felt that there was a lack of a sustainable plan for supporting survivors of trafficking to prevent re-trafficking.

CEE-HOPE described how this is representative of a wider issue of lack of governmental welfare support that contributes to many people existing without a safety net.

CEE-HOPE stated that they do not currently have any cases referred from overseas but would be willing to support if referred.

MANI



MENTALLY AWARE NIGERIA INITIATIVE

Mentally Aware Nigeria Initiative (MANI) is the largest provider of crisis support services in Nigeria, providing mental health programs.

MANI have a team of in-house counsellors and psychologists who provide free counselling sessions and also help run a suicide hotline.

They also advocate for change in mental health legislation that has remained unchanged since 1958.

During our discussions, we explored the possibilities of referring our clients to MANI for mental health support.

ETIWA VOCATIONAL TRAINING LTD



Etiwa is a vocational training centre that provides intensive training programmes for around 500 students annually across a range of vocations; electrical (including solar power), air conditioning, block laying, plastering, health & safety and mechanical.

Etiwa has been running for nine years, minus an intermittent closed period during COVID-19, and is structured as a private for-profit company.

These industry-standard courses provide Continued Professional Development (CPD) certifications or locally accredited qualifications to help students get into work. Etiwa also partners with local companies to promote student's employment. For example, the construction training Etiwa runs provides a fertile route into employment. Etiwa has international partners in Germany, hence some qualifications are German, which opens routes to employment in the EU.

The courses are either sponsored or students pay fees, and Etiwa provides an 80-bed hostel to accommodate students.

In collaboration with GIZ, Etiwa provides support to migrant returnees, mostly those from Edo state where there are many returnees. As well as offering a valuable route to employment for migrants, Etiwa works to support returnees' needs, offering trauma informed emotional and psychological support with specialised addiction support. Returnees are referred to Etiwa by other agencies such as Migrant Returnee Programme and Refugee in Lagos.

In terms of gender representation, there are fewer women than men enrolled. However, employers are seeking women employees and Etiwa has a plethora of success stories - including one woman who completed an entrepreneurship and now works for Nestle. Furthermore, one female masonry trainee is currently encouraging other women to register.

Etiwa receives thousands of applications each year but selects a short list based on requirements such as basic numeracy and literacy and a career driven attitude. The solar power course, funded by Dutch organisations, is one of the favourite and most innovative courses that Etiwa offers. Etiwa is looking to expand training in plumbing, painting and decorating, and welding.



CLIENT INTERVIEWS

One of the critical elements of our trip to Nigeria was to understand the lived-experiences of individuals who have returned and are resettling in Nigeria.

A key theme that emerged from our client meetings was that returnees who have lived out of Nigeria for many years and who may have been detained in the UK face societal stigma and feelings of shame. Stigma and taboo create obstacles to being accepted and being able to re-adjust to family and social life, with some clients explaining how they preferred to isolate themselves. Isolation and exclusion seemed to be compounded by the traumatic memories of detention.

This, coupled with the consequences of unfamiliarity that naturally result when being away from a country for a long period, makes it difficult for returnees to resettle. Feelings of uncertainty and instability came up a number of times. These social challenges appear to be perpetuated by a paucity of government support.

In the midst of these challenges, Hibiscus' support is extremely valuable for our clients in being able to land on their feet and have helped a number of clients find employment and make a salary. Financial support is a necessity for returnees to be able to regain stability.

The clients we interviewed found Hibiscus' services to be extremely useful in understanding the immigration and returns process, furthermore ensuring lasting relationships and keeping in touch meant a lot to clients.

CASE STUDY 1:

ABIGAIL

This case study highlights some of the ways that focused support can assist returnees in finding their feet in Nigeria. We are using a false name ‘Abigail’ to protect confidentiality and anonymity.

Abigail returned to Nigeria in December 2019 after she lost a lengthy human rights case with the Home Office. With the assistance of Hibiscus’ support package, Abigail was able to open a small stall in a marketplace selling local food items.

Since her return, we have stayed in close communication with Abigail and she contacted Hibiscus during the pandemic when her livelihood was severely disrupted by the closing of the market during the first lock-down. Abigail was no longer

able to generate any income, and had to eat into her own stock to survive and exchange the rest for rent and bills. Although the market reopened eventually, Abigail didn’t have enough stock to begin trading again and requested additional support from Hibiscus.

Hibiscus supported Abigail with funds to acquire more stock and restart her business. Fortunately, Abigail is now back in business, has regained her independence and is grateful for the support we were able to provide.

During our trip to Nigeria in 2022, we met with Abigail again and she informed us that she has now incorporated a POS (point of sale) business into her shop; a service that enables customers to withdraw cash using a card, transfer money or pay bills. Although Abigail did disclose her experiences of isolation and stigma, Hibiscus’ consistent moral support and a number of financial grants have supported her to regain her livelihood.

CASE STUDY 2:

GRACE

This case study highlights some of the key issues and challenges faced by returnees in Nigeria. We are using a false name 'Grace' to protect confidentiality and anonymity.

Grace came to the UK in 2005 and lived here for 13 years with her sister. After her application for leave to remain was refused, Grace was detained and eventually removed from the UK in 2018.

Our project workers supported Grace while she was detained in Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre, assisting with the voluntary return process. We stayed in close communication with Grace after her departure and continued to check in on her. She communicated her initial frustrations trying to land on her feet and we supported her accessing some additional documents from the Home Office.

We met Grace on our last trip to Nigeria in 2018 and met her again in 2022. In 2018, Grace was in Lagos and was about to move onto her home town Port Harcourt. However, as family relations had broken down due to issues of stigma, Grace decided to relocate to Abuja to try to gain independence and found work in a corner store.

Four years on, Grace explained that she still doesn't feel settled in Abuja, financially or psychologically. She described how although she does attend church, she struggles to feel a sense of belonging in her community. Grace disclosed how difficult it feels re-adjusting to Nigerian life after living in the UK for 13 years and how she feels unable to let go of the family, friends and connections she made over what was a large proportion of her life.

With limited social network, family ties and financial insecurity, Grace feels a weight of uncertainty about the future even after spending four years back in Nigeria and relocating twice.

Grace didn't fully understand the 'reduced' re-entry ban issued by the UK Home Office due to issues with lack of paperwork and so we supported her in understanding the details and context of the ban. We also provided a small grant to Grace during our trip and pointed her towards services that provide psychological support.

Grace expressed gratitude to us for our support during her period of detention and expressed that she wished she had known about our services earlier. She thanked us for our continued communication and support since leaving the UK. We plan to continue our relationship with Grace, to help her overcome her difficulties and gain a sense of stability.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Since its inception 35 years ago, Hibiscus has supported Nigerian clients and been closely connected to Nigeria, with Hibiscus' founder Olga Heaven beginning her first international work in Nigeria. Presently, Nigerian nationals constitute the top five nationalities in Hibiscus' International Resettlement services.

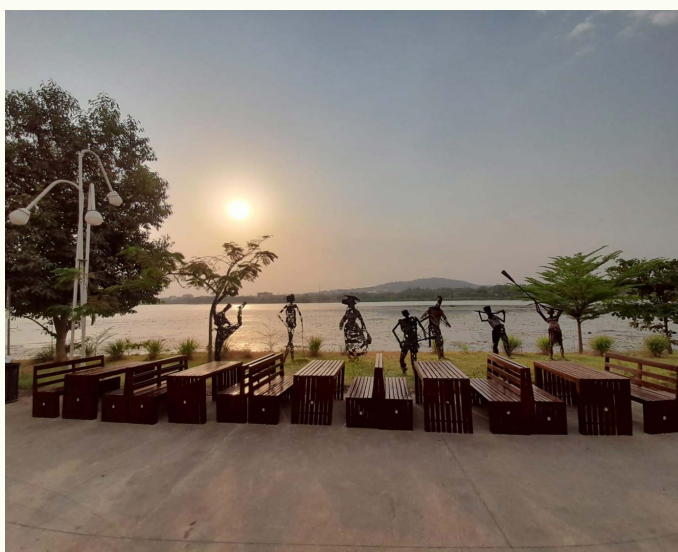
Our second trip to Nigeria in four years gave us a renewed understanding of the long-standing history of migration between the UK and Nigeria, fostered by strong diasporic communities and connections. The persistent levels of socioeconomic inequality in Nigeria fosters a culture of emigration, in which many individuals seek livelihoods and opportunities abroad. However, during this trip and from our conversations with organisations working on the ground, it became clear that trafficking had developed as a serious and growing concern in Nigeria, even since our last trip. Nigeria is witnessing sharp rises in rates of sex trafficking as a result of displacement in northern regions of the country, with rates in Benin State appearing to be the highest in recent years. It was highlighted to us that women are typically targeted through means of deception and coercion, being sold false opportunities and dreams.

In a context of persistent gender inequality and a crisis of gender-based-violence in Nigeria, a promise of a better life or opportunities continues to present an appealing alternative to many. A few of the organisations we met expressed how the judicial system systematically fails women; women's voices are not being heard and the system does not adequately protect women against gender based violence and discrimination.

Nigerian nationals constitute the top five nationalities in Hibiscus' International Resettlement services.

We were impressed by the dedication and commitment of the organisations we met in offering the best support possible to returnees and survivors of trafficking. However, insufficient funds prevent organisations from creating maximum impact. There is simply not enough targeted support and initiatives to prevent women who return to Nigeria having been previously trafficked from being re-trafficked and ending up in the same situation.

Hibiscus therefore has a critical role in supporting people in their transition to a stable and fulfilling livelihood after their return to Nigeria. We strive to share knowledge with our clients in immigration detention regarding where they can access support in Nigeria and to maintain communication with those who return to Nigeria so we can adequately support them in their resettlement process.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A report written by Waseem Saghir

with the support of the organisations on the ground, the IR team, Esther Oke, and those present during the trip; Marchu Girma, Kelly O'Sullivan, Louise Hatch and Waseem Saghir.

With thanks to:

Victor Aihawu, Director of Centre for Youths Integrated Development

The Home Office

All the staff of the following organisations:

CARITAS

Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA)

International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA)

Centre for Youths Integrated Development (CYID)

National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP)

CEE-HOPE Nigeria

Etiwa Vocational Training Ltd

Bisi Alimi Foundation

Mentally Aware Nigeria Initiative (MANI)

And lastly our sincere thanks to all of our clients in Nigeria.

Published by
Hibiscus Initiatives
Resource for London,
356 Holloway Road, London,
N7 6PA, United Kingdom

hibiscusinitiatives.org.uk

020 7697 4120
info@hibiscus.org.uk
[@hibiscuscharity](https://www.instagram.com/hibiscuscharity)

Hibiscus Initiatives Limited is a registered
charity no. 1104094 and a company limited by
guarantee, registered in England no. 4533442