

PAPER SUBMITTED IN CONTRIBUTION TO THE VISIT OF THE U.N.
SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON EXTREME POVERTY AND HUMAN RIGHTS
TO GHANA

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STUDIES

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Profile

The Eban Centre for Human Trafficking Studies (ECHTS) is an independent, political, but non-partisan membership organization focused on ending human trafficking; in both its causes and consequences. We recognize the fact that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. We therefore, seek to create an environment that protects the rights of all people, especially individuals vulnerable to human trafficking and help government to improve its response, and highlight new forms of human trafficking and slavery affecting Ghana. We achieve these by collaborative partnerships, direct engagement and conducting high-quality independent research. Based on our research, we provide innovative, practical recommendations that advance two broad goals: Strengthening state and non-state stakeholders' effort in combating trafficking and providing innovative and influential policy guidelines that harness the prevention, protection and prosecution of traffickers in Africa and beyond.

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Background

In Africa inequality is far from a new phenomenon. Following independence, and in the decades since, wealth has, to a great extent, remained concentrated in the hands of elites who replaced the colonial powers and failed to reform existing structures and redistribute assets. It is argued that the pursuit of equality is not just a moral imperative, not just vital for the poor and for the social cohesion and wellbeing of society; it is also necessary for a stable economy. For example, the scourge of inequality has had a real role in the current intractable economic and financial crisis.

Ghana was on track to achieving ahead of time the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1 target of reducing by half the proportion of people living in extreme poverty at the national level, and in rural and urban areas. Yet, the inequality gap is still widening and pushing many down the red line of poverty. Although government has implemented various social protection programmes such as the LEAP (Livelihood empowerment against poverty programme), targeting is poorly done and the people who really deserve help to cushion them out of poverty are not benefiting. Government influence in the targeting mechanism of poor household is preventing the social protection programmes from achieving its goals.

The sixth Ghana Living Standard Survey (GLSS 6) estimates that there are more than 8.6 million children between the ages of five and 17 in Ghana. Over 1.8 million (21.8 per cent) of them are engaged in child labour and over 1.2 million (14.2 per cent) are engaged in hazardous child labour. Research has shown that most victims of child trafficking are from poverty stricken homes. Although poverty is generally recognized as one of the causes of child trafficking, locating and defining it has been problematic¹.

To understand human trafficking, it is necessary to investigate the role poverty plays. Rather than restricting the discussion on poverty to its measure, research on trafficking needs a broad concept of poverty that covers deprivation of capabilities and opportunities. To trace the roots of child trafficking and sex trafficking networks, it is crucial to understand how poverty renders victims of trafficking vulnerable.

Sex trafficking another form of trafficking is highly prevalent in Ghana due to rising inequality levels and distribution of income.

Sex Trafficking In Ghana

Varied reasons have been canvassed for sex trafficking; poverty is a major reason for victims' vulnerability to it. Coupled with lack of formal education, as well as the absence job opportunities, Ghana is gradually becoming a major source of supply fueling the global sex trade.

¹ Ruggeri Laderchi et al (2003) however indicate the importance of clear definition of the term "poverty" by arguing that its clarification and definition is very vital because different definitions imply the use of different indicators for measurement and this may result to identifying different individuals and groups as poor and require different policies in reducing poverty.

The 3 forms of Sex Trafficking in Ghana

1. Internal

I. Rural Urban Migration

Rural-urban migration has been prevalent over the past few decades as people move in search of employment and better social services and infrastructure. This migration trend contributes significantly to rapid urban growth in Ghana. In addition to other factors such as the natural increase in urban populations and the reclassification of formerly rural areas as urban. Since the 1960s, population censuses have consistently revealed that six regions in Ghana; namely the Central, Eastern, Volta, Northern, Upper East and Upper West have largely been net out-migration regions, with the three northern regions having the highest out-migration rates. In contrast, the Greater Accra, Brong-Ahafo, Ashanti and Western regions are in-migration areas. These patterns of internal migration are a reflection of regional disparities and differential rural-urban poverty in the country (MOI, 2014). The existing disparities have led to a situation of lack of job opportunities for a huge section of the youthful population, compelling them, especially the young girls, to migrate in search of jobs in the Southern parts of the country. Consequently, young females who migrate to the in-migration regions; Greater Accra, Ashanti Region; Brong Ahafo; Western Region in search of non-existing jobs may be lured by the economic benefits of sex trafficking.

II. Local Apprenticeship

Children have always occupied a special position in Ghana because; they are considered the custodians of the future. In the pre-colonial days, children were the most precious of one's possessions (Gyekye, 1996). Although no child welfare system existed per in the pre-colonial Gold Coast, it was customary for the extended family, through kinship foster care and other community networks, to provide care and protection for children whose parents were unable to do so². Orphans were also cared for by childless members of the clan. Community members were also committed to the welfare of children because; they believed it "took a village to raise a child". Therefore, when children did not have biological families to care for them, the community felt indebted to provide guardianship.³ The advantage of this system for children was that they always had more than two adults whom they could depend on and who were concerned about their welfare. This system of care involves sending children to learn a trade. In the process of learning the trade as an additional duty they are coerced or lured by their mistresses or masters into embracing the business of sex trade with interested clients.

III. Sex Tourism:

The growing demand for sex tourism is equally met by a growing supply base made up of university students. This is as a result of the existing economic challenges especially, in getting jobs. Parents inability to secure jobs, are unable to cater for their wards in the tertiary level. Thus, students tend to look for unconventional means to sustain themselves while in school.

² (Goody, 1966).

³ Ansah-Koi, 2006.

2. Migrants

Cross boarder trafficking occurs in Ghana, and there is evidence of it happening especially for sexual exploitation of women and children. Young girls and women are trafficked from Nigeria, Cote D'Ivoire, Togo, Benin etc. into Ghana. Through coercion and sometimes consent they engage in the business of sex trade. Many are spiritually manipulated into the trade. They are therefore, scared of escaping due to spiritual consequences as they have been conditioned to believe.

3. Activities of Travel Recruitment Agencies

For most women, cross country trafficking or illegal migrant smuggling is connected with fraudulent recruitment agencies, recruiting young females to Europe, America and the Arab world including Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to do non-existent jobs promised to them. Ghanaian women are trafficked to Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, the Gambia, South Africa, Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Russia, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, and the United States for forced labour and sex trafficking.

The Supply Chain of Sex Trafficking in Ghana

The past decade has seen considerable increase in domestic and international trafficking of Ghanaian, Francophone and Nigerian women and children. Ghanaians have been trafficked to various parts of the world including Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. A new emerging trend has seen the emergence of the trafficking of Ghanaian women to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to work as domestic servants and in some situations, promised non-existent blue and white-collar jobs. In situations where Ghanaian migrants are unable to acquire jobs promised by travelling agencies, they are coerced into accepting sex trade as means of survival or paying for debts owed to travel agents and their new masters. This trend has led to some young Ghanaian ladies coerced into the act of sex trade.

To understand and formulate the needed policies to arrest this situation, there is the need to understand the business perspective that informs the processes and business model used by traffickers. Trafficking can thus, be compared to international trade processes with the trafficked victims serving as "goods" which are bought, sold and made use of as commodities. The adoption of the term "goods" is for the understanding of the business model being used as in the case of international trade.

However, unlike other commodities or cargo, human beings are more complex. This makes this business model a peculiar one. The need for care during the process of transporting them may not always be legal. Victims are often under coercion to function in a particular way, often being denied of any kind of choice or location and the mode of performing that function. Based on this assumption, the model to be used will illustrate business model behind trafficking. The model may not be perfect; however, it serves as lens for further understanding of how traffickers operate.

Three (3) major links are used;

1. Supplier;
2. Assembly/Manufacturing;
3. Retailer/Service Provider;

Supplier

The traditional supplier is concerned with how to transport and bring the products to the market. So, like raw materials, these victims are located and extracted from their original location with the use of force.⁴

Traffickers use several methods in locating and recruiting victims. Recruitment agencies recruit friends and family members and “pimps”⁵ to recruit and sometimes via social media platforms. Victims are provided with travel documents and are then transported willingly or unwillingly via legal or illicit means. Transportation may include actors like corrupt border officials and criminal activities like irregular migrants (Richard, 2010).

For instance, in Ghana, Travel Recruitment Agencies exploits unsuspecting vulnerable youth who are in desperate search of employment opportunities. They are provided with fraudulent recruitment documents with the promise of good salaries and benefits. Many are transported to countries such as Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Russia, etc. On arrival, promises made proved to be null and non-existent. Their documents are confiscated and they are coerced into domestic servitude, which later evolves into sex trade and slavery like practices. Many of such scenarios have been published⁶.

Assembly/Manufacturing;

The next stage involves the manufacturing and assembling of goods, which are prepared for commercial purposes. Similarly, victims of trafficking can be manipulated in order to make them functional as planned. The process attempts to guarantee the following: (1) the victims need to be able to perform their tasks; (2) Victims will not have to object or refuse the command of traffickers. Submission must be made possible to the highest degree. At this stage, traffickers use an assortment of threats, physical pressure and psychological pressure to dehumanize victims to keep them in check. With the objective of satisfying clients; traffickers and their business counterparts often employ different mechanisms to test their products and victims.

⁴ (United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, 2010)

⁵ a man who controls prostitutes and arranges clients for them, taking part of their earnings in return.

⁶ <https://www.myjoyonline.com/news/2015/April-2nd/abused-gang-raped-and-left-pregnant-aminas-one-year-hell-in-saudi-arabia.php>

Traffickers with the intention to sell victims may in the process exploit the victim for a while in the same way that his client may do. The analysis will therefore present concrete cases that reveal how the mechanisms work.

Typical example is that of the character Amina as described by “Myjoyonline.com”, who was locked, stripped naked, and had his slave master did some incantations, sprinkled water on her and locked her inside a room. Amina did all the cleaning in every space within the five-storey building. She had her head smashed against the wall by her employer for 'offences' such as unsatisfactory cleaning. These actions were done to dehumanize and make her subdue to engaging clients arranged for her.

Retailer/Service Provider;

This stage is followed by the service of the retailer. Trafficked victims are offered up for use and exploitation. The retailer provides interactions that presents goods or offers a service for purchase by customers. Through the need to offer girls to the prospective customers, triggers the need for necessary marketing. Decisions are then made as to how to market the product and how to make contact with the customers. This may therefore, involve trafficked victims to illicit businesses, which employs domestic servants. Alternatively, traffickers must decide on how to market trafficked victims to clients who require the use of prostitutes and this is done through formal and informal communication channels. In the case of formal communication channels, travel recruitment agencies advertise for jobs abroad, which may ultimately lead to sex trade.

Recent happenings, where university students and beauty pageants⁷ have been alleged to serve as escorts for high-ranking officials. Also, involved are selected hotels and escorts agencies. These are the notable ways smart sex traffickers' use in acquiring sex workers for their clients.

Key obstacles to implementation of the Human Trafficking Act are mainly:

1. Ineffective collaborative mechanisms to fight trafficking
2. Inadequate Government budgetary allocation to carry out mandated activities in the Human Trafficking Act by MoGCSP and for that matter the Human Trafficking Secretariat
3. The Anti-Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU) remains under-staffed and under-funded. AHTU officials are the only state officials mandated to prosecute trafficking cases yet their limited resources hamper government's ability to adequately address the number of cases brought to the Unit each year. And the high level of beaureucrazy in the government structure.

⁷ <https://www.myjoyonline.com/entertainment/2017/december-18th/audios-miss-ghana-winners-say-pageant-is-escort-service-organisers-hold-panic-meeting.php>