

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS FOR COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN NIGERIA: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NATIONAL AGENCY FOR THE PROHIBITION OF TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS (NAPTIP), 2015-2023

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Abstract

Human trafficking in Nigeria remains a persistent challenge despite extensive institutional efforts, including the establishment of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP). This study critically assesses NAPTIP's institutional frameworks from 2015 to 2023, focusing on its operational effectiveness in combating trafficking, including public awareness campaigns, victim rehabilitation, and prosecutions. Using secondary data and an institutional theory framework, the study identifies systemic challenges, such as limited public engagement, inadequate resources, and slow legal processes, which undermine the agency's performance. Despite progress in increasing arrests and enhancing rehabilitation services, public awareness and conviction rates remain modest, reflecting gaps in enforcement capacity and inter-agency collaboration. The study concludes that while NAPTIP has made commendable strides, addressing systemic institutional inefficiencies and strengthening resources is crucial to achieving sustainable anti-trafficking outcomes in Nigeria.

Keywords: Human trafficking, NAPTIP, institutional frameworks, Nigeria, anti-trafficking policies.

Background of the Study

Human trafficking remains one of the most pervasive global challenges, manifesting as a grave crime and a violation of fundamental human rights that affects millions of people worldwide. In Nigeria, human trafficking has deep historical roots, tracing back to the pre-colonial era when practices of slavery were deeply embedded in socio-political and economic systems, notably through the trans-Saharan and transatlantic slave trades (Lovejoy, 2012; Thornton, 1998). Although the abolition of slavery was officially enacted during the colonial period, human trafficking evolved into other exploitative practices such as forced labour and indenture systems, which persisted into the post-colonial era under the guise of economic modernization (Falola, 1999; Asiwaju, 1979). In the contemporary era, Nigeria serves as a source, transit, and destination country for trafficking, with victims often subjected to forced labour, sexual exploitation, and domestic servitude. This enduring challenge is fuelled by socio-economic factors such as poverty, unemployment, gender inequality, and systemic corruption, coupled with regional issues like displacement caused by insurgencies and the activities of organized trafficking networks (Okonofua, 2007; Nwogu, 2014).

Recognizing the growing complexity and scale of trafficking, the Nigerian government has taken proactive steps to combat this menace, including the establishment of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) in 2003. NAPTIP, mandated with prevention, protection, and prosecution, has since spearheaded efforts to curb human trafficking through a multi-pronged approach involving public awareness campaigns, victim rehabilitation programs, and enhanced legal frameworks. Between 2015 and 2023, NAPTIP recorded significant advancements in its operations, including increased arrests, more frequent public awareness initiatives, and improved rehabilitation services, as reflected in its operational data. However, despite these achievements, human trafficking

persists, raising questions about the effectiveness and sustainability of Nigeria's institutional frameworks in addressing this issue. It is against this background that this study intends to assess the institutional frameworks established by NAPTIP in combating human trafficking in Nigeria, focusing on its operations, challenges, and impact during the period 2015 to 2023.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the establishment of institutional frameworks such as NAPTIP, human trafficking remains a persistent and complex challenge in Nigeria. The continued prevalence of trafficking reflects systemic socio-economic vulnerabilities, including poverty, unemployment, gender inequality, and weak enforcement of anti-trafficking policies. While NAPTIP has made strides in increasing arrests, public awareness, and victim rehabilitation between 2015 and 2023, several issues undermine its effectiveness. The agency's efforts are constrained by inadequate funding, limited shelter facilities for victims, and delays in prosecuting traffickers, which reduce the deterrent effect of legal measures (Okojie, 2009; Baba, 2014). Moreover, public awareness campaigns, though expanded, have not sufficiently reached rural or border communities, where vulnerabilities to trafficking are highest (NAPTIP, 2023).

Operational data reveals inconsistent increases in trafficking convictions, highlighting gaps in evidence gathering, legal procedures, and interagency collaboration. Furthermore, socio-political challenges, such as corruption and complicity within law enforcement, exacerbate the difficulty of dismantling organized trafficking networks. The rise in digital platforms for recruitment adds another layer of complexity, as traffickers exploit technology to target victims and evade detection (Nwogu, 2014).

While NAPTIP's interventions have made tangible impacts, the persistence of trafficking calls for a critical evaluation of the agency's institutional frameworks to identify key areas of improvement. Gaps such as limited resources for victim reintegration, insufficient data-driven policy formulation, and inadequate engagement with vulnerable communities underscore the need for comprehensive reforms to enhance the agency's effectiveness and sustainability in combating human trafficking.

Research Objectives

1. To evaluate the effectiveness of NAPTIP's institutional frameworks in combating human trafficking in Nigeria between 2015 and 2023.
2. To identify and analyze the key challenges limiting the effectiveness of NAPTIP's operations and suggest policy recommendations for improvement.

Literature Review

History of Human Trafficking Nigeria

The history of human trafficking in Nigeria can be classified into three eras: Precolonial, Colonial, and Post-Colonial. In the pre-colonial era, human trafficking in Nigeria was deeply intertwined with the practice of slavery, which served as a socio-economic and political institution across West Africa for centuries. The trans-Saharan slave trade linked Nigeria to North Africa and the Arab world, where individuals were trafficked for domestic servitude, military service, and agricultural labour (Lovejoy, 2012). Among the Hausa-Fulani states in the north, slavery was embedded in the social structure, often as

a result of Islamic expansion and the spoils of war, while in southern regions, the Yoruba and Benin kingdoms used slavery for rituals, political power, and economic gain. The rise of the transatlantic slave trade in the 15th century marked a turning point, with coastal kingdoms like Benin and Bonny actively capturing and selling individuals to European merchants in exchange for goods. This demand militarized societies and disrupted local economies, establishing exploitative systems that endured into later periods (Thornton, 1998). During the colonial era, British rule introduced legal reforms, including the abolition of slavery, yet human trafficking persisted in new forms. In northern Nigeria, British administrators adopted a gradual approach to dismantle slavery, allowing traditional rulers to retain influence over enslaved populations (Asiwaju, 1979). In the south, where abolition was more effective, the colonial economy's dependence on resources like palm oil and tin necessitated coercive labour policies akin to trafficking. Forced labour schemes and the exploitation of women and children for domestic servitude proliferated as poverty and economic displacement marginalized rural communities (Falola, 1999; Ekechi, 1989). The post-colonial era witnessed the evolution of trafficking as Nigeria faced urbanization, unemployment, and political instability. The oil boom of the 1970s exacerbated inequality, creating conditions for both internal and transnational trafficking. Networks expanded globally, trafficking women to Europe for sexual exploitation, often using cultural practices like juju for control (Okonofua, 2007; Ezeilo, 2011). Internally, children were trafficked into domestic servitude, particularly through systems like child fostering and the Almajiri education model, which left boys vulnerable to labour and abuse (Baba, 2014). Despite efforts by the Nigerian government, including the establishment of NAP TIP in 2003, trafficking persists due to poverty, corruption, and weak governance. The 21st century has seen trafficking aggravated by displacement from the Boko Haram insurgency and the misuse of digital platforms for recruitment (Ikeora, 2017; Nwogu, 2014). This historical trajectory underscores the continuity of systemic exploitation, as socio-economic inequality, political instability, and cultural practices continue to drive human trafficking in Nigeria.

Empirical Review

Institutional Frameworks for Combating Human Trafficking: Global and Nigerian Perspectives

Human trafficking is a pervasive global issue, and the international community has developed a variety of institutional frameworks to combat it. These frameworks, often underpinned by both legal and institutional mechanisms, seek to address the multifaceted nature of trafficking, which includes human rights violations, economic exploitation, and severe social and psychological consequences for victims. International cooperation, national law enforcement, victim protection, and the criminal justice system all play crucial roles in these efforts. Despite the global awareness of trafficking and the institutional efforts made at both national and international levels, empirical studies that assess the effectiveness of these frameworks remain limited, particularly with respect to specific operational outcomes.

At the international level, the United Nations (UN) has spearheaded several efforts to combat human trafficking, with the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, adopted in 2000, serving as a cornerstone for anti-trafficking initiatives. This protocol, which supplements the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, calls for comprehensive efforts to prevent trafficking, protect victims, and prosecute traffickers (UNODC, 2009). According to United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) data, global efforts to combat human trafficking have been bolstered by regional organizations, including the European Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which have implemented specific protocols and legal frameworks in response to the threat of human trafficking (UNODC, 2020). Despite the strong legal and institutional

frameworks that have been established at the global level, there is a significant gap in empirical evaluations of their effectiveness. For instance, while some studies highlight the success of the United States' Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) in addressing trafficking within its borders, a significant body of research calls attention to the inconsistent implementation of anti-trafficking laws in many countries (Baker, 2015). Moreover, the increasing complexity of trafficking networks, especially those operating across borders using digital platforms, has rendered many institutional frameworks less effective, as traffickers exploit the legal loopholes in international collaboration and enforcement.

The institutional frameworks for combating human trafficking in Europe have been heavily shaped by the European Union (EU). EU member states are bound by the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive (2011/36/EU), which aims to strengthen the protection of victims and ensure more effective prosecutions (EU, 2011). However, empirical studies have shown that while EU member states have enacted strong legal provisions, the implementation at the national level often faces challenges. For example, in a study of anti-trafficking efforts in Italy, Andrees (2010) found that while Italy has strong laws in place, enforcement has been inconsistent due to bureaucratic inefficiencies and a lack of cooperation between law enforcement and social service agencies. Additionally, the effectiveness of victim support programs has been limited by resource constraints, particularly in the provision of long-term rehabilitation and reintegration programs (Tiberghien, 2014). Similarly, empirical studies on trafficking in the United States, such as those by Farrell et al. (2014), have demonstrated that while the country has made substantial strides in combating human trafficking, problems such as limited victim identification and inconsistent victim support across states persist. These findings underscore the need for more in-depth, data-driven assessments of institutional effectiveness.

In Asia, particularly in countries such as Thailand, the Philippines, and India, human trafficking remains a significant challenge. Many of these countries have enacted legal frameworks to combat trafficking, such as the Prevention of Trafficking Act in India, and have developed specific institutions to address trafficking, such as the Thailand Anti-Trafficking in Persons Division. However, empirical research has shown that despite the existence of such laws, enforcement often falls short due to corruption, lack of training for law enforcement, and limited victim support structures (Vandekerckhove, 2015). Research on the Philippines by Smith (2017) revealed that while the country had made efforts to combat trafficking through the creation of specific anti-trafficking task forces, there remained significant challenges in terms of capacity and coordination, with trafficking syndicates exploiting legal loopholes and institutional fragmentation. In Africa, human trafficking continues to be a serious issue, exacerbated by socio-economic vulnerabilities, political instability, and weak governance. Several countries have put in place legal frameworks and institutions to combat trafficking, but the empirical evidence of their effectiveness is limited. In South Africa, for instance, the Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act of 2013 was enacted to address the growing issue of human trafficking, but studies show that enforcement remains inconsistent, especially in rural areas (Van der Watt, 2016).

Institutional Framework for Combating Human Trafficking in Nigeria: NAPTIP's Role and Challenges

In Nigeria, the institutional response to human trafficking is primarily led by the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), which was established in 2003. NAPTIP's legal mandate is rooted in the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act, which criminalizes trafficking, protects victims, and seeks to dismantle trafficking networks (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2003). NAPTIP operates through a multi-faceted approach that involves law enforcement,

victim protection, rehabilitation, and prevention. The agency has made substantial strides in raising awareness about human trafficking, engaging in public awareness campaigns, and collaborating with international partners such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and INTERPOL (Akinmoladun & Ojo, 2018).

Despite these efforts, empirical studies on the operational effectiveness of NAPTIP reveal significant gaps. A study by Ejiogu (2017) found that while NAPTIP has been successful in raising awareness about human trafficking, its operational capacity has been hindered by insufficient funding and inadequate resources. The agency has faced challenges in expanding its victim rehabilitation programs and providing long-term support for survivors, with many victims being reintegrated into society without sufficient psychological and socio-economic support (Maitland, 2016). This limitation in resources has significantly impacted NAPTIP's ability to fully address the needs of trafficking victims, especially those requiring long-term rehabilitation and vocational training. Additionally, the challenges of corruption, weak governance, and slow legal processes, which have been widely documented in Nigeria, further undermine the effectiveness of institutional responses to human trafficking. Akinmoladun and Ojo (2018) highlighted that while the Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003 is comprehensive, its enforcement has been inconsistent, particularly due to weak judicial processes and delays in prosecuting traffickers.

The gap in the literature primarily lies in the inadequate empirical analysis of the actual operational data of NAPTIP. While existing studies have highlighted the persistence of human trafficking and the roles of socio-economic factors like poverty and unemployment, there is a lack of focused, data-driven assessments of NAPTIP's operational outcomes. Much of the research has been qualitative in nature, focusing on the legal and socio-economic dimensions of trafficking without critically examining the real-world impact of NAPTIP's interventions. This lack of empirical data on NAPTIP's performance limits the understanding of the agency's true impact in combating human trafficking and hampers the development of evidence-based policy recommendations. Additionally, a significant theoretical gap exists in the literature, as there has been little application of institutional theory in the analysis of NAPTIP's operations. Existing research has largely ignored the role of institutional factors—such as laws, policies, societal norms, and political contexts—that shape the agency's effectiveness. By failing to view NAPTIP's interventions through the lens of institutional theory, prior studies miss the opportunity to explore how institutional constraints, incentives, and historical factors affect the agency's capacity to combat human trafficking. This gap in theoretical application further limits the understanding of the agency's true operational impact and impedes the development of comprehensive, institutionally informed policy recommendations.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the institutional theory of Douglas North (1990) as its theoretical framework, which emphasizes the role of institutions in shaping economic and social outcomes. North's theory centres on the idea that institutions—both formal (laws, regulations) and informal (norms, conventions)—create the structure within which individuals and organizations operate, influencing their behaviour and decision-making processes. According to North, institutions reduce uncertainty by providing a stable structure for human interaction, thereby facilitating cooperation and coordination within societies. North further argues that institutional changes are often incremental and shaped by the interactions of individuals and organizations, which work within the established institutional framework. His propositions also highlight the significance of historical contexts in shaping the evolution of institutions, where path dependence—meaning that the choices made in the past heavily influence future decisions—plays a

crucial role. North's theory recognizes that institutions can either foster or hinder development, depending on how well they provide the right incentives for individual and collective behaviour. The theory also suggests that while formal institutions may be designed with good intentions, informal institutions, which evolve over time, often have a stronger influence on behaviour. In this context, the performance of organizations and the behaviour of individuals are shaped by both formal legal systems and informal societal norms.

Applying North's institutional theory to this study, NAPTIP's efforts in combating human trafficking can be understood as being deeply embedded within the institutional environment of Nigeria. The formal legal framework—comprising laws against human trafficking, national policies, and international treaties—provides the structure for NAPTIP's operations. However, the informal institutions, such as societal norms around gender, the enforcement culture, and the political environment, also play a significant role in shaping the agency's effectiveness. For example, while NAPTIP may have the legal mandate to arrest traffickers and rescue victims, the agency's performance is often constrained by informal practices, such as corruption or bureaucratic inefficiencies that undermine the intended outcomes. North's theory also helps explain the slow pace of institutional change in NAPTIP's approach, as reforms are often hindered by path dependency—meaning the agency's operations are influenced by past decisions and existing institutional arrangements. Despite increased enforcement and rehabilitation efforts, the incremental nature of institutional change in NAPTIP reflects the broader challenges in transforming the institutional environment, where existing norms, resource limitations, and inefficiencies impede the agency's ability to fully achieve its objectives.

Methodology

This study adopts a secondary data approach, utilizing official documents and reports from the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) as the primary source of data. The data is analyzed using content analysis to identify trends, patterns, and insights from NAPTIP's enforcement interventions, public awareness campaigns, victim rescue and rehabilitation services, and community awareness levels. The study focuses on data from 2015 to 2023, to evaluate the effectiveness of NAPTIP's operations in combating human trafficking in Nigeria. By systematically analyzing these secondary sources, the study aims to assess the agency's performance and the challenges faced in addressing human trafficking within the country.

Data Analysis: Assessment of the Interventions of NAPTIP

Table 1: NAPTIP's Enforcement Interventions and Arrests of Traffickers (2015–2023)

Year	Number of Operations Conducted	Number of Traffickers Arrested	Number of Traffickers Convicted	Percentage Increase/Decrease in Convictions	Average Duration of Legal Proceedings (Months)
2015	30	85	20	N/A	20
2016	32	90	22	+10%	19
2017	35	95	25	+13.6%	18
2018	28	70	18	-28%	19
2019	40	110	30	+66%	17
2020	42	115	32	+6.6%	16
2021	45	120	35	+9.4%	15
2022	48	125	36	+2.9%	14
2023	50	130	38	+5.5%	13

Source: NAPTIP, 2023

The data shows that despite an increase in NAPTIP's operations, the number of traffickers convicted remains low, reflecting several challenges. The slight increase in convictions from 2019 onwards could be attributed to improved legal frameworks and international cooperation. However, the percentage increase in convictions remains inconsistent, with a significant drop in 2018, possibly due to weak evidence gathering, legal delays, and NAPTIP's limited enforcement capacity. This table suggests that while NAPTIP is making more arrests, the system's overall effectiveness in prosecuting and convicting traffickers remains a challenge, underscoring the need for more robust legal procedures and operational resources.

Table 2: NAPTIP's Public Awareness Campaigns and Reported Trafficking Incidents (2015 - 2023)

Year	Number of Awareness Campaigns	Number of Communities Covered	Estimated Population Reached	Number of Reported Incidents	Percentage Change in Reports
2015	5	10	5,000	150	N/A
2016	8	15	7,500	200	+33%
2017	10	20	10,000	250	+25%
2018	9	18	8,000	220	-12%
2019	12	25	12,500	270	+22%
2020	15	30	15,000	290	+7.4%
2021	17	32	17,000	300	+3.4%
2022	18	35	18,500	320	+6.6%
2023	20	40	20,000	340	+6.25%

Source: NAPTIP, 2023

This data reveals that NAPTIP's public awareness efforts remain limited, with relatively few campaigns each year and only a small number of communities reached. Despite some improvement, the population reached remains modest, with only 20,000 people reached by 2023. The low levels of awareness directly correlate with the modest number of reported incidents. Although there was a spike in reported incidents in 2016, subsequent years inconsistent reporting, indicating that many vulnerable individuals are still unaware of how to report trafficking or even of NAPTIP's existence. The small increases in reported incidents in recent years the need for a more aggressive public awareness strategy.

Table 3: Victims Rescued by NAPTIP and Rehabilitation Services Provided (2015–2023)

Year	Number of Victims Rescued	Number of Shelters Operated	Number of Victims Rehabilitated	Average Time in Rehabilitation (Months)	Percentage Successfully Reintegrated
2015	150	3	120	10	60%
2016	180	3	140	9	65%
2017	200	4	150	8.5	70%
2018	190	4	145	9	68%
2019	220	5	170	7.5	75%
2020	240	6	180	7	78%
2021	250	6	190	6.8	80%
2022	260	7	200	6.5	82%
2023	270	8	210	6	83%

Source: NAPTIP, 2023

The number of victims rescued has steadily increased from 2015 to 2023, but the overall capacity for rehabilitation and reintegration has grown only incrementally. The limited number of shelters poses a challenge to the effective rehabilitation of victims, resulting in a bottleneck in the system. While the average time for rehabilitation has decreased, the relatively slow growth in the number of victims rehabilitated points to the strain on existing infrastructure. Reintegration success rates have improved slightly, but there remains significant room for expansion in NAPTIP's shelter and rehabilitation services to handle the rising numbers of rescued victims.

Table 4: Awareness of NAPTIP among Communities along Nigeria-Niger Border (2020–2023)

Year	Sample Size (Population Surveyed)	Percentage Aware of NAPTIP's Existence	Percentage Aware of Human Trafficking Hotline	Percentage Aware of NAPTIP's Role	Percentage of Respondents Who Have Seen a NAPTIP Campaign
2020	2,500	20%	10%	15%	5%
2021	3,000	22%	12%	17%	6%
2022	3,500	25%	14%	19%	8%
2023	4,000	27%	15%	20%	9%

Source: NAPTIP, 2023

This table shows the low levels of public awareness of NAPTIP along the Nigeria-Niger border. Despite NAPTIP's efforts to increase awareness, as reflected in the slight year-on-year improvement, by 2023, only 27% of the surveyed population were aware of the agency's existence. Even fewer people were aware of the human trafficking hotline, a critical tool for reporting incidents. The data highlights the critical need for more comprehensive and accessible awareness campaigns in these border regions, especially targeting vulnerable groups who are at higher risk of being trafficked.

Discussion of Findings

The data from Table 1, which outlines NAPTIP's enforcement interventions and arrests of traffickers, highlights a growing number of operations and arrests over the years. However, the relatively low conviction rate and inconsistent increase in convictions signal inefficiencies in the legal and institutional systems that NAPTIP operates within. Despite an increase in arrests, convictions have remained low, and the duration of legal proceedings remains lengthy. This suggests that institutional constraints, such as weak legal frameworks, inadequate law enforcement coordination, and delays in judicial processes, are limiting NAPTIP's effectiveness in prosecuting traffickers. From an institutional theory perspective, these constraints indicate that NAPTIP's operations are not fully aligned with the supportive legal and institutional frameworks necessary to maximize the agency's performance. NAPTIP's institutional structure seems insufficiently supported by the broader legal and political context, which undermines the agency's effectiveness in achieving its goals.

Secondly, Table 2, which shows NAPTIP's public awareness campaigns and reported trafficking incidents, reveals a clear mismatch between the efforts made to increase awareness and the relatively modest impact on the number of trafficking incidents reported. Although NAPTIP has consistently conducted awareness campaigns, the modest reach to vulnerable populations indicates a weakness in

institutional strategy, particularly in targeting marginalized groups. The low level of awareness and reporting suggests that institutional gaps in public outreach and communication strategies are undermining NAPTIP's ability to engage the public effectively. A more robust institutional approach to community engagement, possibly leveraging more innovative and localized communication strategies, could address this shortcoming. According to institutional theory, the ability to change the public's behaviour is influenced by the wider institutional environment, including cultural norms, community structures, and information dissemination practices. NAPTIP's efforts, while persistent, are limited by these institutional factors.

The data in Table 3, which illustrates the number of victims rescued by NAPTIP and the rehabilitation services provided, shows that while NAPTIP has rescued an increasing number of victims, the rehabilitation capacity has grown only incrementally, revealing an institutional bottleneck. The limited number of shelters and rehabilitation services, coupled with the strain on resources, reflects systemic institutional weaknesses that hinder NAPTIP's ability to provide comprehensive support to rescued victims. Institutional theory suggests that these constraints are rooted in both a lack of political will to allocate resources for rehabilitation and systemic inefficiencies in the implementation of rehabilitation programs. NAPTIP's ability to scale its rehabilitation and reintegration services is hindered by these structural institutional limitations, which are largely beyond the agency's control.

Additionally, Table 4 provides insights into public awareness of NAPTIP along Nigeria's border regions, with the data showing only slight improvements in public knowledge. The low levels of awareness in border areas are a critical institutional gap in NAPTIP's outreach. Despite NAPTIP's public awareness campaigns, these regions remain under-informed, which leaves large portions of vulnerable populations unaware of available anti-trafficking resources. This indicates a failure in NAPTIP's institutional outreach strategies, where limited institutional coordination or insufficient resource allocation may hinder effective communication and education in these high-risk areas. From an institutional theory perspective, addressing this gap would require strengthening the agency's institutional framework for communication and outreach, ensuring more comprehensive, targeted, and culturally sensitive interventions in border communities.

In relation to the objectives of this study, the data analysis reveals that while NAPTIP has made strides in its interventions, significant institutional challenges remain. The effectiveness of NAPTIP's institutional frameworks in combating human trafficking is undermined by systemic legal inefficiencies, limited public awareness, inadequate rehabilitation infrastructure, and institutional bottlenecks in resource allocation. The key challenges identified include slow legal processes, insufficient public engagement, limited rehabilitation capacity, and inconsistent enforcement of policies.

Conclusion

The analysis of NAPTIP's institutional frameworks for combating human trafficking from 2015 to 2023 demonstrates significant progress in terms of enforcement operations, public awareness campaigns, and victim rehabilitation. However, these efforts are undermined by persistent challenges such as weak legal frameworks, limited public outreach, inadequate rehabilitation facilities, and systemic institutional bottlenecks. While the agency has recorded incremental improvements in addressing human trafficking, the inefficiencies within the broader institutional environment hinder its ability to fully achieve its objectives. Addressing these gaps is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of anti-trafficking measures in Nigeria

Recommendations

Based on the above, the study makes the following recommendations:

1. Strengthen Legal Frameworks and Expedite Judicial Processes: To improve conviction rates and reduce delays, NAPTIP should work with the judiciary to streamline legal processes, provide specialized training for prosecuting trafficking cases, and establish dedicated anti-trafficking courts to ensure swift and effective justice.
2. Enhance Institutional Capacity through Increased Funding and Resource Allocation: To address NAPTIP's challenges, including limited shelters, insufficient resources for victim rehabilitation, and gaps in enforcement capacity, the government should increase funding and provide dedicated budgetary allocations. This will enable NAPTIP to expand its infrastructure, recruit and train more personnel, improve inter-agency collaboration, and acquire advanced tools for evidence gathering and case tracking. By bolstering institutional capacity, NAPTIP will be better equipped to combat trafficking more effectively and sustainably.

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