



The Unfought SOC in Nigeria

Policy Recommendations

- 1** Government and its partners should alleviate poverty.
- 2** There is a need for improvement to reduce the scourge of human trafficking to the barest minimum.
- 3** There is a need for effective intelligence gathering skills to infiltrate the planning process to bring the perpetrators to book.
- 4** Nigerian government should collaborate with other countries to fight the scourge of illicit organ harvesting.
- 5** States with forests must revive their forests guarding security system that is empowered with modern technologies such as drones, CCTV, and gadgets to curb the use of these forests for these serious and organised crimes.

Nextier SPD Policy Weekly provides an analysis of topical conflict, security, and development issues and proposes recommendations to address them. It is a publication of Nextier SPD.

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Slowly but steadily, Nigeria has become a killing field where human lives are vitiated daily. Despite the factional struggle for supremacy within the [Boko Haram insurgency](#), killings continue unabated in the North-East with huge humanitarian crises. The security situation in the country has been compounded by banditry in the North-West, which is exerting a significant toll on lives, livelihoods and livestock and thus engendering terrible [food insecurity](#). Also, despite the formidable efforts to push back marauding herders from southern Nigeria, they continue to bestride agrarian communities across the region, leaving destruction of crops and human lives in their trail (Aghedo and Akov, 2020).

Besides these infamous sources of violent insecurity, there are criminal gangs whose activities are no less deadly and every day. Yet, many of these pockets of violence are under-reported, including the nefarious activities of kidnappers, ritual murderers, cultists, and illicit organ harvesters. In recent times, the crime of illicit organ harvesting has assumed a [frightening dimension in scale and frequency in Nigeria](#), posing a huge security threat to lives. The crime of harvesting and trafficking human organs within and outside Nigeria has made it one of Nigeria's serious organised crimes (SOC). According to the [United Nations Convention on Transnational organised crime \(UNTOC\)](#), an organised crime group shall mean a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in a concert to commit

one or more serious crimes or offences, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefits. This edition of Nextier SPD Policy Weekly examines the phenomenon of illicit organ harvesting and merchandise in human tissues. It highlights the key drivers of the organised crime and measures to mitigate them.

Booming Illicit Trade in Human Organs

The illicit trade in human organs has become a value chain in Nigeria in recent years. Undoubtedly, human organs can be legitimately harvested by experts in hospitals to save patients. But these days, vital human organs and body parts are often harvested by quack medical personnel and traded by organised criminal syndicates. In the so-called [Red Market](#), kidney costs about \$262,000, heart sells for about \$119,000, the lungs go for about \$150,000, while the liver costs about \$157,000. Some Nigerian migrants also sell their ovaries to fertility clinics. The demand for the organs by people in several countries is driving the supply. In 2010, [Egypt](#) was named by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as one of the top five countries notorious for illegal organ trade in the world. India, Morocco and [Libya](#) have also been indicted for the harvest of Nigerians' organs named 'life giver'. More recently, Nigerians and other Africans who got stranded in Libya on their way to Europe resorted to [selling their vital organs](#) for survival and finance their dangerous journey across the Mediterranean Sea. In April 2021, a cargo ship that sailed from Nigeria was

seized by Chinese authorities upon discovering [7,200 refrigerated penis](#) in the ship. This incident and other organ harvesting allegations against China prompted an investigation by the [House of Representatives](#).

Besides trafficked Nigerians, local syndicates specialise in organ harvesting [deals in Lagos](#) and other major cities. They brainwash wretched people into selling their organs in collusion with unprofessional doctors. Usually, the victims are paid peanuts and the rackets, a windfall. To worsen the situation, several [armed groups in Africa](#) have started to rely on organs harvested from their victims to finance their violence campaigns. Sadly, Nigeria is replete with many insurgent groups and other non-state violent actors (Akinola, 2015).

In addition, following the clampdown on internet fraudsters (known locally as Yahoo Boys) by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), several internet fraudsters have started to [branch into the human organ business](#) that is less regulated by law. The lucrateness of the illicit trade in organs has not only made [human trafficking](#) a ready supply chain but the crime is also believed to be responsible for the incessant cases of [missing persons](#) and [ritual killings](#) in the country. In Nigeria today, confirmed, and unconfirmed reports from traditional and social media sources show that this trinity of serious organised crimes of organ harvesting and trafficking, human trafficking, and ritual killings, and cultism is dominant in the South-West, South-East and South-South regions of the country.

The Imperative of Securitisation

From the foregoing, illicit organ harvesting poses a huge threat to many unsuspecting persons, including victims of human trafficking, kidnapping and insurgent attacks. Also, the heinous crime undermines the image of Nigeria in the international community. Thus, the following measures can be deployed in addressing the menace.

1. Government and its partners should alleviate poverty: mass poverty has been one of the drivers of human trafficking through which many people are lured into illicit organ harvesting. One way of doing this is to invest in infrastructure such as electric power provisioning so that several people can engage in their businesses and earn legitimate incomes.
2. Strengthen security agencies for effective performance: public agencies involved in regulating illegal migration and human trafficking such as the Nigeria Immigration Service, Nigeria Police, and the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) are in dire need of strengthening and capacity building. For example, [NAPTIP has arrested 5,923](#) suspected human traffickers and rescued 13,950 victims in the last 15 years. Despite this commendable achievement, there is a need for improvement to reduce the scourge of human trafficking to the barest minimum.

4. Investment in intelligence gathering: illicit organ harvesting is an organised crime. Several people are involved in the planning and execution. So, there is a need for effective intelligence gathering skills to infiltrate the planning process to bring the perpetrators to book. This action will serve as a deterrent to others.
5. Nigerian government should collaborate with other countries to fight the scourge of illicit organ harvesting. Many international conventions prohibit the unethical trade in human organs, such as the [Istanbul Declaration](#). Nigeria should liaise with other countries to ensure that international syndicates involved in perpetuating the crime are quickly tracked and prosecuted.
6. Nigeria's ungoverned spaces are one of the major contributors to the rise and sustenance of these criminal activities. Forests that are left unmanned and unguarded with no direct control by states governments are used for these nefarious activities. Therefore, states with such forests must revive their forests guarding security system that is empowered with modern technologies such as drones, CCTV, and gadgets to curb the use of these forests for these serious and organised crimes.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of illicit human organ harvesting has assumed a frightening dimension in Nigeria, posing a huge security threat to the people. The crime also undermines the already battered image of the country internationally. To address the abnormally, the high level of mass poverty needs to be reduced; the security agencies such as NAPTIP should be strengthened; intelligence gathering capacity of the security personnel should be bolstered, and Nigeria needs to collaborate with other countries and international organisations to ensure that external actors involved in the illicit trade are easily traced and prosecuted.

References

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