

MULTISECTORAL RESPONSE AND CAPACITY ASSESSMENT (MRC) (MRC)

Nigeria

Joint and coordinated action for the prevention, investigation and assistance to victims of Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

July 2024

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ASSESSMENT (MRC) Nigeria**

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National Capacity Building Program

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Table Of Content

ACRONYMS	4	SECTOR 4: Society and Culture	48
ABOUT ICMEC	6	CAPABILITY 11: Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Hotline	48
ABOUT THE MRC ASSESSMENT	7	CAPABILITY 12: Education Programs	48
INTRODUCTION	8	CAPABILITY 13: Child Participation	49
OBJECTIVES	11	CAPABILITY 14: Offender Prevention and Support Systems	49
METHODOLOGY	11	CAPABILITY 15: Ethical and informed media reporting	50
RESULTS	13	SECTOR 5: Industry	54
SECTOR 1: Policy, Legislation And Governance	14	CAPABILITY 16: Takedown Procedures and Reporting	54
CAPABILITY 1 – Leadership	14	CAPABILITY 17: Innovative Solution Development	55
CAPABILITY 2 – Legislation	14	CAPABILITY 18: Responsible Business Conduct	56
SECTOR 2: Criminal Justice	31	SECTOR 6: Research and Data	59
CAPABILITY 3: Dedicated Law Enforcement	31	CAPABILITY 19: Research and Data	59
CAPABILITY 4: Judiciary and Prosecutors	33	RECOMMENDATIONS	62
CAPABILITY 5: Offender Management Process	34	SECTOR 1: Policy, Legislation and Governance	62
CAPABILITY 6: Access to Image Databases	35	SECTOR 2: Criminal Justice	63
SECTOR 3: Victim Support and Empowerment	39	SECTOR 3: Victim Support and Empowerment	65
CAPABILITY 7: End to end support	39	SECTOR 4: Society and Culture	66
CAPABILITY 8: Child Protection Workforce	39	SECTOR 5: Industry	68
CAPABILITY 9: Compensation, remedies, and complaints	41	SECTOR 6: Research and Data	69
arrangements	41	CONCLUSION	70
CAPABILITY 10: Child Helpline	43		

ACRONYMS

AG – Attorney General
ACSAI – Action Against Child Sexual Abuse Initiative
ACJA – Administration of Criminal Justice Act
ALTON – Association of Licensed Telecom Operators in Nigeria
AU – African Union
CCN – Christian Council of Nigeria
CMT – Case Management Tools
COP – Child Online Protection
CRA – Child Rights Act
CSAM – Child Sexual Abuse Material
CSEA – Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
CSO – Civil Society Organization
CYPL – Children and Young Persons Law
DSVRT – Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team
FCT – Federal Capital Territory
FGM – Female Genital Mutilation
HDI – Human Development Initiative
ICACCOPS – Internet Crimes Against Children Child Online Protective Services
ICMEC – International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children
ICSE – International Child Sexual Exploitation
ICT – Information Communication Technology
ISP – Internet Service Providers
IT – Information Technology

LaPT – Like a Palm Tree
LE – Law Enforcement
MNR – Model National Response
MOI – Ministry of Interior
MOJ – Ministry of Justice
MRC – Multisectoral Response and Capacity
NASFAT – Nasrul-Lahi-il Fathi
NAPTIP – National Agency for the Protection of Trafficking in Persons
NBC – National Broadcasting Communication
NCC – Nigeria Communication Commission
NCMEC – National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
NcoS – Nigeria Correctional Services
NDPC – Nigeria Data Protection Commission
NGO – Non-Governmental Organization
NIPSS – National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies
NITDA – Nigeria Information and Telecommunication Development Agency
NNCOPS – Nigeria National Online Child Sexual Abuse Policy and Strategy
NPF – Nigeria Police Force
NPF-NCC – Nigeria Police Force-National Cybercrime Centre
NPS – National Police Service
NUJ – National Union of Journalists
OAS – Organization of American States
OCSEA – Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
OSINT – Open-Source Intelligence

POE – Project Open Eyes

P2P – Peer-to-Peer

SARC – Sexual Assault and Referral Centre

SGBV – Sexual and Gender Based Violence

STER – Stand to End Rape

UN – United Nations

UNCRC – United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

VSF – Victim Support Fund



ABOUT ICMEC



The International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC) is a non-governmental organization that fights against child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA) and searches for missing children in the world. It is headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia, USA, with representation in Australia, Brazil, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, El Salvador, France, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Scotland, Singapore, South Africa, and The Philippines. Since its formation, it has worked hand in hand with governments, law enforcement, industry, and civil society organizations in order to build institutional, legislative, and public policy frameworks to protect children and adolescents against disappearance, abuse, and sexual exploitation.

The work ICMEC has carried out in more than 120 countries has promoted, among other actions, the formation of local alliances for the implementation of policies for the eradication of sexual exploitation and the production of Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM).

These activities have been accompanied by entities such as the United Nations (UN), Interpol, the Organization of American States (OAS), and other multilateral organizations.

ABOUT THE MRC ASSESSMENT



The global phenomenon of Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CSEA) represents a challenge for many countries that have institutional weaknesses to prevent and investigate these cases, and care for child victims. For this reason, in 2020, the ICMEC National Capacity Building program created the Multisectoral Response and Capacity Assessment (MRC), using the capacities of the WeProtect Model National Response (MNR) as a basis to identify the progress made, the gaps that still exist, and the corresponding recommendations to address them.

This model is multisectoral in nature since the strategic response to combat Online Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation must include comprehensive and complementary care from all the institutions involved in protecting and guaranteeing the right of the children.

INTRODUCTION



Between November 2023 and May 2024, ICMEC carried out in Nigeria the MRC Assessment for the Prevention, Investigation, and Care of cases of online child sexual exploitation and abuse in order to identify the country's weaknesses and strengths in addressing and mitigating this scourge.

This analytical methodology provides orientation and support to countries and organizations to fulfill the commitment to prevent and mitigate CSEA, recognizing that this cannot be addressed in isolation and a broader set of capacities to prevent and address CSEA is required to ensure a comprehensive national response. The model proposes the following 20 capacities to be developed in six relevant sectors:

Additionally, the MRC methodology included the development of specific tools to identify the entities from which the necessary information was required to achieve the established objectives.

Preventing and tackling child sexual exploitation and abuse

A Model National Response



CAPABILITIES

OUTCOMES

POLICY, LEGISLATION AND GOVERNANCE

1 Leadership

Accountable, cross-sector national body with a clear mandate and resources to protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse online, and willingness to engage in international collaboration

2 Legislation

Comprehensive and effective legal framework to prosecute offenders and protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse in line with international human rights standards

Legal provision to protect children engaged in consensual sharing of sexual content from criminalisation where appropriate.



Highest level national commitment to child sexual abuse prevention and response

Comprehensive understanding of child sexual abuse within the highest levels of government and law enforcement. Willingness to work with, and coordinate the efforts of, multiple stakeholders to ensure the enhanced protection of victims and an enhanced response to child sexual abuse offending.



CRIMINAL JUSTICE

3 Dedicated law enforcement

Human and technical capabilities to investigate child sexual abuse online and offline, including cross-border cases

Trauma-informed training for law enforcement

Coordination with victim support services

4 Judiciary and prosecutors

Specialist training on child sexual exploitation and abuse and technology-enabled offending

Child-friendly and victim-centred protocols

5 Offender management process

Multi-agency system to identify, manage and rehabilitate sex-offenders, and statutory tools (rehabilitation and education programmes, community supervision)

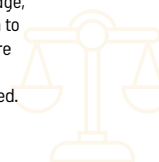
6 Access to image database

National database with access to the Interpol's ICSE database for international collaboration, supported by alignment with terminology for CSAM categorisation



Effective and successful child sexual abuse investigations, convictions and offender management

Law Enforcement and judiciary have the knowledge, skills, systems and tools required to enable them to perform victim-focused investigations and secure positive judicial outcomes. Child sexual abuse offenders are managed and reoffending prevented.



VICTIM SUPPORT AND EMPOWERMENT

7 End-to-end support

Planned, integrated and multi-stakeholder support for victims and survivors

Services are inclusive and sensitive to age, gender, sexuality, disability and ethnicity.

Psychological support across dedicated law enforcement, frontline workers accessing image databases, child protection workforce, and hotlines

8 Child protection workforce

Skilled, specialist statutory workforce trained, coordinated and available to provide trauma-informed support to protect and support children at risk of sexual abuse and exploitation online

Guidelines for frontline professionals on emerging and complex issues such as child "self-generated" sexual material

9 Compensation, remedies and complaints arrangements

Provision of measures to allow children and victims accessible support in compensation, legal remedies and complaints procedures

10 Child helpline

Accessible to all children, nationwide, toll-free, available 24/7, voice and text based, offering confidential support and counselling with appropriate referral mechanisms.

Robust data protection systems

Counsellors with specific training in online harms



Appropriate support services for children and young people

Children and young people have access to services that support them through the investigation and prosecution of crimes against them. They have access to shelter; specialised medical and psychological services; and rehabilitation, repatriation and resocialisation services.



SOCIETY AND CULTURE

11 Child sexual exploitation and abuse hotline

Dedicated portals/hotlines for the public to report suspected child sexual exploitation and abuse online
Cooperation with law enforcement and the technology industry

12 Education programmes

National education programme (including age- appropriate, accessible and inclusive content) to raise awareness of all forms of child sexual exploitation and abuse – empowering children, young people, parents, guardians, caregivers and practitioners with relevant information
Systematic training for professional in education, social care and health

13 Child participation

Children and young people encouraged and enabled to give ideas and influence policy and practice relating to child sexual exploitation and abuse
Child protection, children's rights frameworks, and trauma-informed practice utilised when engaging children

14 Offender prevention and support systems

Support to prevent people with a sexual interest in children from abusing or accessing child sexual abuse material
Support for convicted offenders as part of rehabilitation response
Specialised support for children displaying harmful sexual behaviour

15 Informed and ethical media reporting

Evidence-based and sensitive reporting that respects victims' and survivors' rights and dignity



Child sexual abuse prevented

Children and young people are informed and empowered to protect themselves from child sexual abuse. Parents, carers, teachers and childcare professionals are better prepared to keep children safe from child sexual abuse, including addressing taboos surrounding sexual abuse.



INDUSTRY

16 Takedown procedures and reporting

Local removal and blocking of child sexual abuse material online
Procedures for timely removal of child sexual abuse material when a company confirms its presence
Statutory protections for industry to report child sexual abuse, including content transmission to law enforcement or a designated agency
Global and cross-sector collaboration

17 Innovative solution development

Technological solutions to prevent and address child sexual exploitation and abuse online

18 Responsible business conduct

Child protection and safeguarding policies, due diligence and remediation that address child sexual exploitation and abuse online



Industry engaged in developing solutions to prevent and tackle child sexual abuse

The public can proactively report child sexual abuse offences. Industry has the power and willingness to block and remove child sexual abuse material online and proactively address local child sexual abuse issues.



RESEARCH AND DATA

19 Research and data

Data, research and analysis on the threat of and response to child sexual exploitation and abuse online
Robust administrative data systems (e.g. police, courts, social services) to monitor service delivery, access and effectiveness and provide regular insights for decision-makers

20 Universally agreed terminology

Information and policies communicated clearly and in alignment with international standards



Awareness raised among the public, professionals and policy makers

Potential future offenders are deterred. Child sexual abuse offending and reoffending is reduced.



ENABLERS

Cross sector, multidisciplinary collaboration

Willingness to prosecute, functioning justice system and rule of law

Supportive reporting environment

Aware and supportive public and professionals, working with and for children

Sufficient financial and human resources

National legal and policy frameworks in accordance with the UNCRC and other international and regional standards

Data and evidence on child sexual abuse

GOALS

General

Develop a reference framework for the construction of a strategic plan that allows ICMEC, the Nigerian government, and other relevant actors to carry out the consolidation of a Model National Response (MNR) and guide a work plan based on the gaps found to combat OCSEA. Determine where current efforts of Nigerian actors can be supported and enhanced.

Specific

- Identify the gaps in the national response for the prevention, investigation, and assistance to victims of OCSEA in Nigeria.
- Identify priority actions aimed at covering the identified gaps.
- Provide inputs for the development of an intersectoral work plan for the construction of a national response to combat OCSEA, based on the MNR.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology to carry out the MRC Assessment included a mapping of entities related to the protection of children against CSEA; as well as a series of instruments to collect information on the 20 capacities established in the MRC Assessment.

- Surveys to identify and evaluate the capacities of the entities according to their responsibilities. (ICMEC carried these out directly with officials of each institution virtually.)
- Specific requests for information to entities through video calls and emails.
- Search for information in open data sources.

Subsequently, the information collected was complemented with the resources available in open sources and analyzed according to the MNR and based on four criteria:

1. Existence of a capacity in Nigeria
2. Level of capacity development based in the information collected (Poor, Acceptable or Outstanding)
3. Identification of the gap between what is proposed in the MNR and the level of capacity development in the country
4. Potential actions that contribute to reducing the gaps detected based on what is proposed in the MNR

PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

Sector 1 - Policy, Legislation and Governance:

- Office of the Attorney General
- Office of the Director of Public Prosecution

Sector 2 - Criminal Justice:

- National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking of Persons (NAPTIP)
- Nigeria Cyber Police

Sector 3 - Victim Support and Empowerment:

- Cece Yara Foundation

Sector 4 - Society and Culture:

- Action Against Child Sexual Abuse Initiative (ACSAI)
- Like A Palm Tree Foundation (LaPT)

Sector 5 - Industry:

- MTN Nigeria
- ALTON
- Nigeria Communication Commission

Sector 6 - Research and Data:

- Office of the Director of Public Prosecution



RESULTS

This section presents the results derived from the analysis of the information collected. For each capacity proposed by the MNR, the relevant aspects related to significant advances that contribute to the achievement of each of the capacities are presented, as well as the gaps evidenced and for which the MRC Assessment later proposes recommendations.





SECTOR 1: Policy, Legislation and Governance

Highest level national commitment to child sexual abuse prevention and response.

Comprehensive understanding of child sexual abuse within the highest levels of government and law enforcement.

Willingness to work with, and coordinate the efforts of, multiple stakeholders to ensure the enhanced protection of victims and an enhanced response to child sexual abuse offending.

CAPACITY 1: Leadership

Accountable, cross-sector national body with a clear mandate and resources to protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse online, and willingness to engage in international collaboration.

Findings:

- The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chapter 6, Part 1, Section 150 provides for the Office of the Attorney General (AG). The AG is identified as the chief law officer of the federation and the head of the Federal Ministry of Justice (MOJ). The MOJ is responsible for the creation of laws and policies within the country, including online and offline child protection laws.
- The Nigerian Communications Act of 2003 provides for the formation of the Nigeria Communications Commission (NCC). The NCC is responsible for the economic and technical regulation of

the communications industry. It protects and promotes the interest of the consumers in Nigeria including regulating and control of the Internet Service Providers (ISPs).

- The National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) Act of 2007 provides for the formation of the said agency whose key mandate is to coordinate general Information Technology (IT) in the country as well as to implement the Nigerian Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Policy. According to the information on the NITDA website, their role is to: “develop, regulate, and advise on Information technology in the country through regulatory standards, guidelines and policies. Additionally, NITDA is the clearing house for all IT projects and infrastructural development in the country. It is the prime Agency for e-government implementation, Internet governance and general IT development in Nigeria.”

CAPACITY 2: Legislation

Comprehensive and effective legal framework to prosecute offenders and protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse in line with international human rights standards.

Legal provision to protect children engaged in consensual sharing of sexual content from criminalisation where appropriate.

Findings:

International Conventions ratified/ acceded to by Nigeria that may be related with children's rights, prevention of CSEA, and the investigation of Cybercrime, are:

- The Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) in April 1991
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography in September 2010
- African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990)
- The Convention on Cybercrime (Budapest Convention) (2022).

Local Laws

Nigeria has a broad regulatory framework for the comprehensive protection of children from CSEA. At the national level, there are the following regulations related to CSEA and the investigation of cybercrimes:

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999)¹ is the supreme law of the land. Section 3 Chapter IV provides for the rights and freedoms of Nigerians and is read together with the provisions of the Child Rights Act to ensure the protection of children in Nigeria.

The Child Rights Act (CRA) (2003)² is the main child protection law in Nigeria, with 24 out of the 36 states having adopted it into their local laws.³ The CRA was passed as a law at the federal level however, states in Nigeria have to formally adopt it into their local laws for it to be implementable in the specific states.

- The Act provides for the best interest of children in all matters, their rights and responsibilities as well as protection mechanisms in place in the country to protect the best interest of the child.

The Children and Young Persons Act (2004)⁴ is seen as the main document for child protection for the 12 states of Nigeria that are yet

to adopt the CRA. The Children and Young Persons Act provides for a child as a person under the age of 14 years, and a young person as an individual who has attained the age of 14 and is below the age of 17.

- The Act provides for the welfare of young persons and treatment of young offenders.

The Labor Act of 1974 provides for the definition of a child as a person under the age of 12 and a young person as one under the age of 14 years. The Labor Act is noted as an important child protection document in the country as it regulates child labor and provides for freedom from exploitation and abuse.

The Cybercrime Prohibition and Prevention Act of 2015 provides for "an effective, unified and comprehensive legal, regulatory and institutional framework for the prohibition, prevention, detection, prosecution and punishment of cybercrimes in Nigeria. This act also ensures the protection of critical national information infrastructure, and promotes cybersecurity and the protection of computer systems and networks, electronic communications, data and computer programs, intellectual property and privacy rights."⁵

- The Act under Section 23 prohibits the use of technology to produce child pornography and its related crimes. It states that:
 1. Any person who intentionally uses any computer system or network in or for-
 - a. producing child pornography;
 - b. offering or making available child pornography;
 - c. distributing or transmitting child pornography;
 - d. procuring child pornography for oneself or for another person;
 - e. possessing child pornography in a computer system or on a computer-data storage medium: commits an offence under

1. <http://www.nigeria-law.org/ConstitutionOfTheFederalRepublicOfNigeria.htm>

2. <https://www.nigeriarights.gov.ng/files/childrightact.pdf>

3. <https://www.nigeriarights.gov.ng/focus-areas/child-rights.html>

4. Cap 22.Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004 (Unavailable online)

5. <https://www.nfiu.gov.ng/images/Downloads/downloads/cybercrime.pdf>

this Act and shall be liable on conviction – (i) in the case of paragraphs (a), (b) and (c) to imprisonment for a term of 10 years or a fine of not more than N20,000,000.00 or to both fine and imprisonment; and (ii) in the case of paragraphs(d) and (e) of this subsection, to imprisonment for a term of not more than 5 years or a fine of not more than N10,000,000.00 or to both such fine and imprisonment.

2. Any person who knowingly makes or sends other pornographic images to another computer by way of unsolicited distribution shall be guilty of an offence and upon conviction shall be sentenced to One year imprisonment or a fine of Two Hundred and Fifty Thousand Naira or both.
3. Any person who, intentionally proposes, grooms or solicits, through any computer system or network, to meet a child for the purpose of:
 - a. engaging in sexual activities with the child;
 - b. engaging in sexual activities with the child where –
 - i. use is made of coercion, inducement, force or threats;
 - ii. abuse is made of a recognized position of trust, authority or influence over the child, including within the family; or
 - iii. abuse is made of a particularly vulnerable situation of the child, mental or physical disability or a situation of dependence; Child pornography and related offences.
 - c. recruiting, inducing, coercing, exposing, or causing a child to participate in pornographic performances or profiting from or otherwise exploiting a child for such purposes; commits an offence under this Act and shall be liable on conviction-
 - i. in the case of paragraphs (a) to imprisonment for a term

of not more than 10 years and a fine of not more than N15,000,000.00; and

- ii. in the case of paragraphs (b) and(c) of this subsection, to imprisonment for a term of not more than 15 years and a fine of not more than N25,000,000.
4. For the purpose of subsection (1) above, the term “child pornography” shall include pornographic material that visually depicts-
 - a. a minor engaged in sexually explicit conduct;
 - b. a person appearing to be a minor engaged in sexually explicit conduct; and
 - c. realistic images representing a minor engaged in sexually explicit conduct.
5. For the purpose of this section, the term “child” or “minor” means a person below 18 years of age.

The Data Protection Act (DPA) of 2023⁶ provides for the safeguarding of the fundamental rights and freedoms of data subjects in Nigeria. The Act is read and interpreted along with the provisions of Section 8 of the CRA which provides for the child’s right to privacy subject to parent or guardian rights to exercise supervision and control of their child’s conduct.

- **The Nigerian Data Protection Commission (NDPC)⁷** is responsible for the implementation of the Act through safeguarding the rights of natural persons to data privacy, safe conduct of transactions involving the exchange of personal data and preventing the manipulation of personal data.

6. <https://placng.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Nigeria-Data-Protection-Act-2023.pdf>

7. <https://www.ndpc.gov.ng/Home/About>

GAPS - SECTOR 1: POLICY, LEGISLATION, AND GOVERNANCE

- The laws lack a harmonized definition of a child and the age of majority. Different laws providing for the rights of the Nigerian Child define a “child” differently. This may prove problematic in determining the kind of treatment a child should receive under various laws.
- Nigeria, as a federal country with semi-independent states, requires that each state locally adopt laws made at the federal level. In this case, the requirement to localize has some states failing to adopt laws that favor the best interest of the child, hence exposing the children to potential harm and abuse.
- The terminologies in the laws at the time of the MRC Assessment were not in line with the provisions of Luxembourg guidelines, with terminologies such as “child pornography” still being used to define Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM). However, the interviewees confirmed that several laws are currently undergoing review with amendments to introduce the proper terminologies.



SECTOR 2: Criminal Justice

Effective and successful child sexual abuse investigations, convictions and offender management

Law Enforcement and judiciary have the knowledge, skills, systems, and tools required to enable them to perform victim-focused investigations and secure positive judicial outcomes. Child sexual abuse offenders are managed and reoffending prevented.

CAPACITY 3: Dedicated Law Enforcement

Human and technical capabilities to investigate child sexual abuse online and offline, including cross-border cases

Trauma-informed training for law enforcement

Coordination with victim support services.

Findings:

The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) established its Specialized Police Cybercrime Unit in 2017 in response to the growing threat of cybercrime in Nigeria. Their primary focus is investigating and preventing cybercrimes within Nigeria's jurisdiction. This includes various online criminal activities like:

- Online fraud (e.g., phishing scams, identity theft)
- Cyberbullying and harassment
- Hacking and malware attacks
- Online child sexual abuse material

They are equipped with modern forensic tools and trained detectives with IT backgrounds. This allows them to analyze digital devices, recover evidence, and examine digital files to build strong cases.

- The Cybercrime Unit collaborates with other Nigerian law enforcement agencies and international partners to share information and coordinate investigations.

The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) is the institution with the unit responsible for the investigation of CSEA both online and offline. NAPTIP was established by the **Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act of 2003**. The Act empowers the agency to investigate and prosecute cases of child trafficking as well as online and offline exploitation.

- The agency works in collaboration with other governmental and non-governmental institutions on the **Child Online Protection (COP)** initiative. The initiative is geared towards identifying and addressing online threats to children, raising awareness on online safety among children, parents, and caregivers in general and developing strategies for preventing and responding to OCSEA.
- NAPTIP also collaborates with ISPs and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to monitor online activity and identify potential cases of abuse.

Cases of CSEA in Nigeria can be reported to NAPTIP directly through their hotline, 07030009900, on their website <https://naptip.gov.ng> or at the local police stations.

Cybercrimes are also reported through the NPF reporting portal <https://incb.npf.gov.ng/tnc.php>

- Some states, such as Lagos, have specialized response teams to which abuse can be reported. The Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team (DSVRT) receives and provides support to victims of all forms of violence including child abuse.

Nigeria receives CyberTips from the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). These potential Files of Interest are scraped from major internet platforms (Meta, Snap, X, etc) that have their servers in the United States, and therefore are subject to U.S. mandatory reporting of suspected CSAM.

From 2019 to 2023, NCMEC reported a 770% increase in CyberTips for Nigeria, from 39,052 to 339,660. This vastly outpaces the worldwide increase in the same period of 113%

NAPTIP hosts NCMEC's Case Management Tool (CMT) used to investigate cases and CyberTips on OCSEA. It also has access to Internet Crimes Against Children Child-On-line Protection System (ICACCOPS). Access to ICACCOPS is through the Office of the Director General of NAPTIP.

- The Nigeria Police have been able to carry out Peer-to-Peer (P2P) network investigations in collaboration with international organizations such as Interpol.

Nigeria has a specialized unit hosted at NAPTIP and at the NPF which carries out investigations of CSEA both online and offline. The officers in the unit are all university graduates.

- Specialized training on child protection investigation in the country is carried out collaboratively between law enforcement agencies and non-governmental organizations.
- **The National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS)**, a federal institute, also offers advanced training for law enforcement

in line with emerging issues.

- State police commands have also been known to develop their own local training programs for law enforcement to enhance their investigative ability.

Depending on the situation and available resources, Nigerian law enforcement uses various tools to carry out investigations for CSEA including, but not limited to, forensic devices, CMT, Axiom, Nigeria Sexual Offenders Database, XRY and other Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) tools.

The Police assign personnel to cases based on urgency and priority⁸:

- Approximately 20 personnel are assigned to an OCSEA investigation at a given time.
- Approximately 350 victims are identified per year based on the NCMEC CyberTips reports and other reported cases.

CAPACITY 4: Judiciary and Prosecutors

Specialist training on CSEA and technology-enabled offending

Child-friendly and victim-centred protocols

Findings:

The Prosecution in Nigeria is in the process of being equipped with specialized training to handle various cases of abuse including CSEA and OCSEA. The Federal Ministry of Justice, under the office of the Attorney General has a specialized cybercrime unit that assists in prosecution of OCSEA.

Training on OCSEA for the prosecutors and judges is done mainly by international and/or local child protection agencies depending on available budget and ongoing projects.

8. The personnel assignment breakdown was given by interviewees from law enforcement.

- The Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) Unit prosecutes offline cases of child sexual abuse and works collaboratively with the cybercrime unit for crimes that have both an online and offline aspect of abuse.

There are no specialized courts to hear cases of OCSEA. However, there are SGBV courts which hear cases of abuse including various forms of child abuse.

- Currently, there are six specially trained judges and specialized courts which handle SGBV cases within the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Abuja.
- The Cybercrime Unit from the MOJ is working closely with the prosecution and judiciary to train prosecutors and judges on the nuances of OCSEA in the criminal justice sector.

So far, there have been no convictions on OCSEA charges from the Office of the Prosecution in Nigeria. The current sentences for convictions have been termed as not being commensurate to the seriousness of the crimes and are currently under review.

- The Prosecution in Nigeria takes measures to ensure that the child is protected during the court process.
- The victim and witnesses are provided with psychosocial support throughout the proceedings. Currently, counseling services are mostly outsourced from CSOs and private entities that offer these services.

During the interview process, there is effort in most cases to ensure the child is not confronted with the aggressor. Other measures put in place to protect the child include:

- Victims are accompanied by counselors.
- Pseudonyms and initials are used to protect the true identity of the child.

- Victim testimony is not taken in open court.
- Victims are at times granted leave of the court to testify via a video link.

The Witness Protection and Management Act of 2022⁹ provides for the protection of witnesses in the course of investigation, detection, and prosecution of offences.

- A witness, under the Act, is a person who has information about the commission of an offence or wrongdoing and has given, or is giving or has agreed to give evidence on behalf of the State in the proceedings for the trial of the offence, or hearings or proceedings relating to the offence or wrongdoing before an authority which is declared by the Attorney-General by an order published in the Federal Gazette to be an authority.
- A witness is also a person if he or she has made a statement to the Inspector-General of Police or a member of the Nigeria Police Office or a law enforcement officer, in relation to an offence in contravention of a law in Nigeria.
- A person will also be considered to be a witness if due to his or her relationship with a witness, such a person requires protection.

Most officials handling cases of online and offline child sexual abuse seek assistance and support out of their own initiative.

CAPACITY 5: Offender Management Process

Multi-agency system to identify, manage and rehabilitate sex-offenders, and statutory tools (rehabilitation and education programs, community supervision)

9. <https://p.placbillstrack.org/9th/upload/HB1200.pdf>

Findings:

The Nigerian Correctional Services (NCoS) is the government agency that operates prisons in Nigeria. It was formerly known as Nigerian Prisons Services (NPS). NCoS is domiciled under the Ministry of Interior (Mol).¹⁰ The operation of the Service is supervised by the Ministry of Interior and the Civil Defence, Fire, Immigration and Corrections Board.

- NCoS derives its mandate from Nigerian Correctional Service Act, 2019¹¹ to perform the following functions:
 - a. Taking custody of all persons legally interned;
 - b. Providing safe, secure, and humane custody for inmates;
 - c. Conveying remand persons to and from courts in motorized formations;
 - d. Identifying the existence and causes of anti-social behaviors of inmates;
 - e. Conducting risk and needs assessment aimed at developing appropriate correctional treatment methods for reformation, rehabilitation, and reintegration;
 - f. Implementing reformation and rehabilitation programs to enhance the reintegration of inmates back into the society;
 - g. Initiating behavior modification in inmates through the provision of medical, psychological, spiritual, and counseling services for all offenders including violent extremists;
 - h. Empowering inmates through the deployment of educational and vocational skills training programs, and facilitating incentives and income generation through Custodial Centres, farms and industries;
 - i. Administering Borstal and related institutions;
 - j. Providing support to facilitate the speedy disposal of cases of Awaiting Trial Persons;

- k. Performing other functions as may be required to further the general goal and functions of the Service
- l. Administering non-custodial measures, including community Service, probation, parole, restorative justice measures and any other non-custodial measure assigned by a court of competent jurisdiction.

The National Sexual Offenders Register for Nigeria was launched in 2019.¹² NAPTIP is the agency responsible for feeding data into the registry. During the launch of the registry, it was noted that its main purpose was to name and shame sexual offenders with the hope to deter others from offending. The registry is also used as a verification tool for enhanced criminal background checks. The registry is accessible to members of the public.

- As of 2023, the database had recorded 655 cases, 104 convictions, 329 pending in court, while 181 were still under investigation.

CAPACITY 6: Access to Image Database

National database with access to Interpol's International Child Sexual Exploitation (ICSE) database for international collaboration, supported by alignment with terminology for CSAM categorisation.

Findings:

- Nigeria has access to the Interpol's ICSE Database which is used by the NAPTIP and can be accessed by the prosecution by request on a case-by-case basis.
- Police stations capture the personal details, fingerprints and sometimes images of the accused persons. However, there is no uniform method of storing or sharing this data that would be used for image hash.

10. https://www.corrections.gov.ng/page/about-ncos/about-ncos?menu_id=2&sub_id=2

11. https://www.corrections.gov.ng/storage/report/NCoS_act_2019.pdf

12. <https://von.gov.ng/judiciary-designates-special-courts-for-sexual-and-gender-based-violence-cases/>

GAPS - SECTOR 2: CRIMINAL JUSTICE

- Despite there being several methods of making reports of abuse in Nigeria, there is little to no coordination between the different agencies receiving the reports to ensure they are followed up on. The lack of coordination among the different agencies leads to the challenge of lack of harmonised data on the number of cases reported per year, the number of victims identified, and action taken.
- The police academies in Nigeria do not have specific training on handling Online Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation cases and rely mainly on local and international experts for training whenever there is availability of funding.
- The Judiciary does not have special courts that hear cases of OCSEA, the 6 trained judges within the FCT are not able to cover the whole of Nigeria.
- The victim support aspect in the judicial process in Nigeria is weak due to lack of government funding and the victims have to rely on the goodwill of well-wishers. The prosecution has referral networks for child victims and their parents. However as earlier noted, the support is not guaranteed due to limited funding and donor preference.
- Judges and prosecutors are aware of the need for psychosocial support for themselves. However, there is no mandatory provision or guideline that provides for them to receive such support. In most instances, they seek out psychosocial support out of personal initiative.
- The judicial officers do not have specific training on handling of OCSEA cases in their academy and rely on self-taught knowledge or trainings by non-governmental organizations.
- Only 10 out of 36 states in Nigeria currently keep their own databases of convicted sex offenders, and even among these states, records are not always updated regularly.
- There are no legal prohibitions or limitations in the existing laws that mandate judges to issue orders to have aggressor behavior managed in the community.
- The rehabilitation process of offenders in the country is weakened by lack of resources and overcrowding in prisons, making it hard to focus on behavioral change of the prisoners.
- There is no procedure or law that speaks to the limitation of aggressor behavior at the community level and there is no offender investigation record on child sexual offender profile.



SECTOR 3: Victim Support and Empowerment

Appropriate support services for children and young people

Children and young people have access to services that support them through the investigation and prosecution of crimes against them. They have access to shelter; specialized medical and psychological services; and rehabilitation, repatriation, and resocialization services.

CAPACITY 7: End-To-End Support

Planned, integrated, and multi-stakeholder support for victims and survivors.

Services are inclusive and sensitive to age, gender, sexuality, disability, and ethnicity.

Psychological support across dedicated law enforcement, frontline workers accessing image databases, child protection workforce, and hotlines.

Findings:

From the interviews conducted during the assessment, it was evident that some effort was in place to provide end to end support. The process is influenced by the laws in place, cultural context, and resources available. For instance, the following has been noted:

- Once a complaint has been made by a possible victim, law enforcement conducts investigations to verify the claim, gather evidence, and identify the perpetrator.

- Medical attention is mandatory and considered a matter of urgency in the cases where the victim has been abused. Forensic examination is also carried out on cases of sexual abuse.
- The child victim is expected to receive therapy and counseling to help cope with emotional trauma the entire time the case is being investigated and thereafter.
- In the case that a child's home or current environment is considered unfriendly, the child can be placed in temporary shelter or safe space for housing and support.

The complexity of governance in Nigeria is a big challenge for providing the necessary support to victims. However, the process of interviews highlighted a strong willingness from civil servants and other interviewees to make the necessary changes, as highlighted in the quotes below.

- “Nigeria does not have planned and integrated support programs to address OCSEA. That is because OCSEA involves several factors in Nigeria - beginning from the fact that Nigeria's legal framework for matters involving children's rights and welfare depends on 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory. For example, child pornography in Nigeria, under the Cybercrimes Act 2015, is a federal offence that is to be prosecuted by the Attorney-General of the Federation. However, if that is not done in partnership with states, it means that even if there was a successful prosecution by the AG of the Federation, the support that needs to be given to the child victim (where the victim is identifiable), would ideally come

from the relevant ministry in the State where the victim is located. Furthermore, the Child Rights Act, which is the fundamental law that guides the rights and welfare of children in Nigeria, was passed in 2003 at the federal level. However, for that law to come into effect, states need to pass their own Child Rights Law. Currently, not all states in Nigeria have passed Child Right Laws.”

- “The government agencies provide legal medical, shelter, psycho-social support, skill acquisition, and educational support for children to mitigate the immediate impact of abuse, but there are no long term-support programs to enable them live a normal post abusive life.”

The research process for this MRC has found Nigeria not to have a robust structure on victim compensation nor any legal provisions to the same effect. Court-ordered restitutions and offender compensation (traditional restitution) are the most common forms of compensation.

- Court-ordered Restitution: Judges can order the offender to pay compensation to the victim during sentencing. However, our findings show that enforcement can be difficult, and awarded amounts are often inadequate.
- Traditional Practices: There are traditional practices in some Nigerian communities where offenders offer compensation to the victim’s family without going to court.

One of interviewees noted that “There is no compensation procedure for survivors of child abuse and exploitation although there is high profile advocacy from child-focused organizations aimed at informing a policy for compensations to be filed along with criminal proceedings.”

State accompaniment programs for victims in Nigeria are present, however facing a lot of challenges due to limited resources and personnel to implement the programs. The accompaniment programs have been termed, at best, as short- to medium-term accompaniment

programs. There has been no stated period for the accompaniment program.

- States like Lagos State have strong arrangements with nonprofits like the Mirabel Centre, that provide support to CSEA victims in Lagos State. However, other non-profits (like Stand to End Rape) run support programs in other states in Nigeria. Many Ministries for children in the various states have arrangements to provide support to victims of CSEA albeit weak.

The support that victims receive in terms of legal, psychological, medical, and social services varies from one state to another in Nigeria. There are no clear guidelines for the support process, and the lack of resources leads to imbalanced support to victims which is heavily dependent on their state.

- Nigeria has a Victim Support Fund (VSF);¹³ however, the fund only serves victims of terrorism and insurgency.

CAPACITY 8: Child Protection Workforce

Skilled, specialist statutory workforce trained, coordinated, and available to provide trauma-informed support to protect and support children at risk of OCSEA.

Guidelines for frontline professionals on emerging and complex issues such as child “self-generated” sexual material

Findings:

The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development has a role in promoting child well-being, although child protection is not its sole focus. It is expected that the ministry should be responsible for protecting child victims in collaboration with other ministries such as the MoI and local children’s rights NGOs.

13. <https://victimssupportfund.org/>

- “The protection system is state-based. There are 36 states in Nigeria and the Federal capital territory, and the ability of a state to make provisions for child protection is dependent on several socio-economic and ethno-religious factors. The vast majority of states (31 now) have their own domestic laws that deal elaborately with child protection.”
- The judicial process for child protection in Nigeria is premised on the provisions of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Children Rights Act (2003) and Witness Protection and Management Act (2002), and the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) (2015).¹⁴

Most states in Nigeria have interdisciplinary teams consisting of law enforcement, counselors and other key professionals in the child protection system. NAPTIP also coordinates an interdisciplinary team for child protection at the federal level.

- In Lagos State, there is a Unified Referral protocol signed by all child-focused agencies aimed at facilitating inter-agency collaboration of child protection. Also, some states have steering committees on SGBV that handle child protection issues. The child protection system in Nigeria employs coordinated efforts to identify possible cases of CSEA in collaboration with different actors such as schools, health centres, and NGOs. There are ongoing programs targeting various institutions, however, reporting is still very minimal. Some interviewees stated that scepticism and the belief that no action will be taken are some of the reasons most institutions do not report.
- Different government agencies have roundtables to discuss child protection and strengthen intervention measures such as the First Ladies forum consisting of the governors' wives, the Commissioner of Police roundtable of NGOs, and the Lagos State domestic and sexual violence agency roundtable of NGOs.

Capacity building for professionals in the child protection space in Nigeria is mainly an individual and organizational initiative. However, most NGOs dealing with CSEA have put effort into ensuring their staff are trained on the basics of handling cases. The training sessions are mainly conducted by international NGOs or via online learning platforms such as ICMEC's Agents of Change course.

CAPACITY 9: Compensation, Remedies and Complaints Arrangements

Provision of measures to allow children and victims accessible support in compensation, legal remedies, and complaints procedures.

Findings:

The effectiveness of the remedies and reparations process for victims and caregivers in CSEA cases is determined by several factors in Nigeria. Some states have arrangements for taking the child victim out of an abusive background and putting the child in a care home. Child-focused organizations are advocating for the creation of a policy providing for effective reparations for victims.

Procedures and implementation of procedures are in place to ensure CSEA victims have the best possible opportunity to access the services available. This includes, for instance, the provision of child-sensitive information and advice about the services available by state.

14. https://www.policinglaw.info/assets/downloads/2015_Administration_of_Criminal_Justice_Act.pdf

CAPACITY 10: Child Helpline

Accessible to all children, nationwide, toll-free, available 24/7, voice- and text-based, offering confidential support and counseling with appropriate referral mechanisms.

Robust data protection systems

Counselors with specific training in online harms.

Findings:

Cece Yara is the most robust and utilised child helpline in Nigeria.¹⁵ It has been adopted and recognized by UNICEF, Child Protection Network, and the Social Services Department at the FCT Abuja. Also, religious organizations like Nasrul-lahi-li Fathi Society of Nigeria (NASFAT) and the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN) have adopted the Cece Yara Child Helpline.

- The Helpline is located and run by a civil society institution (Cece Yara Foundation) that works collaboratively with government agencies.
- The Helpline offers counseling services, referrals, emergency interventions, and general information. The referral services can be for institutions that do in person or virtual care. Cece Yara also offers in person counselling.
- The Helpline (0800 800 8000) is toll free and operates 24/7. Users also have the option of engaging with the helpline on their social media platforms:
 - Facebook: <https://facebook.com/ceceyarafoundation>
 - X: https://twitter.com/cece_yara
 - Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/cece_yara/

- The helpline offers support to anonymous child callers regardless of their location, local or internationally.
- Cece Yara has promotional campaigns and a digital board at the Lagos high court for creating awareness on the existence of the Helpline. NAPTIP and other state and non-state agencies also create awareness of the existence of the helpline during their training sessions.

There is also the Human Development Initiative (HDI) Helpline in Nigeria. However, this helpline serves both adults and children.

- The HDI helpline is toll-free and available via call, text or WhatsApp.
 - Contact: 0808 0551 376

15. <https://ceceyara.org/child-helpline/>

GAPS - SECTOR 3: VICTIM SUPPORT AND EMPOWERMENT

- The current criminal justice systems do not have coordinated social services capable of helping survivors, which prevents them from receiving services such as legal assistance, shelter, support in trauma, information and protection, both for themselves and their families. Likewise, this described context suggests that due to the retention of cases in the penal system, victims and witnesses often give up and the perpetrators end up being released. Different states have different ways of handling CSEA cases making coordination difficult.
- There is a lack of sufficient professional support services available for victims and OCSEA case services are generally limited to urban centres. Additionally, there was not enough data to show if the local councillors have some type of training as first responders, which may increase the risk of generating traumas for the children, due to a poor primary interview.
- Health professionals who handle OCSEA cases do not have sufficient knowledge to be first responders in these cases. Likewise, and taking into account that there is confusion in the community about reporting channels, people go to different entities to report this type of case, which presupposes that most professionals should be trained to deal with a CSEA case.
- There is no policy or law mandating state accompaniment programs and support programs for victims of OCSEA and their families, making reintegration after abuse a difficult process.
- While access to compensation, legal remedies, and complaints procedures are supposed to be offered to victims according to

Nigerian legislation, in practice, little is done to enforce these laws and ensure that victims have access to appropriate restitution.

- As campaigns usually rely on NGOs and development partners, there is a need for more resources to enable Cece Yara to do their own campaign independently of other partners to ensure sustainability.



SECTOR 4: Society and Culture

Child sexual abuse prevented

Children and young people are informed and empowered to protect themselves from child sexual abuse. Parents, carers, teachers and childcare professionals are better prepared to keep children safe from child sexual abuse, including addressing taboos surrounding sexual abuse.

CAPACITY 11: Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Hotline

Dedicated portals/hotlines for the public to report suspected OCSEA.

Cooperation with law enforcement and the technology industry.

Findings:

Nigeria launched its first CSEA hotline in January 2024. The hotline is an InHope hotline and is managed by the Action Against Child Sexual Abuse Initiative (ACSAI), a local NGO in Nigeria.¹⁶

The hotline coordinates with the Nigeria Police Force - National Cybercrime Centre (NPF-NCC) to detect and remove reported CSAM.

At the time of this assessment in 2024, there had not been a nationwide campaign to educate people on the existence of the hotline. However, ACSAI is working with local partners and stakeholders to launch an educational campaign in the coming year.

CAPACITY 12: Education Programs

National education program (including age-appropriate, accessible, and inclusive content) to raise awareness of all forms of CSEA – empowering children, young people, parents, guardians, caregivers, and practitioners with relevant information.

Systematic training for professionals in education, social care and health.

Findings:

At the time of this assessment, there was not an existing public policy mandating public education on CSEA both on the online and offline platforms. However, there is a draft policy termed as the Nigeria National Online Child Sexual Abuse Policy and Strategy (NNCOPS), documented by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) which provides for awareness creation on OCSEA.

Nigeria has several non-governmental organizations running campaigns to raise awareness on CSEA online and offline.

- ACSAI has several campaigns to raise awareness such as the “Tell Person, Online Child Sexual Abuse Na Crime”. The campaign educates the public, especially boys and men, on the criminal nature of OCSEA.¹⁷
- Like a Palm Tree (LaPT) Foundation launched Project Open Eyes (POE) in 2018, an initiative meant to carry out research on internet usage of children in Nigeria and also create awareness on the harms children face online including OCSEA.¹⁸

16. <https://www.inhope.org/EN/articles/welcoming-acsa-nigeria>

17. <https://www.acsaing.org/programs.html>

18. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/parenting4digitalfuture/2018/09/12/childrens-online-safety-in-nigeria/>

- Stand to End Rape (STER) also runs campaigns advocating against sexual violence, provides prevention mechanisms and offers psychosocial support services.¹⁹
- The Mirabel Centre was the first Sexual Assault and Referral Centre (SARC) in Nigeria and works closely with government, prosecution, and law enforcement to raise awareness on the impact of CSEA as well as provide psychosocial support for survivors.²⁰

From the mentioned initiatives, unless otherwise specified, the campaigns target the general public, children, and parents/caregivers.

- The campaigns are friendly and accessible to most audiences as the NGOs use local languages such as pidgin English, a common language among Nigerians, to run their campaigns.

The campaigns also offer referrals for victims and survivors with some of the NGOs also offering psychosocial support themselves.

CAPACITY 13: Child Participation

Children and young people encouraged and enabled to give ideas and influence policy and practice relating to CSEA.

Child protection, children's rights frameworks, and trauma-informed practice utilized when engaging children.

Findings:

Nigeria is a signatory of most of the international instruments encouraging countries to include children in policy-making, especially for issues that directly affect them. These include the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

Nigeria has a children's parliament that brings together children from different parts of the Federal Republic to discuss issues related to their

rights. The current parliament was sworn in December 2022.

- Some of the key issues that the parliament is meant to deliberate include child trafficking, sexual exploitation of children, and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).²¹ Domestication and implementation of the Child Rights Act by all states was another aspect meant to be championed by the current children's parliament.
- Government gets the opinion of children in decision-making through the children's parliament. Local NGOs such as ACSAI and LaPT also actively collect views from children and use them to drive their awareness campaigns.

CAPACITY 14: Offender Prevention and Support Systems

Support to prevent people with a sexual interest in children from abusing or accessing CSAM

Support for convicted offenders as part of the rehabilitation response

Specialized support for children displaying harmful sexual behavior.

Findings:

In general terms, criminals and offenders can have access to rehabilitation in Nigerian prisons. According to some respondents – and disputed by others – there are some rehabilitation centers for those convicted of sexual offences against children. Moreover, the same respondents stated that offenders are trained on various skills before being reintroduced to society.

No specific programs for young people displaying sexually harmful behavior in Nigeria have been found by this research. The CRA and the CYPL provide for diversion (keeping children out of court and focusing on rehabilitation) for child offenders. UNICEF also works collaboratively with the Nigeria government and local NGOs to provide

19. <https://standtoendrape.org/programs-services/>

20. <https://mirabelcentre.org/how-we-help/#>

21. <https://guardian.ng/news/nigeria/fg-inaugurate-7th-national-children-parliament/>

support and training for children in the justice system.

Preventive communication to deter offenders is mainly incorporated in training by local and international NGOs such as the campaign by ACSAI targeting men and boys and educating them on the consequences of CSEA.

CAPACITY 15: Informed and Ethical Media Reporting

Evidence-based and sensitive reporting that respects victims' and survivors' rights and dignity.

Findings:

The Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), formed in 1955, is the main media institution in Nigeria. It is a network of media professionals from all over Nigeria established to advance the safety and welfare of journalists in the country.²² Among its key objectives is providing training and professional development for its members.

The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) is the broadcast regulator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The commission's main mandates are licensing, monitoring, and regulating broadcasting in Nigeria.²³

The Nigerian Press Council Act (1992) provides for the formation of the Nigeria Press Council.²⁴ The Council oversees all matters regarding journalists in Nigeria. The Act also provides for the NUJ to come up with a code of ethics for journalists in Nigeria. The code of ethics has a general provision on children stating that: *A journalist should not identify, either by name or picture, or interview children under the age of 16 who are involved in cases concerning sexual offences, crimes, and rituals or witchcraft either as victims, witnesses, or defendants.*²⁵

22. <https://nuj.ng/about/>

23. <https://www.williamsdabogroup.com/national-broadcasting-commission/>

24. https://new.presscouncil.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/npc_law.pdf

25. <https://new.presscouncil.gov.ng/code-of-ethics/#:~:text=A%20journalist%20should%20strive%20to%20enhance%20national%20unity%20and%20public%20good.&text=A%20journalist%20should%20promote%20universal,equity%2C%20peace%20and%20international%20understanding.&text=A%20journalist%20should%20not%20copy,without%20attribution%20and%20For%20consent>

GAPS - SECTOR 4: SOCIETY AND CULTURE

- Despite the launch of the hotline in Nigeria, there has not been any national initiative to create capacity and raise awareness among the general public on the existence of the hotline and the importance of reporting OCSEA cases.
- Despite ongoing efforts, OCSEA and CSEA are still stigmatized in Nigeria. For survivors of OCSEA and sexual violence in general, the victimization is often furthered within families, schools, police stations, and the community. Child marriage is still common, and certain harmful practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) make it difficult for victims to speak up. For example, talking about sex and sexual abuse is still a taboo in some regions, which can prevent victims from reporting OCSEA.
- There are insufficient capacity building efforts to cover all the states in Nigeria. Similarly, most of the capacity building is carried out by local CSOs with limited resources making the campaigns less effective.
- Respondents did not know about support systems for sexual offenders, and for their family and friends. There is also little to no support for families with child offenders.
- Nigeria does not have support systems in place for people with a sexual interest in children to prevent them from acting on their interest and sexually abusing children, and to prevent them from accessing CSAM on the internet before they commit a crime. This is also premised on the complete lack of data on characteristics of individuals with sexual interest in children.
- The focus of support efforts is for victims and their families. Providing support to the offender and their families might be perceived negatively.
- As per the interviewees, Nigeria does not have specific guidelines or courses designed for the media regarding the protection of children's rights in their journalistic actions. No preventative communications are published to deter offenders and potential offenders to act on their desire to offend against children.
- The Media does not have platforms for discussing matters related to OCSEA or legal provisions that require them to create awareness among themselves and their audience on OCSEA.
- There is a significant knowledge gap regarding OCSEA in Nigeria. Professionals often lack the necessary expertise to effectively address OCSEA and CSEA rehabilitative process.



SECTOR 5: Industry

Industry engaged in developing solutions to prevent and tackle child sexual abuse

The public can proactively report child sexual abuse offences. Industry has the power and willingness to block and remove CSAM online and proactively address local child sexual abuse issues.

CAPACITY 16: Takedown Procedures and Reporting

Local removal and blocking of CSAM online.

Procedures for timely removal of CSAM when a company confirms its presence.

Statutory protections for industry to report child sexual abuse, including content transmission to law enforcement or a designated agency.

Global and cross-sector collaboration.

Findings:

The National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) has a Code of Practice for Interactive Computer Service Platforms and Internet Intermediaries.²⁶ The code provides for best practice requirements for Interactive Computer Service Platforms/ Internet intermediaries, sets out measures to combat online harms, and provides an approach for its implementation and compliance.

- The Act provides for platforms to assist in ongoing investigations under Part 1 (1); “Act expeditiously upon receiving an Order from a Court of record directing a Platform to provide any information under its domain or any assistance to any Authorised Government Agency for the purpose of carrying out an investigation, combating cybercrimes, or prosecuting an offence.”
- It provides this definition: “Child Inappropriate Content” means any content that is inappropriate for the viewing or consumption of a Child such as sexually explicit content, child/adult pornography, images of violence/torture, semi-nude and/or nudity;”
- Finally, the Act provides for expeditious response to user complaints by platforms. “Act expeditiously upon receiving a complaint by a User or Non-User to remove, disable, or block access to non-consensual content that exposes a person’s private areas, full or partial nudity, sexual act, deepfake, or revenge porn, where such content is targeted to harass, disrepute, or intimidate such User or non-User. A Platform must acknowledge the receipt of the complaint and take down the content within 48 hours.”

Further, the NCC has guidelines for the provision of internet service by ISPs which speaks to general consumer code of practice and protection of consumer rights.²⁷

There are no explicit provisions for service providers to block CSAM, however, the provisions above show an implied obligation for the service providers when handling CSAM.

²⁶ <https://nitda.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/APPROVED-NITDA-CODE-OF-PRACTICE-FOR-INTERACTIVE-COMPUTER-SERVICE-PLATFORMS-INTERNET-INTERMEDIARIES-2022-002.pdf>

²⁷ <https://ncc.gov.ng/accessible/documents/102-consumer-code-of-practice-regulations-1/file>

CAPACITY 17: Innovative Solution Development

Technological solutions to prevent and address OCSEA.

Findings:

No technology industry locally storing CSAM has been identified in Nigeria. The relevant authorities work closely with international companies when it comes to identifying and taking down CSAM as well as collection of evidence on the same.

CSAM identification is mainly through reports made either to the hotlines or social media companies. In Nigeria currently, CSAM is proactively identified within the country solely through tools embedded in existing websites and social media applications.

The NITDA code of practice obligates national industry to cooperate during investigations of online offences including CSAM and act expeditiously to furnish any evidence attached to an ongoing investigation. However there has not been any explicit provision for the industry creating a reporting procedure for the same.

The personnel in the national companies are not well equipped, if at all, to identify and report cases of OCSEA. There are initiatives by telecom companies such as MTN Nigeria and associations such as ALTON to address this gap and build awareness on identifying and reporting OCSEA cases.

As there are no national companies that actively identify CSEA, there is not much emphasis on self care for personnel. However, the law enforcement and judiciary officers who handle CSAM work in close partnership with organizations such as the Mirabel Centre to provide psychosocial support for the personnel who interact with OCSEA content.

The NITDA Act provides for development of tools that enhance user

experiences; this could be interpreted as covering the requirement for guidance tools. Most education for users concerning how to report is carried out by specific social media companies.

Investigation of all reports is done by the NPF-NCC and NAPTIP.

Local child protection NGOs in Nigeria are working to closely form alliances with the government and technology companies for the development of technological solutions for identification, prevention, and investigation of CSAM.

CAPACITY 18: Responsible Business Conduct

Child protection and safeguarding policies, due diligence, and remediation that address OCSEA.

Findings:

There are several ISPs in Nigeria. Some, like MTN and Airtel, are both mobile network providers and ISPs. There are also dedicated ISPs such as the Spectranet, Tizeti, IPNX, Starlink, and VDT Communications which were rated the top five ISPs in Nigeria as of 2023.²⁸

ACSAI, at the time of this assessment (2024), was carrying out a survey to identify the most commonly used social media platforms by children in Nigeria. According to their unpublished data and data from online resources, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Telegram, Pinterest, and X were some of the most commonly accessed platforms by children.

The local and international technology companies which provide services for children have features that enable underage users to report and flag content that is abusive and offending on their platforms. More recently, companies such as TikTok are actively engaging local NGOs to create awareness on prevention, identification and reporting of CSEA.

28. <https://nairametrics.com/2023/12/14/top-10-internet-service-providers-in-nigeria-by-customer-number-as-of-q3-2023/>

GAPS - SECTOR 5: INDUSTRY

- Nigeria does not have a regulatory system to remove or block online CSAM. Moreover, there are not any specific regulations or procedures established for service providers to monitor, remove, or block CSAM.
- Even though the Electronic Transactions Act 2011 mentions that service providers should remove or disable access to materials that infringes the rights of the user, there is no specific regulation that refers to the removal of CSAM by an ISP.
- Given that there are no regulatory procedures or protocols in practice, it is unclear how each ISP manages OCSEA cases or even how to make the report to each provider.
- There is no legislation that directly requires technology companies to have tools to guide its users on how to prevent or report cases of OCSEA.
- There are no technological mechanisms developed from the industry sector to prevent and address OCSEA.



SECTOR 6: Research and Data

Awareness raised among the public, professionals and policy makers

Potential future offenders are deterred. Child sexual abuse offending and reoffending is reduced.

CAPACITY 19: Research and Data

Data, research, and analysis on the threat of and response to OCSEA.

Robust administrative data systems (e.g. police, courts, social services) to monitor service delivery, access, and effectiveness and provide regular insights for decision-makers.

Findings:

UNICEF in Nigeria has conducted several surveys and published research findings covering violence against children in Nigeria. In 2014, in partnership with Together for Girls, the National Population Commission of Nigeria, U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and Violence Against Children in Nigeria, UNICEF launched the Violence Against Children Nigeria Survey.²⁹ The survey covered aspects of CSEA and provided recommendations to tackle the same.

Similarly, in 2022, UNICEF also published a Situation Analysis of Children in Nigeria.³⁰ The analysis provided for child rights issues in Nigeria including sexual abuse and digital and cybersecurity issues.

CAPACITY 20: Universally Agreed Terminology

Information and policies communicated clearly and in alignment with international standards.

Findings:

There are no internal instructions from the institutions of the protection system, the police, the prosecution, or the judiciary that require the use of appropriate terminology regarding CSEA material.

The Luxembourg Guidelines are not applied in any official document or procedures from the national institutions regarding OCSEA cases. Nevertheless, when conducting interviews with official institutions, its public workers are aware of the correct use of terminology and are working to incorporate the proper terms in the laws.

29. <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/media/1586/file/Nigeria-violence-against-children-national-survey.pdf.pdf>

30. <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/media/5861/file/SituationAnalysisofChildreninNigeria.pdf>

GAPS - SECTOR 6: RESEARCH AND DATA

- There is no centralized reporting, monitoring, evaluation, and analysis system or platform for OCSEA cases.
- There is no official list of appropriate terms related to CSEA that follow international guidelines such as the Luxembourg Guidelines.
- There has not been any comprehensive research at the local level that specifically speaks to issues of CSEA and OCSEA in Nigeria. Seeing that there are no such reports, the country also does not have evaluation reports on progress achieved so far in line with OCSEA.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SECTOR 1: POLICY, LEGISLATION, AND GOVERNANCE

Short-Term

- Harmonize laws providing for child matters to have a uniform and agreed upon definition of a child, stipulate a uniform age of majority, and provide for a uniform age of criminal liability for a child across all states in Nigeria.
- Ensure the new legislations being currently deliberated and amended in parliament, such as the Children's Act, factor in the terminologies in the Luxembourg guideline.

Mid-Term

- Have a mandatory requirement for all states within the Federal State of Nigeria to adopt laws that provide for the protection of the rights of children that are passed at the federal level.

Long-Term

- Implement a monitoring system for the federal government to hold states accountable for implementing child protection laws.

SECTOR 2: CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Short-Term

- Create a case management system for child abuse cases that will enable harmonization of data collected throughout the country to a central database. This will enable the relevant authorities to keep track of reported cases and action taken in each case.
- Create a curriculum for the law enforcement academies that educate on understanding and investigation of OCSEA cases.
- Develop a similar curriculum intended for judicial officers training academies that cover prosecutors, judges, and other judicial officers handling cases of child abuse.
- Provide for mandatory psychosocial support and therapy for law enforcement and judicial officers handling cases of online and offline child abuse.
- Have public engagement sessions for law enforcement officers and the public for the officers to educate the public on the reporting and investigation process of OCSEA cases.

Mid-Term

- Acknowledge the challenge of setting up courts that deal specifically with OCSEA cases, and nationally invest in training the sitting judges who handle child matters in each state on OCSEA cases. This will empower the judges in each state to have special sittings within ordinary sessions to hear OCSEA cases.
- Allocate funds within the federal government's and state government's budgets specifically for OCSEA victim support for

children to complement the efforts of donors and well-wishers.

- Create a policy or framework that provides for management of offenders – more specifically child sexual abuse offenders – and that empowers judges to issue rehabilitation orders for offenders.

Long-Term

- Assist in the creation of a database for convicted sex offenders in the 26 Nigerian states that do not have one yet. Concurrently, implement a central database fed by the registries from each state with a subcategory for sexual offenders of children.
- Use the data collected on sex offenders to create a guideline on how to limit aggressor behavior at the community level, while also creating potential sexual offenders profile.

SECTOR 3: VICTIM SUPPORT AND EMPOWERMENT

Short-Term

- Create a case management system for child abuse cases that will enable harmonization of data collected throughout the country to a central database accessible by social services. This will facilitate the identification of the correct assistance measure needed by each victim and hence ensure effective end to end support.
- Harmonize guidelines on how cases of OCSEA should be handled across all the states of Nigeria with urgency to prevent victims and witnesses from giving up and dropping cases due to the length of the process.
- Develop a training program to train local councillors on how to handle and counsel victims, witnesses, and families of victims of online and offline sexual offences.
- Develop a training curriculum for medical professions who handle cases of OCSEA to help them understand the nuances of OCSEA related physical and psychological trauma.

Mid-Term

- Create a policy or guideline that provides for a state accompaniment program and specifies the length of the accompaniment and the kind of assistance provided during and after the stated accompaniment program.

- Have a clear policy on OCSEA victim compensation and remedies. The policy to direct how the compensation is acquired and distributed to victims and their families.
- Allocate more government resources from its budget to raise awareness on the country's national helpline. This will create public awareness on their right to report cases of OCSEA and the availability of a 24/7 free helpline.

Long-Term

- Increase the human and technical capacity of the local offices in order to improve the local response to cases of CSEA. Allocate budgets for the maintenance of these offices (logistics, infrastructure, transportation, staffing) and provide training to promote care for victims and their families.
- Amend the legislation to include the possibility to access compensation as appropriate by the guardians, caregivers, and families of the child victim.
- Ensure that the Helpline is sustainable by replacing its dependence on external international agencies with national government funding, allowing for more staff to join, expanding the call center to accommodate all calls, and ensuring that equipment is replaced as and when needed.

SECTOR 4: SOCIETY AND CULTURE

Short-Term

- Prioritize OCSEA capacity building and awareness raising initiatives at the national and local levels to complement the efforts of local and international NGOs for public education. The campaigns will also help debunk the stigma associated with sexual offences cases that hinder reporting.
- Create campaigns that strongly speak against retrogressive cultural practices such as child marriages and FGM which normalize sexual abuse of children.
- Create a curriculum for Media and journalist that educates them on ethical reporting of child abuse related cases and prevention of revictimization.
- Strengthen the children's parliament and amplify the voices of children in public forums that discuss their challenges and rights on the online platforms.

Mid-Term

- Use the data collected by the criminal justice sector on offender profiles to encourage conversations on how communities can support children who have increased risk factors which could lead to becoming social offenders and also to offer support to offenders' families.
- Create a guideline for reintegration of offenders back to the community, including a guideline of the Dos and Don'ts for the offenders' interactions with children. Provide a platform for potential

offenders to seek help if they are on the verge of offending against a child.

- Publish communication around the prevention of OCSEA targeted at offenders and potential offenders to raise awareness of the impact their offending might have on victims, and ensure they are aware of the punitive measures if they indeed offend against children.
- Create platforms for the Media to educate the public on understanding OCSEA.

SECTOR 5: INDUSTRY

Short-Term

- Create a consultative platform through the NCC and NITDA with internet and electronic service providers to create a guideline of industry best practices on monitoring and removal of CSAM.
- Develop a training program for ISPs to raise awareness and knowledge on their responsibility in protecting children using their services from all forms of online abuse including OCSEA.
- Create legislation that mandates ISPs to have tools for taking down OCSEA content and for users to prevent and report cases of OCSEA.

Mid-Term

- Promote the creation and implementation of software by the private sector that helps identify CSAM and create alerts for ISPs to remove and block CSAM.
- Create an intersectoral committee that involves the participation of law enforcement and representatives of the ISPs in order to coordinate activities, procedures, and reporting mechanisms on OCSEA cases.

SECTOR 6: RESEARCH AND DATA

Short-Term

- Elaborate and circulate with government institutions, law enforcement, and the industry an applicable and easy-to-understand guide based on the Luxembourg Guidelines for the correct use of terminology in OCSEA cases.
- Promote the coordination of information to improve the sharing among official institutions in order for law enforcement and other relevant institutions to have access to relevant databases for the creation of reports on OCSEA.

Mid-Term

- Coordinate with NGOs in Nigeria to provide specialized training for LE and government institutions regarding the appropriate use of terminology in CSEA cases.
- Create awareness through social media and campaigns in the community about the importance of the appropriate use of terminology in CSEA cases.

Long-Term

- Create an intersectoral working group for the elaboration and promotion of a public policy to articulate the national response on CSEA in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

Nigeria has taken important steps that make evident its commitment to improve its institutional capacities to respond to Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. Nigeria's membership to the We Protect Global Alliance indicates its commitment to protecting children from online harms and working collaboratively with other countries to combat this issue.

Here are some of the key initiatives:

1. Legislative Framework:

- **Child Rights Act:** Nigeria has enacted the Child Rights Act, which provides comprehensive legal protection for children, including provisions related to online safety.
- **Cybercrime Act:** The Cybercrime Act criminalises various online offences, including child pornography (CSAM) and sexual exploitation.

2. Law Enforcement Initiatives:

- **Specialized Units:** Law enforcement agencies have established specialized units to investigate and prosecute cases of online child sexual exploitation and abuse.
- **Training and Capacity Building:** Law enforcement personnel receive training on digital forensics, online investigations, and child protection.

3. Awareness Raising Campaigns:

- **Public Education:** The government and NGOs conduct awareness campaigns to educate the public about the dangers of online child sexual exploitation and abuse.
- **Training for Parents and Caregivers:** Parents and caregivers are provided with resources and training to help them protect their children online.

4. Collaboration with International Organizations:

- **WePROTECT Global Alliance:** Nigeria is a member of the WePROTECT Global Alliance, which fosters international cooperation to combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse.
- **Interpol:** Nigeria collaborates with Interpol to share information and coordinate investigations across borders.

5. Internet Service Provider (ISP) Engagement:

- **Content Filtering:** ISPs are encouraged to implement content filtering measures to block access to child sexual abuse material.
- **Reporting Mechanisms:** ISPs are required to report suspected cases of online child sexual exploitation to law enforcement.

6. Victim Support Services:

- **Shelters and Counseling:** Victims of OCSEA have access to shelters and counselling services.
- **Legal Assistance:** Victims can receive legal assistance to navigate the legal process and seek justice.

7. Cybersecurity and Digital Literacy:

- **Education Programs:** Schools and communities are encouraged to promote digital literacy and cybersecurity education among children and young people.
- **Safe Internet Practices:** Children are taught about safe online practices, including the importance of not sharing personal information with strangers.

It is important to note that while significant progress has been made, challenges remain in combating OCSEA in Nigeria. Continued efforts are needed to strengthen laws, improve enforcement, and raise awareness about this issue.

