

2.2.9. Re-trafficking

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Nigeria does not have a centralised system that monitors long-term reintegration or provides ongoing follow-up for victims of trafficking. As such, there is no consistent way to track reintegration outcomes nationwide and understand how these might impact re-trafficking.257

Sources indicated that for most returnees, lack of adequate reintegration measures, economic hardship and social stigma are the primary factors contributing to vulnerability to re-trafficking. 258 In fact, returnees often find themselves back to the same conditions of poverty, deprivation, and conflict they initially sought to escape,259 which make them vulnerable to re-exploitation. 260

According to Roland Nwoha, Country Director at IRARA Nigeria, ‘it's very common that returnees want to go back and very common that many of them are being re-trafficked.’ The source said that the constant economic, emotional, and social pressure compounded with lack of support from family or community, and persistent stigma, often pushes returnees to consider re-migrating. Some try to leave on their own, while others reconnect with Madams. ‘When they look back at the life they had in Europe - even if they were undocumented and lacked the freedom they desired - they still had access to decent shelter, regular meals, and sometimes stipends to support themselves and their children. For many, even living under those conditions feels more manageable than returning home to face daily struggles.’ Those who return with children – the source added - face additional pressure, struggling to provide education, nutrition, and care while also trying to survive themselves. Nwoha informed that many returnees usually start out hopeful upon coming back, but once they are confronted with the realities - often within the first year – they feel overwhelmed, and many end up wanting to leave again. ‘We have seen this happen with quite a number of returnees.’261

WOCON reported documenting over 100 cases of victims being re-trafficked after their return within the past five years. In some cases, women openly confess to the NGO their intention to leave again, while others ask to no longer be contacted. In many instances, the women give advance notice before cutting off communication. When no such warning is given and contact is lost, the organisation often assumes they have returned abroad.262

Out of the 69 returnees interviewed by Dr Adeyinka in 2024 for her research study, five had returned to Libya by 2025. When the academic met some of those still in Nigeria in April 2025, several mentioned they were considering going back, despite not wanting to, as they felt that

returning offered at least some income to support their families. For most, the decision was not solely about themselves, but about providing for children, elderly parents, or other dependents. The same source stated to be aware of specific cases where traffickers contacted returned victims requesting them to provide a certain number of girls in exchange for payment for each girl ‘sent their way’ and adding that if the person wished to return abroad, they could facilitate that as well.263

There are also returnees who feel strongly they would never want to go back, having gone through very difficult experiences in Europe. As noted by Roland Nwoha, many in this group managed to save some money, secure decent accommodation, and return with some stability. For them, the reintegration package served more as a supplement to what they had already prepared. This group tends to include more older returnees. In contrast, younger returnees are often more desperate to go back, feeling restless and disillusioned with life at home. 264

According to UN Women, despite significant progress has been made in raising awareness about trafficking for sexual exploitation and, to some extent, its links to forced labour and forced migration, a general sense of optimism about success abroad persists, often outweighing awareness of the associated risks. In Edo State, for instance, this is largely driven by returnees who display signs of financial prosperity, such as owning large homes and luxury vehicles. Their remittances have led to visible socio-economic improvements for previously disadvantaged families and communities. Individuals also frequently return with accounts of improved living standards and higher incomes abroad, reinforcing community belief in the benefits of migration and downplaying the associated risks. After returning, as time passes, the perception of danger and risk diminishes, and some returnees express a renewed desire to attempt the journey again. UN Women stated that there is evidence that many individuals in some African countries continue to raise funds to pay agents for migration and that many deported or forced returnees continue in the search for ‘green pastures’ in countries where prostitution is legal and lucrative, despite the risks.265

- 257

  Adeyinka S., online interview with EUAA, 16 July 2025

- 258

  Adeyinka S., online interview with EUAA, 16 July 2025; Nwoha R., online interview with EUAA, 18 July 2025

- 259

  UN Women, Assessment of national responses and strategies to combat and eliminate trafficking in persons and forced migration in Africa, January 2024, url , pp. 14-15

- 260

  This Day, Bringing Trafficked Girls Back Not Enough, There Must Be Reintegration and Rehabilitation 21 May 2025, url

- 261

  Nwoha R., online interview with EUAA, 18 July 2025

- 262

  Omaiboje M., email communication with EUAA, 8 July 2025

- 263

  Adeyinka S., online interview with EUAA, 16 July 2025

- 264

  Nwoha R., online interview with EUAA, 18 July 2025

- 265

  UN Women, Assessment of national responses and strategies to combat and eliminate trafficking in persons and forced migration in Africa, January 2024, url, pp. 14-15

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