



SOVEREIGN MILITARY HOSPITALLER ORDE  
OF SAINT JOHN OF JERUSALEM OF RHODES AND OF MALTA

*Embassy-at-Large for Africa on Migrations and Human Trafficking*

## **Bakhita Villa Project Lagos in Nigeria, to save Human trafficked girls from international sex traffic**

Lagos, January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

Estimated friends,

Committed to helping the most vulnerable and preserving human dignity, the Sovereign Order of Malta has been actively engaged in combating human trafficking and protecting the victims of this worsening global phenomenon.

As many other actors fighting human trafficking, the Sovereign Order has observed a spike in the number of Nigerian women arriving through different migration flows. With an increasingly growing population, and a sharp rise in human trafficking, Nigeria is experiencing an endemic human trafficking crisis.

The **Bakhita Villa project** in Lagos helps to save and rehabilitate women victims of human trafficking upon return to Nigeria. In order to further its commitment to providing assistance, counseling and vocational training to help rehabilitate and reintegrate these women into society, the Sisters of St. Louis purchased a building with a bungalow. Under the congregation's management and operations, the space will be used to house about thirty-five women and children, providing them with a safe space and a human and professional support to rebuild their lives in Nigeria.

In order to complete the center, the project needs assistance with completing the building, furnishing it, and the operational expenses for its first year.

**In the following pages, we have gathered the key information to share with you the detail and the context of this project.**

## How you can support the Bakhita Villa Project?

All donations and other forms of help, big or small, will help us provide the most effective and sustainable support to the Bakhita Villa Project. Here are some of the ways you can support the project:

- Make a donation (tax deductible for French donors)
- Make a material donation (clothes, toiletries, first aid supplies, sheets, towels, etc.)
- Get involved: (i) Partnership: Transfer of skills and learning; trainings and (ii) Mentorship: help survivors of human trafficking reintegrate society

The Bakhita Villa Project is committed to donors' rights and transparency. We make our financial statements and project developments available to our donors.

### 1. For EU bank Transfer: **Critical** to precise in the wording of the transfer is for **BAKHITA Project**.

- Bank account designation: OHFOM COLLECTE VIREMENT
- IBAN: FR76 3007 6023 5212 9409 0020 095 BIC: NORDFRPP
- Bank: Credit du Nord

### 2. For France Check transfer, You can also send a cheque to the following destination; **Critical** to precise in the correspondence "**BAKHITA Project**".

- addressed at the order of "Ordre de Malte France"
- Send at the following direction: Ordre de Malte, DIOM, 42 rue des Volontaires, 75015 Paris France

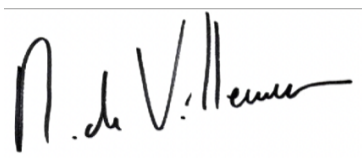
### 3. For Nigerian transfer: directly transfer at the following bank account:

- Name: BAKHITA PROJECT
- Bank: ZENITH
- Account Number: 1015 9947 19

We thank you in advance for your contribution and for the time and the attention you will give to this critical project. This contribution will directly benefit to the girls, victims of this odious traffic and will change positively and dramatically their lives.

Please receive our best wishes for this feast of the Nativity, hopefully this period will inspire us to continuously increase our love and attention to the poorest,

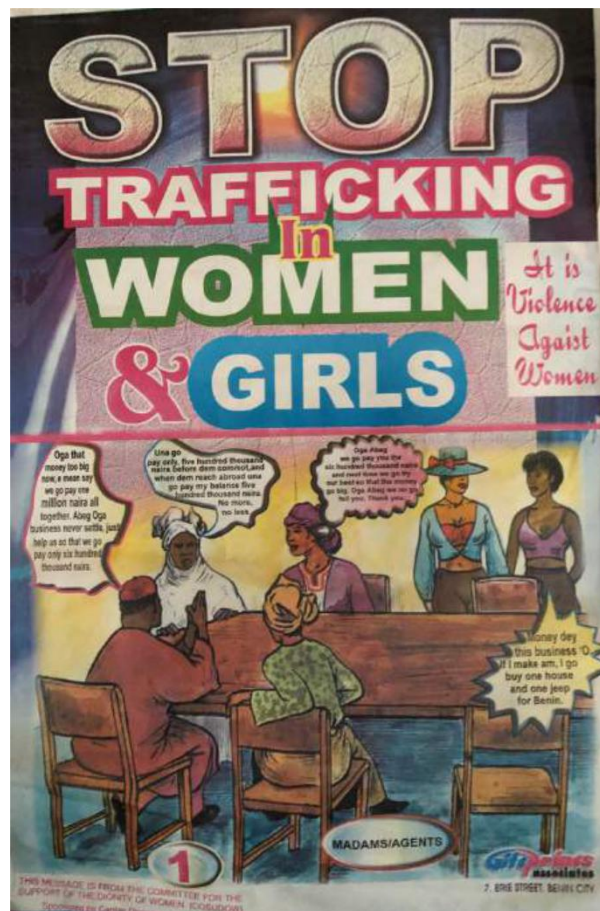
Romain de Villeneuve  
Ambassador at-Large for Africa on Migration and Human Trafficking



## Nigeria and Human Trafficking

Nigeria remains a source, transit and destination country for victims of trafficking<sup>1</sup>. Victims are trafficked to Europe through the Central Mediterranean Route, but also to Gulf countries, as well as Russia and other West and Southern African countries mainly for the purpose of sexual and labour exploitation. The vast majority of them fall prey to traffickers in transit countries, especially in Libya, and is subject to all forms of human rights violations including torture, rape, extortion, and exploitation amounting to trafficking, slavery and forced labour. In destination countries, severe forms of exploitation are also perpetrated by traffickers and final exploiters, through organized crime networks.<sup>2</sup>

The Nigerian victims are mostly women and increasingly younger girls, many of whom are minors. The great majority originates from states in southern Nigeria, particularly Edo, Ogun, Osun, Lagos, Anambra, Enugu, Imo, Rivers, Cross-River, Delta and Akwa Ibom.



The victims are recruited from poor communities where families struggle to survive economically. They are often approached by former prostitutes turned traffickers or people working on their behalf with offers of well-paid jobs or studies in European countries. The future, however, turns out to be much grimmer for the many women and girls who embark on the journey to Europe.

Before departing from Nigeria, some victims are often subjected to a humiliating and daunting voodoo ritual (named juju), during which their nail clippings, pubic hair or menstrual blood and items of clothing are taken and placed in a packet kept by the juju priest. The ritual aims to instill fear in the victims and ensure that they will pay their debt to the traffickers upon arrival in Europe and refrain from collaborating with authorities in the destination country or share information that could identify their traffickers. The fear of the juju, which victim believe may cause death to them or their families in case they break the oath, has become a very effective method, among others, of restraint and psychological control over victims, and an important tool to ensure compliance and payment of the debt.

<sup>1</sup>US State Department, Trafficking in Person Reports, June 2018.

<sup>2</sup>UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, Maria Grazia Giammarinaro, on her end of visit statement in Nigeria, 3-10 September 2018.

From Nigeria, the victims travel over land to Libya or Morocco through the city of Agadez in Niger. Many are subjected to violence and exploitation on the way to Europe, as they are placed in connection houses where they are isolated from the external world, raped and forced into prostitution. Others are sold to different traffickers during the journey, changing hands like a commodity. Once in Europe, the victims are usually placed in open reception centers where they are picked up by the traffickers soon after their arrival.



*Photo Source Huffington post*

The great majority of the victims who make it across the Mediterranean end up working as prostitutes in the streets of Europe to pay their traffickers an excessively high debt – that can at times amount up to EUR 50,000. After they pay off of their debt, some will turn into madams, recruiting new victims to support the criminal organization that exploited them for years.

### **Trafficking in Persons in Europe (the EU) from Africa, Particularly Nigeria<sup>3</sup>**

Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly countries in West Africa, currently represents one of the main source regions of victims of human trafficking in the EU. The victims are mainly from poverty-stricken areas where high levels of unemployment, deprivation, illiteracy and gender inequality prevail, factors that often boost their desire to travel abroad in search of new opportunities. They come in large numbers from Nigeria, but also from countries, such as Cameroon, Ghana, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone.



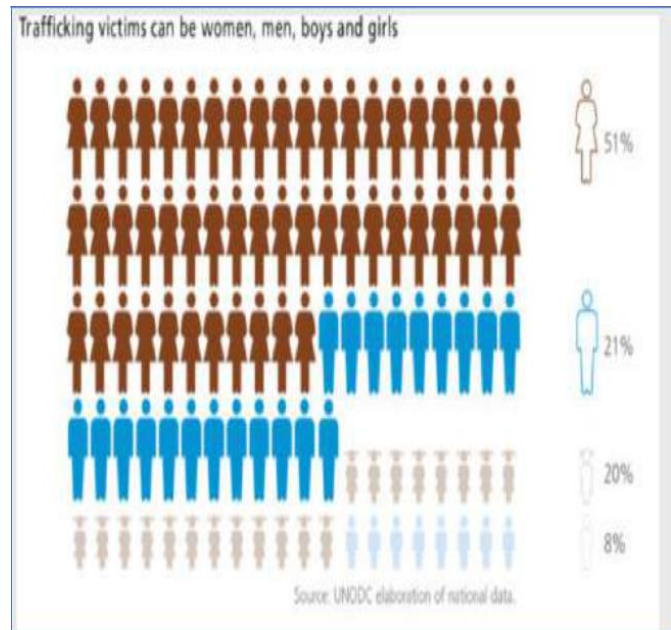
*Photo Felicia Essan, 2015, destitute prostitution in Italy*

<sup>3</sup> Based on European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) Report with International Organization of Migration (IOM) addition and OFM remarks



Trafficking in Nigerian minors and women into Europe, particularly Italy for prostitution started in the second half of the 1980s, following the economic difficulties. They started leaving Nigeria on promises of well-paying jobs in Europe, in factories, offices and farms. They arrived in Italy only to find themselves sold into sexual slavery. They were forced to engage in prostitution.

The issue of trafficking in persons, from Nigeria in particular, has in the past few years become of particular concern to law enforcement authorities across the EU. Although human trafficking from



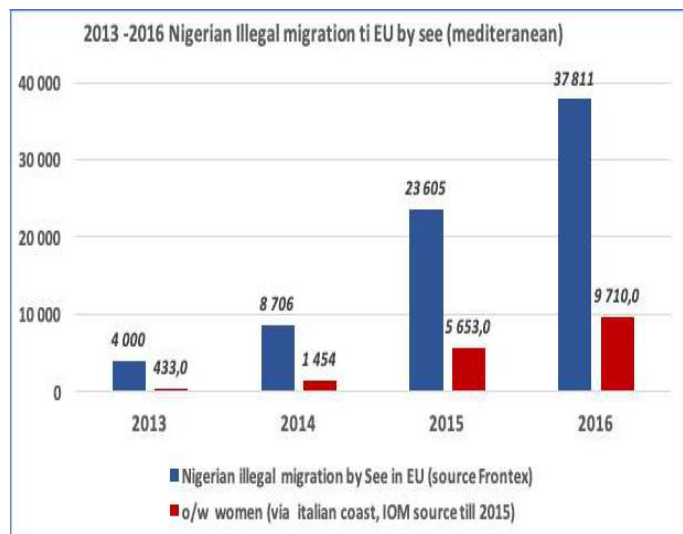
Nigeria has, for decades, supplied the European sex market, the spike in the number of Nigerian females arriving in mixed migration flows to Italy (and, to a lesser extent, in Spain), has brought the phenomenon of human trafficking from Nigeria to light. Currently, Nigeria represents the top nationality of third-country victims of human trafficking in the EU.

### How many victims in Europe?

Given the complexity and nature of the issue of trafficking in persons, it is extremely difficult to provide precise data on victims of human trafficking. The Order of Malta estimates that the number falls around 50,000 Nigerian women in Europe victims of sex trafficking. Scelles Foundation, in 2015, estimated the number at 50,000 in Europe of which 10,000 in Italy. The year of 2016 saw a dramatic increase in the number of Nigerian girls prostituted in Europe. IOM and Frontex estimate that in 2015, additional c4,500 Nigerian girls arrived illegally by sea in Europe as victims of prostitution, and additional c8,000 in 2016. French authorities believe that 95 % of the girls arriving from Nigeria is to enter into

sex illegal activities such as prostitution (IOM estimated around 80 %). The figure does not include those arriving by air with false documents.

Italian authorities estimated between 10,000 and 30,000 Nigerian women working in prostitution on the streets of Italy. It is noteworthy that in the last three years, IOM has recorded an almost 600% increase in the number of potential sex trafficking victims arriving in Italy via the Mediterranean.



## Returnees and Problems for the Return

According to IOM statistics, there is almost no returnees from Europe. 99% of registered official returnees come from Libya and Niger. It is estimated that since 2017, around 9,600 Nigerian women have returned from Libya of which around 3,800-4,000 are girls, including pregnant women and single parents. IOM estimates that around 60,000 Nigerians are still in Libya (April 2018).

Returnees from Europe is quite insignificant (less than 1% vs. the returnees from Libya): mostly due to the fact that Europe privileges the voluntary returns. Frontex indicates that in 2017 there was 2,600 returnees including 1,700 forced returns from Europe to Nigeria.

The associations that take care of the victims in France also testify to the little will of return of the girls victims of sexual trafficking when they wish to leave the networks. The victims who want to leave the human trafficking network do not want to come back for reasons, such as family pressure, lack of job opportunities in the countries of origin, exposure to trafficking, lack of protection and lack of care. In addition, and sometimes, it is the families themselves who send their daughters "to get the money", whatever the lawful or unlawful possibilities. This is a very important link that will generate a strong motivation for girls to bring back money no matter what. Families can also sometimes guarantee the debt of the trip to be reimbursed, increasing the pressure of girls towards their families.



In spite of important advances accomplished by Nigerian and European authorities and civil association, the established infrastructure in Nigeria remain undersized to be able to propose a viable solution for all those girls in Europe who wants to leave the traffic and come back in Nigeria to build a viable future.

The Congregation of Sisters of Saint Louis and Sovereign Order of Malta have decided to partner together to strengthen Nigeria capacity and offer these girls a hand in their salvation journey, and are collaborating in a project to improve the capacity and quality of the Bakhita shelter in Lagos

## **The Beginning of the Collaboration in the Bakhita Villa Project between the Sisters of St. Louis and the Order of Malta**

### ***Santa Marta Group***

This group was founded by Pope Francis to abolish human trafficking. It is an alliance of international police chiefs and bishops from around the world working together with civil society in a process endorsed by Pope Francis to eradicate human trafficking and modern-day slavery. The group was introduced to Sr. Patricia Ebegbulem, the founder of the Bakhita Villa, by Sr. Eugenia Bonnetti in Italy. It was at one of these gatherings that Sr. Patricia met with Michel Veuthey of the Order of Malta, who introduced her to Romain de Villeneuve.

### ***Congregation of Sisters of St Louis in Nigeria (SSL):***



St Louis hospital, Zonkwa, Kaduna, an example of SSL Project in Nigeria

- Celebrating in 2018, 70 years anniversary, there are approximately 140 Sisters of St Louis in the Nigeria Province. In Nigeria, there are 20 Sister of St Louis communities in a country with a population of 195 million people, Africa's most populous nation.

Approximately one-third of the Sisters are involved in education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Of the 17 schools that they teach in, five are owned by the Sisters of St Louis. They teach at and run the other 12 schools on behalf of dioceses or the government of Nigeria. Another quarter or so of the sisters are involved in providing health and pastoral care, and in community development initiatives. The remainder of the Sisters of St Louis are in leadership and administrative roles.

The Sisters of St. Louis have been involved in the campaign against human trafficking since 1996. The then provincial superior, Sr. Patricia Ebegbulem, as president of the Nigeria Conference of Women Religion (NCWR) together with the members of the executive council, founded the Committee for the Support of the Dignity of Women (COSUDOW). It is therefore in collaboration with the Women Religion of Nigeria and Slaves No More of Italy that the shelter (Bakhita Villa) was established in Lagos, to serve as a point of re-entry for rehabilitating the trafficked girls and women and reintegrating them into the society. They provide protection, family reconciliation, healthcare, spiritual support, counseling, vocational trainings and reintegration into the society



Current Bakhita Villa, in Lagos, has already saved more than 35 ladies from the sex traffic



Current process of collaboration involves identification of the woman victims who are willing to return from Italy, welcoming the victims at the airport in Lagos and taking them to the shelter. The rehabilitation and reintegration process begin once they are welcomed at the shelter which can take months depending on their experience and situation

*Since its establishment Bakhita Villa has managed to rehabilitate about 35 girls and women. In order to Further their commitment in providing assistance, counseling and vocational training to help rehabilitate and reintegrate the victims into the society, the Sisters of St. Louis, purchased a building with a bungalow. They need assistance in completing the building, furnishing it and operational expenses in the first year of its expanded operation.*



## Expansion Project of Bakhita Villa

Project:	Expansion of the Center for Victims of Human Trafficking
Location	Ipaja, Ikeja, Lagos Nigeria

The expanded center will be hosted in a three-floor building and a bungalow adjacent to the building, offering a total capacity to welcome and accompany about 35 girls and children at a time.

### Project Completion

The renovation of the building is expected to be completed in February 2019. The Center is expected to be operationally starting in Q1 2019 with the inauguration date of Saint's Joseph day is being considered (March 19<sup>th</sup>).

- Ground floor will be used as the office, chapel, guest room, conference room and skills acquisition area.
- 1st floor will be for the living space of the women victims of trafficking, and an additional space for skills acquisition. In its full capacity, the 6 bedrooms on this floor will be able to accommodate 20 single women/girls (4 bedrooms with 4 girls in each bedroom and 2 smaller bedrooms with 2 girls in each bedroom).
- 2nd floor will be the Convent of the Sisters working in this project, since it is pertinent that they closely accompany the victims in all of the rehabilitation stages up to their reintegration into society and the monitoring thereafter.
- Bungalow with 3 bedrooms and a common room will be used for the women who come with children.



*Villa Bakhita extended, exterior view, August 2018*



*Villa Bakhita extended, exterior view, January 2019*



August 2018, Inside Villa Bakhita



January 2019, Inside Villa Bakhita, same room





### **Project necessities:**

The main components to complete the projects are furniture, electronics and financing of the 1st year of the operation. We are looking at around 53,500 usd to close this project phase and operate the center in 2019.

#### ***(i) Furniture; 37 000 usd.***

- Office furniture (desks with drawers and chairs, shelves with drawers, a conference table with chairs)
- ACs
- Furniture for the chapel (an altar table, a table for vesting and chest of drawers for altar items)
- Bedrooms furniture (beds, wardrobes, desks with drawers and chairs)
- Living and dining rooms furniture (sofas, tables, shelves with drawers and dining tables with chairs) and kitchen furniture (cabinets and shelves).
- Some electronics for the office, skills acquisition and daily living including among others, laptops, printers, sewing machines a photocopier, stoves, washing machines, fridges, freezers and TVs.
- Estimated Furniture's budget is 25,500,000 Naira (equivalent 70,000 USD).

**Out of this 25,500,000 Naira, we received 12,300,000 Naira of promises funds,**

**→ remaining 13,200,000 Naira to cover (equivalent 37 000 USD)**

#### ***(ii) Operational expenses: yearly estimated budget of 6,000,000 Naira (equivalent 16,500 USD)***

- basic necessities to run the shelter (electricity, water, internet, telephone, TV subscription, groceries, petrol, fuel for generator, maintenance of building, car and generator, cleaning supplies),
- basic necessities for the ladies (clothes, sheets, pillows, and toiletries) and salary for the assistants (a driver, two security staff and a domestic worker),
- We are also looking for a bus or large pickup to support the transport of the girls during the integration process and to help the life of the Shelter



## **Project Sustainability:**

Order of Malta is working with the Bakhita Villa on a number of creative approaches. One of them is the expansion of the skills acquisition unit to offer services to public so that the remuneration will be able to fund the operational expenses of the center.

### **Contacts for Further Information**

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### ***About Sovereign Order of Malta & the campaign Against Human Trafficking***

The Sovereign Order of Malta is one of the oldest institutions of Western and Christian civilizations. It is a subject of international law and has diplomatic relations with over 100 states and the European Union. It is neutral, impartial and apolitical. Today, the Order of Malta is active in 120 countries caring for people in need, particularly people living in the midst of armed conflicts and natural disasters, through its medical, social and humanitarian works. Fulfilling its mission to assist the weakest. It is increasing its efforts against human trafficking through social services and humanitarian action.

Through Bakhita Project in Lagos, our aim is to contribute to offer a protective environment to Nigerian trafficked girls, with or without children, from Europe or elsewhere, who wish to quit prostitution networks and to return to Nigeria. We are proud to collaborate with the congregation of Sister of St Louis, and we are certain that this Bakhita project will be a critical successful step for all the girls who will benefit from its hospitality.



# ORDER OF MALTA

Migrations and Human Trafficking in  
Africa