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INTRACTABLE PROBLEMS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

A COLLECTION OF ESSAYS
ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING
IN AFRICA

Collection of Essays: Your Voice in Tackling Human Trafficking in Africa

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Editors



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Table of Contents

Editors and Development Process	iii
Contributors Biographies	i
Acknowledgments	iii
INTRODUCTION	iv
<i>Aristid Banyurwahe & Gift Gawanani Mauluka</i>	<i>iv</i>
Overview of the essays	iv
Outlook and Invitation to Dialogue	vi
EXPERIENTIAL METHODS OF DEALING WITH HUMAN TRAFFICKING	1
<i>Ejiroghene Ogoye Okparavero & Prudence Adula Okparavero</i>	<i>1</i>
BEYOND BORDERS: TACKLING HUMAN TRAFFICKING THROUGH STRUCTURAL REFORM, REGIONAL COOPERATION, AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE	12
<i>Gerald Mandisodza</i>	<i>12</i>
RURAL-URBAN TRAFFICKING OF GIRLS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: TRENDS AND EFFECTS IN THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA	21
<i>Nicodemus U. Msika</i>	<i>21</i>
WEAVING THE SHIELD TO TACKLE THE ACHE OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN AFRICA.....	30
<i>Grace. N. Sitati</i>	<i>30</i>
TRANSFERABLE IDEAS OR INNOVATION FOR TACKLING HUMAN TRAFFICKING	40
<i>Ihuoma Okorie</i>	<i>40</i>

Editors and Development Process

The volume is co-edited by Prof. Thoko Kaime and Gift Gawanani Mauluka. Prof. Dr Thoko Kaime is the holder of the Chair of African Legal Studies at the University of Bayreuth. He is an internationally recognized expert in public international law with a research focus on international human rights law and international environmental law. His work is characterized by an interdisciplinary approach that focuses on the interfaces between law, legitimacy, and public participation in international rulemaking and implementation processes.

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INTRODUCTION

Aristid Banyurwahe & Gift Gawanani Mauluka

Human Trafficking is one of the most relevant forms of human rights abuse and has its effects on the African continent in several ways. Overseas transit metropolises, slums, and big port cities, as well as rural areas that are hardly accessible for human rights defenders, are the scenes of action for forced prostitution, exploitative child labor, and forced recruitment of young children to non-state armed groups. Nigeria is just one prominent example with an estimated 750,000 to 1 million people forced into begging, prostitution, domestic servitude, armed conflict and labour exploitation.¹

Despite existing international agreements to tackle this issue, numerous legislations at domestic levels, and a broad number of aid projects in this area, there are still notable deficits in the prevention and prosecution of human trafficking. These deficits result from insufficient involvement of communities that are particularly vulnerable to human trafficking in creating strategies to combat this issue, bureaucratic hurdles, and insufficient collaborations between state institutions and civil society organizations.²

This collection of essays gives a voice to upcoming African researchers, who portray systemic failures as well as potential solution approaches. Including African voices has two benefits here: On the one hand, it ensures epistemic justice. On the other hand, through this combination of theoretical and practical approaches, these essays better reflect on-ground realities.

The collection at hand comprises five excellent essays submitted in response to the essay writing competition 'Your Voice in Tackling Human Trafficking in Africa.' The competition was organized and advertised by the Chair of African Legal Studies at the University of Bayreuth, Germany, a leading institution in the field, and funded by the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence. The competition addressed students, civil society actors, activists, and young researchers from the African Union's member states. The goal was to provide young people from the continent, whose voices are underrepresented in the global discourse on human trafficking, with the opportunity to share their perspectives. Due to their originality, the selected contributions can all enrich the discourse on African human trafficking.

Key Questions and Objectives

The following questions form the conceptual basis for the following contributions:

1. Empowerment and prevention: How can young people be guiding forces in the fight against human trafficking?
2. Community-based interventions: What role do local networks, notably Civil Society Organizations, play in establishing adequate support and reporting mechanisms?
3. Innovation potential: To what extent do technological advances open sustainable approaches to lower the vulnerability of potential victims and break through existing structures?

Overview of the essays

In their essay 'Experiential Methods of Dealing with Human Trafficking,' Ejiroghene Ogoye Okparavero and Prudence Adula Okparavero focus on experimental, multidisciplinary

¹ Eromo Egbejule, 'I miss home': 13-year-old Nigerian girls trapped and exploited in Ivory Coast sex industry' *The Guardian* (Abuja, 26 August 2024).

² Jeanine Nshimirimana, 'Challenges Facing the East African Community in the Effective Implementation of Human Trafficking Laws within the Region' (2024) 8(2) IJRIS <https://rsisinternational.org/journals/ijriss/articles/challenges-facing-the-east-african-community-in-the-effective-implementation-of-human-trafficking-laws-within-the-region/> accessed 27 May 2025.

interventions that extend beyond traditional legal measures. Based on the proposal of poverty alleviation programs, public health initiatives, and data-driven approaches, the authors argue that a combination of anti-terrorism measures and social welfare provides more effective protection against exploitation than isolated policymaking. This essay is based on a literature review and analyses of international legal frameworks, an evaluation of innovative experimental projects, an examination of case studies, and policy comparisons.

In his essay 'Beyond Borders: Tackling Human Trafficking through Structural Reform, Regional Cooperation, and Community Resilience,' Gerald Mandisodza analyses the complex problem of human trafficking in the SADC region. Based on a case study of a trafficked girl from Zimbabwe, Mandisodza analyses structural weaknesses in national legal systems and shows that effective countermeasures can only be achieved through a combination of structural reform, cross-border cooperation, and strengthening the resilience of local communities. His methodological approach includes a qualitative case analysis, the evaluation of relevant legal norms, and a critical reflection on international standards such as the Palermo Protocol.

In his essay 'Rural-Urban Trafficking of Girls in Sub-Saharan Africa: Trends and Effects in the United Republic of Tanzania', Nicodemus Msika draws attention to the underestimated link between rural poverty and urban exploitation. The focus is on young girls who are lured to cities under the pretext of education or employment and forced into domestic labor or sexual exploitation. The study combines statistical analyses of poverty and education data with an examination of national legislation and qualitative studies to highlight structural risk factors and protection gaps in the Tanzanian system.

The essay 'Weaving the Shield to Tackle the Ache of Human Trafficking in Africa' by Grace Sitati approaches the topic from an international legal and political perspective. It emphasizes the need for coordinated partnerships in the combat against human trafficking. Using legal benchmarks and examples of good practice, the author demonstrates that neither national solo efforts nor mere legislative reforms are sufficient. Instead, close interaction between international norms, regional legislation, and civil society engagement is required. The essay is based on doctrinal legal analysis, supplemented by comparative policy analysis and exemplary case studies of successful public-private partnerships.

In the last essay, 'Transferable Ideas or Innovation for Tackling Human Trafficking,' Okorie Ihuoma explains that the sustainable prevention of human trafficking in African societies cannot be achieved solely through legal prohibitions and criminal prosecution, but rather, above all, through a 'bottom-up' approach. Based on proverbs, personal experiences, and observations, she demonstrates how values such as individual responsibility, contentment, cultural pride, and cultural awareness can be systematically integrated into schools, parental homes, religious communities, and social media to make young people resistant to exploitative structures. Her methodological approach is auto-ethnographic as she uses qualitative reflections on her cultural values as an empirical basis, supplemented by literature-based contextualization.

Target Audience

This edited collection is addressed to:

1. Academics in law, social science, and political science who are looking for interdisciplinary analyses,
2. Practitioners in non-governmental organizations, faith-based initiatives, and politics need concrete methods for prevention and intervention,
3. Decision-makers in governments and funding organizations who want to implement evidence-based models and

4. Students who want to gain practical insight into research and advocacy on human trafficking.

Outlook and Invitation to Dialogue

With this publication, we are opening an open space for discourse in which research and practice go hand in hand. The contributions collected here offer a wide range of perspectives and approaches - from empowerment strategies and community-based prevention to technological and economic innovation potential. We invite you to not only read the following essays but also to think further about their concepts, apply them in your context and develop them further in dialogue with other stakeholders.

Only through collective commitment, interdisciplinary cooperation, and the courage to explore new avenues can human trafficking in Africa be combated sustainably and real prospects opened for the people affected.

EXPERIENTIAL METHODS OF DEALING WITH HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Ejiroghene Ogoye Okparavero & Prudence Adula Okparavero

1. Introduction

Regarded as the world's third-largest crime, human trafficking is an activity that is globally condemned.¹ It is a pervasive global issue that involves the exploitation of individuals for forced labour, sexual exploitation and other forms of servitude.² Despite significant efforts to combat this crime, traditional methods fall short in addressing human trafficking due to its multifaceted nature. There is a growing interest in experimental methods that can offer innovative solutions to this pressing challenge.³

To discuss these experimental methods and related issues, this paper is divided into six parts. After the introduction, the second part provides an overview of human trafficking. The third and fourth parts of the paper, respectively, highlight previous efforts in addressing human trafficking and the results achieved so far. Rather than relying on conventional approaches, this paper adopts a nuanced analysis of the underlying factors that perpetuate human trafficking, proposing innovative solutions to address these challenges.

Building on existing jurisdictional approaches to anti-human trafficking efforts, the fifth part of the paper undertakes a critical examination of their efficacy. It identifies opportunities for experimental interventions to augment these efforts in Nigeria. The paper concludes with the sixth part.

2. An overview of Human Trafficking

Human Trafficking has been described as the modern analogue of slavery,⁴ as it takes the guise of slavery in modern times. The old form- 'slavery' is marked with legal ownership or long-term enslavement. While the new form of slavery- 'human trafficking' is marked by temporary ownership, debt bondage, forced labour and hyper-exploitative contractual arrangements,⁵ as desperate and vulnerable people are treated as 'commodities' to make economic gains.⁶ This indicates that the act of commoditisation of humans, as in slavery, has not changed; only the methods have been altered. In fact, there is more slavery now than in the days of slave trade.⁷ In 2021, there were an estimated 50 million victims of modern slavery in the world, more than were enslaved during the Transatlantic Slave Trade.⁸

¹ Sandra Keefer "Human trafficking and the impact on National Security in the United States" (Strategy Research Project 2006) < <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA448573.pdf> > accessed 16 December 2024; Francis Miko, *Trafficking in Women and Children: The US and International Response*, (Library of Congress, Washington, DC 2004).

² Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act, 2015, s 82

³ Ella Cockbain and Edward Kleemans. "Innovations in Empirical Research into Human Trafficking: Introduction to the Special Edition." (2019) *Crime, law, and social change* vol. 72.1

⁴ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2009. Hereinafter 'UNODC 2009'.

⁵ Bales Kevin, *Understanding Global Slavery: A Reader* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) p 17

⁶ Maggy Lee 'Introduction: Understanding human trafficking' in Lee Maggy (ed.) *Human trafficking* (Routledge 2013) 3

⁷ Bales Kevin, 'Expendable People: Slavery in the Age of Globalization' (2000) 53(2) *Journal of International Affairs* 461.

⁸ Katharine Bryant and Todd Landman, 'Combatting Human Trafficking since Palermo: What Do We Know about What Works?' (2020) 6 *Journal of Human Trafficking* 119.

In order to address human trafficking as a distinct offence, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons was adopted.⁹ The core objective of the protocol is to prevent human trafficking, prosecute offenders and protect victims.¹⁰ Article 3(a) defines trafficking in persons as an action being the recruitment, transportation, harbouring or receipt of persons, by a means of coercion, abduction, deception or abuse of power or vulnerability, for the 'purpose' of exploitation. It further provides that exploitation at a minimum includes sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery, and slavery-like practices. In fact, several forms of exploitation have been found to take place in illegal markets such as the supply of human beings for several activities like forced labour, forced criminal activities, sexual exploitation, forced begging, harvesting of organs, armed conflicts (e.g., child soldiers),¹¹ and fraudulent adoption.¹² These activities are not limited to the illegal circle, and they also occur in legal workplaces such as restaurants, hotels,¹³ factories, and farms.

The Palermo Protocol provides for states parties to criminalize human trafficking and to punish the attempt to commit, take part in, or organize offenses related to it.¹⁴ Nigeria, as a signatory to the Protocol, has ratified it via the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act (TIPPEA). The Act's definition of trafficking in persons adopted the definition of the Palermo Protocol but expanded the term 'exploitation' to include pornography and the buying and selling of human beings.¹⁵ It laudably provides that forced labour and the employment of a child as a domestic worker be criminalised.¹⁶

3. Efforts in dealing with human trafficking: A jurisdictional approach.

Since the adoption of the Palermo Protocol, numerous efforts from non-government and government agencies have strived to combat the phenomenon of human trafficking through legal-institutional means, direct interventions, and programs of support for those exploited.¹⁷

The Kenyan government has identified an increased number of trafficked persons and has provided direct services or referrals to non-governmental organization (NGO) for their care. It has also developed a comprehensive bench book to enhance judicial proceedings in labour trafficking cases.¹⁸ Furthermore, the government established guidelines for the disbursement of funds from the National Assistance Trust Fund for Assisting Victims of Trafficking, utilizing the fund to support the economic reintegration of trafficking survivors. Additionally, the government actively solicited feedback from survivors, particularly those exploited in Gulf states, to inform and refine its anti-trafficking efforts.¹⁹

⁹ UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (United Nations: A/RES/55/25, Annex II, 2000). Hereafter 'Palermo protocol'.

¹⁰ Article 2 Palermo Protocol.

¹¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 'Trafficking in Persons Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime' (2000) UN Doc A/RES/55/25, art 3.

¹² The outright sale of newborns through a sham called 'cryptic pregnancy'- this is child trafficking. See, BBC News, 'Nigeria's Miracle Baby Scammers - BBC Africa Eye Documentary' (YouTube, 25 November 2024) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r62xSGw3kcI>) accessed 29 November 2024.

¹³ Eliana Lourenco, Mariana Goncalves and Marlene Matos, 'Trafficking in Human Beings: Portuguese Magistrates' Perceptions' [2019] 5 Journal of Human Trafficking 238.

¹⁴ Article 5, Palermo Protocol

¹⁵ Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act (TIPPEA) Act, s17 and 21.

¹⁶ Fatima Waziri-Azi, 'The Interplay between Corruption and Human Trafficking Epidemic: Implications and Solutions for Nigeria' (Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies' Inaugural Lecture) (2024) 9.

¹⁷ Katharine Bryant and Todd Landman (n10).

¹⁸ United States Department of State, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report – Kenya (2023).

¹⁹ Ibid.

Nigeria's efforts to combat human trafficking are spearheaded by the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP). The Agency is mandated to have specialized departments, such as Investigation, Counselling and Rehabilitation, Public Enlightenment, and Legal and Prosecution. NAPTIP has four Ps strategies: Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, and Partnership.²⁰

Over the years, NAPTIP has implemented various initiatives to counter human trafficking, including legislative and policy reforms, prevention campaigns, victim identification, assistance programs, investigation and prosecution of traffickers, and capacity-building. NAPTIP actively sought partnerships with international entities, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), to harness collective expertise, resources, and support in the fight against human trafficking.²¹ Notably, Nigeria has achieved significant milestones, including being the first African country to secure convictions for anti-trafficking, with a total of 510 convictions to date.²² In *Raji v FRN*,²³ the prosecution secured conviction against the accused who trafficked the victim to Kuwait under the guise of obtaining employment as an artist. However, on arrival, the victim was placed in the custody of two women who engaged the victim in forced labour and sold her from one person to another. The appeal was further dismissed for lack of merit.²⁴

In 2024, Nigeria's efforts to combat human trafficking have been intensified through enhanced collaboration with international partners on law enforcement activities. Furthermore, the implementation of a handover protocol facilitates the referral of children associated with armed groups, including trafficking victims, to receive necessary care. To elevate the quality of services provided to victims and ensure consistency in care standards, NAPTIP has established and launched comprehensive guidelines and minimum standards for service providers supporting trafficking victims.²⁵

In Europe, Germany has strengthened its anti-trafficking efforts by enhancing its victim identification system, conducting awareness campaigns, and improving law enforcement cooperation with non-governmental organisations (NGOs).²⁶ The government also increased investigations, prosecutions, victim assistance, and identified more trafficking victims.²⁷

While Portugal, has notably intensified investigations and prosecutions of suspected traffickers, as well as identification and assistance of presumed trafficking victims. Furthermore, comprehensive training programs have been consistently delivered to various officials. At the same time, law enforcement agencies have actively participated in international collaborations, yielding positive results in identifying potential victims and apprehending suspects.²⁸

4. Do the current Anti-Trafficking Efforts Truly Deliver?

²⁰ National Action Plan on Human Trafficking in Nigeria 2022-2026.

²¹ Emmanuel Idemor Ukhani, Agaba Halidu and Lauretta Azegbeye Achudume, 'The Role of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) in Combating Human Trafficking in Nigeria' [2024] 2(2) *Journal of Political Discourse* 175.

²² National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), NAPTIP Data (December 2021)

²³ (2019) LPELR-47182(CA).

²⁴ See also *Ologbe v FRN* (2024) LPELR (CA); *Bassey v AG Federation* (2015) LPELR-40425(CA); *Ogundare v State of Lagos* (2023) LPELR-60340(CA); see *Ologbe v FRN* (2024) LPELR (CA).

²⁵ United States Department of State, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report – Nigeria (2024).

²⁶ United States Department of State, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report – Germany (2023).

²⁷ United States Department of State, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report – Germany (2024).

²⁸ United States Department of State, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report – Portugal (2024).

Denton agrees that the implementation of anti-trafficking initiatives has led to a surge in the number of traffickers apprehended, as well as increased numbers of trafficked individuals identified by law enforcement.²⁹ However, Bales posits that despite the anti-human trafficking initiatives which has raised awareness and increased funding, more work needs to be done as organizations still grapple with how best to combat human trafficking.³⁰

The Kenyan government fell short of minimum standards in several areas.³¹ Its Victim protection services, especially for adults, were limited and inconsistent. The government relied heavily on civil society for victim services, but did not provide adequate support. Official complicity in trafficking remained a concern, with no reported action against implicated officials. Efforts to protect Kenyan victims abroad, particularly in Gulf countries, were also limited.³²

While the Nigerian government failed to meet minimum standards in several critical areas, corruption, including among NAPTIP officials and the judiciary, remained a significant concern, perpetuating impunity for traffickers. Waziri classified the levels of corruption related to human trafficking into four. The first is bribery of law enforcement officers, obstructing investigations and prosecutions. The ripple effect of this act undermines due process and evidentiary integrity. It further violates victims' rights to justice and state protection under domestic and international law. Secondly, the complicity of government officials, providing fake travel documents and ignoring victims' exploitation, is a high level of corruption that promotes trafficking in persons. This amounts to both administrative misconduct and criminal complicity.³³ The third category identified is obstruction of justice, including evidence tampering and witness intimidation. This is a violation of international standards of fair trial under Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The implication is acquittals or delayed justice, emboldening traffickers and weakening deterrence. Lastly, corruption in recruitment agencies and immigration processes enables traffickers to exploit victims.³⁴ Border security and international cooperation frameworks, such as ECOWAS Free Movement Protocols, are in turn undermined.

In fact, the government's anti-trafficking efforts waned, with fewer investigations and prosecutions compared to the previous period. Moreover, the government's efforts to identify and protect vulnerable populations, including internally displaced persons, women, children, and those exploited in begging rings, were found to be inadequate.³⁵

Scholars confirm that despite the increasing attention and collaborative efforts directed toward combating human trafficking, challenges persist. These challenges range from the complexities of transnational cooperation and limited resources to the evolving nature of the crime itself. Therefore, it becomes essential to evaluate the effectiveness of NAPTIP in combating human trafficking in Nigeria.³⁶

²⁹ Erin Denton, 'Anatomy of Offending: Human Trafficking in the United States, 2006-2011' [2016] 2 Journal of Human Trafficking 32-33.

³⁰ Bales Kevin, *Understanding Global Slavery: A Reader* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) p 17

³¹ Kenya and Nigeria are on the Tier 2 Watch List of the U.S Department of State, this implies that the country meets the minimum standard in the aspect of compliance to international best practise of anti-human trafficking laws.

³² United States Department of State, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report – Kenya (2023).

³³ See Section 7 of the Advance Fee Fraud and Other Related Offences Act and NAPTIP Act

³⁴ Fatima Waziri-Azi, (n 16).

³⁵ United States Department of State, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report – Nigeria (2024)

³⁶ Emmanuel Idemor Ukhamsi (n 21).

Bryant suggests that post-Palermo, it is imperative to assess progress and re-examine the question, “what works to combat human trafficking?”³⁷ This paper aims to address this question by examining innovative/ experimental approaches employed by other countries and proposed by scholars, to identify promising practices for future interventions.

5. Experimental/Innovative methods of dealing with human trafficking in Nigeria

1. Poverty Alleviation as a Critical Strategy in Combating Human Trafficking

Poverty is often regarded as the “root cause” of trafficking.³⁸ Human trafficking involves individuals utilizing the vulnerability of others as a mode of financial gain.³⁹ It is a demand-driven phenomenon, as there is an existing market that demands victims from the traffickers.⁴⁰ Statistics show that 20.9 million persons were trafficked for forced labour in 2012⁴¹ and 45.8 million people in 2016⁴² while in 2021 the number has climbed to 50 million people.⁴³

Typically, individuals residing in environments characterized by poverty, limited opportunities, and pervasive inequality and discrimination are more susceptible to recruitment by traffickers. The confluence of economic, political, and social factors in these environments creates a heightened sense of insecurity, thereby increasing the risk of exploitation.⁴⁴ The pull factors include perceived images of opportunities for employment or better living conditions.⁴⁵ Hence, traffickers deliberately target and exploit vulnerable individuals by manipulating their weaknesses.

To tackle this issue, scholars have canvassed for a more pragmatic approach and proposed Oxfam GB's perspective on the issue of trafficking in women within the framework of its poverty reduction approach.⁴⁶ This model adopts a survivor-centered approach to combating human trafficking, focusing on the vulnerabilities of women.⁴⁷ There is a growing recognition of the need for a convergence of human trafficking and human development policies. However, it has been observed that the evaluation of the development impact of anti-trafficking initiatives is still in its nascent stages. This presents a fertile area for further academic research, which can provide valuable insights and inform the development of evidence-based policies to effectively address human trafficking.⁴⁸

2. Leveraging Counter-Terrorism Strategies to Combat Human Trafficking

It is noted that the direct links between human trafficking and terrorism are hard to identify, which can be attributed to the covert nature of the crime, thereby making it difficult to determine

³⁷ Katharine Bryant and Todd Landman, 'Combatting Human Trafficking since Palermo: What Do We Know about What Works?' (2020) 6(2) *Journal of Human Trafficking* 119.

³⁸ Gergana Danailova-Trainor and Frank Laczko, 'Trafficking in Persons and Development: Towards Greater Policy Coherence' (2010) 48(4) *International Migration* 38.

³⁹ Hetal Pandya and Hemal Pandya, 'Racial Discrimination and Human Trafficking in India: Challenges Ahead' (2011) 1(6) *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 97.

⁴⁰ Llana, Sarah Miller 'Mexico Massacre: How the Drug War is Pushing Cartels into Human Trafficking' (30 August 2010). < <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Americas/2010/0830/Mexico-massacre-How-the-drug-war-is-pushing-cartels-into-human-trafficking> > accessed 1 December 2024.

⁴¹ ILO Trafficking in Persons Report 2012.

⁴² The Global Slavery Index 2016.

⁴³ The Global Slavery Index 2021.

⁴⁴ Michele Anne Clark, 'Trafficking in Persons: An Issue of Human Security' (2003) 4(2) *Journal of Human Development* 247.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

the extent of the interaction between the two.⁴⁹ Terrorism is an issue of global concern, and human trafficking plays a growing role in the operation of the 21st century operations of terrorist groups. Human trafficking enables child soldiers, domestic servants, sex slaves and executioners and serves as a channel to launch its victims into more structured and well-organized criminal activities.⁵⁰

Armed conflicts amplify the risks of human trafficking for vulnerable populations by increasing economic desperation, weakening the rule of law, decreasing the availability of social services, and forcing people to flee for safety. Armed conflict typically and quickly results in an increase in the demand for trafficking children for exploitative purposes.⁵¹

In Nigeria, reports indicate that Boko Haram has continued to forcibly recruit, abduct, and use child soldiers as cooks, spies, messengers, bodyguards, armed combatants, and increasingly as suicide bombers in attacks in Nigeria, Cameroon, and Chad.⁵² Amnesty International reported that in 2017, Boko Haram used at least 158 children as human bombers. Contemporaneously, it was reported that the group has disproportionately targeted and abducted women and girls during their raids. The victims are subjected to rape, sexual violence, sexual slavery and forced marriages.⁵³

Therefore, it can be deduced that child/human trafficking plays a pivotal role in the ideological expressions of terrorist groups, and without recruits, terrorist groups cannot thrive, as it is a medium of terrorist recruitment. It is therefore imperative to address issues that make persons vulnerable to human trafficking in the affected areas. It is crucial to enhance protection measures to ensure victims, including women and children allegedly associated with armed groups, are not inappropriately penalized solely for offenses committed as a direct result of being trafficked, and prioritize their reintegration. This calls for a further collaboration between NAPTIP, NGOs and the Nigerian Army.

3. The Strategic Role of Data in Combating Human Trafficking

Several limitations inherently challenge human trafficking research. A paramount concern is the reliance on data sourced from law enforcement reports, case law, and records of trafficking arrests and prosecutions. This constraint is further exacerbated by the anticipated prevalence of unreported human trafficking crimes, which are likely to remain undetected and unaccounted for in official statistics.⁵⁴

Research shows that quantifiable data on human trafficking incidents results in further arrests and prosecutions.⁵⁵ Not only so, accurate data are critical for policymakers and legislators to understand the impact of human trafficking in their jurisdictions and develop evidence-based solutions to address this complex issue.

Past efforts to combat human trafficking have been hindered by a lack of comprehensive data, with initiatives focusing on training and intervention neglecting statistical data collection. To

⁴⁹ Howard, Russell D., and Colleen M. Traugher. "The 'new silk road of terrorism and organized crime: the key to countering the terror-crime nexus.'" (2008) *Armed Groups: Studies in National Security, Counterterrorism, and Counterinsurgency*: 371-387.

⁵⁰ Christopher Jaspardo and Jonathan Taylor, 'Climate Change and Regional Vulnerability to Transnational Security Threats in Southeast Asia' (2008) 13(2) *Geopolitics* 241.

⁵¹ Kathryn Farr, 'Armed Conflict, War Rape and the Commercial Trade in Women and Children's Labour' (2009) 16(1&2) *Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies*, 1-31.

⁵² U.S Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report* 2018.

⁵³ Amnesty International, Nigeria: 'our job is to shoot, slaughter and kill': Boko Haram's reign of terror in North East Nigeria (2015) <www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr44/1360/2015/en/> accessed 1 December 2024.

⁵⁴ Erin Denton, "International news coverage of human trafficking arrests and prosecutions: A content analysis." in Francis Bernat (ed) *Human Sex Trafficking*. (Routledge 2011).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

effectively combat human trafficking, it is essential to increase efforts to investigate and prosecute traffickers, as policymakers rely on empirical data to inform decision-making.⁵⁶

Harnessing the power of data-driven research can effectively disrupt the entrenched dynamics of human trafficking, thereby equipping the government with actionable insights and empirical evidence to address the root causes of human trafficking.⁵⁷ The development of informed, evidence-based policies can be facilitated through a nuanced understanding of the evolving dynamics of human trafficking, which includes relevant data for monitoring and tracking progress.

It is convincing to conclude that data-driven research can inform the creation of tailored, region-specific action plans that address the unique trafficking challenges confronting different areas of Nigeria. For instance, the northern region's distinct struggles with trafficking for terrorism, begging, and other forms of exploitation necessitate a bespoke approach. In contrast, the southern region's experiences with fraudulent adoption, labour trafficking, and sex trafficking demand a similarly tailored response. Furthermore, effective collaboration between NAPTIP and the Nigeria Data Protection Commission is essential to ensure the responsible handling and utilization of trafficking data.

4. A Public Health Approach

Legislative efforts over the past decade have produced a patchwork of criminal laws and some assistance programs for victims. There is no evidence, however, that these efforts have reduced the incidence of trafficking. Denton corroborates that many cases of human trafficking remain unreported.⁵⁸ This lack of meaningful progress prompts questions as to what the best framework is for addressing human trafficking.⁵⁹

The limitations of a law-enforcement-centred approach to combating human trafficking are evident in its failure to address the needs of victims and its low success rate in securing convictions. Despite the challenges inherent in prosecuting such cases, the low number of convictions suggests that a law-enforcement-centred approach alone is insufficient to reduce the incidence of human trafficking significantly.⁶⁰

In contrast, a public health approach offers a promising alternative. By emphasizing prevention, public health strategies can effectively reduce human trafficking and better meet the needs of affected individuals and communities.⁶¹ Prevention is a cornerstone of public health programming, whether addressing infectious diseases or violence. By prioritizing prevention, a public health approach can provide a more effective and sustainable solution to combating human trafficking.⁶²

⁵⁶ Eliana Lourenco, Mariana Goncalves and Marlene Matos, 'Trafficking in Human Beings: Portuguese Magistrates' Perceptions' [2019] 5 *Journal of Human Trafficking* 238.

⁵⁷ Kelle Barrick and Rebecca Pfeffer, 'Advances in Measurement: A Scoping Review of Prior Human Trafficking Prevalence Studies and Recommendations for Future Research' (2021) 10(1) *Journal of Human Trafficking* 1-19.

⁵⁸ Erin Denton, 'Anatomy of Offending: Human Trafficking in the United States, 2006-2011' [2016] 2 *Journal of Human Trafficking* 32-33.

⁵⁹ Jonathan Todres, 'Moving Upstream: The Merits of a Public Health Law Approach to Human Trafficking' [2011] *North Carolina Law Review* 89(2) 447.

⁶⁰ Cooper, Fallon Isabella, Van Bommel, Pauline Van der Leun, et al. 'Factors That Influence The Criminal Justice Response To Human Trafficking: A Systematic Review Of North American And European Studies' (2024) *Crime Law Soc Change* 82, 623-658.

⁶¹ Greenbaum Jordan. "The Public Health Approach To Human Trafficking Prevention" (2019) *Ga. St. UL Rev.* 36, 1059.

⁶² *Ibid.*

A public health perspective highlights the shortcomings of the current approach to human trafficking. In public health, prevention is the primary goal, rather than merely responding to outbreaks or holding perpetrators accountable after harm has occurred.⁶³

Success in public health comes from proactive measures, such as immunization and preparedness, which prevent illness and minimize harm. Similarly, with human trafficking, prevention must be the goal. Arrests, convictions, and victim support services, while important, indicate a failure to prevent victimization in the first place.

Todres advocated for the adoption of public health campaigns that are tailored to transform societal attitudes that lead to risky behaviours.⁶⁴ They target changes at individual, institutional, and community levels to achieve healthier outcomes. Social marketing and advertising campaigns have proven to be highly effective in addressing a range of public health issues.⁶⁵ A notable recent example is the global campaign to raise awareness about COVID-19, which successfully disseminated key messages about the virus and preventative measures to a worldwide audience.

To combat human trafficking, policymakers and advocates must identify concrete steps for individuals and communities to contribute to prevention efforts. Public health campaigns can inform choices in the human trafficking context, modifying behaviour toward healthier actions.⁶⁶

In attaining the aforementioned, there is need for a successful reformulation of awareness messaging that will necessitate strategic partnerships, particularly with the public health sector and NGOs as NAPTIP cannot bear this responsibility alone, and collaborative efforts will be essential to achieving meaningful impact.

5. Conclusion

Human trafficking remains a pervasive challenge that requires innovative and multidisciplinary approaches. While existing frameworks like the Palermo Protocol have advanced the global fight against trafficking, significant gaps remain, particularly in addressing root causes such as poverty, systemic corruption, and insufficient victim protection measures. This paper has highlighted experimental methods, including poverty alleviation, leveraging counter-terrorism strategies, data-driven interventions, and adopting a public health approach as critical avenues for tackling human trafficking in Nigeria.

To effectively implement these strategies, robust collaboration between governmental agencies like NAPTIP, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector is imperative. Nigeria must invest in strengthening institutional capacities, ensuring accountability, and fostering an enabling environment for sustainable anti-trafficking initiatives. Only by integrating these experimental approaches with existing frameworks can the country hope to achieve meaningful and lasting progress in combating human trafficking.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ J Todres (n 59).

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

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BEYOND BORDERS: TACKLING HUMAN TRAFFICKING THROUGH STRUCTURAL REFORM, REGIONAL COOPERATION, AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Gerald Mandisodza

1.1 Introduction

Human trafficking, a form of modern slavery perpetuated by coercion and exploitation, remains a critical issue in Southern Africa, particularly in Zimbabwe. Defined by the UN Palermo Protocol (2000) through its act, means, and purpose, trafficking thrives in contexts of systemic poverty, gender inequality, and weak governance.¹ Scholars regard human trafficking as a form of modern slavery sustained through physical and psychological controls that perpetuate exploitation.² In the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, particularly in Zimbabwe, human trafficking is a complex issue that demands multifaceted solutions. This area acts as a source, transit, and destination for victims, facilitated by porous borders and interconnected vulnerabilities that create a ripe environment for exploitation.³ Zimbabwe is a source country for trafficked individuals, especially women and children, who face labour and sexual exploitation in South Africa, Kuwait, Oman, and other Middle Eastern nations. It also serves as a transit point for victims from Somalia, Ethiopia, and Malawi en-route to South Africa.⁴ Internally, Zimbabwean children are subjected to forced labour in mining, agriculture, and domestic work.

In Zimbabwe, human trafficking thrives because of systemic poverty, gender inequality, and weak governance.⁵ The crisis drew international attention in 2016 when 213 citizens were repatriated from Kuwait, prompting the US State Department to spotlight Zimbabwe's severe trafficking situation.⁶ This issue has since spread to Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, further entrenching poverty and inequality.⁷ Poverty and high unemployment, particularly in rural areas, compel individuals to seek opportunities abroad, rendering them susceptible to false promises by traffickers.⁸ Limited education and vocational training narrow the avenues for escaping poverty, whereas corruption undermines anti-trafficking laws through resource misuse and bribery at borders, facilitating the movement of victims.⁹ Meanwhile, political instability worsens this problem by causing dysfunction in underfunded and poorly trained law enforcement, ultimately hindering human trafficking investigations and prosecutions. Despite

¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 'Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling' (2021) www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/index/html accessed 31 December 2024.

² Maggy Lee, *Trafficking and global crime control* (SAGE 2011) 21.

³ Phyllis Kedibone Chembe, 'Human trafficking in southern Africa' (Doctoral dissertation, University of South Africa 2016), 146.; Charles Mutasa, 'Human Trafficking in Southern Africa' in Alecia Dionne Hoffman and Sabella Ogbobode Abidde (eds), *Human Trafficking in Africa: New Paradigms, New Perspectives* (Springer International Publishing 2021), 275.

⁴ Blessing Zulu, 'Zimbabwe Grappling With Human Trafficking Scourge' (*Voice of America, Zimbabwe*, 1 April 2024) <https://www.voazimbabwe.com/a/human-rights-zimbabwe-grappling-with-human-trafficking-scourge/7551055.html> accessed 31 December 2024.; Charles Mutasa, 'Human Trafficking in Southern Africa', (n 3), 285.

⁵ Chembe (n 3), 284.

⁶ US Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report* (2016), 402.

⁷ Farayi Machamire, 'Zim-Kuwait "slaves" narrate horror tales' (*Nehanda Radio*, 14 June 2016) <https://nehandaradio.com/2016/06/14/zim-kuwait-slaves-narrate-horror-tales/> accessed 31 December 2024.

⁸ Obediah Dodo and Gloria Dodo, *Human trafficking in Zimbabwe: an impediment to national development* (2012).

⁹ Blessing Zulu, 'Zimbabwe Grappling With Human Trafficking Scourge', (n 4). Lydia T Chibwe, 'An appraisal of legislation and policy on human trafficking in Zimbabwe' (LLM Dissertation, University of Pretoria 2016).

anti-trafficking frameworks like the Palermo Protocol, their effectiveness is compromised by inconsistent monitoring and implementation.¹⁰

Political corruption and weak governance in Zimbabwe not only facilitate human trafficking and erode public trust in protective institutions but also necessitate an examination of individual experiences and community responses to fully understand their impact and identify potential grassroots solutions to this complex issue. This paper examines human trafficking in South Africa and Zimbabwe by exploring factors such as social deprivation, corruption, and gender inequality as drivers. It advocates for a comprehensive Africa-wide strategy, including legal reform, community involvement, regional cooperation, and survivor-centred approaches to address root causes. This essay contends that addressing human trafficking requires a multifaceted and comprehensive approach that emphasises structural reform and regional cooperation. The paper examines structural drivers, analyzes cooperation efforts, and concludes with proposals for community resilience.

1.2 Survivor Experiences, Community Initiatives, and Youth Engagement

The severe impact of human trafficking is highlighted through survivors' stories, exposing traffickers' tactics for exploiting vulnerable individuals. Ethically sharing these experiences while maintaining the dignity and privacy of survivors is essential for public education. For instance, MN, a 17-year-old Zimbabwean girl, was promised to work in South Africa but ended up in forced labour under abusive conditions. At the same time, T, a 33-year-old mother, was deceived into sex trafficking under the guise of economic opportunity.¹¹ These stories highlight how traffickers exploit poverty, gender inequality, and legal vulnerabilities. In addition, H.G. was promised lucrative hotel work in Kuwait, but instead suffered forced labour, abuse, and confiscation of his passport, which demonstrates the deceptive tactics of traffickers.¹²

Community-based initiatives, particularly those led by religious organisations such as the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, have been essential for educating the public and mobilising communities against human trafficking.¹³ Fostering resilient community responses, these religious groups train leaders to identify trafficking signs and inform the public, while young people significantly contribute through social media awareness campaigns and peer education, acting as change agents and advocating for stronger anti-trafficking measures.¹⁴ From these experiences and community initiatives, it is clear that a comprehensive pan-African approach is essential, employing a multipronged strategy that integrates legal reforms, enhanced regional cooperation, and innovative solutions to empower local communities and leverage technology to combat pervasive human rights violations.

2.1 Pan-African Strategies and Innovative Solutions to Combat Human Trafficking

2.1.1 Addressing Socioeconomic Drivers

Human trafficking in southern Africa is fundamentally driven by socioeconomic inequalities, encompassing poverty, unemployment, and limited education, vulnerabilities significantly

¹⁰ Paul Oluwatosin Bello and Adewale A Olutola, 'The enforcement of anti-human trafficking law in South Africa: a case of an aircraft without a pilot' (2018) 19 Police Practice and Research 270, 270.

¹¹ Maybe Zengenene, 'Trafficking of women and girls in the District of Seke: Lessons from the Zimbabwe's Second Republic' (2020) 33 Masyarakat, Kebudayaan dan Politik 256, 257-259.

¹² Machamire, (n 7).

¹³ UnitingWorld News, 'Fighting human trafficking in Zimbabwe' <https://unitingworld.org.au/fighting-human-trafficking-in-zimbabwe/> accessed 29 December 2024.

¹⁴ Philip H Frankel, *Human trafficking in South Africa* (BestRed, an imprint of HSRC Press 2023), 36.; Nathaniel Umukoro, 'Human Trafficking in Africa: Strategies for Combatting the Menace' in Alecia Dionne Hoffman and Sabella Ogbobode Abidde (eds), *Human Trafficking in Africa: New Paradigms, New Perspectives* (Springer International Publishing 2021), 81.

exacerbated by political instability and systemic gender inequalities, thereby increasing susceptibility to exploitation.¹⁵ The exploitation of individuals, as tragically illustrated by H.G.'s case, where economic hardship led to deceptive recruitment and abuse in Kuwait, demonstrates the critical need for targeted interventions to address root vulnerabilities.¹⁶ Consequently, developing strategies such as programs offering job training, financial literacy, and support for women-owned businesses is essential to reducing susceptibility to trafficking by providing alternative economic pathways.¹⁷ Equally important are educational interventions that build marketable skills and gender-responsive policies that challenge harmful societal norms, both of which are crucial for mitigating vulnerability.¹⁸ These vital socioeconomic and gender-focused initiatives are ultimately underpinned by robust legal and policy frameworks that serve as the foundation for comprehensive efforts to combat human trafficking.

2.1.2 Legal and Policy Frameworks: Strengthening Enforcement and Regional Cooperation

Combating human trafficking in Africa hinges on legal and policy reform. The African Union's ten-year plan emphasizes comprehensive legal reform, prosecution of offenders, and intergovernmental cooperation.¹⁹ The Southern African Development Community (SADC) has also initiated policies on skill development, capacity building, victim support, and public awareness.²⁰ However, critics argue that these measures prioritize immigration control and law enforcement over addressing root socioeconomic issues.²¹ A unified subregional anti-trafficking treaty, expanding on the Palermo Protocol, could provide a more holistic approach to addressing the underlying causes, particularly by strengthening law enforcement and border controls to dismantle smuggling networks that exploit weak enforcement and porous borders in countries such as Zimbabwe, thereby facilitating the transportation of victims.²² Enhancing investigative capacity is essential for identifying, prosecuting, and detecting trafficking, as evidenced by the potential impact of robust legal action, exemplified by the 30-year sentence of Caroline Ziyanga. However, the rarity of these cases highlights the need for more consistent and widespread enforcement.²³

Regional cooperation enhances enforcement effectiveness through cross-border collaboration and partnership. Key measures include information sharing, cross-border training, and improved border control to dismantle human trafficking networks. Investment in surveillance technologies and the establishment of joint task forces among SADC states enhance surveillance and facilitate the cross-border prosecution of traffickers.²⁴ Effectively combating human trafficking requires a unified, multi-stakeholder approach that integrates legal reforms, enhanced enforcement, and regional cooperation. This approach involves collaborative initiatives, such as joint task forces and training, which facilitate coordinated

¹⁵ Zengenene (n 11).

¹⁶ Sally Nyakanyanga, "I Was Going to Starve": A Story of Trafficking and Escape in Kuwait' (*Women & Girls Hub, News Deeply*, 7 November 2016) <https://deeply.thenewhumanitarian.org/womenandgirls/articles/2016/11/07/going-starve-story-trafficking-escape-kuwait.html>, accessed 30 December 2024.

¹⁷ Paul Oluwatosin Bello, 'Effective response to human trafficking in South Africa' (2019) 12 *African Journal of Criminology and Justice Studies* 1.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Alecia Dionne Hoffman and Sabella Ogbobode Abidde (eds), *Human trafficking in Africa: New paradigms, new perspectives* (Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2021).

²⁰ Mutasa (n 3) 276; Frankel (n 14) 145.

²¹ Nina Mollema, 'Combating human trafficking in South Africa: A comparative legal study' (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria 2013).; Mutasa (n 3) 279.

²² Bello (n 17); Zengenene (n 11).

²³ Zulu (n 4).

²⁴ Hoffman & Abidde (n 19).

action and information exchange. Additionally, support for local civil society ensures adaptable, community-focused interventions.²⁵ Combining public awareness, community engagement, and practical solutions, these strategies can create a sustainable framework to fight trafficking in human beings in Zimbabwe and beyond.

Regional cooperation is crucial to combating human trafficking in Southern Africa, and bilateral agreements among SADC member states, along with mechanisms such as the Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization (SARPCCO), facilitate information sharing and coordinated law enforcement efforts.²⁶ Successful interventions such as Zimbabwe's collaboration with Kuwaiti authorities to rescue trafficked women demonstrate the effectiveness of transnational partnerships.²⁷ However, to strengthen regional responses, SADC states must harmonise data collection and reporting systems, enabling evidence-based policy interventions and improving the monitoring of trafficking trends.²⁸ Beyond legal frameworks, operational measures such as joint task forces, cross-border training initiatives, and resource pooling are essential for dismantling trafficking networks and ensuring the prosecution of offenders. Nevertheless, while institutional mechanisms provide the foundation for anti-trafficking efforts, public awareness remains vital for translating policy into tangible action.

2.1.3 Public Awareness, Community Engagement, and Practical Solutions

Public awareness and community involvement are crucial in the fight against trafficking in human beings, especially in resource-intensive contexts, such as Zimbabwe. The current efforts include coordinated initiatives between governments, notably through the National Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons (NAPLAC) (2020-2028), and local and international non-governmental organisations, including the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Love Justice International.²⁹ These programmes use a variety of communication channels, including traditional and social media, in addition to community platforms (schools, religious institutions and local assemblies) to inform the public about identification and prevention of exploitation.³⁰ Using existing local structures offers a cost-effective strategy for grassroots campaigning against human trafficking.³¹

However, the impact of these initiatives remains limited across Zimbabwe and the broader Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. Challenges include inconsistent awareness depth, with public understanding often superficial and unable to keep pace with the evolving tactics of traffickers, particularly in digital spaces.³² Outreach to remote and marginalized communities remains inadequate, hindered by logistical barriers and the need

²⁵ Frankel (n 14).

²⁶ Chembe (n 3).

²⁷ The Sunday Mail, 'Zim women auctioned as sex slaves' (8 May 2016) <https://www.sundaymail.co.zw/zim-women-auctioned-as-sex-slaves> accessed 20 December 2024.

²⁸ Mutasa, 'Human Trafficking in Southern Africa' (n 3).

²⁹ IOM Zimbabwe, 'Counter-Trafficking Programme' <https://zimbabwe.iom.int/counter-trafficking-programme> accessed 21 April 2025.

³⁰ Thabisani Dube, 'The Scourge of Human Trafficking in Zimbabwe: A Call to Action' (*New Ziana*, 21 March 2025) <https://newziana.co.zw/the-scourge-of-human-trafficking-in-zimbabwe-a-call-to-action/> accessed 21 April 2025; Kudakwashe Dube, Hillary Mugota and Joshua Machinga, 'A Community's Fight Against Vulnerability to Child Labour and Trafficking Through Awareness and Action' (*ZELA Blogs*, 25 February 2025) <https://zela.org/a-communities-fight-against-vulnerability-to-child-labour-and-trafficking-through-awareness-and-action/> accessed 21 April 2025.

³¹ Nicea Gumbo, 'Girl child trafficking from Zimbabwe to neighbouring countries, an analysis of the interventions by government and selected non-governmental organisations' (MA Dissertation, University of Zimbabwe 2008).

³² US Department of State, *2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Zimbabwe* (2024) <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-trafficking-in-persons-report/zimbabwe/> accessed 21 April 2025.

for sustained, tailored messaging.³³ Additionally, Zimbabwe's historical legal definition of trafficking, previously centred on *cross-border movement*, has obscured the recognition of internal trafficking and non-mobile exploitation, further complicating awareness efforts.³⁴ While reporting mechanisms exist, low public trust, accessibility gaps, and insufficient victim protection services undermine their utility.³⁵ Law enforcement inconsistencies, as noted in previous reports, exacerbate this issue, creating a perception of inadequate consequences for offenders and support for victims.³⁶ Consequently, despite awareness campaigns, systemic weaknesses perpetuate population vulnerability and impede meaningful reduction in trafficking.³⁷ Media outreach, including radio broadcasts on stations such as Radio Zimbabwe, Star FM, and National FM, extends efforts to rural areas.³⁸ However, shifting media consumption patterns and a declining reliance on traditional radio are diminishing their reach. Although stations now supplement broadcasts with social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp, this digital shift excludes communities with limited Internet access, highlighting a persistent urban-rural digital divide in anti-trafficking messaging.³⁹

Community-level initiatives play a key role in the fight against trafficking in human beings in Zimbabwe, particularly in raising awareness among vulnerable groups.⁴⁰ Collaborative programmes, led by local and international NGOs, often in partnership with government agencies, utilise workshops, awareness-raising initiatives, and grassroots campaigns to combat exploitation.⁴¹ For example, the Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (ZELA) and Save the Children have conducted awareness campaigns in high-risk areas such as Mudzi, using road shows and local media to inform communities about the dangers of child labour and trafficking.⁴² Similarly, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has conducted capacity-building seminars for civil society groups, religious organisations, and community leaders, utilising theatre and interpersonal communication to disseminate relevant messages on human trafficking.⁴³ These initiatives not only train local stakeholders to identify indicators of trafficking but also set up community reporting mechanisms. By involving trusted local structures, these programmes demonstrate the viability of grassroots interventions while promoting the transformation of social norms, including the involvement of men and boys in the dismantling of harmful practices.⁴⁴

Beyond raising awareness, Zimbabwe's anti-trafficking efforts include survivor-centred support programs, primarily facilitated by NGOs and international organisations.⁴⁵ These

³³ Gumbo (n 30).

³⁴ Zororai Nkomo, 'The Conundrum of Combating Child Trafficking in Zimbabwe' (*AfricLaw blog* 11 March 2025) <https://africlaw.com/2025/03/11/the-conundrum-of-combating-child-trafficking-in-zimbabwe/> accessed 19 April 2025.

³⁵ IOM Regional Office for Southern Africa, Pretoria, 'Training enhances coordination between Government and Civil Society against trafficking in persons' <https://ropretoria.iom.int/news/training-enhances-coordination-between-government-and-civil-society-against-trafficking-persons> accessed 21 April 2025.

³⁶ US Department of State (n 32).

³⁷ Val Ingham-Thorpe, *Parliamentary Briefing Paper on Human Trafficking* (Veritas, March 2011) https://www.veritaszim.net/sites/veritas_d/files/Parliamentary%20Briefing%20Paper%20on%20Human%20Trafficking_0.docx accessed 21 April 2025.

³⁸ Claudia Macaveiu, Lorraine Wong and Lorenzo Guarcello, 'Factors, Counter-Trafficking Programs, and Geographical Variations in Human Trafficking Literature (2010–2022)' (2024) *Journal of Human Trafficking* 1.

³⁹ Tilda Moyo, a prominent radio and TV personality, has produced a variety of reality talk shows that are both educational and informative, including those featuring individuals convicted of human trafficking in Zimbabwe, <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/15MRxsXsZh/>; <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/16QBdzRjsp/>

⁴⁰ Frankel (n 14).

⁴¹ US Department of State (n 32).

⁴² Dube and other (n 30).

⁴³ IOM Zimbabwe (n 29).

⁴⁴ IOM Regional Office for Southern Africa, Pretoria (n 35).

⁴⁵ US Department of State (n 32).

initiatives provide vocational training, income-generation assistance, and holistic reintegration services to reduce survivors' vulnerability to re-exploitation.⁴⁶ However, while the Trafficking in Persons National Plan of Action (NAPLAC) outlines a framework for national reintegration, implementation remains heavily reliant on external partners owing to resource constraints.⁴⁷ Additionally, although national strategies acknowledge the potential of technology, particularly in data collection and case management, the widespread adoption of cost-effective tools (e.g., mobile-based reporting systems) remains inadequately documented in Zimbabwe's current anti-trafficking landscape.⁴⁸

2.1.4 Comprehensive Support for Survivors in Anti-Trafficking Efforts

Despite public awareness campaigns and interventions at the community level, trafficking in humans continues, and many survivors require long-term, comprehensive support. Effective anti-trafficking strategies need to adopt survivor-centred approaches that not only facilitate rehabilitation and reintegration but also address the systemic vulnerabilities that allow exploitation to occur. Survivors often suffer severe physical and psychological trauma, as illustrated by the case of Zimbabwean women trafficked to Kuwait to work under extreme conditions of abuse and forced labour.⁴⁹ Comprehensive support systems, including medical assistance, psychological counseling, legal aid, and reintegration programs (such as safe housing, vocational training, and financial assistance), are therefore essential to restore the dignity and autonomy of survivors. The Survivor-centred approach goes beyond punitive measures and addresses the rights and needs of victims. The central element of this approach is the provision of trauma-informed care, which is central to the provision of specialised mental health services for the treatment of complex post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and trauma-related attachment.⁵⁰ This requires healthcare providers, first responders, and social workers to be trained to effectively identify and address the psychological needs of victims.

In Zimbabwe, the *Trafficking in Persons Act [Chapter 9:25]* aligns with the Palermo Protocol by mandating victim protection, compensation, and provincial rehabilitation centres. However, implementation gaps persist due to inadequate state funding, leaving NGOs to shoulder the majority of service delivery.⁵¹ However, the practical effectiveness of these legal provisions in ensuring the comprehensive recovery and reintegration of survivors is critically hampered by the lack of government commitment and adequate resources for full implementation, as well as the heavy reliance on NGOs for the provision of services.⁵² In addition to policy consultation, a survivor-centred framework requires the involvement of survivors in the design and assessment of support services, in the creation of peer networks, and in contributing to awareness-raising and education programmes based on their lived experiences. This active participation is essential to ensure that interventions are adapted to the lived experiences of the survivors and thus increase the effectiveness of the programme.⁵³

In addition to participation in programming, ensuring the long-term independence of survivors and reducing the risk of re-trafficking requires comprehensive, individualised support

⁴⁶ Bello (n 17).

⁴⁷ UNODC, *The Zimbabwe Trafficking in Persons National Plan of Action (NAPLAC)*, https://www.unodc.org/documents/southernafrica/Publications/CriminalJusticeIntegrity/TraffickinginPersons/Zimbabwe_TIP_National_Plan_of_Action.pdf accessed 21 April 2025, 12.

⁴⁸ Macaveiu, Wong and Guarcello (n 38); UNODC, *NAPLAC* (n 47).

⁴⁹ The Sunday Mail (n 27).

⁵⁰ Ronald Chambers and others, 'Trauma-coerced Attachment and Complex PTSD: Informed Care for Survivors of Human Trafficking' (2022) 10 *Journal of Human Trafficking* 41.

⁵¹ Zimbabwe, *Trafficking in Persons Act [Chapter 9:25]* 2014, <https://www.laws.africa/zw/act/2014/4> accessed 23 April 2025, s 5; s 8; s 3(4); s 1, art 6.

⁵² UNODC, *NAPLAC* (n 47); US Department of State (n 32).

⁵³ Macaveiu, Wong & Guarcello (n 38).

addressing diverse needs, including economic empowerment through education, vocational training, and employment.⁵⁴ Tailored services, including safe accommodation, legal and financial assistance, complemented by accessible hotlines and referral mechanisms, together with legal frameworks protecting survivors against criminalisation of acts committed under duress and protecting their identity in the context of legal proceedings, are key components of the coordinated safety net.⁵⁵ However, providing such tailor-made support is not yet sufficient in practice, underlining the equally vital need to address the systemic root causes of vulnerability to trafficking in human beings at the same time. Combating trafficking in human beings effectively requires addressing systemic vulnerabilities deeply rooted in poverty, gender inequality, and limited opportunities through coordinated multisectoral interventions.⁵⁶ This requires adequate training of all stakeholders, especially law enforcement and social workers, to develop a truly survivor-centred response that considers victims' rights and needs. Strong monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are essential to ensure that interventions remain relevant and practical, including participatory methods such as survivor feedback and the use of advanced techniques, such as multisystem estimation, for accurate prevalence data and evidence-based policy development.⁵⁷ The most promising approach to promoting sustainable recovery and meaningful social change is to combine comprehensive support systems with structural strategies to reduce vulnerability.

3.0 Conclusion

Human trafficking in the SADC region, particularly in Zimbabwe, represents a severe violation of human rights sustained by systemic failures. Fighting this problem effectively requires a multifaceted strategy that includes survivor-oriented interventions, regional cooperation, regulatory reform, and targeted socioeconomic measures. Addressing root causes such as poverty, inequality, and lack of opportunity requires initiatives such as education programmes and financial assistance to reduce vulnerability and provide viable alternatives to exploitation. Regional cooperation is crucial for dismantling the trafficking networks. Joint task forces and harmonised legal frameworks across SADC countries would strengthen cross-border investigations, information sharing, and overall coherence in the fight against trafficking in human beings. Comprehensive survivor support systems that prioritise trauma-informed care for psychological recovery and economic reintegration are equally important. These measures are crucial to breaking the cycle of exploitation and empowering survivors to reclaim their lives.

The eradication of trafficking in humans ultimately requires an integrated approach that combines structural reforms, community engagement, and multilateral cooperation. This comprehensive framework recognises the interlinked factors that drive trafficking in human beings and underlines the need for sustained commitment at the local, regional, and international levels. Only through coordinated, long-term action can meaningful progress be made towards a fairer and safer society.

⁵⁴ Katharine Bryant and Todd Landman, 'Combatting Human Trafficking since Palermo: What Do We Know about What Works?' (2020) 6 *Journal of Human Trafficking* 119.

⁵⁵ Mollema (n 21); Bryant & Landman (n 54).

⁵⁶ Bryant & Landman (n 54).

⁵⁷ Chambers and others (n 50), Mutasa (n 3); Hoffman & Abidde (n 19).

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RURAL-URBAN TRAFFICKING OF GIRLS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: TRENDS AND EFFECTS IN THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA.

Nicodemus U. Msika

1. Introduction

Rural-urban trafficking of minor girls is a prevalent phenomenon among poor families in Sub-Saharan African Communities. The problem can be witnessed when minor girls are moved from rural to urban areas in search of a good livelihood for themselves and their poor families. Consequently, in the search for a good livelihood for themselves and their poor families, young, innocent, and defenceless girls are exposed to human trafficking. This is because adults with evil will and a vicious thirst for dirty money usually lure young girls from rural areas, promising them and their families a brighter future after these young girls move to urban areas for employment.¹ Most sophisticated and innocent girls are guaranteed to work in good and decent environments as housemaids, maids in nursing homes, shopkeepers, waitresses in restaurants, and other decent working environments.² Unfortunately, these girls end up in dangerous gangs of domestic human traffickers dealing with rural-urban human trafficking and expose young girls to prostitution, unpaid domestic work, and all other sorts of exploitation.³ Minor females are preferred by human traffickers compared with adult females. This is because young girls are often defenceless and can be easily deceived, and are unlikely to be capable of standing up for their rights.⁴

This problem has been prevalent despite there being laws that protect children from employment and laws that prohibit the trafficking of persons; as such, there is a need to rethink how to solve this recurring problem. Several factors are discussed as the causes behind the prevalence of the phenomenon, as well as the effects that have been pointed out on rural-urban trafficking of girls, taking into account the vulnerability of these girls. Lastly, this essay offers solutions that should be adopted to combat the stated problem.

2. Factors Behind Rural-Urban Trafficking of Young Girls

Several factors tend to stand behind the prevalence of rural-urban trafficking of young girls in Tanzania. These factors are categorized into legal, social, and economic categories. The following are the main factors that attract the occurrence and the continuation of human trafficking of girls from rural to urban areas.

2.1. Poverty in Families

Poor families in rural areas tend to struggle to improve their livelihoods. The struggles to improve financial stability in low-income families often lead young girls to enter the workforce to earn money to support their families.⁵ Families with financial difficulties in rural areas tend

¹ Janet Henshall Momsen, *Gender, Migration and Domestic Service: Routledge International Studies of Women and Place*, (Oxon 1999) 57.

² Angela Mathias, 'Child Trafficking in Tanzania Exploring Experiences of Trafficked Girls in Dar es Salaam' (Master's thesis, Universitas Bergensis 2011) 23.

³ Annemarie Kashaija Kiaga, 'Blaming the Other Woman: Rural House-girls and Urban Employers on Identity, Labour and Migration in Tanzania' (DPhil thesis, University of Minnesota 2007) 31.

⁴ Karla Lorena Andrade-Rubio and others, 'Vulnerability to Sex Trafficking: Adult Women's Experiences While They Were Adolescents' (2024) 14 *Societies* 51.

⁵ Anti-Slavery International, *Domestic Work and Slavery*, (Anti-Slavery International 2014) 6.

to convince their children to enter into job arrangements in urban areas.⁶ Human traffickers in urban areas tend to take advantage of the financial difficulties of families in rural areas by presenting tempting offers to families with girls that there are golden employment opportunities in the urban areas. This situation is quite different for rich families in rural areas.⁷ Since rich parents or guardians tend to earn their daily bread without seeking the assistance of their children.

2.2. Low Level of Employment Opportunities in Rural Areas

The prohibition on the employment of children in Tanzania is not absolute, as children may be employed to carry out light work. Section 77 of the Law of the Child Act permits children aged 14 years and above to be engaged in light work.⁸ The recruitment of children in light work is also reflected in the Law of Child (Employment) Regulations.⁹ The Employment and Labour Relations Act;¹⁰ And the Employment and Labour Relations (Code of Good Practice) Rules.¹¹ However, there are relatively low levels of light work opportunities in rural areas in comparison with urban areas. Additionally, the cash flow in rural areas is generally lower compared to urban areas.¹² As a result, girls aged 14 and above who would have been employed in light work in rural areas are forced by circumstances to travel to urban areas where they are exposed to the hands of human traffickers.¹³

2.3. The Focus of the Authorities on Cross-Border (Transnational) Human Trafficking

Different authorities, such as the police force and immigration officers, are responsible for enforcing the Anti-Human Trafficking Act of Tanzania.¹⁴ However, such authorities focus more on transnational or cross-border human trafficking.¹⁵ For instance, such authorities have been focusing on ensuring that the girls who travel abroad to work as domestic workers are not enslaved.¹⁶ There are intensive security screenings to ensure that the girls who are offered jobs abroad are placed in safer hands. Unfortunately, the focus of such authorities in combating the transnational trafficking of persons is not reflected in the domestic trafficking of persons.¹⁷ Also, the education concerning the trafficking of persons focuses on the transnational

⁶ National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *Child Poverty in Tanzania*, (NBS and UNICEF 2016) 17.

⁷ Francis Miko, 'Trafficking in Women and Children: U.S and International Responses' in Alexandre Troubnikoff (ed), *Trafficking in Women and Children: Current Issues and Development* (Nova Science Publisher Inc. 2003) 52.

⁸ Law of the Child Act 2019, s. 77.

⁹ Law of Child (Employment) Regulations 2012.

¹⁰ Employment and Labour Relations Act 2019.

¹¹ Employment and Labour Relations (Code of Good Practice) Rules 2007.

¹² Anti-Slavery Organisation, 'Tanzania Child Domestic Workers' (*Anti-Slavery Org.* 2 May 2019) <<https://www.antislavery.org/what-we-do/tanzania/>> accessed 20 April 2025.

¹³ Magolanga Shagembe and Thomas Ndaluka, 'Are Child Domestic Workers Key Ingredients in Employers' Households? Employers' Perceptions Towards Child Domestic Workers in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (2022) 29 *Tanzania Journal of Population Studies and Development* 107, 123.

¹⁴ The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act 2008.

¹⁵ United States Department of State, 'Trafficking in Persons Report 2009' (*Ref World*, 16 June 2009) <<https://www.refworld.org/reference/annualreport/usdos/2009/en/67882>> accessed 04 January 2025.

¹⁶ IOM, 'Child Victims of Trafficking in Tanzania' (*IOM Tanzania*) <<https://tanzania.iom.int/child-victims-trafficking-tanzania>> accessed 12 December 2024.

¹⁷ United States Department of State, '2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Tanzania' (*US-Department of State*, 20 July 2023) <<https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/tanzania/>> accessed 12 December 2024.

trafficking of persons. Consequently, there are in-depth statistics on trends in transnational human trafficking, unlike domestic human trafficking.¹⁸

2.4.The Prevalence of Child Labour in Domestic Settings

In the Tanzanian setting, a large proportion of domestic workers, also known as housemaids, are children aged between 12 and 17.¹⁹ This is despite the fact that the Law of the Child Act of Tanzania stipulates that a child is a person below the age of 18 years.²⁰ Additionally, the Employment and Labour Relations Act prohibits the employment of children.²¹ Still, there is a prevalence of child labour, which tends to open a room for human traffickers to have access to young girls through promises of better jobs in urban areas.²²

2.5.Poor Management of Recruitment Agencies

There are formal and informal recruitment agencies in urban areas. Some recruitment agencies tend to focus on accumulating wealth while disregarding the welfare of the girls they recruit. Some girls from rural areas are recruited as domestic labourers after passing through the hands of recruitment agencies.²³ After being placed in the hands of the employees, some recruitment agencies tend to lose focus on the welfare of the girls that they bring from rural areas.²⁴ Hence, exploitative and inhumane employers tend to enslave the girls who primarily pass into the hands of recruitment agencies.

3. The Effects of Rural-Urban Trafficking on Girls

Several effects tend to affect the trafficked girls from rural to urban areas under the umbrella of domestic workers. Such effects range from physical to psychological. The following are the significant effects of rural-urban trafficking of girls.

3.1.Human Rights Violation

The trafficked girls are often exploited and humiliated. These girls are denied their rightful payments after working in domestic settings, and others are subjected to sexual exploitation.²⁵ The girls are subjected to severe beatings, restrictions on movements, and other inhumane and degrading treatments.²⁶ Some of the girls who are subjected to sexual exploitation end up as victims of sexually transmitted diseases (STDS), and other girls are impregnated. Afterwards,

¹⁸ Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice, 'Gender-Based Violence and Human Trafficking in Tanzania; Submission for the UN Universal Periodic Review 39th Session of the UPR Working Group (Oct-Nov 2021)' (HKC) <<https://www.shu.ac.uk/helena-kennedy-centre-international-justice>> accessed 21 April 2025.

¹⁹ International Labour Organisation, *Child Labour and the Youth Decent Work Deficit in Tanzania* (International Labour Organisation 2018) 23.

²⁰ National Bureau of Statistics, Office of the Chief Government Zanzibar, and United Nations Children's Fund, *Child Work and Child Labour in the United Republic of Tanzania Evidence from the Integrated Labour Force Survey (2014–2021)* (United Nations Children's Fund, 2024) 19.

²¹ Employment and Labour Relations Act 2019.

²² Rebecca Grant, 'No School, No Salary: the Children Tricked into Domestic Servitude in Zanzibar' *The Guardian* (Dar es Salaam, 9 November 2017) 7.

²³ Tausi Mbalamwezi, 'International Obligation in Preventing Trafficking in Persons: An Examination of the Anti-Trafficking Law in Tanzania' (LL.M Dissertation, Mzumbe University 2016) 44.

²⁴ Camilla Fabbri and others, 'Labour Recruitment and Human Trafficking: Analysis of a Global Trafficking Survivor Database' (2023) 57 *International Migration Review*, 629, 637.

²⁵ Prime Minister's Office Labour, Youth, Employment and Persons with Disability, *National Strategy on the Elimination of Child Labour 2018-2022* (Prime Minister's Office Labour, Youth, Employment and Persons with Disability 2017) 26.

²⁶ End Child Prostitution and Trafficking (ECPAT), 'Executive Summary-Tanzania' (ECPAT, 2021) <https://ecpat.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/EXSUM_A4A_AF_Tanzania.pdf> accessed 17 December 2024.

these girls are chased away or forced to undergo an abortion.²⁷ Furthermore, the minor girls affected by rural-urban human trafficking tend to suffer from low self-esteem as well as isolation from various spheres of life. For instance, in domestic settings, such girls are denied food, medical treatment, decent dressing, and proper work conditions. According to a report by CNN, the majority of children who work in domestic settings in Tanzania are exposed to the modern form of slavery and servitude.²⁸

3.2. Psychological Trauma

The trafficked girls are subjected to physical, verbal, and mental harassment, among other inhumane treatments. Such harassment and inhumane treatment tend to cause psychological trauma to the trafficked girls.²⁹ The Commissioner General of the Immigration Service Department of Tanzania was quoted in a newspaper interview stating that girls aged between 12 and 17 years are vulnerable to human trafficking in domestic settings. The Commissioner General said further that after being rescued, these girls remain with severe psychological scars.³⁰ Without psychological treatments and other assistance, psychological trauma tends to remain forever in the lives of post-trafficked girls.³¹ Psychological trauma tends to disturb the mental wellness of trafficked girls and leave them with permanent scars because of the inhumane treatment they experienced when trafficked.

3.3. An Increase in the Rate of School Dropouts

Rural-urban trafficking of girls is prevalent among girls aged 12 and 17 years.³² The majority of girls of this age are those who are supposed to be in either primary or secondary school, as applicable.³³ The prevalence of human trafficking of girls from rural to urban areas tends to attract an increase in the number of girls who tend to quit their studies. This is because both the girls and their parents are deceived into thinking that the girls should leave school.³⁴ With the promise of receiving golden opportunities in urban areas as domestic workers, aside from other job opportunities that these girls are promised to find in urban areas.³⁵ Therefore, rural-urban trafficking of girls is among the factors that make the number of girls who attend school lower in rural areas in comparison with the number of girls who attend school in urban areas.³⁶

²⁷ United Republic of Tanzania, 'Statistics and Effects of Child Labour in Tanzania' (*United Republic of Tanzania*, 25 May 2021) <<https://unitedrepublicoftanzania.com/economy-of-tanzania/statistics-and-effects-of-child-labor-in-tanzania/>> accessed 21 April 2025.

²⁸ Lisa Cohen, 'Finding a Brighter Future for Tanzania's Child Domestic Workers' (*CNN*, 18 March 2023) <<https://edition.cnn.com/2023/03/18/africa/mercy-esther-tanzania-domestic-servitude-cfp-spc-intl/index.html>> accessed 21 April 2025.

²⁹ Joseph Mwamunyange, 'New Form of Child Trafficking in Tanzania' *The EastAfrican* (Nairobi, 23 October 2011) 3.

³⁰ Editorial, 'Battling Human Trafficking: From Shadows to Spotlight' *The Guardian* (Dar es Salaam, 4 May 2024) 7.

³¹ James Matheka, Elizabeth Shayo, and Annabel Erulkar, *Domestic Work, Sexual Abuse, and Exploitation in Tanzania* (Population Council 2020).

³² Hine Haley, 'What's Hindering Girls' Education in Tanzania?' (*The Borgen Project*, 13 May 2018) <<https://borgenproject.org/girls-education-in-tanzania-2/>> accessed 20 April 2025.

³³ Simon Ngalomba, 'Poverty and Child Trafficking in Tanzania: Implications on Access to Education' (2020) SSRN <<https://ssrn.com/abstract=3569714>> accessed 19 December 2024.

³⁴ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *Child Domestic Workers and Access to Education in Makete, Tanzania* (UNICEF 2006) 29.

³⁵ Cecilia Apolinary, 'Domestic Child Trafficking in Tanzania; Analysis of the Existing Legal Framework: A Case of Mbeya Region' (*COSTECH Integrated Repository*, 2017) <<http://repository.costech.or.tz/handle/11192/3815>> accessed 16 December 2024.

³⁶ Rehema J Magesa, 'The Impact of Human Trafficking on Young Female' Live' (DPhil thesis, The Open University of Tanzania 2021).

4. The Way Forward

The identification of the causes and effects of rural-urban trafficking of girls calls for the adoption of durable solutions. There is a need to adopt tentative solutions to solve the problem of rural-urban trafficking of girls. The following are the proposed solutions.

4.1.Criminalising Child Labour in Domestic Settings

As previously mentioned, the majority of domestic workers in urban settings are children. This makes it easy for girls to be subjected to human trafficking under the umbrella of domestic workers. There is a great need for the Tanzanian Government to criminalise the employment of children in domestic settings.³⁷ Criminalising the employment of children in domestic settings may pull away human traffickers from using children's employment in domestic settings as a way of lulling girls whom they intend to exploit after being trafficked. Once the employment of minor girls is criminalised, and when there is vigorous enforcement of the laws. It will be difficult for human traffickers to lure minor girls by promising them employment opportunities. This is because most girls are trapped in human trafficking through fake promises of employment opportunities.

4.2.Social-Economic Support to Poor Families in Rural Areas

Poverty is one of the factors behind the trafficking of girls from rural areas. Since parents and guardians from low-income families in rural areas often allow their daughters to move to urban areas to engage in various forms of work, such as domestic work, to help support their families economically. It is therefore essential for low-income families in rural areas to receive social and economic support.³⁸ The social and economic support may prevent parents and guardians in rural areas from allowing the girls to move to urban areas in the quest for earning a daily bread for their families. The Government and development stakeholders should design relief platforms to uplift the livelihoods of poor families in rural areas. The reliefs should be centred on agriculture, pastoralism, fishing, forestry, pottery and other activities engaged in by the majority of people in rural areas.

4.3.Awareness Raising

There is a need for public sensitisation on matters concerning human trafficking. The public should be educated on the causes, the extent, the effects, and the solutions behind human trafficking.³⁹ This is because few people are aware of the existence of human trafficking. At the same time, the few people who are aware of human trafficking tend to focus on cross-border or international human trafficking while ignoring domestic human trafficking, such as the rural-urban trafficking of girls. Therefore, awareness raising concerning human trafficking should be given to all people in rural and urban areas. This should also be featured in both formal and informal education.

4.4.Moral and Material Support to the Victims

The majority of trafficked girls tend to live with psychological trauma because of the hardships endured during their enslavement. Unfortunately, when the majority are rescued, they do not receive the required moral and material support. The rescued or self-freed girls need to undergo

³⁷ Edson Katabwa, 'Child Labour Reduction and Prevention at Ukwamani and Mzimuni-Kawe Dar es Salaam' (Master's Dissertation, Open University of Tanzania 2013).

³⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking, *An Introduction to Human Trafficking: Vulnerability, Impact and Action* (United Nations 2008) 22

³⁹ Rosemary Mirondo, 'Tanzania's Anti-Human Trafficking Efforts Pay Off' *The Citizen* (Dar es Salaam, 11 November 2024) 9

psychological treatments and be placed under comprehensive rehabilitation.⁴⁰ It is also essential for the victims of human trafficking to be assisted financially to become self-independent.⁴¹ Furthermore, the Government of Tanzania and other stakeholders should ensure that the rescued girls are enrolled in adult education and vocational training programs.

4.5. Strong Supervision of Domestic Workers Recruitment Agencies

There is a great need for the government and its responsible agencies to supervise and monitor recruitment agencies.⁴² Recruitment agencies should be monitored on how they ensure the welfare of girls brought from rural to urban areas.⁴³ When recruitment agencies do not oversee the welfare of the girls they bring into urban areas, there will be no end to the trafficking of the girls.⁴⁴ Once it is revealed that a recruitment agency abandons the girls in the hands of their employers. The government should intervene by reprimanding or prohibiting the operations of such a recruitment agency.

5. Conclusion

Generally, the trafficking of persons, be it of a transnational or domestic nature, is dangerous to the interests and welfare of a trafficked person, the family of the trafficked person, and the betterment of the entire community. Thus, instead of focusing extensively on the transnational trafficking of persons only. The different authorities need to focus also on combating the domestic trafficking of persons to combat the rural-urban trafficking of girls. Most importantly, there is a need for socio-economic initiatives to be implemented in order to alleviate poverty among poor families in rural areas. This is because poverty is a major factor that traps minor girls into human trafficking while searching for a better life through employment opportunities in urban areas.

⁴⁰ Nattasuda Taephant, *IOM Training Manual on Psychosocial Assistance for Trafficked Persons* (International Organisation for Migration 2010).

⁴¹ GRETA Group of Experts on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings, *Assistance to Victims of Human Trafficking* (Council of Europe 2019).

⁴² Reda Sirgedience, *The Relationship Between Recruitment Practices and Trafficking in Human Beings for Forced Labour, Exploitation for Forced Labour, and Other Exploitative Labour Situations of Lithuanians Abroad* (CBSS 2020) 56.

⁴³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *The Role of Recruitment Fees and Abusive and Fraudulent Recruitment Practices of Recruitment Agencies in Trafficking in Persons* (United Nations 2015) 61.

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WEAVING THE SHIELD TO TACKLE THE ACHE OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN AFRICA

Grace. N. Sitati

1. Introduction

Human trafficking, known as Trafficking in Persons, is a form of neo-slavery.¹ It is a crime against the State and individuals as it undermines the rule of law and violates human rights.² The crime involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of persons using threats, coercion, deception, abuse of power, or a position of vulnerability, or illegal means, with the intent to exploit.³ Therefore, the elements of human trafficking are: the act (recruiting, transporting, transferring, harbouring, and receiving individuals); the means (deception, coercion, threats, force, fraud, abduction, abuse of power); and the purpose centred on exploitation.⁴

The Palermo protocol defines exploitation to include prostitution of others, forced labour or services, sexual exploitation, slavery and similar practices, servitude, organ removal, and sex tourism, among other forms.⁵ Further, the Protocol stipulates that consent cannot be used as a justification when the means mentioned above are used; it is considered irrelevant.⁶ Additionally, if the victim is a child below 18 years, the means used are immaterial.⁷

Consequently, most African countries have ratified the Palermo Protocol and incorporated its provisions into their legal frameworks.⁸ Despite this, they are yet to comply with the set standards for the elimination of human trafficking.⁹ As a result, they are globally classified according to their adherence to the international minimum standards.¹⁰ Tier 1 countries, like Seychelles, fully comply with the standards set in the fight against human trafficking.¹¹ Conversely, Tier 2 countries, such as South Africa and Kenya, are making considerable progress but have not met the set standards.¹² Another category is Tier 2 Watch List countries, such as the Congo and Zimbabwe, which risk falling behind in their anti-trafficking efforts.¹³ Tier 3 countries, such as Sudan and South Sudan, do not meet the minimum standards for anti-trafficking laws. In contrast, countries like Somalia and Libya are referred to as exceptional cases because they face distinct challenges of

¹ Caf Dowlah, *Cross-Border Labor Mobility, Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (2nd edn, Palgrave Macmillan 2020) 244.

² Ryszard Piotrowicz, Conny Rijken, and Baerbel Uhl, *Routledge Handbook of Human Trafficking* (1st edn, Routledge 2017).

³ Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (adopted 15 November 2000, entered into force 25 December 2003) UNTS No. 39574 (Palermo Protocol) [2000], art 3a.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Palermo Protocol [2000] (n 3).

⁶ Ibid art 3b.

⁷ Palermo Protocol [2000] (n 3), arts 3a, 3c.

⁸ United Nations Treaty Collections, 'Status of Treaties'

<https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XVIII-12-a&chapter=18&clang=_en> accessed 18 December 2024.

⁹ US Department of State, *2024 Trafficking in Persons Report*, (Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2024).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ US Department of State (n 9).

¹² Ibid (n 11).

¹³ Ibid.

vulnerable regions that complicate their ability to combat human trafficking.¹⁴

From the above classification, stakeholders advocating against human trafficking can readily assess the compliance rate, hold states accountable, foster collaborations and make targeted recommendations to countries based on their performance. Moreover, the rankings promote the exchange of ideas, information and harmonisation of standards. This is because countries in the lowest tier can benchmark themselves against those in the higher tier as they journey toward combating human trafficking.

2. Background to Human Trafficking in Africa

In Africa, the prevalence of human trafficking is attributed to both push and pull factors.¹⁵ These factors are caused by personal or systemic reasons that put people in precarious positions, making them more susceptible to exploitation by traffickers. Systemic reasons are beyond an individual's control, while personal ones originate from unique situations that either push or pull an individual. Push factors force people to leave their homes or seek better opportunities. They include poverty, political instability, armed conflict, climate change, limited educational opportunities, and corruption.¹⁶ On the other hand, pull factors are the perceived opportunities or promises of better living conditions, employment, and safety in foreign countries.¹⁷

In most cases, traffickers target vulnerable individuals seeking better opportunities and end up exploiting them through deception. They also lure victims with false promises of lucrative opportunities. For instance, recently, over 100 Kenyans were repatriated from the Thailand-Myanmar border following an incident in which they were duped into believing they would secure better opportunities, only to fall victim to human trafficking.¹⁸ Similarly, a local agency was under fire when desperate job seekers accused it of swindling them with false promises of securing jobs in Mauritius.¹⁹ These incidents exhibit how traffickers prey on the hope of those who take advantage of the push and pull factors.

3. Legal Regime for Tackling Human Trafficking

Having established the pull and push factors that contribute to human trafficking, it is trite to examine the international, regional and sub-regional legal framework in place to combat trafficking.

Internationally, in 1949, the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others was adopted to address trafficking for prostitution.²⁰ The Convention criminalises all acts related to procuring, exploiting, or managing prostitution, even with consent, and prohibits the operation of brothels or related financial involvement.²¹ It obligates states to enact legislation, punish offenders, extradite criminals, and provide support

¹⁴ US Department of State (n 11).

¹⁵ International Association of Women Judges Kenya Chapter and International Association of Women Judges, *Kenya Judicial Bench Book on Labour Trafficking in Persons* (GFEMS, 2022) 4-5.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid (n 15).

¹⁸ Hillary Kimuyu, 'More Kenyans rescued from human trafficking in Myanmar amid growing concerns' (Nation ePaper, 19 February 2025) <More Kenyans rescued from human trafficking in Myanmar amid growing concerns| Nation> accessed 4 April 2025.

¹⁹ Franklin Wallah, 'Angry Kenyans storm travel agency after being conned millions in Mauritius job scam' (Citizen Digital, 26 March 2025) <<https://citizen.digital/news/angry-kenyans-storm-travel-agency-after-being-conned-millions-in-mauritius-job-scam-n359943>> accessed 4 April 2025.

²⁰ Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, (adopted 2 December 1949, entered into force 25 July 1951) 96 UNTS 271, the Preamble.

²¹ Ibid arts 1, 2.

measures for victims.²² It also mandates States to cooperate through the sharing of information, regulating migration and employment agencies, and conducting public awareness campaigns.²³

The Convention is supplemented by the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime, 2000, which, through the Palermo Protocol, 2000, provides a comprehensive legal framework to combat organised crime and human trafficking of all forms.²⁴ The objectives of the Palermo Protocol are to prevent and combat trafficking, protect and assist victims while respecting their human rights, and foster international cooperation.²⁵ Additionally, the Protocol calls for state cooperation in law enforcement, border control, and document security.²⁶

At the regional level, the Maputo Protocol 2003 expressly prohibits trafficking of women and girls, recognising it as a violation of their human rights and dignity.²⁷ The Protocol urges States to adopt measures to prevent trafficking, prosecute perpetrators, and enact laws that criminalise all forms of exploitation.²⁸ Likewise, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, 1990, prohibits the sale, trafficking, and abduction of children.²⁹ In addition, Article 24 (4) of the Charter requires the protection of children from all forms of exploitation, including trafficking during adoption. To prevent human trafficking of any child, the Charter obligates state parties to take all measures to prevent and eliminate such practices.³⁰

Although the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), 1981 (Banjul Charter) does not expressly provide for human trafficking, it safeguards human rights. The Charter implicitly addresses trafficking by affirming that every person has a right to life and personal integrity,³¹ freedom of movement,³² prohibition of exploitation and degradation, including slavery,³³ and protection of women, children and the family.³⁴

Sub-regionally, within the East African Community (EAC), the EAC Treaty requires Partner States to establish shared security policies as a mechanism to combat cross-border crimes.³⁵ Hence, in 2013, the Partner States signed the EAC Protocol on Peace and Security to nurture collaboration in the fight against cross-border crimes like human trafficking.³⁶ EAC Partner States have ratified the Peace and Security Protocol.³⁷ Furthermore, the EAC Counter-Trafficking in Persons Bill, 2016, although awaiting assent, incorporates the "4 P's" obligations of prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnerships to combat trafficking in persons.³⁸

²² Ibid (n 20) art 6.

²³ Ibid (n 20) art 13.

²⁴ Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (adopted 15 November 2000, entered into force 25 December 2003) UNTS No. 39574 (Palermo Protocol), art 2.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Palermo Protocol, Part III.

²⁷ Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (adopted 11 July 2003, entered into force 25 November 2005) CAB/LEG/66.6, (Maputo Protocol) art 4 (2) (g).

²⁸ Ibid art 13(m).

²⁹ African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (adopted 11 July 1990, entered into force 29 November 1999) CAB/LEG/24.9/49 (ACRWC) art 29.

³⁰ Ibid arts 27, 29.

³¹ African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (adopted 27 June 1981, entered into force 21 October 1986) CAB/LEG/67/3 rev.5, 21 ILM 58 1982 (Banjul Charter) art 4.

³² Ibid art 12.

³³ Banjul Charter, art 5.

³⁴ Banjul Charter, art 18 (3).

³⁵ Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community (adopted 30 November 1999, entered into force 7 July 2000) (EAC Treaty) art 124.

³⁶ East African Community Protocol on Peace and Security (adopted 15 February 2013) arts 3(1), 12 (1) (d) (e).

³⁷ East Africa Legislative Assembly, *Report of the Committee on Regional Affairs and Conflict Resolution: Progress Made by the EAC on its Common Foreign and Security Policies* (2022) 13.

³⁸ EAC Counter-Trafficking in Persons Bill, 2016, cl 3 and 10.

In support of the framework, the Continent has also formulated policies that guide the fight against human trafficking. For example, the Ouagadougou Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, especially Women and Children, 2006, aims to develop cooperation among states at the regional and domestic level, ensure due regard for best international practices and establish mechanisms to prevent and combat trafficking of human beings between the European Union and the African Union.³⁹ This Plan supports the African Commission Initiative against Trafficking (AU-COMMIT).⁴⁰

Furthermore, the African Union (AU) Policy on the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons (TIP) in Africa, 2021, seeks to prevent and combat human trafficking across the continent. The Policy emphasises the need for a holistic approach, focusing on the 4 P's: prevention, protection, prosecution and partnerships, a concept borrowed from the Ouagadougou Action Plan.⁴¹ It calls for the establishment of national and regional mechanisms to address the root causes of trafficking.⁴² The policy provides the strategic framework for fighting trafficking in Africa, such as strengthening law enforcement, prosecution, and intelligence sharing; facilitating gender-responsive victim protection and compensation; and developing comprehensive legal frameworks to combat human trafficking.⁴³ It emphasises the importance of research, data collection, and capacity building for relevant institutions. Similarly, the Policy advocates for secure and coordinated border management, streamlining cross-border migration and labour practices.⁴⁴

Additionally, the African Union Horn of Africa Initiative on Human Trafficking and Smuggling of Migrants (AU HoAI), founded in 2012, serves as a platform for countries in the Horn of Africa region to exchange information and share experiences.

From the preceding paragraphs, the legal regime designed to combat human trafficking is strong and elaborate. However, it is worrisome that the Continent remains a hotspot for human trafficking, accounting for a third of cross-border trafficking, with women and girls being principal targets.⁴⁵ Hence, Africa faces the enormous task of combating human trafficking. The key question remains: What are the challenges, and how can we tackle human trafficking more effectively?

4. Challenges in Tackling Human Trafficking

Numerous challenges hinder the fight against human trafficking in Africa. They include: limited public awareness and access to information,⁴⁶ collusion between traffickers and local communities,⁴⁷ and endemic corruption where officials collaborate with culprits, frustrating the efforts to fight human trafficking.⁴⁸ In addition, self-trafficking, where victims consent to exploitation, also complicates enforcement efforts. Further challenges include gaps in the implementation and ratification of legal frameworks such as the Niamey Convention, 2014,⁴⁹ inadequate training for law enforcement due to limited resources, weak political will, poorly

³⁹ Ouagadougou Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, Especially Women and Children (adopted 2006), the Preamble.

⁴⁰ African Union, 'AU Commission Initiative against Trafficking (AU-COMMIT) Campaign 2009-2012,' <https://au.int/web/sites/default/files/newsevents/workingdocuments/28041-wd-au_commit_strat_-_english.pdf> accessed 27 December 2024.

⁴¹ AU policy on the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons [TIP] in Africa, (September 2021), 7.

⁴² Ibid 20-29.

⁴³ Ibid (n 41)

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2024*, (United Nations, 2024) ch II, 65-103.

⁴⁶ Ibid 101.

⁴⁷ National Crime Research Centre, *The Problem of Human Trafficking in Kenya* (revised edn, 2022) 107.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ African Union Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation (adopted 27 June 2014) (Niamey Convention).

regulated and monitored porous borders that facilitate trafficking,⁵⁰ and insufficient technological capacity that undermines anti-trafficking efforts.

5. Proposed Solutions

In light of the foregoing challenges, it is essential to explore ways to combat corruption. Clearly, combating human trafficking in Africa requires concerted efforts are necessary. To address the challenge of porous borders that fuel human trafficking and still realise the free movement of people, states must strengthen border security through advanced technology, infrastructure, and adequately trained personnel. Cross-border cooperation, including intelligence-sharing, joint patrols, and regional task forces to disrupt trafficking networks. Further, community engagement at border points can also assist in reporting suspicious activities related to human trafficking.

Another viable solution is to create public awareness campaigns that educate communities on the signs of trafficking and available resources. For instance, due to high levels of illiteracy and ignorance, awareness of human trafficking remains low. Often, victims do not recognise that they are being trafficked. Furthermore, potential allies, such as local leaders or NGOs, usually lack the necessary knowledge to intervene. Therefore, grassroots campaigns, in partnership with NGOs, faith-based organizations, and community leaders, can help broaden awareness. More so, educational programs targeting vulnerable populations can help individuals make informed decisions and reduce their susceptibility to traffickers.

In addition, hotlines for trafficking reporting, combined with sensitisation and school-based education, offer a probable solution to combating human trafficking. Empowering everyone to report activities through designated hotlines, such as Childline Kenya and Uganda's *Sautiline* 116,⁵¹ helps address child trafficking. Likewise, billboards, social media, and workshops in a language understood by the targeted audience can enhance awareness.

It is also vital to diversify information dissemination on issues of human trafficking to be readily accessible to everyone. This can be through different local dialect radio stations, mobile phone messages, digital and nationwide circulating newspapers, and visual aids, which are more effective. By tailoring information in a way that is easy to understand and access, more people become aware of the signs of trafficking and how to report it. Moreover, survivor inclusion can play a crucial role in the dissemination of information. Such information empowers survivors to share their experiences and contribute to solutions to prevent future cases. Their experiences provide real-life insights into the methods traffickers use and the challenges victims face, making it easier for law enforcement, advocacy groups, and policymakers to create more targeted and effective interventions.⁵²

Since most African countries are globally classified under Tier 2 watch list, Tier 3 or designated as exceptional cases, it means that there is a pressing need to strengthen their legal regimes by

⁵⁰ Omolara Akinyemi, 'Porous Borders and Increasing Human Trafficking in West Africa: Issues and Challenges' [2019] *International Journal of Social Science Research* 42, 49.

⁵¹ Childline Kenya <https://childlinekenya.co.ke/>; Sauti 116 Helpline <<https://sauti.mglsd.go.ug/sauti/>> accessed 26 December 2024.

⁵² US Department of State, *Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Kenya* (2024).

either enacting or domesticating international instruments.⁵³ Similarly, while most African countries have adopted anti-trafficking laws, effective enforcement remains a challenge. Hence, they need to devise mechanisms to ensure proper enforcement. In addition, there is a need to further focus on offenders because most anti-trafficking laws are victim-centred, making it hard to prosecute offenders. A balanced approach should be adopted to strike a balance between the two.

Another proposed solution worth considering is increasing funding for training, hiring, and expanding leadership efforts in the fight against human trafficking. Capacity-building programs for relevant officers can enhance the detection, investigation, and prosecution of trafficking cases. For example, responsible offices for prosecution can develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), as Kenya has done under the Better Migration Management (BMM) initiative, for the investigation and prosecution of human trafficking cases.⁵⁴

Furthermore, emerging advanced technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), can be beneficial in identifying trafficking patterns, monitoring online trafficking activities, and facilitating cross-border intelligence sharing. Since perpetrators use digital platforms to recruit victims and hide their identities, technology like AI can analyse large datasets to track suspicious financial transactions or detect traffickers' communications on the dark web. With perpetrators often steps ahead, enforcement agencies must adopt proactive strategies that outpace them.

It cannot be gainsaid that ensuring safe, orderly, and regular migration is non-negotiable. Governments must strengthen regulatory frameworks to oversee recruitment agencies and ensure transparency. For instance, Kenya's National Employment Authority (NEA) provides a model for verifying agency registrations and protecting workers.⁵⁵ Migrants should scrutinize job offers and have them reviewed by legal or labour experts, with mandatory attestation by labour departments to confirm their legitimacy and authenticity. Travel documents, including work visas, should align with the purpose of migration, and sharing travel plans with trusted contacts is critical for safety. Registering with embassies upon arrival should be mandatory to ensure migrants have access to assistance when needed. Governments should raise awareness of potential red flags, such as tourist visas issued for work purposes or jobs that sound too good to be true.

There is a need for information sharing among key stakeholders in the countries of origin, transit and destination. Realising the foregoing is possible through government-to-government (G-G) deals, bilateral agreements, partnerships and cross-border cooperation. For instance, the Middle East, i.e., Qatar, Dubai and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, are destinations for most migrant workers from Kenya, thus increasing human trafficking.⁵⁶ Consequently, in 2014 and 2024, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to safeguard the rights of Kenyan workers in the UAE.⁵⁷ Through the agreement, both countries collaborated on

⁵³ Tom Obokata, 'Human Trafficking in Africa: Opportunities and Challenges for the African Court of Justice and Human Rights' in CC Jalloh, KM Clarke, and VO Nmehielle (eds), *The African Court of Justice and Human and Peoples' Rights in Context: Development and Challenges* (Cambridge University Press 2019) 529–552.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ National Employment Authority, 'National Employment Authority Integrated Management System (NEAIMS),' <<https://neaims.go.ke/>> accessed 26 December 2024.

⁵⁶ The Senate of Kenya, Standing Committee on Labour and Social Welfare, *Report on Labour Migration, Senate Study Visit to the Middle East and Policy Implications* (October 2021) 5.

⁵⁷ Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, 'PS Urges Adoption of Good Practice in Labour Migration Partnerships,' (State Department for Labour and Skills Development, 22 November 2024) <<https://labour.go.ke/ps-urges-adoption-good-practice-labour-migration-partnerships#:~:text=Labour%20and%20Skills%20Development%20Principal%20Secretary%20Shadrack%20>

improving the recruitment process and establishing safer migration pathways to reduce the risk of trafficking through unauthorised employment channels. Kenya has also entered into bilateral agreements with various destination countries, including the United Kingdom, to address human trafficking and transnational crime.⁵⁸ Furthermore, in December 2024, the Republic of Kenya joined the Alliance 8.7, a global partnership of states that seeks to combat human trafficking and achieve Goal 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which aims to eradicate trafficking.⁵⁹ The country has developed a road map for the next five years (2025-2030) to tackle the human trafficking challenge.

From a juridical perspective, countries can draw inspiration from the judiciaries of Kenya and Uganda, which collaborated to develop a bench book on labour trafficking. This bench book equips judicial officers with the knowledge and tools necessary to handle labour trafficking cases.⁶⁰ Similar bench books addressing other forms of trafficking would further strengthen the judiciary across the continent in handling all forms of human trafficking.

Public-private partnerships can also play a transformative role by pooling resources, sharing expertise, and creating training programs to detect and report suspicious activities. For example, in 2024, Kenya Airways and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) formed a strategic partnership to combat human trafficking and enhance the protection of migrants.⁶¹ The collaboration seeks to implement measures that identify, prevent, and address trafficking while promoting regular migration pathways.⁶²

6. Conclusion

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the dynamics of Human Trafficking in Africa are continually changing, demanding concerted efforts to tackle the issue.⁵⁹ Though African countries have made commendable strides, the war against human trafficking requires a holistic approach that addresses its root causes, strengthens legal and institutional capacities, and empowers communities. With concerted efforts, Africa can move closer to achieving the goal of human trafficking-free continent.

Mwadime,workers%20against%20all%20forms%20of%20exploitation%20and%20abuse> accessed 27 December 2024.

⁵⁸ Bilateral agreement between the Government of the Republic of Kenya and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for collaboration on healthcare workforce (2021) reg 6.

⁵⁹ Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Alliance 8.7 Kenya Country Road Map 2025–2030, (Republic of Kenya, 2025) 12.

⁶⁰ International Association of Women Judges, Anti-trafficking Judicial Bench Books in Uganda and Kenya (19 January 2023) <https://www.iawj.org/content.aspx?page_id=5&club_id=882224&item_id=83956> accessed 23 December 2024.

⁶¹ Kenya Airways and International Organization for Migration (IOM) Kenya, ‘Kenya Airways and IOM Kenya Unite to Combat Trafficking in Persons and Protection of Migrants’ (Press Release, 2 July 2024) <<https://www.kenya-airways.com/press-release-kenya-airways-iom-kenya-unite-combat-trafficking-person>> accessed 27 December 2024.

⁶² Ibid.

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TRANSFERABLE IDEAS OR INNOVATION FOR TACKLING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

*Ihuoma Okorie***1. Introduction**

Trafficking is a complex phenomenon influenced by a range of social, economic, cultural, and other contextual factors. Many of these drivers are specific to individual trafficking patterns and the particular states in which they occur.¹ It is a crime that often transcends borders, with victims being smuggled, sometimes on foot, other times through dangerous routes, spending days in transit while evading both rebels and security agents.² This is often driven by the pursuit of a better life, particularly for those seeking to escape poverty and severe socio-economic conditions. It underscores the notion that the most common reason people migrate is the search for greener pastures.

In recent times, trafficking has become a booming enterprise for those who prey on the vulnerability and psychology of victims and their families, enticing them with promises of a better future.³ In Nigeria, it is widely regarded as a form of modern-day slavery.⁴ Despite growing awareness and coordinated conversations around this issue, trafficking persists, with perpetrators daily devising novel strategies to attract and bring unsuspecting victims on board. This ongoing crisis challenges the fundamental human rights of those affected. Therefore, effectively addressing trafficking requires not only a deeper understanding of its root causes but also the adoption of innovative, transferable ideas that can significantly reduce its occurrence. This essay aims to explore and propose such solutions.

2. The Tragic Cost of Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a grave vice that has unfortunately gained prominence in many African countries. Based on interactions with survivors, this essay captures it as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of individuals through threats, force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or vulnerability, or the giving and receiving of payment or benefits to control another person, explicitly for the purpose of ill treatment. In West Africa, Sawadogo Wilfried Relwende highlights that trafficking activities follow clearly established routes across countries such as Senegal, Gambia, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Togo, Nigeria, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, and Gabon. Other key routes include those along Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Chad.⁵ Victims are often forced into various forms of exploitation. They become commercial sex workers, sex slaves, or coerced into same-sex relationships. Others serve in bars, restaurants, hotels, and brothels. Some victims endure hazardous conditions working in factories, mines, and construction sites. A significant number are forced into street begging, while others are recruited as child soldiers. Perhaps the most harrowing trend is the increasing prevalence of organ harvesting, which has tragically become alarmingly common.

In view of the above, according to Oyekanmi, many victims of human trafficking, particularly women and girls, are unaware of the harsh realities that await them in their

¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022* (UNODC 2022).

² International Organization for Migration, *World Migration Report 2022* (IOM 2021).

³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (n 1).

⁴ National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons, *2023 Annual Report* (NAPTIP 2023).

⁵ Sawadogo Wilfried Relwende, *West African Human Trafficking Routes and Trends* (UNODC 2018).

destination countries.⁶ They often believe that life abroad will be comfortable and full of opportunities, only to encounter danger and exploitation upon arrival. In fact, some desperate Nigerians who set out on foot may never reach their destinations due to the many risks they face along the journey. This highlights the fact that the dangers of human trafficking begin the moment victims leave their homes. The risks are enormous. Many are coerced into the sex trade and subjected to constant abuse. Forced to engage in sexual activities with numerous strangers daily in order to repay their traffickers, victims frequently suffer serious health problems. These include sexually transmitted infections, mental health issues such as panic attacks and depression, and substance abuse as a means of coping with trauma. In addition, the poor hygiene and limited access to medical care in these exploitative environments leave victims vulnerable to chronic and sometimes terminal illnesses.

Several factors contribute to the rise in human trafficking. However, the most frequently cited "push factor," as shared by survivors, is the desire for a better life.⁷ Traffickers exploit the desperation of individuals seeking better opportunities abroad, deceiving them with false promises of employment, education, or a brighter future.⁸ Tragically, many of these victims end up trapped in cycles of abuse and exploitation, with no clear path to escape. According to some interviews with survivors, the journey to Europe is fraught with peril. They recount horrifying experiences, such as enduring extreme thirst to the point of pleading for each other's urine to quench their parched throats.⁹ Despite the horrors and suffering endured by victims, this desire remains a powerful motivator for many. Alarming, the traumatic experiences of survivors fail to deter others from pursuing the same perilous path. Rationalizations such as "something must kill a man" offer misguided solace, propelling individuals to embark on dangerous journeys despite full awareness of the risks involved. This dire situation is encapsulated by a Cameroonian proverb: "If money were to be found in the trees, most people would be married to monkeys." This sentiment aptly reflects the extent to which the pursuit of wealth, riches, and fame drives human trafficking in Africa.

In this light, one might conclude that these are indeed troubling times to be African, marked by a pervasive obsession with material gain at great human cost. To further emphasize the point above, Shemang Ben and Takambou Mimi Mefo highlight that an increasing number of Africans are being exploited and trafficked along migration routes to Europe and the Middle East.¹⁰ This alarming trend underscores the need for urgent transferable ideas and innovation to tackle human trafficking.

3. African Values as Shields against Trafficking: Contentment

Although some African countries have implemented measures to combat human trafficking, these efforts often fall short, further emboldening traffickers. This is evident in the weak law enforcement and corruption in many African countries, where anti-trafficking laws exist but are poorly enforced due to limited resources, lack of training among law enforcement personnel, and widespread corruption. This creates loopholes that traffickers exploit with little

⁶ Oyekanmi Maryam, *Understanding the Experiences of Nigerian Victims of Trafficking* (unpublished manuscript, 2024).

⁷ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022* (UNODC 2022).

⁸ International Organization for Migration, *World Migration Report 2022* (IOM 2021).

⁹ Human Rights Watch, *No Escape: Abuse of Migrants in Libya* (HRW 2019).

¹⁰ Shemang Ben and Takambou Mimi Mefo, *Human Trafficking in Africa: The Exploitation Across Borders* (2021) African Journal of Migration Studies 45.

fear of prosecution. In fact, the UNODC notes that in regions like West and Central Africa, prosecutions and convictions of traffickers remain disproportionately low despite high levels of trafficking.¹¹ Even more, there is also the absence of well-structured rehabilitation centers, counseling services, and reintegration programs for victims often discourages reporting and undermines the fight against trafficking. According to the Global Slavery Index, even when victims are rescued, many receive inadequate support, leaving them vulnerable to re-trafficking.¹²

From the above, it is clear that many interventions are top-down approaches that rely solely on government action. While the creation of specialized agencies to address trafficking is commendable, these efforts would benefit greatly from the inclusion of young people in decision-making processes. A bottom-up approach that engages citizens and bodies, aside from the government, can foster collaboration and enhance the effectiveness of anti-trafficking initiatives. To contribute to the fight against human trafficking, this essay employs an auto-ethnographic method, drawing on some personal experiences to explore potential solutions.

To begin with, a key argument is that the survival and stability of any society depend significantly on the values that guide its people. In this context, virtues such as contentment can play a vital role in reengineering African society and reducing the prevalence of human trafficking. Contentment is the state of happiness and satisfaction with what one has. Unfortunately, many people lack this virtue, leading them to pursue harmful ambitions that often result in ruin and despair. Contentment does not imply complacency or a lack of desire for self-improvement. Instead, it means appreciating what one has while working toward a better future. Many people struggle with discontentment, wishing they had been born into wealthier families. The role of parents in guiding their children towards the right path cannot be overemphasised. I vividly remember my father's words in Igbo: *Ndidi na dota obi uto*, meaning "patience attracts happiness." This proverb, often repeated, served as both a reminder and a warning against impatience and greed. It emphasized the importance of accepting that one may not always get what one desires. The proverb also teaches that achieving dreams takes time and that the path to success is often long, winding, and unpredictable. This wisdom played a significant role in my life, especially when I was tempted to join a group of school friends planning to leave the country illegally in pursuit of greener pastures. In contemporary African society, contentment is increasingly undervalued, often dismissed as old-fashioned. The pervasive "get rich quick" mentality dominates, fueled by a society that celebrates immediate success and material wealth.

Given this backdrop, this essay argues that contentment should be a core value infused in a subject, to be taught in schools at all levels, from elementary to tertiary education. Early and consistent exposure to these teachings can help young Africans combat the destructive effects of greed. This mindset can empower them to make a positive impact on a global scale. As Africans continue to aspire for better lives, it is crucial to cultivate a sense of perspective and self-awareness. While the pursuit of progress is valid, Africans must remember their families, communities, and cultural heritage. The Igbo proverb *Ihere adighi eme onye ara, ma nde muru ya*—"A madman is not ashamed of his situation, but his people are"—aptly captures this sentiment. It reminds Africans that an individual's actions reflect not just on themselves

¹¹ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020* (UNODC 2020).

¹² Walk Free Foundation, *Global Slavery Index 2018* (2018) 12 <<https://www.reliefweb.int/report/world/global-slavery-index-2018>> accessed 20 April 2025.

but also on their family and society. Allowing greed to take root has broader implications for how Africans are perceived by others, particularly Europeans.

In view of the above, parents can lead the way in instilling contentment and discipline by setting limits for themselves, as children often learn best by observing actions rather than listening to words. In African culture, it is commonly said that children emulate what they see rather than what they are told. By deliberately modeling and practicing these values, parents can guide their children toward developing them. Gratitude, in particular, is a powerful way to cultivate contentment. In the past, proverbs played a significant role in character formation and moral education within African families.¹³ These proverbs were used to teach values like gratitude, regardless of how little one had. They emphasized that chasing quick money could lead to ruin. To revive this diminishing tradition, parenting must become deliberate and proactive, starting early in a child's life. This early education is especially critical as human traffickers often prey on individuals who are experiencing hardship or lack strong support systems. Parents who are actively involved in their children's formative years can help build resilience, making them less susceptible to manipulation by traffickers. Strong family values not only help children navigate challenges but also serve as a moral compass for families in determining right from wrong during difficult situations. Consequently, there is a pressing need to establish a Family Law Act across African nations, mandating that parents exercise their responsibilities toward their children. Unlike the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which is a specific human rights instrument adopted by the Organization of African Unity (now AU) in 1990 and entered into force in 1999,¹⁴ the African Law Act allows African countries to pass their own anti-human trafficking laws based on regional guidelines.¹⁵ Therefore, it is imperative for Africans, especially the youth, to exercise caution and critical thinking in their choices. Adopting this bottom-up approach that emphasizes personal responsibility, contentment, and cultural pride can help tackle the root causes of human trafficking and reframe Africa's narrative on the global stage.

In light of the above, it is essential to revive and reinforce family values within African households. This can be achieved through the use of African proverbs, which have always held foundational significance in many African societies. They are commonly regarded as expressions or sayings that encapsulate wisdom, truth, morals, experiences, lessons, and life advice. Proverbs were primarily used to teach cultural values and reinforce societal norms. Over time, they served as tools for advising, training, or warning individuals. Consequently, many African cultures relied on proverbs to communicate family values and address social issues. Family values refer to the shared beliefs, ethics, priorities, and worldviews that bind family members. These behavioral codes provide structure, define roles within the family, and guide decision-making. They include principles such as honesty, kindness, love, respect, and good behavior. As the smallest unit of society, the family plays a foundational role in shaping the character and future of its members. Parents bear a significant responsibility in ensuring the healthy and secure upbringing of their children. Family values begin with the parents, who are

¹³ Kwesi Yankah, *Speaking for the Chief: Okyeame and the Politics of Akan Royal Oratory* (Indiana University Press 1995).

¹⁴ Organisation of African Unity, African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (adopted 11 July 1990, entered into force 29 November 1999).

¹⁵ African Union, Ouagadougou Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, Especially Women and Children (2006).

their children's first teachers. This idea is encapsulated in the Igbo proverb: *Nwa na afu na ndi nwe ya nwere ndidi na afo ojuju ga inwe kwa ndidi na afo ojuju*, meaning, "If a child observes that their parents are content, they will strive to emulate that contentment." Given that proverbs often carry deep cultural values, this essay suggests that parents should regularly use proverbs to teach and guide their children. Proverbs are not only a source of wisdom but also a way to instill morals and cultural pride. However, despite the critical role parents play in their children's lives, it has significantly declined.

A major contributing factor to this decline is the demanding nature of modern life. Many parents, particularly working parents, struggle to dedicate sufficient time to their children's growth and well-being due to professional and other commitments. This lack of engagement often leaves children feeling neglected, which can negatively impact their development and emotional stability. Additionally, economic hardship has left many parents unable to provide adequately for their children. These children, left vulnerable, often rely on friends or external influences for support. This is evident in studies that have shown that children from economically disadvantaged households are more susceptible to exploitation and external influence, as poverty often limits parental capacity to provide supervision, support, and basic needs.¹⁶ Tragically, traffickers prey on this vulnerability, deceiving children with false promises of a better life and leading them into the clutches of human trafficking. To counter this, instilling the correct values and maintaining an active presence in a child's life are essential. When parents model contentment, kindness, and resilience, children are less likely to fall victim to the manipulations of traffickers. By nurturing strong family bonds and prioritizing the transmission of positive values, families can act as the first line of defense against the scourge of human trafficking.

4. Turning Social Media into a Weapon against Human Trafficking

Targeted education for young people through social media is essential, as this medium has dramatically reshaped the way individuals interact. With globalization and the widespread use of mobile phones, social media has become a double-edged sword in the fight against human trafficking. While traffickers exploit these platforms to further their operations, social media also holds the potential to combat this menace effectively. According to a United Nations report, "Human traffickers have become adept at using internet platforms, including social media channels and webpages, to recruit victims and attract clients."¹⁷ Similarly, Chon Katherine highlights that "Traffickers use technology to increase the efficiency of their operations, remotely identifying and recruiting individuals on a larger scale than what is possible through traditional offline schemes."¹⁸ This underscores the growing concern that traffickers are abusing social media to gather insights into people's lives and exploit their vulnerabilities.

However, despite its misuse, social media can also play a significant role in combating human trafficking. It can be a powerful tool for education and outreach, enabling young people to access vital information about the risks of trafficking and effective prevention strategies. Additionally, survivors and advocates can utilize these platforms to establish support networks, share their experiences, and cultivate a sense of community. Social media can empower survivor leaders to engage with others, provide guidance, and drive collective action to fight

¹⁶ UNICEF, Child Poverty and Vulnerability in Sub-Saharan Africa

¹⁷ UNODC, 'Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020' (2021) 63.

¹⁸ Chon Katherine, 'Technology's Complicated Relationship with Human Trafficking' (2022) <<https://acf.gov/archive/otip/blog/2022/07/technologys-complicated-relationship-human-trafficking>> accessed 21 December 2024.

human trafficking. By leveraging the same platforms that traffickers use, society can turn the tide and use social media as a force for awareness, prevention, and empowerment in the fight against this pervasive crime. As technology continues to play an integral role in personal and professional lives, it is essential to harness its potential as an innovative tool in responding to human trafficking.

Social media, in particular, offers significant opportunities for educating people about the dangers of trafficking. For instance, creating a dedicated Facebook page for this cause can help raise awareness by hosting events where films on human trafficking are viewed and discussed. Such activities educate the public about the existence of modern slavery, the deceptive tactics employed by traffickers, often referred to as '*Burgas*'¹⁹—and the importance of rejecting their enticing offers. Awareness campaigns should also provide practical tips on identifying traffickers and their *modus operandi*. Through consistent and targeted education on social media, people can become more equipped to recognize potential traffickers and protect themselves. In addition to pages and campaigns, hashtags represent another powerful method of combating human trafficking. Hashtags increase the visibility of content, allowing it to reach the right audience, spark new conversations, and broaden engagement on social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, TikTok, LinkedIn, and Instagram.²⁰ For example, Instagram allows users to include up to 30 hashtags per post, enabling them to reach a wider audience. While irrelevant hashtags can sometimes attract the wrong audience, the benefits of this tool far outweigh the drawbacks when used strategically. By deploying meaningful and targeted hashtags, awareness of human trafficking can be amplified, creating ripples of understanding and action across the digital landscape.

5. The Moral Power of Religion in Africa's Anti-Trafficking Fight

Another critical resource in the fight against human trafficking in Africa is the prominence of religious organizations. Religion, as a source of moral authority and values, plays a vital role in shaping societal behavior. Churches, in particular, can serve as natural allies in this fight, offering moral clarity and healing for victims who have endured tremendous suffering. Clergy members and pastors can leverage their platforms—such as pulpits and fellowship gatherings—to counsel victims, raise awareness, and teach values like contentment and integrity. Churches should actively build on their unique opportunities and assets, partnering with various denominations and sectors to work comprehensively against human trafficking. For instance, dedicating a specific time each year to raising awareness about human trafficking can have a lasting impact. Furthermore, while traffickers often exploit religion to manipulate and control their victims, religion can also be a powerful tool for resistance when deployed appropriately. By fostering a culture of collaboration and moral advocacy, religious groups can significantly contribute to the eradication of human trafficking in Africa.

6. Universities as Frontlines in the Fight against Trafficking

In the academic realm, it is imperative for African youths to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to recognize and resist the tactics of human traffickers. Raising awareness and promoting focused socialization through the teaching of human trafficking is essential. Educating young people about the risks and realities of trafficking will equip them with the attitudes necessary to reject enticing offers and actively participate in efforts to eliminate

¹⁹ "Burga" does not have a widely recognized definition; however, in the context of human trafficking in Libya, it refers to individuals who claim ownership of victims, often migrants-and demand repayment of the money spent to transport them before granting their freedom.

²⁰ Jean Burgess and Joshua Bruns, 'Twitter and its Power to Shape Public Discourse' in Axel Bruns and others (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Social Media and Politics* (Routledge 2016) 123

this scourge. A lack of information in academic settings, however, risks perpetuating ignorance and neglecting the profound social implications of trafficking for Africa's present and future. Universities, as centers of learning and development, offer an ideal platform to address this gap. For instance, many universities require new students to take general courses that provide foundational knowledge. Incorporating human trafficking as a subject within such courses ensures that all students are exposed to its realities as they begin their academic journeys. This is particularly crucial because universities are environments where young people often encounter diverse individuals, some of whom may attempt to lure them into trafficking schemes. By studying this issue and acquiring the necessary knowledge, students are better equipped to navigate such challenges and make informed decisions.

7. Using Films to Fight Human Trafficking

In addition to academic efforts, community-based initiatives are equally vital in tackling human trafficking. Hosting regular awareness events, such as bi-weekly screenings of films about human trafficking, can significantly impact youths and their parents. For example, after watching the films *Mvera*²¹ and *Goated Life*,²² I recommended them to young girls in my community and invited them for a discussion afterward. During our conversation, we explored the concept of modern slavery, how it manifests, and the tactics traffickers use to deceive victims. Such films can serve as powerful tools for education and awareness, providing Africans with vivid depictions of how trafficking operates and the consequences for its victims. By making these movies widely available and fostering discussions around them, communities can better prepare their youth to recognize and resist the threat of trafficking.

8. Conclusion

This essay represents my perspective on identifying innovative solutions and transferable ideas for tackling human trafficking. It seeks to unpack the nature of human trafficking, its effects, and how it can be curtailed in African societies, where many individuals daily face the harrowing decision to leave their homes in pursuit of a better life. To effectively address this issue, a comprehensive bottom-up approach is necessary to complement the efforts already made by governments in raising awareness for human trafficking prevention. Collaborative action, through partnerships and the sharing of knowledge, is the key to combating this vice. When everyone plays their part, society can move closer to living in a world free of human trafficking. It is essential that responses to this crisis are well thought out to ensure the safety and well-being of all involved. By valuing one another and recognizing that no one can do everything, but each of us has an important role to play, we can make significant strides in the fight against human trafficking.

²¹ Official Trailer: YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GEz9RceqAZo> accessed 22 December 2024.
Kenyan Vibe Article: Kenyan Vibe, <https://www.kenyanvibe.com/mvera-becomes-first-coastal-film-on-netflix/> accessed 22 December 2024.

²² Official Trailer: YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RxlwV2-liBM> accessed 22 December 2024.
New Arab Article: The New Arab, <https://www.newarab.com/news/gulf-states-protest-netflixs-goat-life-ignore-kafala> accessed 22 December 2024.

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<<https://www.reliefweb.int/report/world/global-slavery-index-2018>> accessed 20 April 2025

Official Trailer: YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GEz9RceqAZo> accessed 22 December 2024.

Official Trailer: YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RxlwV2-liBM> accessed 22 December 2024.

“Many vulnerable young people leave Africa after being coerced into drug trafficking operations outside the continent. Teenagers are lured into fake job opportunities only to become victims of sex and human trafficking networks. Men and women are duped into leaving their families for better job prospects. Shockingly, children are sold or given away in exchange for money across Africa.” These are some instances that detail the stories of human trafficking in Africa -BBC Documentary.