

Human Trafficking in West Africa: A Case of Sierra Leone

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Abstract

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This study investigates why Sierra Leone is an anchor-spot for human trafficking in West Africa. Through qualitative research methods, criteria for data collection were established, data from a number of different types of sources were collected, and analysis was undertaken to inform the research's findings and conclusions. Reports by organizations such as United Nations International Childrens'Emergency Fund, International Organization of Migration, and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee formed part of the data collected in an effort to ascertain the causes of rampant human trafficking in Sierra Leone. This study found that Sierra Leone continues to be an anchor-spot for human trafficking in West Africa because of several key factors. Two of those factors were examined as part of this research in an effort to ascertain why they continue in spite of the fact that they have previously been identified as connected to human trafficking in Sierra Leone. These factors were 1) Unregistered child births and 2) Foster parentage. These key factors also affected or impacted other factors such as arbitrary arrest, lack of awareness about human trafficking, poverty, ignorance of fighting human trafficking, porous borders, civil war in Sierra Leone, and public corruption. The research revealed a number of reasons that contribute to the continuance of these factors, and ultimately operational and policy recommendations are made that may assist in the eradication of this problem.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of Study

This study seeks to identify why human trafficking continues in Sierra Leone. Through its findings, it will be easier for policymakers to come up with appropriate corrective measures to addressing the problem in a sustainable manner. Furthermore, the research seeks to examine what the government of Sierra Leone has been doing in the elimination of the human trafficking problem. It aims to recommend areas that will assist governments and other organizations in solving or minimizing the occurrences of human trafficking. The aim of the research is to provide recommendations that will assist the government of Sierra Leone as well as other players keen on addressing the human trafficking problem in the country.

Human trafficking is a growing social problem in West Africa, and in Sierra Leone, in particular. Different nations in the region experience different forms of human trafficking (Blackburn, Taylor & Davis, 2010). In order to analyze this phenomenon, it is imperative for the various forms of human trafficking to be defined. Different organizations and countries have adopted their own definition of human trafficking based on the international definition, created by the United Nations (UN).

The United Nations definition of human trafficking is:

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a

person having control over another person, for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons is not an issue where any of the means set forth in the definition have been used (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2004a).

Since the advent of this international law, several countries in West Africa and other parts of the world have introduced anti-trafficking laws to fight child trafficking. For example, Sierra Leone has passed laws to include labor and sexual exploitation (Anti-Human Trafficking Act of Sierra Leone, Article 2(2), 2005).

In comparison to the United States, the definition of human trafficking is difficult to define because various members of congress promoted their own understanding of what constitute victims of trafficking to include severe forms of trafficking.

The United States defines severe forms of trafficking as:

(1) Sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, and coercion or in which a person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age or (b) The recruitment, harbouring, transportation, provision or obtaining of a person for labour or services, through the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery (Trafficking and Victims Protection Act (TVPA), 2000 Public Law 106-386).

The United Kingdom on the other hand, defines human trafficking in person as the transporting of people into the United Kingdom for exploiting that person using force, violence, fear, deception, or coercion.

Human trafficking differs from people smuggling because in the latter, people voluntarily request or hire a smuggler, to transport covertly victims from one location to another (United States Department of State, 2010). This generally involves transportation from one country to another, where legal entry would be denied upon arrival at the international border. There may be no deception involved in the illegal agreement between the smuggler and the person being smuggled. After entry into the country and arrival at their ultimate destination, the smuggled person is often free to find their own way. Quite often, smugglers have left behind the sick to die because they cannot continue the journey or smugglers have threatened to hurt relatives if they cannot come up with extra smuggling fees imposed on them.

While smuggling requires travel, trafficking does not (UNODC, 2004b). Much of the confusion rests with the term itself. The word "trafficking" includes the word "traffic," which we often equate with transportation or travel. However, while the words look and sound alike, they do not hold the same meaning. Human trafficking does not require the physical movement of a person but must entail the exploitation of the person for labor or commercial sex. In addition, victims of human trafficking are not permitted to leave upon arrival at their destination. They are held against their will through acts of coercion and forced to work or provide services to the trafficker or others. The work or services may include anything from bonded or forced labor to commercialized sexual exploitation (Amnesty International Australia (AIAU), 2010; UNODC, 2011). The arrangement may be structured as a work contract, but with no or low payment or on terms which are highly exploitative.

Sometimes the arrangement is structured as debt bondage, with the victim not being permitted or able to pay off the debt (AIAU, 2010).

According to these data from the UN agencies, among them the United Nations Children's Fund, Sierra Leone is one of the nations in the world where the trafficking of humans is a rampant problem. The country has experienced the trafficking especially involving children and women (UNICEF, 2005). Human trafficking is a real and major problem in West African countries just as in many parts of the world (Blagbrough, 2008).

Looking from a global perspective, many countries in all regions of the world take an active role in participating in this unlawful activity. Some countries serve as receivers of victims like the United States of America and Saudi Arabia. Poor countries in Africa like Sierra Leone where they are often used for the provision of cheap labor such as farm workers, and as porters (Sawadogo, 2012). In addition, some of these nations have become notable for human trafficking (Blackburn et al., 2010). Those transported to North America and European countries are exploited as domestic workers and for commercial sex. Many people turn out to be victims of harassment and in extreme situations, killed. Handicapped people are also trafficked from Sierra Leone for the purposes of acquiring money through begging on the streets (Surtees, 2005).

Today, Sierra Leone appears to be a safe haven where activities related to human trafficking take place (Sawadogo, 2012). People arrive into the major towns of the country from the rural areas within or from other countries in order to be smuggled to various destinations. Sierra Leone appears to be a country of destination especially for children who are smuggled from surrounding countries like Nigeria, Guinea, Cote d' Ivoire, and Gambia (Surtees, 2005).

They arrive in Sierra Leone as victims of human trafficking and are either exploited in the same country or brought through the same process to other destinations. They have no knowledge of the dangers that they are likely to encounter once they are far from home. Upon arrival in their countries of destination, they go through orientation for various jobs to ensure that they are of value. For example, the traffickers conduct orientation to those who will do the mining of various minerals like diamonds and gold. It is the same for potential prostitution, domestic workers, beggars, porters, and street criminals. There are multiple activities that human trafficked individuals become involved with at their destinations such as fishing and agriculture (United States Department of State, 2012). In the social sphere, some are recruited for forced marriages of which their exploitation occurs, and forced into sex and strenuous work. Sierra Leoneans voluntarily migrate to other West African countries, including Mauritania and Guinea, as well as to the Middle East and Europe, where they are forced into hard labor and prostitution (Guardian News, 2013).

In view of the issue of prostitution, eighteen suspected trafficking offenders were prosecuted, and six were convicted during the previous reporting period of 2011. It appears that the enforcement of the anti-trafficking law is low. For example, the Anti-trafficking in Person act of 2005 prohibits all forms of human trafficking and prescribes a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment or a fine of \$4,650 for both sex and labor trafficking offenses. In essence, the crime of human trafficking must be taken seriously just like others including rape (U.S. Department of State, 2012).

With regard to protection of victims, the Sierra Leonean government demonstrated limited effort to protect child trafficking victims, the most significant population of trafficking victims in the country. In 2011, the government identified four foreign trafficking victims from Nigeria, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, and Gambia but

failed to identify any Sierra Leonean victims. The efforts of the government were not realized since human resources were not at play. The government relied on the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations to identify and provide services for trafficking victims. During the period of 2011, ninety-one victims were identified by NGOs, and there were no reports of anyone detained, fined, or jailed for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of human trafficked. In fact, the government did not make adequate efforts to identify trafficking victims, which may have led to some victims treated as offenders (United States Department of States, 2012).

Statement of the Problem

Sierra Leone is one of the countries where activities related to human trafficking takes place. The major towns see people come from the rural areas within the country or other countries in order to be smuggled to various destinations. This is especially true for children who are smuggled from surrounding countries such as Nigeria, Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, and Gambia. Nevertheless, the country has put anti-trafficking rules in place. It appears that the law enforcers lack knowledge, power, and goodwill to implement the laws. Another challenge is that the laws also have a discrepancy since they do not address how to deal with human traffickers from outside the boundary (IOM, 2005). The public also lacks knowledge on the dangers of human trafficking. The anti-trafficking laws in themselves are not effective especially given that they have not addressed modern forms of trafficking such as Internet sex trafficking (Kunze, 2010). Recently, the Sierra Leone Police has called on the Government of Sierra Leone to enact legislative instrument or put policy in place to help fight the alarming rate of cyber related crimes like human trafficking (Awareness Times, 2013).

In spite of the government of Sierra Leone being aware of these problems, very little has been done to address the issue. However, the real problem lies with government enforcement. Thus, there has been a failure on the part of both the Sierra Leonean government and the public to effectively address human trafficking (UNICEF, 2005).

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study is to investigate human trafficking in West Africa, in general, but with an emphasis on Sierra Leone, in particular. In essence, Sierra Leone is the case study for the research. The main objective of this study is to analyze relevant trafficking data from Sierra Leone.

Details

- To identify, summarize and analyze data to ascertain the varied reasons for supporting human trafficking.
- To identify measures to be put in place for mitigation of human trafficking.
- To make recommendations regarding how best the human trafficking problem in Sierra Leone can be addressed.

The Research Question

To achieve the objectives of the study, the following research question must be answered:

- Why do factors such as the use of false passports, unregistered childbirths, lack of the existence of data and expertise, and failure to maintain minimum standards, which contribute to the existence of human trafficking, continue to exist in Sierra Leone?

Significance of the Study

The illegal transfer of people has received worldwide attention because it contravenes some provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 2013). In Article 4, the United Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) provides that “No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms” (United Nations, 2013); and that “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment” in Article 5 (United Nations, 2013). Slavery, slave trade, servitude, torture, cruelty, and inhuman or degrading treatment are key characteristics of human trafficking. The fact that human trafficking involves cross-border has forced the international community, notable the United Nations to intervene. The United Nations is calling for the different states to take responsibilities to eradicate this dehumanizing behavior.

Sawadogo (2012) observes that the Government of Sierra Leone, just like other countries across the globe, needs to work together with international agencies to mitigate the problem of human trafficking, especially when it involves children who are innocent and vulnerable. Their innocence needs protection (Surtees, 2005). The government has a responsibility of protecting the inherent dignity of everyone. Therefore, policy makers in Sierra Leone must formulate policies that will work towards sustainable mitigation of human trafficking for both the country and the world at large (Sawadogo, 2012). Furthermore, significant stakeholders in the country must pay attention to the minimum standards set by the international community for the eradication of this unethical issue.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) finds that the government has not shown significant effort towards seeking solutions, noting that it has continued to see habitation of notorious human traffickers (United Nations High

Commissioner for Refugees, 2012). This is evident in the various reports made by the United Nations every year. There is almost no progress in addressing the matter.

This is the reason why in 2012, Sierra Leone was on the U.S. State Department's human trafficking Watch List as Tier 2. Tier 2, according to the U.S. Department of State, consists of those states that are not showing any progress in actually addressing human trafficking at any given time relative to the same time the previous year. Tier 2 states do not fully comply with the minimum standards as entrenched in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act for the eliminating trafficking of persons.

One wonders why despite the observation by the United Nations of the large number of individuals smuggled in and out of the country, only a few suspects have been charged and brought to court for the crime (Sawadogo, 2012). Even the government has not denied the level of the problem in the country.

Sawagodo (2012) further insists that it is necessary for the various stakeholders to work together in order to eradicate human trafficking in Sierra Leone. The government should take the lead since it falls under the mandate to protect the human rights of her citizens. It has the human resources to do so including finances (Guardian News, 2013). Extra effort needed to adequately put the necessary measures in place in addressing the problem (Sawagodo, 2012). It involves allocation of adequate financial and human resources accordingly. The citizens need to be educated on why they should not involve themselves with human trafficking since it is dangerous. Enough sensitization through information campaign should be done to promote community watchdogs where they will even help create a civil society reporting the human traffickers (Surtees, 2005).

The government of Sierra Leone should seek to increase penalties under various issues relating to human trafficking among them prostitution (United States Department of State, 2012). Those who implement the Anti-Trafficking law will be able to prosecute and convict the offenders. The police force needs training on the law so that they will be empowered to investigate, identify, and prosecute the traffickers (Guardian, 2013). Sierra Leone has not taken enough measures in addressing the matter. The country has been engaging in this dehumanizing act for quite a long period. Without appropriate information about the nature, causes, and effects of the human trafficking problem, it would be difficult for appropriate measures to be put in place to address the problem (Wylie & McRedmond, 2010).

This study is important because it aims to identify practices that will assist policymakers in developing and implementing appropriate corrective measures to address human trafficking. Ultimately, it is hoped that through the recommendations that result from this research, the government of Sierra Leone as well as other players keen on addressing the human trafficking problem will be able to significantly improve their ability to fight the crime in countries.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Sierra Leone's human trafficking problems are rooted in the major social problems of poverty and economic inequality, and are facilitated by other important factors such as lack of child registration at birth, use of false passport, the arrest of victims, ill-motivated parents, lack of awareness of human trafficking and lack of expertise by authorities.

This chapter critically reviews the literature on the subject of human trafficking in West Africa. Emphasis is on the human trafficking problem in Sierra Leone, and the literature is organized based as such. Literature written on the same or similar subject matters are grouped together, compared, and contrasted thematically. The thematic presentation of the literature review helps ensure that the gaps in the existing literature are identified with the objective of filling one or more of those gaps through this research. Alternatively, the literature review assists in determining whether this research will be a valuable addition to the existing literature.

Human Trafficking Models

Theories abound to explain the trafficking of persons across international borders. For example, in one theory, poverty is one of the most important contributing factors related to human trafficking. The poor are often at a disadvantage, and it takes effort and skill to be able to earn a living (UNICEF, 2005). Most poor people in the world's developing countries struggle every day to make ends meet, and quite often, these people have to make do on as little as one meal a

day. Moreover, when a meal becomes available, it is usually not sufficient for healthy subsistence (UNICEF, 2005). Malnutrition and starvation are common occurrences in most developing nations. Under such conditions of extreme and abject poverty, the masses live at the mercy of anyone who can provide them with food (Surtees, 2005).

According to Wheaton, Schauer, and Galli (2010), hunger is sufficient in itself to send the poor into any form of lifestyle. Human traffickers often take advantage of the situation. For the traffickers, economic hardship experienced by many poor people makes their work easier. Generally, poorer people find it difficult to resist the temptation of moving from their villages to either the urban areas or other nations with the promises of better lifestyles (UNICEF, 2011).

Another major theory on human trafficking asserts that disparities in productivity and/or quality of living among people of different nations, or even regions of the same nation, also accounts for the largest incidence and instances of human trafficking (UNICEF, 2005). The fact that some nations are richer and more economically endowed than others, compels people from the poorer nations to want to migrate to the richer and more prosperous nations in the hope that they will find a better life (Wheaton et al., 2010).

When different regions of the same nations are desperate economically, people from poorer areas seek to migrate to the richer areas. Where such inequalities exist, human trafficking, as an illegal activity, thrives (Wheaton et al., 2010). International trafficking networks find it easy to entice people from their homes and villages using promises of better lives abroad (Sawadogo, 2012). The result is that victims often willingly submit themselves to the care of the traffickers, and they subsequently end up being victims of human trafficking. The promises offered by the traffickers are hardly ever fulfilled, but by the time the victims realize that they have been duped, it

is almost always too late to do anything to free themselves or even get help (UNICEF, 2005).

Theories of Human Trafficking in Sierra Leone

For this study, two main theoretical frameworks are evident. The first one is that poverty plays a vital role in pushing people to conditions of slavery (Wheaton et al., 2010). Such conditions then breed behaviors that encourage and even intensify the trafficking of human beings (Quirk, 2011). If these countries had the means to take care of their people living in poor conditions, it is possible that human trafficking would not be as prevalent in West Africa and Sierra Leone.

A second framework examines disparities in productivity and living quality among people of different nations and regions throughout the world. People living in places that are poorer tend to move to places that are more prosperous (Breuill, 2008). Due to economic differences, migration of people has been encouraged. This migration occurs both legally and illegally, and human traffickers exploit this desire by people to move, which is usually by means of human trafficking (IOM, 2005).

An integrated theory that combines both major theories of human trafficking, such as trafficking as rooted in poverty and inequality, respectively is important to contextualize the current study. According to this integrated theory, economic factors the most important part in the perpetuation and exacerbation of human trafficking (Wheaton et al., 2010).

While the victims of trafficking are often poor and economically deprived, the perpetrators are people who seek to capitalize on the vulnerabilities of the victims to make money (Wheaton et al., 2010). The fact that human traffickers are rarely arrested makes traffickers bolder and more willing to engage in the crime. Remedial

measures ought to include efforts to reduce economic problems that are faced by victims and potential victims (Wheaton et al., 2010).

The Nature of Human Trafficking in Sierra Leone: Causes and Implications

Human trafficking in West Africa varies in nature from country to country (Sawadogo, 2012). There are country-specific issues that stand out, which may not be effectively addressed unless they are identified as being unique to a given country (UNICEF, 2005). Therefore, while human trafficking in West Africa is usually generalized, there are significant variations from one country to another.

In Sierra Leone, for example, the nature of human trafficking is such that most of the victims are trafficked from the rural areas of the country to the major urban centers. They are typically forced into domestic servitude or forced labor, and mostly for the purpose of commercial sex exploitation (Surtees, 2005). In essence, the most rampant form of human trafficking is that which is carried out *within* the country, as opposed to other West African nations where transnational trafficking is more prevalent. For many women around the world, child domestic labor is still considered a safe form of employment. Blagbrough (2008) argues that domestic labor is actually a modern form of slavery. This is mainly due to the negative consequences it has on the children involved.

According to UNICEF (2011), another very important characteristic of human trafficking in Sierra Leone is that a large proportion of the victims of human trafficking are actually children. These children are usually trafficked from the rural areas to the urban areas within the country. Children are forced to carry out different duties for menial pay, which is mostly taken by their traffickers. Consequently, traffickers often end up involved in related international crime involving child labor.

Furthermore, the trafficked children provide labor of various kinds to their traffickers (Sawadogo, 2012).

However, human trafficking in Sierra Leone is not restricted to occurrences within the nation or to children. Transnational trafficking of women and children also takes place. Most women and children trafficked across borders from Sierra Leone are often destined for the fishing and agricultural industries of neighboring countries like Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, and Gambia (Surtees, 2005).

International Organization of Migration (IOM) (2005) notes that Sierra Leone is also a leading *destination* and transit point for women and children trafficked from nations like Guinea, Nigeria, and Liberia. The victims often end up working in the mines and in the agricultural industry. Others become beggars, laborers, sex slaves, and porters (Surtees, 2005). The situation in the country is similar to what happens in other parts of the world where trade in militarized sexual violence and trade in persons are common. In addition, assaultive sexual violence against women during conflicts is closely related to the sale of women for sexual exploitation (Farr, 2009).

Human trafficking in Sierra Leone, as in most other West African states, has been especially difficult to curb because of the *cultural practices* that people engage in and the economic situation of the people (United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking, 2008). Sierra Leone is one of the poorest nations in the world. As a result, most people live in miserable conditions. With such dire conditions of living, it has become easy for trafficking rings and cartels to lure unsuspecting victims using the promise of a better life (UNICEF, 2005).

Culturally, the roles of women and children are subservient to the men in society. Thus, when fathers and husbands make a decision to have their children

taken to work in the urban areas, the women and children have no choice but to go along with the men (UNICEF, 2005).

In effect, many trafficking victims are at least initially willing parties to the crime of trafficking (United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking, 2008). The people who take them from their homes are often close friends or relatives who come with the promise of better lives for the children and women. The victims are then subject to involuntary servitude, forced labor, arranged marriages, begging, prostitution, and other forms of income-generating activities. The earnings of the victims benefit the traffickers (Sawadogo, 2012).

In view of this, it is very challenging for some forms of human trafficking to be identified (Gozdziak, 2010). The victims are often clueless about the trafficking ring until they are in the destination country or city, and by then it is too late to act. The traffickers confiscate their passports and other documents. In some cases, they use falsified documents to get their victims across borders. This is to ensure that they do not escape (IOM, 2005).

In addition, the seizure of legal documents by traffickers ensures that any attempts by the victims to report the matter to the relevant authorities would usually result in the victims themselves being arrested for being in the destination countries illegally (IOM, 2005). Indeed, such occurrences take place quite often in West Africa, and victims of human trafficking have been mistaken for the traffickers and arrested by the authorities (UNICEF, 2005).

The fosterage of children is also another cultural practice that is deeply entrenched in Sierra Leonean family life and one that has helped exacerbate the child trafficking problem. Perhaps, owing to the inability of most families in Sierra Leone to take good care of their own, many prefer leaving their children to the care of

relatives, friends, and foster parents who are able to provide for their needs (Surtees, 2005). Under such circumstances, it becomes easier for the children to be trafficked (UNICEF, 2011). The foster parents themselves are often eager and keen to make a good living. Consequently, many foster parents will not let the chance of a good income pass them by, even if it means offering a foster child to work overseas or in the country's capital city of Freetown (Surtees, 2005).

Apart from widespread poverty, two other factors that have contributed to rampant human trafficking in Sierra Leone are war and lack of registration of births. For the most part, a good number of children in Sierra Leone were not registered at birth. This lack of legal documentation provides the human traffickers the opportunity to move the victims from one region to another and out of the country without much difficulty (UNICEF, 2005). Unregistered children at birth also do not have a specific nationality even though they were born in Sierra Leone. Although they are born in Sierra Leone, the fact that they have not been registered as Sierra Leone citizens make it easy for children to be moved to other countries without raising any suspicions (UNICEF, 2005). Moreover, the past civil wars in the country have also made it easy for human traffickers (Sawadogo, 2012). The government was focused on the war effort, and it considered the fight against human trafficking as less significant. Indeed, the government benefitted significantly from the trafficking trade. As a result, children trafficked from the rural areas of the country found their way into the fighting ranks of either the government or the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF), (Surtees, 2005). The rebels and the government forces have been accused of being perpetrators of the crime of child trafficking because they directly or indirectly arranged for the enrollment of child soldiers into their fighting units. In fact, child soldiers accounted for over twenty five percent of the fighting forces (Surtees, 2005).

This was a clear indication that the children trafficked from villages were destined for the warzone.

The other major setback for Sierra Leone has been the acute lack of trafficking data (UNICEF, 2005). In any part of the world, it is virtually impossible for crimes to be effectively curbed unless there is an increased awareness regarding the phenomena (Hynes, 2010). Such awareness about human trafficking is extremely low in Sierra Leone just as is the case in other West African states (UNICEF, 2005).

This lack of awareness is evident in the absence of data on human trafficking (UNICEF, 2005). There is no documented evidence regarding the number of people including women and children trafficked into and from the country. As such, any remedial measures against the crime have relied solely on findings by international organizations and some NGOs (Sawadogo, 2012). Additionally, even these organizations have not been able to document their information since they often rely on government data (UNICEF, 2005). In view of the lack of data, it is possible that the human trafficking problem in the country could actually be larger and more advanced than some believe.

Trafficking versus Migration: the Sierra Leone Dilemma

Quite often, many cases of migration have been confused with those of human trafficking and vice-versa, observes UNICEF (2005). In some cases, migration has been wrongly reported and documented as human trafficking just as certain human trafficking cases have been wrongly identified as migration (Surtees, 2005). This confusion has become common in recent times, and it has been a major cause of the inaccuracies in the data related to human trafficking cases in Sierra Leone. To be able to address any problem, the problem must first be identified clearly, and its causal factors pointed out (Gozdziak, 2010). The same applies to human trafficking. The

lack of awareness about human trafficking both at government level and among non-governmental organizations in Sierra Leone have meant that fewer people are actually able to identify human trafficking (Surtees, 2005; Gozdzia, 2010).

Furthermore, those organizations and agencies responsible for curbing human trafficking have not been able to deal with the problem because they lack the expertise regarding identification (Gozdzia, 2010). This could partly explain why human trafficking data is largely unavailable when it comes to Sierra Leone (United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking, 2008). The civil society in the country has been unable to report any meaningful cases of human trafficking in the recent past. The reason for this is not that human trafficking has not been taking place. Instead, many cases of human trafficking are confused with those of migration or other social ills such as street children, child abandonment, and child labor (UNICEF, 2005). These organizations did not know that most of these social ills were actually elements of human trafficking (Surtees, 2005).

In addition, and even more surprising, is the fact that some civil society groups as well as government agencies had, as recently as the year 2004, classified human trafficking in Sierra Leone as an “emerging” social problem. Although this characterization appears to be contradictory given the various reports that Sierra Leone has witnessed widespread human trafficking, the reason behind such a notion lies with the very nature of human trafficking in the country (Surtees, 2005). Secrecy and lack of awareness have both made human trafficking difficult to identify (Gozdzia, 2010; Hynes, 2010).

The nature, forms, and methods of human trafficking have been unknown among people, and this has made those who were eager to address the problem unable to identify the problem in the first instance (Gozdzia, 2010). Furthermore, the fact

that human trafficking could be described as an emerging problem means that the various ways through which it manifests itself have been new to the people and have not been previously known (Surtees, 2005). Indeed, like many other crimes, human trafficking across the world has been taking on different forms (IOM, 2005).

Even then, few people understand the common forms of human trafficking (Gozdziak, 2010). In Sierra Leone, people believe that human trafficking is forceful abduction and subsequent sale of children. In fact, very few people generally know or have heard about human trafficking. The few people who have heard about human trafficking had a very limited understanding. For such people with limited understanding of human trafficking, the abduction of children for the purposes of selling them abroad is the only understanding they had of human trafficking (Surtees, 2005).

Thus, when various organizations worked with such people, they came to realize that most acts that actually constituted human trafficking were not reported as such. Similarly, some acts that were not part of human trafficking were reported incorrectly under this category. This confusion has significantly delayed efforts to curb rampant human trafficking in Sierra Leone (Surtees, 2005).

The fight against internal trafficking has especially suffered from this confusion (UNICEF, 2005). Most people did not consider movement of people from rural areas to mostly urban areas as a form of human trafficking. This was because they mistakenly understood trafficking to be only by force and with victims carried across the border to other countries (Surtees, 2005). As a result, most of the cases of women and children trafficked from within the rural areas to work in mines were not reported as having been trafficked (UNICEF, 2005).

Misperception of Human Trafficking as an Emerging Social Problem in Sierra Leone

According to Surtees (2005), even the very people that worked closely with NGOs on fighting human trafficking could not identify these activities as human trafficking. It is, therefore, not surprising that human trafficking has been classified as an emerging social ill. In addition, although the crime has been in existence in the country for decades now, it is only starting to be publicly understood. Therefore, the perceived newness of human trafficking in Sierra Leone is not based in its actual newness, but in a poor level of understanding about it (Surtees, 2005).

Remedial Measures

Sierra Leone has tried to institute measures to combat human trafficking in general, and with regard to trafficking of women and children, in particular (UNICEF, 2005). The government's efforts have been reinforced and supported by international organizations such as UNICEF as well as by non-governmental organizations operating mainly within the country (Surtees, 2005).

The efforts of the government towards curbing human trafficking have been far from achieving the intended purposes (UNICEF, 2005). This has largely been attributed to the fact that the Government of Sierra Leone has not been able to become fully compliant with the minimum standards required to eliminate human trafficking. Most of this failure has been attributed to the country's limited resources (Surtees, 2005). The minimum standards are set by the United States Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), which were developed to assist other countries with the problem of human trafficking According to the TVPA:

- (1) The government of the country should prohibit severe forms of trafficking in persons and punish acts of such trafficking.
- (2) For the knowing

commission of any act of sex trafficking involving force, fraud, coercion, or in which the victim of sex trafficking is a child incapable of giving meaningful consent, or of trafficking which includes rape or kidnapping or which causes a death, the government of the country should prescribe punishment commensurate with that for grave crimes, such as forcible sexual assault. (3) For the knowing commission of any act of a severe form of trafficking in persons, the government of the country should prescribe punishment that is sufficiently stringent to deter and that adequately reflects the heinous nature of the offense. (4) The government of the country should make serious and sustained efforts to eliminate severe forms of trafficking in persons (TVPA section 108 (a) 1-4).

Several reasons account for the country's failure to fully comply with these minimum standards, one of which is the limited resources available for proper implementation (Surtees, 2005). Without the necessary resources, Sierra Leone has not been able to enforce its anti-trafficking laws, although they are in place.

Secondly, the Sierra Leonean government has not fully understood the nature, causes, and extent of its human trafficking problem (Surtees, 2005). Without such understanding, fighting the crime, which is among the critical standards set, has been difficult. To some extent, the government of Sierra Leone has not complied with the minimum standards because of lack of good will among the political elites. Much of the work of fighting human trafficking has been left to non-governmental organizations most of which have little or no real government support in the work. As a result, the responsibilities placed on these organizations and the role they are expected to play in combating human trafficking is far greater than the financial resources allocated to them, if any, by the Sierra Leone government. The government

could benefit immensely if specific measures such as stiff penalties are handed out to government officials found guilty of working with human traffickers. In addition, the government needs to work with border control agencies of other West African countries.

Although Sierra Leone is not fully compliant, it has managed to comply with at least one of the minimum standards. It is notable that Sierra Leone did comply with the standard to legislatively pass an anti-trafficking law (the Anti-trafficking in Person act of 2005). The Anti-trafficking in Person act of 2005 prohibits all forms of human trafficking and prescribes a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment or a fine of \$4,650 for both sex and labor trafficking offenses (Surtees, 2005). This is a major step that the government has been able to make towards fighting human trafficking.

Prevention of Trafficking, Prosecution of Offenders and Protection of Victims

With regard to the issue of prostitution in Sierra Leone, eighteen suspected trafficking offenders were prosecuted, and six were convicted during the previous reporting period of 2011 (Surtees, 2005). Already, the country has in place some anti-trafficking laws especially for children (Buck, 2008). However, the enforcement of this law and others is quite poor (UNICEF, 2005). For example, as previously noted, the Anti-trafficking in Person act of 2005 prohibits all forms of human trafficking and prescribes a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment or a fine of \$4,650 for both sex and labor trafficking offenses (Surtees, 2005). The United Nations has noted that the crime of human trafficking must be taken seriously just like others including rape (United States Department of States, 2012).

UNICEF, has asserted that if prevention is to be successful, then the causal factors of human traffickers, notably rampant poverty and the culture of fostering,

have to be addressed first. Given that it is not easy to change culture, efforts to prevent human trafficking in Sierra Leone will not succeed anytime soon. Economic reforms are also necessary. However, the poor economic performance of the country's economy is also a major hindrance (UNICEF, 2005).

An example of such failure to succeed in regard to protection of victims was seen in 2011 when the Sierra Leonean government demonstrated limited effort to protect child trafficking victims, which is the most significant population of trafficking victims in the country (United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking, 2008). In 2011, the government identified only four foreign trafficking victims from Nigeria, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, and Gambia but it failed to identify any Sierra Leonean victims. Indeed, the United Nations noted that the efforts of the government were not realized since its human resources were not at play (United States Department of States, 2012; UNHCR, 2012).

Instead, the government relied on the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations to identify and provide services for trafficking victims. During the period of 2011, ninety-one victims were identified by NGOs, and there were no reports of anyone detained, fined, or jailed for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of human trafficking. In fact, the government did not make adequate efforts to identify trafficking victims, which may have led to some victims being treated as offenders (United States Department of States, 2012).

The Way Forward for Sierra Leone

In spite of the various measures put in place by the Sierra Leone government to curb human trafficking, little progress has been made to stop the problem of human trafficking (United States Department of States, 2010). That is why Sawadogo (2012), and UNICEF (2005) argues that the government of Sierra Leone, just like

other countries across the globe, needs to work together with international agencies to mitigate the problem of human trafficking, especially because it involves children. Their innocence needs to be protected (Surtees, 2005).

The government has a responsibility for protecting the inherent dignity of everyone. Therefore, policymakers in Sierra Leone must formulate policies that will work towards sustainable mitigation of human trafficking both for the country and for the world at large (Sawadogo, 2012). Furthermore, stakeholders in the country must emulate efforts by other nations and pay attention to the minimum standards set by the international community for the eradication of this unethical practice (Cameron & Newman, 2008; Blackburn et al., 2010).

However, the U. S. department of States found that the Sierra Leone government has not shown significant effort towards seeking solutions, noting that it has continued to see habitation of notorious human traffickers (United States Department of States, 2012; Blackburn et al., 2010). This is evident in the various reports made by the U.S. department of States and UN every year. There is almost no progress in addressing the matter.

This is the reason why in 2012, Sierra Leone was placed on the human trafficking Watch List as Tier 2 state. Tier 2, according to the U.S. Department of State, consists of those states which have not shown any progress in actually addressing human trafficking at any given time relative to the same time the previous year. In essence, Tier 2 states do not fully comply with the minimum standards as entrenched in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act for the eliminating trafficking of persons. Furthermore, the United Nations has also noted that despite its own observations concerning the large number of individuals smuggled in and out of the country, only a few suspects have been charged and brought to court for the crime.

Even the government has not denied the level of the problem in the country (United States Department of States, 2012).

It has become clear that the various stakeholders must work together in order to eradicate human trafficking in Sierra Leone. The government should take the lead since it falls under the mandate to protect the human rights of its citizens. It has the human resources to do so including finances. However, extra effort is required to implement the necessary measures in order to address the problem (Sawadogo, 2012). There must be an adequate allocation of financial and human resources, and the citizens need to be educated on how not to become involved with human trafficking due to its dangerousness (United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking, 2008). Additionally, sufficient relevant sensitization should be undertaken to promote community watchdogs that can help create a civil society reporting system targeting the human traffickers (Surtees, 2005).

It has also been noted that the government of Sierra Leone needs to increase penalties under various issues relating to human trafficking including related prostitution. Those who implement the Anti-Trafficking law will, therefore, be able to properly pursue the prosecution and appropriate sentencing of the offenders (Hynes, 2010). In addition, the police in Sierra Leone need to enhance their border patrols to curb human trafficking. Human traffickers capitalize on lax border patrols as the case of Bangladesh shows. For example, according to a case study, McCabe (2008) found that border patrols and police efforts in addressing human trafficking do not exist in Bangladesh and human traffickers are aware of and take advantage of this fact. Furthermore, local nongovernmental organizations have acknowledged over twenty porous areas for human trafficking along the borders.

From the review of the literature, two major issues were determined as being at the root of rampant human trafficking in Sierra Leone. These are poverty and inequality. Other important factors also contribute to its persistence, such as the use of false passports, the arrest of victims, ill-motivated foster parents, lack of child registration at birth, use of child soldiers, lack of data, lack of awareness of human trafficking, lack of expertise by authorities, secrecy behind the trafficking, and failure by Sierra Leone to become fully compliant with the minimum standards of The Trafficking Victims Protection Act.

From the literature review and in view of the above findings, it can be concluded that there indeed exist a number of factors that contribute to the existence of human trafficking in Sierra Leone. Most of the writers on this subject are practitioners working with human rights organizations, aid agencies, child protection organizations, womens' rights advocacy groups, and government agencies. What remains unanswered is why these factors continue to exist in spite of the fact that they have been identified as being both relevant and serious in relation to the continued existence of human trafficking in Sierra Leone.

In other words, why has there not been a concentrated effort towards the interdiction and eradication of the manufacture, sale, and use of false passports? Other critical questions surround the reasons why the failure to register child births registrations continues, why there still is a lack of data, awareness, and expertise surrounding this subject matter, and finally, why does Sierra Leone continue falling short of become fully compliant with the minimum standards for prevention, enforcement, and prosecution of human trafficking?

Indeed, based upon the results of the literature nothing has been written with regard to the research question. Why do factors such as use of false passports,

unregistered child births, lack of the existence of data and expertise, and failure to maintain minimum standards, which contribute to the existence of human trafficking, continue to exist in Sierra Leone?

In the rare cases when some aspects covering this particular research question were addressed, the focus was not on Sierra Leone but on other West African states such as Nigeria. This focus was common in the findings of McCabe (2008) and Blackburn et al., (2010). Accordingly, a gap exists in the human trafficking literature relative to Sierra Leone. This is because most of the literature available only covers other aspects of human trafficking such as causes, protection, and prevention of human trafficking. There has been nothing that specifically addresses the unanswered question of why known factors which contribute to Sierra Leone being an anchor-spot or distribution center for human trafficking in the West African region, continue to exist.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

As we know from the literature review, Sierra Leone is noted for being an anchor-spot for human trafficking in West Africa (U.S. Department of State, 2012). Many people have fallen victim to human trafficking, with the majority being children and women (UNICEF, 2005). The literature review revealed that there have been a number of human trafficking-related factors that have been previously identified as such, yet they continue to exist. However, it remains unclear why some of these factors remain unabated in spite of the fact that they have been identified. Indeed, there have been no concerted efforts in addressing these factors, which continue to contribute to the rampant trafficking of persons witnessed and reported in Sierra Leone. Consequently, this study explores why many of these factors continue to exist and why there have been no concerted efforts in addressing them.

Data on human trafficking in Sierra Leone is sparse, and there is little or no communication between the government and non-governmental organizations regarding human trafficking (UNHCR, 2012; United States Department of State, 2012). Accordingly, the data collected for this study added substance to the limited information on this problem. These data also assisted in answering the research questions as to why certain human trafficking factors continue to exist in Sierra Leone and why there have been no concerted efforts in addressing the various factors that contribute to trafficking of persons witnessed and reported in Sierra Leone.

The Research Design

This study was qualitative in nature, and it sought to discover why Sierra Leone remains an anchor-spot for human trafficking in West Africa. Qualitative research seeks to find out the reason why things are as they appear. In essence, this approach specifically strives to offer reasons behind observed phenomena.

The Research Approach

This research employed the case study approach. A case study focuses on the principal issue being investigated, narrowing the research to only that issue (Creswell, 2009). In this instance, this was a case study of human trafficking in Sierra Leone.

The advantage of using a case-study approach to the data collected was specific. Such an approach can help enhance the reliability of the data collection criteria and the validity of the research findings (Creswell, 2009). By focusing on Sierra Leone, and only one aspect of research human trafficking, the case study approach significantly enhanced the specificity of the entire study and the reliability of its findings.

Context of and Access to Participants

The context of this study is the country of Sierra Leone. As a case study of that state, the focus was on the reasons for the continued existence of previously identified human-trafficking factors related to Sierra Leone. Since the study was based on data collected by others on the same subject matter, this research involved the secondary analyses of data regarding human trafficking in West Africa and Sierra Leone in particular. No research involving human subjects was involved.

Data Collection Methods

This study used qualitative methods for collecting data. They were collected from secondary sources. The sources were those that were already available to the public regarding Africa, and specifically West Africa and Sierra Leone.

The main sources of these data were reports from governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, books, academic journal articles, and publications and bulletins by the Sierra Leonean government. Most of the reports used to analyze data were those published by organizations engaged in efforts to combat human trafficking in West Africa in general and Sierra Leone in particular. These organizations included the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United States Department of State, and the Network Movement for Democracy and Human Rights (NMDHR).

Additionally, specific reports from which data were collected included "Data and Research on Human Trafficking: A Global Survey" from the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2005), "Trafficking in Human Beings, especially Women and Children in Africa" from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2005), and Trafficking in person report- Sierra Leone from United States Department of State in conjunction with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2012). Data were also collected from the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender, and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA) in Sierra Leone.

The studies carried out by the various organizations, government departments, and agencies had used several approaches. They included questionnaires, focus group discussions, in-depth interviews of heads of households, and questionnaires to stake

holders throughout Africa. Usage of these multiple sources, known as triangulation, helped to make correlation and validation of these data (UNICEF, 2005).

Desk reviews of these data were significant in identifying and establishing a baseline of the available information for secondary analyses. Taking such an approach for this study allowed for a thorough examination of the various reports and other sources in which the findings of the abovementioned organizations, government departments, and agencies were recorded. A critical analysis of the various field interviews that had been carried out in the past was also undertaken.

Type of Data Collected

This study was qualitative in nature. That is, it sought to investigate the reason why things appear as they are. It specifically sought to explore the reason why Sierra Leone has continued to be an anchor-spot for human trafficking in West Africa in spite of the fact that the problems that contribute to the human trafficking are largely known.

Based on the data sources, and the collection method mentioned above, numerous data were presented regarding human trafficking in Sierra Leone. However, this study was concerned with specific data about the causes of the rampant human trafficking problem in Sierra Leone relating to the research question as to why certain human trafficking factors continue to exist in Sierra Leone and why there have been no concerted efforts in addressing the various factors that contribute to trafficking of persons witnessed and reported in Sierra Leone.

To ensure the question was fully answered, the researcher expressly and deliberately sought data relating to the following previously identified relevant issues: registration of births, culture, arbitrary arrests, foster parentage, awareness of human trafficking, poverty, ignorance of fighting human trafficking, porous borders, civil

war in Sierra Leone, and public corruption. These categories were deemed wide enough to cover all aspects of the specific factors.

Registration of births shows the number of children that are registered as having been born in Sierra Leone. This data was important for the study because it helped shed light on the disparity between the number of children actually born in Sierra Leone and those that are registered as trafficked outside the country.

Culture is the way of life of the people, and in this study refers to that of those living in Sierra Leone. By collecting such data, it was possible to understand how some aspects of people's normal way of life actually contribute to human trafficking.

Measures of arbitrary arrest refer to the number of people who are arrested without sufficient cause or justification by law enforcement officers. Using this data, it was possible to determine the extent to which people who are victims of trafficking are arrested and detained by the law enforcement officers instead of being helped. Most of these people were arrested on suspicion of being illegal migrants and/or human traffickers.

Foster parentage is a common lifestyle in Sierra Leone where one or both parents decide to give their child or children up for adoption by a wealthier relative or friend so the child or children can be provided for sufficiently. Drawing from data on foster parentage, it was possible to evaluate a normal practice in the country that has been transformed into an avenue for human trafficking.

Lack of awareness, in this study, means the inability of the people to know about the critical issues surrounding human trafficking such as how the criminal activities are actually carried out, which forms of such activities commonly manifest themselves, and the specific categories of victims that likely become targets of the traffickers. Data on the level of awareness also helped reveal how human trafficking

has not been fought effectively because people, including some law enforcement officers and even NGO staff members are not fully aware of the problem.

Ignorance, in this study, refers to lack of knowledge of the problem of human trafficking in general. This data helped demonstrate that human trafficking has not been addressed because people lack education on how to fight the crime.

Poverty in this study is used to refer to the lack of the basic human needs such as food, education, shelter/housing, healthcare, and clothing. Using this data, it was possible to understand how traffickers capitalize on the vulnerabilities of the people, which were reflected by the lack of these basic needs of life.

The porosity of a border means the ease at which Sierra Leone's national borders can be crossed into and from neighboring countries without detection by border officers. Data on porous borders was important in linking the country's long and often unguarded borders and the inability of law enforcement officers to stem illegal movement of people in and out of Sierra Leone.

Civil war here refers to the fighting between the Sierra Leone government forces and several rebel movements in the country led by the Revolutionary United Front that lasted for over ten years. Data on the civil war was helpful in understanding how the needs of the war fuelled the demand for women and children who were in turn trafficked from various parts of the country to the war zones.

Corruption refers to the lack of transparency and integrity that leads to the prevention of justice. Data on public corruption helped inform the extent to which government officers in general, and immigration officials in particular, receive bribes and consequently allow human traffickers to go free even after identifying them as such.

The process entailed first identifying data on causes of human trafficking in West Africa. Then the data was sorted to specifically categorize information that pertained to Sierra Leone, and according to the objectives of the study as outlined in chapter one. Understanding why these problems persist in the country helped provide answers to the research question. Furthermore, these data helped explain the reason for the occurrence or persistence of the human trafficking problem in Sierra Leone and why the prevalence of this problem has persisted in spite of the causes of the problem being largely known.

Because of the breadth of information and scope of the investigation, the researcher decided that the in-depth analysis would be limited to two of the aforementioned key factors, which also affected or otherwise impacted other factors. These factors were 1) unregistered child births, and 2) foster parentage. In order to ensure the reliability of the data collected (and ultimately the validity of the results), several criteria were established in relation to the data collection. These were statements or other evidence that might explain why: 1) parents gave their children up for adoption, 2) why foster parents were willing to accept the children, 3) why the foster parents turned the children over to traffickers, 4) why traffickers selected this method, 5) explanations or statements by police, 6) why unrecorded births continued and how they affected the problems with foster parentage, 7) why birth registration records are missing, 8) why many children have been separated from their parents, 9) why efforts to register people are mostly unsuccessful, and 10) why parents cannot access healthcare facilities during delivery.

Data Analysis

The data analysis first entailed identifying the relevant data in the sources according to the criteria and classifications specified above under data collection. The

data collected were then organized according to the various thematic issues raised in the specific reports and other sources that were identified for use in this research. These thematic issues, from which the research questions were drawn, included the causes of rampant human trafficking in Sierra Leone; the reasons why these causes have not been addressed by the government and other relevant parties; and the reasons why Sierra Leone is still classified as a Tier 2 state as far as human trafficking is concerned.

The next step in the data analysis process involved linking, from a qualitative perspective, the data categorized by thematic issues to the previously identified human-trafficking related factors that included (1) ill-motivated foster parents, and (2) lack of child registration at birth. The results from analyses relative to these two specific factors also contributed to a better understanding of other factors such as a lack of awareness of human trafficking, lack of expertise by authorities, and why the government of Sierra Leone has not become fully compliant with the minimum standards of the TVPA. Through these methodological steps, the researcher was able to draw inferences and conclusions as to why these factors continue to exist in spite of the fact that they had previously been identified as contributing to the problem of human trafficking in Sierra Leone. The specific results are discussed in the next chapter.

Both of the two principal factors listed above were linked to the data collected based on the literature related exclusively to the specific factor. That is, the main criteria used to link these factors to the data collected was the amount and quality of data/information available for the specific factor. Thereafter, each factor was critically analyzed to determine how it contributed to the problem of human trafficking in Sierra Leone. These factors were known to be main contributing

component of human trafficking in Sierra Leone. However, it was not known why they remain unaddressed. To better understand why they had not been properly addressed, the data collected were analyzed from qualitative perspectives.

How the Data Analysis Method Helped Answer the Research Question

The review of the aforementioned reports revealed that data collected included the various root causes of human trafficking in Sierra Leone.

In addition, the secondary analyses of these sources provided results that led to answering the research question. The reasons why there have been no concerted efforts in addressing previously identified factors that contribute to the continued trafficking of persons was ascertained from secondary analyses of these data. These factors were identified in the literature review and included: 1) ill-motivated foster parents and 2) lack of child registration at birth. These two principal factors also bore a relationship with a lack of awareness of human trafficking, lack of expertise by authorities, and why the government of Sierra Leone has not become fully compliant with the minimum standards of the TVPA.

It was clear from the analyses of these reports, that the respondents felt that poverty was the key cause of human trafficking. It also appeared that a relationship existed between poverty and other factors that contribute to human trafficking in Sierra Leone and the state's status as an anchor spot for such illicit activities. Based on the existing studies and the secondary analyses of existing data, which resulted from the primary research, the researcher was able to provide valid results necessary for answering the research question, which was: why do previously identified factors that affect human trafficking in Sierra Leone continue to exist in spite of the fact that they have been identified?

Moreover, it was possible to answer the question by crosschecking the data collected in relations to this question and making linkages. Logical correlation of the earlier knowledge and available data assisted in making the necessary interpretations and in answering the research question.

Validity and Limitations of the Study

In order to enhance the validity of the study, only one nation from West Africa, Sierra Leone was considered. In essence, this was a case study of human trafficking in Sierra Leone, and as a case study, specificity was enhanced. Validity was also enhanced by using data from reputable organizations that have worked directly with the people of Sierra Leone and have investigated the same phenomenon of human trafficking.

Nonetheless, the limitations to this study include the lack of data on human trafficking in Sierra Leone by its government. To overcome this problem, the researcher developed a well-coordinated approach within the scope of information from the relevant academic literature. In other words, the researcher did not rely on solely on government data but on data available through other sources. In fact, the primary sources of data were international organizations and non- governmental organizations working in Sierra Leone, which again, served to validate and enhance the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This chapter presents the main findings of the study. This data was solely about two of the ten factors identified earlier as contributing to rampant human trafficking. These are foster parenting and failure to register births. Therefore, the findings are based on the qualitative analyses of the data collected from 10 sources in relation to the failure to register childbirths in Sierra Leone and 10 sources in connection with foster parentage in Sierra Leone. See Appendices A and B for the aforementioned sources of data for failure to register births and foster parentage respectively.

From the very start, this study sought to answer the question: Why do factors such as the use of false passports, unregistered childbirths, lack of data and expertise, and failure to maintain minimum standards, which contribute to the existence of human trafficking, continue to exist in Sierra Leone? To answer this question, the specific factors that contribute to the persistence of human trafficking as identified in the literature review were analyzed to determine why they have not been addressed despite the fact that they have been identified as such.

Through review of the literature, it was discovered that the prevalence of human trafficking in Sierra Leone has been attributed to various issues/problems that were reportedly working together in a synergistic fashion to exacerbate the human trafficking problem. The most important of these included poverty, the use of false passports, the arbitrary arrest of victims of trafficking, ill-motivated foster parents, lack of child registration at birth, lack of awareness of human trafficking, lack of expertise by authorities, and the non-compliance of the Sierra Leone government with

the minimum standards of the TVPA. It is the failure or inability to address the problems that have made Sierra Leone continue to be an anchor-spot for human trafficking in West Africa.

Two of these factors were selected for in-depth analysis. They were selected based on data relating to previously identified relevant issues, and also directly affected or otherwise influenced other factors. These are foster parentage and failure to register births. Since these two factors were singled out, it became imperative to narrow the research question. Therefore, the narrowed research question that is answered in this chapter was: Why do problems associated with foster parentage and failure to register births continue to exist in Sierra Leone even after they have been identified clearly and specifically as contributing to human trafficking in the country?

The Persistence of Foster Parentage and Failure to Register Births in Sierra Leone

The analysis of the data collected reveals 10 sub-factors that relate directly to the question of why births remain unregistered and why certain issues surrounding foster parentage continue in spite of the fact that these factors have been previously identified as contributing to the continuance of human trafficking in Sierra Leone. These sub factors include: 1) Lack of resources for registering births, 2) Lack of transportation in order to register births, 3) Lack of healthcare services, 4) Ignorance of the relationship between these two sub factors and human trafficking by birth parents, 5) Cultural beliefs and practices, 6) The Fostering of former child soldiers, 7) Lack of both national and international legislation regarding foster parenting, 8) Lack of monitoring of foster parents, 9) Unequal assistance from NGOs, and 10) Porous borders and problems associated with verifying registration. Each of these is discussed in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

Lack of resources for registering births. One of the most widely cited issues that have contributed to an increase in the number of people (both adults and children) that are not registered is poverty. Poverty at the level of the household and even that of the government has made it impossible for the necessary resources required to register new births to be made available. This has forced many families to not register their children at birth.

On the other hand, there remains to be an unusually large number of people who were born earlier, but their births were also not registered. This means that the challenge of registering births has been a long running issue in Sierra Leone. For adults who are not registered, the challenge is getting the resources required to set up registration centers since hospitals can only be used to register the newborn children.

Analysis of the data revealed that ten sources identified the fact that a lack of resources has made it impossible for registration centers to be located near the people. For instance, interviews by Surtees (2005) on women, government officials, and NGO country officials in rural areas of Sierra Leone found that parents find it too costly to travel the many miles from their homes just to have their children registered. Instead, they opt to save whatever money they have for use on other issues, which they find to be more important.

Sawadogo (2012), in interviews with NGO and government officials working to help combat human trafficking in Freetown, found that the government also lacks resources to run a program that would assist children and adults who are without any official identification with registration and providing necessary documents. Such a program would require personnel and other resources such as transportation to be successful. Since the government is mostly without such resources, it has been relying on assistance from well-wishers and international aid agencies (Sawadogo,

2012). In UNICEF's (2005) assessment of the causes of human trafficking in Sierra Leone (undertaken through a combination of desk review, visits to different areas of the country, and expert workshops targeting key stakeholders), it was noted that the economic performance of Sierra Leone has continued to be poor compared to the economies of many other nations in the world in general and in West Africa in particular. In fact, Sierra Leone is ranked among the poorest nations in the world.

Economic growth translates into better living standards for the people (Sawadogo, 2012). On the other hand, the poor economic state results in poverty even as people struggle to meet their daily needs in life. This is because unless the economy of a country grows with the population, increase in population will inevitably place a strain on the available resources. This means more people are going to have to share in the few available resources thus, more and more people become poorer.

These economic issues become all the more apparent and related to the two factors in this research. Plan International (2012) in a survey of households in rural Sierra Leone that targeted rural households found that the poor state of the economy has produced many negative impacts especially as these relate to fostering and failure to register births. Since the country's economy either has been growing too slowly to match the growth in population or has been experiencing negative growth, it has been hard for the government to provide the necessary services. These services included good healthcare programs and social services such as education among others. This has limited these people's ability and capacity to register new births, and has encouraged fostering.

Through a combination of desk reviews, visits to different areas of the country, and expert workshops targeting key stakeholders (mostly NGO officials,

government officers, and parents of victims of foster parenting), UNICEF (2005), also established that children are the most affected under the system of foster parentage. Furthermore, they found out that more often than not, these children find their way into the hands of these family friends or relatives where they are adopted as wards. Some friends and families are in cities and are expected to take care of the children on behalf of their parents (UNICEF, 2005).

Having interviewed former victims of trafficking as well as NGO and government officials in Sierra Leone, Moccia (2009) reports in his child protection report card for Sierra Leone that since children are more vulnerable when they are away from their homes and their biological parents, it is while they are staying with foster parents that they become exposed to human traffickers. This is because the foster parents also have their own challenges. Therefore, instead of having these foster children staying at home with them where they are an extra financial burden, they often arrange to have them working in urban areas or diamond mines so there is income constantly flowing into the foster family.

Analyses of surveys conducted by UNICEF (2005) revealed that a number of respondents were categorical in stating that some of these alleged guardians and/or foster parents were themselves part of the trafficking rings that took advantage of the poor state of children to traffic them. Through surveys of children and parents in conflict-prone rural areas of Sierra Leone, UNICEF (2005) finds that many of the children who voluntarily leave their homes for the homes of these would-be guardians are not aware that the promises they have been given of getting better jobs and better lives are mostly false. They do not suspect that they are likely to be trafficked by the people they trust (UNICEF, 2005).

Lack of transportation in order to register births. In a report by the Government of Sierra Leone (2000) on the status of women and children in the country, which relied on women's questionnaires (ages 15-49), children's questionnaires (below age 5), and households' questionnaires (all households), it was established that the very fact that many parents could not travel to the few registration centers available in the country was a key contributor to the high number of unregistered people in Sierra Leone. In many cases, registration centers for adults who were never registered at birth have been set up in urban centers where the majority of the people cannot afford transportation expenses. Furthermore, most children are registered in hospitals and other health facilities immediately after birth (Government of Sierra Leone, 2000).

Using desk reviews of various government ministries and selected NGOs in the country, Plan International (2012)—in a study to gauge the progress made with universal birth registration in Sierra Leone—found that most of the rural areas of Sierra Leone have no such health facilities as hospitals or dispensaries. Those that exist are located great distances from the people. This makes it inconceivable for parents to spend a lot of money to travel to these facilities to deliver their babies. Instead, they prefer delivering their children at home with the assistance of traditional midwives. Such home-based services are preferred because they are not only accessible but are also affordable.

Lack of healthcare services. Apart from the fact that long distances make it difficult or impossible for parents to register births, there are many cases in Sierra Leone where there are no healthcare facilities. According to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (2000) in its concluding observations for Sierra Leone, rural areas are especially affected by this problem. Analysis of a study by CRC found

that it had also observed that in most nations around the world and even in West Africa, the norm is to register children at birth. However, this can only be possible where people have access to healthcare facilities.

A review of a countrywide survey on parents, child victims, government officials, and NGO officers undertaken by CRC (2006) revealed that people could only go to available healthcare facilities to deliver their babies or have them registered. Where such facilities are lacking, as is the case in Sierra Leone, it is not possible for births to be registered. The analysis revealed that the respondents in the CRC study cited lack of healthcare facilities in most rural parts of the country as well as in some urban areas. The people of these areas have no choice but to resort to traditional ways of giving birth. This way, the birth of a child is unregistered because there are no programs in place to have the newly born children registered. Traditional midwives in the villages have no mandate to register births of new children yet they are the ones to which most women seek maternity services.

Ignorance of the relationship between these two sub factors and human trafficking by birth parents. Interview surveys carried out by Surtees (2005) using direct personal interviews with women, government officials, and NGO country directors in rural Sierra Leone discovered another major reason why fostering and failure to register births have not been addressed even though they have been identified as being related to human trafficking. The reason is that a majority of the population is not aware that a relationship exists between these two sub factors and human trafficking.

This research revealed that the CRC (2000) report, which was prepared based on countrywide surveys on parents, child victims, government officials, and NGO officers, if people were enlightened, that it would be easier to deal with birth

registration and foster parenting. Further, a CRC study (2006) involving a similar countrywide survey on parents, child victims, government officials, and NGO officers, found that a more worrying issue is the fact that birth parents were reported to be the most ignorant of this relationship between fostering and failure to register birth children and human trafficking.

UNICEF (2005) in a survey of children and parents in conflict-prone rural areas of Sierra Leone also finds that more often than not, human trafficking thrives on ignorance. Unregistered children and even adults are stateless and have no identification documents. Some even lack as much as an official name and age. This means it is virtually impossible to know who these children are and their place of origin. Traffickers use this to move people from one place to another as they can lie as to the identity of the person.

Furthermore, Sawadogo (2012), in interviews with NGO and government officials working to help combat human trafficking in Freetown, discovered that it has been easy for traffickers to move people to and from Sierra Leone because they are not registered. Since being unregistered means one does not have an official state, traffickers have been able to move people across the border claiming they belong to the destination country when in the real sense they are from Sierra Leone.

According to findings by Alber, Martin, and Notermans (2013) with regard to fostering, parents are keener on having their children take proper care in order to prevent any evil that might befall them. This is a culturally normative practice. For that reason, it runs from one generation to another, and it is perceived by many that little can be done to prevent it. If parents were aware that fostering predisposes their children to human trafficking, then they would probably be less willing to engage in the practice (Alber et al., 2013).

Even then, many of those interviewed (who were adult males and females in rural Sierra Leone) by Alber et al. (2013) were categorical that the good that comes from fostering far outweighs any negative impacts. In fact, it was clear that the few parents who were knowledgeable about the risks of fostering did not care as long as their children could find care in the hands of people who could educate and take care of them on their behalf.

Cultural beliefs and practices. Fostering and failure to register births was also attributed to retrogressive cultural practices of the people of Sierra Leone. This was revealed by Alber et al. (2013) in an interview with rural men and women in Sierra Leone seeking to understand the causes of non-registration. Their study found that some of the cultural practices in the country are themselves risk factors for the people in general and children in particular. One such practice is foster parenting. It was ascertained that fostering is normal in Sierra Leone. In fact, it is encouraged as a way of helping children get an education and other needs.

Child Frontiers (2010) in a survey of the child protection system in Sierra Leone finds that fostering has also been important in helping many families cope because the burden of childcare is removed from the biological parent to the foster parents. Gale (2006), through interviews on the Fula (the Fula-also called Fulani or Fulbe-are an ethnic tribe that is predominant in West Africa) refugees from Sierra Leone, finds that a common notion in the country is that a child belongs to multiple parents and not just one parent.

Another study also found that, parents find it acceptable to give up their children to foster parents both within and outside Sierra Leone. This has in turn contributed to human trafficking since most of these children in foster homes eventually ended up in the hands of traffickers. In some cases, the foster parents are

either traffickers or accomplices in the trafficking of these foster children they are supposed to care for and protect (Child Frontiers, 2010).

Another cultural practice in Sierra Leone that was repeatedly found through the data analysis was child labor. In most developed nations where child labor is frowned upon and perpetrators arrested and prosecuted, child labor is almost an acceptable practice in Sierra Leone and most other states in West Africa. In essence, while child labor is prohibited in other parts of the world, the practice is not only socially normative but is also economically necessary within the context of Sierra Leone (UNICEF, 2005; Child Frontiers, 2010).

In a study undertaken by UNICEF (2005) on victims of child labor and some of their parents using desk reviews and interviews on key stakeholders (employment agents, government labor officials, labor union officials, and law enforcers), it was found that child labor was very prevalent in both rural and urban areas of Sierra Leone. Generally, though, the most reported cases of child labor were in the rural areas. Owing to the demands of the country's diamond industry among other labor needs, the people of Sierra Leone – including parents – readily give up their children to work for whoever is willing to pay them some money (UNICEF, 2005).

This analysis also revealed that parents in Sierra Leone often encourage their children at an early age to go out of their homes and villages to look for work so that they can help in the upkeep of their parents and siblings. It was noted that this is an acceptable way of life for the majority in Sierra Leone (UNICEF, 2005). Even the children themselves often run away from home due to extremely high levels of poverty to look for work in the cities and large farms. While they may find the work they so much desire, they often end up missing on greater and more promising

opportunities in life such as the chance to go to school and to become educated (UNICEF, 2005).

An educated person, according to UNICEF (2005), stands a better chance in life than one who is not educated. Unfortunately, child labor is a common practice and one that is almost acceptable in the society. Even though the government has been trying to fight child labor in the recent times, the practice is rooted in the social fabric that it might not be eradicated any time soon.

According to responses to interviewees conducted by UNICEF (2005) on NGO officials in the country, it was established that the government appeared not to be fully committed to fighting child labor in the country because it is a potentially politically explosive issue. Similar findings were reported in surveys conducted by Child Frontiers (2010) that revealed in part that the government did not want to lose its legitimacy by targeting for eradication a practice that was culturally accepted and embraced. While these findings in themselves did not seek to suggest that the government of Sierra Leone was actually not doing anything to fight child labor, they are nonetheless an indicator that the government's so-called commitment to address child labor issues is not genuine.

The fostering of former child soldiers. Four different sources (Hynes (2008); Heap & Cody (2008); Gale (2006) and Gale [2008]) identified the Sierra Leone civil war and its effects as another reason why fostering and failure to register births are so rampant in Sierra Leone even though they have been identified as causes of or contributors to human trafficking. Through a combination of life-history interviews with key informants, participant observation at formal events and in households, focus groups and informal interviews with children and adults in the capital, Freetown and in Makeni (the largest city in the Northern Province), interview

with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender, and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA), the Sierra Leone Police's Family Support Unit with key focused on child, and NGOs, Gale (2006) finds that the civil war, which lasted for over a decade, had many negative impacts, which directly or indirectly contributed to either foster parentage or failure to register people or both.

For example, according to the research undertaken by Gale (2006), when the war ended, many livelihoods had been lost and/or devastated. More specifically, the fact that many children had taken part in the war as child soldiers made it impossible for them to lead normal lives. They (former child soldiers) were accommodated in refugee camps. Having spent a lot of time in these camps, these former child soldiers could not be registered because their identities could not be established and/or ascertained. The fact that most of these former child soldiers had grown up to become adults added to the problem of an increase in the number of adults who were unregistered in the country.

With regard to fostering, many former child soldiers have been taken into foster homes as a way of helping them to become reintegrated into the society. Although fostering has largely been taken to be helpful under the circumstances especially given that the parents and/or relatives or even homes of these former child soldiers could not be established, it has nonetheless helped exacerbate human trafficking.

Heap and Cody (2008) through interviews of adults and children in various cities in Sierra Leone found that by the time the war came to an end, many people had been killed, displaced, and/or wounded. Many others had been rendered homeless and/or lost their valuable assets such as land. The refugee problem and the related problem of internally displaced persons were overwhelming. These displaced people

needed to be accommodated if they were to become productive members of their communities.

However, the fact that many of the refugees had been displaced, and many others could not even recall their original parents, relatives, and /or homes, they ended being offered to foster parents away from the camps. This was seen as a way to reduce the growing problem of the presence of many refugee camps and camps of the internally displaced (Heap and Cody, 2008). In essence, because there were so many former child soldiers in need of reintegration into society made it necessary for the authorities (including some NGOs) to turn to well-wishers for help. As a result, most of the former child soldiers were placed in the hands of foster parents and others lived in camps but still under the supervision of foster parents. By this time, these former child soldiers had grown up to become adults. Since they had not been registered at birth and had spent most of their time in the war, there was a growth in the number of unregistered people the moment the war ended (Heap and Cody, 2008).

Analysis of data collected from a study conducted by Hynes (2008), which included a survey of the Mende ethnic community, revealed that it was found that as many as one third of all children aged sixteen and below were actually not living with their parents before the war. Further, it was found that during the war many young boys and children were forced to take up arms and fight or serve as sex slaves. Most of the children were abducted from their homes and taken to military camps belonging to both the government side and the rebel forces.

Further analysis of the Hynes study also showed that trauma occasioned by these events persists in some cases. Such children could hardly lead normal lives in spite of attempts to integrate them into society. These children sometimes relied on the war to earn a living. With the war over, they cannot have access to any other

meaningful source of income. Some of the children were forcefully abducted from their families while they were small, and as a result, they have not been able to retrace their families. These children have not been able to successfully fend for themselves because they are forced to live in refugee camps or foster homes (Hynes, 2008).

Hynes's (2008) study also finds that the raging war made it impossible for children to be registered at birth. This is because at the height of the war safety was the primary concern of mothers and their children. Therefore, those who managed to give birth did so in secret so militia could not kill their children. Furthermore, the disruption caused by the war made it impossible for child registration programs to continue. At the height of the civil war, many health facilities were destroyed or closed and thus, hindered registration of new births.

Shepler (2005) finds through interviews with expert groups (NGO personnel) that the fact that the war displaced a large number of people and separated many others from their families makes it difficult for people to be registered as their identities remain unknown. He further found that some children were separated from their parents while they were young, and they cannot be successfully registered because they virtually have no identity.

According to another study, in regard to fostering, the war predisposed many people to poverty and dependency. Few people, if any at all, could manage to care for their families. This pushed them to seek the help of foster parents from within Sierra Leone and outside the country (Shepler, 2005). Furthermore, as more children found themselves fighting in the war, they had no chance of knowing their real parents.

When the war ended, these former child soldiers now in their teens were taken into care centers while others were taken by well-wishers for upbringing. This way fostering thrived. The total number of former child soldiers and former refugees

seeking to be cared for was overwhelming. This fueled the fostering practice (Shepler, 2005).

Lack of both national and international legislation regarding foster parenting. Analysis of data revealed that a report by Plan International (2005), which relied on data from desk reviews of various NGOs operating in Sierra Leone and case studies of situation of fostering in the country, showed a relationship between the high rates of foster parenting in Sierra Leone and the lack of relevant laws to govern the practice. The study noted further that while there is an international convention that governs adoption of children across national borders (Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, 1993), the fact that Sierra Leone has not ratified it means that there is no national law to address international fostering.

While parents abroad have reportedly adopted many children, it remains unclear under what conditions these children live. If anything, the government of Sierra Leone has no legal capacity to monitor such cross-border adoptions of children. The result has been that a significant number of children allegedly adopted by parents in other countries have ended up being trafficked (Ward, 2010).

Shepler's (2005) survey on transnational fosterage of war-affected children that targeted law enforcement officers (the police) reveals that at the local level no law has been passed to govern the practice even though it is known to be widespread. The general perception that fostering is a safe practice and one that is intended to help children better their lives has tended to overshadow any real concerns about the problem in general and how it predisposes children to human trafficking in particular. Because of the lack of such legislation, the parents and guardians determine how best

to approach the issue, in reality, the onus lies with the parents to determine how and where their children go.

Furthermore, another study found that those suspected of using fostering to traffic children have virtually gone unpunished because there are no legal provisions to try traffickers before a court of law. This way, fostering has continued almost unchecked, and the risk it poses to children remains unmitigated (Shepler, 2005).

Lack of monitoring of foster parents. Closely related to the issue of lack of appropriate legislation is the problem of monitoring. Alber et al. (2013) in their study note that by nature, biological parents are supposed to monitor their children who have been offered to foster parents. However, they added, this rarely if at all happens in Sierra Leone. Instead, parents almost immediately forget about the children once they hand them over to the concerned foster parents. This leaves the foster parents with all the time they need to do whatever they want with the children (Alber et al., 2013).

Ward (2010) in an interview with parents and children regarding the relationship between inter-country adoption, trafficking, and child protection, finds that quite often, there is little to no communication between the fostered children and their biological parents. This is because parents are too trusting of the foster parents to suspect that anything can go wrong. The aforementioned lack of awareness among parents that fostering could lead to human trafficking has contributed to the problem of lack of monitoring. After all, the parents are so trusting and believe their children are in safe hands. Often, they are mistaken because the same children end up being trafficked.

Unequal assistance from NGOs. UNICEF (2002) and Plan International (2005), in two separate case study reports on birth registration, found that Sierra

Leone as a country also lacks the capacity to register adults. The two case studies were undertaken in rural and urban Sierra Leone (respectively) and targeted adult males and females who had not been registered for some reason. According to Plan International (2012), which is actively engaged in efforts to register adults in the country, it is more beneficial to have adults registered than to have people in the country remaining unregistered. This is important in limiting the exposure that such people have to various risks in society such as human trafficking and being declared as stateless.

Through visits to different areas of the country and expert workshops targeting key stakeholders, UNICEF (2002) found that the problem, however, is that the government has not been receiving enough assistance from NGOs to facilitate the registration of unregistered adults in the country. This has been partly attributed to lack of willingness on the part of NGOs and the failure by the government itself to demonstrate commitment to this cause.

Porous borders and problems associated with verifying registrations.

Shepler (2005) through interviews with immigration personnel and the police find that many problems associated with the use of false passports due to Sierra Leone having a very long national border shared with Liberia and the Atlantic Ocean. Since the Atlantic border is the longest, and it has been largely unsupervised, the ease with which children and even adults can move from one country to another country has been enhanced.

Sawadogo (2012), using both surveys on families and on victims of trafficking and interviews with relevant government ministries, found that this problem has been compounded by the fact that it is difficult for immigration officers supervising the country's main border points to verify the documents that migrants carry. Some of

these documents have allegedly been cleverly falsified and are not easy to detect. The falsification of registration or travel documents in the country is rife and has added to the problem.

Another study found that there are genuine people who are keen to adopt children from Sierra Leone. However, there are others whose motives are to traffic the children they purport either to be adopting. This problem is common for adoption both within and outside Sierra Leone. In the rare event that a person's documents are in doubt, it is not easy to verify the details from the national government because some of the registration details actually do not exist (Child Frontiers, 2010).

For instance, a child being adopted by another parent may be required to produce identification. Nevertheless, since this child was never registered in the first place and no verifiable information about him or her exists, the child can easily be cleared using any other registration details. Therefore, fostering is thriving on the fact that registration documents cannot be easily verified.

Conclusions

From the analysis of the different types of sources that included field reports, different types of surveys, case studies, interviews with key stakeholders, and desk reviews of leading government and NGO agencies, revealed that fostering and failure to register births remain critical issues related to human trafficking in Sierra Leone. The analysis of wide array of data sources of data revealed the fact that foster parentage and failure to register births continue to exist in Sierra Leone even though these factors have been identified as contributors to human trafficking in the country. More important, the analysis of the data from multiple sources and of different kinds, suggests a number of reasons for why these two factors have indeed continued to exist. These include: 1) lack of resources for registering births, 2) lack of

transportation in order to register births; 3) lack of healthcare services, 4) ignorance of the relationship between these two sub factors and human trafficking by birth parents, 5) cultural beliefs and practices, 6) the Fostering of former child soldiers, 7) lack of both national and international legislation regarding foster parenting, 8) lack of monitoring of foster parents; 9) unequal assistance from NGOs, and 10) porous borders and problems associated with verifying registrations.

In the next chapter, recommendations are made as to how Sierra Leone can enhance its fight against human trafficking in general. More specifically, the recommendations are based on the various factors identified in this chapter as contributors to foster parenting and failure to register births. In essence, the recommendations laid out in the next chapter are possible remedies to the reasons (problems) contributing to the persistence of failure to register births and fostering in Sierra Leone.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

This study investigated the reasons as to why Sierra Leone has continued to be an anchor-spot for human trafficking in West Africa. It was discovered through a review of the literature that there are many factors that have made Sierra Leone continue being an anchor-spot for human trafficking in West Africa. Two key factors, foster parenting and failure to register births, were further researched to inform the findings of the study. The other factors that were found to cause or contribute to rampant human trafficking in Sierra Leone that were identified in the literature review, but were not the main subject of the current research included poverty, cultural beliefs and practices, rampant corruption, and ignorance. Research and analysis of these other factors was beyond the scope of the current study.

With regard to fostering and failure to register births, it was established that they have persisted because of issues such as poverty (lack of resources), cultural beliefs and practices, ignorance, lack of appropriate laws, and absence of parental monitoring of their fostered children. The others are lack of healthcare services, absence of transportation to health facilities and/or registration centers, porous borders, lack of or limited help from NGOs, and the former status of many Sierra Leone children as child soldiers.

Lack of resources and rampant poverty are major problems in Sierra Leone. Owing to this state of affairs, the vast majority of the country's people are poor, making human trafficking thrive. For any population trapped in abject poverty, the

solution is to try to find any possible way of fending. People are vulnerable and are more than willing to do almost anything as long as they are able to manage the conditions within which they find themselves. Unfortunately, most of the extremely poor parents are not able to provide even for their own needs and the needs of their dependent children. The problem of foster parenting was mentioned frequently in the course of the literature review, and the surveys from the studies carried out. Poor parents resort to seeking foster parents for their children just to make sure that these children are in good care.

Efforts by NGOs in the country to address fostering and failure to register births are also proving largely ineffectual. In fact, it is not possible for any NGO, regardless of how willing they may be, to proceed with a program when the host government is either unwilling or uncommitted to the program. This is the dilemma a number of NGOs in the country face, forcing some of them to avoid the issue altogether.

Therefore, while some NGOs have been offering help to the government, others have not. As a country that ranks among the poorest in the world, Sierra Leone has not been able to carry out an adult registration campaign without the help of mostly NGOs. This has resulted in the persistence of the problem of existence of many unregistered births/people.

The above issues have had an impact on registration of people and fostering in the country. Primarily, it has been hard, even impossible, for the displaced people to be registered even where there are registration facilities and programs in place.

This is because many were displaced by the war and have not been able to retrace their original families. Others were used as child soldiers and cannot tell who their biological families were or where they lived before they were abducted and

forced to take up arms. Still, there are children who have been wounded in the civil war and have no idea where they came from or who their parents were.

Registering such people has been thus far an insurmountable challenge for the government and even for the NGOs like Plan International working together with the government to register as many people as possible. To understand this challenge, consider a case where someone has no recollection of his/her name, names of parents, relatives, village, or even clan. This renders any efforts to register him/her impossible.

Since both failure to register births and fostering are problems that remain unaddressed, human trafficking is likely to continue in Sierra Leone. Unless measures are in place to help address the 10 causes of fostering and failure to register people identified in the course of the research, then Sierra Leone will likely continue to be an anchor-spot for human trafficking in West Africa.

Recommendations

In view of the above challenges, the following recommendations are made. These recommendations are necessary if implemented in helping address the two problems of fostering and failure to register births.

1. In order to address the problem of ignorance of the relationship between these two sub factors and human trafficking by birth parents, more awareness through information campaigns about the relationship between fostering and human trafficking ought to be carried out. The same must be done for failure to register births. If parents are enlightened about this relationship, then they might be less willing to practice fostering and more willing to register their children.

2. To address the challenge of porous borders and problems associated with verifying registrations, there is need to enhance border security and improve ways of real time verifying of registration documents and information.
3. With regard to the problem of unequal assistance from NGOs, the government of Sierra Leone should encourage and work closely with NGOs in addressing registration of not only new births but also previously unregistered births.
4. Former child soldiers whose parents or relatives are unknown should be placed in special programs where they can be helped to reintegrate into the community instead of being offered to foster parents. This would help address the problem of former status as child soldiers.
5. In order to address the two problems of lack of resources and lack of healthcare, the government of Sierra Leone needs to commit more resources to building more health facilities or registration centers for both new births and unregistered adults. Maternity services also ought to be made affordable and easily accessible.
6. Parents ought to be encouraged or even compelled to monitor the progress and whereabouts of their fostered children. This way, the problem of lack of monitoring of foster parents and children would be addressed.
7. The need exists for the government to ratify the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption. This way, the problem of lack of national legislation for foster parenting can be enforced.

8. To address the problem of lack of national legislation for foster parenting, national legislation governing adoption and fostering of children need to be formulated.
9. The government needs to consider transporting people to registration centers as much as possible. This way, the problem of lack of transportation could be solved.

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Appendix A: Sources for Failure to Register People

Government of Sierra Leone (2000). The status of women and children in Sierra Leone. A household survey report. *Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey-MICS2 Final Report*, November.

- Unregistered births are contributing to rampant cases of human trafficking.
- Statelessness is common in Sierra Leone because of the large number of unregistered people.
- Women and children are more likely to be unregistered than men.
- Poverty is a major cause of failure to register births. Does the study say why?

Heap, S. & Cody, C. (2008). The universal birth registration campaign. *Plan International*.

- Owing to separation between parents and their children at the height of the civil war, it is hard to register some children.
- Former child soldiers, who were previously unregistered, cannot be registered successfully because of lack of reliable records about their births.
- Poverty thrives in nations that have high numbers of unregistered people.
- Where there is no help from non-governmental organizations, efforts to register people are mostly unsuccessful or do not take off at all.

Moccia, P. (2009). Progress for children: A report card on child protection. *UNICEF*.

- Protection of children cannot be successful if they have not been registered.
- Many children are unregistered because parents cannot access healthcare facilities during delivery.
- The effects of the war continue to hinder registration of people in Sierra Leone.
- Poverty and ignorance are major hindrances to registration of not only births but also other people who have never been registered before.

Plan International (2005). Universal birth registration – A universal responsibility. *Plan International*.

- Birth registration is a universal right for every child.
- It is possible and desirable to have adults registered than to fail to register them at all.
- Because of failure to register births, many of the unregistered people have been denied their basic human rights such as right to education, right to a state, and right to healthcare.
- Lack of motivation and awareness among mostly rural people has impeded the registration of children at birth and even adults.

- Poverty and general lack of resources is a major obstacle to the registration of people.

Plan International (2012). Progress made with universal birth registration in Sierra Leone. *Plan International*.

- Birth registration for all is an international human right.
- Unregistered children and adults are more likely to be trafficked and exposed to other forms of crime.
- Poor planning and lack of resources is a leading cause of failure to register births. Do they provide examples?
- Cultural practices that include the reliance on traditional midwives have made many women to give birth at home where registering a birth of hardly possible.

Surtees, R. (2005). Child trafficking in Sierra Leone. *UNICEF*.

- Many people in Sierra Leone are not registered, denying them their rights.
- Registration of children at birth has partly been hampered by the raging civil war.
- The poor state of the people especially in rural areas makes it hard for them to get to child registration centers.
- Since many people in Sierra Leone are unregistered, it is very easy to traffic them.

United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2000). Concluding observations: Sierra Leone. *CRC*, 24 February, *CRC/C/15/Add.116*.

- Many people under age 18 are unregistered, or if they are their registrations cannot be verified.
- Poverty has hindered many mothers from getting their children registered.
- The civil war contributed to the rampancy of the non-registration problem.
- Because many children in Sierra Leone lack identity, they have been exposed to poverty and other social ills.

United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (2006). UN Committee on the rights of the child: Second periodic report of states parties due in 1997, Sierra Leone. *CRC*, 8 September 2006, *CRC/C/SLE/2*.

- Unregistered births continue to be a major problem for Sierra Leone.
- The government's effort in addressing the problem is being hampered by lack of resources.
- The age and identity of many people in Sierra Leone remains unknown because of lack of registration records. This is hampering development planning.
- The efforts to register previously unregistered people are on track but still very slow

UNICEF (2002). Birth registration: Right from the start. *Innocenti Digest* No. 9 March.

- Unregistered births are a growing problem in West Africa.
- Failure to register births is a cause for other social problems.
- Poverty, long distance to health facilities, and ignorance are some of the causes of failure to register births.
- Many children who are unregistered risk being stateless.

UNICEF (2005). Trafficking in human beings, especially women and children, in Africa. *UNICEF*, Florence, Italy.

- Awareness about the growing problem of unregistered people is still low in Sierra Leone.
- Without births being registered, people's human rights are denied.
- Human trafficking is thriving in Sierra Leone partly because many people are not registered.
- Lack of registration records complicate efforts to curb human trafficking since it is very easy to move people from one nation to another in West Africa.

Appendix B: Sources for Fostering in Sierra Leone

Alber, E., Martin, J. & Notermans, C. (2013). *Child fostering in West Africa: New perspectives on theory and practices*. BRILL.

- Child fostering is culturally normative.
- There is little understanding of the implication of child fostering other than the often-mistaken belief that it helps children evade poverty and lead better lives.
- Most West African ethnic communities encourage fostering, and this has made the practice to thrive even across national borders.
- Economic deprivation is a leading or main cause of rampant fostering of children.
- The lack of a well-defined legal framework for governing fostering and child adoption both within and outside nations has contributed to the misuse of the otherwise cultural practice.

Child Frontiers (2010). Mapping and analysis of the child protection system in Sierra Leone. *Final Report*, April.

- Foster parenting is still rampant in Sierra Leone as in other West African states.
- Justice for children is still far from being achieved because the legal system.
- Adoption of children is common partly because Sierra Leone has not ratified the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption. Therefore, foster parents outside Sierra Leone can adopt children.
- The domestic laws are largely silent on the aspect of child adoption; and this has made fostering to thrive.

Gale, L. (2006). Sustaining relationships across Borders: Gendered livelihoods and mobility among Sierra Leonean Refugees. *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 25 (2), 69-80.

- Inadequate or missing capacity strengthening is to account for increased fosterage of children especially in war-torn states.
- Participation in war and war related activities has exposed children to fostering.
- While children might not want to be adopted, pressure from peers and parents often compel them to agree. Otherwise, the children have no say in plans to have them fostered.
- Illegal fostering child trafficking occurs largely because of the porous nature of borders of the states engaged in war.

Gale, L. (2008). *Beyond men pikin: improving understanding of post-conflict child fostering in Sierra Leone. Feinstein International Center Briefing Paper*, April 25.

- Most of the fostering that occurs in Sierra Leone took place after the civil war.
- The civil war has been a major cause of rampant fostering of mostly children in Sierra Leone.
- Although fostering of children is rampant and acceptable in Sierra Leone, there is a general lack of awareness about its actual effects on the victims.
- Fostering is dangerous because the children involved do not get as good care as they would in the hands of their real parents and/or while living in their parents' homes.
- Rampant poverty has been a major cause and contributor to widespread fostering.

Hynes, B. (2008). *Children of the borderlands: Young soldiers in the reproduction of warfare*. ProQuest

- The increased use of children in war and cross-border fostering are closely related.
- The common and widespread belief that a child belongs to many people (as opposed to just the parents) has fuelled child fostering and related practices such as child labor and child trafficking.
- Fostering is not necessarily bad. It actually benefits both sides engaged in it if it is not intended for ill motives.
- The Mende ethnic community that lives in the Sierra Leone-Liberia border region is especially steeped in the practice of child fostering. Before the war, one study found that as many as one third of all children aged sixteen and below were actually not living with their parents.
- Awareness about fostering is still minimal in Sierra Leone.

Sawadogo, W. R. (2012). The challenges of transnational human trafficking in West Africa. *African Studies Quarterly*, 13(1/2), 95-116.

- Fostering is rampant in West Africa, including in Sierra Leone.
- Poverty is a cause of fostering in Sierra Leone.
- The civil war has contributed to rampant fostering.
- Fostering is a normative practice in Sierra Leone just as it is in West Africa.
- Parents encourage fostering as way to make life better for them and for their children.

Shepler, S. (2005). Transnational fosterage of war-affected children in West Africa: Immediate coping capacities across borders. *UNICEF Field Report*.

- International or cross border fostering is as rampant in Sierra Leone as that taking place within the country.
- Parents often have no fears about allowing their children to be adopted by other people or organization. If anything, they encourage it.

- A large number of children fostered are those affected by the civil war in one way or the other.
- Sierra Leone lacks adequate mechanisms to monitor cross-border fosterage, and this has potential to contribute to human trafficking.

Surtees, R. (2005). Child trafficking in Sierra Leone. *UNICEF*

- Fostering is a major contributor to human trafficking.
- Fostering is a cultural practice.
- Parents encourage their children to be adopted by friends and/or families.
- Fostering has made child labor to increase.
- Poverty has been determined to have a direct relationship with fostering. Poor parents more readily give up their children to foster parents or well-wishers.

UNICEF (2005). Trafficking in human beings, especially women and children, in Africa. Florence, Italy.

- Unlike other parts of the world where fostering is either illegal or culturally unacceptable, fostering is not only common in Sierra Leone but is actually encouraged.
- The civil war fought in the country has contributed to the increase of the fostering.
- Former child soldiers, having nowhere to go after the war, have ended up in the hands of foster parents both within Sierra Leone and even abroad.
- Women who have been displaced by war are more inclined to offer up their children to foster parents than those who live in their own homes.
- Fostering is a conduit for child labor and child trafficking within and outside Sierra Leone.

Ward, E. (2010). The relationship between inter-country adoption and human trafficking. *IHLI, Chicago*.

http://www.pravo.unizg.hr/_download/repository/Elisabeth_Ward.pdf

- Although there is a formal system of foster care and adoption, the system is hardly even with any standard mechanisms of monitoring. This encourages criminal practices like child labor and child trafficking.
- Failure to ratify international instruments regarding fostering and/or adoption of children is a major contributor to child related criminal activities in Sierra Leone.
- Poverty and war-related issues have fueled the demand for fostering services.
- Children are at a greater risk of child labor and child trafficking if they are in foster homes than if they are at their own homes.

Appendix C: List of Acronyms

AI	Amnesty International
CF	Child Frontiers
CR	Child Frontiers
CRC	Committee on the Rights of the Child
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MSWGCA	Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender, and Children's Affairs
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NMDHR	Network Movement for Democracy and Human Rights
PI	Plan International
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
TI	Transparency International
TVPA	Trafficking Victims Protection Act
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNCF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNCTOC	United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime
UN.GIFT	United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime