

# New Wares of Trade: Understanding Evolving Baby Factory and Trafficking in Nigeria

Dr Freedom C Onuoha

*Research Fellow*

*Centre for Strategic Research and Studies*

**National Defence College**

Abuja, Nigeria

A paper presented at the *5th international conference: National and international perspectives on crime reduction and criminal justice*, organised by the Institute of Security Studies, at Radisson Blu Gautrain Hotel, Sandton, Johannesburg, 14 - 15 August 2014

# Introduction

- ❖ Human trafficking is a serious organised crime globally.
- ❖ Particularly worrisome is the recent dimension of baby trafficking and associated operating of 'farms' or 'factories' to produce the new wares of trade in the form of babies.
- ❖ Countries such as Bulgaria, Spain, and China, for example, have recorded ugly incidence of baby trafficking in the last decade.
- ❖ In March 2014, for instance, Chinese authorities successfully cracked four baby selling networks, rescuing 382 babies and arresting more than a thousand suspects.
- ❖ Although baby trafficking and the associated 'farming' is now a subject of growing concern, its true origin and practice date back to the late Victorian era.
- ❖ In recent times, however, practice similar to the Victorian-era farming has emerged in a dangerous form in Nigeria, underpinning a booming trade and trafficking in babies.

# Aim

This article examines the nature, actors, modus operandi and motives behind this emergent dimension of human trafficking in Nigeria.

## Scope of Presentation

- Methodology
- Conceptual clarifications
- Overview of human trafficking in Nigeria
- Dimensions and modus operandi of Baby Factory/Trafficking
- Factors behind the upsurge in baby factories
- Efforts and challenges to tackling baby factories and trafficking
- Measures to curb baby factories and trafficking
- Conclusion

# Methodology

- The study is based on extensive review of existing literature
- Unstructured interviews with the Nigerian police, security agencies, civil society organisations and some local residents
- Telephone interviews with some local residents of states in the South East zone of Nigeria – Abia (Umuahia), Anambra (Onitsha), Ebonyi (Abakaliki) Enugu (Enugu), and Imo (Owerri)
- Primary data on baby trafficking were from police record and NAPTIP

# Conceptual Clarification

The term 'baby factory' has also been used interchangeably with 'baby farming' or 'baby harvesting'

They are “used by journalists to describe criminal activities in Nigeria involving restriction of a person’s movement against such person’s will, forced impregnations, sale of babies and illegal adoptions” (Huntley, 2013:10).

## Baby factory

*“where poverty-stricken teenagers are paid a token to mother children who would eventually be sold out to childless couples” (Chioma, 2014)*

*“locations where young ladies or girls, some teenagers or little above that, are harboured and deliberately encouraged or forced to become pregnant and subsequently give up their babies for sale” (Mba, 2024)*

**Baby trafficking** refers to all acts involved in the transfer, sale or receipt of a baby, within national or across international borders, through stealing, false adoption, fraud or deception, to be used for satisfying social, material, and ritual purposes, among others. By babies, we mean any child from birth to the age of one.

# Overview of Human Trafficking in Nigeria

- ❑ Nigeria over the years has become a notorious hub for all forms of human trafficking. Human trafficking is ranked the third most common crime in Nigeria, after financial fraud and drug trafficking.
- ❑ The rapid growth of this crime has attracted international condemnation, forcing many countries, including Nigeria, to initiate measures to combat it.
- ❑ Nigeria, for instance, enacted the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act in 2003; amended in 2005 to prescribe more severe penalties
- ❑ The Act also created the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP) to lead efforts aimed at combating human trafficking.
- ❑ Statistics from NAPTIP indicates that as of December 2013, a total of 2, 726 cases of human trafficking had been reported to the Agency since its inception in 2003, and has secured only 218 convictions since then

# Summary of Human Trafficking Case in Nigeria

S/No	Subject	Inception to Dec 2013
1	Total Number of cases received	2726
2	Total Number of cases investigated	2486
3	Total number of victims rescued	7529
4	Total number of victims empowered	539
5	Total number of convictions secured	218

Source: <http://www.naptip.gov.ng/docs/DATA%20ANALYSIS%20-%202013.pdf>

# Baby Factory and Trafficking in Nigeria

The phenomenon of baby factories, as well as baby trafficking, is growing into one of the most lucrative organised crimes in Nigeria, consisting of powerful suppliers and clients.

Although the phenomenon of baby factory business and trafficking cuts across the various zones in Nigeria, it is more prevalent in the Southern states, appears rampant in **Abia**, **Akwa Ibom**, **Anambra**, **Cross Rivers**, **Imo**, and **Rivers States**. But it has also been reported in Benue, Lagos, Ogun, and Ondo states.

- ❖ In 2011, the police raided two hospitals, and dismantled two baby factories in Enugu State.
- ❖ In June 2011, 32 pregnant girls were rescued in Aba, Abia from a hospital of the Cross Foundation.
- ❖ Between January and March 2010, 77 girls were rescued in other parts of Abia State.
- ❖ In 2007, 19 girls were rescued from a cartel that operated between Aba and Port Harcourt in Rivers State.

# Some baby farms recently discovered in Nigeria

Date discovered	Community/state	Geopolitical Zone	Name/description of baby factory	Number of pregnant girls rescued
14 July 2014	Isiala Ngwa, Abia State	South East	A house located at Umunkpeyi in the Isiala Ngwa South Local Government Area of the state	19
21 March 2014	Akure, Ogun State	South West	Four-bedroom bungalow located at Sebanjo Crescent, Fagbunle Bus Stop	8
30 January 2014	Okitipupa, Ondo State	South West	Healing Home	5
17 June 2013	Aba, Abia State	South East	Cross Foundation International	16
14 October 2011	Ihiala, Anambra State	South East	Spormil Hospital and Maternity (aka Iheanyi Ezuma Foundation)	30

# Dimensions of Baby Factory and Trafficking in Nigeria

**Tier 1:** Highly sophisticated and organised baby farming

**Tier 2:** Facilitative baby farming

**Tier 3:** Sham adoptions

## *Some actors and their roles in baby factories and trafficking in Nigeria*

S/No	Actors	Roles and Activities
1	Doctors	Responsible for running the baby farms
2	Nurses/ midwives	Provide professional services (antenatal support/care) for the pregnant girls
3	Male syndicate employees	Responsible for impregnating girls whose babies are eventually sold
4	Corrupt security agents	Accepting bribes to overlook the operators of the illicit trade
5	Young girls	Carry and deliver the babies (who are usually sold)
6	Scouts/facilitators	Responsible for recruiting young girls and able-bodied men into the illicit business
7	Document forgers	Procure fake or forged legal documents with which they sell babies
8	Clients	Buy the babies

# Factors behind the Upsurge in Baby Factories in Nigeria

Escalating poverty

Premium placed on having biological child – Infertility

Cultural practice of ostracising pregnancies out of wedlock

Decaying moral and social values in contemporary society

Poor regulation of orphanage homes,

Complicity of state actors

# Challenges to Combating Baby Factories in Nigeria

- Deficient legal framework
- Preference of relatives of rescued pregnant girls to settle out-of-court
- Reluctance of rescued pregnant teenage girls to present themselves as witness and victims in the law court
- Interference of very influential persons or state actors
- Prevalence of corruption in the judicial and police system
- Poor data collection and analysis

## Recommendations for Combating Baby Factories/Trafficking

- ✓ Implementation of robust poverty alleviation programmes
- ✓ Subsidising fertility treatments
- ✓ Imposition of stringent regulation of procedures for admitting young pregnant girls into orphanage home
- ✓ Improve monitoring of the activities of orphanage and maternity homes
- ✓ Greater advocacy by civil society groups to promote public awareness on the menace,
- ✓ Strengthening of intelligence gathering and investigative skills among security agencies
- ✓ Amendment of NAPTIP Act, and imposition of stringent punishment for culprits.

# Conclusion

- ❑ The growth in baby factories and trafficking has added a worrisome dimension to this human rights issue.
- ❑ It is gradually growing in Nigeria, and may well take root in other countries if it is not given the international attention that it rightly deserves.
- ❑ Thus, if concerted efforts are not made to deal with the actors and dismantle the market, its profitability will embolden current actors and even encourage new entrants into the booming trade.
- ❑ Proceeds from such business will not only feed into other forms of organised crimes but also empower the criminal groups involved, as they bribe their way through weak state institutions.

**Thank  
You**

---