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# HUMAN TRAFFICKING ALONG THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN ROUTE

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DATA, STORIES AND INFORMATION  
COLLECTED BY THE INTERNATIONAL  
ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION

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International Organization for Migration (IOM)  

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The UN Migration Agency

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*All photos used in this report have been taken by IOM staff*

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# CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
TERMINOLOGY	9
1. THE PHENOMENON OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING	11
2. IOM'S COUNTER-TRAFFICKING ACTIVITIES IN ITALY	15
2.1 Identification of victims of trafficking: indicators developed by IOM	16
2.2 Direct assistance to victims of trafficking	21
2.3 Training and capacity-building activities	23
3. MAIN DIFFICULTIES IN THE SAFEGUARD AND PROTECTION OF TRAFFICKING VICTIMS	25
4. MAIN VULNERABILITIES/RISKS IDENTIFIED BY IOM	43
4.1 Underage victims	43
4.2 Victims of sexual violence during the journey	44
4.3 Victims suffering from psychological disorders or high trauma	45
4.4 Trafficking victims of other nationalities	46
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	47



## INTRODUCTION

Human trafficking is a transnational crime that is defined in Article 3 of the “Additional Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Human Trafficking, in particular Trafficking Involving Women and Children”.<sup>1</sup> According to the definition, human trafficking shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

At European level, trafficking in human beings is defined by the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.<sup>2</sup> The European Union has issued two directives on trafficking in human beings, the Council Directive 2004/81/EC of 29 April 2004, on the residence permit issued to third-country nationals who are victims of trafficking in human beings, or who have been the subject of an action to facilitate illegal immigration, who cooperate with the competent authorities,<sup>3</sup> and the

European Union has issued two directives on trafficking in human beings

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1 Additional Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Human Trafficking, especially Trafficking involving Women and Children (2000).

2 Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, Warsaw, 16.V.2005

3 Pursuant to the Directive, the residence permit is issued at the end of a so-called

51%  
of victims  
of trafficking  
in the world  
are women

Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, of 5 April 2011, on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, and replacing Council's Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA.<sup>4</sup>

In Italy, the offense of human trafficking is defined by Article 601 of the Criminal Code,<sup>5</sup> as recently amended by Legislative Decree 24/2014,<sup>6</sup> as part of the transposition of the EC Directive 2011/36/EU. Article 18 of the Consolidated Act on Immigration<sup>7</sup> and Article 27 of Implementing Regulation<sup>8</sup> govern the procedures for issuing a residence permit "for social protection"<sup>9</sup> to a foreigner whose safety is at risk due to attempts

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"reflection period", after which the migrant has agreed to cooperate actively in investigations, provided that the State has assessed the opportunity offered by the extension of the victim's stay in the national territory for the purposes of investigations or judicial proceedings, and that the migrant has broken any link with the alleged perpetrators of the offences.

- 4 The directive defines common minimum standards for determining offences related to human trafficking and fixing their penalties. It also envisages measures aimed at reinforcing the prevention of the phenomenon and the protection of victims. In particular, the forecast provided for in Article 11, par. 3, specifies that "Member States shall take the necessary measures to ensure that victim assistance and support are not contingent upon the will of the latter to cooperate in criminal investigations, judicial proceedings or trials".
- 5 Article 601 of the Criminal Code "Anybody who recruits, introduces into or transfers outside the territory of a state, transports, surrenders authority on the person, hosts one or more persons under the conditions set forth in Article 600, or has such conduct on one or more persons by deceit, violence, threat, abuse of authority or the exploitation of a vulnerability, physical, psychological or necessity situation, or by promising or giving money or other benefits to the person who has authority, in order to induce or force individuals to work, provide sex, beg for money, or otherwise, to carry out illicit activities that involve their own exploitation or forces them to donate their organs, is punished with imprisonment from eight to twenty years. Everyone, even outside the conditions set forth in the first paragraph, paragraph, carries out the same activities contained therein, towards minors shall be subject to the same punishment".
- 6 Legislative Decree 4 March 2014, no. 24 "Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking and Protection of Victims", in implementation of Directive 2011/36/EU on the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking.
- 7 Consolidated Act on Immigration, Legislative Decree 25/07/1998 no. 286.
- 8 Regulation setting forth rules for the implementation of the Consolidated on Immigration, pursuant to Article 1, paragraph 6 of Legislative Decree no. 286, and Presidential Decree of 31 August 1999, no. 394.
- 9 The residence permit is issued to allow the migrant to escape violence and the pressure from a criminal organization and to participate in a programme of social assistance and integration. It has a term of six months and can be renewed for a year, or for a longer period, for reasons of justice.

to escape a criminal organization committing crimes such as forced prostitution, child exploitation, begging, enslavement and human trafficking punishable by mandatory arrest *in flagrante delicto*, pursuant to Article 380 of the Criminal Code, or as a result of statements provided during preliminary investigations or trial procedures.

Given the complexity and nature of this phenomenon, it is extremely difficult to provide precise data on victims of human trafficking at a global level. More precise data relate to cases reported or identified, which only represent a small part of this phenomenon. Since 2002, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) records cases of human victims of trafficking assisted by the Organization; approximately 7,000 each year. The world dataset includes 46,000 registered cases involving individuals from 140 nationalities, identified in 150 destination countries.<sup>10</sup>

768  
assisted  
victims  
in the  
European  
Union

UNODC estimates that 51 per cent of total number of victims of trafficking in the world are women, while men account for 21 per cent and under-age victims 28 per cent.<sup>11</sup> If the victims are women, exploitation is primarily sexual (in 72% of cases), followed by labour exploitation (in 20% of cases) and other forms of exploitation (in 8% of cases). Men are more affected by labour exploitation (85.7% of cases) than sexual exploitation (6.8% of cases).

IOM carries out worldwide support activities for governments in the fight against human trafficking and provides direct assistance to victims, both in the countries of destination and those of transit and origin. In 2016, IOM assisted 768 victims of trafficking in the European Union, Switzerland and Norway, including 390 women, 116 men and 262 children. Most assisted victims were of Nigerian nationality (59%), followed by Bulgaria (11%), Romania (8%), Hungary (3%) and Thailand (2%).

In Italy, IOM is present at landing sites, Hotspots and reception centres of the main landing areas and has been able, as specialized counter trafficking

10 Since 2002, IOM records cases identified by the Organization globally, but data have not been systematically collected in all countries. In order to improve data on this phenomenon, IOM has developed Counter-Trafficking Collaborative Data, an open and multilateral data set of victims of trafficking.

11 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) 2016 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons: [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2016\\_Global\\_Report\\_on\\_Trafficking\\_in\\_Persons.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2016_Global_Report_on_Trafficking_in_Persons.pdf)



Understand  
a painful  
phenomenon  
that involves  
many adults  
and children

actor in the field of legal information and assistance, to monitor and record the growing number of victims of trafficking among migrants and those who seek international protection arriving by sea along Italian coasts.

This report aims to provide information gathered during the provision of legal information to arriving migrants, screening for vulnerability and identification of victims of trafficking and assistance/referral activities of identified victims in Italy. In this way, the report intends to contribute to formulating policies and developing initiatives to assist victims of trafficking and prevent and combat human trafficking phenomenon. The report focuses on the arriving by sea of victims of trafficking (in particular from Nigeria), whose data was collected by IOM's personnel in the field by direct contact with victims of trafficking.

The report describes: the phenomenon of human trafficking solely for the purpose of sexual exploitation in Italy; IOM activities relating to the fight against this phenomenon; difficulties regarding the safeguarding and protection of victims of trafficking in Italy; and, main vulnerabilities/risk indicators identified through assisted cases in the framework of IOM's assistance programmes. These subjects are also illustrated through the selected stories of some of the victims identified by IOM front line staff in the course of 2016.

The stories of these girls and women (whose names have been changed for safety reasons) have been chosen among the many accounts collected in order to help raise awareness of trafficking and exploitation, and to understand a painful phenomenon that involves many adults and children, and which appears to be drastically growing. Even though they are very dramatic stories, they are part of a reality that IOM feels necessary to share with authorities, politicians, professionals, service providers, volunteers, and all actors involved in fighting human trafficking, as well as in the assistance, protection, prevention and prosecution repression thereof, also for the purpose of a stronger joint coordinated response to the phenomenon.

Finally, we believe that giving voice to the victims of this crime who have found the strength to fight back will provide courage to those who find themselves in the same dramatic condition, as well as to those who work every day to support and assist victims.

## TERMINOLOGY

To make this report easier to read and understand, we will briefly clarify some of the recurring words used by victims of human trafficking during the interviews:

- **Madame:** The term “madame” is a sign of respect that means “lady”, but in the context of human trafficking, it identifies the trafficker who handles the victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation, to whom the debt incurred prior to leaving their country must be repaid. It is often the victim of trafficking herself who, after repaying her debt, may have decided to earn from the same process which victimized her in the first place. This sad outcome stems from the traffickers tactics of “co-opting”.
- **Oga:** It is the masculine equivalent of “madame”.
- **Native doctor:** Shaman who submits victims of trafficking to voodoo rituals (“juju” in Nigerian).
- **Boga:** is normally, a male, who accompanies one or more girls from Nigeria to Libya and is in permanent telephone contact with the madame/oga and traffickers in the criminal network. *Boga* is also the person who picks up and transports the newly arrived victim of trafficking from a “reception centre” in Italy, to meet the designated/respective madame. Several *boga* travel from Nigeria to Europe for guarding the victims until they reach their destination and become exploited.
- **Connection man:** travel organizer/smuggler. Generally referred to as the one who organizes trips from Nigeria to Italy through Libya. More “connection men” can work together to transport a single

Recurring words used by victims of human trafficking

victim, for instance, one is in charge of the Nigeria leg and the other of the Libya leg of the journey.

- **Connection house:** brothel. Generally, victims of trafficking use the term “connection house” to refer to brothels in Libya, and, more recently, those in Italy or Europe, where victims are forced into prostitution. In Italy and Europe, it is often the youngest victims who are locked in connection houses, because they might attract too much public attention. Connection houses are also brothels inside “ghettos” (see below), such as in Rignano Garganico, Rosarno, etc.
- **Ghetto:** it is the term used by victims of trafficking and migrants in general to indicate the place, often an abandoned building/cottage, where they wait before embarking on an inflatable boat. It is also used to indicate the informal settlements/gatherings where many migrants live in Italy. In English, it would be a shack or slum.
- **Lapalapa:** dinghy boat.



# 1.

## THE PHENOMENON OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING FOR THE PURPOSE OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AMONGST MIGRANTS ARRIVING IN ITALY BY SEA

Over the past 15 years, Italy has been increasingly concerned with the phenomenon of the arrival by sea of migrants seeking international protection, after leaving the coasts of Libya, Tunisia and Egypt. These flows increased significantly in 2011, in conjunction with political changes in the aftermath of the so-called “Arab Spring”, in the countries of North Africa (especially in Tunisia and Libya) and with the intensification of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. In particular, over 170,000 people arrived in 2014, including more than 42,000 Syrians fleeing the war.

The number of Syrian refugees arriving in Italy has fallen sharply in 2015. In the same year, the Balkan route, which flows from Turkey through Greece and the Balkan countries, opened up. Most Syrian refugees moved along this route.

In Italy, in 2015 and 2016, there was a significant number of arrivals of migrants and those seeking international protection coming from Libya and originating from West African countries and the Horn of Africa.<sup>12</sup> From the beginning of 2016 to present, in Italy there has been a significant increase in the number of migrants from West African countries and a sharp drop in the number of those arriving from the Horn of Africa.<sup>13</sup>

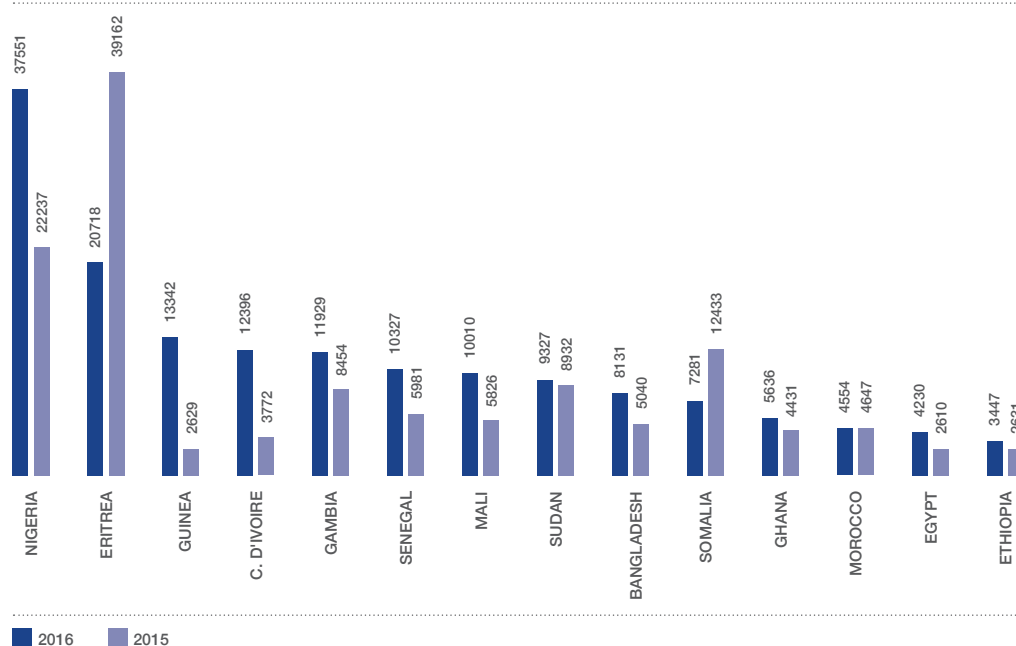
over  
**170,000**  
people  
arrived  
in 2014

12 In 2016, the number of arrivals exceeded 181,000, mainly from Nigeria (37,551), Eritrea (20,718) and Guinea (13,332) (source: Ministry of the Interior, Department of Public Security, Central Administration of Immigration and Police of the Borders).

13 Migrants arriving by sea until 31 May 2017 were from: Nigeria (9,286), Bangladesh (7,106), Guinea (5,960) and Côte d'Ivoire (5,657). Compared to the same period in 2016, the number of people from Eritrea declined by 63 per cent (2,344 in 2017, compared to 6,501 in 2016), and those coming from Somalia by 54 per cent (1,664 in 2017, compared to 3,586 in 2016).

The Central Mediterranean route remains an important route for asylum seekers, but is also an important route for those who are not necessarily refugees, but migrants who have moved to Libya for a variety of socio-economic reasons. As migrants face dire living and working conditions in Libya, they are forced to attempt the sea crossing to reach safety in Europe; this is an irregular and dangerous migration managed by smugglers. From migrants' stories, there emerges the image of a Libya in chaos, where violence and abuse are increasingly frequent and armed groups find human beings an extremely profitable source of money.<sup>14</sup>

#### Main Nationalities Arriving by Sea (Source: Ministry of the Interior)



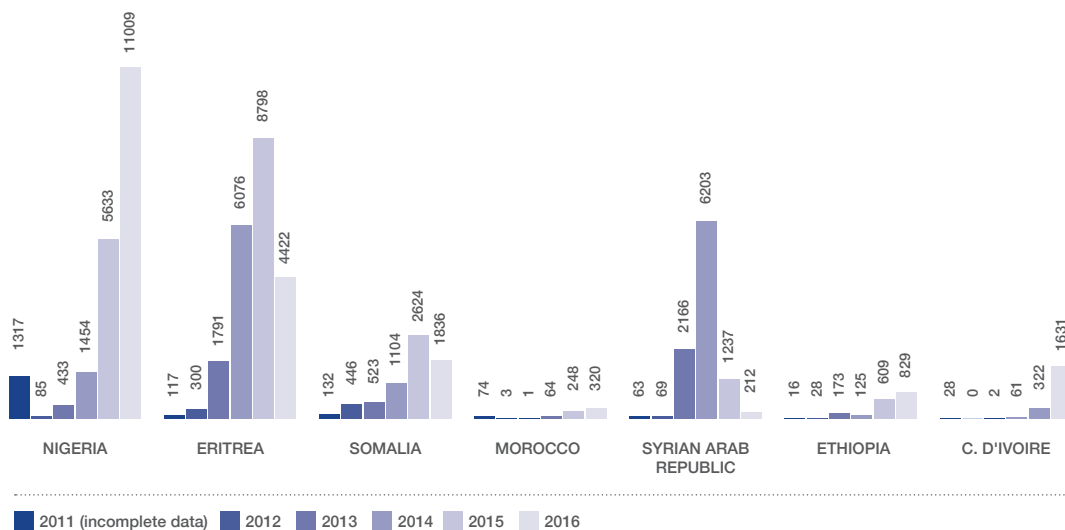
<sup>14</sup> This situation clearly emerges from the evidence gathered in the “Aware Migrants” information campaign, developed by the Ministry of the Interior in cooperation with IOM and launched in October 2016. Through the dissemination of video testimonies narrated by migrants themselves. The initiative aims to enable potential migrants to make informed decisions, warning them of the real dangers they might encounter while travelling through the desert and crossing the Mediterranean. For additional information: [www.awaremigrants.org/](http://www.awaremigrants.org/).

As mentioned above, in 2016 most migrants arriving in Italy by sea were from Nigeria, with a particular increase of women and unaccompanied children (respectively 11,009 and 3,040 in 2016, compared to about 5,000 women and 900 unaccompanied children in 2015).

IOM estimates that about 80 per cent of Nigerian women and girls arriving by sea in 2016 are likely to be victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation in Italy or in other countries of the European Union.<sup>15</sup> According to the Organization's assessment, women and unaccompanied girls of Nigeria are among the most at risk of being trafficked for sexual exploitation, although it cannot be excluded that migrants from other nationalities are also affected by trafficking in human beings.

Considering the exponential increase in women and children of Nigerian nationality who characterized the flows of 2016, it is clear that the number of potential victims of this transnational crime has more than doubled compared to last year.

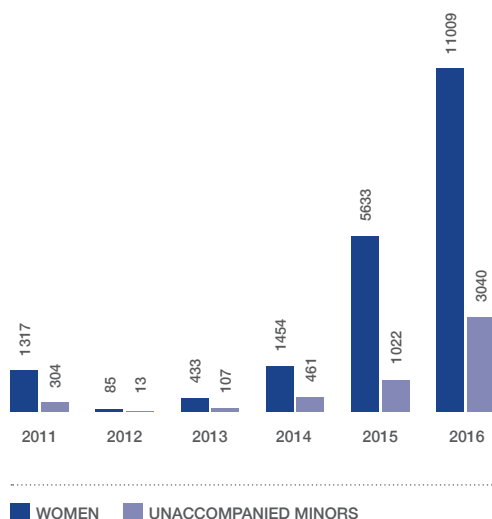
#### Women arriving in Italy by sea (Source: Ministry of the Interior)



<sup>15</sup> Through its direct assistance to migrants, focusing mainly on identifying vulnerable cases (described in the following chapter), IOM has developed a set of indicators - described later in this report - on the basis of which it is possible to identify early victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation, reporting them to competent authorities and to the protection mechanisms envisaged by the law.

In particular, it is important to point out the significant and worrying increase in adolescent victims of trafficking. IOM also considers that many young Nigerians, although declaring themselves adults, are actually children or adolescents who comply with traffickers' instructions by falsely declaring themselves older so to avoid the child protection pathway, which might become an obstacle for traffickers. As a result, girls are transferred to adult facilities, where it will be easier to contact their traffickers who will pick them up without any difficulties.

**Nigerian Women and Unaccompanied Minors Arriving in Italy by Sea**  
(Source: Ministry of the Interior)



IOM has reported an increase in cases of sexual violence perpetrated in Libya on women and children, with a consequent increase in cases of women arriving in Italy pregnant. Finally, IOM has identified among victims of trafficking particularly vulnerable persons suffering from psychological distress as a consequence of trauma.



## 2.

### IOM'S COUNTER-TRAFFICKING ACTIVITIES IN ITALY

For years, IOM has been engaged in the fight against human trafficking both internationally and within the Italian context. In 2016, IOM continued to carry out identification and assistance activities of victims of human trafficking arriving to Italy by sea, in the framework of a consolidated cooperation programme with the Civil Liberties and Immigration Department of the Ministry of the Interior and with the Italian authorities involved in the management of mixed migratory flows arriving to Italy by sea.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Since 2006, IOM, in support of and cooperation with the Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration of the Ministry of the Interior, has been providing information and legal counselling on the rights and duties of migrants arriving by sea, identifying vulnerable cases (unaccompanied minors, victims of trafficking, migrants at risk of exploitation) to be reported to the competent authorities. The “Praesidium” project - originally funded by the European Commission and the Ministry of the Interior and subsequently by the Ministry of the Interior alone - has been implemented since 2006 in partnership with UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), the Italian Red Cross, and, since 2008, Save the Children. The project first kicked off on the island of Lampedusa and then extended to other regions of southern Italy, and in particular Sicily, Calabria and Apulia. Since 2015, activities - carried out in synergy with UNHCR and all actors involved in the management of flows of arrivals by sea - have been funded by the Ministry of the Interior through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and implemented through the “Assistance” and “Monitoring” projects. In addition, the “ADITUS” project, funded by the Ministry of the Interior through the AMIF fund kicked off in January 2017. Within the framework of this project, IOM teams will be on site in Sicily (including Lampedusa), Apulia and Calabria; with legal experts and cultural mediators providing direct assistance to migrants at main landing sites, in Hotspots and initial reception centres. During the implementation of the project activities, IOM has established and strengthened its cooperation with investigating authorities, anti-mafia district bureaucracies, Juvenile Courts and Social Services of Municipalities in the territories in question, as well as with the Anti-trafficking National System. IOM has also entered into protocols with the General Prosecutor’s Offices in Palermo and Reggio Calabria and has participated in numerous institutional technical round tables on the matter.



In this framework, IOM's counter trafficking activities are related to three main areas of intervention:

1. Early identification of potential victims of trafficking at landing point and in the reception centres where migrants are transferred, namely in the regions of Sicily, Apulia and Calabria;
2. Assistance and referrals to competent authorities;
3. Training and capacity-building activities.

IOM carries out training and technical support activities

IOM's intervention, therefore, is based on direct assistance at boat-landing points and in the Hotspots, in cooperation with the competent authorities, and in compliance with Standard Operating Procedures established by the Ministry of the Interior<sup>17</sup> and applied in the Hotspots. IOM cooperates in the early identification and referral of victims of trafficking to the competent authorities, and assists in placing them in protected and suitable shelter facilities to ensure their safety.

In addition to direct assistance to potential victims, IOM carries out training and technical support activities on the identification and protection mechanism of the victims of trafficking for the staff of the reception centres, law enforcement agencies, EUNAVFORMED mission staff and other actors involved in the management of the phenomenon. These activities are described in detail in the following sections.

## 2.1 Identification of victims of trafficking: indicators developed by IOM

In the first report on human trafficking for sexual exploitation in Italy published by IOM in 2015,<sup>18</sup> the Organization had drawn up a list of indicators to identify potential victims of trafficking among newly arrived migrants, based on first-hand information gathered during individual interviews with migrants. These indicators are typical qualifying patterns

<sup>17</sup> [www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/it/hotspot](http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/it/hotspot)

<sup>18</sup> International Organization for Migration (IOM), Project Assistance "Report on victims of trafficking in mixed migration flows arriving in Italy by sea. April 2014 - October 2015": [www.italy.iom.int/sites/default/files/news-documents/RapportoAntitratta.pdf](http://www.italy.iom.int/sites/default/files/news-documents/RapportoAntitratta.pdf)

that keep repeating themselves among the many stories of victims of trafficking collected by IOM staff. They obviously do not have legal value, but, above all, serve to identify quickly and early, in large groups of migrants, those who are most at risk and, thus, require qualified personnel to conduct individual counselling for further analysis. This is a non-exhaustive list that is constantly updated on the basis of the evolution of the phenomenon but which is of great use in field work, and for this reason, we believe that it can be proposed as an identification tool to be adopted by other operators in this field.

It should be underlined that not all indicators emerge immediately upon migrant arrivals or during their first interview due to a variety of obstacles, such as the environmental context and/or the psychophysical condition of migrants. For these reasons, it is always advisable to meet potential victims of trafficking as often as possible and, ideally, at different stages of their stay in Italy, when appropriate and feasible. In fact, the identification of victims of trafficking could also take place even at the time of landing or after a certain period of their stay in Italy, since victims may not have received information on the protection programmes at the time of landing or immediately thereafter, or are still unaware of their trafficking situation.

Since victims may not have received information on the protection programmes

Obviously, the greater the number of indicators detected, the greater is the likelihood that we are dealing with a victim of trafficking.

Some of these indicators allow operators to identify potential victims as soon as they arrive, so that they can then carry out the necessary assessments and investigations later.

Among the indicators that IOM has reported in 2016 in its day-to-day work with migrants for the early identification of victims of trafficking and data collection, there may be elements that were already highlighted in the previous report, including:

- Gender: most victims of trafficking are women;
- Age: victims of trafficking are often minors, between the age of 13 and 24.<sup>19</sup> Many young people claim to be adults although they are

<sup>19</sup> The United Nations defines adolescence as the period between ages 10 and 19 and

clearly younger, as some of the stories below illustrate. It is important to highlight the lowering of the age of children victims of trafficking, whose number of arrivals has increased in 2016. In addition, among the youngest victims, there is a sort of emulation factor enhanced by the spread of social networks through which it is possible to see friends and relatives living in Europe, enjoying a wealthier life, while in Nigeria, also due to the recent devaluation of the naira (national currency), living conditions have become increasingly difficult. The young population grows and not only it cannot find any outlet for its aspirations, but in many cases, it cannot survive. More will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

- Nationality: as far as nationality is concerned, it is important to emphasize the peculiarities of the case of victims of trafficking from Nigeria, not only from Edo State, but from various parts of the country (Delta, Lagos, Ogun, Anambra, Imo, Akwa Ibom, Enugu, Osun, Rivers, are the states of origin, apart from Edo State, that are most quoted by Nigerians interviewed by IOM);<sup>20</sup>
- Psycho-physical conditions: if in group, they are the most submissive and silent, sometimes obviously controlled by other migrants, who, for example, reply on their behalf or are opposed to the idea of a private interview.

Other indicators of trafficking emerge - especially those of socio-economic nature - when it is possible to conduct in-depth individual talks. Among these additional elements, is worth mentioning the following:

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youth as the period between 15 and 24. A 'child' is anyone under the age of 18, as defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

20 The increase in arrivals from these states is also confirmed by other sources such as the EASO (European Agency for the Support of Asylum) - Easo, "Country of origin information report. Nigeria sex trafficking of women", October 2015, [www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/public/BZ0415678ENN.pdf](http://www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/public/BZ0415678ENN.pdf). This may be due to several factors. On the one hand, information about the possibility of reaching Europe is spreading across Nigeria; on the other hand, girls from less-centralized areas are less aware of deception, a factor that criminals can take advantage of. In Benin City, it seems to be well-known that those who go to Europe will have to prostitute; this is less true for other states.

- Low level of education;
- Family situation: among others, belonging to particularly disadvantaged families; being often the first child of large families; or claiming to being orphaned in a truthful or instrumental way, mistakenly believing for this reason to be entitled to a favorable treatment;
- Conditions under which migration occurs: the statement that they have not paid anything for the trip because someone has paid for them; the difficulty of retracing the stages of the journey; the duration of stay in Libya (where a very short duration can indicate an efficient organization that shortens the time for exploitation in Italy; a long duration of more than three months, instead, can indicate organizational bottlenecks).

Among those indicators, which may emerge since the first interview, the most suspicious statements concern the fact that a migrant was not charged for the trip because he or she needs to reach a contact in Europe who will cover all the costs.

Lastly, there are “behavioural” indicators, which occur during the **first reception phase** and that can be found mainly by the staff of centres who are constantly in contact with victims of trafficking:

- psychological problems (anxiety, poor self-esteem, depression);
- aggressive attitude, mistrust and poor cooperation with the staff and other guests, introversion;
- departures, even frequent, from the welcome structures;
- control by other guests (e.g., spouses, companions, relatives, whether true or fictitious);
- excessive use of the phone (with outside calls that cause external forms of control);
- involvement in activities such as prostitution or begging.

Psychological or behavioural disorders are often an expression of discomfort, which is a reflection of the enormous weight that these victims carry. Even those who decide to ask for help and not to link with traffickers in the end, may experience moments of discouragement and have contradictory behaviours (see paragraph on vulnerabilities).

Psychological or behavioural disorders are often an expression of discomfort

The strongest indicators that will be collected, usually after several interviews, are the ones that make it possible to clearly identify the offense of trafficking, as defined in Article 601 of the Criminal Code.<sup>21</sup> In the case of victims of trafficking arriving by sea, the elements constituting the criminal offense (recruitment, transfer, exploitation) are summed up as follows:

- **Recruitment** in the country of origin through deceit (e.g., the promise of a better job/future in Italy); threat (e.g., voodoo rituals); abuse of authority (e.g., the case of children who are not voluntarily choosing to leave, but who are “consigned” to this fate by their own family members); taking advantage of a vulnerable condition (e.g., boyfriends who deceive victims with false promises), psychological vulnerability, or necessity (severe poverty); promise to give money or payment of money or other benefits to the person having authority over the migrant (e.g., the promise of rich financial returns);
- **Transfer: irregular transport** through transit countries and by sea to destination countries (mainly Italy, Spain, France and Germany, but also Sweden, Belgium, Austria, the Netherlands and Switzerland); the victims are generally in possession of a European, Nigerian or Libyan telephone contact to have information on how to reach their final destination where exploitation will take place;
- **Exploitation purpose:** while Nigerian female minors are victims of human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, there are also cases in which male minors are victimized for both work and sexual exploitation (one of these stories is described below).

There are also cases in which male minors are victimized for both work and sexual exploitation

21 Article 601 of the Criminal Code “Anybody who recruits, introduces into or transfers outside the territory of a state, transports, surrenders authority on the person, hosts one or more persons under the conditions set forth in Article 600, or has such conduct on one or more persons by deceit, violence, threat, abuse of authority or the exploitation of a vulnerability, physical, psychological or necessity situation, or by promising or giving money or other benefits to the person who has authority, in order to induce or force individuals to work, provide sex, beg for money, or otherwise, to carry out illicit activities that involve their own exploitation or forces them to donate their organs, is punished with imprisonment from eight to twenty years. Everyone, even outside the conditions set forth in the first paragraph, paragraph, carries out the same activities contained therein, towards minors shall be subject to the same punishment”.

It should also be noted that with last year's devaluation of Nigeria's naira the "debt" - to be paid mostly through prostitution or, in some cases, as mentioned above, with forced labour - has decreased and is equivalent to figures ranging from 25,000 and 35,000 euros.

When IOM staff collects these indicators, which are key for the configuration of trafficking offenses, it also acquires the consent of the victim and, in the case of a child, of the guardian, to participate to a **protection programme**. The victim is reported by IOM to the anti-human trafficking toll-free number<sup>22</sup> and, if the victims wishes to file a report, IOM personnel takes the necessary steps to facilitate the submission of complaints to investigating authorities.

## 2.2 Direct assistance to victims of trafficking

IOM's activities take place during disembarking phases and at later stages of the reception process, and entail direct information to migrants, including the delivery of multilingual papers to groups and on a one-on-one basis, as well as interviews and linguistic and cultural mediation.

In 2016, IOM provided information on trafficking for sexual exploitation at the ports of Augusta, Messina, Catania, Palermo, Porto Empedocle, Reggio Calabria, Taranto, Brindisi and Otranto, in the Hotspots of Lampedusa, Trapani and Pozzallo (RG), Taranto and in the centres of first hospitality in Sicily, Apulia and Calabria, as well as other facilities that accommodate potential traumatized victims arriving to Italy by sea.

IOM's activities at landing points and in the Hotspots require a

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22 The Anti-trafficking toll-free number is a tool established in 2000 by the Department of Equal Opportunities of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, and can be contacted anonymously and free of charge by potential victims to seek help, but also by private citizens, Law Enforcement Authorities or representatives of public or private bodies wishing to report cases of trafficking or exploitation. Service operators have the task of filtering the calls and directing reports to areas of competence, focusing, in particular, on sending to suitable state facilities those victims who intend to participate in assistance and protection programmes provided for in Articles 13 of Law 228/03 and 18 of Legislative Decree 286/98.

IOM meets migrants at landing sites and guarantees over time the necessary and constant individual support

specific approach to potential victims from the moment they disembark or enter the Hotspots. These are meant to build trust and to detect certain vulnerabilities as early as possible (e.g., unaccompanied minors, people under the control of an accompanying person or fake husband/family).

After the first contact at the port of arrival and the distribution of multi-lingual informational material prepared by IOM – which also contains the Anti-trafficking toll-free number and telephone contacts of the Organization – IOM staff performs group information sessions. During these information sessions, experts explain the risks associated with sexual and labour exploitation, as well as the forms of protection provided by Italian law in favor of victims of human trafficking. Subsequently, in-depth individual counselling sessions are conducted, especially with the youngest and more vulnerable girls. If a girl asks for help or indicators point to human trafficking or serious vulnerabilities, IOM, in compliance with the victim's privacy and with her consent, reports the case to the competent authorities<sup>23</sup> and identifies a suitable facility to welcome and protect the victim.

IOM meets migrants at landing sites, Hotspots and reception centres for adults and children, even on the days immediately following their arrival and guarantees over time the necessary and constant individual support and accurate case follow-up, through daily contact with investigating authorities and relevant institutions, including the National Anti-Trafficking Network.<sup>24</sup>

23 Competent authorities and the “networking” of requests for transfer of victims of trafficking by the implementing actors of Articles 13 and 18 in territories other than those of territorial jurisdiction. [www.osservatoriointerventitratta.it/servizio/il-numero-verde-800-290-290/](http://www.osservatoriointerventitratta.it/servizio/il-numero-verde-800-290-290/)

24 Further observation on the phenomenon and moment of encounter with particularly vulnerable migrants is provided by IOM's work to fight labour exploitation within major “ghettos” and informal settlements in Apulia and Campania, particularly in the provinces of Foggia and Caserta. In these territories, IOM carries out direct assistance and counselling to migrants at risk of labour exploitation, reporting the most vulnerable cases to different public services or NGOs operating in the areas. However, such settlements often also host women, predominantly of Nigerian origin, who are likely to be victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. During 2016, there were about 50 Nigerian women victims of trafficking who turned to IOM staff in the “ghettos” of Rignano Garganico (FG) and Borgo Tre Titoli (FG), as well as the former Borgo Mezzanone Track (FG) and in the whole surrounding area the Municipality of Castel Volturno (CE).

Below is the data on victims of trafficking met and assisted by IOM in recent years:

<b>VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING, IDENTIFIED AND ASSISTED BY IOM AT LANDING SITES AND RECEPTION CENTRES</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2014/2015</b>
Potential victims of human trafficking (based on indicators developed by IOM) informed	8,277	3,380
Identified victims of human trafficking (based on indicators developed by the IOM)	6,599	2,195
Victims of trafficking reported to authorities or provided with assistance	290 (of which 164 minors)	30
Victims of trafficking reported to the Anti-trafficking Network	135 (of which 87 minors)	112
Complaints	78	33
Alerts by the Territorial Commission for the Recognition of International Protection	188	-

### 2.3 Training and capacity-building activities

Among the activities carried out by IOM in Italy, there are also training and capacity-building tasks. These activities are carried out in the regions where IOM is permanently present in support of local authorities, as well as in other provinces of the national territory, in order to increase knowledge of the phenomenon of trafficking in human beings, with particular attention to arrivals by sea, and to strengthen the Italian protection system, through the sharing of indicators prepared by the Organization for the early identification of potential victims.

Starting from the case study developed over 10 years of experience in this field, IOM has developed training modules on a variety of issues related to human trafficking, including: phenomenological information, approaches and interviews, early identification and protection of victims of trafficking, by contacting the Anti-trafficking toll-free number, and requesting residence permits, pursuant to Article 18 of the Consolidated Act on Immigration.

Through participatory training sessions, IOM has contributed to the capacity-building of personnel employed in the management of migrant



arrivals by sea, belonging to the local authorities most involved in this phenomenon, such as Prefectures, Social Services of Municipalities and Law Enforcement Authorities (*Carabinieri*, *Guardia di Finanza*, *Questura*), but also of those engaged in the reception of foreign adults and unaccompanied children.

In most cases, training sessions were organized with the support of the jurisdictionally competent Prefecture, but also of the Judicial Authority (Public Prosecutor's Offices, Prosecutor's Offices at Juvenile Courts), of Social Affairs Department of relevant Municipalities, as well as non-governmental organizations and other civil society representatives.

Lastly, within the EUNAVFOR MED mission,<sup>25</sup> launched in June 2015, IOM has been conducting periodic training sessions with navies of Member States of the European Union, at the beginning of their respective missions at sea.

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25 In the context of the growth of migratory flows through the Central Mediterranean, the European Union responded by defining a 10-point Migration Action Plan, the second of which was actually implemented by EUNAVFOR MED, officially launched on 22 June 2015. On 26 October, 2015, the Operation officially took the name "EUNAVFOR MED Sophia Operation", in honor of the baby girl born on the Operation ship that saved her mother on 22 August 2015 off the Libyan coast. The operation - which has been extended until July 2017 - is being carried out by 25 European nations, in addition to Italy. [www.difesa.it/OperazioniMilitari/op\\_intern\\_corso/eunavfor\\_med/Pagine/default.aspx](http://www.difesa.it/OperazioniMilitari/op_intern_corso/eunavfor_med/Pagine/default.aspx)

### 3.

## MAIN DIFFICULTIES IN THE SAFEGUARD AND PROTECTION OF TRAFFICKING VICTIMS

Through its activities and presence at landing points and reception centres, IOM identified many challenges in the safeguarding and protection of the victims of trafficking. In particular, the time to provide information to potential victims is never enough, sometimes victims are not willing to talk because they feel a strong bond with their traffickers, and are often thankful to them. In many cases, they are also directly controlled by traffickers, who travelled with them. In addition to these factors, one must take into account those related to the fear of the consequences resulting from the violation of the voodoo rite, as well as the consequences for their family members left behind in the country of origin.

Must take into account the factors related to the fear of the consequences resulting from the violation of the voodoo rite

During the reference period, IOM collected many stories of victims of trafficking, both at the moment of landing and at subsequent stages, when victims were residing in reception centres for migrants. Each story represents a unique case, with peculiarities linked to the individual's experience and the personality of the victim. The following stories are based on facts that really happened, however some information has been modified to protect the safety and confidentiality of the subjects involved. These life stories have been selected to facilitate the understanding of the difficulties discussed above, as they allow us to observe the indicators described in the preceding paragraphs as well as the difficulties in safeguarding and protecting victims of trafficking. These stories are also meant to inspire the victims to seek for help.

As we said in the premise, telling these stories can contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon and encourage those who find

Is important to provide migrants with detailed information on the risks associated with human trafficking for sexual and labour exploitation

themselves in the same dramatic condition, as well as those who work every day to support and assist victims of trafficking.

By quickly reading this data, one can understand that most victims of trafficking are not willing, at least at first, to disclose their experience or access safety programmes.

The first obstacle to the safeguard and protection of victims of trafficking is the scarcity of **time available** (at the moment of arrival or immediate release), which does not allow developing a trusted relationship with victims. The presence of IOM staff from the countries of origin of the victims certainly contributes to increasing the number of victims who decide to open themselves and to share their personal story. However, factors that push victims to want to “see what’s there later” remain; therefore, victims may be initially disinclined to believe operators who warn them about the risks they may encounter.

For this reason, it is important to provide migrants with detailed information on the risks associated with human trafficking for sexual and labour exploitation, as well as protection mechanisms in place. It is also important to specify that they may be able to seek help at any time, if they are willing to do so, by contacting the National Anti-Trafficking Network (toll-free number), the Police or IOM.

The stories collected in this chapter show how important it is to provide information on the Italian and European legal protection system to all potential victims of trafficking at the very moment they arrive in Italy, to ensure early identification and prevent their entry into the exploitation circuit, from which it becomes increasingly difficult to ask for help. It is also important to note that, although some migrants become victims of exploitation, the information received at the time of arrival is valuable to raise awareness of their condition as victims and, arguably, to make them reach out to receive assistance, when they can muster the courage to do so.

It often happens that, given the trust placed on traffickers (who often are fellow nationals, if not friends or relatives), victims of trafficking do not want to believe they are in the conditions described by IOM as indicators of risks associated with human trafficking, and do not perceive themselves

as victims of a crime. It is likely that only after victims have suffered abuses and exploitation, they are able to understand the truthfulness of the information they have received at their arrival, thus becoming aware of their victim status. For this reason, there are many cases of victims of trafficking who are assisted by IOM even at a later stage, or during their stay in the Italian reception centres. In some cases IOM assists victims who have been found by Italian authorities somewhere in Italy or at border controls and then transferred to a Hotspot, but there are also cases of women and children assisted after having been reported to IOM by the Territorial Commissions for the Recognition of International Protection, Juvenile Courts, Bureaus, Law Enforcement Authorities, local government or private agencies.

Consequently, the bond linking victims of trafficking with their exploiters is a major obstacle to a timely identification. When they arrive in Italy, as illustrated by some of the stories that follow, victims believe in traffickers more than any other person, and develop a strong sense of gratitude for these people, as they allowed them to arrive to Europe assuming all travel costs. This seemingly contradictory feeling leads victims to unconditionally trust the false information traffickers provide them before leaving their home country or Libya. For example, criminal organizations encourage victims of trafficking to declare themselves to be 18 even when they are younger, convincing them that if they declare their real age they will be repatriated or that the centres for minors are prisons. Humanitarian operators know well that traffickers provide this information because they want the victims to be transferred to (open) adult reception centres, where it is easier to reach them and to send them to work as prostitutes, as facilities for minors are less accessible to traffickers and generally more controlled and protected.

Victims believe in traffickers more than any other person, and develop a strong sense of gratitude for these people



## BLESSING'S STORY

Nigeria

Madame always reassured her that in Italy those who wanted to become prostitutes were in the position to choose so

Blessing contacted IOM staff by phone, indicating that she was at the station of a big Italian city. She was weeping and spoke with great difficulty but managed to say that she heard about human trafficking when she arrived to Sicily, though at the time, she did not consider herself to be a victim of trafficking. She believed that her madame was another type of person: she always reassured her that in Italy those who wanted to become prostitutes were in the position to choose so, but that Blessing would start working in a grocery store. Furthermore, the woman always supported her during the trip and she was sent money to pay her ransom when she was kidnapped in Libya. Blessing trusted this person who saved her from her condition in Nigeria and was looking forward to being able to work for her to repay the debt incurred on her behalf and show this woman that she had not made a mistake by helping her. Nevertheless, Blessing also kept with her the IOM phone number, provided to her during her stay in Sicily upon arrival.

A few days after her arrival, the girl was transferred to a reception centre in northern Italy, from where she contacted her madame, who gave her directions

on how to reach her. Soon thereafter, Blessing left the reception centre with the help of a *boga*.

When she arrived at the madame's home, the young woman was initially welcomed with affection: she was offered African food, was able to go to a beauty salon for hair care, was introduced to the Nigerian community of a Pentecostal Church, and was given a mobile phone to communicate with family members in Nigeria and new friends she made in Italy.

After about three days, however, the madame explained to Blessing that it was time for her to start working, showing her skimpy suits she had just bought for her. Blessing wept, understanding that she had been deceived. That same evening, the madame took her to the streets along with two other girls. The young woman told IOM staff that right at that time, she recalled the information received by them and understood that she had the opportunity to seek help in Italy.

For about three months, she thought about how to escape. One day, she asked a client to bring her to the bus station and took the first bus she found, headed to a city she did not know. During the trip, she switched off her mobile phone and installed a new SIM

card she had secretly purchased. When she arrived at the station of arrival, she contacted IOM to ask for help.

At the end of the first call, IOM staff immediately contacted the anti-trafficking association operating in that area,

whose personnel was dispatched to the station to look for the girl. She was found and placed in a protected facility.

Today, Blessing is attending a course to learn Italian and waiting for her residence permit. ■

A third obstacle is the **control** that the “accompanying individuals” have on their victims. Victims often travel together with “sisters”, “aunts” and “husbands”, who are just *bogas* and whose goal is to bring them to the trafficker waiting for them in Europe. For criminal networks, these are couriers who, pretending to be family members or boyfriends, have the task to deliver the “goods” to criminals in Italy. Given the trust placed in their traffickers, victims actually confirm that these people are their relatives, because they don’t want to be separated from them once they are transferred to a reception facility



## PRINCESS’S STORY

18 years, Nigeria

She arrived in Italy in 2016. Princess landed in Sicily in January 2016 and IOM met her on that same day at the port. She was travelling with an older man who claimed to be her husband. While talking to IOM staff who provided her with information on the risks associated with sexual exploitation, Princess seemed confused, constantly looking at the person accompanying her and watching her from afar.

After the briefing, Princess, with an excuse, managed to speak privately with IOM staff, and she confessed

to have lied to the Police, explaining she was not married and she arrived to Italy with a man she met in Benin City not too long before. She explained that, even if he had a family, he told her that he was in love with her and that he wanted to marry her. He paid for her trip and promised her a happy life in Europe.

Princess never really believed him. He paid the crossing for another sixteen-year-old girl as well, who was introduced as a family friend, but Princess had doubts: in Libya, she

She wanted to be taken into custody IOM staff explained her that she could not be repatriated

had heard the man talk on the phone with another Nigerian man in France, telling him that he had the two girls with him. He was offered a large sum of money and reassured him that the girls would soon start working for him.

Those words did not match what she had been promised, but it was too late to go back, and Princess, alone in a foreign country, had to trust his companion and follow him to Italy.

Once in Italy, after talking to IOM staff, Princess finally understood that she had been deceived. She realized that she had an alternative and she ended up asking for help, terrified at the idea of finding herself again near to this man. Princess also confessed to IOM staff

that she was not yet 18. It was her travel companion who told her to lie about her age, so that she would not be “arrested and repatriated to Nigeria”. With the help of Law Enforcement authorities, the girl was separated from her purported husband and, that same evening, transferred to a centre for minors, where she would wait to be moved to another facility for victims of trafficking.

A year later, Princess learned Italian and found employment as interpreter, also working on ceramics. She still lives in the community that welcomed her after arriving in Italy. She recently became aware of the arrest of her trafficker and she now feels free. ■

Sometimes, however, the so called “sisters” can be other girls who are victims of the same exploiter victims of trafficking, who asked them to pretend to be all relatives in order not be separated. Once transferred in the same reception centre, the exploiter will be able to reach all of them and to take them with him.



## PRECIOUS’S STORY

17 years, Nigeria

In the spring of 2016, Law Enforcement authorities met Precious, a Nigerian girl who was clearly a minor; she was along a secondary road in Sicily. At the Police Station, she claimed to be 21 years old and wanted to be taken

back to her older sister, who lived in the city. Precious did not have documents on her, was frightened and refused to provide any other information. From a check on the Automatic Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS), the police

learned that Precious had arrived in Italy 5 months before and that she was actually 17 years old.

The District Attorney of the Juvenile Court, informed by Law Enforcement, contacted IOM staff, who, the following day, met Precious in the centre where she was temporarily sheltered. The girl was wearing a red wig and the clothes she had on when she was taken into custody the day before. IOM shared with her the story of a Nigerian girl who, in her country of origin and with the promise of an employment, reached Italy hoping to work and send money to her family. Unfortunately, once arrived in Italy, she understood that she has been duped when rather than being employed as a hairdresser, she was forced into prostitution by country fellowmen she trusted. It was by prostituting herself that the girl had to pay off the debt incurred to reach Italy. Precious associated herself with the story and decided to trust IOM staff, telling them that she had been prostituting herself for a few months and that after her arrival she was transferred to a community of minors from where, as it was agreed prior to her departure, she contacted a Nigerian woman who was waiting for her in Italy, so that she could find employment in her beauty salon. After she was picked up at her community the following day, contrary to what she was promised, Precious

was forced into prostitution. The minor, who had never had sex with a man before, was forced to be on the street for 12 hours a day, and was afraid she may have gotten sick. When she saw Law Enforcement agents approaching her, she called her trafficker asking her what to do. The latter urged her to run to avoid repatriation. Precious, however, though frightened, decided not to move. She wanted to be taken into custody. IOM staff explained her that she could not be repatriated and that, if she wanted, she could be helped and protected.

Precious was scared, she was submitted to a voodoo rite and the madame knew her family. IOM personnel met with her every day for an entire month.

At first, she could not sleep at all. She was too afraid that the voodoo curse would kill her. She would often run away from the centre by knotting sheets and climbing down the window. Other times she would pack all her things but then stop right at the door. At last, the fear of being forced to get back on the streets prevailed and she decided to press charges against her traffickers. Even though her family back in Nigeria was receiving violent threats, Precious had their support.

She now lives in a protected shelter, far from Sicily. She speaks Italian perfectly and is currently studying to become a cultural mediator. ■

Precious was too afraid that the voodoo curse would kill her. She would often run away from the centre by knotting sheets and climbing down the window



Further, the **feeling of gratitude** is also linked to the acceptance of exploitation, which is perceived as the “right” price to pay to achieve wellness. In order to be understood, this issue needs to be contextualized with respect to the victim’s conditions of origin and their degree of understanding what is actually happening to them. For example, most of the Nigerian minors who interacted with IOM reported being sexually abused in Nigeria by relatives, friends, acquaintances, or neighbors. These experiences affect the personal perception of the traumatic events that will occur later, that in some cases are accepted and considered almost normal, despite serious consequences for the victim’s physical and psychological health.



## NINA'S STORY

17 years, Nigeria, Benin City

**A**rrived in Italy in 2015. Nina arrived in Italy when she was 17 years old. IOM staff met her at the port for the first time, and then many other times at the first reception centre where she was placed.

Born in Nigeria, in Benin City, she was abused by her father when she was 10; these abuses continued until she decided to run away from home, taking refuge in friend’s house. In order to support herself she became a prostitute like her host. After about a month, a wealthy client who presented himself as “Kenny” told her that he had fallen in love with her and proposed her to go with him to Europe. There he claimed to have an acquaintance by the name of Michael, who may be

able to help her. The young woman felt like she did not have any alternative, so she accepted, in the hope for a better life.

Kenny and his sister Laura, accompanied Nina to take part in a voodoo rite in which the girl pledged to pay 5 million naira (about 25,000 euros at the time). Nina then left Nigeria with the man, and travelled by bus to Sabha (Libya). During their trip to Libya, the man behaved correctly, but once in Sabha, his attitude began to change and he began to abuse the young woman for the entire time they were together.

Their journey continued through various places passing from one truck to another, until they reached a ghetto, where Nina met three more girls she

would later see on the boat that took them all to Italy. After some time, the ghetto was raided by the Libyan police. During the attack Kenny was wounded by firearms and Nina was arrested and taken to jail. She remained imprisoned for about three months, until she was freed by a guard in exchange for sexual favors. The guard took Nina to a connection house managed by a Libyan woman named Alima. There, Nina was forced to become a prostitute for about two months until, for reasons unknown to the girl, Alima decided to let her leave.

Nina was rescued at sea and brought to Italy in October 2015. Upon arrival, she received information by IOM on human trafficking, but did not request any assistance at that time. Although placed in a centre for minors, Nina managed to call Laura at her Nigerian number because, even though she believed that Kenny had died, she felt and feared the power of the voodoo, and she felt indebted to the woman as well. On the phone, Laura told Nina that Kenny was not dead and only wounded, that the plan to get her to Michael was still on and that for the moment she would be the one in charge of organizing Nina's escape from the centre. She also gave her Michael's Italian number, telling her that he was in the same city where Nina was residing.

To buy some time, the girl came up with the excuse that she was in a centre patrolled by the police and could not go anywhere. She misbehaved in the facility, exhibiting aggressive behaviour towards other guests, whom she knew since her time in Libya. Operators struggled to handle her, but at a certain point she crossed paths with IOM team again and told them her story. IOM staff made it clear that she was not obliged to comply with what the traffickers wanted her to do. However, the minor, still under the influence and fear of the voodoo ritual, told the staff that she wanted to participate in a protection programme. She was aware that adhesion to the programme was contingent upon the suspension of any contact with Laura, Michael and Kenny, as well as other possible subjects connected to the exploitation network.

IOM team looked for a reception facility for victims of trafficking that could accommodate minors, but was unable to find a place for Nina because of the lack of availability. In the meantime, the young woman received a variety of phone calls by individuals who told her that they knew where she was and were about to pick her up. Nina agreed to report these facts, but even after her formal complaint, it was impossible to find a suitable shelter for her. She was

Under the influence and fear of the voodoo ritual, told the staff that she wanted to participate in a protection programme

transferred to a centre for minors; this moment lives on her own, but she was frightened and nervous, she's followed by an anti-trafficking showing signs of discomfort and organization, that has been alerted rebellion. The girl, who could not be and informed on the case by IOM sheltered in a protected facility, in appropriately notified by IOM. ■

Some victims of trafficking are also aware of the kind of activity they will be asked to carry out, but are not aware of the level of abuse they will be subjected to. In the last year, more and more often, victims of trafficking seemed to know that they were destined to prostitution in Europe. Having given an informed consent creates in some victims the **conviction** that **they cannot escape exploitation**.

As far as adult women are concerned, they often have little or no understanding of the **magnitude of the “debt” they accumulate** (often traffickers in Libya are the first to tell them about it either before leaving the African coast or once at their destination. The debt is quantified in Euro, and many of them do not understand its value). Furthermore these women have high **earning expectations** that do not correspond to reality and contribute to their illusion. When they learn about the debt they owe just prior to their departure, victims also learn from their traffickers that they will be able to repay their obligations in a short period of time, after which they will be able to provide for themselves autonomously. However, this scenario is far from being true because victims have to pay their traffickers for rent, utility bills and food (at inflated costs). This further extends the time necessary to pay off one's “debt”.

For these reasons, it is necessary to explain to victims that any consent provided in matter of exploitation is irrelevant because it is informed and influenced by the difficult conditions in which victims find themselves in their country of origin. Conditions which led them to accept the proposal to travel to Italy in the first place.



## SANDRA'S STORY

Nigeria

IOM received a phone call from Sandra, a young Nigerian girl who claimed she had arrived in Italy a few days earlier, declaring that she was housed in a reception centre in Northern Italy.

The young woman explained that she understood the information on human trafficking that was shared with her on the day of her arrival, and suspected that she was deceived by the people who helped her reach Europe. She reported to IOM that she had told her trafficker the name of the centre where she was staying at, but that she did not want to meet with this woman. IOM recommended the girl to stay at the centre and go to the police to report her story.

After a few days, IOM received another call from Sandra, who reported that she was picked up by a friend of her madame and that she was at his house. She also reported that she was reassured by her trafficker over

the phone that she would be offered employment as a maid or cash register operator. Sandra told IOM that she needed to work and had no choice but to trust the woman.

After a few days, Sandra called IOM again, but this time she was in tears: her madame told her that in order to repay her debt, she would have to become a prostitute. When she refused, she was locked in a room without food.

The girl, alone in a foreign country, unable to speak Italian, locked into a home and intimidated by the voodoo, finally found the courage to ask for help. Through IOM, she reached out to the Law Enforcement officials in the city where she lived. The investigations finally led to her release and the arrest of her captors.

Sandra now lives in a protected home, and is attending a pastry-making course in the hope that her two-year-old son will soon be able to reach her. ■

Her madame told her that in order to repay her debt, she would have to become a prostitute

Children find themselves in terrible situations, especially the youngest ones, because even though they are aware that they will be forced into prostitution, they usually do not even know what prostitution is, or have a vague and incorrect idea of it. In this regard, many children explain that prostitution means to become engaged to white men, who, in their imagination, are generally very rich and will be able to help them repay any debt incurred for the journey to Europe. In some cases, they think that prostitution entails working at nightclubs as dancers.

During most of their journey many victims of trafficking are not aware of the destiny that awaits for them in their point of arrival. Women and girls begin to suspect they have been deceived and sold only once they reach Libya, where, waiting for their departure, they listen to other migrants' stories, and understand that all "sponsored" women will be destined to prostitution in Europe. They do know that once they reach Libya, they cannot go back. For a woman travelling alone, returning unaccompanied to her country of origin is incredibly risky; she may face further violence and abuses and will not be able to pay the large amounts of money required to travel back. Although most victims of trafficking identified in Italy are women and the main purpose is sexual exploitation, men are equally at risk.



## LUCKY'S STORY

Nigeria, Benin City

**A**rrived in Italy in 2015. IOM met Lucky, a very young Nigerian boy, in a reception centre in 2016.

He was born and raised in Benin City, his parents divorced and his mother remarried a man who eventually abandoned her. After his mother's death, Lucky and his six-year-old brother, ignored by their father, went to live with their grandmother, who in turn died a short while later. As it is customary in Nigeria, the family home went to Lucky's older brother, who asked his siblings to move out because he wanted to sell the property. The two boys went to live in an abandoned building, trying to survive by doing occasional jobs. Because of this, Lucky was

only able to attend elementary school. At their grandmother's funeral (which in Nigeria is held sometime after death), the two brothers met a relative named Sunday who had been living in Libya for 18 years, and proposed to Lucky to follow him so that he could offer him an unspecified job, which may earn him 6,000 naira (around 18 euros) per day. According to what his relative promised, Lucky would repay the costs of the journey with the money he would earn in Italy.

Lucky then left his brother with one of his mother's friends, promising her that he would send back some money to care for his brother, and began his journey with Sunday. With him

were three peers and a 14-year-old boy travelling by bus from Benin City, stopping in Nigeria along the way, in Abuja and Kano. The journey was very tiring: 50 people were crammed in the same vehicle. During the trip, lasting three days without any food or water, some passengers fell from the vehicle. Two of them died and, according to the boy, they were left on the side of the road.

Near the border with Niger, travellers were stopped by border control and held for two nights. Sunday eventually paid the border officials in order to continue the journey towards Libya. At this point, the travellers were transferred onto a bus headed for Agadez, where they were taken to a home where they hid for three days. From there, they moved to Sabha, in Libya, where they ended up in a prison with 300 people; it was prohibited to raise one's voice and release would come only after payment of bail. Sunday was not held with the boys; he occasionally brought them food from the outside. Lucky recounted that the trafficker was "well integrated" in Libya and spoke Arabic fluently. The boys were left in these conditions for a week, until Sunday took them out of jail and brought them to his home.

The boys were eventually divided after the arrival of a man from Tripoli. Lucky was sent with the man, who took him

to an Arab woman. The young man saw them talk and had the impression that they exchanged money. He was told that he had to work as a prostitute for that woman. At his refusal, Sunday was called in. He beat up the boy and took him to a residence where there were other men who beat and whipped him. Sunday told him that he spent 6,000 dinars (about 3,800 euros) for him which now must be returned to him, and that the woman paid 500 dinars to have sex with him. Lucky was therefore forced into prostitution for about four months, until he asked to stop and managed to get permission to work in a car wash. The boy eventually went to work with ten other boys from different nationalities. All the money they earned was collected by Sunday.

When Lucky fell ill, he asked the Nigerian man who managed the car wash to help him reach Italy. The latter asked him to work at the carwash for three more months to reach the necessary sum for the trip (500 dinars). After collecting that amount, Lucky was taken to the coastal centre of Gasr Garabulli, in a place where there were about 700 people waiting to embark. After a couple of days, there was a shootout in which some twenty people were killed and Lucky injured.

He was taken to Janzur Prison, where

Lucky was therefore forced into prostitution for about four months

He was able to work a bit to get the money needed to pay for his trip to Italy

he remained for a month without receiving any medical assistance. Some people regularly visited the prison to pick up prisoners and get them to work and Lucky ended up working as a construction worker for a Ghanaian man in nearby Gasr Garabulli. He later managed to flee to Tagiura, in the Tripoli district. There, he was able to work a bit to get the money needed to pay for his trip to Italy, where he would arrive in December 2015. His trafficker lost track of him in Libya, but Lucky feared that in case of his return to Nigeria, this person would find the

way to bring him back to Libya and exploit him again.

IOM staff met Lucky after he arrived in Italy, in the reception centre where he lived. On that occasion, the boy shared his story. Although Lucky is not a victim of human trafficking in Italy and, therefore, does not meet the requisite for participating in a protection programme under Italian law, he reported his story of trafficking and exploitation in Libya to IOM and the Territorial Commission for the recognition of international protection, which granted him refugee status. ■

As migrants have reported, victims of trafficking also believe that they cannot violate the commitment they made, which is sealed by **voodoo rituals**. This fear of breaking the voodoo oath is a further element of subordination that can affect victims of every level of education. For this reason, voodoo remains widely practiced in Nigeria as a form of psychological control. Through the rite of initiation, victims commit through a sealed oath in front of a shaman - to honor an agreement, to repay the sum requested to traffickers, and to obey to the latter. As a result of this “commitment” they promise not to reveal the names of the traffickers and other useful details that may lead to the identification of exploiters, because otherwise bad things will happen to them and to their families. Thus, Voodoo ensure loyalty and silence, even after migrants discover the reality of their conditions after their arrival to their destination.

Finally, the biggest obstacle is the sense of responsibility towards one's commitment and towards one's **family ties**. This sense of responsibility thus translates into a fear of a retaliation by the traffickers on the victims' families. However these feelings and fears are actually linked to the fear

of the voodoo and the consequences of its violation, and shed light on how this local ritual has the power of “materializing” a fear of terrible consequences on themselves and their loved ones.

In some cases, following traffickers’ suggestions, victims do not tell their family members about their imminent departure, especially because they fear they would not be supported. Criminal organizations however, have information on the victims’ families (such as addresses and telephone numbers). For this reason, a young woman who leaves without her family’s consent is haunted by a terrible sense of guilt if she decides to break her agreement, because her decision may have a very negative impact on her family.

In other cases, given the increasing number of minors among victims, it is possible to see an active involvement of families, which select a daughter to send to Europe in order to improve the family’s conditions. In these cases, the child feels that she has been chosen by her closest relatives, because she was considered more capable and deserving, and feels the weight of the responsibility to support their family. Families often choose daughters that can be “sacrificed”, for example, because they are suffering from disabilities, cognitive delays, as well as physical or psychological problems. Probably, in some cases, the family also assesses the possibility of giving a future to their daughters through marriage: some young and very young girls are sent off on difficult journeys because, for a variety of different reasons, they are difficult to marry. Therefore, young girls are considered to be “sacrificial victims” for the well-being of their family: they can send home the money that ensures their parents’ livelihood, pay the school fees for their younger brothers, as well as the medical costs incurred to care for a sick family member. In such cases, safeguarding and protecting these people is very difficult because minors, in addition to having to come to terms with the fact that they were deceived by their own family member, must choose to abandon their family at least temporarily, which in turn, may resort to repudiating them forever.

Families  
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“sacrificed”





## KATE'S STORY

16 years, Nigeria, Benin City

During the ritual, the girl did not drink all the potion she was offered by the shaman

Arrived in Italy by sea, in Palermo in 2016. After the death of her father, Kate was entrusted to her grandmother at a very young age. She attended elementary school and rarely saw her mother, who in the meantime had remarried. In 2009, she was entrusted to a lady living in Warry, who initially offered to take care of her and let her continue her studies, though ultimately treated her like a maid for about four years. In 2013, Kate returned to her grandmother's home. In 2016, her mother and stepfather visited Kate and told her that they had found someone willing to help her go to Europe (by plane). The couple asked Kate to prepare for this trip but the young girl refused, stating that she wanted to stay in Benin City to take care of her grandmother. Her mother explained that by sending money to Nigeria from Europe, she would not only help her grandmother but the whole family, considering that she would continue to study and find a good job.

Therefore, Kate accepted the proposal, prepared her luggage and greeted her grandmother in tears, who asked her if she was able to make love to men. The girl, who did not understand the meaning of this question, hugged her grandmother, telling her

that she will help her forever. That same night, Kate was accompanied by her mother and stepfather to a shaman's home, there she found another girl, Mary. Kate was afraid; however, she showed herself to be submissive and, after wearing a white dress, as she was asked to do, she committed to pay the amount of 35,000 euros to the person who would help her reach Europe while the native doctor recited magic formulas. During the ritual, the girl did not drink all the potion she was offered by the shaman, but the mother intervened and, with the help of the shaman's assistants they forced the girl to drink the entire potion. After completing the voodoo ritual, Kate's mother and stepfather accompanied her to a woman's home, who was supposed to be the person who organized the trip to Europe.

The following day Kate left with Mary and a *boga*. From Benin City, the three travellers took the bus to Abuja, continued to Kano and eventually reached, by private means, the border with Niger. There, they found one of the *bogas's* accomplices who hosted them at his place. At night, the group was accompanied by some traffickers across the border on motorcycles (four people on each), thus avoiding border

police checks. Once in Niger, the group climbed on a truck headed to Agadez, where it stopped for a few days. Here, Kate asked the *boga* when they would finally get on the plane headed to Europe, but the man silenced her, ordering her not to ask unnecessary questions. After a few days, in the early morning, the *boga* offered the two girls a bottle of water, advising them to keep it as if it were gold. The group climbed on a truck together with some thirty other migrants. Soon Kate understood the importance of water when she realized that some thirty migrants drank a mixture of urine and cocoa powder to quench their thirst. Finally, the group arrived in Sabha (Libya), where they were housed in an apartment owned by a couple of other Nigerian accomplices of the *boga*. A few weeks later, the group reached Zuwara by private car, where the *boga* left Kate and Mary in a ghetto, telling them they would leave soon. Waiting for their departure (about two weeks later), Kate explained that she had heard stories about how “sponsored” girls from Nigeria were destined to prostitution in Europe, though she did not believe it at the time. She also discovered that to get to Italy she would have to climb on a *lapalapa* (rubber dinghy) and cross the sea. One night, Kate was awakened by the screams of Libyan traffickers who,

guns in hand, ordered about one hundred migrants to climb in the *lapa-lapa*. Kate burst into tears when she saw a very small inflatable boat because she could not swim. She finally climbed on the dinghy which, at sunrise, was rescued by a large ship. Kate remembered that during her trip, the *boga* had suggested that once in Italy, she should say she was born in 1996, and to contact the person waiting for her in Italy through the telephone number they had provided.

Upon arriving in Italy, after talking with IOM, Kate found the courage to share her story and reveal her true age. However, she was frightened about the repercussions she may suffer from violating the voodoo commitment and explained that she wanted her mother’s consent to take this step. Kate contacted her mother in Nigeria, who instead, urged her to leave the centre where she was sheltered and honor her commitment. The young woman found support in her grandmother who suggested that she should stay at the centre and continue studying, especially because she was a brilliant student. Kate is bravely continuing to move forth with her decision. She is currently in third grade and wants to become a cultural mediator to fight human trafficking, in order to help other women find their own courage to free themselves from their condition. ■

She realized that some thirty migrants drank a mixture of urine and cocoa powder to quench their thirst

In conclusion, it is important to highlight that safeguarding and protecting victims of human trafficking inevitably affects a person own migration plan and perhaps their entire life. Victims of human trafficking must first become aware of their conditions, they must understand that they have been deceived and exploited by the people they trusted, who often are their own family members. Further they need to overcome all the fears that have been previously described and reconfigure their entire life plan. It is important to point out and keep in mind that the hope of a young woman on a journey that she believed could improve her conditions crumbles and her expectations of a better life are completely destroyed.



## 4.

### MAIN VULNERABILITIES/RISKS IDENTIFIED BY IOM

During the period covered by this report, consistent monitoring of human trafficking by sea for the purpose of sexual exploitation of women and girls has allowed IOM to identify some of the major vulnerabilities among potential victims.

#### 4.1 Underage victims

As already mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the increase in adolescent victims is alarming.<sup>26</sup> The increasingly younger age of Nigerian minors arriving by sea is inversely proportional to the consciousness of being victims of trafficking and of the violence and abuse that victims will have to face. Many teenagers encountered at landing sites tell IOM staff that they never had sex before, and that they are not aware of birth control methods or the risk of becoming infected with Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs). They are unaware of what the act of prostitution actually entails.

Related causes to this lack of awareness are, in addition to a very young age, having grown up in remote areas and a low level of education due to extremely difficult economic conditions in which the victims' families live, especially because in Nigeria education is not free.

It should be considered that when the victims are underage, the decision

Many teenagers encountered at landing sites tell IOM staff that they never had sex before

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<sup>26</sup> In 2016, 37,551 Nigerian citizens arrived in Italy, including 11,009 women and 3,040 unaccompanied minors, including many teenage girls (source: Ministry of the Interior).

The extreme vulnerability of underage victims makes it difficult to accept that their family members may be aware of the real nature of the work they are forced into

to escape the network of traffickers becomes complex and the choice seems to be collective rather than an individual one. The decision to be included in a protection programme could lead to the interruption of all relations with their family and it might aggravate the victim's already painful detachment from his/her country of origin and cultural background. The extreme vulnerability of underage victims makes it difficult to accept that their family members may be aware of the real nature of the work they are forced into. A fact that is clearly demonstrated by the large number of underage girls who prefer to reach their own traffickers because they could never believe they have been deceived by their parents or family.

Therefore, approaching victims of human trafficking is crucial. For the operator who provides information to a young woman, placing him- or herself in an oppositional role *vis-à-vis* the victim's family may be a cause for further trauma, resulting in a person's introversion, especially in light of the hardship that the migrant already experienced during the journey towards Europe and because of the need to provide support to his/her family.

In these cases, IOM suggests providing the minor with all the necessary elements to question her family promise and to make independent decisions about her life, notwithstanding the obligation to report to Prosecutors of Juvenile Courts, in case of offenses perpetrated against minors.

#### 4.2 Victims of sexual violence during the journey

Another evolving element is related to travel and safety conditions in transit countries. IOM has noted that the control of victims by traffickers during their stay in transit countries is made difficult by the social and political instability reigning in these countries. Particular reference is made to Libya, the last stop before sea crossing, where victims of trafficking wait to embark, along with other migrants, for variable periods of time. If in the past traffickers were able to monitor their victims, while in the last year, because of instability and the rise of rebel groups, they have not been able to have a full control over the situation. This results in an increase in the number of cases of sexual violence perpetrated

by non-drug traffickers against women and girls and, consequently, an increase in the number of pregnant women arriving in Italy.

From the evidence that has been collected, it was possible to ascertain that pregnant victims who arrived in Italy by sea may be re-trafficked. In fact, the madame, having learned of the victim's pregnancy, may decide to "leave her" in Libya, considering her pregnancy as a great obstacle to work, and, therefore, the payment of debt. In some cases, girls are sold by their madame in Europe to another madame in Libya, who will force girls to interrupt their pregnancy and work in brothels. In many other cases, however, the girls who were interviewed were forced to rely on a different trafficker willing to support them in Libya and, eventually, from Libya to Italy. The victim is then subjected by the new madame to a second voodoo ritual and sometimes, forced to prostitute herself even during a pregnancy. In the most serious cases, once landed in Italy, the victim will still be forced to stop her pregnancy, normally not through official channels but by the ingestion of particular medicines, as a prerequisite for starting to prostitute herself once picked up from the reception centre where she is housed. If the medicine has no effect, or if the pregnancy is advanced, the trafficker will make the victim abort with the use of invasive tools that could endanger the woman's life. In some cases, pregnancy is a factor that facilitates the understanding of the state of the victim and the decision to cut all ties with the criminal organization.

#### 4.3 Victims suffering from psychological disorders or high trauma

IOM registered the arrival of girls that were victims of trafficking with psychological pathologies requiring the immediate intervention of specialized health-care personnel. These are situations of exceptional vulnerability and importance, which should not be confused with anxiety caused by the fear of violating the voodoo rite to which the victim has been subjected to. These pathologies must be highlighted, as they provide an increasingly dramatic picture of the brutality with which young women are sent off on journeys to Europe.

In particular, there are cases of hallucinations affecting women or under-age girls accommodated in reception centres, who report the presence

of a man in their room in the middle of the night (they report that they are seeing the shaman who submitted them to the voodoo rite next to their bed), or say that they feel like they are suffocating at the hands of some spirit.

#### 4.4 Trafficking victims of other nationalities

Along with the growing number of Nigerian women, IOM is currently monitoring the ever-increasing number of adults and underage girls coming from Mali, Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroon, who generally say they have fled their country of origin to escape forced marriage or infibulation. However, these girls often leave the centre where they are housed in order to reach nationals, mainly women, residing in Italy or Europe (especially in France). They often state they have not paid for the trip or have assumed any debt.

In light of IOM's indicators, it is believed that these are potential victims of trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation, although there are not many cases that are currently being investigated. For this reason, it is crucial to inform potential victims on the risks associated with trafficking, as well as the protection mechanisms in place for victims in the Italian and European legal order. In several cases, the women in question said they had already been forced into prostitution in Libya, sometimes by Nigerian citizens, in ways similar to those used for Nigerian women.



## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As part of the project activities carried out at the places of disembarkation and migrant centres, IOM was able to detect not only an increase in the number of victims and potential victims of trafficking, but also in the increased use of brutal and violent recruitment and subjection methods by criminal organizations. These methods often include the involvement if not even the complicity, of families and the exploitation of social, economic, cultural and health vulnerabilities of the victims. For these reasons, in addition to an overview of the number of arrivals and assisted people, the edition of this report has chosen to provide an overview of the stories of victims of trafficking encountered by IOM staff, in order to help raise awareness of the vicissitudes that women and underage girls who cross the Central Mediterranean route, have gone through during their journeys to Italy and the rest of Europe.

Sexual  
exploitation  
is the  
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of this form  
of slavery

In most cases, sexual exploitation is the ultimate purpose of this form of slavery, in which people, often young women and girls, are considered as commodities of the sex market.

It is urgent and important that the analysis of the data on the phenomenon of trafficking in human beings and the ways in which victims are transported to Italy and the rest of Europe shall be accompanied by a study of the market they are intended for and of the growing demand for paid sex services.

Sexual exploitation involves extremely serious physical and psychological abuse and violence which has long-term consequences. Targeted interventions are necessary to enable victims to overcome the trauma



they suffer so they can re-establish confidence in themselves, in institutions and people around them.

A 10 Euro sexual performance on the street of a large or small Italian or European city has incalculable human and social costs. Therefore, combating the phenomenon of human trafficking means to also understand and fight the forms of exploitation to which the victims are destined. There is a need to stimulate a reflection of the whole society on such forms of exploitation in order to disseminate growing awareness of the condition of victims and of what it means, in many cases, to purchase sex.

IOM has therefore welcomed the adoption of the National Anti-trafficking Plan,<sup>27</sup> which, amongst the various lines of action, includes communication and awareness-raising activities, such as

“initiatives in primary and secondary levels of education and in universities, so that young people, and especially men, become aware of the social model in which gender relations are forged”.

Based on these considerations and what is described in this report, IOM wishes to formulate or reiterate<sup>28</sup> a number of recommendations and proposals to competent institutions, in order to respond in a structural and comprehensive way to the concerning rise in the number of human victims of trafficking arriving by sea:

1. IOM welcomed the adoption of the National Anti-trafficking Plan, which is structured according to the priorities identified in the EU Strategy for the eradication of Human Trafficking (2012-2016)<sup>29</sup>

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27 The 2016–2018 National Action Plan on Trafficking and Exploitation (PNA), adopted by the Council of Ministers on 26 February 2016, provides for action to combat trafficking and exploitation in four directives aimed at achieving 4 of the 5 priorities identified in the EU Strategy for the eradication of Human Trafficking (2012–2016), as set forth in the COM Communication (2012) no. 286 of 19 June 2012.

28 Some of the recommendations have already been expressed in the previous report of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Project Assistance “Report on Victims of trafficking in the Mixed Migration Flows by Sea, April 2014–October 2015”.

29 The Plan, considering the four guidelines (prevention, prosecution, protection, partnership), is structured according to the 5 priorities identified in the EU Strategy: A. Identifying, protecting and assisting victims of trafficking; B. Intensifying the prevention of trafficking in human beings; C. Enhancing criminal prosecution against

including awareness-raising initiatives in schools. In this regard, IOM is of the opinion that the implementation of information and awareness raising campaigns about trafficking and labour exploitation aimed at young people in schools and universities is of paramount importance;

2. IOM expresses its appreciation for the adoption by the Ministry of the Interior of the “Guidelines for Territorial Commissions for the recognition of international protection for the identification and referral of victims of trafficking among international protection applicants”, drafted by the National Commission for Asylum and the UNHCR, and the training of the staff of the Territorial Commissions to ensure the identification and the protection of victims of trafficking within the asylum procedure;
3. IOM stresses the need to strengthen protection mechanisms through projects funded by the Department for Equal Opportunities by generally increasing availability in facilities, in particular those reserved to children victims or victims with other specific vulnerabilities (psychological, health, etc.), as well as the creation of protected places (“safe houses”) where to transfer victims that have been already identified at the time of disembarking, so that they can be separated from their traffickers and immediately activate specific assistance services;
4. In order to ensure access to the protection system provided for by the current legislation, effective referral mechanisms should be established between the various actors involved in the reception of migrants and asylum seekers who travel by sea, including the staff of different reception facilities for unaccompanied minors, to ensure that human victims of trafficking identified after their arrival are accommodated in appropriate facilities;
5. The need to involve National Rapporteurs or Equivalent National Mechanisms<sup>30</sup> (set up in an informal EU network established by the

They can be separated from their traffickers and immediately activate specific assistance services

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traffickers; D. Improving coordination and cooperation among the main stakeholders and coherent policies; E. Increasing knowledge of emerging issues related to all forms of human trafficking and providing an effective response.

<sup>30</sup> According to Article 7 of Legislative Decree no. 24 of 4 March, 2014, “Implementation of Directive 2011/36/EU on the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking and the Protection of Victims, replacing Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA”, the

conclusions of the Council on the establishment of a European network of national rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms of Human Trafficking of 4 June 2009),<sup>31</sup> in order to ensure harmonized interventions and the exchange of information so that victims of trafficking seeking international protection are not sent back to a EU country, including pursuant to the Dublin III Regulation, where they may still be at risk of exploitation;

6. In order to ensure constant updates of all involved parties, including Law Enforcement and reception operators, as well as to ensure that victims are correctly and timely identified at the time of disembarkation, and enhance assistance and protection capability at the national level, within the framework of the “2016–2018 National Action Plan against Trafficking and Exploitation”, IOM wishes to promote a capacity building programme addressed to the various stakeholders involved in managing migration flows, and to all those who are differently called upon to respond to the phenomenon of human trafficking and exploitation, both in terms of direct assistance to victims, as well as prevention of and fight against human trafficking and exploitation;
7. Victims of trafficking are among the victims of crime who should benefit from specific protection needs according to the Directive establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime. Moreover, it is also essential to remember that victims of trafficking are among asylum seekers defined as vulnerable in accordance with Italian and European legislation and are therefore, entitled to special treatment, especially as per the reception conditions as defined by law.

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Department of Equal Opportunities of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers is identified as Equivalent Mechanism in Italy.

31 As referred to in recital 27 of Directive 2011/36/EU, on the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking and the Protection of Victims, replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/629/ JHA.





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