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## Forced Begging: A Financial Rewarding Business In Human Trafficking In Nigeria

Dr. Ogwezzy Oluwatosin. O

### *Abstract*

*Forced begging is a form of human trafficking which involve forced criminal activity or organised crime. Estimates suggest that traffickers can earn substantial amounts from forced beggars, particularly children and individuals with disabilities. Forced begging in Nigeria, is propelled by factors such as poverty, underfunded education and lack of child protection, have all evolved into a lucrative human trafficking enterprise. Children, especially those in the alma jiri system in the northern part of Nigeria, are compelled to beg to sustain themselves and their schools, while in the southern part of Nigeria, children are either forced by parents or lured by traffickers into begging in urban centers. The aim of this paper is to examine how traffickers exploit vulnerable individuals, including those with disabilities has turned forced begging to a financial rewarding business in human trafficking and utilising them in organised begging rings. This paper discussed how forced begging is viewed under Nigerian law. The paper discusses the challenges in combating forced begging and efforts by government and non-governmental organisation in putting an end to forced begging. This paper further discusses forced begging and Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act of 2015 in Nigeria which is a legislative response aimed at addressing the alarming rates of human trafficking and exploitation, particularly in the context of forced begging. This paper concludes that the practice of forced begging in Nigeria not only exposes victims to harsh conditions, violence, and psychological distress but also denies them education and opportunities for development. This paper recommended that to tackle the issue of forced begging in Nigeria requires a multifaceted approach involving stronger law enforcement, increased access to education and food, and a commitment from government, communities, and international organizations to protect children's rights and combat trafficking networks.*

*Keywords: forced begging, financial, rewarding, human trafficking, trafficker(s)*

\* LL. B (OSU), BL, LL.M(Lagos), LL.M(AAUA-Akungba), PhD (RSU-Port Harcourt),ACIarb(Nigeria). Lecturer, Faculty of Law, University of Port Harcourt. Email address: Oluwatosin.ogwezzy@uniport.edu.ng,08033273670

## I. Introduction

Human trafficking is the third largest crime industry in the world after drug and arms trafficking which happens in almost every country in the world.<sup>1</sup> It is considered modern-day slavery and is a multi-dollar form of international organised crime.<sup>2</sup> The victims are usually targeted through their vulnerabilities and trafficked using coercion and deception.<sup>3</sup>

Nigeria is a source, transit, and destination country for human trafficking, with forced begging representing a critical facet of this crime.<sup>4</sup> Traffickers exploit Nigerian victims both within Nigeria and across its borders.<sup>5</sup> Human trafficking in Nigeria impacts individuals of all ages and genders.<sup>6</sup> Traffickers exploit women and children for forced labour and sexual exploitation, including compelling them to beg.<sup>7</sup> Forced begging in Nigeria is a financially rewarding business that preys on vulnerable individuals, especially children, and is intertwined with the exploitative regional child trafficking industry.<sup>8</sup> Forced begging in Nigeria is a complex issue driven by a combination of economic, social, and historical factors, and it has evolved into a financially rewarding, exploitative industry that particularly affects children.<sup>9</sup>

## II. Conceptual Framework

The concept of human trafficking and forced begging in Nigeria has elicited the study interest of many scholars from diverse backgrounds across the globe. This is because human trafficking has received increasing global attention over the past decades. Accordingly, scholars have done juridical and scholarly works on different issues of human trafficking and forced begging in Nigeria. This is particularly so where conscious efforts are made by NAP TIP and other law enforcement agencies to put to end to the menace of human trafficking and forced begging in our country. An Attempt shall be made to review the

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<sup>1</sup> Nisha Singh & Hitesh Kumari, An Analysis of Impact of Begging and Human Trafficking in Society and its Control and Management,(8)(2) International Journal of Law Management and Humanities,1859-1878(2025).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> European Union Agency for Asylum(EUAA),Victims of Human Trafficking Including Forced Prostitution <https://euaa.europa.eu/country-guidance-nigeria-2021/215-victims-human-trafficking-including-forced-Prostitution>.(Mar. 30,2025,8:00am).

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> Anti-slavery, Shackled to the Past: Forced Child Begging in Nigeria,(Mar.30, 2025, 8;00am),<https://www.antislavery.org/latest/forced-child-begging-in-nigeria/>.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

opinions of scholars expressed in some existing literature about the definition of key terms like human trafficking, forced begging, trafficker, and financially rewarding that are relevant to this paper. According to the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), an anti-trafficking federal law established in 2000 under President Clinton's administration, human trafficking is defined as the exploitation of a person or persons for sex or labour using "force, fraud, or coercion."<sup>10</sup> The definition follows the action, means, purpose (A-M-P model), which helps determine whether force, fraud, or coercion was present.<sup>11</sup> These definitions highlight the exploitation and lack of consent central to human trafficking, distinguishing it from other crimes like smuggling, which involves consensual border crossing.<sup>12</sup>

Article 3(a) of the *Trafficking Protocol* defines "Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, using the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices like slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation outlined in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means outlined in subparagraph (a) have been used. The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for exploitation shall be considered "trafficking in persons" even if this does not involve any of the means outlined in subparagraph (a) of this article. "Child" shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.

The United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (Trafficking Protocol) articulates the most widely accepted international framework for addressing TIP and calls upon States Parties to take steps to prevent trafficking, protect victims and prosecute offenders. The Trafficking Protocol is the only globally binding international instrument that contains an agreed-upon definition of trafficking in persons. Nigeria is a signatory to the Palermo Protocol and to that effect, it enacted a Federal Law known as Trafficking in Persons, (Prohibition) Enforcement and

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<sup>10</sup> 22 U.S.C. § 7102.

<sup>11</sup> T. J. Toney & Butler "et al", *Human Trafficking* (Mar. 30, 2025, 8:00am), <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28613660/> 10 Mar.,

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

Administration Act 2015 (TIPPEAA 2015) and adopted the definition of trafficking in persons in Art 3 of the Palermo Protocol in its Federal Legislation.<sup>13</sup> In Nigeria, under the Interpretation provision<sup>14</sup> of Trafficking in Persons(Prohibition)Enforcement and Administration Act(TIPPEAA) 2015. It defines trafficking to mean recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person or debt bondage for the purpose of placing or holding the person whether or not in involuntary servitude(domestic, sexual or reproductive) in forced or bonded labour, or in slavery-like conditions, the removal of organs or generally for exploitative purposes.<sup>15</sup> For the purpose of this paper, the definition of article (3)(a) of the Palermo protocol shall be adopted.

Forced begging is one of the lesser talked about aspects of modern slavery that we could be passing every day on our high street<sup>16</sup>. Forced begging in Nigeria is defined by scholars as a coercive practice where individuals, particularly children, are compelled to beg for money or alms, often under exploitative conditions.<sup>17</sup> Forced begging is a form of human trafficking that may also involve forced criminal activity or organised crime.<sup>18</sup> The Nigerian definition of forced begging will be adopted or use for the purpose of this paper.

Joy defines a trafficker as anyone who receives money or something of value for the sexual exploitation of another person.<sup>19</sup> According to the interpretation section of the TIPPEAA Act<sup>20</sup>a trafficker includes any person or an entity that commits or is in the process of committing, aids, abets, facilitates or acquiesces to an act of trafficking in persons. According to the 2016 UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, there are at least two broad categories of traffickers: first, those who are members of sophisticated criminal networks and, second, unsophisticated small-time local criminals operating in isolation from organised criminal groups.<sup>21</sup> Legal scholars and international laws uniformly recognise

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<sup>13</sup> Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act 2015,s.82.

<sup>14</sup> Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act 2015, s.82.

<sup>15</sup> Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act 2015, s.82.

<sup>16</sup> The Clewer Institute, Forced Begging,(Mar.30.2025,10:04), <https://theclewerinitiative.org/blog/forced-begging>.

<sup>17</sup> Anti-slavery International (Supra Note 8).

<sup>18</sup> IOM UN Migration (IRELAND) ‘Criminal Activity,(Mar.30.2025,10:04), <https://www.anyonetrafficked.com/criminal-activity-forced-begging>.

<sup>19</sup> Amy Joy, Human Trafficking 101: Stories, Stats, and Solutions145 (Amy Joy Publications, 2021).

<sup>20</sup> Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act 2015, s.82.

<sup>21</sup> UNODC, The Crime of Trafficking in Persons, (Mar.30.2025,10:04) <https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/tip-and-som/module-6/key-issues/crime-of-trafficking-in-persons.html>.

traffickers as perpetrators of a serious crime that violates the autonomy and dignity of victims through systematic exploitation.<sup>22</sup> Financial means relating to money or how money is managed.<sup>23</sup> For the purpose of this paper, this definition will be used in this work.

According to Collins Dictionary<sup>24</sup> rewarding implies an experience or action that is rewarding gives you satisfaction or brings you benefits. Financial reward refers to receiving a benefit or incentive, often monetary, because of a specific action, performance, or achievement. This definition of rewarding by Collins dictionary is hereby adopted.

### **III. Overview of Forced Begging as a Form of Human Trafficking and Organised Crime.**

Human trafficking for the purpose of forced begging is a phenomenon that has been identified with many countries and parts of Africa particularly in Nigeria.<sup>25</sup> Human trafficking for the purpose of forced begging, refers to situations in which a person's personal or economic predicament or helplessness is exploited to make them engage in begging.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *Id.*

<sup>23</sup> Cambridge Dictionary, 'Financial'(Mar.30.2025,10:04),  
<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/financial>

<sup>24</sup> Collins Dictionary, Definition of Rewarding,  
(Mar.30.2025,10:04),<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/rewarding> .

<sup>25</sup> Alexis. A . Aronowitz & Mounia Chmaitilly, Human Trafficking:Women,Children and Victim Offender ,Overlap, (Mar.30.2025,10:04),  
<https://oxfordre.com/criminology/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264079.001.0001/acrefore-9780190264079-e-609?p=emailAAAt46CQOxaGb6&d=/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264079.001.0001/acrefore-9780190264079-e-609>.

<sup>26</sup> Respect International, Trafficking in Human Beings: Labour Exploitation, Sexual Exploitation Forced Criminal Activities and Begging German Ngo Network against Trafficking in Human Beings, (Mar.30.2025,10:04),  
<https://respect.international/trafficking-in-human-beings-forced-criminal-activities-and-begging/> .

They are forced to hand over all or most of their earnings.<sup>27</sup> Their freedom is limited to the point where they can no longer decide freely whether they want to engage in this activity or not. A major difference between human trafficking for the purpose of forced begging and other forms of exploitation is that begging only happens in public spaces, so these persons are being exploited in public view.

Forced begging is a severe form of human trafficking that involves the exploitation of vulnerable individuals, often children and people with disabilities, for financial gain. Forced begging violates basic human rights, including the right to dignity and freedom from exploitation.<sup>28</sup> It is recognised as a form of modern slavery and a worst form of child labour.<sup>29</sup> Victims are often coerced into begging through threats, violence, or psychological manipulation.<sup>30</sup> They may be forced to work for long hours under harsh conditions, with little or no control over their earnings. It is closely tied to organised crime, with traffickers operating sophisticated networks that resemble medium-sized businesses in complexity.<sup>31</sup> Victims of forced begging often include vulnerable populations such as children, elderly persons, and individuals with disabilities. These groups are targeted due to their perceived ability to elicit sympathy from passersby.<sup>32</sup> They may be forced to work long hours under harsh conditions and are often subjected to physical and verbal abuse.<sup>33</sup> Forced begging operations can be part of larger criminal networks, with organizational structures similar to those of medium-sized businesses.<sup>34</sup> Organized crime groups recruit victims by promising them better living conditions or job opportunities,<sup>35</sup> only to exploit them for begging once they are in a vulnerable position.<sup>36</sup> The proceeds from forced begging are used to fund luxurious lifestyles for the traffickers and to acquire valuable assets.<sup>37</sup> The traffickers operate

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<sup>27</sup> IOM UN Migration(supra note18).

<sup>28</sup> IOM (UN Migration), Human Trafficking for Criminal Purposes, (Mar.30.2025,10:04), <https://www.anyonetrafficked.com/criminal-activity-forced-begging>.

<sup>29</sup> Macedonia Young Lawyers Association(MYLA),Forced Begging as a Worst Form of Child Labour inRepublic of Macedonia(Mar.31.2025,10:04) <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/slavery/sr/cfis/worstforms/subm-worst-forms-child-cso-macedonia-myla-myla.PDF>.

<sup>30</sup> IOM (UN Migration), (supra note 28).

<sup>31</sup> Iveta Cherneva, Human Trafficking for Begging,17 BHRLR.25, (2011).

<sup>32</sup> IOM UN Migration (IRELAND)( supra note 18) .

<sup>33</sup> AN Ronin Dli agus Cirt Department of Justice, Forced Criminality and Begging(Mar.31.2025,10:04), <https://www.blueblindfold.ie/forced-criminality-and-begging>.

<sup>34</sup> Iveta (Supra Note 31).

<sup>35</sup> European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (EUROJUST), ‘Dismantling of Criminal network that Forced Victims into Street Begging in Germany and Austria’(Mar.31.2025,10:04). <https://www.eurojust.europa.eu/news/dismantling-criminal-network-forced-victims-street-begging-germany-and-austria>.

<sup>36</sup> Myria (Mar.31.2025,10:04)[https://www.myria.be/files/PART\\_2.4.pdf](https://www.myria.be/files/PART_2.4.pdf).

<sup>37</sup> EUROJUST (supra note 35).

like medium-sized business enterprises, organising rings with hierarchical structures and systematic exploitation.<sup>38</sup> They use the money for personal luxury, including expensive clothing, cars, and properties. This contrasts sharply with the dire living conditions of their victims, who often sleep in condemned buildings without heating or proper sanitation.<sup>39</sup> These networks often operate across multiple countries, exploiting victims in various locations.<sup>40</sup>

Financial exploitation of vulnerable groups, including children, individuals with disabilities, and older adults, is a pervasive issue that affects these populations in distinct ways.<sup>41</sup> This form of exploitation can occur through various means, such as forced labour, manipulation of financial resources, and coercion.<sup>42</sup> Children are often exploited through forced labour or begging, which is a form of financial exploitation. This is particularly prevalent in regions with high levels of poverty and social inequality.<sup>43</sup>

Forced begging is a significant issue in Nigeria, particularly prevalent in certain regions due to socioeconomic and cultural factors. In the Northern Nigeria, the alma Jiri system, which involves young boys being sent to Islamic schools but often forced to beg due to insufficient support networks<sup>44</sup> is a major factor in Northern Nigeria. Cities like Kano and other metropolitan areas in the north are particularly affected.<sup>45</sup> In Suleja, boys aged 8–19 are commonly seen begging with slogans like “Sada-ka-Sabo-da-Allah” (give because of God).<sup>46</sup> The population of beggars in Nigerian cities has grown exponentially, with some states like Kano recording over 1.4 million beggars in a census.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Iveta (supra note 31).

<sup>39</sup> JADWIG, Exploitation of Forced Begging, (Apr.1.2025,10:04pm)  
<https://www.jadwiga-online.de/en/subjects/exploitation-of-begging>.

<sup>40</sup> Myria(supra note 36).

<sup>41</sup> Peterson JC et.al, Financial Exploitation of Older Adults: A Population Based Prevalence Study, 29(12)JGIM, 1615-23(2014).

<sup>42</sup> Janet DiFiore et.al, ‘Understanding and Preventing of Financial Exploitation of Vulnerable Adults’(Apr.1.2025,10:04pm),  
<https://ww2.nycourts.gov/sites/default/files/document/files/2018-09/monograph.pdf>.

<sup>43</sup> Noriega Makarsky ,D et.al, Financial Exploitation Vulnerability and Social Connectedness in Middle Aged and Older Adults without Dementia [2025]Taylor and Francis (online) (Apr.1.2025,10:04pm),<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13607863.2025.2475331#abstract>.

<sup>44</sup> Adegbite A E and Odetunde I, A Legal Examination into the Eradication of Street Begging in Nigeria, 7(3)AJPRA54-68 (2024).

<sup>45</sup> Antislavery (supra note 8).

<sup>46</sup> David V. Ogunkan & Olufemi A Fawole, Incidence and Socio-economic Dimensions of Begging in Nigerian Cities: The Case of Ogbomosho 4(12)Int.NGOJ,498-503(2009).

<sup>47</sup> Roseline Olufunke Bukoye, Case Study: Prevalence and Consequences of Street Begging among Adults and Children in Nigeria, Suleja Metropolis 171 P-SBS,323-333(2014).

In urban centres, major cities such as Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt experience high levels of street begging due to economic hardship and migration from rural areas.<sup>48</sup> Urban centres like Lagos and Abuja attract migrants from rural areas seeking better opportunities. However, many arrive with no skills or resources and end up on the streets begging. In Lagos while specific data on forced begging might be limited, it is part of the broader context of exploitation where vulnerable individuals,<sup>49</sup> including children and disabled persons, are coerced into begging by organised groups or individuals.

In the southwest while less prevalent than in the north, street begging among school-age children is a concern in states like Ondo, Oyo, and Lagos. Poverty and unemployment are key drivers in these regions.<sup>50</sup> Forced begging in Nigeria is most prevalent in Northern regions due to cultural practices like the Alma Jiri system, while economic hardship affects urban centers across the country.

#### **IV. Factors Driving Forced Begging in Nigeria**

Forced begging is a multifaceted issue influenced by various socioeconomic, cultural, and systemic factors, legal framework and enforcement. These factors contribute to the exploitation of vulnerable individuals, particularly children and marginalised groups.

Nigeria's high poverty rates, with nearly half of the population living in poverty, force many individuals to resort to forced begging.<sup>51</sup> Poverty is the primary driver of forced begging, as families living in extreme conditions often resort to sending their children or vulnerable individuals to beg as a survival strategy.<sup>52</sup> Poverty forces many Nigerians to resort to begging as a survival strategy.<sup>53</sup> With about half of the population living in extreme poverty, individuals often lack access to necessities like food, housing, and healthcare.<sup>54</sup> The absence of viable job opportunities and economic instability exacerbate vulnerability, leading families to send children or vulnerable individuals to beg.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> O.A Fawole et.al, ' The Menace of Begging in Nigerian Cities: A Sociological Analysis 3(1)Int.JSA,9-14(2014).

<sup>49</sup> Usman Adekunle Ojedokun, Dynamics and Patterns of Transnational Street Begging in Lagos and Ibadan Metropolis Nigeria( unpublished PhD ,thesis, University of Ibadan , 2015).

<sup>50</sup> M K Aliyu and J T Kayode, 'Street Begging among School Age Children and Social Protection Policy in Southwestern ,Nigeria, 12(4) GJAHSS,1-32(2024).

<sup>51</sup> O. A Fawole et.al( supra note 48).

<sup>52</sup> Iker Malania, 'Child Begging: A Manifestation of Child Labour ,7 (3)JLC,227-228( 2024).

<sup>53</sup> Adegbite and Odetunde (Supra note 44).

<sup>54</sup> *Id.*

<sup>55</sup> *Id.*

Forced begging in Nigeria is deeply rooted in cultural and religious factors, which significantly contribute to its persistence. The act of begging has historically been normalised in Nigerian society, especially among marginalised groups such as the elderly, disabled, and impoverished.<sup>56</sup> It is often viewed as a legitimate survival strategy rather than a social problem.<sup>57</sup> In Northern Nigeria, the Alma Jiri system exemplifies cultural factors contributing to forced begging.<sup>58</sup> This system involves sending young boys to Islamic schools where they are often forced to beg due to inadequate support networks. The alma Jiri system was initially intended for religious education, it has evolved into a major driver of street begging and exploitation.<sup>59</sup> In Nigeria, many Nigerians feel culturally obligated to give alms to beggars, perceiving it as an act of kindness or communal responsibility.<sup>60</sup> This attitude inadvertently sustains begging practices and creates opportunities for exploitation.<sup>61</sup>

Systemic deficiencies play a significant role in contributing to forced begging in Nigeria. Nigeria faces high levels of poverty and unemployment, which are exacerbated by economic instability and lack of job opportunities. This forces many individuals to resort to begging as a means of survival.<sup>62</sup> The absence of robust social welfare programs leaves vulnerable populations without safety nets, making them more susceptible to exploitation by organised begging rings.<sup>63</sup> Limited access to quality education contributes to a lack of skills and employ-ability among many Nigerians.<sup>64</sup> This lack of education restricts opportunities for gainful employment, pushing individuals toward begging.<sup>65</sup>

Disability and homelessness are significant contributors to forced begging in Nigeria, often intertwined with systemic deficiencies and societal attitudes. People with disabilities in Nigeria often face societal stigma and marginalisation, leading to exclusion from mainstream

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<sup>56</sup> Adegbite and Odetunde (supra note 44).

<sup>57</sup> R E E Nwobodo, Street Begging : A Devaluation of Igbo Humanism,12(2)NZJP138-152(2021).

<sup>58</sup> Adegbite and Odetunde (supra note 44).

<sup>59</sup> D V Ogunkan, Begging and Almsgiving in Nigeria: The Islamic Perspective 13(4)Int.JSA 127-132(2011)

<sup>60</sup> Nwobodo (Supra Note 57).

<sup>61</sup> U Ojedokun, 'Push and Pull Factors of Transnational Street Begging in Southwestern13(2)TNJSA 13 25(2015).

<sup>62</sup> T A Oluwole, A Critical Analysis of the Causes and Implications of Street Begging among People Living with Disabilities in Ibadan Metropolis Nigeria 2 (1)Int.JARSSEST 42-66(2016).

<sup>63</sup> *Id.*

<sup>64</sup> *Id.*

<sup>65</sup> *Id.*

society, and economic opportunities.<sup>66</sup> This marginalisation pushes many into begging as a means of survival.<sup>67</sup>

Many individuals migrate from rural areas to urban centers in search of better economic opportunities. However, upon arrival, they often find limited job prospects and inadequate resources, leading them to resort to begging as a survival strategy.<sup>68</sup> Nigeria attracts transnational migrants from neighbouring countries, such as Niger and Mali, who come seeking better opportunities.<sup>69</sup> These migrants often engage in street begging due to economic hardships in their home countries.<sup>70</sup>

## **V. Legal Framework and Enforcement of Forced Begging in Nigeria**

The legal framework and enforcement in Nigeria play a significant role in addressing forced begging, but there are challenges in effectively implementing these laws. Nigeria has several laws aimed at reducing begging, including the Criminal Code Act and the Penal Code.<sup>71</sup> These laws prohibit begging and provide penalties for offenders, but their effectiveness is limited by inconsistent enforcement.<sup>72</sup> The Child's Rights Act specifically prohibits the use of children for begging, which is a significant step toward addressing forced child begging.<sup>73</sup> Despite having laws against begging, enforcement varies significantly across different states in Nigeria. For example, begging is illegal in Southern states but not uniformly enforced.<sup>74</sup> In Northern Nigeria, laws like the Kano State Street Begging Prohibition Law, 2013, have been enacted but have not significantly reduced begging due to inadequate enforcement.<sup>75</sup>

## **VI. Forced Begging as a Financial Rewarding Business in Human Trafficking in Nigeria**

Forced begging in Nigeria is financially rewarding to traffickers, traffickers exploit physically challenged or disabled individuals, often in the Northern regions, by forcing them

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<sup>66</sup> Y Alhassan, 'Patterns of Street Begging, Support Services and Vocational Aspirations of People living in with Disabilities in Ilorin Nigeria (Apr.5.2025,10:04am)  
[https://www.kwcoailorin.edu.ng/publications/staff\\_publications/alhassan\\_yahaya\\_2x3k/patterns-of-street-begging-support-services-and-vocational-aspirations-people-living-with-disabilities-in-ilorin-nigeria.pdf](https://www.kwcoailorin.edu.ng/publications/staff_publications/alhassan_yahaya_2x3k/patterns-of-street-begging-support-services-and-vocational-aspirations-people-living-with-disabilities-in-ilorin-nigeria.pdf)

<sup>67</sup> *Id.*

<sup>68</sup> Aderonke and Odetunde (supra note 44).

<sup>69</sup> Ojedokun (supra note 61)

<sup>70</sup> *Id.*

<sup>71</sup> I A Baba, A Study of Legal Measures against Begging in Nigeria vis-a- vis Kano State Street Begging Prohibition Law (2013),9(11) Int.JAAR 96-111 (2023).

<sup>72</sup> Consortium for Street Children,Nigeria:Is it illegal for Children to beg-yes , (Apr.3.2025,10:04am)  
<https://www.streetchildren.org/legal-atlas/map/nigeria/status-offences/is-it-illegal-for-children-to-beg/>.

<sup>73</sup> Child Rights Act 2003,s 30.

<sup>74</sup> Consortium (supra note 72).

<sup>75</sup> Baba (supra note 71).

into organised begging.<sup>76</sup> This allows traffickers to take charge of the earnings and maintain a steady income stream.<sup>77</sup> In cases like the alma Jiri system, children are forced to beg to support their schools and masters.<sup>78</sup> This system has become very lucrative, with traffickers profiting from the exploitation of these children.<sup>79</sup> In some instances, traffickers charge individuals a "fee" for using specific areas for begging, further increasing their financial gains.<sup>80</sup> Traffickers rent infants from mothers for as little as ₦3,000 (approximately \$2 USD) and deploy them at busy intersections, bus stops, and markets.<sup>81</sup> Older children are forced to supervise these infants, collecting alms throughout the day. The daily accumulation of small donations from sympathetic passersby translates to steady income for traffickers, with minimal overhead costs beyond initial "rental" fees.<sup>82</sup> Trafficking rings operate with division of labour, using recruiters, transporters, and supervisors.<sup>83</sup> For example, older children are tasked with moving infants between locations and safeguarding earnings.<sup>84</sup> Beggars collect small donations at high-traffic areas (markets, intersections), generating steady income.<sup>85</sup> For example, a single infant beggar can yield hundreds of daily contributions, far exceeding initial investments.<sup>86</sup>

In Northern Nigeria, traffickers target physically disabled individuals, compelling children to guide them during begging operations.<sup>87</sup> These children receive only basic sustenance, allowing traffickers to retain most profits.<sup>88</sup> The traditional Qur'anic education system has been co-opted into a trafficking pipeline. An estimated 8.5 million of alma jirai children are forced to beg daily to sustain themselves and their "masters," who profit from their labour.<sup>89</sup> Illegal facilities regarded as baby factories in Southern Nigeria that produce infants for sale,

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<sup>76</sup> Solomon Oluranti Ayorinde, *Impact of Human Trafficking on Economic Development: Counselling Implication* 20(1)JEACE 53-62(2016).

<sup>77</sup> *Id.*

<sup>78</sup> *Anti Slavery* (supra note 8).

<sup>79</sup> *Id.*

<sup>80</sup> Michael Semprebbon et.al, *The Practice Begging between Freedom of Choice, Exploitation and Trafficking and Connections with Organised Crime. Focus on Nigerian People*, (Apr.5.2025,10:04am),[https://www.insightproject.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2.1a\\_REPORT-begging-E-N-def.pdf](https://www.insightproject.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2.1a_REPORT-begging-E-N-def.pdf).

<sup>81</sup> Editorial, *Child Trafficking on the Streets, This Day* (March 14 2023,8:00am), <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2023/03/14/child-trafficking-on-the-streets/>.

<sup>82</sup> F Omotosho and Others, *Qualitative Analysis of Factors of Supporting Child Labour Trafficking in Nigeria: Public Perceptions and Cultural Relativism*7(3)*Dignity:AJAEV* 1-26(2022).

<sup>83</sup> *Id.*

<sup>84</sup> Omotosho (supra note 82).

<sup>85</sup> Baba (supra note 71).

<sup>86</sup> M K Aliyu and J T Kayode, (supra note 50).

<sup>87</sup> Ayorinde (supra note 76).

<sup>88</sup> *Anti-slavery* (supra note 8).

<sup>89</sup> *Anti-slavery* (supra note 8).

with some later funnel-lead into begging rings.<sup>90</sup> These operations commodify children from birth, ensuring a renewable supply.<sup>91</sup> In some cases, traffickers can earn substantial profits, such as up to \$40,000 annually by exploiting disabled children in begging activities.<sup>92</sup> The global context suggests that forced labour, including forced begging, generates significant illegal profits. For instance, forced labour worldwide is estimated to yield over \$236 billion annually.<sup>93</sup>

Large-scale exploitation in forced begging allows traffickers to accumulate significant profits by controlling many beggars, exploiting vulnerable groups, maintaining control over earnings, and operating with relative impunity.

## **VII. Legal Perspective on Forced Begging in Nigeria**

Forced begging is a pervasive issue in Nigeria, often linked to human trafficking and exploitation. It is viewed as a criminal activity, particularly when it involves children. It involves coercing individuals, particularly children and vulnerable adults, into begging as a means of survival. This practice is not only morally reprehensible but also illegal under Nigerian law. This paper will examine the Nigerian laws addressing forced begging in Nigeria. The national laws to be examined in this paper are Criminal Code Ordinance 1916 as amended,<sup>94</sup> Penal Code (Northern States Provisions Ordinance 1960, as amended (PC)),<sup>95</sup> Child Rights Act (CRA) 2003, Kano State Street-Begging (Prohibition) Law, 2013, Kano State Child Labour (Prohibition) Law, 2014 and Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018.

The Criminal Code Ordinance 1916 (as amended) now Criminal Code Act Cap C3 Laws of the Federation 2004 applies in Southern Nigeria and includes provisions that indirectly address begging, such as Section 249 of the Act, which criminalises causing children to beg in public places. The Nigeria's CCA criminalises forced begging and related activities, particularly targeting those who exploit others for this purpose.<sup>96</sup> The provision categorises such acts as

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<sup>90</sup> Omotosho (supra note 82).

<sup>91</sup> EASO Nigeria, Trafficking in Human Beings country of Origin Information Report 2021' < (Apr. 5. 2025, 10:04am), [https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2021\\_04\\_EASO\\_Nigeria\\_Traffic\\_king\\_in\\_Human\\_Beings.pdf](https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2021_04_EASO_Nigeria_Traffic_king_in_Human_Beings.pdf).

<sup>92</sup> IOM (UN Migration) (supra note 28).

<sup>93</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO), Profits and Poverty: The Economics of Forced Labour, (Apr. 5. 2025, 10:04am), [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed\\_norm/@ipecc/documents/publication/wcms\\_918034.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_norm/@ipecc/documents/publication/wcms_918034.pdf).

<sup>94</sup> Criminal Code Act Cap C3 Laws of Federation of Nigeria 2004.

<sup>95</sup> Penal Code Cap 53 Laws of Federation of Nigeria 2004.

<sup>96</sup> Criminal Code Act, s 249.

offences under "idle and disorderly persons," with specific emphasis on coercive begging practices. The provision of Criminal Code Act<sup>97</sup> in Nigeria categorises certain individuals as "idle and disorderly persons," including those involved in forced begging.

The section provides for four categories of individuals considered idle and disorderly. The first category are common prostitutes; these are persons engaging in disorderly or indecent behaviour in public places or soliciting for prostitution. The second category are beggars wandering or placing oneself in public to beg or gather alms, or causing, procuring, or encouraging children to do so. The third category are gamblers, these are persons playing games of chance for money in public places. The fourth category are peace disruptors, these are persons conducting themselves in a manner likely to cause a breach of the peace in public places.<sup>98</sup> The categories is encapsulated in subsection (b) which prohibits "*every person wandering or placing himself in any public place to beg or gather alms or causing or procuring or encouraging any child or children so to do.*"<sup>99</sup> This clause criminalises both direct begging and coercive acts that compel others (especially children) to beg.

The language "causing or procuring" implies intentional facilitation or exploitation, covering forced begging scenarios. The law applies to public spaces (roads, intersections, markets, etc.). It targets not only individuals engaged in begging but also third parties who orchestrate or profit from it (e.g., human traffickers or guardians forcing children to beg). Violators face one month imprisonment.<sup>100</sup> Repeat offenders may face harsher penalties<sup>101</sup> under section 250, including longer imprisonment terms.

The Penal Code is used in Northern Nigeria, it prohibits acts that could lead to begging, such as exposing children to harm.<sup>102</sup> The Penal Code in Nigeria addresses the issue of forced begging, particularly as it concerns the exploitation and abandonment of children under the age of 12 years.<sup>103</sup> This provision criminalizes acts that expose or abandon children in a manner that makes them vulnerable to forced begging or other exploitative activities. Section 237 prohibits exposing or abandoning a child under the age of 12 years, thereby criminalizing acts that lead to exploitation, including forced begging.<sup>104</sup> The law prescribes a maximum

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<sup>97</sup> Criminal Code Act,s 249.

<sup>98</sup> Criminal Code Act,s249(b)

<sup>99</sup> Criminal Code Act,s249(b).

<sup>100</sup> Criminal Code Act, s249.

<sup>101</sup> Criminal Code Act,s 250.

<sup>102</sup> Penal Code,s.237.

<sup>103</sup> Penal Code, s 237.

<sup>104</sup> Baba( supra note 71).

punishment of seven years imprisonment for offenders, along with an unspecified fine or both. This is stricter compared to similar provisions in the Criminal Code Act, which prescribes up to 10 years imprisonment for comparable offences.

The implication of section 237 is that the section specifically targets scenarios where children are abandoned or exposed, which often results in their involvement in begging either directly or through coercion. This section<sup>105</sup> aligns with broader legal measures aimed at combating child labour and exploitation. The relatively severe punishment under provision <sup>106</sup> serves as a deterrent against acts that lead to forced begging, particularly involving minors. By dealing with abandonment and exposure, the section<sup>107</sup> indirectly tackles one of the root causes of forced begging which is vulnerability due to lack of care and protection. The Penal Code appears more focused on child-specific protections compared to the Criminal Code Act. For instance, section 237 explicitly considers abandonment and exposure as criminal acts tied to exploitation.<sup>108</sup>

The Child's Rights Act 2003 in Nigeria addresses various forms of child exploitation, including forced begging. The CRA<sup>109</sup> specifically prohibits buying, selling, hiring, or otherwise dealing in children for purposes such as begging for alms, prostitution, or any unlawful or immoral purpose.<sup>110</sup> Anyone who contravenes these provisions is liable to imprisonment for a term of ten years upon conviction.<sup>111</sup> While the Act does not explicitly state that begging by children is illegal, it prohibits using children for begging as part of broader protections against exploitation.<sup>112</sup> Despite legal protections, enforcement remains a significant challenge due to societal and economic factors that contribute to child begging.<sup>113</sup>

The Kano State Street-Begging (Prohibition) Law, 2013, was enacted by the Kano State government under Governor Rabi'u Kwankwaso to address the issue of street begging, particularly by *alma jirai* and other vulnerable groups. The purpose of the enactment of this law is to reduce the prevalence of begging on the streets and improve public safety and social welfare. The law prohibits begging in public places, including streets, markets, and other

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<sup>105</sup> Penal Code,s237.

<sup>106</sup> Penal Code,s 237.

<sup>107</sup> Penal Code.s237.

<sup>108</sup> Baba (supra note 71).

<sup>109</sup> Child Rights Act 2003,s 30.

<sup>110</sup> Lawglobalhub, Section 30 of Nigerian Child's Right Act, (Apr.12,2025,10:04am)  
<https://www.lawglobalhub.com/section-30-nigerian-childs-right-act-2003>.

<sup>111</sup> *Id.*

<sup>112</sup> Consortium(supra note 72).

<sup>113</sup> *Id.*

areas where people commonly gather. This includes both children and adults engaging in begging activities. Initially, enforcement was delegated to various boards and ministries, such as the Hisbah Board, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Women's Affairs. However, these bodies were often preoccupied with other tasks, leading to ineffective enforcement.<sup>114</sup>

In response to the ineffective enforcement, the Kano State government established an agency for the evacuation and emancipation of beggars. This agency is tasked with clearing roads of children who endanger their lives by begging or cleaning car windshields.<sup>115</sup> The penalty for street begging is that parents whose children are found begging may face legal action if they allow their children to continue begging after being counseled. The law also involves biometric identification to track repeat offenders.<sup>116</sup>

The Kano State Child Labour (Prohibition) Law, 2014, was enacted to address the widespread issue of child labour in the state. The Kano State Child Labour (Prohibition) Law, 2014, operates within the context of other laws, including the Child's Rights Act, which aims to protect the rights of all children in Nigeria.<sup>117</sup> This law is part of broader efforts to protect children from exploitation and ensure their rights are upheld. While the law primarily focuses on child labour, it indirectly addresses aspects related to human trafficking by prohibiting the exploitation of children. The law prohibits the employment of children in hazardous or exploitative conditions.<sup>118</sup> It aligns with national legislation, such as the Child Rights Act, 2003, which prohibits children from being subjected to forced or exploitative labour.<sup>119</sup>

Section 6(1) of the law explicitly states that a child shall not be used for the purpose of begging for alms. This provision is designed to protect children from being exploited for begging, which is often linked to poverty and lack of educational opportunities.<sup>120</sup> The law stipulates that any person who contravenes this provision commits an offence and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term of one year or a fine not exceeding one hundred thousand Naira (N100,000), or both.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Hum Angle, 'Poor Parenting Endangering Kano's Next Generation, (Apr.12,2025,3:04pm) <https://humanglemedia.com/poor-parenting-endangering-kanos-next-generation/>.

<sup>115</sup> *Id.*

<sup>116</sup> *Id.*

<sup>117</sup> Child Right Act 2003,s 1.

<sup>118</sup> Child Right Act 2003, s 2.

<sup>119</sup> Child Right Act 2003,ss 28,30.

<sup>120</sup> Baba (supra note 71).

<sup>121</sup> *Id.*

The Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act, 2015 is a comprehensive legal framework aimed at combating human trafficking in Nigeria. The Act has three main objectives: Firstly, to provide a legal framework for the prohibition, prevention, detection, prosecution, and punishment of human trafficking offenses.<sup>122</sup> Secondly to protect victims of human trafficking.<sup>123</sup> Thirdly, to collaborate with national and international organisations to achieve these objectives.<sup>124</sup> The Act led to the establishment of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), which is responsible for enforcing the provisions of the Act.<sup>125</sup>

The Act defines trafficking broadly, including the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of persons for exploitation, which encompasses forced begging.<sup>126</sup> While it does not specifically address forced begging, its provisions against exploitation can be applied to combat this issue. The Act established the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), which can play a role in addressing forced begging by identifying and prosecuting traffickers who exploit individuals for begging.<sup>127</sup> The Act prescribes severe penalties for trafficking offences, which can deter those involved in exploiting children for begging. Part III, of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act, 2015, focuses on the prohibition of human trafficking and outlines specific offences and penalties.<sup>128</sup>

Section 13(1) explicitly states that all acts of human trafficking are prohibited in Nigeria. This provision that the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of a child for exploitation is considered trafficking, even if no force or coercion is involved.<sup>129</sup> Section 13 outlines the *actus reus* (prohibited acts) and *mens rea* (mental intent) required to constitute trafficking offenses, while also addressing penalties and victim protections. Section 13 states that (1) “*All acts of human trafficking are prohibited in Nigeria*” This blanket prohibition applies to all forms of exploitation including forced begging, sexual exploitation and forced labour. Section 13(2) criminalizes specific acts of trafficking. A person commits an offence if they recruit, transport, transfer, harbor, or receive another person using threats, force, abduction, fraud, deception, or abuse of power/vulnerability giving/receiving payments to

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<sup>122</sup> Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act 2015, s.1(a).

<sup>123</sup> Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act 2015, s.1(b).

<sup>124</sup> Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act 2015, s.1(c).

<sup>125</sup> Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act 2015, s 2(1).

<sup>126</sup> Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act 2015, s 82.

<sup>127</sup> Ojedokun (supra note 61 )

<sup>128</sup> Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act 2015 TIPPEAA 2015, s.13.

<sup>129</sup> Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act 2015, s.13 (4)(b).

control a person for exploitation. Conviction attracts imprisonment of not less than 2 years and a fine of not less than ₦250,000.

Section 13(2)(ii) clarifies that abuse of vulnerability includes exploiting an individual's personal, situational, or circumstantial vulnerability (e.g., poverty, disability, or age) to coerce them into trafficking. For example, traffickers targeting alma Jiri children for forced begging would fall under this provision. Section 13 explicitly criminalizes forced begging by defining it as exploitation under trafficking. Traffickers using children or vulnerable adults for begging face severe penalties. The Act's focus on children ensures that Alma Jiri children forced into begging are legally recognized as trafficking victims, warranting state protection.<sup>130</sup> While Section 13 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act 2015 does not directly tackle forced begging, it provides a legal framework that could be applied to prosecute cases involving forced begging as a form of exploitation. The TIPPEAA 2015 focus on protecting vulnerable individuals and prohibiting various forms of exploitation makes it a crucial tool in combating forced begging and similar practices in Nigeria. The Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act, 2015, is a crucial step towards addressing forced begging and other forms of human trafficking in Nigeria. However, its effectiveness depends on robust enforcement, public awareness, and addressing the socioeconomic factors that contribute to these practices.

The Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018 is a landmark Nigerian legislation aimed at protecting the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities (PWDs),<sup>131</sup> prohibiting all forms of discrimination, and promoting their full integration into society.<sup>132</sup> The Act was signed into law in January 2019 and applies primarily to the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, with provisions for adoption by individual states.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Joanna Rotdelma Dyitkuka & Omomem Musa Agboneni, A Critique of the Legal Framework for Combating Human Trafficking in Nigeria 11(1)COL<ABULJ, 97-118(2023).

<sup>131</sup> Olaniwun Ajayi, Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018-Overview and Impact, The Newsletter (Apr. 12, 2025), <https://www.olaniwunajayi.net/blog/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/DISCRIMINATION-AGAINST-PERSON-S-WITH-DISABILITIES-PROHIBITION-ACT-2018-OVERVIEW-AND-IMPACT-1-1.pdf>.

<sup>132</sup> Okata, Ihenyerem Kubor, An Exploration against of Nigeria's Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities Prohibition Act 2018- A Legal Practitioners Perspective (Unpublished Thesis Master of Art, University of Manitoba, 2024).

<sup>133</sup> Olaniwun Ajayi (supra note 131).

Specifically, section 16 prohibits employing or involving persons with disabilities in begging or parading them in public to solicit alms, with penalties including fines and imprisonment.<sup>134</sup> However, forced begging persists due to systemic issues such as poverty, weak enforcement of laws, and cultural practices. The Act's prohibition against involving persons with disabilities in begging directly addresses one facet of forced begging, aiming to protect disabled individuals from exploitation. However, the persistence of forced begging, especially among children in the Alma Jiri system and disabled persons, highlights enforcement gaps and the need for comprehensive social interventions beyond legal prohibitions

## VII. Challenges in Combating Forced Begging in Nigeria

Forced begging is a pervasive issue in Nigeria, deeply intertwined with socioeconomic challenges and cultural practices.<sup>135</sup> Despite being one of Africa's largest economies, Nigeria struggles with widespread poverty and inequality, which drive many individuals, particularly children, into begging as a means of survival.<sup>136</sup> The alma jiri system, a traditional Islamic educational framework, has evolved into a system where children are often forced to beg, exacerbating the problem.<sup>137</sup> The involvement of transnational beggars further complicates the situation, as it introduces additional challenges related to migration and exploitation.<sup>138</sup> Combating forced begging in Nigeria is fraught with numerous challenges, including lack of specific legislation, enforcement gaps, social challenges, institutional challenges and economic constraints.<sup>139</sup>

The absence of specific legislation addressing forced begging in Nigeria is a significant barrier to effectively combating this issue. While there are general laws against human trafficking and exploitation, they often fail to address the unique dynamics of forced begging. Existing laws like the Criminal Code Act and Penal Code criminalise certain acts indirectly

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<sup>134</sup> Policy and Legal Advocacy (PLAC),The Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities(Prohibition)Act,(Apr.13,2025 10:04AM), <https://placng.org/i/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/The-Discrimination-Against-Persons-with-Disabilities-Prohibition-Act.pdf>.

<sup>135</sup> Ojedokun (supra note 61).

<sup>136</sup> Anti slavery International (supra note 8).

<sup>137</sup> UNICEF, Children Adjust to Life Outside Nigeria's Alma Jiri System<(Apr.13,2025 10:04AM),<https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/stories/children-adjust-life-outside-nigerias-almajiri-system>

<sup>138</sup> UNICEF (supra note 137).

<sup>139</sup> Policy and Legal Advocacy (PLAC),The Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities(Prohibition)Act,(Apr.14,2025 10:04AM), <https://placng.org/i/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/The-Discrimination-Against-Persons-with-Disabilities-Prohibition-Act.pdf>.

linked to begging, such as child abandonment or exploitation, but do not explicitly define or prohibit forced begging as a standalone offence. This creates gaps in legal enforcement and prosecution.<sup>140</sup> For instance, while the Kano State Street-Begging (Prohibition) Law, 2013, attempts to address begging locally, its impact is limited geographically and does not tackle forced begging comprehensively across Nigeria.<sup>141</sup>

Enforcement gaps are a significant challenge in combating forced begging in Nigeria. The porous nature of Nigeria's borders, as highlighted in studies on transnational organised street begging, allows for the easy entry of foreign beggars, complicating enforcement efforts.<sup>142</sup> This makes it difficult to track and prosecute those involved in forced begging across borders. In some regions, cultural practices like the alma Jiri system are deeply ingrained, making it challenging for law enforcement officers to intervene effectively without being seen as interfering with religious or cultural norms.<sup>143</sup>

Social challenges play a significant role in perpetuating forced begging in Nigeria, making it difficult to combat the issue of forced begging effectively. These challenges are rooted in cultural practices, poverty, and weak social protection systems. The alma Jiri system in Northern Nigeria,<sup>144</sup> originally intended for Quranic education, it has evolved into a practice where children are sent to Islamic schools but are forced to beg due to insufficient support systems.<sup>145</sup> This deeply ingrained cultural tradition complicates efforts to eradicate forced begging, as it is often defended on religious or cultural grounds.<sup>146</sup>

Economic challenges significantly contribute to the persistence of forced begging in Nigeria. Nigeria, despite being one of Africa's largest economies, faces high poverty rates. About half of its population lives in extreme poverty, which drives many to beg as a survival strategy.<sup>147</sup> The current economic crisis in Nigeria, characterized by inflation and declining purchasing

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<sup>140</sup> Baba (supra note 71.)

<sup>141</sup> *Id.*

<sup>142</sup> Ojedokun (supra note 62).

<sup>143</sup> S. Babangida et.al, Interrogating the Factors of Street Begging in Kaduna Metropolis Kaduna State Nigeria[(11)ASSR49-71(2021).

<sup>144</sup> Adegbite and Odetunde( supra note 44).

<sup>145</sup> A O Fatai et.al, Security and Socio-Economic Consequences of Street Begging in Nigerian Cities 5(1) POLAC Int.JHSS 19-31, (2020).

<sup>146</sup> Aliyu and Kayode( supra note 50).

<sup>147</sup> Adegbite and Odetunde (supra note 45).

power, has led to an increase in the number of beggars.<sup>148</sup> People are no longer ashamed to beg due to economic necessity.<sup>149</sup>

Current anti-begging laws in Nigeria are often punitive, focusing on prosecution rather than rehabilitation or addressing the root causes of begging. For example, the Lagos State Street Trading and Illegal Markets Prohibition Law emphasises punitive measures without offering viable alternatives for individuals who depend on begging for sustenance.<sup>150</sup> Enforcement of anti-begging laws is inconsistent and lacks coordination among different government agencies and law enforcement entities. This inconsistency leads to uneven application of the law, with some areas experiencing more stringent enforcement than others.<sup>151</sup> There is a lack of effective coordination between institutions such as the Nigeria Police Force, the Nigeria Immigration Service, and other relevant agencies. This fragmentation hampers the ability to tackle forced begging comprehensively.<sup>152</sup> Institutions responsible for combating forced begging often face resource constraints, including inadequate funding and insufficient personnel. These limitations impede the implementation of effective strategies to address the issue.<sup>153</sup> With an estimated 10 million children involved in forced begging, the potential financial rewards for traffickers are substantial. This large-scale exploitation allows traffickers to accumulate significant profits from the begging activities.<sup>154</sup> Traffickers often operate within organised networks, which enable them to control multiple begging locations and manage many beggars.<sup>155</sup> This organisation helps in coordinating efforts to maximise profits. The lack of effective regulation and enforcement in Nigeria contributes to the persistence of forced begging.<sup>156</sup> This allows traffickers to operate with relative impunity, maximising their financial gains.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> M Babatunde & Kuraun, 'More Beggars, Fewer Patrons: How Economic Hardship is Forcing Good Samaritans Away from Beggars', *Tribune Newspaper* March, 10, 2024.

<sup>149</sup> Emelike Obina, 'More Nigerians Slip into Beggars' Clan as Economy Worsens', *Business Day* 17 September, 2023.

<sup>150</sup> Adegbite and Odetunde (supra note 44).

<sup>151</sup> *Id.*

<sup>152</sup> Ojedokun (supra note 61).

<sup>153</sup> Adegbite and Odetunde (supra note 44).

<sup>154</sup> Anti-Slavery (supra note 8).

<sup>155</sup> IOMX, 'Human Trafficking for Forced Begging', (Apr. 14, 2025 10:04AM), [https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/our\\_work/DMM/MAD/07312017/ForcedBegging.pdf](https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/our_work/DMM/MAD/07312017/ForcedBegging.pdf)

<sup>156</sup> Michala Sempron (supra note 80)

<sup>157</sup> UNODC, 'Study on Illicit Financial Flows associated with Smuggling of Migrant and trafficking in Persons from Glo-Act Partner Countries in Europe', (Apr. 14, 2025 10:04AM), [https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/2023/New\\_publications/GLOACT\\_Study\\_on\\_Illicit\\_Financial\\_Flows\\_-\\_E-Version.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/2023/New_publications/GLOACT_Study_on_Illicit_Financial_Flows_-_E-Version.pdf).

## IX. Impact of Forced Begging on Victims in Nigeria

Forced begging is a pervasive issue in Nigeria, where vulnerable individuals, often children or adults, are coerced into begging on the streets. This form of exploitation has severe and far-reaching impacts on its victims, affecting their physical health, psychological well-being, and socio-economic stability. Victims of forced begging frequently face physical abuse and neglect, which can lead to injuries and health problems.<sup>158</sup>

More-so, the psychological trauma caused by such experiences can result in anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).<sup>159</sup> The social stigma associated with begging also complicates victims' reintegration into their communities, limiting their access to education and employment opportunities.<sup>160</sup>

One of the impacts of forced begging on victims is social impact. This occurs as a result of the breakdown of the family system as forced begging often involves children being separated from their families, leading to emotional trauma and a breakdown in family structures. This can result in long-term psychological effects and social isolation for both children and parents.<sup>161</sup> Beggars are frequently stigmatized, which exacerbates their social isolation and makes reintegration into society more difficult. This stigma can also perpetuate negative stereotypes about begging.<sup>162</sup> Forced begging removes individuals from the workforce, contributing to a loss of economic productivity and potential for personal development. Beggars are not economically productive, as they do not contribute to the formal economy.<sup>163</sup> It fosters a culture of dependency rather than encouraging self-reliance or entrepreneurship, which could contribute to economic growth. This dependency can perpetuate cycles of poverty.<sup>164</sup>

Psychological and health implications are also the impact of forced begging on victims in Nigeria. Victims of forced begging often experience psychological trauma, including anxiety, depression, and feelings of hopelessness. The *alma jiri* system, for example, exposes children

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<sup>158</sup> Oloko S T and Odejimi B ,Causes and Consequences of Street Begging among Children in Ibadan Nigeria 6(1)JRCTE 1-12,(2015).

<sup>159</sup> Makolo S. O& Akinyele I. O, Forced Begging and Psychological Trauma among Street Children in Nigeria,2(1) JTSD,1-10 (2019).

<sup>160</sup> Ojedokun ( supra note 61).

<sup>161</sup> Ant-slavery International (supra note 8).

<sup>162</sup> Fawole et al (supra note 48)

<sup>163</sup> *Id.*

<sup>164</sup> Musediq Olufemi Lawal ,A Qualitative Study of public Health and Policy Implication of Street Begging in Nigeria,2(54) Acta Politica Polonica 67-82,(2022).

to physical, psychological, and sexual violence.<sup>165</sup> Beggars are exposed to health risks such as malnutrition, diseases, and physical abuse. These conditions are exacerbated by lack of access to healthcare services.<sup>166</sup>

The issue of security concern is one of the impacts of forced begging on victims. Since forced begging is linked to organised crime network with some beggars used as fronts for illegal activities like theft or drug trafficking. This poses significant security threats to communities.<sup>167</sup> Beggars are found in urban and rural areas and their presence in large numbers can contribute to social unrest, as they may be perceived as a threat to public order or safety. This can lead to increased tensions between beggars and local communities.<sup>168</sup>

Another impact of forced begging is that it denies children access to education which is important for personal development and future economic opportunities. Without it, individuals are more likely to remain in poverty and continue the cycle of begging. The alma Jiri system, originally meant to provide education, now often exploits children through begging.<sup>169</sup> Lack of education means that children are more likely to grow up without the skills or knowledge needed to escape poverty, perpetuating cycles of poverty across generations<sup>170</sup>

## **X. Efforts of Governments and Non -Governmental Organisation in Combating Forced Begging in Nigeria.**

The Nigerian government has implemented legal, policy, and rehabilitation measures to address forced begging. For instance, the Child Rights Act criminalizes forced child begging and mandates free basic education. However, inconsistent adoption persists, particularly in northern states where cultural practices like the alma Jiri system remain entrenched.<sup>171</sup> The government of Nigeria has made efforts to enact a federal law, that Prohibits human trafficking and forced begging, enforced by the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Anti-Slavery(supra note 8)

<sup>166</sup> Asunogie O.F & Osagioduwa M, Street Begging and its Socioeconomic Implications on Auchi Metropolis 4(4)DRJMSS65-73(2023).

<sup>167</sup> *Id.*

<sup>168</sup> Fawole et. Al(supra note 48).

<sup>169</sup> Anti- slavery (supra note 8)

<sup>170</sup> Nura Ahmad & Hassan Malami Alkanchi, Causes and Effects of Street Begging on Muslim Children in Sokoto Metropolis16(1&2)JAS,1-16(2023).

<sup>171</sup> Anti- slavery ( supra note 8).

<sup>172</sup> Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement Administration Act 2015.

The government has also made some state-level interventions to combat forced begging in Nigeria. For example, in Lagos state the government established rehabilitation centers (e.g., Majidun) for beggars, focusing on family reunification and skill acquisition, though facilities often lack adequate resources.<sup>173</sup> In Kano State Piloted school feeding programs in Qur'anic (Tsangaya) schools to reduce hunger-driven begging. Initial results showed reduced child begging, but sustainability remains a challenge. In Jigawa, the government Introduced monthly stipends (₦7,000) for persons with disabilities to reduce dependency on begging. The Federal Government of Nigeria has also made efforts to integrate basic literacy and vocational training into Qur'anic schools, aiming to reduce exploitation and improve employ-ability.<sup>174</sup>

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have played a significant role in combating forced begging in Nigeria, particularly among vulnerable groups like Alma Jiri children. These efforts include advocacy, research, community-based interventions, and policy recommendations aimed at addressing the root causes of forced begging.

Organizations like Anti-Slavery International (ASI) and CHRICED have been actively advocating for child protection laws and raising awareness about the plight of Alma jiri children who are often subjected to forced begging.<sup>175</sup> They emphasize the importance of empathy and inclusion while discouraging narrow criminalization of begging, which risks further marginalization of vulnerable groups.<sup>176</sup>

NGOs have focused on integrating formal education into the lives of street children. Initiatives such as universal education programs and school feeding schemes aim to reduce the dependency on begging by addressing hunger and educational needs.<sup>177</sup> Hunger has been identified as a primary driver of forced begging. Some NGOs advocate for well-equipped rehabilitation centers and monthly survival allowances for beggars as alternatives to street begging. These measures aim to provide sustainable support for destitute individuals.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Anna Onayese, Effective Methods of Combating Street Begging in Nigeria as Perceived by Panhandlers,3 (7) JPPAR ,93-99(2013).

<sup>174</sup> *Id.*

<sup>175</sup> Anti- slavery ( supra note 8).

<sup>176</sup> Antislavery(supra note 8).

<sup>177</sup> Anna Onayese (supra note 173).

<sup>178</sup> *Id.*

## **XI. Conclusion and Recommendations for Addressing Forced Begging in Nigeria**

Forced begging as a financially rewarding business in human trafficking in Nigeria is a complex issue that underscores the darker aspects of exploitation. This practice of forced begging thrives due to systemic failures, economic hardship, and cultural vulnerabilities. Forced begging in Nigeria is a lucrative business for traffickers, who exploit vulnerable individuals, including children and disabled persons, to generate substantial profits. This practice is deeply entrenched in the socio-economic fabric of the country, exacerbated by poverty, lack of education, and ineffective legal enforcement. Despite legal measures such as the Child Rights Act and the Kano State Street-begging (Prohibition) Law, 2013, the prevalence of forced begging persists due to inadequate implementation and societal challenges. The financial rewards from forced begging are substantial, as traffickers exploit cultural and religious sentiments to maximize earnings. However, this comes at a significant human cost, including psychological trauma, social isolation, and the denial of education and economic opportunities for victims. Addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach that includes strengthening legal frameworks, enhancing education access, and implementing economic empowerment programs to break the cycle of exploitation and poverty. Ultimately, combating forced begging as a financially rewarding business in human trafficking in Nigeria demands a concerted effort from government, civil society, and individuals to protect vulnerable populations and promote sustainable development. The government of Nigeria should move from penalising begging to addressing root causes like hunger and lack of education, advocating for standardized non-formal education, school feeding programs, and stronger collaboration between government, law enforcement, and child protection agencies.