



*ChildVoice students at the Malkohi Host Community Camp near Yola, Nigeria.*

## **A Story of Hope for Human Trafficking Awareness Day**

Talata runs a small hairdressing salon and tailoring business in the border city of Yei, South Sudan, just north of the Ugandan border. It's a modest business, but it generates enough income for Talata to provide a decent life for her daughter, Maska.

Seeing Talata today, you would never suspect that at the age of 13, she was forced to turn to prostitution to survive.

The odds seemed stacked against Talata from the very beginning. Her father died when she was very young. Her mother had little money, and she and her five siblings—each from a different father—consistently went without the most basic needs, forcing Talata to resort to stealing food just to have something to eat. And while she was able to attend school for a few years, she struggled due to persistent hunger. By the time she reached the third grade, she dropped out of school to take small jobs—anything to make money for food.

Talata's home life was chaotic, and she frequently suffered abuse at the hands of her mother, who eventually abandoned her family, leaving Talata in the street with nothing but the clothes on her back.

It was at that time that Talata, just 13 years old and desperate to survive, was brought to a brothel and recruited to work as a prostitute. She became a child mother at the age of 14.

Life in the brothel was also hard and often brutal, and Talata was jailed several times. Hope for a better life seemed beyond her reach. But then she learned about ChildVoice and joined eagerly. She learned life-changing vocational skills that she's since employed to build her own successful business back in her hometown of Yei.



The city of a quarter-million people has seen hard times due to protracted conflict in the region, but it is Talata's home. Here in Yei, in the place where she once lost all hope, she's proven to both herself and the world that being a victim of human trafficking isn't an inevitable fate for marginalized adolescent girls. Given the chance and the tools to do so, they can build better lives for themselves and their children.

Violence, displacement, and poverty form a vicious cycle that together greatly increase a child's vulnerability to human trafficking and exploitation.

A [2019 study](#)<sup>1</sup> by IntraHealth International, in conjunction with the United States CDC and the South Sudan Ministry of Health, indicates that over there are over 5,000 sex workers in the city of Juba, South Sudan, alone.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) [reported in 2020](#)<sup>2</sup> that the various ways in which children, adolescent girls, and young women are known to be trafficked or exploited in South Sudan include:

- domestic servitude (which can include sexual exploitation)
- forced marriage (which can include sexual exploitation)
- sex work (including "survival" prostitution and recruitment for brothels)
- military recruitment (mostly in support roles such as cooks and porters)

According to the IOM report, between 2014 and 2018, 403 girls and 5,320 boys were recruited by armed forces groups.

Trafficking is also a particularly significant problem in Nigeria. Nigeria's National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) [reports](#)<sup>3</sup> that approximately 1 million people--the majority of them women and children--are trafficked annually within Nigeria.

## Citations:

1. Okiria, A. G., Bolo, A., Achut, V., Arkangelo, G., Michael, A., Katoro, J., . . . Hakim, A. (2019, March 18). Novel Approaches for Estimating Female Sex Worker Population Size in Conflict-Affected South Sudan. Retrieved January 11, 2021, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6441857/>
2. Harley, L., for IOM (2020, July 28). Trafficking in persons in South Sudan Prevalence, Challenges and Responses. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20200724%20TiP%20full%20report%20low%20re%20solution.pdf>
3. 1m trafficked in Nigeria annually – NAPTIP (n.d.). Retrieved January 11, 2021, from <https://dailytrust.com/1m-trafficked-in-nigeria-annually-naptip>