

THE CHALLENGES OF IDENTIFYING TRAFFICKED CHILDREN: THE
EXPERIENCES OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE
GHANAIAN FISHING INDUSTRY

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis uses the Ecological Systems Theory and Qualitative Research methods to explore the identification of child trafficking for labour in the Ghanaian Fishing Industry by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The thesis also examines the multiple perceptions of child trafficking through NGOs' perspectives to reveal how NGOs manoeuvre between the internationally influenced legal concept of child trafficking and local Ghanaian perceptions. The study finds that NGOs' identification strategies are fairly holistic because they contain poverty reduction programs to address some structural causes of child trafficking and expand exploitations that constitute child trafficking to avoid confusion between the phenomenon and cultural practices. To make identification strategies more holistic, NGOs must accommodate more agency from trafficked children and support the improvement of local government systems. Poverty reduction strategies must be well-coordinated with other programs to focus on all vulnerable communities. International funding and protocols must support community-based initiatives and perceptions.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

AHTU	-	Anti-Human Trafficking Unit
CSO	-	Civil Society Organization
CH	-	Challenging Heights
DSW	-	Department of Social Welfare
EST	-	Ecological Systems Theory
FAO	-	Food and Agriculture Organization
FCUBE	-	Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education
FTS	-	Free the Slaves
GNA	-	Ghana News Agency
HTA	-	Human Trafficking Act
IJM	-	International Justice Mission
IOM	-	International Organization for Migration
LEAP	-	Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty
L.I	-	Legal Instrument
LJI	-	Love Justice International
MMDAs	-	Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies
MoGCSP	-	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protections
MoLGRD	-	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
MP	-	Mercy Project
NGO	-	Non-Governmental Organization
RTBF	-	Right to be Free
SAP	-	Structural Adjustment Program
SER	-	Social Enquiry Report
SOP	-	Standard Operating Procedure

UN - United Nations
UNODC - United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USDOS - United States Department of State
UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Human trafficking represents a consistent global abuse of fundamental human rights; the right to freedom and security, the right to bodily integrity and the right to non-discrimination (Andreatta, 2015). Contemporary research on human trafficking has revealed that the phenomenon is complex, frequently takes place without crossing national borders, and disproportionately affects children. It is estimated that children make up to one-third of the 40.2 million people trafficked worldwide (Minderoo Foundation's Walk Free, 2018; United Nations Children's Fund, 2018). The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) suggest that there could be more trafficked children since the identification of trafficked children is far difficult than adults (UNODC, 2018). In Africa, it is estimated that children make up about two-thirds of trafficked people (Minderoo Foundation's Walk Free, 2019; UNODC, 2018). In Ghana, where my research is focused, trafficking of children for labour within the country is predominant (Gyamfi 2016; Sertich & Heemskerk, 2011), constituting about 67% of detected trafficking cases in 2019 (United States Department of State, 2020).

The magnitude of child trafficking has called for global efforts to counteract it. These efforts, grouped into three main categories (known as the 3Ps), are present in intervention strategies of many countries, including Ghana. The categories are: 1) protection of trafficked children; 2) prevention of child trafficking; and 3) prosecution of perpetrators (Adhikari & Turton, 2019; Sertich & Heemskerk, 2011). Under the protection of trafficked children, identification of trafficked children is the first step (Christenson,

2012; Rafferty, 2015; Warria, Nel & Triegaardt, 2014). However, the terms ‘identification of’ or ‘to identify’ trafficked children are contested in literature. These terms refer to the institutional processes that enable trafficking victims to be sheltered from further exploitation and to access assistance (Warria et al., 2014). In the policy document of International Office for Migration (IOM), identification is defined as the process of determining that someone is trafficked (IOM, 2017). These definitions present two main ideas: 1) the removal of trafficked children from further exploitation; and 2) determination of their trafficking status. Therefore, identification, which is the focus of my research, implies all the institutional processes that are undertaken to detect potentially trafficked children and finally determine their trafficking status.

It is noteworthy that the removal of trafficked children from further exploitation, as explained in most literature, involves taking trafficked children away from their exploited environment and later repatriating them to their original home or family (Dougnon, 2011; Gyamfi, 2016). Such an approach is commonly referred to as “rescue” but has been criticized by some researchers for treating trafficked children as victims with no agency (Mbakogu, 2020; Mbakogu & Hanley, 2019). Children, especially older ones (13-17 years) have been known to play a major part in their trafficking by either consenting to it or even migrating on their own accord and allowing themselves to be exploited by traffickers (Dougnon, 2011; Mbakogu, 2020; Mbakogu & Hanley, 2019, Warria et al., 2014). Therefore, to avoid the tensions associated with the word ‘rescue’ and treatment of trafficked children as individuals with no agency, I use ‘removal of children from exploitation’ (henceforth referred to as ‘removal’) to describe this process and ‘trafficked children’ or ‘survivors’ rather than ‘trafficked victims’ in my research.

To the best of my knowledge, no studies have specifically focused on the identification of trafficked children for their labour (the dominant form of trafficking) in Ghana, although references to actors involved in the identification process and associated challenges do appear in some research. In terms of actors in the identification process, Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) are recognized as primary actors (Sertich & Heemskerk, 2011; Gyamfi, 2016). NGOs undertake this role because government organizations such as the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU) of the Ghana Police Service, who are mandated to address all the criminal aspects of child trafficking have inadequate human and funding capacity (Gyamfi, 2016). This situation in Ghana supports the assertion by Limoncelli (2016) that NGOs play a major role in child trafficking interventions in Sub-Saharan African due to their governments' inadequate efforts. My experiences working in an anti-child trafficking NGO in Ghana support this recognized role of NGOs, since government actors (for instance, the police and social welfare department) often play passive roles. However, the significant role of NGOs in the identification of trafficked children is unique to the Ghanaian context since studies in other contexts, such as Nigeria recognize government organizations such as the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons as primary actors in the identification process (Adesina 2014; Nwogu 2014).

That notwithstanding, the challenges associated with identification of trafficked children in Ghana share some similarities with the global context. Significantly, the concept of child trafficking determines the interventions, including identification strategies, to combat it (Sertich & Heemskerk, 2011). However, the concept of child trafficking is contested, both globally and in Ghana. According to the United Nations (UN)

Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (hereinafter known as the as the Palermo Protocol), trafficking is simply the “recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbour or receipts of persons under 18 years with a purpose of exploitation; be it sexual, labour or similar practices, and the removal of organs” (UNODC, 2004). This definition does not specify what exactly constitutes exploitation, yet it has been mirrored in the national laws of many countries, including Ghana (Okyere, 2017; Sertich & Heemskerk, 2011), Mali (Dougnon, 2011) and Nigeria (Adesina, 2014). Okyere (2017: 95) further points out that the lack of precision implies that *“identification of child trafficking is therefore largely reliant on what actors deem to be ‘child exploitation’ based on their personal, cultural and political morals or value judgements.”*

Also, due to the vagueness of what constitutes exploitation, the mere movement of children to involve in any activity that may be interpreted as exploitative can imply trafficking. This lack of clarity has led to misunderstandings between local perceptions and national/international laws. In Sub-Saharan Africa and Ghana, child trafficking is understood locally as the outright buying and selling of children (Dottridge, 2002; Golo, 2016). Therefore, cultural practices of “fosterage”, “placement”, “kinship” and “apprenticeship”, which are characterized by children moving away from their biological parents to another relative or a family friend to learn new social or life skills and have access to better life opportunities (Einarsdóttir & Hamadou, 2014; Golo, 2016; Truong & Angeles, 2005) cannot be classified as trafficking. These practices are long standing traditions, as it is common in Ghana for parents to allow their children to stay with a relative for their childhood years as part of the kinship system, for socialization purposes, and share the responsibilities of childbearing (Osafo-Acquah & Banini, 2018). Thus, these practices

are not necessarily exploitative but the element of movement and the involvement of children in work which may be interpreted as exploitative turns such practices into child trafficking from the perspective of some actors, which subsequently leads to tensions between local communities and anti-child trafficking actors.

The confusions around the concept of child trafficking does not take away the harm caused to children involved in it. A lot of academic and policy documents have captured the negative consequences of the phenomenon on trafficked children's health, education and social development, both worldwide and in Ghana (Gyamfi, 2015; Hamenoo & Sottie, 2014; Johansen, 2006; Warria et al., 2014). Researchers (Dougnon, 2011; Nwogu, 2014; Okyere, 2017) who have critiqued anti-child trafficking intervention strategies in Sub-Saharan countries, have also acknowledged that the concerns over child trafficking are valid, thereby supporting the importance of identifying trafficked children.

Identification strategies, similar to all child trafficking interventions, must be holistic due to the complex and multifaceted nature of the phenomenon (Adhikari & Turton, 2019; Andreatta, 2015; Okyere, 2017). Some researchers have therefore used the Ecological Systems Theory (EST) to study the understanding and intervention strategies (including identification strategies) of child trafficking. The EST provides a framework that analyzes the drivers of trafficking, both contemporary and historical, found in the environment of trafficked children, from the very local to the global scales (Barner, Okech & Camp, 2018; Christenson, 2012). That notwithstanding, the understanding of child trafficking by its actors, especially NGOs in Sub-Saharan Africa (such as in the case of Ghana and Mali), often excludes the impact of historical and global inequality factors such as colonialism, Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) and free trade policies, which in

turn have limited the effectiveness of interventions to combat child trafficking (Dougnon, 2011; Okyere, 2017). As further pointed out by Okyere (2017) in the Ghanaian context, the exclusion of these factors may be a calculated one since NGOs do not want to raise issues that criticize and undermine their international donors, who are often deeply entrenched in the creation and reproduction of global structural inequality.

Due to the significant role of NGOs in identifying trafficked children in Ghana, these identification challenges are most directly experienced by NGOs. Recognizing the important role of NGOs and these challenges, my research focuses on the experiences of NGOs to analyze the identification of children trafficked for labour in Ghana. Specifically, my research focuses on the fishing industry around the Lake Volta in Ghana because majority of research and NGO interventions in child trafficking has taken place in this sector. This context, therefore, presents the best avenue for research on the processes used by NGOs to identify children trafficked within Ghana for labour purposes. In addition, my personal experiences working with an anti-child trafficking NGO to identify trafficked children in fishing communities around the Lake Volta also influenced my interest in this research and the study area.

Lake Volta was created in the 1960s to generate hydro-electric power for Ghana and has additionally served as a source of livelihood, transportation and a foreign exchange earner for the country (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2016; International Trade Administration, 2020). A huge number of about 300,000 people depending on the lake for their livelihood has led to its over-exploitation of about twice the sustainable production capacity of 40,000 tonnes of fish per year since the 1980s (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2016). This has led to the depletion of stock and has increased the demand

for cheap labour, including that provided by children (Johansen, 2006). In both academic and policy documents, fisher folks prefer the use of children because they are obedient and easily controlled (Agbenya, 2009; Johansen, 2006; Sertich & Heemskerk, 2011). Fisher folks also find children very effective in diving to disentangle nets caught by the numerous tree stumps in the lake due to the children's nimble hands (Agbenya, 2009; Johansen, 2006; Sertich & Heemskerk, 2011).

Before I discuss my research in detail, one of the elements I grapple with is whether the definition of child trafficking should be guided by the national/international laws or local understandings. I chose the former because it aligns with the definition of child trafficking used by the main study participants (NGOs), whose definition is guided by national laws and international protocols. Second, since NGOs are the primary actors in the identification of trafficked children, they are faced with the challenge of navigating among the different understandings of child trafficking in local communities. This research thus examines how the NGOs manoeuvre between their perceptions and those of the local communities.

1.2 Research Problem

Most of the research on identification of trafficked children are in the context of the United States of America whereas those in other countries have focused primarily on transborder trafficking and sex trafficking (Andreatta, 2015; Christenson, 2012; Simich, Goyen, Powell & Mallozzi, 2014; Todres, 2016; Warria et al., 2014; Warria et al., 2015). These research findings reveal that identification of trafficked people is a multi-collaborative effort among 1) trafficked people; 2) community members; 3) government

officials (police force, social workers, health practitioners); and 4) CSOs, especially NGOs. Furthermore, these findings mention that community members and CSOs are the best first responders in identifying trafficked people (Andreatta, 2015; Warriia et al., 2014) because they are more aware of the vulnerable people in their environment and their mobility patterns (Warriia et al., 2014). Other important findings such as the steps for identifying trafficked people and associated challenges are discussed in detail in the following chapter.

Even though these research are not in the context of Ghana or the identification of child trafficking for labour within countries, there are still some lessons that can be learnt from such research but with careful interpretation. I also utilize related research on the role and criticisms of NGOs, and perceptions, causes and identification processes of trafficked children in Ghana, Sub-Saharan Africa and other parts of the world to reveal concepts embedded in the identification strategies of NGOs in Ghana and extend the findings of existing research.

1.3 Research Questions

My thesis examines how NGOs identify trafficked children working in the Ghanaian Lake Volta fishing industry, and the successful aspects and challenges of their approaches. I do not seek primarily to criticize the approaches used by NGOs, but rather to better understand and support their work. Since the strategies adopted by NGOs are underpinned by the controversial concept of child trafficking, my thesis will address NGOs' perceptions of these concepts, their perceptions of the understandings of the fishing communities they work in, and how they maneuver between these different understandings to identify trafficked children.

1.4 Thesis Statement

Even with international and domestic legislation to combat child trafficking, the identification of trafficked children remains a challenge, and the strategies and tools to detect trafficked children are often not effective. In fact, identification, is a complex problem and therefore must be approached with a holistic solution that addresses the structural causes of the phenomenon and multiple perspectives about it (Dougnon, 2011; Okyere, 2017). By doing so, efforts to identify trafficked children are more likely to protect them and respond to the vulnerabilities of the environment in which they find themselves.

1.5 Outline of the Thesis

Following the Introduction in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 focus on the review relevant academic and policy literature on child trafficking, the identification of trafficked children and the role of NGOs. Chapter 3 explores the Analytical Framework for carrying out my research, the Ecological Social Theory (EST). This model has the capability of looking at identification strategies beyond the child to all other systems found in the child's environment. Since the research on the identification of trafficked people has mentioned the process as a multi-collaborative effort, it is appropriate to make use of such a model.

Chapter 4 explains the qualitative research methodology used in this study. Chapter 5 presents the research findings, based on detailed narrative of responses received from participants and analysis of these findings in a larger perspective through the Analytical Framework presented in Chapter 3. Chapter 6 concludes this research and outlines lessons that will be relevant for actors involved in identifying trafficked children within and outside Ghana.

CHAPTER 2 – CHILD TRAFFICKING AND THE CHALLENGES OF IDENTIFICATION

2.1 Introduction

The identification of child trafficking is just one of the elements of human trafficking, yet it is best understood if all the relevant aspects related to it are analyzed. Through an in-depth analysis of the literature on child trafficking, discourses on the identification of trafficked children and the efforts to combat it, I conclude that NGOs are crucial in identifying trafficked children and are primary actors in the Ghanaian context, but there is a dearth of literature on how they perform these roles. Also, I reveal that literature on the identification of trafficked children in Sub-Saharan Africa. I hope that my research helps to address this gap in the research.

2.2 Global – Child Trafficking Identification and Non-Governmental Organisations

The UN Palermo Protocol on human trafficking, established in 2000 (Gozdziak & Vogel, 2020) has been widely acknowledged and adopted by many countries in Africa. Article 3 of the Protocol defines human trafficking as:

(a) the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other

forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs (UN OHCHR, n.d., Article 3)

The trafficking of a children is treated as a special case by the Palermo Protocol, and this is elaborated in Article 13: “(c) *The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered trafficking in persons even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article; (d) “Child” shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.*” (UN OHCHR, n.d., Article 3). Simply put, the movement of any individual under eighteen years, with or without their consent, for the purpose of exploitation is considered to be child trafficking within the Palermo Protocol.

This definition presents distinct challenges when children are trafficked for labour. First, the definition of child trafficking stipulates that a purpose and not necessarily an occurrence of exploitation is a condition for child trafficking to occur. This implies that the mere movement of children – either within or outside their national borders – could be the starting point for identifying trafficked children. However, some scholars have argued that the movement of children under child trafficking is often similar to child labour migration (Mbakogu & Hanley, 2019) and aforementioned cultural practices in Africa. It is upon these challenges that some scholars argue that emphasis should be placed on the element of exploitation rather than the recruitment process (Puente, 2019). The emphasis on exploitation automatically incorporates all other forms of child exploitations. Therefore, such an approach must look at exploitations holistically and contextually to avoid tensions between the law and local perceptions.

Also, some scholars have criticized the Palermo Protocol and other related international conventions for recognizing all people under 18 years as one homogenous group, irrespective of their culture, environment, gender and age (Adhikari & Turton, 2019; Mbakogu & Hanley, 2019). This classification puts children into one big homogeneous group, frequently characterized by powerlessness, irrationality and dependency even though children often have at least some agency (Adhikari & Turton, 2019; Mbakogu & Hanley, 2019). Furthermore, researchers such as Dougnon (2011) have pointed out that in local communities in Mali, a child is not defined by chronological age as stipulated in the Palermo Protocol, and that individuals who are thirteen years and above often migrate for work without the approval or even knowledge of their parents. This goes to support the point that the experiences of children may be different and can therefore not be summed up into one homogenous group of helplessness.

The complexities of how child trafficking is defined also affect the statistics on its prevalence. It is not only difficult to estimate the number of trafficked children, but it is difficult to prosecute trafficking crimes, especially child trafficking for labour. The Trafficking-In-Persons Report by the United States (USDOS) estimates that, in 2019, a total of 118,932 trafficked people were identified, with about 11.6% of them trafficked for labour and majority for sexual exploitation (USDOS, 2020). Yet, labour trafficking made up only 8.6 percent of all trafficking prosecutions and 5.2 percent of all trafficking convictions. The trend here is that labour trafficking, which typically affects children in Ghana, is not only less detected but disproportionately less prosecuted and convicted in comparison with other forms of trafficking.

Causes of Child Trafficking

The most common factor highlighted by researchers as a driver of child trafficking is poverty (Adhikari & Turton, 2019; Truong & Angeles, 2005; Warria et al., 2015; West, 2016). Usually, parents in relatively poorer households are eager for a better life for themselves and their children. According to Truong & Angeles (2005), household interviews revealed that a significant number of families were ready to release their children because they did not have enough income to cater for the needs of all their family members. Some children also migrate to escape poverty without waiting for their families to give them out, only to find themselves in trafficking situations (Dougnon, 2011; Warria et al., 2015). The points raised by these researchers do not imply that poverty causes child trafficking directly, but rather poverty is the main factor that renders families more vulnerable to trafficking.

Besides poverty, there are numerous other factors that render families vulnerable to trafficking. West (2016) suggests that gender, race and lack of access to income and livelihood resources can increase one's vulnerability to trafficking. However, Adhikari & Turton (2019) emphasize that child trafficking is always evolving and therefore the factors that make families vulnerable is always changing. That notwithstanding, other additional risk factors include cultural norms, dysfunctional family or breakdown of the family (Truong & Angeles, 2005; Warria et al., 2015), unsafe and poor work environment, lack of education and inadequate birth registration systems (Adhikari & Turton, 2019). Mbakogu (2020) further elaborates in her study on Nigeria that the culture of respect and belief that parents cannot lead their children astray can also contribute to child trafficking.

The cultural practices of “fosterage”, “placement”, “kinship” and “apprenticeship”, described previously, are socially accepted norms in much of Sub-Saharan Africa that have been recognized to facilitate the socialization of children (Mbakogu & Hanley, 2019). However, due to poverty, these practices have also been commercialized and corrupted (Adesina, 2014; Truong & Angeles, 2005; Warri et al., 2015). The trafficking of children under the guise of these cultural practices is widespread in West Africa, especially in the areas of cocoa farming, fishing, small scale mining and domestic work (Truong & Angeles, 2005).

Another major facilitator of child trafficking, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa is the long-lasting impact of neoliberal economic policies of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). The SAPs, implemented by most countries in Africa in the 1980s through the influence of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), created severe economic hardship. As pointed out by Dougnon (2011) and Mbakogu (2020), the impacts of SAPs, as well as other factors including the corruption of government officials have increased poverty within these countries, especially the rural areas. This makes people living in these areas vulnerable and therefore more susceptible to child trafficking, either as a means of survival or falling prey to traffickers in their attempt to escape poverty.

Another major factor that facilitates child trafficking is weak judicial and legal frameworks. Researchers have mentioned that issues such as inadequate legislation on child trafficking increase the vulnerability of children to trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa (Rafferty, 2015; Truong & Angeles, 2005). Even where efforts are in place to combat child trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa, Adesina (2014) in her research on Nigeria asserts that,

those efforts are limited, and more emphasis is placed on international trafficking than internal trafficking, which most involves child trafficking for labour.

Responses to Child Trafficking: The Roles of Non-Governmental Organizations

The responses to child trafficking from international actors include the establishment of the UN Conventions against Transnational Organized Crime, the UN Palermo Protocol and their adoption in domestic law by various countries (Limoncelli, 2016). Other relevant conventions include optional protocols by the UN on the rights of the child, sale of the child, child prostitution, child pornography and involvement of children in armed conflict (USDOS, 2020). As mentioned earlier, these efforts are categorized under the 3Ps – protection, prosecution and prevention, with identification of trafficked children falling under protection. Evidence suggests that on a global scale, government and NGOs are becoming more effective at identification; it is estimated the identification of trafficked people increased by 40 percent in 2016 as compared to 2011 due to improved anti-trafficking institutions and legislature (UNODC, 2018).

In many countries, NGOs played important roles in bringing about these achievements. Limoncelli (2016) reveals that NGO involvement in combating human trafficking grew quickly since the 1990s and that these organizations have become major actors in the fight against trafficking worldwide. In Italy, NGOs influenced legislature on trafficking and provided assistance to trafficked people long before a national policy was adopted (Andreatta, 2015). In Bangladesh, Rahman (2018) reveals that NGOs undertake awareness programs, research, advocacy, and protection programs such as removal, investigation and rehabilitation of trafficked children. In some cases, NGOs also provide

legal assistance to victims and law enforcement officials during prosecution (Rafferty, 2019). In Africa, Kastro (2017) reveals that the fight against human trafficking has been undertaken almost exclusively by NGOs and international agencies. In Nigeria, Nwogu (2014) reveals that NGOs are involved in awareness creation on child trafficking, and rehabilitation and reintegration services for trafficked children. These efforts by NGOs reveal that they are crucial in combating child trafficking but not all of them are involved in the identification of trafficked children.

The roles of NGOs are not without criticisms. A common critique of the proliferation of NGOs since the 1980s and 1990s, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, is that NGOs emerged as a result of a) neoliberal SAPs imposed by the IMF and World Bank which resulted in major cuts to the budgets and capacities of governments, and b) neoliberal inspired shifts in the preferences of donors from funding governments to funding NGOs (Gary, 1996; Nega & Schneider, 2014). In order to attract funding, NGOs usually adopt international ideologies, typically neoliberal ideas, against national perspectives (Xaba, 2015). Besides being agents of neoliberalism, NGOs have inherent problems of not being able to address their missions fully (Nwogu, 2014; Xaba, 2015) and also of creating dependence on their skills and expertise in ways that perpetuate their existence (Xaba, 2015). In Mali, Dougnon (2011) reveals that parents regard the labelling of migration of older children as child trafficking by NGOs as both manipulation by the NGOs and an insult to the parents.

These criticisms suggest that it is only because the capacities of governments, especially in West Africa, have been systematically undermined by SAPs and donors have privileged NGOs, that NGOs have emerged as important actors in development practice,

including the identification of trafficked children in a number of these countries. However, regardless of one's perspective on the factors that led to the weakening of state capacities and the proliferation of NGOs in Sub-Saharan Africa and many other parts of the world, the contemporary reality is that NGOs have become very important actors in the fight against child trafficking. While state actors should be encouraged to accept responsibility and develop capacity to confront child trafficking, for the short to medium term future, NGOs will continue to be important actors in this struggle.

Identification of Child Trafficking

The process of identifying trafficked children is not specifically discussed in the UN Palermo Protocol but international agencies such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) provide some guidelines (Rafferty, 2019). UNICEF is concerned about the best interest of the child and suggests multi-stakeholder collaboration and appropriate measures to use in the rapid identification of child trafficking and to overcome challenges such as the presumption of age and the unwillingness of trafficked children to be identified. Academic studies on the identification of trafficked children are limited. Some of the studies do not distinguish processes for identifying trafficked children from that of adults (Andreatta, 2015). Furthermore, studies with emphasis on trafficked children have focused mostly on transnational trafficking (Gozdziak, 2010; Warria et al., 2014), sex trafficking (Rafferty, 2015) and the United States (Christenson, 2012; Gozdzia, 2010; Todres, 2016). Even though the process for identifying trafficked children is fragmented and ambiguous, these studies suggest that the identification of trafficking goes through three main steps: 1) the presumption of trafficking; 2) the removal of the potentially trafficked child from the exploited situation; and 3) determination of the status of the potentially trafficked child.

The presumption of a trafficking case can be initiated by anyone with information, ranging from the trafficked child to both government and non-governmental actors, but it is typically initiated by community actors, which include community members, NGOs and CSOs (Warria et al., 2014). Trafficked children rarely identify due to their unawareness of their trafficking situation, fear of their traffickers or their perceived benefits of the trafficking (Christenson, 2012; Rafferty, 2015; Warria et al., 2014). Regardless, presumed cases are usually reported to these government actors or to relevant NGOs.

The removal of the potentially trafficked children from their exploited situation is more widely addressed in policy and academic documents (IOM, 2017; USDOS, 2020; Warria et al., 2014). It is usually a collaborative step, involving the police and social services (Warria et al., 2014). This step involves moving trafficked children to a secure place where interviews are undertaken to determine their trafficking status. This step is also mentioned in child trafficking interventions in some Sub-Saharan African countries (Dougnon, 2011; Nwogu, 2014). Pullins (2016) discusses three main approaches for removal which include: 1) raid – a highly organized method that uses law enforcement agents to search and remove trafficked persons; 2) purchase – individual or organization pays the trafficker directly to remove trafficked persons; and 3) escape – trafficked persons are provided information and valuable resource to escape their exploitation. Pullins (2016) explains that the success of the approaches depends on thorough planning, a good understanding of the trafficking circumstance and availability of programs of assistance for trafficked persons upon their removal.

This removal of trafficked children has received some criticisms. Warria et al. (2014) indicate that older children can feel cheated for their labour rather than see

themselves as trafficked. Thus, they would prefer an improvement in their working conditions, rather than a complete removal from their condition. Pullins (2016) also mentions that the raid removal method sometimes leads to violent responses from traffickers and an inability to remove all potentially trafficked persons as some of them may have been moved away or escape during the raid. He further mentioned that effects of the removal process on trafficking communities and the trafficked persons are also unknown.

The last step, the determination of a trafficking status, is usually undertaken by the police and social services. Research suggests that the police and social services have different working guidelines that they use to interview potentially trafficked children to determine their trafficking status (Warria et al., 2014). Technically, the identification of child trafficking ends with this interview. If a case is determined as trafficking, further investigations on the background of the trafficked child are undertaken by the police. Afterwards, social services conduct a needs assessment of the child so the child can have access to assistance programs (Warria et al., 2014).

There are a lot of challenges in identifying trafficked children which encompasses the child and the environment they live in. One of the main challenges is low self-identification. In addition to some of the reasons raised under the presumption of trafficking, traffickers sometimes create an environment in which trafficked children become dependent on them, either by taking them to an unfamiliar environment or seizing their travel documents, in the case of transnational child trafficking (Rafferty, 2015). In some cases, trafficked children and community members do not trust law enforcement authorities due to their display of corruption and / or are afraid of being punished by such

authorities (Rafferty, 2015; Warria et al., 2014). In addition to the case of older children, self-identification is low when the children or their families actively consented to the trafficking situation (Gozdziak, 2008; Rafferty, 2015) and risk losing the economic benefits of the trafficking (Rafferty, 2015).

2.3 Ghana – Child Trafficking Identification and Non-Governmental Organisations

Ghana serves as a source, transit and destination for human trafficking, and majority of the trafficking involves internal trafficking of children for labour (Gyamfi, 2016; Sertich & Heemskerk, 2011; USDOS, 2020). About 10,000 children were estimated by aid organizations to be trafficked from the Northern part of the country to the Central and Southern Regions to work as head porters (kayaye) or domestic servants in homes (Sertich & Heemskerk, 2011). In the fishing industry, where trafficking is said to be widespread, a study by International Justice Mission (IJM) estimated that 57.6% of working children are trafficked (IJM, 2016).

Hamenoo & Sottie (2014) undertook a study on the experiences of child survivors of trafficking in the fishing industry. The study revealed that trafficked children engage in fishing for long and odd hours, often without adult supervision, as well as in fish selling and farming. Most of these children do not get medical attention, partly due to the absence of such facilities in the communities where they work. Even though some of these children had been in school before they were trafficked, they could not continue school during their exploitation. The trafficked children also dive into the Lake to disentangle nets and face the danger of hurting themselves from the numerous tree stumps in the Lake or even drowning. Physical abuse was also reported by almost half of the participants while the

sexual abuse of two girls was also detailed (Hamenoo & Sottie, 2014). The experiences of trafficked children are reinforced in other research where the dangerous conditions boys face on the lake were mentioned (Johansen, 2006; Osafo-Acquah & Banini, 2018; Sertich & Heemserk, 2011) as well as the exploitation of girls in domestic work and sometimes for sexual purposes (Sertich & Heemserk, 2011).

Perspectives on Child Trafficking in Ghana

Perspectives on child trafficking in Ghana highlight tensions between the law and local perceptions. Lawrence (2010) describes the initial legislative framework (2005 Human Trafficking Act of Ghana) for human trafficking in Ghana as a “blanket approach” due to its mirroring of the UN Palermo Protocol. In keeping with that, the 2005 Human Trafficking Act (HTA) of Ghana provides the meaning of child trafficking as:

(1) the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, trading or receipt of persons for the purpose of exploitation within and across national borders by (a) the use of threats, force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, the abuse of power or exploitation of vulnerability, or (b) giving or receiving payments and benefits to achieve consent. (2) Exploitation shall include at minimum induced prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the removal of organs. (4) where children are trafficked, the consent of the child, parents or guardian of the child cannot be used as defence in prosecution under the Act, regardless of whether or not there is evidence of abuse of power, fraud or deception on the part of the trafficker or whether the vulnerability of the child was taken advantage of. (“Human Trafficking Act”, pp. 3-4)

This concept of child trafficking does not adequately translate the phenomenon into local terms and the social-cultural context. In Ghana, the tradition of sending one's children to live with a relative or a friend is considered part of the kinship system and an avenue for children to learn social and life skills (Osafo-Acquah & Banini, 2018). In addition, the level of poverty and inability of many families to cover their basic needs, pushes some families to send some of their children to better-off households as a coping mechanism (Golo, 2016). Nevertheless, there are also reported cases where people deceive vulnerable families with promises of gifts and a better life for their children in order to recruit children into labour exploitation, especially in fishing on the Lake Volta (IJM, 2016; Johansen, 2006; Osafo-Acquah & Banini, 2018). These nuances are not adequately captured in the blanket definition of trafficking copied from the UN Palermo Protocol and reproduced in the original version of Ghana's HTA.

In 2010, Ghana amended the 2005 Human Trafficking Act (HTA) and clarified child trafficking to include "placement for sale, bonded placement, temporary placement, and placement as service where *“exploitation by someone else is the motivating factor shall also constitute trafficking”* (Hamenoo & Sottie, 2014, p. 104). Even with this clarification, there is still some misunderstanding between stakeholders combating child trafficking and the communities where it takes place. Golo (2016) mentions that practices such as child bonded labour, child servitude and child placement, which fall under child trafficking, are often not regarded by community members as illegal, except when children are sold or bought outright. It is also noteworthy that many families are not happy with sending their children away to work but see this practice as a survival strategy. They are therefore concerned about anti-child trafficking strategies by the government that do not provide

alternative reliable source of livelihood (Golo, 2016). In agreement with Osafo-Acquah & Banini (2018), it is important to be careful in distinguishing between these cultural practices and child trafficking.

Causes of Child Trafficking in Ghana

The majority of the research on child trafficking in Ghana mentions poverty as the fundamental cause of trafficking (IJM, 2016; Loh 2018; Okyere, 2017; Yadoglah, 2018). In order to reduce financial and caring responsibilities, poor parents give their children out to other families. However, such parents do not support the exploitation of their children, which transform the practice into child trafficking. That notwithstanding, in some cases, parents know that children are too young to work in certain jobs such as fishing, but they give out their children for such activities as a survival strategy (IJM, 2016). Often, there are no alternative income opportunities in the source communities, thereby making families vulnerable to traffickers (IJM, 2016; Loh, 2018).

There are also other factors that explain why child trafficking for labour is more prevalent within Ghana. First, the aforementioned cultural practices provide an avenue for sharing the economic and caring burden of large family sizes, single parents and orphaned children, as well as an opportunity for children to earn some life skills (IJM, 2016). However, these cultural practices are easily manipulated by traffickers to indulge children in forced labour. Secondly, children are easier to victimize and exploit. Yadoglah (2018) reveals that younger children cannot easily make their own decisions, thereby making it easier for parents and older family members to give them away to traffickers. The vulnerable nature of such children makes them appealing to traffickers and users who seek

to control them for exploitation of their labour (IJM, 2016). Therefore, younger children can face double victimization by their families and the traffickers. Besides these factors, other social factors such as the ignorance of families on the issue of trafficking and illiteracy have been reported to increase the vulnerability of households in terms of economic strength, which subsequently increases the victimization of children (Loh, 2018; Okyere, 2017; Yadoglah, 2018).

Responses to Child Trafficking: The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations

Ghana and other West African countries have employed legislative strategies to combat child trafficking by ratifying relevant international treaties, protocols and conventions and creating national laws, partly due to the aggressive influence of the US government and its global partners (Lawrence, 2010). Through this legislative approach, the 2005 Human Trafficking Act (HTA) of Ghana emerged. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP) was set up to administer the Act (Osafo-Acquah & Banini, 2018; Sertich & Heemserk, 2011). As a result of decentralization, the government has created Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) through the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MoLGRD) to provide services to grassroots communities. Each MMDA has a decentralized office of the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) which supports the MoGCSP to perform its anti-child trafficking duties (Sertich & Heemserk, 2011). Additionally, the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU) was set up in 2007 under the Ghana Police Service (GPS) to identify trafficked children and prosecute perpetrators (UNICEF, 2020; Ghana Police Service, nd).

An assessment by Sertich & Heemserk (2011) reveals that the government has made significant progress in creating education programs to prevent child trafficking and also prosecuted some trafficking cases, but protection of trafficked children was largely unaddressed due to the government's lack of resources. Moreover, the protection of trafficked children is the most expensive of the 3Ps due to the expensive cost of shelter and rehabilitation (Sertich & Heemserk, 2011). In this context, NGOs have tried to fill the gap, demonstrated by their contributions towards the protection of trafficked children as reflected in academic and policy documents (Sertich & Heemserk, 2011; USDOS, 2020).

In terms of the protection of trafficked children, NGOs work to identify, rehabilitate and reintegrate trafficked children with their biological families (Gyamfi, 2016). Prominent media agencies and international organizations in Ghana have published stories of the identification of trafficked children in the fishing industry, with emphasis on the removal of children from such harmful exploitations (Ghana News Agency, 2020b; IJM, 2020). NGOs are also involved in community awareness creation and education, economic empowerment livelihood interventions and training of government stakeholders (IJM, 2016). NGOs also collaborate with the government to fight child labour and trafficking in the cocoa farming industry (Osafo-Acquah & Banini, 2018).

NGOs in Ghana have also come under criticisms. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, critics assert that NGOs erroneously represent the practices of certain communities as trafficking due to poor consultation with traditional authorities and community members (Mensah & Okyere, 2019). Furthermore, similar to what was reported by Dougnon (2011) in Mali, other researchers in Ghana opine that NGOs exaggerate the trafficking situation by employing a crisis narrative in their communications to attract international funding

(Okyere, 2017). That notwithstanding, the documented harm caused to children found in exploitative situations of trafficking does make intervention necessary. NGOs will remain key players in these interventions, especially the identification of trafficked children, so far as the state lacks capacity and there is no shift in international funding priorities that have favored NGOs.

Identification of child trafficking in Ghana

Even though the roles of NGOs in Ghana are mentioned in academic literature, the news media and policy documents, there is very little analysis of how they undertake these roles, especially in the identification of trafficked children. In principle, the identification of trafficking is guided by the Legal Instrument (L.I) 2219 of the 2005 HTA of Ghana. Based on the L.I, the IOM, USDOS, the Government of Ghana and relevant CSOs in Ghana formulated standard operating procedures (SOP) document to combat human trafficking (IOM, 2017). The document provides detailed steps that should be followed to identify trafficked children in accordance with the national legislation on human trafficking in Ghana. The authors of the document assert that the SOP document is both contextual to the Ghanaian environment and internationally framed (IOM, 2017), thus highlighting the desire to align child trafficking intervention in Ghana to international perspectives.

According to the SOP document, the onus of initial suspicion of a trafficking case is placed on all citizens and institutions. However, all suspected cases must be reported to the police, who must keep the identity of informants confidential. The police must then inform potentially trafficked children of their rights and remove them from their exploitative condition regardless of their cooperation with the police. The removal of

trafficked children could be a collaborative process among the police, social welfare officers, CSOs, NGOs, other government professionals and community leaders but the police must lead. Upon removal of the child from exploitation, the police must provide immediate safety and medical referral. The police and the staff of the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) must then conduct preliminary screening and interview the potentially trafficked children to determine whether child trafficking has occurred.

Some research mention some of the challenges associated with identification of trafficked children in Ghana. Amissah (2019) reveals that potentially trafficked children may work in exploitative situations, but they and their families are often unconcerned about it if trafficked children can have a better life for themselves and their families. Also, the boundaries between child trafficking and other crimes against children such as child labour and abuse are blurred even though these other crimes carry weaker punishments and may disregard victim protection (Sertich & Heemserk, 2011). Other challenges include the unwillingness of communities to give out information on trafficking and difficulty in tracing trafficked children using tip-off information since their names may have been changed or their names are so common that they do not help to distinguish one child from another (for instance, many Ghanaians are named after the day of the week they were born, thus making such names very common) (Amissah, 2019).

2.4 Conclusion

The literature reveals the tensions between the current legislative framework on child trafficking and local perspectives. Besides, the diversity of factors that cause and exacerbate the phenomenon makes it difficult to combat it with a one-size fit-all approach,

especially in the context of Ghana and to some extent Sub-Saharan Africa, where the phenomenon is known to take place through familial networks and legitimate cultural practices, and typically affect children for labour purposes. NGOs are recognized as important actors in combating child trafficking and their role ranges from advocacy, prevention, protection and prosecution of trafficking cases.

In Ghana, NGOs are primary actors in identifying trafficked children. However, the literature on identification of trafficked children has focused heavily on government actors, the context of the USA and Europe, and transnational and sex trafficking. There is no focus on the identification of trafficked children in the Ghanaian context and Sub-Saharan Africa, despite the unique characteristics of this context. Research in this issue will help to address the gap in understanding about the role of NGOs in the identification of trafficked children and shed light on how identification strategies deal with labour trafficking of children, as well as grapple with the different perceptions of child trafficking in Ghana.

CHAPTER 3 – ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

A significant theme in the child trafficking discourse is that the phenomenon is complex and multifaceted. As such, factors that facilitate the phenomenon do not operate in isolation; they relate with each other. In the same way, the strategies for identifying trafficked children must be in line with the nature of child trafficking. Identification strategies must be cognizant of the wide range of factors that facilitate child trafficking, the relationships among these factors, and their impacts on children. Ecological Systems Theory (EST) is therefore an appropriate framework for this study. EST is a popular approach within child exploitation research because it considers the child, different levels of structures in his / her surroundings and how these structures relate and influence the development of the child (Christenson, 2012; Karikari, 2016; Hamenoo, Dwomoh & Dako-Gyeke, 2018). In this chapter, I summarize the EST and how it applies to my study.

3.2 The Ecological Systems Theory in Child Trafficking Studies

The Ecological Systems Theory (EST) is a holistic framework developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner to analyze individuals' interactions with five levels of systems in their environment (Barner, Okech & Camp, 2018, Christensen, 2016). These levels of systems include the following:

- 1) The Microsystem: This is the immediate setting or environment for individual lives, and includes the individual's family and community (Christensen, 2016). This system also places emphasis on the individual's characteristics (age, gender, perspective

and experiences); hence the individual is not a passive recipient of experiences in this setting but actively co-creates their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

2) The Mesosystem: These are relationship existing between or among the microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The experience between the individual and a microsystem can have an impact on another microsystem.

3) The Exosystem: This is the relationship that exists between or among different settings, of which the individual plays an active role in only one of the settings (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

4) The Macrosystem: This is the wider society in which individuals live, including belief systems, culture and ideologies. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). These are the systems at the national and global level (Steele, 2019), including national and international laws and policies, socio-economic status, race, and ethnicity among others, that can influence the microsystem.

5)The Chronosystem: This is the change of systems over time and may include historical and economic events (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

As pointed out by Christensen (2016), the EST understands an individual in the context of their immediate and broader global environment, the relationships that exist among the various levels of systems in their environment, and the influence of changes in these systems over time. Taking this approach does not only provide a holistic understanding of child trafficking but also highlights the need to include these various factors in interventions, including identification of trafficked children.

As such, some researchers have used the EST or a modified version of it to propose interventions and policies for combating child trafficking (Barner, Okech & Camp, 2018; Finigan-Carr et al., 2018; McIntyre, 2014; Sanchez & Pacquiao, 2018). The EST was useful in such research because the nature of child trafficking lends itself to the levels of systems identified in EST (Barner, Okech & Camp, 2018). Child trafficking can be exacerbated by issues in the child's environment such as poverty, dysfunctional family, socio-economic characteristics of a community, cultural practices and even globalization. These factors, can be categorized into the micro, meso and macrosystems of the EST.

The microsystem of the EST draws attention to the child's experiences, fears, involvement of his or her family in the trafficking and destructive coping abilities used during exploitation, all of which must be taken into consideration when coming up with intervention strategies (McIntyre, 2014). Furthermore, the child's age and gender are taken into consideration and the EST highlights the power of children to act as agents of change, rather than just being seen as powerless (McIntyre, 2014). This feature of the EST also reflects the aforementioned concerns raised by other authors such as Adhikari & Turton (2019) and Mbakogu & Hanley (2019) about viewing children as individuals with agency. Besides, Barner, Okech & Camp (2018) agree that one of the important attributes of the EST is its acceptance of the perspectives of researchers/practitioners within the multiple levels of analysis. This enables practitioners to come up with intervention strategies that are *“specifically tailored towards the unique constellations of contextual factors at play within a given family, geographic area, nation or population”* (pp. 142).

Some authors have raised criticisms against the rigid use of EST in child trafficking studies. Rigby & White (2013) suggest a dynamic and multi-centric use of EST to capture

both the source, transit and destination relationships of the child to better understand transborder trafficking complexities for better interventions. This means that all the geographic locations that a trafficked child might have moved through must be analyzed using the EST. However, in the context of internal trafficking such as in the case of Ghana, the children are mostly within Ghana and not far away from their source communities, compared to transborder trafficking. Thus, this critique is not so relevant in such cases, yet attention must be paid to dynamics within the communities and the country as a whole.

3.3 Application of the Ecological System Theory to this study

Ecological Systems Theory provides a holistic framework for exploring the challenges of identifying trafficked children in the Ghanaian fishing industry. This framework recognizes that frontline actors such as NGOs interact with other actors at national and global levels and also recognizes the interconnectedness of the trafficked child and their environment. Therefore, by applying EST to this study, I argue that a successful strategy for identifying trafficked children by NGOs hinges on a wide array of support from the child and various actors in their environment. These actors include the family, the community, community institutions such as schools, religious organization and other groups, the police, social workers, health practitioners, other NGOs, the judiciary, politicians, national anti-child trafficking organizations and their protocols, and international agencies and their protocols. Due to the nature of child trafficking, an approach that involves these actors will provide a comprehensive and holistic strategy for identifying trafficked children. I make use of all the five levels (micro, meso, exo, macro and chronosystem) of the EST in my study.

In my study, the microsystem allows for strategies to focus on the child's age, gender and experiences, thereby emphasizing the agency of children. Again, this attribute is important because these individual factors influence whether children, especially older children, see themselves as trafficked or not (Christenson, 2012; Gozdzia, 2008; Rafferty, 2015). Even when children do not see themselves as trafficked, the acknowledgement of their perspective by other actors establishes trust (McIntyre, 2014). The gender of the child is important since the type of work performed by each male and female child is often different. As indicated earlier, trafficked girls are mostly involved in domestic labour exploitation, which is more easily overlooked by other actors. An understanding of the child's perspective can therefore guide a suitable awareness process that also empowers the child. This level of analysis also contains essential actors for every child's development, such as family and school. Child trafficking in the Ghanaian fishing industry occurs primarily through familial contacts (Golo, 2016). It is therefore important to have information on who the children stay with and understand the roles and perceptions of these people towards child trafficking. Inclusion of children and their close units provides more information on the trafficking situation of children, thereby increasing the success of identifying such children.

In my study, the mesosystem of the EST applies to the interactions among the child, fishing communities around Lake Volta in Ghana and vulnerable communities that serve as the source of trafficked children. McIntyre (2014) asserts that due to the presence of communal values, priorities and socio-economic opportunities, children and their families function best when they are supported by the community. The community system also acts as an agent of change and can strengthen social support for children even when they belong

to families vulnerable to trafficking (McIntyre, 2014). To echo the recommendations of other authors for identifying trafficked children, NGOs must take note of community systems in order to come up with suitable strategies to identify trafficked children. The involvement and support of community actors such as community or opinion leaders and community organizations such as churches, schools and clubs play important roles in the identification of trafficked children.

The exosystem applies to anti-child trafficking actors who are not too far away from the child's immediate environment, the relationships of such actors with the child's immediate environment and the effects on identifying trafficked children. As demonstrated by Warria et al. (2014), organizations such as the police, social services and NGOs play important role in the identification of trafficked children as they have become the local authorities for addressing child trafficking. Thus, this level of analysis includes how the strategies employed by NGOs relate with and involve government organizations such as social services, the police and the judiciary among others. This relationship could be in the form of perceptions of child trafficking among the various actors, their roles, their practices and procedures in supporting the identification of trafficked children.

The macrosystem applies to the broader societal norms, beliefs and culture that affect the nature of child trafficking and the identification of trafficked children. As previously indicated, the concept of child trafficking is contentious and varies within and among communities in Ghana on one hand and the Ghanaian law on the other (Golo 2016; Osafo-Acquah & Banini, 2018). The macrosystem also includes international policies due to their aforementioned influence on formulation of national laws on trafficking

(Lawrance, 2010). Thus, the macrosystem reveals how NGOs' identification strategies expose perceptions, role and support of the national and international stakeholders.

Since child trafficking is dynamic and known to be exacerbated by historical events such as the implantation of SAPs in Ghana, the chronosystem in my study applies to how NGOs factor in changes in the nature of trafficking and historical factors into their identification strategies. In terms of the dynamic nature of trafficking, former trafficked children are also identified as important actors in the protection and prevention of trafficking due to their familiarity with trafficking processes and their ability to empower other children trapped in exploitation (Barner, Okech & Camp, 2018). Inclusion of these survivors and their perspectives could provide significant lessons for NGO's strategies.

3.4 Conclusion

The levels of systems proposed by the EST provides a holistic framework for analyzing child trafficking and identifying trafficked children. It reveals the significant actors that can affect strategies used by NGOs. EST also encourages collaboration among various actors including the child and those in their surroundings as recommended in child trafficking research. Moreover, because the EST takes into account the environment of the child, it makes sure that the study is analyzed contextually, taking into account both the legal and local perceptions of the concept of child trafficking in the Ghanaian fishing industry.

CHAPTER 4 – METHODS

4.1 Introduction

Due to the complexities of child trafficking and limited information on how identification is carried out in Ghana, I employed qualitative methods to collect data from staff of NGOs and Department of Social Welfare (DSW) in Ghana, who are working to identify trafficked children. I then make use of the grounded theory data analysis strategy to analyze the data to answer my main research questions: how NGOs identify trafficked children, the perceptions of child trafficking and how NGOs manoeuvre between the different perceptions of child trafficking among domestic and international actors.

4.2 Qualitative Research Methodology

Qualitative research methods are preferred for exploring topics about which there is little information (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Qualitative methods also aim to understand contextual factors and circumstances that affect the actions of people and institutions (Karikari, 2016). Qualitative methods include interviews, observations, focus group discussions and documentations (Atkinson & Hammersly, 1994). Particularly, the semi-structured interview is known to encourage natural development of conversations and is therefore useful for sensitive topics such as child trafficking (Ashton, 2014). More importantly, qualitative research methodology is appropriate for capturing the nuances of a complex phenomenon like child trafficking, and especially where there is limited information available, such as in the identification strategies used by NGOs in Ghana. Again, the EST approach, by which this research is analyzed, calls for detailed and nuanced understanding, which is possible with a qualitative research methodology.

4.3 Participants

This study focuses on the experiences and perspectives of staff who work with NGOs combating child trafficking around the Lake Volta in Ghana. My research requires that participants have substantial practical experience and knowledge of the subject matter. Therefore, I used purposive sampling to identify NGOs and government social services in Ghana which are combating child trafficking, specifically those operating around the Lake Volta and involved in the identification of trafficked children. Prospective organizations were therefore identified from the Volta Region (recently separated into Volta and Oti Region), Eastern Region, Ashanti Region, Bono East Region (recently carved out from the Brong Ahafo Region) and Northern Region (recently separated into Savannah and Northern Region). Appendix A is a map that shows these regions and their location in relation to the Lake Volta in Ghana. After identifying relevant NGOs and social services, convenience sampling and snowball sampling techniques were used to select personnel from NGOs and social services who showed interest in the study.

It would have been useful to also include other stakeholders in the research, such as fishing communities, trafficking survivors and local government and non-government actors; however, due to the global pandemic, this research could only be undertaken virtually, which made it impossible to engage with people without internet access. I therefore relied on government social service staff to corroborate the information from NGOs, since they work together to combat trafficking in districts in Ghana. Government social service staff were well positioned to explain the concerns of NGOs strategies since they can reflect on their professional knowledge and experiences from identifying trafficked children.

NGO participants were recruited by email and follow-up phone calls when responses were delayed. The contact details of NGOs participants were collected from the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) document to combat trafficking in Ghana. Only one organization, Love Justice International (LJI), was included through referrals from other NGOs. Recruitment of participants from the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) started with those personnel I had worked with in Ghana, who suggested and introduced me to other district personnel working on the subject matter. Recruitment of these participants followed the same format as NGOs personnel. Research participants are presented in a table in Appendix B. Also, each participant was assigned a pseudonym to ensure anonymity in the study as shown in a table in Appendix C.

4.4 Data Collection

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and therefore allowed the content of the interview to be adapted during the conversations. Based on the questions, the interviews are categorized into three parts as follows.

1) Basic information: This part reveals how each organization contributes to the identification of trafficked children and the specific role of each interviewee in the process. To ensure diversity in responses, I interviewed two staff from each NGO, with the exception of one NGO where I could only interview one person. Selected participants from NGOs and social services were in the position of director and/or directly involved in the identification of trafficked children. Interview questions started with the role and sectors of the organization in child trafficking, followed by the daily responsibilities of interviewees at their organization.

2) Identification strategies information: Using information from chapters 2 and 3, the questions in this part of the interview focused on how NGO strategies consider the children's perspective, their families and the interactions between them as recognized by the microsystem of the EST. In the same way, I encouraged interviewees to elaborate on how their strategies involve the trafficking communities and their related local structures, as suggested by the mesosystem level of EST. I also asked questions about how strategies involve government stakeholders like the police, the social welfare department and any other relevant stakeholders outside the child's immediate fishing community as required of the exosystem. A significant issue raised in literature is awareness or understanding of what child trafficking means. This issue cuts across the various systems in EST. Therefore, interview questions also asked questions about how NGOs understand child trafficking and how they perceive other actors, from the child to how the international level also understand the phenomenon.

3) Opinion-based information: This part of the interview is a critical reflection by interviewees about what could be done to improve the success of strategies used by NGOs to identify trafficked children. Questions focused on the larger identification processes, rather than just the specific strategies used by a particular NGO.

In total, I completed 14 interviews with staff from five NGOs and five district social welfare departments around Lake Volta in Ghana from August to October 2020). Appendix C shows the list of interviews and dates conducted. These interviews took place virtually and as such interviewees and I chose a quiet and safe space in our respective locations for confidentiality purposes. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

4.5 Data Analysis

I analyzed the collected data by qualitative coding, informed by the grounded theory data analysis method. The grounded theory is known to be useful for conceptual building of a phenomenon when little or no pre-existing ideas of the phenomenon exist (Khan, 2014). Therefore, I first coded responses from participants using pre-determined concepts that I reviewed in Chapter 2 and the EST framework in Chapter 3. Afterward, I re-read the responses to code other responses that were missed and to identify significant data that answered the research questions. Then I identified direct quotations to support emerging themes and findings.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

Before collecting data for my research, the Social Science and Humanities Research Ethics Board of Dalhousie University reviewed this study in June and July 2020, in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans. I received final approval on July 9, 2020 (REB #: 2020-5187), covering the period of July 09, 2020 to July 09, 2021. I ensured that the research guidelines were followed in the recruitment of participants, data collection and analysis, I explained the research process to participants and their anonymity was ensured.

I have also worked with and continue to periodically provide technical assistance to one of the participating NGOs, in their child trafficking interventions. My experiences with this NGO include building relationships with vulnerable communities, educating these communities on child trafficking and identifying trafficked children. Through these experiences, I have heard and faced many of the challenges with the identification of child

trafficking. I therefore entered into this research with the hope of revealing the nuances involved in the identification process and enabling the sharing of best practices among anti-child trafficking actors.

My professional experience therefore had an impact on this research. Thus, not only was I mindful of the influence of my positionality, especially potential biases towards the perspectives and relevance of NGOs, but I was also transparent to participants about my professional experiences and all the motives behind my research. To mitigate these potential biases and influences, I recruited participants for my study through personnel of higher authority in each organization. Also, I systematically coded responses from participants using my laid-out methods and I explicitly mentioned areas where findings or analysis were from my professional experience. On the other hand, due to my positionality, I had relatively less difficulty in connecting with and recruiting participants from both NGOs and DSW. I was also able to ask detailed and precise follow-up questions.

CHAPTER 5 – DISCOURSE AND IDENTIFICATION STRATEGIES OF CHILD TRAFFICKING

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the findings and discussions of my study in accordance with existing literature and the Ecological Systems Theory (EST) Analytical Framework. I reveal that the roles of NGOs in child trafficking identification in Ghana are significant, and even extend to solely mandated roles of government actors. I also reveal that the perceptions of child trafficking by NGOs is similar to government actors (the police and social services) but not in sync with local perceptions and some political actors. In maneuvering among these different perceptions to identify trafficked children, NGOs have extended exploitation of children under child trafficking to also include other factors. They also engage in various forms of partnerships with communities and government actors, demonstrating the relevance of the immediate and broader environment of the child under the EST.

The identification processes of NGOs are fraught with challenges but provision of assistance to trafficked children and to some extent families and communities have made NGOs more successful with their approaches. The EST is then utilized to examine these challenges and the successes of the identification process as well as to reinforce the need for a more holistic identification strategy that is child-centric, accommodates local perceptions and addresses the drivers of child trafficking.

5.2 Organizations

Participating organizations include five NGOs and five Department of Social Welfare Districts around the Lake Volta in Ghana. NGOs in this study include Free the Slaves (FTS), Right to be Free (RTBF), Challenging Heights (CH), Mercy Project (MP) and Love Justice International (LJI). Each of these organizations are based in or operate in Ghana with a focus on internal child trafficking in the fishing industry around the Lake Volta. All the NGOs receive external funding for their operations, but they did not reveal the source of their funding. Hence, none of the NGOs are funded by the government, similar to other Sub-Saharan countries such as Nigeria (Nwogu, 2014).

CH and MP focus solely on child trafficking in the Ghanaian fishing industry, but the remaining NGOs also focus on other forms of trafficking. Specifically, RTBF focuses on trafficking of women to the Gulf Countries. Also, LJI focuses on all forms of trafficking that transit through neighbouring borders of Ghana (Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso and Togo). Lastly, FTS focuses on all forms of trafficking in Ghana. In line with their main focus, CH and MP are the only NGOs that have continuously worked in the child trafficking sector. The other NGOs have worked in the sector intermittently as a result of donor priorities and funding opportunities. An NGO staff commented that: *“usually the funding cycle determines their area of focus, whether it is on children or adults”* (Personal Communication, 8 September 2020). Geographically, NGOs’ operations extend beyond just regions surrounding the Lake Volta because the source communities of trafficked children are sometimes far away from the lake.

A common approach by the NGOs in protecting trafficked children is to detect, remove, rehabilitate and reintegrate them with their families, but the processes involved vary. Law enforcement actors play a role in the removal of trafficked children from exploitation, but they are more conspicuous and active in the strategies of some NGOs than others. All NGOs remove trafficked children after their exploitation, except LJI, which intercepts trafficked children at transit points before such children are exploited. Community partnership is common with all NGOs' strategies and usually involves community awareness programs on child trafficking, information gathering on trafficking cases and livelihood empowerment programs.

The Department of Social Welfare (DSW) of every district in Ghana is mandated to oversee all child protection activities in their respective district and therefore collaborate with NGOs. The DSW also identify trafficked children. However, all DSW staff acknowledged that due to inadequate funding, they are limited to areas that are easily accessible in terms of transport and cost. Thus, they have not been as successful as NGOs since child trafficking usually takes place in remote and poorly accessible fishing communities. A DSW staff commented that: *“most of the identification is done by NGOs, they are the forefront. But we identify those within our catchment areas, those communities that are not far-reaching and those that are happening within the town”* (Personal communication, 11 September 2020). In one district, the DSW is at the forefront of the identification process but it is heavily funded by an NGO to do so.

Altogether, NGOs usually play a lead role in identifying trafficked children in the Ghanaian fishing industry as confirmed by the DSW. The end goals of NGOs are to detect and remove trafficked children from exploitation through varied collaborative efforts with

similar and distinct challenges. Even though NGOs do not play a lead role in the identification process of some countries, these end goals of NGOs are shared by many anti-child trafficking efforts in Sub-Saharan Africa and other parts of the world (Andreatta, 2014; Nwogu, 2014; Dougnon 2011; Rafferty, 2019). The variety of strategies are good lessons for other NGOs and anti-child trafficking efforts in Ghana and Sub-Saharan countries with similar context.

5.3 Discourse of Child Trafficking

NGOs and DSW staff agree to the concept of child trafficking as enshrined in national laws (2005 Human Trafficking Act of Ghana). However, they place more emphasis on the perceived negative consequences of child trafficking on children to highlight the illegality of the phenomenon. This implies that the mere movement of children from the household of their parents or guardians to another household as depicted in cultural practices of fosterage, kinship, placement and apprenticeship does not necessarily imply trafficking. However, the exploitation that accompanies the movement of children or such an intended purpose is what qualifies it as trafficking. One of the participants mentioned that, *“we (the participant and alluding to many Ghanaian adults) all stayed with our uncles and aunties, but they did not treat us differently from their own children...Second, they gave us the opportunity to go to school”* (Personal Communication, 2 October 2020). Thus, these cultural practices are widespread in Ghana and are not admonished or labelled as child trafficking by NGOs or the DSW, except when children are exploited. This is in line with the assertion that cultural practices could be manipulated to exploit children, hence leading to child trafficking (Adesina, 2014; Osafo-Acquah & Banini, 2018; Truong & Angeles, 2005).

According to participants, situations perceived to be exploitative include when children: 1) work in hazardous environment; 2) were recruited through deception (not disclosing that children will be actively fishing and lying about financial benefits); 3) are treated worse than the children of whoever they stay with; 4) are not offered opportunities for development such as formal education and 5) are restricted in terms of their movement and their decision to return to their parents/guardians. All NGO and DSW staff perceive fishing as a hazardous activity, and therefore, the movement of children from their parents to another under any of the cultural practices to engage in fishing is deemed as child trafficking. However, the engagement of children by their parents in fishing is widespread, with minimal efforts by the NGOs and DSW to tackle it. This creates the assumption that the use of children in fishing is part of a culturally legitimate practice of child work. Since identification is primarily based on engagement of children in fishing, it becomes difficult to distinguish exploitations within child trafficking from legitimate cultural practices. To overcome this, NGO staff mentioned that they consider the other criteria (criteria 2-5 previously indicated) to support their perception of child trafficking.

Regardless of these clarifications, NGO and DSW staff perceive a variety of perceptions of child trafficking among and within fishing communities. First, some community members perceive child trafficking as a legitimate cultural practice. Community members who have not been sensitized on child trafficking share this perception. However, there are some community members who are aware of the phenomenon but still justify those practices as culturally legitimate because it has been their “normal way of life”. Typically, such individuals may have gone through the same process when they were young and therefore do not see anything wrong in doing same

when they are older. One DSW staff commented that: “*so for them (community members), it (child trafficking) is a way of life; they were trafficked and now they are old, and they cannot do most of the activities (fishing activities), so they bring the young ones in to now work for them*” (Personal Communication, 26 September 2020). These findings are in line with Dougnon (2011) who mentioned that what NGOs perceive as child trafficking in Mali is seen by the locals as their way of life since colonial times, where young people migrate to sell their labour for a better life.

Closely related to the first perception is the view of child trafficking as a way of survival by communities, including communities that NGOs have engaged in extensive public education on child trafficking. The participants perceive that vulnerable and poor families in source communities feel they have no option but to give out some of their children. This helps them to reduce their care and financial responsibilities. Such families are aware of the negative experiences that children go through, but it is a survival strategy to cope with desperate circumstances. This is in line with research by Adesina (2014) in Nigeria. Such perception is also shared by some community members in the destination communities, who believe that they support their extended family and other vulnerable families in the source communities as well as help to develop the work skills of the children involved, who later ensure of the fishing industry.

Lastly, the participants revealed that child trafficking mostly takes place through familial networks. This is in line with research in Nigeria and other Sub-Saharan countries that reveal that traffickers operate mostly through flexible and familial networks (Adesina, 2014; Mbakogu, 2020; Troung & Angeles, 2005). However, in some cases, children end up with total strangers, yet these strangers go through the family network in order to have

access to the children. The participants perceive that when strangers and to some extent family friends are involved, they tend to see trafficking from a purely business perspective. Here, children are expected to work to pay off monies given to their families. One participant commented that: *“they (such community members) have their own children in school and what they need is free or cheap labour”* – (Personal Communication, 15 September 2020b). Again, when total strangers are involved, they sometimes re-traffic the children to others in order to make more profit from the child’s labour. Instances like this are referred to some of the NGOs as slavery since they see the children as being sold outright (Personal Communication, 15 September 2020b; 25 September 2020b). This perception is in line with Kara (2009) who asserts that trafficking is similar to any business which aims to make maximum profits, leading to the exploitation of trafficked persons.

Beyond the fishing communities, some NGO and DSW staff mentioned that politicians are usually interested in protecting their votes and therefore sometimes protect perpetrators of child trafficking from prosecution. An NGO’s staff commented that: *“Some politicians (Member of Parliaments and Directors of Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies) don’t accept it because they have to protect the people who are their party organizers and party secretaries, so if they are arrested, it is going to go against their party”* (Personal Communication, 15 September 2020b). However, it seems the challenge is mainly with arresting and prosecuting suspected traffickers and not necessarily identifying trafficked children. In that regard, even NGO and DSW staff confirmed that arrest and prosecution of child traffickers is highly controversial, so they mainly focus on removing the trafficked children from exploitation.

NGOs and the DSW see child trafficking as a crime but they are also cognizant of the multiple perceptions of fishing communities and the lack of support from political actors indicated earlier. Whereas NGOs and the DSW see child trafficking as illegal, there is an alternative perspective among fishing communities that simply view the engagement of children in fishing as appropriate under legitimate cultural practices, coping with poverty and sustaining the fishing industry. Community members with these alternative perspectives are more likely to resist the concept of child trafficking or any attempt by NGOs to identify trafficked children. The variety of perceptions within the fishing communities are similar to findings of Golo (2016) in his research on fishing communities in Ghana. These perceptions partly influence NGOs strategies to identify trafficked children, depicted in the next subsections.

5.4 Child Trafficking Identification

5.4.1 The Meaning of Identification

Regardless of the perceptions of community members, NGOs presume child trafficking as a crime and hence the need to protect trafficked children from it. Almost half of the NGO staff described identification as only the presumption of a trafficking case and excluded the removal of children from exploitation and determination of the status of a trafficking case as separate activities. This labelling does not have any effect on their strategies. Hence, those separate activities by such NGOs are all analyzed together as identification strategies.

5.4.2 Presumption of child trafficking

The presumption is the first process of identifying trafficked children and it implies the initial recognition of a trafficking case, although it is not known for certain. It usually involves education on the phenomenon in trafficking-prone areas and gathering of information. NGOs then verify such information to be sure of the suspected cases before moving on the next step of removing the trafficked children.

Education on child trafficking

Creating awareness on child trafficking goes hand-in-hand with gathering information on suspected trafficking cases. According to NGOs staff, sometimes one comes before the other, but all education programs in communities (source, transit and destination communities) are expected to help create more awareness and encourage tip-offs by community members to NGOs on suspected cases. A significant aspect of the education focuses on indicators of child trafficking. The most common and significant indicators suggested by NGOs staff include:

1. physical marks on children that show that they have been physically abused or injured from fishing activities.
2. children not attending school at all or only infrequently.
3. children being treated differently from other children in their household
4. children found working on the lake during school hours, early morning, late evenings and bad weather.
5. children in transit who are dressed differently than the children in that environment.

6. children looking quiet or isolated from other children or the adults that they are travelling with.

This finding already appears in the trafficking literature for those working with or teaching around human/child trafficking such as Simich, Goyen, Powell & Mallozzi (2014), Todres (2016) and UNICEF (2006). However, these roles are typically undertaken by government agencies but in the case of Ghana, NGOs play these roles.

The participants mentioned that both trafficked boys and girls are identified using these criteria but there is more focus on children found fishing on the lake. This leads to the under-identification of trafficked girls because they usually perform domestic duties and processing of fish at home. One NGO and DSW staff acknowledged that there is an under-identification of girls even though exploitation of girls is sometimes worse than boys (Personal Communication, 15 September 2020b; 26 September 2020). They mentioned that girls are usually given out to men or older trafficked children as wives as part of a strategy to control such males to work for the traffickers or sell their fish to the traffickers. By the time an NGO is able to identify a trafficked girl, she may have already given birth and appear to be physically mature. This complicates the circumstances of such girls and usually dissuades NGOs from identifying them as trafficked. Whereas the roles of girls in the Ghanaian fishing industry have been highlighted in some research such as the report by International Justice Mission (IJM) (2016), the under-identification of girls as a result of their domestic roles is missing. However, these findings are in line with Puente (2019) who asserted that, domestic work is usually unrecognized in child trafficking discourse, thereby affecting girls the most, since they mostly undertake this role.

Gathering Information

The multiplicity of perspectives of child trafficking makes gathering information on potential cases cumbersome and dangerous, especially in destination communities. However, information gathering is a vital step in identifying trafficked children. Thus, NGOs employ a variety of methods and sources, which are discussed as follows, in accordance with the geographic points of trafficking (source, transit and destination communities).

Source community Engagement: Three out of the five NGOs educate, partner with and form committees in the source communities. These committees, usually known as Child Protection Committees (CCPCs), are made up of a variety of community leaders. They receive periodic training on child trafficking so they can gather information on suspected cases for the NGOs. The CCPCs have immense knowledge of their communities and sometimes receive information from teachers and the classmates of trafficked children. In some cases, parents of trafficked children, especially those whose children have not been returned to them after the duration of the arrangement with the trafficker, contact NGOs to provide relevant information. An NGO staff mentioned that they provide financial support to CCPCs to enable them to undertake this task (Personal Communication, 25 September 2020a). Authors such as Warria et al. (2014) and Rafferty (2019) have highlighted the importance of educating community members on child trafficking but the use of money or gifts to motivate community members to trafficking cases is not mentioned.

Destination Community Engagement: Four out of the five NGOs usually avoid working directly in destination communities because they feel that there is a risk to their

physical safety in these communities. Staff of these NGOs mentioned that they use indirect approaches to gather information in these communities. These include random visits to communities to discuss issues other than child trafficking to discreetly gather information on suspected cases (Personal Communication, 25 September, 2020a). Sometimes, the staff in these NGOs join another NGO that is implementing a non-child trafficking project in the community to gather information (Personal Communication, 25 September, 2020a). This approach by NGOs highlights the resistance of the concept of child trafficking by local communities. Warria et al. (2014) highlights the need for the concept of trafficking to be in line with community perceptions and trends but this is clearly missing in NGOs awareness at destination communities.

Staff of the remaining NGOs mentioned that they develop long-lasting relationships with destination communities through a community fish farming project (an approach they refer to as the community partnership approach) (Personal Communication, 17 September 2020a). This method is missing from literature but was hailed by the staff of the NGO as allowing safe access to the destination communities to form committees, similar to what is done in source communities, recruit informants and freely conduct observations to gather information on trafficked children. All the NGOs working in destination communities have found informants and children to be helpful in giving out information. Similar to source communities, informants are usually financially motivated as an NGO staff commented that: *“so we (the NGO) say that if there is something like this (child trafficking) going on in your (informant’s) community and you can support us to get this information, we are going to give something like GHC 20.00 (approximately CAD 4.37 as at 16 Feb 2021) to buy mobile airtime or soap”*

Transit Community Engagement: Staff of one NGO mentioned that they monitor for trafficking cases at transit points in Ghana, such as the Dambai ferry transit point in the Krachi East Municipality of Oti Region (Personal Communication, 25 September 2020a; 25 September, 2020b). While vehicles wait to load onto the ferry for crossing, they observe travellers for trafficking indicators. The NGO also provides training for important transit actors such as bus drivers, ferry operators and hotel managers so they can detect cases and report to them. This particular type of engagement is missing in literature in Ghana since the identification of children whiles in transit is typically carried out by the Police. Ghana News Agency (2020a) and Abbey (2021) reports such activities by the police. NGOs activities are therefore expanding to even cover typical known roles of government actors.

Other Engagements: This includes referral of suspected cases to NGOs by the DSW or other government actors due to government actors' limited funding to remove trafficked children from exploitation and provide assistance programs (Personal Communication, 11 September 2020; 17 September 2020b). Some of the NGOs also mentioned that they carry out a desk study and also utilize information from former trafficked children to identify others or to update their knowledge on how best to find trafficked children (Personal Communication, 8 September 2020). This in line with recommendation by Warria et al. (2014) on the identification of trafficked children.

Initial verification of presumed cases

Initial verification of presumed cases of trafficking is undertaken before potentially trafficked children are removed from exploitation. The geographic point where information on trafficking was gathered informs how such information is verified.

Verification of Information from Source Communities: Information from this source is usually verified through investigations by the NGO staff. They may go to destination communities in any capacity, except as NGOs, to discreetly gather information on the specific location of the trafficked children and the traffickers, and their aliases if necessary (Personal Communication, 17 August 2020; 2 October 2020). Verification is also undertaken by informants in destination communities if they are available (Personal Communication, 2 October 2020).

Verification of Information from Destination Communities: NGOs who do not use the community partnership approach verify information by interrogating the potentially trafficked children if there is an opportunity. When it is difficult to go to the communities, such NGOs rely solely on the information from their informants (Personal Communication, 25 September 2020a). On the other hand, NGOs who use the community partnership approach interrogate the potentially trafficked child, the trafficker and some community members (Personal Communication, 17 September 2020a). Furthermore, they interrogate and seek the consent of supposed parents of trafficked children before finally presuming a trafficking case. To get the approval of parents, the NGO explain the exploitative circumstances of the trafficked children to their parents and reveal plan for assisting them upon removal of the trafficked children. This is usually a long process and sometimes impossible when the traffickers or parents do not cooperate.

Verification of Information from Transit Communities and other sources: Here, NGOs interrogate both the suspected trafficked child and the trafficker to finally presume a trafficking case (Personal Communication, 25 September 2020a). In the case where

information was gathered through other forms of engagement, verification is the same as any of the already discussed methods that is mainly used by the NGO.

All the five NGOs reported that they provide documents of final suspected cases of child trafficking to the DSW of the particular district of the suspected cases. Since the DSW are in charge of child protection, their approval is needed to facilitate collaboration with other government actors and to intercept trafficked children. Some participants mentioned that the DSW initially joined them in the verification process (Personal Communication, 17 September 2020a). However, after NGOs have worked with the DSW for some time and have built trust, the NGOs undertake the whole process and only submit reports to the DSW. The NGOs seem to presume trafficking cases by themselves in partnership with communities and hardly involve government actors, except when the NGOs need approval to remove potentially trafficked children from exploitation.

However, there is an exception, staff of one of the NGOs mentioned that they have a strong partnership with the DSW and therefore the presumption of trafficking cases is thoroughly discussed with and supervised by the DSW Director (Personal Communication, 25 September 2020b). According to the staff of this NGO and confirmed by the DSW staff, this process facilitates a healthy collaboration with the DSW and success in the subsequent identification processes (Personal Communication, September 25 2020b; 26 September 2020).

The findings here are different from what has been reported in literature by Warria et al. (2014) and in the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) document by IOM (2017) to combat child trafficking in Ghana. These documents mention that whenever a case is

suspected, the police and social services must be involved right away and as such the initial verification of a presumed case by NGOs is not necessary. This approach by NGOs demonstrates a lack of coordination between NGOs and government organizations, a situation that seems to be widespread even when government organizations take the lead in identifying trafficked children, as reported in research on Nigeria (Adesina, 2014).

5.4.3 Removal of Trafficked Children from Exploitation

According to NGO staff, the removal of trafficked children from exploitation is usually a collaborative process among NGOs, the DSW, the police and sometimes other anti-human trafficking actors such as the Navy. The nature of this collaboration is varied and influenced by the method of presumption of trafficking case, hence leading to different outcomes. Generally, all the NGOs prepare a list of suspected cases with basic information such as names and aliases of the suspected trafficked children and traffickers, ages of the children, their location, and biological parents' information and the amount exchanged during trafficking if available. Due to the heavy cost involved in the removal process, NGOs staff mentioned that they prefer to identify groups of at least five to fifteen children before they undertake this step, except in the case of trafficked children in transit. A team is then assembled which includes NGO's staff and sometimes the staff of the already indicated actors.

One of the approaches used under this process is the "Raid" method. This approach is a targeted swoop by an NGO's removal team at suspected trafficking in destination communities without the knowledge of the community members (Personal Communication, 17 August 2020; 15 September 2020b; 17 September 2020b; 19

September 2020). This approach is well organized, includes a significant number of law enforcement agents and is mainly used by NGOs who gather information from source communities. This approach is identified by Pullins (2016) as the most common removal method. The reason for this approach is mainly to protect the removal team from the violent reaction of community members, ensure that trafficked children are removed even without the traffickers' approval and arrest traffickers if necessary (Personal Communication, 15 September 2020b).

The arrest of traffickers under this approach and subsequent prosecution have been encouraged in both Ghanaian and international policies and research as important in the fight against child trafficking (IOM, 2017; Osafo-Acquah & Banini, 2018; USDOS, 2020). However, some of the NGO and DSW staff mentioned that such an approach makes child trafficking more invisible because it deters community members from giving out information and pushes traffickers to move children to more remote areas or engage them during hours that are difficult for NGOs to spot them (Personal Communication, 17 August 2020; 11 September 2020). Again, Pullins (2016) recommends a good understanding of the trafficking circumstance when using this approach, but NGOs are not able to undertake a thorough verification of all presumed cases before the removal.

Second is the community partnership method. This is in line with the community partnership approach of gathering information in destination communities. Here, community members are made aware of the date of removal of trafficked children from exploitation by NGOs and law enforcement agents and the DSW are usually not involved (Personal Communication, 17 September 2020a). The rescue hinges on the partnership and support of the community leaders. However, when a trafficker is unwilling to release a

potentially trafficked child upon persuasions, then the police are discreetly involved. Staff of the NGO that uses this method commented that: *“So we (NGO) don’t usually like going with the police except at the last stage where we are fully convinced that someone is a trafficked child and it is becoming clear that we will not be able to rescue the child, then we can go in with the police. But even with that, the police will not be in their uniform”* (Personal Communication, 17 September 2020a). According to an NGO staff, a community approach that provides some assistance to destination communities was common in the past when there was no legal instrument to combat child trafficking in Ghana (Personal Communication, 17 August 2020). The advantages and disadvantages of such an approach, which is still being used by one NGO is missing in literature.

The last approach is the “Patrol” method. In this approach, NGOs presume a trafficking case and rescue at the same spot (Personal communication, 25 September 2020a). It is a rapid identification process and particularly used for identification at transit points. Staff of NGOs that use the other approaches mentioned that they seldomly use the patrol approach as a supplement (Personal Communication, 15 September 2020b; 17 September 2020a). When this approach is used as a supplement in communities other than transit points, the presumption of child trafficking process is even hastened more. Some of the DSW staff raised concerns about this approach as one commented that: *“there are sometimes what they call Rambo [patrol removal method]; like the NGOs are grabbing them (potentially trafficked children) on the lake ... Once the child is underage and is in the fishing boat with his parents or whoever it is, there is no interrogation, no excuse, the child is picked (removed from exploitation)”* (Personal Communication, 11 September 2020). The participants further mentioned that such an approach sometimes leads to

wrongful removal and subsequent tensions among families, community members and NGOs. Pullins (2016) combines this approach with the raid approach due to their common use of law enforcement agents. However, NGOs may or may not use law enforcement when applying this approach, hence the separation from the raid method.

Altogether, removal of trafficked children from exploitation is common with all NGOs. Due to the varied perceptions and acceptance of the concept of child trafficking, this process is tedious and sometimes risky for NGOs. The presumption of trafficking case, which precedes the removal of trafficked children from exploitation, is riddled with challenges of inadequate verification of presumed cases and involvement of local government actors like the DSW and the police. This can therefore lead to wrongful removal of children from exploitation but not misidentification of trafficked children as trafficking cases is only determined in the process discussed as follows.

5.4.4 Determination of a Trafficking Case

According to NGO staff, the DSW and the police conduct an assessment to determine the trafficking status of trafficked children after their removal from exploitation, but this process is reported differently by NGO and the DSW staff. NGOs who use the raid and the patrol method mentioned that, as indicated by law, they file a trafficking case after removal of trafficked children and allow the DSW to carry out assessment through interviewing of the trafficked children and traffickers if arrested, to finally determine the status of trafficking. However, the DSW reported that due to time constraints, the assessment by the police and DSW is sometimes not done, (Personal Communication, 11 September 2020; 17 September 2020b; 18 September 2020). In such cases, the DSW and

the police just rely on documents of the trafficking circumstances prepared by the NGOs to determine a trafficking case. This document is known as Social Enquiry Report (SER) and may be accompanied by other completed trafficking determination forms from the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protections (MoGCSP) (Personal Communication, 15 September 2020b; 2 October 2020).

NGOs that use the community partnership approach are able to conduct thorough investigations before the removal of trafficked children. Therefore, they are able to understand the trafficking circumstances better before sending out completed copies of the aforementioned documents to the DSW for approval (Personal Communication, 17 September 2020a). But similar to the other NGOs, the DSW and the police are sometimes not able to interview the removed children to verify the information provided by NGOs (Personal Communication, 17 September 2020a).

Hence, in all approaches, children removed from exploitation may be determined trafficked and sent to rehabilitative shelters without proper assessment by the DSW and the police. Confirmed trafficked children are then sent to rehabilitative shelters, which are usually located outside the jurisdiction of the DSW staff. Even though NGO staff mentioned that misidentification is rare, all the DSW staff suggested that it happens more than rarely, as a result of the lack of the capacity of the DSW to fully assess the status of removed children. In the case of misidentification of trafficked children, the DSW has to follow up with NGOs and after some assessment, the children in question may be released to their parents but with a reprimand to desist from letting the children work on the lake (Personal Communication, 11 September 2020).

The determination of a trafficking case is an important step in the identification process. Even when other actors are involved from the beginning of the identification process, this particular step of determination is reported to be undertaken by the police and / or social workers (Adesina, 2014; Andreatta, 2015; Todres, 2016; Warria et al., 2014). However, in the Ghanaian context, NGOs sometimes undertake this process and the police and DSW staff just provide a rubber-stamp. It is likely that the inability of the police and DSW to fund the identification process and subsequent assistance programs for trafficked children, put government actors in a situation where they just allow NGOs to operate with less supervision.

5.5 Successes and Challenges of NGOs' Strategies

Both NGO and DSW staff acknowledged that all the NGOs have had significant successes in identifying trafficked children. Some of the NGO staff mentioned that their organization identifies over 20 trafficked children every year (Personal Communication, 17 September 2020a; 15 September 2020b; 25 September 2020a). In fact, one NGO staff mentioned that his organization has identified over 1000 trafficked children in almost 20 years (Personal Communication, 17 August 2020). Unfortunately, there are no reliable statistics on the total number of trafficked children around the Lake Volta, but IJM (2016) mentions that a research by a government ministry and ILO in Ghana revealed that 46% of the research participants confirmed that trafficking of children into forced labour occurred in their fishing communities. Regardless of the inability to compare the efforts of NGOs against the number of trafficked children, both NGO and DSW staff confirmed that NGOs have been successful with their approaches, despite their challenges.

One of the factors leading to NGO successes shared by participants is the involvement of communities. Even though the nature of this involvement is varied, NGOs believe that, similar to the recommendation by Warria et al. (2014), community members are the best agents to monitor child trafficking (Personal Communication, 8 September 2020; 15 September 2020b). Therefore, educating them and recruiting some of them as informants has provided the NGOs with information that may have been hidden from outsiders like the staff of the NGOs. This also implies that NGOs could even be more successful if their perceptions were to be in sync with local perceptions. Also, engagement of destination communities will also reveal the peculiar cases of girls involved in domestic work and to correctly identify those who may be trafficked.

Another factor revealed by participants is NGOs' inclusion of economic empowerment activities in their partnerships with communities (Personal Communication, 17 August 2020; 17 September 2020a). According to NGO staff, poverty and its associated vulnerabilities facilitates child trafficking. Thus, introducing programs to overcome these issues has an enormous influence on the community's cooperation in both source and destination communities reduce the vulnerability factors and increase community support towards the identification of trafficked children. This approach is also recommended in policy and academic documents (IOM, 2017; Rafferty, 2019). The only difference is that these documents do not explicitly propose any form of economic support for vulnerable destination communities and traffickers since they are seen as perpetrators.

The approaches for removing children from exploitation also come with distinct levels of success. As mentioned by the NGO staff, some of the DSW staff acknowledged that the community partnership approach in destination communities allows NGOs access

to the community and hence they can understand the community and detect trafficking cases that are hidden (Personal Communication, 17 September 2020b). Even though this method is challenging when the traffickers do not cooperate, some of the NGO and DSW staff explained that the introduction of law enforcement on unwilling traffickers ensures that most of the trafficked children are detected and removed (Personal Communication, 17 September 2020a; 17 September 2020b). The raid and patrol removal methods are also known for their ability to remove trafficked children quicker from exploitation, similar to the assertion by Pullins (2016). Due to the conspicuous use of law enforcement, unwilling traffickers cannot resist the rescue of potentially trafficked children when found.

Despite these successes, NGOs face a lot of challenges which could be categorized into community, collaboration, removal approaches and internal challenges. Both NGO and DSW staff mentioned that accessing destination communities poses a risk to the physical safety due to challenges such as numerous tree stumps found in the lake, meandering passageway to the communities, and violent responses from some community members (Personal Communication, 17 August 2020; 25 September 2020a). Many of the participants mentioned that some community members have threatened them with violence at least once. Others also mentioned that they have had close calls to their lives due to bad weather on the lake and their boat striking some of the tree stumps in the lake (Personal Communication, 17 September 2020a).

All the NGO and DSW staff acknowledged that community members are not always forthcoming with information, a situation that is already reported by Amisshah (2019). Specifically, in destination communities, members are cautious in divulging information in order to avoid disharmony in the community. Besides, trafficked children

themselves usually fail to provide information due to fear of or admiration for their traffickers. One of the NGO staff commented that: “*some of the children at times have so much fear that you cannot even get much (information) out of them...they think their traffickers are doing them a favour*” (Personal Communication, 17 August 2020). Some of the NGOs staff also mentioned that older children sometimes see NGOs’ interventions as threat to their livelihood and achievement of big rewards at the end of their contract, even though these big rewards promised by traffickers are never honoured but are used to trap older children into more exploitation (Personal Communication, 17 August 2020; 15 September 2020b; 17 September 2020a). Another NGO staff mentioned that it is also difficult to verify the ages of children who are 15 years and above due to inadequate birth record management in rural areas of Ghana. As such, both the children and the traffickers lie about the ages of children to avoid their identification (Personal Communication, 25 September 2020b).

In terms of collaboration challenges, NGO staff commended government actors for their improved collaboration but had some reservations. First, NGOs believe that government actors are not as enthusiastic about identifying trafficked children as they should be. They believe that this lack of enthusiasm is demonstrated in the periodic delay in receiving approvals from the DSW or the provision of a law enforcement team to support the removal of trafficked children (Personal Communication, 8 September 2020). The DSW staff believe that these delays occur because the local government structures are usually not involved in the first step of presumption of cases (Personal Communication, 19 September 2020). The perspective of the DSW is also reflected in the fact that the NGO that collaborates with the DSW in the first step did not mention any delay challenges.

However, all NGO staff mentioned that they have to pay for government collaborators' feeding, transportation, accommodation and other necessary expense. This put a strain on NGOs' budget because some donors do not provide funds for engaging with government actors whose mandate is to undertake this role in the first place. This unwillingness by donors seem to represent a neoliberal ideological preference for NGOs over government.

In terms of the removal approach challenges, NGO staff were more concerned about destination community's violent response to this step, a similar predicted challenge opined by Pullins (2016). With the community partnership approach, sometimes traffickers may refuse to release trafficked children. With the raid and patrol approaches, traffickers sometimes run away with children when they realise the NGOs presence in the community. In fact, the DSW officials mentioned that these two approaches have made trafficking activities more invisible and impossible for other NGOs to undertake programs in destination communities.

5.6 A Holistic Child Trafficking Identification Strategy

The preceding discussions reveal that despite the challenges NGOs face, they play an enormous role in combating child trafficking. In order to critically analyze the relevance and shortcomings of these strategies in relation to existing literature and the nature of child trafficking, I employ the Ecological Systems Theory (EST) to reveal how identification strategies of NGOs incorporate trafficked children and their interactions with their surroundings, as captured under the five distinct structural levels of micro, meso, exo, macro and chronosystem.

The microsystem: Towards a child-centred approach

The study findings reveal that the NGOs treat children as individuals in need of protection, with some but minimal agency. Some of the NGOs do not solicit the views of children on their willingness to be identified until the children have been removed from exploitation and they narrate their trafficking experience to determine their trafficking status. To these NGOs, all the children are powerless individuals until removed from their exploitation. This depicts the previously indicated critique of identification processes treating children as having no agency (Adhikari & Turton, 2019; Mbakogu & Hanley, 2019). However, NGOs that use the community partnership approach mentioned that prior to the removal of children from exploitation, they make children aware of the reason for such step and the type of support available for them (Personal Communication, 17 September 2020a). Yet, the NGO often makes the final decision since they believe that children in exploitation cannot make sound decisions (Personal Communication, 17 September 2020a).

In the case of older children, the NGOs that use the community partnership approach take more time to explain to the children the type of assistance and support the children will gain when they are removed from their exploitation. This is because older children are more concerned about opportunities to earn more income rather than being repatriated to the parents or guardians to reclaim their lost childhood (Personal Communication, 17 September 2020a). A study of the trafficking case of a 14-year-old by Mbakogu & Hanley (2019) supports the evidence of older children opting to remain in trafficking not because they cannot make it out of trafficking but because they see their situation as trafficked children as an opportunity for achieving life goals, at least in the

short term. Andreatta (2015) also recommends that any trafficking intervention including identification must take into account the individual's basic needs, and their short-term and long-term aspirations to be successful. It is therefore important that NGOs, in attempting to serve the best interests of such children, consider the reasons why children were trafficked, their experience and their aspirations.

While focusing on trafficked children, NGOs also include their close social units (their family, teachers, classmates, peer and sometimes traffickers). NGOs consider children's relationship with their close units and also gather information from this unit. Most importantly, NGOs, as indicated earlier provide close units of trafficked children in vulnerable communities with income opportunities. This implies that NGOs do not just identify trafficked children but also attempt to address some of the drivers of trafficking. Due to widespread familial trafficking in Ghana, a focus on the close social units becomes even more important. This is in line with Mbakogu (2012) who explained that intervention strategies are likely to face opposition if attention is not paid the families and other close social units of children.

Attention to the microsystem highlights the importance of children's agency in the identification process. Even younger children need to be consulted about their trafficking experience. The best interest of the child should be determined in consultation with the child, especially when older children are involved, to understand the short and long-term needs of the children. These plans should also extend to the family of the child since they are often involved in the trafficking of their children. A clear plan that provides viable opportunities for a better life for children and their families will make it easier to convince older trafficked children and gain the support of their families.

The Mesosystem: Towards a Sustainable Community Engagement Approach

The frequent use by NGOs of informants, the CCPCs and other community actors to gather information, and their reliance on community leaders to persuade traffickers to release trafficked children demonstrate the significant role of the mesosystem (trafficking affected communities) in this study. Also, educating community members is a significant step in identifying trafficked children. It ensures that identification strategies are in line with a community's understanding and local trends in trafficking (Warria et al., 2014). However, participants mentioned that though a lot of community members are now aware of child trafficking, the phenomenon still persists. The responses of NGOs suggest that their education programs focus on the dangers or exploitations of child trafficking to generate empathy but there is no room for intentional dialogue, especially in destination communities, to generate more solidarity to combat the phenomenon. Clearly, it is not an issue of lack of information on child trafficking but lack of understanding or perspective. This same issue exists in Mali where Dougnon (2011) mentions that community members feel insulted by NGOs that label the migration of their children as trafficking.

Such situations demand the use of deliberative dialogue with communities to reveal the nuanced understanding of community perceptions on the phenomenon and guide the awareness programs of NGOs. According to Mutchler & Knox (1998: 10), a deliberative dialogue *“gives [citizens] a chance... to hear other people ... and they frequently find out that there is [a] side to some of these issues other than theirs. Theirs may still be the burning one to them and the most important, but they get a chance to hear another side.”* Deliberative dialogue may be a long process as compared to simply creating awareness, but it has more advantages of including community's perspectives and gaining the trust

and support of the community members. Such an approach may also influence NGOs' perspectives by deepening their understanding of the vulnerability of destination communities and the importance of strengthening the livelihood of these community members under identification strategies.

The explanations of identification strategies by NGOs staff suggest that even though they see child trafficking as a crime, their approaches encompass the development needs of some community members. All of the NGOs provide (or used to) some form of livelihood empowerment program for both source and destination community members, particularly the families of trafficked children and vulnerable families susceptible to trafficking. This approach changes trafficking from being seen just as a crime to address the structural causes of poverty. This approach is in line with the recommendations of child trafficking research, particularly that of the International Justice Mission, IJM (2016). Since children may have been trafficked to escape poverty, thus programs for improved standard of living are needed to encourage families and community members to cooperate with NGOs and provide information for identifying trafficked children.

While such initiatives in source communities represent a step in the right direction, it seems that there are few parallel efforts in destination communities. Some of the participants in my study mentioned that the living standards in source communities are sometimes better than in the destination fishing communities (Personal Communication, 15 September 2020b), demonstrating the poverty in destination communities. Hence, as reported in the study results, community members in destination communities are reluctant to give out information or cooperate with NGOs, since the use of the children supports their livelihood. This supports the assertion by IJM (2016) that poverty is both a push and pull

factor of trafficking. However, with the exception of one NGO that attempt to address poverty in destination communities, the remaining NGOs hardly undertake such initiatives. In my experience in combating child trafficking, when trafficked children are removed from exploitation, traffickers typically replace them another trafficked child or their own children. Therefore, not addressing the development needs of destination communities can simply transfer the exploitation to another child.

Altogether, these findings suggest that NGOs are more successful in their engagement with source communities when they provide education and help to address the causes of poverty. Members in these communities cooperate with NGOs and provide relevant information on children trafficked out of their community. However, there is still inadequate dialogue with and support for destination communities, even though they are also poor and see child trafficking as a means of livelihood. The identification strategies of NGOs could be greatly improved by using deliberative dialogue to engage with destination communities on child trafficking and addressing issues of poverty and other development needs. NGOs do not necessarily have to undertake all livelihood empowerment programs but could improve their partnerships with other organizations with such mandates and link communities to these services.

The Exosystem: Towards Effective Local Government and NGO partnership

The results of the study demonstrate the significant role of NGOs in identifying trafficked children in a resource-constrained local government environment. Local governments are increasing integrating child protection activities into their medium-term plans (UNICEF, 2020). However, similar to the study results, the resource constraints of

the local government have limited the effective implementation of their development plans (Bawole, 2017), including child protection programs.

In addition, the identification of trafficked children, similar to research by Sertich & Heemskerk (2011), is revealed by participants to be one of the most expensive elements of child trafficking interventions and must be accompanied by programs of assistance such as rehabilitation, reintegration and family empowerment. This makes it difficult for local government actors, who are already resource constrained to undertake identification. The role of NGOs is therefore heightened in the identification of trafficked children as demonstrated in the findings, to the extent that some mandated roles of local government actors such as monitoring at transit points and determination of trafficking have seen a gradual involvement of NGOs.

Despite the importance of NGOs in identifying trafficking children, about half of the NGO staff mentioned that they do not continually work in the sector. One participant mentioned that their focus is usually determined by external funding, which reinforces the importance of building connections with community actors, including the local government, which are primarily in charge of combating child trafficking. Yet the relationship between NGOs and local government actors is wholly inadequate. The presumption of trafficking cases is the first step to identifying trafficked children, but local actors are usually not involved, even though their involvement will not only increase their knowledge of identification but also improve the presumption process since the local government actors have significant knowledge of the communities. Furthermore, the determination of trafficking by local government actors is often done hastily or not done at all, further demonstrating the poor collaboration between NGOs and the local government

actors. This varied and poor relationship is in line with the report by Bawole & Hossain (2015) who mentioned that the relations between local government and NGOs are varied, complex, multidimensional and riddled with superficial and convenient partnerships.

Besides the local government actors, NGOs capitalize on other NGOs programs to access fishing communities, but no other form of relationship was mentioned. Interestingly, NGOs involved in the identification process hardly collaborate among themselves. One of the NGO staff working in destination communities mentioned that his organization do not want to collaborate with other NGOs, especially those who use law enforcement in their identification approach, to avoid making destination communities think that his organization approve of such method (Personal Communication, 17 September 2020a). Doing so may hamper their relationships with the destination communities and affect the subsequent identification of trafficked children.

Nevertheless, there was some reported collaboration in the delivery of rehabilitation services since not all NGOs are able to set up a rehabilitative shelter. The inability to set up individual shelters is due to the huge cost involved and the fact that removed trafficked children do not stay in these facilities for a long time. One of the NGOs also provide funding and train local NGOs based in the fishing communities to identify trafficked children (Personal Communication, 8 September 2020; 2 October 2020). Yet, this NGO partners mostly with grassroot NGOs but not local government actors. NGO staff also mentioned that their education programs encourage community members to report suspected trafficking cases to the local government actors to ensure sustainability, yet most of the cases are still reported to the NGOs (Personal Communication, 8 September 2020).

They could be as a result of the financial motivation given to informants or the economic package NGO provides to affected communities.

Clearly, collaboration, which is indicated earlier as one of the significant elements the identification is a big challenge for NGOs. According to the DSW staff, this lack of collaboration has led to some misidentification and under-identification challenges of trafficked children. In the defence of NGOs, collaboration is an expensive process since the NGOs have to fund the process and actors involved. However, doing so will ultimately increase the capacity of local government actors to sustain the process of identifying and rescuing trafficked children.

The Macrosystem: Reworking the Child Trafficking Concept

NGOs emphasize the activities children indulge in and how they are treated in comparison with other children within local cultural practices as justification for the term child trafficking. This implies that NGOs acknowledge some of the confusions around the definition of trafficking where the mere of movement of children could constitute trafficking. However, there are still a few concerns. First, NGO staff emphasize any work which is hazardous to the child, which includes children working on the lake as exploitation. Even though the perceptions of communities on child work were not explicitly mentioned, an NGO staff mentioned that parents in the fishing communities perceive that they have unqualified autonomy over their children (Personal Communication, 25 September 2020b), a similar assertion made by Mbakogu (2012). This suggests that child work is at the sole discretion of the parents. This perception of parents is indirectly supported by NGOs through their narrow focus on child trafficking. This is because NGOs

are concerned about trafficked children even though children working with parents on the lake are also working in a hazardous environment. It is unsurprising that NGOs revealed that some traffickers claim to be the parents of trafficked children to avoid the identification of such children (Personal Communication, 17 August 2020).

Secondly, the study participants perceive that fishing and vulnerable community members use indicators such as physique and ability to earn some money to differentiate between a child and adult. This is why older children are better able to negotiate their terms of service with their traffickers. However, NGOs educate and gather information from the communities using the national definition of a child as below 18 years. The challenge here is that older children may not be revealed by community members when NGOs themselves have reported that community members still do not go by the chronological age system. Beyond that, older children themselves have been reported to be difficult to identify because they do not see themselves as either children or trafficked.

NGO staff acknowledged the familial nature of child trafficking in the fishing industry. However, the extended family support system is an integral part of every child's development in African countries. As such, Mbakogu (2012) asserted that *"in Africa, parents and extended family members are the people recognized as guardians for children; adopting a new form of protection that alienates these known or familiar guardians may face some opposition"* (pp. 11). The integral role of families complicates identification of trafficked children by NGOs, especially when perpetrators are arrested. One NGO staff mentioned that *"there are a lot of complications with it (familial trafficking), because the other family members may not accept the child when the previous family member the child stayed with has been arrested"* (Personal Communication, 17 August 2020).

Furthermore, the prosecution of trafficking cases is universally low (UNODC, 2018). However, it is disproportionately lower in the fishing industry in Ghana, as three out of five of the NGOs mentioned that have not yet prosecuted any traffickers, despite their identification. Beside the familial nature of trafficking, NGO staff mentioned that the local government actors and politicians do not support prosecution. About half of NGO staff mentioned that even when they arrest traffickers, the police release them afterwards either based on inadequate evidence or by the directions of a top government official.

These happenings highlight how child trafficking is perceived and enforced in principle and in practice. In line with Sertich & Heemskerk (2011), these happenings also show that the 2005 Human Trafficking Act (HTA) of Ghana is not adequate to capture the complexity of the phenomenon because of lack of political will, exclusion of local perspectives and a neglect of the socio-political context. Also, it appears child trafficking is deemed morally wrong or a crime by community members, and NGOs and government actors respectively, only when children are exploited - that is, when children are involved in hazardous work and/or deprived of opportunities like education and treated worse than other children in their household. However, the arrest and prosecution of perpetrators does not resonate well with many of the actors due to the familial nature of the phenomenon and the presence of socio-economic and political factors.

Even though research shows a clear link between Ghana and international protocols on child trafficking, majority of the participants knew little about international protocols of child trafficking but were conversant with the HTA of Ghana. The few participants who demonstrated knowledge about international protocols were all NGO staff. They acknowledged that the national laws on trafficking are highly influenced by the Palermo

Protocol. One of the respondents who is currently supporting Gambia in formulating their child trafficking policies commented that: *“the legal backing we have to work in Ghana is in the Human Trafficking Act of Ghana. However, that Act takes its source from the Palermo Protocol. So, once we are working the Act, we are all working with the Palermo Protocol”* (Personal Communication, 17 August 2020). According to them, such similarity between the national laws and the Palermo Protocol legitimizes NGOs operations and makes funding available to them (Personal Communication, 15 September 2020). This is in line with Okyere (2017: 103) who opines that *“many (anti-child trafficking organizations) require support from donors...for funding, legitimacy and other purposes”*.

Subsequently, it can be deduced that NGOs’ relationship with international actors affects NGOs’ representation of the trafficking situation and identification strategies. Due to the importance of funding, NGOs may be tempted to represent the trafficking situation in line with international actors and protocols rather than challenging international perspectives and advocating for local, community-based understandings of child trafficking. In fact, one of the NGO respondents commented that in the past some NGOs classified child labour cases as child trafficking in order to justify interventions (Personal Communication, 8 September 2020).

This analysis does not mean that international actors and protocols are harmful to Ghana’s child trafficking discourse. However, these analyzes require a shift in the construction and application of national laws on child trafficking. This implies that international protocols that influence national laws should make room for local perspectives or at least make a deliberative dialogue with domestic actors a requirement before the ratification of protocols. Again, international donors and other NGOs could

focus on strengthening the local government system to be able to deal with the complexities of the phenomenon and supervise the activities of NGOs to ensure accountability of NGOs to the local communities and national stakeholders.

The Chronosystem: Towards a dynamic identification strategy

The chronosystem captures the changes over time in the child trafficking discourse and how the strategies of NGOs have adjusted to them. This study was not able to capture structural changes in the child trafficking discourse but a significant finding from NGO participants is the arrest and prosecution of perpetrators. Some NGO participants mentioned that their identification strategies in the past was based on moral conviction and financial motivation of traffickers and local communities to release trafficked children. But with the introduction of the Human Trafficking Act in 2005 and its accompanied Legal Instrument in 2015, NGOs can involve law enforcement agents in their approaches. Thus, strategies of some NGOs have evolved to include more law enforcement agents and have moved away from engaging and addressing the needs of destination communities.

To adjust to the trafficking trends, some NGO respondents also mentioned that former trafficked children are also involved to share their perceptions on the nature of their recruitment and factors that affected their early identification to improve the strategies of NGOs. This is in line with recommendations by Barner, Okech & Camp (2018). However, a report by some NGO and DSW staff that trafficking is becoming more invisible due to the use of law enforcement agents implies that NGOs have to re-evaluate their strategies to adjust to emerging child trafficking trends, especially in destination communities.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter has presented important ideas for the identification of trafficked children. Participants reveal that multiple perceptions of child trafficking still exist despite numerous awareness programs. Even though some children are trafficked from a purely business perspective, majority of the trafficking is through familial networks and a survival strategy or a way of life of those involved. Recognizing these perceptions, NGOs focus on the movement of a child and exploitation of the child. Importantly, exploitation goes beyond only the engagement of children in fishing to other criteria such as a deceptive recruitment process of the children, the way the children are treated in comparison with other children in the household and opportunities available for children to develop.

Even though NGOs recognize that child trafficking is a survival strategy for both source and destination communities who are riddled with poverty, they focus on providing economic support to only source communities except one NGO that undertake a fish farming project in destination communities to create income and employment opportunities. Subsequently, NGOs mostly use the raid method, an approach commonly mentioned in academic and policy documents as well organized and uses law enforcement agents to remove children from their exploitation before their trafficking status is determined. This approach guarantees the removal of trafficked children and but only if they are available. In some cases, traffickers move children away from the communities when they learn of NGOs presence, causing the under-identification of such trafficked children. The NGO based in destination communities uses the community partnership approach and hence relies on the support of parents of trafficked children, destination community leaders and members to convince traffickers to release trafficked children,

thereby involving less use of law enforcement agents. This approach provides NGOs with more access to destination communities and has been successful, including identifying trafficked children whose exploitations are hidden, such as girls.

The use of the EST framework reveals that NGOs demonstrate a considerable understanding of the relationships that exist among trafficked children, their immediate and broader global surroundings through their identification strategies. For an improved holistic identification strategy, NGOs must accommodate more involvement of children in their identification, especially during the removal process. Also, identification strategies must foster a better collaboration among NGOs, fishing communities and government actors such that the understanding of the phenomenon can be deliberated and negotiated, as well as build the capacity of government actors. NGOs must also advocate for local perspectives in the concept of trafficking and provide more solutions to the structural causes of child trafficking beyond just source communities. International donors who have been revealed to wield enormous power on NGOs must also accommodate a bottom-up approach and demand NGOs to be cognizant of the dynamics in trafficking and local perspectives.

CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSION

6.1 Research Highlights

In answering my research questions, it is clear that the identification of children trafficked for labour is a difficult process and the nuances in the Ghanaian fishing industry makes it even more challenging. NGO strategies for identifying trafficked children in this context can be grouped into three main processes as identified in policy and academic literature: 1) the presumption of a trafficking case; 2) removal of trafficked children from exploitation; and 3) determining their trafficking status (IOM, 2017; Warriia et al., 2014). In the presumption of trafficking cases, the trafficked children, their close units, fishing and vulnerable communities (grouped under the micro and mesosystem of the child) are the most important elements. NGOs educate individuals in these systems to make sure their perceptions are in line with that of NGOs and trends of child trafficking. Based on the education, NGOs gather and verify information on suspected trafficked children through information from the members in these systems and NGOs' staff.

The remaining processes of removing trafficked children from exploitation and determination of their trafficking status is typically undertaken by NGOs and actors who are relatively far from the child's environment, but still familiar with it (known as the exosystem), which include government actors, especially social services and law enforcement agents. In the removal process, NGOs treat the children as victims, with minimal agency. However, trafficked children demonstrate agency by narrating their stories to provide evidence of their trafficking, while some older children indicate that they

do not want to be removed from situations which NGOs label as trafficking, a situation also reflected in other trafficking studies (Mbakogu, 2020; Mbakogu & Hanley, 2019).

The challenges of identifying trafficked include community members' reluctance to give out information, especially in destination communities, which is in line with research by Amissah (2019). Besides, the use of children in fishing, including trafficked children, remains a significant labour contribution to fishing communities' household income, and as such identification efforts by NGOs are resisted by fishing communities and sometimes escalate into harm against NGO staff. Also, the collaboration between NGOs and government actors is superficial and hasty with less time and funding for adequate involvement of government actors, even in key processes of removal and determination of trafficking status, that government actors must lead or be in charge of. Again, NGOs demonstrate little intent to help build the capacity of government actors to take charge of the identification process, thereby creating a continual reliance on NGOs' resources, skills and expertise, hence supporting the critiques of NGOs by Xaba (2015).

Furthermore, NGOs are aware of some of the structural causes of children trafficking, especially the economic decline in both source and destination communities. However, NGOs reliance on external funding has led to an alignment of Ghana's child trafficking systems with international protocols, where the heavy use of law enforcement in the identification process is on the rise. Despite the successes of such an approach, some NGO and DSW participants acknowledged that child trafficking is becoming less visible and destination communities are more hostile to NGOs, therefore leading to under-identification of trafficked children, especially girls. One NGO uses a different approach, which is uncommon in the literature. This approach, known as the community partnership

approach, allows NGOs to address structural causes of child trafficking in both source and destination communities, as well as uncover invisible exploitations of trafficked girls. However, it is time consuming and resource demanding since the NGO must seek the support of all important actors in trafficked children's environment.

Despite these challenges, NGOs and government actors acknowledge that NGOs have been successful in identifying trafficked children. Almost all NGOs identify over 20 trafficked children in a typical year. Significant factors that contribute to NGOs success include community partnerships and livelihood programs. NGOs partnerships with communities allow them more access and creation of relationships and networks for gathering information on suspected cases. Also, NGOs concentrate on reducing the vulnerabilities of trafficking-affected families and communities through livelihood empowerment programs to encourage support from these groups. Most importantly, NGOs have filled in the role of government actors who are unable to identify trafficked children due to resource constraints. However, the capacity of government actors must be built not only to collaborate with NGOs but to also supervise the activities of NGOs, who at the moment seems to be accountable to only their international donors.

6.2 Implications for Policy and Practice

As demonstrated in my research, child trafficking is a complex phenomenon and as such interventions, including the identification of trafficked children, must also be comprehensive enough to incorporate local, national and international dynamics. As such, the implications of this research, discussed as follows, propose a holistic identification strategy with recommendations for all actors involved in the process. Similarly, the

implications may be useful for other countries with similar contexts in Sub-Saharan Africa, where children are trafficked for labour in an environment where the boundaries between child trafficking and child work are blurred.

- Accommodate more agency from trafficked children

Trafficked children know their circumstances better and older trafficked children often have a significant impact on their identification. This suggests that identification processes could benefit from accommodating more agency from children. As identified in the microsystem analysis in Chapter 5, more agency from children will require strategies to have short and long-term plan for the development of the trafficked children, rather than just identifying them and returning them to the same vulnerable environment that supported their trafficking.

However, as it stands now, there is not enough research that evaluates identification strategies and the importance of children's agency in it, both in the Ghanaian context and worldwide. More academic and policy research must therefore be undertaken both locally and internationally. If such an approach gains traction in international protocols, NGOs are more likely to follow suit. Again, such an approach is likely to face some opposition from some local perceptions that see children as powerless. But the decision of parents to allow such children to move away to other households to work in the first place demonstrates that there is some room for the accommodation of children's agency.

- Link identification strategies to poverty reduction

Ultimately, trafficked children support the livelihood of both their families and perpetrators who are usually poor. Thus, NGOs have been successful in getting the support of communities by attaching livelihood empowerment programs to their community partnerships. As confirmed by most of the NGO and DSW respondents, any form of income generation activity helps to address the drivers of trafficking which is usually poverty (Personal Communication, 11 September 2020; 15 September 2020b, 17 September 2020b). It is important that poverty reduction efforts are streamlined to focus on all vulnerable communities rather than concentrating on a few partnered communities. As an NGO staff commented, as children are identified in one community, the phenomenon moves to another, causing a displacement issue (Personal Communication, 8 September 2020).

Destination communities are also characterized poverty due to the over-dependence on the Lake Volta. In my experience, many of these communities lack social amenities such as schools, health care and sanitation facilities. Sometimes, even when members in destination communities have good intentions for potentially trafficked children, there are no social amenities available for such children to access and as such fishing becomes the only option. Therefore, focusing on just source communities holistically eradicate the exploitation of children which is the focus of NGOs and child protection actors. Poverty reduction programs as well as social amenities must also be extended to destination communities to also combat some of these structural causes of child trafficking.

- Improve the capacity of the local government system or decentralization

The importance of local government actors in identifying trafficked children cannot be downplayed. They understand the communities better and are permanent systems for protecting children. Less than half of the NGOs in my study have focused on child trafficking continuously, demonstrating that a sustainable and long-term child protection strategy cannot rely on NGOs. Moreover, the ability of NGOs to rush and replace key processes of the identification of a complex phenomenon of child trafficking is startling. Supervision of NGO processes and a demand of accountability will not only make NGOs more efficient but also address some of the misunderstandings between local communities and NGOs. Improving the capacity of local government actors will set them up to effectively undertake this role even if NGOs choose to lead the identification process of child trafficking.

To improve the capacity of local government requires funding and training. A report by UNICEF (2020) on the financial analysis of child protection revealed that incorporation of child protection into Ghanaian local government plans by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MoLGRD) have increased the budget for child protection significantly since 2019 and some international donors have prioritized local government capacity building. Thus, local government actors can mitigate their funding and resource challenges by sources by increasing budget for child protection programs in their entire local government development plans and partnering with international actors who are focused on local government development.

- International donors and protocols should facilitate not dictate

Clearly, the capacity challenge of local government systems suggest that it will be unwise to cut off international support. However, international support for child trafficking in Ghana must understand the dynamics of the Ghanaian context and demand that, instead of aligning projects with their perceptions, recipients of their funds demonstrate the unique situations of their context. Similar to Nwogu (2014) suggestion, international donors should “*channel support accordingly, especially needs borne out of locally grown ideas and innovations that are already working*” (pp. 13).

The inclusion of domestic perceptions into international protocols and perception is a challenging task. From my experiences and from my research findings, international actors seem to appreciate these dynamics better when they also experience it themselves. Therefore, there is the need for a more dynamic interaction or a bottom-up approach which could be achieved through monitoring and evaluation. Such an approach will not only allow international actors to learn from domestic actors, but it will also provide international actors the opportunity to assess data and information they receive from their donor recipients (Personal Communication, 15 September 2020a). Subsequently, reports on Ghana at the international level are more likely to reflect what is happening in the country.

6.3 Reflections on the Ecological Systems Theory Analytical Framework

The use of the Ecological Systems Theory (EST) allowed a “bigger picture” analysis of child trafficking identification. Using this approach revealed majority of the actors, their roles, perceptions and relationships in identifying trafficked children, which

are grouped into micro, meso, exo, macro and chronosystems. Such an approach revealed crucial systems that limited resources can be focused to yield the maximum benefits to the identification process. However, the compartmentalized nature of the EST reveals the relationship among these five systems but could not adequately capture the strength of these relationships. Focusing of limited resources on important relationships existing among the systems could be more useful in the identification process.

6.4 Moving Forward: Limits and Future Research Agenda

The voices of source and destination community members, former trafficked children, police and politicians, as well as in-person observation of the identification strategies of NGOs could have revealed more nuances to the identification of child trafficking in Ghana. However, as indicated earlier, this was not possible during a global pandemic of Covid-19. On the other hand, my research reveals important issues that are missing in the literature. A deeper analysis of these issues, indicated as follows, will provide immense lessons to the identification of child trafficking for labour.

- Gender-based analysis of child trafficking for labour identification process.
- Assessment of the community partnership child trafficking identification process.
- Assessment of the raid removal method on communities and trafficked children.
- Community Engagement Approaches for effective child trafficking identification.

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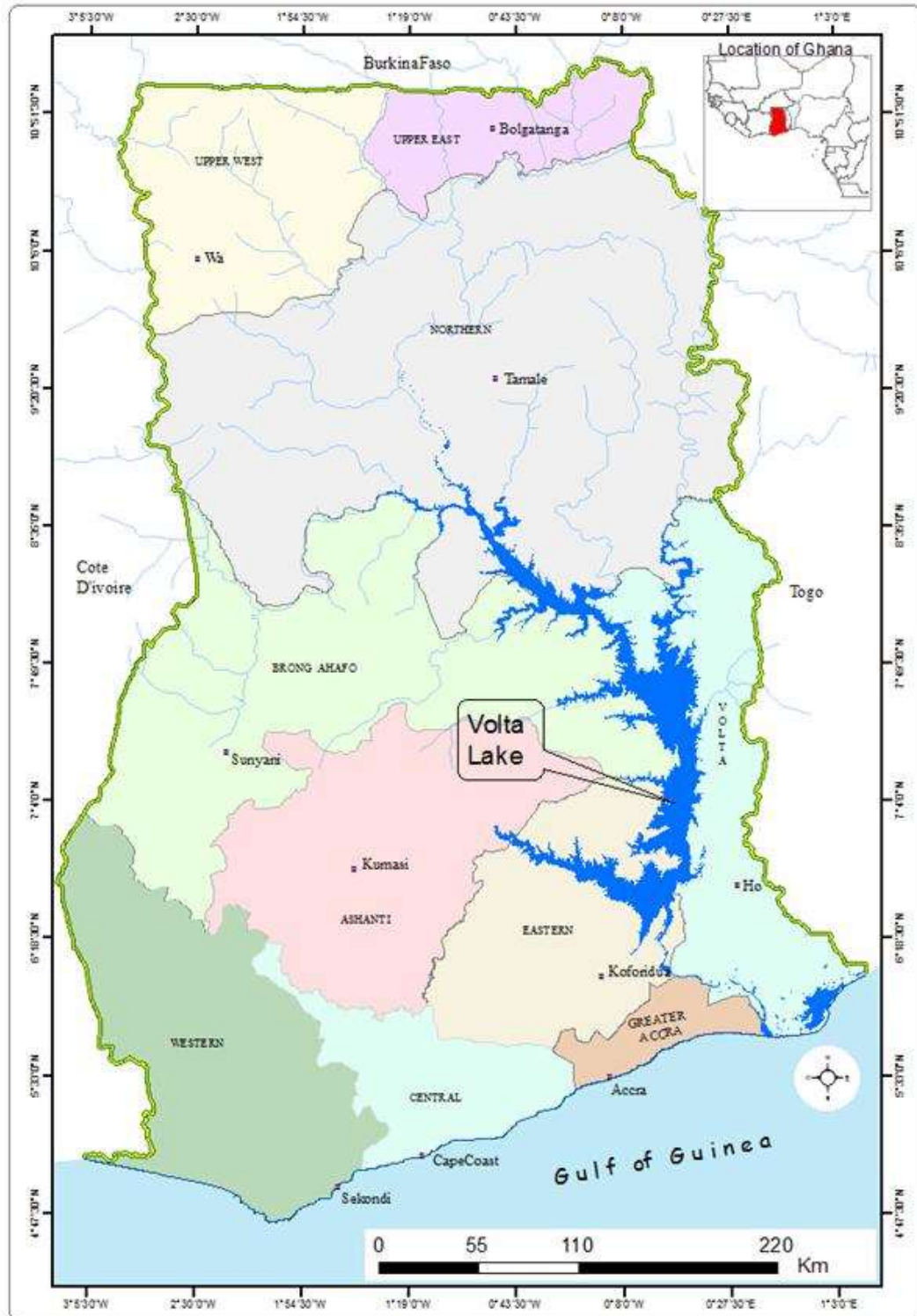
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APPENDIX A – MAP OF GHANA AND THE STUDY AREA



Source: Ofori & Asiedu (2013: pp. 283)

APPENDIX B – PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Name of Organisation	Abbreviation	Primary Operations	Staff Inter-viewed
ANTI-CHILD TRAFFICKING NGOS			
Right to Be Free	RTBF	Identification, rehabilitation and reintegration of trafficked persons in Volta, Central, Greater Accra Region and international countries.	1
Free the Slaves	FTS	Advocacy, identification, rehabilitation and reintegration of trafficked persons in mining and fishing in Ashanti, Brong Ahafo, Central, Greater Accra and Volta Region	2
Challenging Heights	CH	Identification, rehabilitation, reintegration of trafficked children in Brong Ahafo, Central and Volta Region	2
Mercy Project	MP	Identification, rehabilitation, reintegration of trafficked children in Northern, Brong Ahafo and Volta Region	2
Love Justice International	LJI	Identification, rehabilitation, reintegration of trafficked children and adults in the Volta Region and border regions of Ghana.	2
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE (DSW)			
Pru District		Offices of government social services (Department of Social Welfare) in districts/municipalities in Oti, Bono East, Northern and Savannah Regions of Ghana	5
East Gonja Municipality			
Kpandai District			
Krachi East Municipality			
Krachi West District			
Total			14

APPENDIX C – LIST OF INTERVIEWS

Date	Pseudonym	Location
August 17, 2020	Eben	Virtual
September 8, 2020	Jude	Virtual
September 11, 2020	Mike	Virtual
September 15, 2020a	Jack	Virtual
September 15, 2020b	Seth	Virtual
September 16, 2020	Carl	Virtual
September 17, 2020a	Anan	Virtual
September 17, 2020b	Ivan	Virtual
September 18, 2020	Zuka	Virtual
September 19, 2020	Boaz	Virtual
September 25, 2020a	Rico	Virtual
September 25, 2020b	Iris	Virtual
September 26, 2020	Atta	Virtual
October 2, 2020	Bafo	Virtual

APPENDIX D – RECRUITMENT EMAIL TO PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS

Subject: Invitation to take part in research interview on child trafficking

Dear [Recipient],

I am a student researcher in International Development Studies at Dalhousie University. In partial fulfilment of my master's study, I am conducting research on child trafficking and strategies for identifying trafficked children in Ghana. I would like to conduct an interview with you about your perspectives on this study subject.

The goal of the research is to better understand NGO-based strategies for identifying and responding to child trafficking in Ghana and reveal the different but important understandings of child trafficking between international and domestic actors. This will generate useful lessons for anti-child trafficking organizations in Ghana and Sub-Saharan African and encourage international actors to also learn from domestic efforts against child trafficking.

The interview would be conducted virtually using end-to-end encryption feature of WhatsApp or Skype. It will take 45-60 minutes and I humbly suggest you choose a quiet and safe venue for the interview. Should you choose to participate, your identity and that of your organization will be kept confidential throughout this research and the dissemination of the findings. You may choose not to answer any question that you had rather not talk about, and you can withdraw your answers from the study one month after the interview.

Please let me know if you would be willing to take part in an interview and do not hesitate to contact me by phone (+1 902-700-1718) or email (foseibonsu@dal.ca) if you have any questions.

If you agree to an interview, I will send you a Statement of Informed Consent to review, which explains in detail the risks related to the research and the steps we will take to protect your confidentiality. If you have any ethical concerns about your participation in this research, you may also contact Research Ethics, Dalhousie University at (902) 494-1462, or email: ethics@dal.ca (and reference REB file # 2020-5187)."

Thank you.

Francis Osei Bonsu
M.A International Development Studies Candidate
Dept. of International Development Studies
Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada
Tel: +1 (902) 700-1718

APPENDIX E – STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT



Project title: Identification of trafficked children: The experiences of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the Ghanaian Fishing Industry.

Lead researcher: Francis Osei Bonsu
M.A International Development Studies Candidate
Department of International Development Studies
Dalhousie University
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Supervisor: John D. Cameron, PhD
Dept. of International Development Studies,
Dalhousie University
Room 2171 McCain Building, 6135 University Ave.
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Introduction

I invite you to take part in a research study being conducted by me, Francis Osei Bonsu (Master of Arts Student at Dalhousie University), on child trafficking. The information below tells you about what is involved in the research, the themes I hope to discuss with you in an interview, and the measures I will take to protect your confidentiality.

Invitation to participate

I invite you to take part in an interview for this research study. The choice to participate is entirely up to you. Please ask me as many questions as you like about the study before you decide.

Purpose and Outline of the Research Study

This is a 9-month project that and explores strategies used to identify trafficked children in Ghana and examines the understanding of child trafficking between international and domestic actors. The research primarily seeks to better understand the role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and support their strategies for eradicating child trafficking since they have been recognized in most academic and policy research as significant actors in identifying and rescuing trafficked children in Ghana. Therefore, the project does not seek to criticize the strategies of NGOs but to help improve their effectiveness in identifying trafficked children and responding to child trafficking. Nevertheless, eradicating child trafficking is multi-collaborative effort and so the project

will also focus on other actors from the international and national level. The project seeks to answer two main core research questions:

1. What strategies are used by anti-child trafficking NGOs to identify trafficked children? What are the biggest challenges and successes?
2. How do anti-child trafficking NGOs in Ghana understand child trafficking and how do their understandings compare to international laws and definitions?

Who Can Take Part in the Research Study?

You may participate in this study if you work with:

1. An Anti-Child Trafficking NGO in Ghana and have adequate knowledge on the identification and rescue of victims of child trafficking.
2. The Ghanaian Government and in a role that relates to Anti-Child Trafficking NGOs or provide legal and/or professional services to Anti-Child Trafficking NGOs.
3. An International Organization that formulates or advocate for policies or carry out research on Anti-Child Trafficking in Ghana and Sub-Saharan.

What does the interview involve?

As the researcher, I (Francis) will ask questions about your understandings of child trafficking and the role of your organization in anti-child trafficking. I will also ask questions about your organization's role and strategies for identifying trafficked children and the successes and challenges of those strategies if applicable to your organization. The interview will take approximately 45-60 minutes and will be conducted virtually through end-to-end encryption feature of WhatsApp or Skype in a private location of your choice. With your permission, I will audio-record the interview – unless you prefer that I only take notes. You do not have to answer any question or line of questioning that you do not want to answer. You may end the interview or take a break at any time or tell me to pause recording if you want any part of our conversation to be 'off the record.'

Possible Benefits

Participating in this study will not generate any direct benefits for you, but your participation will contribute to a deeper and systematic analysis of the disjuncture between international and domestic understandings of child trafficking and provide lessons to anti-child trafficking organizations on overcoming challenges of identifying trafficked children. It will also provide successful strategies to Government agencies, which could improve their ability to identify and aid trafficked children.

Possible Risks

I understand that child trafficking can be a sensitive issue, with different understandings of it among actors fighting against it. This may have possible implications for your organization's reputation. I will take all possible measures to ensure the confidentiality of your interview and to keep the data from your interview confidential and secure (please see the section on Confidentiality). However, there is always some risk that confidentiality could be breached or that you or your organization could be identified as the source of the data.

Compensation / Reimbursement

I will reimburse you for any internet data cost incurred, up to a maximum of CAD12.00 or GHS50.00, in order to participate in this interview.

How your information will be protected: I will do all that I can to protect your privacy and confidentiality during the interview and after it has been completed (please see the section on Confidentiality).

Privacy: The interview will be conducted virtually through end-to-end encryption feature of WhatsApp or Skype and in a private location of your choice. WhatsApp does not store our conversation or have access to it, so your confidentiality is assured by using that app. For participants whose interviews will be conducted using Skype, the Private Conversation feature will be used. There is a risk that Skype may be able to store information from our conversation, yet they will not be able to read or decipher it because our conversation will be end-to-end encrypted. I will not disclose to anyone else that you have participated in an interview for this research.

Confidentiality: Your interview and the data from it will be treated as confidential. With your permission, I will audio-record your interview using a hand-held audio recording device. However, I will not record your name or the name of your organization in the audio recording. Instead, I will assign your interview a code number and only I, the researcher, will have access to the document which connects your name to the interview files. After the interview is conducted, I will transfer the audio file to a password protected folder to which only myself will have access. The audio file will then be transcribed by me and the audio recording will then be destroyed. In publications and reports based on this research, I will not use your name, the name of your organization, or any specific information that could be linked back to you or your organization; I will only refer to you in general terms (e.g., ‘a senior staff member in an anti-child trafficking NGO). Despite these measures, there is always some possibility that other people might link a particular turn of phrase in a quotation back to you. If this is a concern for you, I will agree not to use direct quotations from your interview.

Data retention and management: After the recording of your interview has been transcribed, I will store the transcription (with your name and organization removed) in an encrypted format in a password protected folder until December 31, 2023 – three (3) years following the anticipated completion date for this project. This will enable me to keep the original data until the results of this research project is first accepted by Dalhousie University and later published by me, so that the accuracy of the research can be verified if needed.

Withdrawing from the study: During the interview, you are free to not answer any questions, to stop the interview, or to ask to turn off the audio recording. At the end of the interview, I will ask you to confirm that you are still willing for me to use your interview in the research. If you are not, I will destroy the audio recording and any notes from the interview. If you decide that you do not want your interview to be used in this research project after the interview is over, please contact me (Francis Osei Bonsu) through my

email: foseibonsu@dal.ca. I can remove your information from the study up until one (1) month after the interview. After then, I will not be able to completely remove the information you provided, because I would have integrated it into my overall analysis and may have already submitted the results to Dalhousie University. However, I will not use quotations from your interview or refer specifically to what you tell me.

How to obtain results from this research project: I will be sharing results from this research project with participants who are interested. If you indicate that you want to receive results, I will e-mail you my full thesis and a policy brief when my thesis is accepted by Dalhousie University.

Questions: I am happy to talk with you about any questions or concerns you may have about your participation in this research study. Please contact me (Francis Osei Bonsu) at foseibonsu@dal.ca or +1 (902)-210-1718 at any time with questions, comments, or concerns about the research study (if you are calling long distance, I will reimburse you). I will also tell you if any new information comes up that could affect your decision to participate.

If you have any ethical concerns about your participation in this research, you may also contact Research Ethics, Dalhousie University at (902) 494-1462, or email: ethics@dal.ca (and reference REB file # 2020-5187).”

APPENDIX F – ORAL CONSENT SCRIPT

The following will be audio recorded at the beginning of interviews with participants from Ghana.

Participants will have already received by email a copy of the Statement of Informed Consent (Appendix D) with information about the research study and will have the opportunity to review a hard copy of the Statement of Informed Consent again prior to the start of the interview.

“I am conducting a research project with Francis Osei Bonsu of Dalhousie University on child trafficking and strategies for identifying trafficked children by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Before we begin the interview, I want to confirm that you understand and agree with the procedure for the interview and with how the data from the interview will be managed, as well as the possible risks of participating in this project.

“Have you read the Statement of Informed Consent?” [Appendix E] Yes No
[If ‘No’ the researcher will then review the Statement of Informed Consent with the participant.]

“Do you have any questions about the research before we begin the interview?” Yes No
[If ‘Yes’ the researcher will answer the questions]

“Do you agree to have your consent to participate in this interview audio recorded?”
 Yes No
[If “Yes”, the researcher will audio-record participant’s answer to the immediate question after this. If “No”, the researcher will save a copy of this script with participant’s answer to the immediate question, participant’s identification details and date.]

“Do you agree to participate in this interview?” Yes No
[If participant does not agree to audio-recording of consent, then the researcher fills the information below]

Name of Participant:
Affiliated Organization:
Date:

“Do you agree to have this interview audio-recorded?” Yes No

“Do you agree that direct quotes from the interview can be used, on the condition that they do not identify you or your organization in any way?” Yes No

“Would you like to receive updates and reports from this project by email?” Yes No