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When the word slavery is mentioned people often think of shackles, plantations, ships and Africa. That type of slavery happened over 200 years ago and has since been replaced by a form called modern day slavery. “Two hundred years after the end of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, we have the obligation to fight a crime that has no place in the 21st century” (UNODC.org). Human trafficking is not something many people within the United States or other countries hear about, unless a case occurs which makes the news. Humans are trafficked and enslaved everyday around the world from the most indigenous cities in Africa or Asia to the landscaped lawns of Beverly Hills. In order to eradicate human trafficking and slavery there has to be more public awareness and enforcement of the human trafficking law. It is not only up to the government to be aware of this situation but also everyday citizens. The wording in the human trafficking law in Ghana allows the traffickers to find loopholes to avoid prosecution while at the same time lacks adequate services to victims.

What is human trafficking? Trafficking involves the transport or trade of humans, usually by force for labor and economic gain. Women and children are easy targets and tend to represent the majority of those trafficked. Trafficking exists in one form or another everywhere in the world. The most trafficked areas are Africa, Asia, South America and Eastern Europe. These individuals are sometimes traded within their regions or trafficked to the United States, the Middle East and Eastern Europe.

There are numerous reasons people are trafficked. In Ghana human trafficking come as a result of high level of poverty, cultural beliefs and practices, and irresponsible parenting. Those problems contribute to the survival strategies of the vulnerable, pushing them into the arms of the traffickers. There is no middle class in Ghana. The class systems in Ghana consist mostly of rich and poor. There are a few in between but the majority is getting by. For those “getting by” that means working menial jobs such as selling cool bottles of water in the streets and food at the chop bars. They also will have to live in cramped spaces which will be over crowded. These dire conditions make young women prime targets for prostitution.

I’ve seen war refugee girls sleep with men in order to provide food for their family. I’m talking about young girls aged 12 – 15 years of age. Mothers willingly force their daughters to find boyfriends with money or men who are willing to give them money for sex. In times of survival these uneducated females turn to what they feel is their only option. Predators can smell desperation a mile away. They offer the parents or the girls directly a job working where they can attract more customers who are willing to spend a lot of money on them. These girls and their parents are oblivious of the world of trading. Most have never left their cities. Unknowingly to them, they are about to be sold to work as a sex slave. Not all are sold some are kidnapped off the streets and taken away without their families knowledge. Oftentimes the kidnappers will allow the families to buy back their children knowing very well they do not have the money to do this. Parents need to be more responsible because neglect among other attitudes towards children is the major causes of trafficking and child labor. In Ghana, the placement of children in the care of other relatives is a common and acceptable practice. This system has, however, been exploited by traffickers and many children have become victims of trafficking through people they regard as their relatives.

There are those within the country and the government who feel that NGOs who report on human trafficking may lack the cultural knowledge. The issue of whether children who lived with relatives would be considered as trafficked victims was brought up during the debate on how to craft the wording for Act 694. Some in the parliament wanted the bill to reflect the cultural beliefs of Ghana and not of a foreign culture. There was discontent on the reliability of the NGOs reports on the ground. The MP for Central Tongu, Joe Gidisu argued, “Some of the so called trafficked children especially in the Tongu area are actually living with their own parents but agree to be resettled to enable them go to school” (Public Agenda). According to Gidisu, as a result of the construction of the Akosombo Dam, about 80 to 90 percent of fishermen in the area have moved to Yeji or the Afram plains for fishing. Such parents do take their children to live with them, but as a result of the lack of good education, they allow their children to be resettled.

Growing up in Africa I will attest that this is a normal practice for families. It is not only practiced by underprivileged families, but wealthy ones as well. My mother who is an affluent businesswoman reared 5 children from other relatives in addition to her own. Those children were raised as part of her immediate family. For some of us the extended family is normal and an age long tradition. The MP for Hohoe South, Joseph Z. Amenowode had support for Gidisu, he said, “The NGOs must understand the culture of the people and not draw hasty conclusions” (Public Agenda).

People with more resources can easily exploit those who are at an economic disadvantage. There is no need to legally own slaves today. People are bought for as little as \$50 and made to do hard labor such as agriculture, sweatshops, peddling and child soldiers. Slavery was abolished in 1948 with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

which states that ‘No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms’. There is no accountability for the actions within the Ghanaian government which attributes to the lack of enforcement of laws. Why have laws when no one is willing to enforce them? A strong prosecution record would deter many from entering or continuing the trafficking. Heavy penalties of a minimum of 10 years imprisonment and a hefty fee would see the crime level would decrease. Without such measures what is there to stop a trafficker or a parent from continuing this practice. I propose that successfully prosecuting and convicting traffickers will contribute to the larger goal of the elimination of human trafficking.

Ghana should be applauded for finally providing a law to combat trafficking. However, it falls short of the international definition set forth by the Palermo Protocol. The Palermo Protocol provided the international community with the definition of human trafficking and works with nation states ensuring provisions against trafficking. Ghana is not a contributing nation state. The Palermo Protocol clearly states regardless of the prohibited act of the trafficker, and how they take over their victims, the result is always exploitation.

The Human Trafficking Act 694 in Ghana went into law on December 9, 2005. There was substantial pressure from international governments promulgating the act. According to the Legal Resource Centre (LRC) “the passage of the Traffickers Act is also refreshing because in Ghana, no person can be convicted of criminal conduct, unless his or her conduct amounts to an offence which is defined, and a penalty provided for such an offence in a written law” (Legal Resource Centre). The law relieved prosecutors from revising criminal procedural rules to apply to traffickers.

The 2005 Act does not seek to criminalize exploitation of others as the main purpose of trafficking. Act 1(1) states recruitment of which is the exploitation of the vulnerability of a person amounts to trafficking. It is too broad a statement therefore giving traffickers the loophole they need to get around the Act. “The act does not provide protection to victims who would like to give evidence in court” (Okeke). Mr. Okeke also suggests giving victims the option to tape record evidence in order to avoid face to face confrontation with the accused. Trafficking Act 2005 vis-à-vis the Palermo Act allows traffickers to escape punishment by stating transportation of a person by deception and nothing more amounts to trafficking.

Trafficking is not only a problem for the ministries, police officers or NGOs, it is a national problem. It is not my intention to initialize diatribes against traffickers by Ghanaians. This research will illustrate that the outcome of most if not all trafficked cases has been exploitation. Since 2005 only five people have been convicted and imprisoned. There are no objectives by traffickers to educate or improve the socio-economic status of victims. “The Act was presented to Parliament in September 2007 in order to redefine human trafficking with the wording of exploitation; it has not yet been passed by Parliament” (Okeke).

Efforts to combat slavery will have only limited effectiveness unless anti-slavery laws are recognized, implemented and enforced by law enforcement officers, courts, and political leaders. Along with those laws there has to be services for victims. “It is very difficult, almost impossible to estimate the number being that it is an illegal activity...there are no records, there are no statistics, and the governments will record this in a different way if they record it at all” (Gramegna,1977.) Public awareness is also critical. Slavery will remain an invisible scourge unless or until an informed public becomes actively engaged and committed in helping identify

situations in which some form of slavery is suspected. It is also difficult to prosecute cases because of the consent of adults to travel with traffickers in order to secure a job.

Most traffickers are middle-aged women and they are sometimes victims of trafficking themselves. Women are seen as the unofficial mother to everyone. Children and even teenagers call women they've never met or may know by the expression "mama" out of respect. "Cultural and family related barriers often prevent victims from reporting cases" (Okeke). There is a hierarchy in Ghana when it comes to age. Not many people will question or confront a woman in her 30s. She is seen as an elder with enough experience to advise others.

It is very difficult to pinpoint and target traffickers unless they are organized with substantial resources. These traffickers are organized crime rings, government officials or businessmen and women. A well known arrest of a popular Ghanaian Andrew Jonah drew criticism and applause for Interpol Ghana. Andrew is the son of one of Ghana's wealthiest men Sam Jonah, a gold magnate. Andrew and his friend Nana Anwo-Adare smuggled drugs from Ghana to England and then to the United States. That drug money was also used to traffic young girls for sex to London. It is rare for someone from such a high social class with power to come under scrutiny and be arrested.

Other traffickers who go under the radar are people like John Ekeve who is a tailor with a modest shop. John was found guilty of selling his niece to a family to become their domestic servant and sex slave to the husband. The mother of the girl was told she was in school in the city and working in his shop. There are a lot of traffickers like John who willingly place family and friends into conditions only to gain favor with someone or for financial profit. Although John was found guilty he has yet to be given a sentence and his niece is afraid to testify against

him. This unfortunately is not a major case for police so they have allowed him to continue working in his shop.

"The debts we owe ourselves are the hardest to pay." – George Meredith

Through my travels from 2001 to 2004 in Senegal and The Gambia I encountered a community of trafficked victims. Initially my project involved setting up programs for Liberian refugees living in Senegal and The Gambia. Within a few weeks I was able to set up health and housing benefits for these girls. Nigerians and Ghanaians began seeking my assistance. Abena Adu was 19 years old from the Volta River area in Ghana. Her story began when she was 13 years old when her mother sent her to work in the fishermen village of Yeji. Trusted friends told Abena's mother she would work as a maid and be sent to school. None of this happened. "They beat me all the time and I had to sell dried fish until late in the night and sleep with my boss man" (Adu). Along with the females in the village she was responsible for cleaning and drying the fish oftentimes with bones getting stuck in her fingers. There was no compensation for her or others who were trafficked. "The situation around me in Yeji was really bad; there were so many small boys no older than seven who drowned when they were forced to dive underwater to untangle the nets" (Adu). After two years of this hard servitude her master was moving to The Gambia to a town where Ghanaian fishermen sent dried fish back to Ghana for sale.

After arriving in Banjul she saw the conditions were not any better but now there were other nationalities to turn to for help. One day while selling fish in the market she befriended some Liberian girls who took her with them to their one bedroom apartment. They themselves had escaped the war in Liberia and their only source of income was to sell their bodies while looking at securing a western boyfriend or as they call them a "sponsor". Abena and her friends moved to Dakar because of the large tourist community. When asked if she would go home, she

shook her head and said not now. “I don’t trust the people in my village and the traffickers might try to do something to me even though I see them sometimes in town” (Adu).

Before moving to Dakar she reported the fishermen to the police who did nothing. Other traffickers tried to entice her with offers of working abroad. Today Abena is back in Ghana living in Accra. While in Dakar she met a Ghanaian businessman during while working. What began as a conversation soon led to a great friendship then a romantic courtship. Currently, Abena is in school at the 7th grade level and is excited about her future. Although Abena’s story is somewhat a success story not all are like that.

Efua Osei went by the name Babygirl who also was from Ghana and worked as a prostitute in Dakar. Babygirl was 26 years-old and a bit more hardened. Her family sent her to Nigeria at the age of 15 to work as a domestic servant. Upon arrival she was raped by her owner, a man in his forties. He informed her she was to work only in his house and be required to sleep with him at his demand. His wife and 4 children also resided in the house. “I had such high hopes for myself when my mother sent me to work in Nigeria but when I got there the only thing I could think about is the day I would leave” (Osei). Her duties involved cleaning, cooking and looking after the children from five in the morning until well after midnight without pay. Her opportunity came when friends informed her of their desire to travel to Banjul, Gambia. At the age of twenty she ran away to Dakar travelling by bus with young Nigerian boys she slept with in order to pay her fare. Upon arrival in Dakar the opportunity for making more money and leaving her identity behind became her focus. When asked if she will return to Ghana her answer was “there’s nothing there for me” (Adu). Fortunately for Babygirl she is pretty with a good sense of fashion.

"I now knew that all of us were prostitutes who sold themselves at varying prices, and that an expensive prostitute was better than a cheap one." – Nawal El Saadawi

Her ability to acquire a “sponsor” is easy compared to the other girls. Her goal is to eventually travel abroad with a sponsor and make more money. As of today Babygirl is still in Dakar, although she was able to travel to London for 3 months. In London her life revolved around cooking and cleaning for her boyfriend, and going to the homes of his friends. This was not the life for her so she returned to Dakar where men lavished her with gifts.

Both girls suffered substantially as trafficked victims. However, when asked recently if they would prefer to have never left their town, the response was shocking. “My life was hard and I suffered, those years are lost to me now but my life today is better than what it would have been in my village” (Adu). She explained in detail about her chance to attend school, exposure to other cultures, and also to meet someone who is above her socially. “Sometimes you have to go through hardships in order to improve your conditions; my life was hard but now I have more than people who had high status in my village; they can’t look down on me no matter how I earn it” (Osei).

A good friend once told me if you’re going to look at a problem, also look to find the solution. What complicates human trafficking more is not just that the laws are not enforced but there are not enough services for victims. The corrupt practices of government, cultural stigmas and poverty are all causes of human trafficking. It is essential to understand the contributions of organizations and individuals to the strategic support of victims.

Relying on laws to protect traffickers has proven to be ineffective. In the rare cases when the laws are used to prosecute violators, it is unlikely the outcome would result in a guilty verdict. Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) based around the world and in Ghana

provide the necessary facilities to these victims. The local NGOs provide the cultural and sometimes security to these international organizations. Whereas, the international NGOs provide the necessary funds needed to not only free these victims but also carry out an extensive rehabilitation program.

"Let us be grateful to the people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom." -- Marcel Proust

The quote above describes the work done by the many local and international NGOs to eradicate human trafficking and provide the necessary rehabilitation to victims. Relying on laws to protect traffickers has proven to be ineffective. In the rare cases when the laws are used to prosecute violators, it is unlikely the outcome would result in a guilty verdict. Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) based around the world and in Ghana provide the necessary facilities to these victims.

The International Organization of Migration based in Geneva is the leading inter-governmental organization in the field of migration and works closely with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners. IOM has helped Ghanaian child trafficking victims recover from their trauma and reintegrate into families and communities for the last 7 years. According to Jo Rispoli the Director of the Ghana mission, "The children will then be reunited with their families and communities and enrolled into schools or given vocational training in order to restart their lives" (IOM). Parents of the trafficked children will be given micro-credit for income-generating activities so they can better support their families. This can include starting or expanding existing businesses such as selling foodstuffs and textiles or small restaurants known as "Chop Bars" or supporting agricultural activities.

The educational training is not limited to the victims only, but also to those who benefitted from the work performed by them. IOM's negotiations with the fishermen yielded not

only the release of the victims but “in return, the fishermen receive training and micro-credits to help them improve their fishing techniques, or engage in other income-generating activities absolving the need to use child labour” (IOM). Since 2002, IOM have rescued a total of 684 with the collaboration of local NGOs such as Friends for Human Development and Partners in Community Development. The program have kept the number of “children it can rescue to 36 each year in order to provide adequate reintegration assistance that includes continued medical follow up and educational assistance, such as mentoring and tutoring” (IOM). Health assessments have revealed severe levels of malnutrition, mental disabilities, stunted growth and other long term health and educational needs.

Kwasi Opoku Mensah, a program officer at Friends for Human Development working with IOM explained that “after the children are rescued, they are camped at Yeji for a month before they are brought down to Accra to be rehabilitated. They are then reunited with their parents if it is possible and in the child's best interest” (Humantrafficking.org). This decision is based on the fact that people give out their children to these fishermen out of poverty and by doing this they are rewarded with some money either monthly, quarterly or yearly by the new masters of their children.

Vital Voices (VV) is an NGO started in 1997 by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, based in Washington DC. VV identifies, trains, and empowers emerging women leaders and social entrepreneurs around the globe, enabling them to create a better community. My conversation with Cindy Dyer who is the Senior Director of Human Rights also led to another interview at Safe Horizons. “We enable women to become change agents in their governments, advocates for social justice, and supporters of democracy and the rule of law” (Dyer). She went on to explain how Vital Voices partner women leaders in

Ghana with policy makers in order to facilitate their education on how to go about changing policies locally. I asked if any of their partnerships have resulted in the change of policy in Ghana. Her response was that “the women we work with have concentrated on providing the necessary services to victims rather than directly working with the government” (Dyer). I see this as not only a cultural barrier but also an easier route to take by the women in Ghana.

From my experience in Ghana showing people you have an organization carries more weight than fighting with the government everyday. The bottom line for NGOs in Ghana is producing what you claim to be the mission of your organization. A hungry man is concerned with the one cup of rice your organization promises rather than the disagreement you had with the Minister of Social Works. People are not concerned with your struggle with the government but can you do what your organization promises. Vital Voices is not a grant making organization but what they do is network with women who are making a difference on the trafficking front by providing them with necessary resources and recognition. One of their most successful programs in Africa is the “African Women’s Leadership Initiative which provides training, mentoring and leadership development opportunities to a cadre of emerging African women leaders” (Dyer).

Senegal has not been hit as hard as Ghana and Nigeria with trafficked victims. I spoke with a Senior Political Analyst with The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Dakar who stressed that there was a growing concern in West Africa on human trafficking. “The United Nations and other organizations are looking for individuals who specialize in this field because there is an outrageous amount of reports to deal with and not enough services or people working effectively on the ground” (Osode). She also iterated the importance of funds needed to provide to local and international organizations providing post-rescue rehab to victims. Ms.

Osode stated that the problem was a silent force which if not confronted could spread like a wildfire crippling the finances and national security of neighboring countries in West Africa.

Given that the United Nations have set up some of the largest peace keeping forces in West Africa for Sierra Leone and Liberia and supported over 25,000 soldiers and staff for 4 years in Sierra Leone and has been based in Liberia with an equal amount of staff since 2003. Where is the money generated to fund these peacekeeping missions and why are there not enough for human trafficking initiatives? Since there is a concern of national security then why not distribute more funds to fight human trafficking in these areas. Ms. Osode explained “it was not only the funds needed but also trained anti-human trafficking personnel and a cooperative government” (Osode).

Ghana is a country evidently still struggling with the implementation of its human trafficking laws and the enforcement. There are other countries leading the way in human trafficking by setting an example of stringent laws and rehabilitation services to victims. The Republic of Belarus decided to fight human trafficking at its inception before the problem became an issue. A phrase I hear often in the medical field is “prevention is the key for curing diseases.” By taking the necessary steps to protect yourself, you are not only preventing but also limiting the spread of a potential problem.

The Republic of Belarus decisive measures to stop human trafficking include:

- Being a party to all international conventions on fighting human trafficking
- Fighting on both a criminal and social platform by providing women and young people with an opportunity to use their own potential in their own country and not seek easy money abroad.
- Made great stride in reducing unemployment which stands at 1.2 percent and continues to decrease.
- On March 2005 signed a decree on Measure to Fight Human Trafficking; the decree seeks to provide more systemic regulation of activities that may potentially serve as channel for human trafficking.

- Every six months the states of human trafficking is reported to the President
- Initiatives proposed at the United Nations in 2005 were elaborated further into two resolutions including 'Improving the coordination of efforts against trafficking in persons' (United Nations International).

In the case of Belarus there have not been numerous cases prosecuted so I am not sure how to measure their success against Ghana in that aspect. What they do have are the affiliations with the international body fighting human trafficking. Ghana selected not to be a member of the most crucial group which is the Palermo Protocol.

Another country I chose to contrast is the United Arab Emirate (UAE) because it is rare for an Arab country to be so outspoken on a crime which include women and sex. UAE was the first government in the Persian Gulf to enact a comprehensive anti-trafficking law. There are prosecution numbers to compare. "From 2006-2007 legal cases rose by 30% in combination with 10 convictions carrying a three to 10 year sentence" (UAEEmbassy). The UAE has a four-part anti-trafficking plan which details:

1. Legislation - In November 2006 enact a federal law providing strict enforcement provision and penalties for convicted traffickers
2. Enforcement – Training Police officers and public prosecutors to monitor and track human trafficking abuses.
3. Victim Support – Social services for victims include counseling, in-house schooling and recreation facilities.
4. Bilateral agreements and international partnerships – Partnership with the UN to recreate the UAE police administration into a center of excellence. In March 2007 the UAE made a significant multi-year commitment to the UN for the establishment of the unprecedented Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UAEEmbassy).

IOM also has a relationship with the UAE in conducting workshops and training programs to enhance the skills of UAE law enforcement and public prosecutors in combating trafficking, by identifying trafficking crimes effectively and dealing with it seriously. IOM has more initiatives in UAE as compared to what they are doing in Ghana. I suspect the cooperation of the UAE government is a key component. In Ghana, IOM partners with local NGOs and not

the government directly. Working with local NGOs has produced astounding results but dealing with those directly involved in the policy making and decisions of the country will further the cause to eradicate human trafficking.

There are cases that have been successful in the fight against human trafficking and slavery. Hadizatou Mani now 25 years old was sold when she was 12 for \$500. She said “I was negotiated over like a goat” (Blogs.state.gov). Ms. Mani is from Niger, a country that banned slavery as recent as 2003. “Ms. Mani was a slave because her mother was a slave. Her status and her future and the future of her children were attached to her caste. She was purchased by a man in his sixties, who beat her, sent her to work long hours in the field, raped her, and made her bear him three children” (Blogs.state.gov). Hadizatou’s master deliberately refused to tell her about the law, but later explained to officials that she was one of his wives and not a slave. Eventually Ms. Mani won her freedom and married again but her former master accused her of bigamy which resulted in a six month sentence for her.

Cases like Ms. Mani’s are all too common. How can the system expect victims to come forward when they are then treated as criminals? As a woman I saw the hopelessness in the eyes of the girls I counseled in Senegal and Ghana. Men frequently attacked them at restaurants or clubs knowing very well these girls would not report the incident. The police never took them seriously and some feared deportation because they lacked proper residency documentations. Ms. Mani explained how difficult it was for her to speak out against her former master and the reason she felt compelled to do so. She says, “This was the only way to protect my child from suffering the same fate as myself...nobody deserves to be enslaved. We are all equal and deserve to be treated the same...no woman should suffer the way I did” (Blog.state.gov).

Depending on the political social norms of the day what is illegitimate form of trade in one era may be legitimate in another. “Trafficking has been transformed from a NGO (non-governmental organization) women’s issues in the early 1980’s, into the global agenda of high politics of the United States Congress, the European Union and the United Nations” (Lee 2). Human trafficking for the sex trade or forced labor market appears to be getting worse because many countries are ignoring the globalized problem.

Most trafficking victims will not readily volunteer information about their status due to fear. They are reluctant to come forward with information from despair, discouragement, and a sense that there are no viable options to escape their situation. Trafficked individuals may be treated as disposable possessions without much attention given to their mental or physical health.

Accordingly to Bales, some of the health problems that may be evident in a victim include:

- Malnutrition, dehydration or poor personal hygiene
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Signs of rape or sexual abuse
- Bruising, broken bones, or other signs of untreated medical problems
- Critical illnesses including diabetes, cancer or heart disease
- Post-traumatic stress or psychological disorders (34).

We have all contributed to this abuse through our demands. The core issue of modern-day slavery and the trans-Atlantic slavery was economics. While there are a number of factors which advance trafficking (poverty, lack of education, etc.), traffickers can make money selling people because there is a demand for their product. There is a demand for cheap or free labor to keep down the prices of goods and services. There is a demand for commercial sex. If this demand went away and traffickers could no longer make money selling people, they would stop trafficking. Globalization has fueled rapid development, where people are now commodities traded to work in the most inhumane conditions. What happened to the industrial world? That

world exists alongside cheap and entrapped labor. “The entry of organized crime in the sex trades, the formation of cross-border ethnic networks, and the growing transnationalization in so many aspects of tourism, suggest that we are likely to see a further development of a global sex industry” (Lucas 29). In Senegal I witnessed children who were brought in from nearby towns to work in the shops in Dakar. Boys and girls as young as 7 years of age worked to support families back in Thies or Kaolack.

"What we require is not a formal return to tradition and religion, but a rereading, a reinterpretation, of our history that can illuminate the present and pave the way to a better future. For example, if we delve more deeply into ancient Egyptian and African civilisations we will discover the humanistic elements that were prevalent in many areas of life. Women enjoyed a high status and rights, which they later lost when class patriarchal society became the prevalent social system." – Nawal El Saadawi

In Ghana religious institutions can sometimes exert more influence than government officials. These leaders range from traditional African religions to Christian, Catholic, Protestant and Baptist. Various faiths are divided on this issue of human trafficking with politicians and opposition groups taking sides. There are churches initiating programs to eliminate human trafficking while others are practicing the act. In order to develop a program of action directed at reducing and eradicating the trafficking and smuggling of persons across national, regional and continental boundaries, the Migrants Commission of the Ghana Catholic Bishop's Conference organized a workshop in Accra from July 1 to 2, 2008 for member organizations of Caritas Internationalis, in the West African Sub-Region on dangers of the menace.

The workshop brought together about 35 participants from Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, La Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali, Cameroon, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and was to give them the opportunity to share experience on human trafficking; discuss strategies to mitigate or eliminate the incidence of the canker in the sub-region. The workshop also had the objective to identify inputs for a framework to guide, rescue and rehabilitation of strategies

against human trafficking and identify various ways of resource mobilization for media campaigns; provide inputs for the establishment of rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration committee at the regional, national, Diocesan and Parish levels.

Some people go to priests; others to poetry; I to my friends. – Virginia Woolf

Local Bishops have called upon the government to enforce the laws. Victims seldom turn to the church for relief services and protection. The Catholic Church and others such as the Episcopalian churches have affiliations making them better funded with a powerful to demand change. There is an understanding that prostitution whether by exploitation or profession is wrong. Rev. Paul Bemile, Bishop of Wa, “actively counsels prostitutes encouraging them to change their lifestyle while preaching to trafficked victims who were prostitutes to rise above their bondage” (Avenor). The Bible teaches us that every human being deserves to live in dignity. “It is therefore not normal for some people to go through suffering caused by the greed and selfishness of their fellow human beings, stated Bishop Bemile, who is also the Episcopal Chairman of Migrants Commission of the Ghana Bishop's Conference” (Avenor).

These religious institutions are also about money. They are as guilty in contributing to human trafficking as organized crime groups, traffickers and fortune 500 companies. In 2007 colleagues of mine attended a non-denomination church in Accra for 6 months before they started noticing the young girls who lived on the grounds of the church were also used as sex slaves. A deacon in the church approached one of the men with an offer to have a girl for the day for a price. Parents of the children were told their daughters would receive education, Christian values and free boarding. Let me add this is not typical behavior of churches in Ghana. Fortunately, that particular church was reported to the authorities. In this case influence and

money did not supersede justice. Those found guilty were not only thrown out of the church, but sentenced to 5 years imprisonment.

Human trafficking is not new to Ghana. There are traditional forms of trafficking that are accepted within the culture which makes it difficult to combat trading of humans. The practice of Trokosi is a localized form of slavery or ritual servitude in which girls are forced into slavery for local fetish shrines in repayment for offenses committed by members of the girls families. Girls as young as 10 years old become brides to men 3 times their age and older. Trokosi is part of a traditional religion where the priest mediates between the people and the gods and of course interprets what they want. The village of Fiato Avendrpedo in eastern Ghana has come under criticism for this practice.

This form of slavery has existed in Ghana for hundreds of years. Within the last 7 years human rights activists have enlisted the help of the government to implement a law which happened in 2001, making the practice a crime. The chiefs still practicing Trokosi list the demand for labor on their lands as one of the reasons they keep the females. Togbe Adome Ahiave a priest in Ghana saw himself as a modern man who felt himself as a monogamous village leader openly stated, “We used to have 15 girls here, but we were told it was against human rights, so we let them go...life’s a lot tougher now, we need more people to work the land” (Hawksley).

Hutealor Wede is a slave living in Fiato with at least 30 other girls facing the same fate. She does not know how old she is all she knows is that she is a slave and will die a slave. “My grandfather had illegal sex with a woman, the gods punished my family” (Hawksley). Trokosi is an eternal penance. When a girl dies the family has to send a new girl to the priest. If the girl runs away and is caught she is beaten. Her family is too superstitious to take her back.

Residents in Fiato and surrounding towns along with some government officials strongly disagree with the president's decision to ban Trokosi. There are some within the government who disagree with the president. "There is also political and religious opposition, a strong lobby within the Ghanaian establishment, which says the campaign against Trokosi is a campaign against African culture" (Hawksley). This ideology has not deterred groups such as the International Needs to successfully raise money to buy women their freedom at \$58 a head. Hawksleys explained, "There are about 3,000 women known to still be in slavery in Ghana, at this rate it would take years to get them all freed."

The division between Christianity and traditional African religions has more to do with culture than behavior or readings from a text. Both are credited for uplifting communities and creating a safe haven for those in need. Oftentimes, they are also conducting themselves in a way that conflicts with the teachings of their institution. Human trafficking and slavery need the backing from what is seen as the pillar of the country instead of being a partaker.

The work of human rights activists has a direct effect on health policies. "Social injustice and limits on basic rights and freedoms, on human dignity itself, can have direct and indirect effects on the health of individuals, communities and population (Beyrer and Pizer 5). Trafficking victims are kept in bondage through a combination of fear, intimidation, abuse, and psychological controls. Victims encounter different experiences, but the common thread they share was a life of indentured servitude.

In my work with refugee and human trafficking victims A doctor familiar with such victims observed "the females seem angry, have no trust in anyone and prefer a female doctor examining them" (Jones). I saw their deep desire to change their situation and somehow erase their pass trauma. Women tend to express an element of fear and shame. Somatic complaints

and psychosomatic disorders were frequently observed to describe fear reactions of sexual abuse victims extended to phobic avoidance of males” (Schetky et al. 41). Abena and Efua, two victims I interviewed expressed how they could never trust anyone again thereby avoiding sharing their past with others. “In most cases, women who have been trafficked have an overwhelming, irrepressible feeling that they are not safe, even after they are out of the exploitative situation” (Beyrer and Pizer 161).

“If a little dreaming is dangerous, the cure for it is not to dream less but to dream more, to dream all the time” – Marcel Proust

The issue of human trafficking and slavery is not something that will go away soon but there are ways to provide assistance to victims while combating the problem. The detriment to traffickers must be better judgment by parents and guardians. My recommendation would be suspension for government officials accused of complicity from their official duties until they can be prosecuted or cleared of allegations. The egregious number of cases is overwhelming compared to those offering aftercare to victims. As a whole, there is an urgent need for capacity building in the field to facilitate an increase in the number of victims identified. There is a vast difference in the number of traffickers brought to justice, and the number of survivors receiving critical social services. In order to be taken seriously Ghana ought to focus on amending Act 694, assess government implementation procedures, monitor cases, coordinate between government divisions, and promote public awareness on human trafficking.

An ideal world in trafficking could prevent additional abuse. First, educating entire villages in the Volta region where children are recruited while motivating parents to call for their children’s return. Also, outreach programs to fishing villages by mobilizing traditional and government leaders to convince fishermen to release the child slaves. This is a strategy grounded

in cultural knowledge and community mobilization. Neighboring countries such as Nigeria, Cote D'Ivoire and Burkina Faso could work together to monitor and enact laws. This collaboration will prevent migration of traded persons.

Since 2007 Act 694 has yet to pass parliament making it difficult for law enforcement to prosecute traffickers. Most people, including government officials, simply do not recognize the seriousness of the phenomenon of human trafficking and sexual slavery. "Government tend to avoid admitting that there is human trafficking and sexual slavery in their territory; this is true for countries that are sources, transit points, and destinations for trafficked women and girls" (Gaon and Forbord 56).

A new law should include the word exploitation, harsher punishment, funds for rehabilitation services and compensation for victims. By including the word exploitation the law will then be on par with international standards of human trafficking. Punishment should fit the level of abuse by the trafficker. I met a trafficked victim aged 17 who worked in a house as a domestic servant and had to sleep with the husband on occasion for 3 years. While that abuse will forever become a traumatic part of her life, I feel some abuses should have harsher sentences. An example would be a fisherman who ordered 2 boys as young as 6 years old to untangle nets under water and eventually drowned. Those found to be the negotiators such as the middle age women should serve 90 days in jail then release if it is their first offense. On a second offense depending on the number of victims and the type of labor, the sentence should be no less than 3 years.

Although the current Act 694 has a provision created by a committee to set aside funding for rehabilitation and reintegration services to this day funds have not been allocated. Two goals from the Act could include providing rehabilitation services that already exist and to make such

services much more widely available. There are limited services in the Volta region which is the most trafficked area. By providing services in every region of the country this will avoid uprooting victims from where they have a support system. I know the people in Ghana and Africa as a whole prefer to stay close to their ancestral grounds. Ghanaians are identified with culturally with the village/town of their birth. Services should include counseling to first assess the severity of the victims abuse with follow-up visits to ensure there is continuity to their development. Too many slaves struggle toward freedom without help, and then must deal with its effects by themselves.

I interviewed 12 trafficked persons on the laws in Ghana; only 2 knew it was a crime to traffic someone. They were not aware of Act 694 but had been told by policemen that they should report their traffickers. Public awareness campaigns should include newspapers, TV commercials, magazine ads, and posters placed in public venues. This would start a dialogue on the topic where there might not have been previously. Awareness may change the decision of parents who send their children to live with friends and family because traffickers exploit this practice. Parents may become diligent in checking on their children more often if they were to send them away.

“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new lands, but in seeing with new eyes” - Marcel Proust

Public campaigns will help to change certain mindsets in the culture. Traditions that contribute to trafficking but have become a norm in the culture will take time for people to change but it will be a good start. Of course, there will be some resistance to the change from those who feel Ghanaian customs is being attacked. This could result in a backlash of what is seen as foreign propaganda. The victims face cultural stigma from their community who view them as wayward residents. “Due to a lack of understanding of the nature of human trafficking,

combined with the absence of appropriate laws and protocols, the victims of human trafficking are often treated as criminals” (Gaon and Forbord 58).

Rebuilding the lives of trafficked victims means empowering them, helping them find their own abilities and strength. It also requires that their physical and emotional wounds are healed as much as possible. But the terrible effects of slavery on victims can never be fully undone. Improved rehabilitation services are important to changing the whole system that keeps slavery going. Rehabilitated victims can lead their communities to throw out traffickers, and to demand people’s rights and their share of public resources. Rehabilitation means not simply helping victims, but creating the human conditions for a future in which slavery will be unknown. Creating a system with a law which stipulates harsher punishment while creating national public awareness campaigns will help with the education of human rights and improve the lives of those economically disadvantaged and underprivileged.

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