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Worsening Women Trafficking, Multidimensional Poverty and Gender Inequality: The Vulnerabilities, Payouts and Governmental Responses in West Africa

Abstract: Modern governments in modern states in third world countries are overwhelmed with social circumstances that have forced citizens to resort to self-help. Also, prevalent unclear demographic and globalization issues are sometimes neutral lines of justification for either transit or destination posture of the West African states. Concisely, poverty issues have continuously permeated the West Africa region's fabric, and the challenges seem protracting. It has implications for mobility, (women) trafficking, and human security, among others. The quantitative approach adopted profiled index while evaluating and descriptive methods explained the content. Among other findings, lack of national data and proper immigration service is obvious. Thus, adequate data for national planning is recommended. Further, on-going regional and national initiatives for possible integration and collaboration to address challenges are advocated.

Keywords: *poverty, mobility, trafficking, human security, gender inequality*

Introduction

Cross-border trafficking and movement in Africa, especially in women and children, have increased in the West Africa region. Though countries in the region share socio-economic, geographical, and cultural conditions, informal cross trade in persons, goods, and services have dated for long past as the history of migration itself. Thus, it can be traced to the pre-colonial times, which had at the center commercial exchanges before the eventual colonial

conquest. Subsequently, the colonies' valorization thus perpetuated the tradition and drawing on a system of an imported workforce in the artificial development poles across the continent.

Unfortunately, trafficking issues have exacerbated along the border despite the various national co-operations and agreements to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons with emphasis on trafficking in women and children. Thus, there are implications for developing a market economy and globalization with accentuated movements geared towards affecting human development. As ultimately, it affects governance, human security (measured in the access to quality education, health, and standard of living), and sustainable development goals performance of the region (Come Dechery and Laura Ralston, 2015; Hussein, Gnisci and Wanjuri, 2014; Alemika, 2013; and Aning, Sampson and John, 2013).

Of note, interactions between states and their markets have resulted in social, political, economic, and technological transfers across national borders, establishing trafficking and migration almost a lifestyle by some population sections. However, migration is dynamic, and it fairly constitutes a part of population distribution, even globally. This study seeks to examine the effects of such activities on poverty and gender inequality bearing in mind that women and children are the worst hit. Also, West African countries' regional and national initiatives to reduce the threats/crises of the movements in the region shall be examined. Previous studies (Olukoshi, 2013; Davidson, 1998; Kofi Annan Foundation, 2012) have investigated African and non-African migration, especially in neighboring nations or European/Western countries.

The study's remaining part is divided into sections covering the research approach, profiling of Multidimensional Poverty Index, Gender Inequality Index, and discourse on concepts such as women trafficking (vulnerability), human security, mobility, and migration. Further, the nexus between trafficking and human security was analyzed. The regional and national strategies toward curbing the menace of trafficking in West Africa were discussed while concluding suggestions for further discussions on the subject.

Research Approach

This research is evaluative and it adopts quantitative approaches that involved gathering of data from the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and International Labor Organization, among others, as we focus on assessing women trafficking, multidimensional poverty and gender inequality. The mixed-method design was used to gather and analyze data on the poverty index in West Africa as measured by the World Bank and the UNDP. The study adopted the methodology of the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) on the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), which identified deprivations at the household level across the sectors of health, education, and living standards. Further, the index used to measure gender inequalities, which is a direct fallout of women's vulnerability, is the

Gender Inequality Index (GII) that captures the inequalities in reproductive health, education, political representation, and the labor market. However, secondary data on human trafficking were sourced from previous reports, documents and studies. Data were analyzed using descriptive methods and content analysis, while observations and analysis of other documents as well as detailed attention was paid to unobtrusive issues.

Table 1 shows the Human Development Indices and Indicators 2018 statistical update that revealed the current statistics for West African countries. The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) identified overlapping deprivations at the household level across the same three dimensions as the HDI (health, education, and living standards). Accordingly, all West African countries record a high percentage of the population at risk of suffering multiple deprivations (20–33 percent). The region also records a high percentage of the population in severe multidimensional poverty with high deprivation scores and not so encouraging statistics.

Table 2 contains the measurement of the Gender Inequality Index in West Africa. It includes a composite measure reflecting inequality in achievement between women and men in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment, and the labor market. Apart from Ghana that falls into the Medium Human Development category, every other West African country represented falls within the Low Human Development category as measured by UNDP and partners. West African countries are performing low. Besides, UNDP in 2018 affirms also that worldwide, the average Human Development Index (HDI) value for women (0.705) is 5.9 percent lower than that of men, which is more prevalent in low human development countries of *West Africa* where the average HDI value is 13.8 percent lower for women than for men (the higher the GII value, the greater the inequality and vulnerability suffered by women) with sub-Saharan Africa (West Africa) aggregating 0.569 the highest against Europe and Central Asia with the lowest on 0.270.

Understanding the Vulnerability of Women in Trafficking

As Article 3a of the trafficking Protocol asserts:

trafficking in persons 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 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 exploitation...

Meanwhile, UNODC (2018) and Clayton (2004), among others, have noted that women remain the most vulnerable and end up being exploited sexually, forced into hard labor and or services or practices similar to slavery, servitude, and non-consented removal of organs.

Table 1: Multidimensional Poverty Index: West Africa Countries

Year and survey	Multidimensional poverty index			Population in multidimensional poverty		Population vulnerable to multidimensional poverty ^a	Population in severe multidimensional poverty ^a	Contribution to deprivation in dimension to overall multidimensional poverty ^a			Population living below the income poverty line	
	value	(%)	Survey year	(thousands)	(%)			Education	Health	Standard of living	Na-tional poverty line (%)	PPP \$1.90 a day (%)
2006–2017	value	(%)	Survey year	(thousands)	(%)	(%)	(%)	Health	Educa-tion	Standard of living	2016–2017 ^c	2006–2016 ^c
Benin	0.346	63.2	6,505	6,875	54.8	16.1	38.1	21.1	35.4	43.5	40.1	49.6
Burkina Faso	0.520	84.0	13,110	15,665	61.9	7.3	64.8	20.2	40.6	39.3	40.1	43.7
Côte d'Ivoire	0.236	46.1	10,926	10,926	51.2	17.6	24.5	19.7	40.4	40.0	46.3	28.2
Gambia	0.286	55.3	1,028	1,127	51.8	21.8	32.0	28.3	34.3	37.4	48.4	10.1
Ghana	0.132	28.9	7,798	8,158	45.5	21.4	9.6	20.4	31.8	47.8	24.2	12.0
Guinea	0.337	62.0	7,679	7,679	54.5	17.1	38.1	18.9	38.6	42.5	55.2	35.3
Guinea-Bissau	0.373	67.4	1,163	1,224	55.4	19.1	40.5	21.4	33.9	44.7	69.3	67.1
Liberia	0.331	64.9	2,782	2,994	50.9	20.4	33.2	21.0	27.4	51.6	54.1	38.6
Mali	0.457	78.1	13,644	14,056	58.5	10.9	56.7	22.1	41.6	36.3	43.6	49.7
Mauritania	0.261	50.6	2,116	2,176	51.6	18.6	26.4	20.3	33.1	46.6	31.0	6.0
Niger	0.591	90.6	16,062	18,727	65.3	5.0	74.9	20.4	37.2	42.4	44.5	44.5
Nigeria	0.294	52.0	99,166	96,623	56.7	16.9	32.7	27.1	32.2	40.7	46.0	53.5
Senegal	0.293	54.4	8,389	8,389	53.9	17.2	32.1	21.4	45.6	33.0	46.7	38.0
Sierra Leone	0.422	76.5	5,295	5,657	55.2	14.4	48.4	23.3	27.7	49.0	52.9	52.2
Togo	0.250	48.4	3,496	3,679	51.6	21.8	24.4	21.8	28.3	49.9	55.1	49.2

Source: United Nations Development Programme (2018); Columns 12 and 13: World Bank (2018).

Table 2: Gender Inequality Index: West Africa Countries

Gender inequality index		Maternal mortality ratio	Adolescent birth rate	Share of seats in parliament	Population with at least some secondary education	Labor force participation rate				
Value	Rank	(deaths per 100,000 live births)	(births per 1,000 women age (5-19))	(% held by women)	(% ages 25 and older)	(% ages 15 and older)				
2017	2017	2015	2015-2020	2017	2010-2017 ^c	2010-2017				
					female	male				
					female	male				
HDI West Africa rank	2017	2015	2015-2020	2017	2010-2017 ^c	2010-2017	2017			
1	Ghana	0.538	131	319	66.6	12.7	54.6	70.4	74.8	79.2
2	Nigeria	...	...	814	107.3	5.8	...	...	50.4	59.8
3	Mauritania	0.617	147	602	79.2	25.2	12.2 ^d	24.5 ^d	31.0	67.7
4	Benin	0.611	146	405	86.1	7.2	18.2 ^d	32.7 ^d	68.7	73.1
5	Senegal	0.515	124	315	72.7	41.8	11.1	20.1	45.5	69.9
6	Togo	0.567	140	368	89.1	17.6	26.3	52.5	75.8	79.4
7	Cote d'Ivoire	0.663	155	645	132.7	9.2	17.8	34.1	48.1	66.2
8	Gambia	0.623	149	706	79.2	10.3	29.0 ^d	42.3 ^d	51.2	67.7
9	Guinea	...	...	679	135.3	21.9	...	...	63.0	65.4
10	Guinea Bissau	...	...	549	84.5	13.7	...	...	65.6	78.1
11	Liberia	0.658	154	725	127.5	9.9	18.5 ^d	39.6 ^d	53.9	57.4
12	Mali	0.678	158	587	169.1	8.8	7.3	16.4	60.8	82.5
13	Burkina Faso	0.610	145	371	104.3	11.0	6.0	11.7	58.2	75.2
14	Sierra Leone	0.645	150	1,350	112.8	12.4	19.2 ^d	32.3 ^d	57.1	58.7
15	Niger	0.649	151	553	192.0	17.0	4.3 ^d	8.9 ^d	67.5	90.7

Source: United Nations Development Programme (2018); United Nations Maternal Mortality Estimation Group (2017) column 3; UNDESA (2017) column 4; IPU (2018) Column 5; UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2018) and Barro and Lee (2016) Column 6 and 7; and ILO (2018) Column 8 and 9.

IOM (2019), Allas (2006), Ellerman (2002) consent that the principal victims of trafficking in persons in West Africa are mainly children and women. However, in Ghana, Benin, Nigeria, and Togo, the central problem is closely related to the exploitation of child labor in the agricultural plantations or domestic workers, while in countries like Senegal, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, and Mali, children are often subject to trafficking for labor exploitation, begging, prostitution and pornography among others.

Amnesty International (2006, p. 1) and ReliefWeb (2006, p. 2) note that girls and women who are naturally vulnerable are most affected by poverty, devastating health conditions, and the trafficking constitutes the rank of child soldiers, though generally in much smaller numbers than boys. Also, many of the girls/women are forced to become ‘wives’ of soldiers or are raped and passed around from man to man. Meanwhile, the consequences of both the *push* and *pull* factors mainly reinforce the lack of effective legislative and policy frameworks to adequately address socio-economic conditions that have kept women and children at the receiving end of governance failure. No doubt, trafficking in persons portends a severe threat to human security, and the long- and medium-term development drive of the region remains threatened as it leaves a negative impact on individual victims and the region.

Meanwhile, the vulnerability to trafficking should be broadly understood as the relationship between the push factors as the conditions in the hosting and transit States, people’s access to entitlements, and their capacity to make migratory decisions. A worst-case risk scenario is an already marginalized person in a fragile state where trafficking gangs operate, who has no access to resources or international protection. She becomes easy prey for recruitment (CTED, 2019). Thus, trafficking, human security, and organized crimes are through realities that become evident with the vulnerability of the populations affected by bad governance, paucity, the nonexistence of basic needs for human survival, and the claims to a dignified life and self-worth, which ultimately leads them to an inevitable effort for amelioration by any means (Chapsos, 2011).

Human Security and Global Reception

Despite the criticism levied towards its conceptual vagueness since it was first presented, “human security” has occupied an important place in the international dialogues on peace, development, and diplomacy (Tanaka, 2015). The traditional concept of security was state-centric, focused on ascertaining, investigating, and curtailing the threats from state relations in the international system. These threats largely connoted the use of military force between states; hence states were embroiled in the competing circus of armament procurement, with the backdrop of achieving force superiority against potential antagonists (Chapsos, 2011). However, the 1994 United Nations Human Development Report (UNHDR) presented a new perspective to the security approach, broadened and expanded beyond the state’s conceived scope, with emphasis on the security of human beings in particular and their vast network of social and economic relations.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 1994 Report defines human security basically in two respects, that is, protection from a sudden and harmful disruption in the patterns of daily life and safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease, and repression, which are represented by its twin goals: freedom from fear and freedom from want (UNDP, 1994). According to the report, human security can be broken down into, and explained from seven important categories: economic, food, health, personal, environmental, community, and political security. These seven categories emphasize individuals' security, which is the focal point of the concept (Uddin, 2014).

Over time, the concept has been understood to transcend military coercions (Paris, 2001); as it presently focuses on everyday standard of living, human dignity, and protection from threatening situations such as lack of food and medicine, poverty, and restraints, hence presenting ordinary citizens with the ability to live in an atmosphere where freedom, equality, and justice are respected. There is a clear shift from the state-centric to a human-centric approach. Subsequently, fear no longer refers to military threats exclusively but to all the conditions identified by human security as fundamental to everyday living and the development of human potentials (Chapsos, 2011; Gomez & Des Gasper, 2014).

As a concept that addresses the circumstances of human beings, human security is closely linked with other human-centered concepts. Noteworthy are the concepts of human development and, more innately, the concept of human rights (Tanaka, 2015). Thus, that encompasses environmental degradation, human development, human well-being, and light arms. Sometimes, as Bobic (2014) expressed, these issues do not directly affect states, but their existence affects human beings who reside within states. The discourse establishes that contemporary security challenges are different from those of previous centuries. While threats such as terrorism, organized crime, cyber-attacks, piracy, environmental degradation, and pandemics cannot be met with the enemy centric approach of the customary western armed forces, the threats do not recognize boundaries and jurisdiction of states, territorial sovereignty, and political independence, since their main protagonists are non-state actors (Chapsos, 2011). However, no matter which topic is addressed, a guiding principle of the human security approach is that it requires understanding the particular threat(s) experienced by specific groups of people, as well as the participation of those people in the analysis process (Gomez & Des Gasper, 2014).

The Welsh school is acknowledged to be at the forefront in human security with scholars such as Ken Booth and Richard W. Jones. Booth believes that we can never be what we might become as long as human society, globally, is imprisoned by the regressive ideas that sustain world insecurity (Bobic, 2014), while Paris (2001) opines that human security deals with providing fundamental needs and the actualization of human self-esteem, as well as liberation from repressive power configurations regardless of their structure, origin, and scope. For Bedeski (2000), human security includes the totality of knowledge, technology, institutions, and activities that protect and preserve human life's biological existence and the processes that protect and perfect collective peace and prosperity to enhance human freedom.

Observably, since the 1994 UNDP Human Development Report's release, there has been an increase in global consciousness towards issues relating to human security. As international organizations, governments, and even higher learning institutions have given human security the deserved attention leading to the establishment of the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS) in 1999 that has supported more than 200 projects throughout the world in human security enhancement. The UN General Assembly also came to a common understanding of human security in September 2012 (A/RES/66/290). While in 2015, Japan declared the Development Cooperation Charter that human security is the guiding principle that lies at the foundation of the nation's development cooperation.

Similarly, the Government of Thailand also took steps by establishing the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security to attend to human security issues within the country (Tanaka, 2015). Thus, regional organizations, such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC), Organization of American States (OAS), African Union, and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), among others, have released statements indicating a human security agenda as well as Academic institutions like Harvard, London School of Economics and Political Science, that have programmes featuring human security standpoint. From all indications, human security as a concept has become globally accepted as a means by which human lives can be bettered and well-being ensured.

Mobility and Migration in Africa

Globally, there have been various treaties and protocols since the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of others (1949). Among others of such are the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Person (2000), Forced Labor Convention, 1930 (No. 29), 2010 United Nations Global Plan for Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol thereto adopted by the General Assembly Resolution 55/25 of November 15, 2000, among others.

Continentially, there is the 1981 Charter on Human and People's Rights, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child and the Protocol of the Rights of Women, the Ouagadougou Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, especially Women and Children. While specifically, Sub-regional efforts include the Economic Organization of West African States - (ECOWAS) Initial Plan for Action against Trafficking in Persons (2002–2003), the Joint ECOWAS-SCCAS Regional Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (2006–2009) as well.

Meanwhile, state commitments through signing international documents will mean compliance to series of measures against transnational organized crimes, including the creation of domestic criminal offenses (participation in an organized criminal group, money

laundering, corruption, and obstruction of justice). The adoption of new and sweeping frameworks for extradition, mutual legal assistance, law enforcement cooperation; and the promotion of training and technical assistance for building or upgrading the necessary capacity for national authorities. Specifically, the target of the protocols is to prevent, suppress, and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, for instance, the Assembly Resolution 55/25 of 25 December 2003; Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air (adopted by General Assembly resolution 55/25 on 28 January 2004) and Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunitions (55/25).

Another dimension is the concept of the modern African states that supports free movements of persons, goods, and services, especially within the West Africa corridor. Thus, relegating citizenship exercised or claimed not based on location but in terms of nationality, relationship and activities across borders. In sub-Saharan Africa, migration predates colonization and assumed greater impetus after the countries have traversed colonialism and become sovereign states. The pre-colonial migration in West Africa occurred largely in search of security, new land safe for settlement, and fertile for farming. A condition that was altered by colonial regimes and subsequently introduced blends of political and economic structures, tax imposition regimes, as well as territorial boundaries, which heightened cross-border migration and subsequently institutionalized trafficking.

After political independence, the countries were confronted with problems of integration, economic growth, and underdevelopment. Also, the people were in haste to adjust to the new realities brought about by self-government. However, observable differentiation of migration exists. It also justifies that most countries do not simply have one type of immigration; as there are: labor migration, refugee or permanent settlement, or a whole range of types at once. Also, migrating chains that start with one kind of movement often continue with the other forms. Of note, migration is increasingly driven by economic, political, and social changes. In the West Africa sub-region, migration can better be explained theoretically from a financial standpoint though other factors play a role, but the economic one remains outstanding.

Human Trafficking in West Africa

The extent of human trafficking in West Africa and the ordeals facing victims is evident in an unfortunate experience relayed by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime about two Nigerian girls, Anna* and her friend Precious* who were taken from Nigeria to Okah, in northern Cote d'Ivoire, under the pretense of attractive jobs. With difficult living conditions back home, the choice of moving for a better life, earning some money, and studying further seem an easy one. The prospect, though, was not as innocent as it seemed as Anna and Precious soon found themselves being trafficked. For over seven days, and under terrible conditions, the traffickers transitioned Anna and Precious illicitly across several national

borders. Arriving at their destination, the two friends were forced to have sex with several men to pay a \$2,600 travel cost 'debt' for their journey to Cote d'Ivoire. With no choice available, the girls had sex with at least 11 men every night for as little as \$2 per customer over two years (UNODC, 2019). Sadly, the story of Anna and Precious is just one of several other trafficking chains and networks in the region.

Generally, trafficking in humans is mostly perceived to refer to the process whereby individuals are placed or retained in an abusive situation for economic gains. Akinterinwa (2019); Allais (2006); CTED (2019); Keefer (2006) affirms that Trafficking in Persons (TiP) is a grave crime and a gross violation of human rights, while victims and the most vulnerable are mainly women and children who often carry the burden of poverty. TiP thus poses a danger to both national and human security. Unfortunately, along with drug trafficking and arms dealing, it has been pronounced as one of the most lucrative crimes in the world, generating profit between 5 to 7 billion dollars annually (Keefer, 2006; Mossbarger, 2008; UNITAR, 2015; Trajano, 2018; Akinterinwa, 2019) though figures from the International Labor Organization stands remains as high as \$32 billion (ILO, 2008 cited in Brewer, 2008).

TiP remains a serious issue at both the international and local strata, demanding immediate need for response. Incidentally, the issue was not acknowledged internationally until the turn of the century with the adoption of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children by the General Assembly of the United Nations in the year 2000, augmenting the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNITAR, 2015, Uddin, 2014; GAATW, 2010). Despite being an old occurrence, transnational crimes have, of late, taken intricate, vivid, shocking, and even lethal proportions with the wake of globalization (Sawagodo, 2012; GAATW, 2010). Meanwhile, globalization has amplified the power void by endowing criminal networks so much that assaults on human self-worth continue to increase correspondingly to the growing globalization in Africa (Sawadogo, 2012).

Of note, trafficking touches all states in sub-Saharan Africa, while domestic and regional networks are integral in its larger Africa-wide networks (Andrew, 2012). The root causes of trafficking in Africa are many and varied. Underlying many of these causes is Africa's poverty trap, which involves a range of mutually reinforcing economic and social ills (Sawagodo, 2012). Thus, people become part of the human trafficking chain because of various reasons that are either push or pull factors (CTED, 2019). *Pull factors* include, among other things: economic differentials that make even relatively poor neighboring cities, regions, or countries more attractive. While *push factors* mainly include: poverty, deteriorating living conditions, human deprivation, persistent unemployment, gender discrimination, lack of information and education, harmful socio-cultural practices, and lack of legislative and policy frameworks (Allais, 2006).

Perhaps, of all the regions in Africa, West Africa witnesses the highest rate of human trafficking as the region either serves as a source, transition, or destination point for trafficking (Akinterinwa, 2019). Trafficking in West Africa has developed into such a big business

that traffickers often have control centers in Europe, North America, and South Africa while feeding their human consignment into greater international systems for the movement of other illegal goods, not excluding narcotics, fake drugs, light weapons, and harmful waste (Andrew, 2012; UNODC, 2009).

Unfortunately, state fragility and a large swathe of ungoverned territory have contributed significantly to the booming activities of traffickers in the region. It should be a major concern to African leaders, especially the ECOWAS leaders because of the high rate of insecurity in the region and also because of the 200 million migrants in the world, not less than seven millions of them reside in West Africa. Besides, one-third of West Africa people not only live outside their district or village but also 42% of the total of international migrants residing in Africa are located in West Africa alone (Akinterinwa, 2019). Meanwhile, the problem here is not the act of migration but the mistreatment to which migrants, especially the illegal ones, are subjected.

Trafficking in persons in the Republic of Benin covers the trafficking of juveniles. In the year 2017, 105 persons were put on trial for trafficking in persons, and 30 were sentenced. Also, 536 victims of trafficking were recorded in 2017. The victims were all children, 361 girls, and 175 boys. In Burkina Faso, recorded victims of trafficking in 2015 were 550 children (199 girls, 351 boys). Also, on December 15, 2015, the Department of Social Development under the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection (MOGCSP) in association with agents of the International Organization of Migration (IOM), the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit of the Police Service, the Embassy of South Africa, and the Human Trafficking Secretariat also under MOGCSP, recorded 21 Ghanaian minors trafficked to Pretoria, South Africa to play football. The trafficked children were between the ages of 9 and 16, and all of the children are from different villages in Sefwi, western Ghana (UNODC, 2018).

Although there have never been recorded cases of trafficking in Guinea Bissau, there have been cases of female genital mutilation, domestic violence against women, and issues regarding the protection of women's rights in the country, among other human security threats. National authorities in 2014 reported that there were stark enforcement gaps of the law. Despite improvement being made, forced marriage is common in Guinea Bissau, especially in the Gabú and Bafatá regions. The forced marriage is said to be the product of poor households trading their daughters in exchange for money, land, or cattle. While the national authorities expressed concern that many of these forced marriages involve trafficking in persons, on average, it is documented that between 7 and 10 percent of girls are forced into marriage before the age of 15, while 29 percent are married before the age of 18. From all indications, poverty is at the root of this issue, with 37 percent of women from indigent households married before 18 (UNODC, 2018).

In Senegal, between 2014 and 2015, six victims of trafficking were identified. According to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Violence against Women, the Liberian government was probing a case involving 14 Liberian girls trafficked to Lebanon in 2015. In Nigeria, it is documented that most victims were trafficked for forced labor and sexual manipulation.

Between January 2014 and August 2017, a total of 1,318 persons were trafficked into forced labor. In the same period, 1,299 persons were trafficked for sexual exploitation (UNODC, 2018).

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (2001), about 200,000 children are trafficked yearly in West and Central Africa and sold into domestic serfdom, prostitution, and forced labor, or bought for sacrifice in black magic rituals. At the core of human trafficking in West Africa is the misuse of the practice of placing children with relatives or other care-takers when they cannot be taken care of by their parents. Nigeria is said to be at the epicenter of this regional trafficking in persons. According to Clayton (2004), it is a major transit and destination source for trafficked women and children.

People are also trafficked to Europe, the Middle East, and other countries in Africa for forced labor, domestic servitude, and sexual exploitation. Eye on Human Trafficking (2005) reports that Nigerian girls and women are trafficked to Italy, France, Spain, the Netherlands, Cote d'Ivoire, and South Africa to be exploited sexually. Likewise, children are trafficked for domestic labor and street hawking within Nigeria and West African countries. There is also the inflow of Togolese, Beninese, Ghanaian, and Cameroonian children trafficked to Nigeria and Senegal, big sources of transit and sometimes destination for trafficked women and children (Adepoju, 2005, cited in Allais, 2006). According to the Human Rights Watch Report (2003), there are four means of child trafficking into, out of, or within Togo. It states that child trafficking in Togo is illustrative of a larger, regional phenomenon involving at least thirteen West African countries. The four means of child trafficking identified are: – the trafficking of Togolese girls into domestic labor in Benin, Nigeria, and Niger; girl trafficking from within Togo to other parts of the country, especially the national capital, Lomé; trafficking of girls from Benin, Nigeria and Ghana to Lomé; and trafficking of boys into forced labor, especially agricultural work, in Nigeria, Benin Republic, and Côte d'Ivoire.

AFP (2017); Ships & Ports, (2017) report that Forty (40) people were arrested and five hundred (500) people rescued after a swoop on human trafficking across West Africa by the International Police Organization (INTERPOL) in November 2017 including 236 minors, that were rescued in simultaneous operations across Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal. The operation's result underlines the challenge faced by law enforcement and all stakeholders in addressing human trafficking in the Sahel region. Unfortunately, traffickers deceive women, men, and children from all corners of the world and force them into sexual exploitation and forced labor. UNODC figures show that women and girls make up 70% of detected victims, with girls constituting two out of every three child victims (UNODC, 2019).

Trafficking and Human Security Nexus

As earlier mentioned, the push and pull factors leading victims to be trafficked becomes known, so also is the linkage between human trafficking in all its forms, and human security in all its manifestations. It then becomes evident that human trafficking in West Africa

is fueled more by factors that revolve around economic security and the quest for a better life. Therefore, the nexus between human security and human trafficking reveals a complementary relationship between the desire for a better life and the pursuit for survival on the one hand, and inhumane treatment, outright exploitation, and gross violation of human rights on the other hand.

Of note, poverty and poor living circumstances often form characteristic features of societies in transition. Also, drained socio-economic capitals in these circumstances create unwholesome community relations in which human trafficking cruelly denies people of inherent values and rights. The ruthless devices of criminal activity bring about awful consequences that feature the lives of modern-day slaves and exemplify constant threats. Unfortunately, with sexual exploitation and various related diseases in mind, trafficking is only one of many features of multifaceted instability (Peulic, 2017; Uddin, 2014; and Sukma, 2008).

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (2004) considers transnational organized crime as one of the major threats to human security, impeding societies worldwide' social, economic, political, and cultural development. Perhaps through this, the nexus between human security and organized crimes is evident. On the other hand, the Council of Europe in the *Organized Crime Situation Report* lists the following crime categories for Europe: trafficking in drugs, trafficking in human beings, smuggling of persons, cybercrime (including online fraud schemes), money laundering, and 'other activities' (including extortion, property crimes, and smuggling).

Therefore, despite the lack of consensus on the definition of organized crime at the international level, it is perceived to be tantamount to crimes or emphasized how the perpetrators are organized (Chapsos, 2011). While human trafficking has a devastating impact on individual victims, its effect also undermines the safety and security of all the nations it touches as it is a global health risk and it fuels the growth of organized crime (Allais, 2006; Uddin, 2014).

The physical form of insecurity pose by trafficking is pretty significant, so also, the non-physical form of insecurity caused by Transnational Organized Crime networks is quite enormous, although it usually accompanies the physical form. Non-physical forms of insecurity instigated by Transnational Organized Crime can be seen in the modern form of slavery, where millions of persons are trafficked each year worldwide for purposes of sexual exploitation or forced labor. This case demonstrates that many people are reluctantly willing to risk being trafficked, hoping for a better future. Yet apart from physical concerns (health security related to sexually transmitted diseases and/or rape, as an instance), such individuals lack fundamental human dignity and free will, as well as economic security, by being denied the right to seek employment and use land according to their own needs. Their willingness to accept trafficking risks reflects their fears about the future (Bobic, 2014).

The prosperity of transnational crime networks is often linked to poverty or economic inequality. Sicilian Mafia in Italy, Russian mafia, organized crime networks in Kosovo are all

said to have emerged as a result of extreme impoverishment as well as the reason of a lack of state capacity to establish the rule of law in these parts (Peulic, 2017; Bobic, 2014). There were clear incentives for an organized crime there to develop services that the state could not. This model is also applicable in West Africa, where trafficking in persons has indirectly been advanced through the appeal to victims of a better life elsewhere. In other words, akin to the Italian and Russian mafia model, warlords and traffickers fill the void in Africa, and step in where the state has failed.

Regional and National Strategies towards Curbing Trafficking in West Africa

As Graaff (2003, p. 56) identified, globalization and international criminal organizations have provided another dimension to trafficking as there have been willing and unwilling movements of persons in the form of migration for mostly reasons of trade and social-economics. Unfortunately, Rousseau (2017, p. 24) identified a lack of effective control in African states to corruption and poverty, leading to governance failure and bloating the trafficking ring and victims.

Though trafficking remains a modern form of slavery and a dark side of global, regional, and international relationships, as Allais (2006) noted, it also is one of the largest profit makers for organized crime in Africa and arguably the lowest risk activity for criminal groups due to widespread corruption and more importantly, lack of legislation coupled with a low rate of prosecution. Unfortunately, as of 2005, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC) puts the figure of African countries involved in the trafficking of human beings at 89 percent, while Allais (2006) notes that virtually no nations in Africa are immune from trafficking.

In 2001, there was the formation of Migration Dialogue for West Africa (MIDWA) with the main objective of designing a platform to encourage member states of the Economic Community of West African States to discuss regional context such as common migration issues and concerns for which immediate solutions may not be forthcoming on a national level. At formation, the thematic focus was on migration data and statistics, border management, combating trans-border organized crime (human trafficking and migrant smuggling), return and reintegration, free movement, professional mobility, and student exchange, protection of migrants' rights, irregular migration and mixed flows as well as Diasporas in the West African communities (IOM, 2019). Also, ECOWAS's initial Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons (2002–2003) was introduced. It was to ensure ECOWAS member states take urgent action with a focus on criminal justice responses to address the menace of trafficking with more detailed and far-reaching action plans emanating from it domestically.

However, UNICEF Ghana (2017, p. 1) expressed that the government of Ghana has put in place policies, legislation, and programmes to address the issue of trafficking, thus, enacted the Human Trafficking Act 2005 (Act 694), which provides a legal framework for

combating human trafficking by seeking to prevent and suppress trafficking, punish persons complicit and initiate interventions to promote the protection and welfare of victims. Also, the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU) of the Ghana Police Service conducts investigations into allegations of human trafficking and seeks to prosecute offenders. The Anti-Human Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons Unit (AHSIP) of the Ghana Immigration Service is to arrest human smugglers and detect such cases. WESTAT (2016) also affirmed the existing partnership between the governments of Ghana and the United States of America on child protection compact partnership (a four-year joint initiative aimed at strengthening the government of Ghana's capacity to effectively investigate, prosecute and prevent the menace of child trafficking). Meanwhile, the National Plan of Action is to strengthen Ghana's capacity along "4Ps" strategy, that is, *prevention* of TIP, *prosecution* of TIP victims; *prosecution* of TIP offenders; and *partnerships* with stakeholders to combat TIP (Human Trafficking Secretariat, 2017).

Just like the government of Ghana, the Nigeria counterpart introduced legislation and frameworks to combat trafficking and thus adopted "4Ps" strategy to *prevent* (through awareness knowledge and understanding TIP), *prosecute* (investigating human trafficking-related cases, monitoring cross-border movements, and prosecuting TIP cases in law courts), *protect* (rehabilitation and reintegration of victims into the society); and *partner* (through collaborative strategies among countries and agencies in information sharing on an investigation, prosecution and combating).

The Nigeria national response to human trafficking dates back to the ratification of the Palermo Protocol in 2001, enactment of the TIPPLEA Act 2003 into law in 2003, the establishment of NAP TIP in 2003, settling up of National Task Force on TIP in 2006, the establishment of Victims of Trafficking Trust Fund 2008, approval of the National Policy on Protection Assistance to Trafficked Persons by the Federal Executive Council in 2008 and approval of National Plan of Action on TIP in 2008. More recently is the official gazette of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act, 2015 with the objectives of providing an effective and comprehensive legal and institutional framework for the prohibition, prevention, detection, prosecution, and punishment of human trafficking and related offenses; protect victims of human trafficking; and promote as well as facilitate National and International Co-operation.

Conclusion and Suggestions for Further Discussions

At every level, the essence of government remains the ability to secure lives and property, then improve such which the study strongly advocates. However, the daring challenges and consequential effects of movement necessitated governmental awakening and reaction through a framework and legislation in the West Africa region. Incidentally, globalization is necessary. Part of its shortcomings is the "imaginary free movement" that made migration and trafficking contemporary. It has, however, consolidated the challenges of human security

in the region. Thus, the efforts of regional and national governments have yet improved the situation as there is still a large gap to be filled in not only measurements of the multidimensional poverty but gender inequality as well as vulnerable (women) trafficking.

Specifically, there is the need to continuously engage citizens in awareness to discourage unregulated human movements and every form of trafficking in the region. Thus, countries in the region should enforce partnership (existing instruments such as IOM and MIDWA) through strict monitoring and evaluation as well as periodic review of such instruments to ensure trafficking is checked. Also, there is the need to ensure proper and adequate profiling of movement by persons from one country to another. Data received should be adopted to plan individual national development strategies as there must be concerted efforts to stimulate good governance and ensure live more abundance for the citizens.

For research, it is relevant for further studies to go beyond the period and numbers of countries examined, especially regarding the national responses towards curbing the menace of governance failure and trafficking.

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