AIS | American Institute of Science

'Re-trafficking' in the Coastal Communities and the Volta Lake of Ghana: Children's Rights, Agency and Intra-household Bargaining Position

Harrison Kwame Golo[1], Isaac Eshun[2, *]

[1]Human Rights and Peace Studies (CHRAPS), University of Education, Winneba, Ghana

[2]Department of Social Studies Education, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana

Abstract

It is estimated that human trafficking is a $150 billion industry and every country, including Ghana must do everything possible to stop this human trade. 'Re-trafficking' of rescued and re-integrated children has become a long-drawn-out phenomenon along the rural coastal fishing communities and the Volta Lake. This study sought to explore the extent to which the interplay of the re-trafficked children's agency and the existing intra-household bargaining positions within households influence 're-trafficking'. A multiple case study design was adopted by focusing on twelve fishing communities in the Volta and Greater Accra and Brong-Ahafo Regions. Out of the regions, 6 fishing communities were randomly selected from Krachi West and Sene East districts along the Volta Lake, whilst 6 were also selected randomly from Ketu South and Dangbe East to represent coastal fishing communities. In-depth interview and focus group discussion were employed to elicit information from 16 re-trafficked children and 12 of their parents/guardians as well as 8 "slave masters" and 4 "slave mistresses" for the study. Mainly, qualitative way of using direct quotations and interpretative techniques were adopted in analysing the data. The data on the socio-demographic background of the respondents were analysed, using simple percentages. It was established in this study that, both parents and children play a major role in the 're-trafficking' phenomenon. That is, while the 're-trafficking' in the study communities thrives primarily on parents' decisions and negotiations, the children, at times, manoeuvre their way back to where they were rescued. It is thus recommended that, Government and other stakeholders should adopt an effective bottom-up approach to tackle the child trafficking and 're-trafficking phenomena for appropriate intervention policies.

1. Introduction

This study is a response to the current Ghanaian public's outcry of child 're-trafficking'. Miko observes that, trafficking of children for forced labour and sexual exploitation has become one of the fastest growing phenomena in the domain of international criminal activities that affect virtually every country in the world [1]. Various studies indicate that, trafficking of children within West and Central Africa is strongly associated with poverty and excessive vulnerability through depressed economies coupled with socio-political crises [2-3]. A study conducted by Dottridge indicated that endemic rural poverty compelled poor families to release or sell their children to traffickers as a survival strategy [4].

The link between poverty and small-scale fisheries has been highlighted by Pauly [5]. Although, there is a study which emphasised that, fishermen are often not the poorest of the

* Corresponding author

E-mail address: isaaceshun@uew.edu.gh (I. Eshun)

poor, fishing communities often reflect the general lack of development of the rural areas [6]. Indeed, while human trafficking, in general, is exclusively driven by a financial gain in most societies where it occurs, the practice of child trafficking in Ghana is underpinned by several factors. Golo's research, for example, has shown that child trafficking as a coping and survival strategies employed by households in the coastal fishing communities in the Volta Region of Ghana interplay with existing cultural practices exacerbated by abject poverty and vulnerability [7].

Further studies have shown that children are more often trafficked within and outside Ghana for labour exploitation [7-9]. The trafficking situation in the country further revealed that, a huge number of trafficked children are normally sent to fishing communities around the Volta Lake where they are engaged in very dangerous works [8-12]. Studies have established that, coastal fishing communities in the country represent the main source of trafficked children [7, 13].

The phenomenon has become both national and international canker that needs an immediate and permanent solution. A number of efforts have been employed at both local and international levels to combat it in recent years as a result of an increased national and international awareness. A substantial number of efforts set out to criminalise the perpetrators and locate the human trafficked victims for reintegration to their families for possible rehabilitation and economic empowerment has been on a slow edge. However, there has been some development of legal framework that comprises international and regional treaties, as well as a broad range of soft-law instruments relating to trafficking.

The Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) – one of the ILO's fundamental human rights Conventions – includes among the worst forms of child labour, in Article 1: "(a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict." The corresponding Recommendation (No. 190) states that: 12. Members should provide that the following worst forms of child labour are criminal offences: (a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;… [14]. As a further effort, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in its general principles and specific provisions of Article 32, also "recognises the child right to be protected from economic exploitation" [10]. Trafficking has, however, received enormous attention since the late 1990s, driven in particular by the US initiatives under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000, and

its subsequent reauthorisations in 2003 and 2005, and the United Nations protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children (commonly known as the Palermo Protocol) [15].

The Government of Ghana and other stakeholders have recognised the fact that human trafficking is not only limited to severe violation of human rights which affects the physical and psychological wellbeing of victims, but also undermines national security and impedes the sustainable development of the country. Consequently, it has resorted to numerous efforts to prevent the phenomenon. Indeed, policy makers in the country for some time now has increasingly demonstrated awareness that, there is a connection between trafficking for child labour and poverty, and the problem of working children, and have adopted committed strategies and policies towards their elimination through various ways. Firstly, the Children's Act (1998) was promulgated in the country to help reform and consolidate the law relating to children, to provide for the rights of the child, maintenance and adoption, regulate child labour and apprenticeship, for ancillary matters concerning children generally and to provide for related matters [16]. Secondly, Ghana's Children's Act (1998) has in its provisions the rights of the child and parental duty by stating that, the best interest of the child shall be the primary consideration by any court, person, institution or other body in any matter concerned with a child [16]. Thirdly, the Human Trafficking Act was passed in 2005 to criminalise the offence and mandates the establishment of the Human Trafficking Fund to support the promotion of efforts to combat it. Fifthly, the Government of Ghana has adopted the 2017 – 2021 National Plan of Action for the Elimination of human trafficking in Ghana and the institutionalization of Standard Operating Procedures to Combat Human Trafficking in country, with the emphasis on child trafficking, in October 2017.

Furthermore, in an attempt to address the plight of the trafficked children and contain the potential security threats, the office of the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) in collaboration with the government of Ghana and International Organisation on Migration (IOM) embarked on project to facilitate the returning of trafficked children from the various fishing communities around the Volta Lake to their parents. The project involved assistance through micro-credit to both fishermen who released the children and the parents, who received their children [11].

However, the 2014 report by Partners in Community Development Programme (PACODEP), an NGO assisting in rescuing, reintegrating and educating trafficked children along the Volta Lake in Kete-Krachi revealed that many at times reintegrated trafficked children found their way to their slave masters.

This study thus sort to explore how and why these rescued trafficked children return to their masters/mistresses by: 1) investigating the motivating factors underpinning the 're-trafficking' or migration of children to the areas where they were rescued; 2.) identifying the extent to which the agency of the trafficked children and the existing intra-household bargaining positions within households influence child mobility in the rural coastal fishing communities and along the Volta Lake, employing the agency and intra-household bargaining positions as a theoretical foundations for understanding children's mobility vis-a-vis their 're-trafficking' in the study settings.

In the subsequent sections of this paper, we have reviewed and discussed literature as well as the theoretical issues that guided the study, and the methodology. These are followed by the discussion of the results, conclusions and recommendations.

2. Literature and Theoretical Perspectives of the Study

Literature on trafficking in the fishing communities was viewed in the context of child's agency and child mobility in the sphere of intra-household bargaining positions. Empirical studies on child mobility or migration and child trafficking are often based on a distinction between push and pull factors. In order to understand child trafficking situation in the study locations and to situate the analysis within its proper perspective, it is important to discuss the concept of child and childhood and relate it to child mobility. Lange asserts that, the empirical phenomenon of children involved in various forms of migration is by no means new [17]. This is particularly true if it is appreciated that, the young migrants referred to in the literature as 'child migrants' are not limited to young children below 10 years of age, but mostly older children in their teenage years are also captured in the discourse [18-20]. These 'older children' may, arguably, also be described as adolescents, young youth, youth, or possibly even young adults.

The United Nations Palermo Protocol definition is an international measure to attempt to define trafficking comprehensively, yet there is still some confusion over its actual meaning. The Protocol refers to a number of undefined concepts (e.g. 'coercion', 'deception' and 'forced labour') [21]. Definitions of trafficking and smuggling according to the Palermo Protocol and as adopted in the Council of Europe Convention are described below:

(a) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring 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. (b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used. [21].

This definition emphasises the three core elements of trafficking: the movement or harbouring of a person; use of deception or coercion; and placement into situations of exploitation. These elements occur in combination and not isolated cases. This Protocol made trafficking in persons for all forms of exploitation an international criminal offence, whether for labour or sexual purposes.

The Palermo Protocol regards child victims of trafficking as special cases - they are regarded as victims of trafficking whether or not they are evidences of being coerced or deceived into their situation [10]. It is suggested that, it is impossible for children to give informed consent - they may simply be submitting to the authority of their parents, even if they understand what is taking place, or otherwise they may feel being disloyal.

From the foregoing child trafficking involves recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, and or receipt of a child for the purpose of slavery, forced labour and exploitation. The term 'child re-trafficking' in the scope of this research goes with the indicators spelt out in the Palermo Protocol. However, we argued that, although the return of some of the trafficked children to the places they were rescued may not necessarily involve coercion, adoption at any point of their movement, the violation of their rights through exploitation by their end users constitute a strong indication of child trafficking, hence 're-trafficking' in this study.

Human trafficking, whether of children or of adults, is a gross violation of human rights. In the case of people who have not yet attained the age of majority, it additionally, violates their rights as children, in particular their right to be protected from exploitation [22]. Children are frequently trafficked into labour exploitation in agriculture, both long-term and on a seasonal basis. They may toil in a variety of manufacturing industries, from large-scale sweatshops to small craft workshops. In some parts of the world, children are exploited in mining or in fisheries [22].

Study has shown that, many children are often moved away from their homes and are exploited in the informal economy,

where they are even more difficult to trace and at high risk of many forms of violence [10]. Some of these activities may not immediately be seen as 'labour'. The reality is, however, that they have a commercial motive and the child is seen by those seeking to make the profit from them [22].

The rationale behind protecting children has traditionally rested upon the perceptions held by a community or social group about who should be considered a child. To determine the creation of a safer and fairer environment for children, the United Nations Convention on the Rights and the Child (UNCRC) established a new paradigm for childhood based on the realization of children's rights. According to the UNCRC, a child means every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, the age of majority is attained earlier. Although, in reality most child protection workers consider that 18 years should still be considered as the 'ideal' age for demarcating the end of childhood [22]. This debate becomes important because once a person reaches the age of majority, there are some things they can do that they could not do before.

The theoretical perspective for the study utilises theories from different disciplines to explain the mobility involving children and young people for labour exploitation. Trafficking in the fishing communities was viewed in the context of child's agency and child mobility in the sphere of intra-household bargaining positions.

Agency has been defined by McGregor and Kebede as the ability to give meaning to circumstances and contexts and then decide on a course of action in relation to these [23]. Apart from appreciating childhood as a social construct, conceptualising children and young people as social actors is the second major contribution of the new social studies of childhood [24]. It has been argued that, this analytical perspective has been embraced by studies on child migration. This is particularly true for studies that critique the dominant human trafficking narrative, but also for studies taking issue with the tendency of mainstream migration studies in which children tended to be treated as 'luggage', "things transported by adults" [25].

The work of Whitehead and Hashim, draw in their respective theorisation of agency heavily on the gender literature [26]. Agency is in these studies conceptualised as a dimension of power, which Kabeer (2000) has usefully defined as the ability to define one's goals and act upon them. "Agency conceptualised along such lines cannot be reduced to 'observable action' alone, as it may also take the form of 'inertness" [27]. Furthermore, agency may also manifest in the form of bargaining and negotiation, deception and manipulation, subversion and resistance as well as more intangible, cognitive processes of reflection and analysis [28].

Furthermore, Sen argued for a distinction between agency and well-being since a person may have various goals and objectives other than the pursuit of his or her well-being, because, agency is influenced, amongst other things, by a person's sense of obligation and perception of legitimate behaviour [29]. These observations bear direct relevance to understanding children and young people's agency concerning migration within the context of the household.

Also, Sen's distinction between agency and well-being highlights the importance of adopting a relational perspective, by studying children and young people's agency as embedded in sets of social relations [29]. Redmond notes that, the extent of children's agency varies according to individual and context [30]. This way, poverty as argued by Lister, sometimes facilitates or constrains agency [31]. Asides, Panter-Brick posits that, poor children as well as adults, can display capabilities that those who are protected and cosseted do not possess [32]. For this reason, this study has resisted employing a predefined age frame for identifying 're-trafficked children'. Instead, it has concentrated on 're-trafficked children' who are according to local frames of meaning regarded as not yet adults.

Child mobility in the sphere of intra-household bargaining positions is also worth discussing in the light of child 're-trafficking'. The main concern throughout this study has been to identify the extent to which interplay between the reintegrated traffic children's agency and the existing intra-household bargaining positions within their households impact on their 're-trafficking'. Migration decision-making processes are not only limited to the field of the household. This is, particularly, evident when considering the role of social networks which may both extend into the social field of the household, but may also constitute a social field separate from the household. For example, access to networks that facilitate migration may be guarded by young migrants' parents and accessing these networks may, therefore, be subject of bargaining in the field of the household. However, Green and Hill have shown that children shape their own destinies, even in a structured environments, in ways that is consistent with a recognition that children are sentiment beings [33]. Thus, some of the children may migrate using their own networks, making them less dependent on the household when it comes to migration decision making processes. Furthermore, the importance of social networks and social capital is well-recognised in migration studies [34-35].

The role of networks has received some attention in work on child mobility. However, this analytical dimension is somewhat obscured by the term independent child migration, which, on the surface, suggests that, children migrate alone without any facilitation [26]. Iversen deals with questions of

networks and social capital in child migration most thoroughly and incorporates this into the conceptual idea of household-based bargaining processes in his work on child migration in Karnataka, India. [18] Iversen hypothesises that, migrant children may benefit from their parents' superior social networks when looking for migrant jobs and from their parents' superior bargaining skills for negotiating an employment deal. The child may further benefit, Iversen hypothesises, from cooperative migration decision-making because this way the young migrant is more likely to receive psychological and financial support when settling down in the migrant job and maintains the right to return in case migration fails [18]. The advantage of cooperation on the part of the parents as suggests by Iversen stems from access to the child's migrant earnings. Cooperation between children and parents thus, appears to be, at a hypothetical level, to be mutually advantageous [18]. However, Iversen shows the household network variable he computed in his statistical analysis of autonomous child migration to be insignificant. More conclusive is Iversen's work on the importance of child migrants' own social networks [18]. Amongst his autonomous child migrants, Iversen, indicates that nearly 30 percent have used their own networks to find migrant jobs and only 12 percent were found relying on kin and relatives to access migrant work [18].

Studies that conceptualise migration as a social process have shed further light on the limitations and pitfalls of understanding migration, migrants' agency and the relations constraining migrants' agency solely from a household or sending site perspective. Works on migration as a social process has emphasised that social identities of migrants are not fixed but may be reworked through the very process of migration [19, 36, 37]. This implies that the various social relations that shape children's social position in the household and the local community may have only limited or possibly no analytical applicability in other stages of the migration process. Social identities may be reworked by child migrants themselves [19, 36]). This may in part be related to life course dynamics, such as rites of passage, since some of the child migrants are mostly found in the transitional phase between childhood and adulthood [37].

Furthermore, dynamics of child mobility may also stem from structural power relations that exists in the households of these child migrants. Studies have shown that women have little say when it comes to decision making within households in especially some developing countries. Agarwal asserts that, socio-cultural norms define the extent of women's voice within the household in most of such countries [38]. Evidences from other developing countries show that women's age and family structure are the strongest determinants of women's authority in decision making [39].

They also, contend that, older women and women in nuclear households are more likely than other women to participate in family decisions.

The causal effects of child trafficking is highly felt when it comes to decision making in the household in giving out children to serve powerful fisherfolks in fishing communities. Research conducted by Eshun, Golo and Dankwa on livelihood strategies and outcomes of fisher folks in selected rural coastal communities of Ghana revealed that parents who struggled for survival may often give out their kids to serve on the purpose of bettering their lots [40]. Golo and Eshun's study on assessing climate change related events on the rights of subsistence in the rural coastal communities of Ghana, concludes that climate related events is making fisherfolks to lose their livelihood thus having a rippling effects on their kids upkeep, thereby letting them to be more vulnerable [41]. This may results in children being involved in hazardous activities to make a living, thereby jeopardizing their future [42]. These indicate that, enormous effort would have to be made by civil societies, religious, governmental and non-governmental institutions in tackling the glooming effects of trafficking and 're-trafficking' of children in the coastal fishing communes of Ghana.

3. Methodology

The study incorporated one district each from Volta Region, Brong Ahafo Region and Greater-Accra Regions. There was no sampling frame to use for the study, so a combination of probability and non-probability sampling procedures were employed in the selection of a relatively small sample of respondents for detailed study. The sampling was multi-staged. The first stage was the determination of the districts within the pre-selected regions - the Volta, Central, Brong Ahafo and Greater-Accra Regions. Purposive sampling technique was employed in selecting four (4) districts. Ketu South and Dangbe East districts in the Volta and Greater Accra Regions respectively (located along the coast) and Kete-Krachi West and Sene East districts in the Volta and Brong Ahafo Regions respectively (located along the Volta Lake). Their selection was based on the fact that a large proportion of the population in these districts do not only engage in inland and coastal fishing respectively, but also employ child labour in their fishing activities [7] and therefore represent the characteristics of both coastal and inland fishing districts.

The second stage involved the listing of all fishing communities within the four districts and their random selection, using the lottery method, of 4 communities from each district. Thus, a total of twelve (12) communities/villages were selected for the study. Given the

resources available for the research, Forty (40) respondents, made up of sixteen (16) re-trafficked children and twelve of their parents/guardians as well as eight (8) "slave masters" and four (4) "slave mistresses" were selected from the twelve communities for the study, using purposive sample method. Four (4) males and females each of reintegrated trafficked children were purposively selected for focus group discussions in two separate coastal and inland fishing communities. The focus group discussion in particular provided an opportunity for the 're-trafficked' children to discuss vital questions that were put forward by the researchers in group. Information from the rest of the re-trafficked children, their parents/guardians and eight "slave masters" and four "slave mistresses" was retrieved through in-depth interview. Ethically, information such as names, gender and location concerning some of the respondents were changed to ensure our informants' anonymity. Mainly, qualitative way of using direct quotations and interpretative techniques were adopted in analysing the data. The results and discussions and presented in the next section.

4. Results and Discussions

The data on the socio-demographic background of the respondents were analysed, using simple percentages. The socio-demographic background of the respondents indicates that, out of the 16 rescued children who were interviewed, majority of them (63%) were males, while 37% were females. The sex/gender differences among the rescued children are due to the fact that, the nature of work in the coastal fishing communities and along the lake is tedious, therefore, most of the 'masters' prefer boys to work with, while the 'mistresses' deal with the females.

Also, data gathered showed that, none of the rescued children was more than 14 years old when they were trafficked. Seventy-six per cent (N=16) were between 8-12 years old, while 24% were between 3-7 years old. Very few were seen with their siblings. Fifty-six percent of the respondents interviewed were between 13-17 years. The information clearly indicates that, all the respondents are children. According to the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, "a child is a person under 18 years of age". The 1999 ILO Convention on Worst Forms of Child Labour (C182) indicates that the term "child" apply to all persons under 18 years. These children are mainly used because they are naïve, have no knowledge about their rights and are therefore abused. Most of these children indicated that they were trafficked from communities in the Central, Western, Greater Accra and Volta Regions to their current place.

Twenty-eight per cent of children have primary education, (42%) were having primary education, (26%) were not

schooling, while (4%) were schooling at the Junior high school level before the trafficking. The results imply very low level of education of these children. Most of these children when interviewed stated that, they are from very poor homes. All the parents/guardians of the 're-trafficked children interviewed indicated that they earned between Ghc. 150.00 and Ghc. 200.00 a month, which is woefully inadequate and far less to enable them live on one dollar per day. Consequently, they are unable to cater for education of their children. Single parents, poverty, broken homes and demise of parents may lead to untold hardship of children from the sending communities. This may results in children being involved in hazardous activities to make a living, thereby jeopardizing their future [42]. These children are forced to drop out of school due to parental neglect or the inability of the surviving parent or guardian to cater for their schooling. In this effects Eshun, Golo and Dankwa on livelihood strategies and outcomes of fisher folks in selected rural coastal communities of Ghana revealed that parents who struggled for survival may often give out their kids to serve on the purpose of bettering their lots [40].

4.1. Re-trafficking: Poverty and Children's Agency

The reintegration process of the rescued children is expected to lift the self-worth of the children, to enable them start or continue their basic education and to have a happy fulfilling life with their families. However, some of these reintegrated trafficked children have since found their way back to where they were rescued. The response to the overarching question asked on how children's mobility or 're-trafficking' is shaped by their agency, network and negotiation is illustrated in Edem's exposé.

Edem, who was 16 years old, at the time the study, was trafficked to work at Kpakpakorfe with some other young boys at the age of 11. Edem was rescued and reintegrated with his family in Ada but he had returned to his 'slave master' with some of his colleagues. According to him, he decided to return to his master because he found life with his parents rather unpleasant due to hardship and hunger. According to him, he could barely get enough to eat at home. He said "my parents do not have money so we were always suffering at home. That is why I came back with my friend. I did not inform my parents because I was afraid to do so." Edem explained further that, two of his friends who were also reintegrated with their parents in the Central Region had also returned to join him (Excerpts of interviews with Edem, 29th April, 2018).

Edem's case was not exceptional, as 7 out of the 16 rescued trafficked children interviewed indicated, that they decided on their own to return to their master, a short period of time,

after they were rescued and reintegrated with their family.

This is what Kwame, a 16 year old trafficked boy who was rescued but returned to his master, had to say in support of Edem's story, during the focus group discussion:

For me, at first it was my parents who gave me out to a man to bring me to my master in this village. This time, nobody brought me back, I run away from my parents because I prefer staying here than staying with them. I missed my friends very much. (focus group discussion with rescued trafficked children, 7th May, 2018).

A similar case found was the one in which Mensiwa, a 17 year old rescued trafficked girl' who also returned to her 'slave madam' after her reintegration due to the death of her mother shortly after she had re-joined the family.

Mensiwa was 14 years old when she was rescued from her 'slave madam' and reintegrated with her single mother at Biriwa. She has two siblings, a younger brother, and a younger sister. According to Mensiwa she lost her mother through lorry accident almost a year after joining her. After that tragic event, Mensiwa quit school and returned to Amutinu village to continue working for her madam. As the elderly children out of the three, she spent her days doing domestic work, processing and selling of fish for a fee to support her siblings who are staying with her aged grandmother back home. Mensiwa explained that, she decided to join her 'slave madam' as some of her friends had gone back to her. According to Mensiwa apart from the aged grandmother, nobody from the extended family was not willing to cater for them like what her single mother was doing before she passed on. She argued further that, it was no fun staying in Biriwa in the Central Region when her siblings were starving. She reported that, although her colleagues always make mockery of her because she was a trafficked girl in the village, returning to work for her madam for a fee was the only way to save her siblings from hunger. (Interviews with Mensiwa conducted between February and March, 2018).

These interview notes resonate with the claims of many villagers that, most of the rescued trafficked children are finding their way back to their 'slave masters and madams due to the recurring hardship they face with their parents/guardians'. Majority of the slave masters and mistress, during the interview, explained that although they did not hesitate in releasing the trafficked children for reintegration to their various families, some of them are either finding their way back on either on their own or being sent back by their parents/guardians. For example, four of the fishermen (and a slave masters) confirmed that, because of the way they treat the trafficked children, most of them who were rescued from them and sent to their parents had

returned on their own to continue working with him.

Look here, we do not abuse these children, we feed them, clothe them, provide them with better medical care and other necessary things than what their parents would have provided them with. That is why they do not want to leave us. These make them to always stay with us. Even if the government should take them away from us some of them will still come back. You see, most of these children did not have food to eat when they were in their various homes. After all these children know what is good for them. That is why many of them decided to return on their own, after they were taken away. The government thought we were abusing them. Not at all, they do the same work my own kids do. I do not discriminate, so they love me as a father. I am a father and know what is good for them. (Interviews with Kafui at Bakpakorfe on 19th April, 2018).

Kafui's explanation is supported by Esinu, a single mother at Amutinu, who lamented that the current effort by the Government through some NGOs to rescue and reintegrate the trafficked children with their families without sufficient financial support was bound to put some of these families in a more difficult financial situation (Interview with Esinu, 27th January 2018). Like Esinu, many other parents/guardians of the 're-trafficked children could not hide their anger and frustration by blaming the government for not compensating them with adequate financial support or alternative source of livelihood. Some of the parents/guardians and slave masters intimated that practices such as bonded child labour and child servitude, for example, should not be discouraged because they were normal practices that contribute to the welfare of many poor households. Therefore, as expressed by one of the father of one of the 're-trafficked children, "sending our children back to us without any adequate financial or material compensation or support has complicated our already precarious financial situation as bonded child labour (bonded child labour is a practice whereby parents/guardians take a loan from well to do people and send their children to work for them to defray the loan) has always been our last option for survival" (interview with Komla, 23rd May 2018).

Moreover, many of the parents/guardians as well as slave masters and mistresses were of the view that the extended family support system which used to protect the family and its members in most fishing communities has currently failed to absorb poor members due to dwindling catches. They explained that, the perennial economic hardship in coastal fishing communities in particular has destroyed the social value to protect the family and its members, especially children, within the existing web of relations: kin, families and friends on which they could fall back for economic and social security.

You see, the kin and familial social mechanism are no longer reliable in providing security for poor families in the present increasingly insecure socio-economic environment like the fisheries. Hence, although some of the parents are aware of the Government's efforts to eradicate the trafficking business, they continue to release or resend their children to us (Interview with Chief fisherman and a slave master at Bakpakorfe, 19th June, 2018).

The finding of this study concur with Skelton's assertion that "the elimination of trafficking is unlikely to be realistically achieved through legislation and declaration of intent, but by improvements in the socioeconomic states of the populations involved" [43]. These include safety nets for the most vulnerable; opportunities for households to their assets as well as provision of utilities. In this regard, rethinking of combating child trafficking within poor communities in Ghana through a comprehensive study on how children and parents/guardians cope with poverty and hunger is thus imperative to appropriate intervention policies. This should be done through a multi-level rather than a micro-level analysis of livelihood trends of rural fishing communities; not only of the responses to the changing conditions, but how these conditions interact with their socio-cultural environments.

Also evidenced in this study is that, some of the reintegrated children who could not depend on any other means to survive, have no alternative way of surviving than to migrate on their own to their various places where they were rescued. Edem's case in this study, for example, demonstrates how the children were able to exercise their agency through networks and negotiation skills in the trafficking discourse is echoed in the work of Iversen [18]. Also, the finding in this study that, ordinary events in the household developmental cycle, such as death of parents can have an impact on child migration or 're-trafficking' as observed in Mensiwa's case resonates in Sparkes [44]. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child views children as human beings with the rights to participation, autonomy, and self-determination. Thus, seeing children as subjects of capabilities means that they can be considered as people endowed with agency and autonomy, able to make choice or decision just like their adult counterparts towards their own welfare. Sen argues that the "... capabilities that adults enjoy are deeply conditional on their experience as children". The fact that some of the children decided to return to their slave masters on their own is something that policy makers and those NGOs working to eliminate child trafficking cannot be ignored [45]. This also means, children should no longer be seen as the passive recipients of welfare enhancing help from adults, but as active social actors and agents in their communities with their own priorities, strategies and aspirations. Understanding children's agency role as observed in this study is central to recognizing the 're-trafficked' children as a responsible persons who act or refuse to act and can choose to act one way rather than the other for their well-being.

However, the Palermo Protocol, which supplements the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime states that, any agency on the part of children in recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt is irrelevant in case these children have ended up in situations of exploitation. [21] The above explanation strengthens Sen's proposition that, insofar as the process or agency aspect of freedom demands that a person should be making his or her own choice, that aspect of freedom is not particularly relevant to the human rights of children, except in some rather minimal ways [46]. In this context, the trafficked children's exercise of their agency and freedom, as evidenced in this study, should not have culminated into undermining of their fundamental human rights, but improving their well-being in a less exploitative and less hazardous manner. Therefore, the emerging evidence in this study that some of the children migrated as a result of their individual decisions, based on a rational cost and free choice, does not insulate their situation from the child trafficking discourse.

4.2. 'Re-trafficking' and Intra-household Decision-making

This section considers decision-making power in terms of intra-household positions (that is husband and wife) regarding migration or 're-trafficking' of children in the study areas. This includes the ability to take decisions and act on issues that pertain to their lives and those of their children and other members of their household. These issues also include contribution of resources to meet household needs, paying for children's education, health and other needs.

Sen posits that, there are a number of potential solutions to differences in goals and strategies, the adopted one being the result of the bargaining ability of power of individuals [29]. Ability, to him, is not a personal negotiating skill because, while household member may have divergent views on how to invest resources, use labour, and so on, they do not all come with equal resources to the bargaining table. Sen, therefore, argues that the intra-household dynamic is most usefully represented as co-operative conflict in which he formulates intra-household decision-making as a bargaining process between members with unequal power [29]. Control over children's labour has been identified as an important issue underlying such inter-generational bargaining processes concerning migration of children. It is evidenced in this study (both trafficked victims and their parents/guardians) that, factors such as socio-cultural norms impact negatively on women's decision-making powers regarding their children's

migration or trafficking. This is demonstrated in Mary's case.

Mary is a 41 year old mother of seven children: four boys and three girls (all below the age of majority). Her husband is a fishing crew but takes to excessive drinking. Mary earns a 'very low' income from petty trading. Her husband barely provides for her children's school fees, medical care and food. Mary takes every responsibility of all the children. Despite Mary's husband's irresponsible life, he used his position as the head of the house and went for a loan from a fisherman at Yeji and forced two of their sons (including one who had returned from a master at Mogyaduro in the Sene East district) to go and work for the man for two years as a way of defraying the loan. Mary could not prevent her husband because in her community, women are forbidden to disobey their husband to avoid divorce.

This is what she had to say:

I am a mother of seven children. Even though my husband works as fishing crew, he spends all his money on drink. He hardly provides for the children's education, medical bills and food in the house. I solely look after the children but my husband went for a loan from a well to do fisherman at Yeji last year and sent two of our boys to go and work for the man for two years to defray it. I could not refuse because in our culture, women are supposed to be submissive to their husband in all circumstances. Husbands in this community hardly contribute resources to meet household needs, but they have more power when it comes to decision making in the house. There are only two options. You either divorce or keep quiet and stay in hardship. Moreover, divorced women are not respected in my community so to some of us, our husbands are just like light that shines on our path. As a result of society frowning on divorce and the respect one get from society as a married woman is preventing many women initiating divorce. This has made some men to be irresponsible.

This was clearly confirmed in a focus group discussion with one of the 16 re-trafficked children, which suggest that their migration or 're-trafficking' is as a result of fathers' decision. This was particularly the case with Geoffrey:

I saw that my mother was sad. My mother asked my father to rescind his decision of giving me out to work. While my mother insisted, my father got annoyed and told my mother that if she does not take time, he would divorce her and send her packing to her father and mother.

Wisdom, a 17 year old child trafficked victim who was rescued, but re-trafficked by his father against her mother's wish, further illustrates decision-making powers in terms of intra-household positions in the study communities. With the question: How did you come back to your master and why?

This is what Wisdom had to say:

My father asked me to go back. My father will not listen to my mother. My mother is always afraid of my father. Anything my father says is final. Nobody speaks his or her mind at home. My mother talked to me by telling me how much she would miss me because I had come back home not quite long and helping her with her business. She was very concerned, because I was very sick when my father first brought me here. So she was worried that something would happen to me again. I now have friends here so am ok. I don't know why, but when I was sent back to them in my village, I always hear my father shouting at my mother. I am sure my father owes my master. (Excerpt from interview with Wisdom, 3rd April, 2017).

From the findings it can be deduced that, the apparent increase in 're-trafficking' of children in the study communities may be partly related to the weak decision-making powers and position of women in the household, which is shaped by socio-cultural norms. Existing work on child trafficking attributes considerable importance to the role of poverty which compelled parents to release their children to middlemen and women in the trafficking business [9, 40]. This implies that parents who try to survive poverty are at times bound by trading off their children with the husbands spearheading it, even if the wives are reluctant.

Punch working on child trafficking and child migration have pointed at the importance of the role of parents in the child 'trafficking' and child migration [47]. It is found in this study that, parents are the prime agents in the 're-trafficking' networks of their children. The above is empirically demonstrated in Wisdom's case in this study. The evidence in this study is in line with Punch's argument, on the basis of research conducted in Bolivia, that mothers may feel pressure from their husbands to push their children to migrate at an early age to earn income to support the family. According to Punch's finding, remittances of migrating children are often, in part, used to finance extended school participation of younger siblings [47].

From both social and legal standpoints, the child cannot assumed responsibilities in many situations. Parental responsibility, in the context of this study, refers to the rights and privileges which underpin the relationship between a child and either of the child's parents (both parents) or those adults who have the significant role in the child's life. To a great extent, both parents have the power to make decision about whether their children should fall victim of traffickers or not. This implies that parental responsibility can play a significant role in minimising child trafficking. It is, however, evident from the findings of this study that women had less power in decision concerning of their children's mobility

despite the fact that most of them provide for the household needs suggest that decision-making powers and position of women are not only determined by their responsible roles, but socio-cultural norms. The case of Mary in this study has also demonstrated that socio-cultural norms, such as social unacceptability, sets limits on what can be negotiated and define issues that can be legitimately bargained over by women concerning their children's mobility or 're-trafficking'. This is in line with Agarwal assertion that, socio-cultural norms define the extent of women's voice within the household [38].

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Not all re-trafficked children were coerced; some exercise their agency in their 're-trafficking' through negotiation and networking to find their way back to their places of rescue to continue working with their 'slave masters and madams. It is a strategy they adopt to escape hardship at home with their parents after they were rescued. It is also evident from the findings of the study that intra-household gender relations and position of women was influenced by socio-cultural norms. This determines women's bargaining powers relating to decision-making concerning their children's mobility. The findings of this study indicates that decision-making concerning child migration or 're-trafficking' favours and works in the interest of men but not women. This makes fathers the prime agents in the 're-trafficking' networks of their children.

The finding deepen our understanding of first, how socio-cultural norms and institutions automatically give the male head of the household authority over his wife and children and tend to make women to have less control over household resources. Any attempt to reduce trafficking and 're-trafficking', therefore, calls for the need of government of Ghana and other stakeholders to collaborate with traditional and religious leaders to find the way forward for the country by abandoning cultural norms and practices which weaken women's rights and intra-household position. Such attempt should also geared towards putting in place workable legislation, policies and strategies to ensure that parents/guardians play active protective role in the life of their children/wards.

It was established that both parents and children play a major role in the 're-trafficking' phenomenon. That is, while the 're-trafficking' in the study areas thrives primarily on parents' decisions and negotiations, the rescued and reintegrated trafficked children, due to unfavourable conditions at home, at times manoeuvre their way back to where they were rescued. This study thus recommends that, Government and

other stakeholders should adopt bottom-up approach to tackle the child trafficking and 're-trafficking phenomena for appropriate intervention policies. This should be done through effective consultation with, and involvement of, the trafficked children, their parents/guardians and their slave masters and mistresses in all child trafficking intervention decision-making processes. This will also enable them to realize their potentials as agents of change in their respective communities.

References

[1]   Miko, F. T. (2003). Trafficking in women and children: The U.S. and international response. CRS Report for Congress, Congressional Research Service.

[2]   UN (2006). *Frequently asked questions on a human rights-based approach to development corporations*. New York: United Nations.

[3]   Adepoju, A. (2005). *Review of research and data on human trafficking in sub-Saharan Africa.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

[4]   Dottridge, M. (2002). Trafficking in children in West and Central Africa. *Gender and Development, 10* (1), 38-49.

[5]   Pauly. D. 2006. Toward consilience in small-scale fisheries research. *Maritime Studies, 4,* 7-22.

[6]   Béné, C. (2004). *Poverty and small-scale fisheries in West Africa*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.

[7]   Golo, H. K. (2015). Interplay between coping/survival strategies and child trafficking in fishing communities in Ghana. *American Journal of Social Sciences, 4* (3), 15-25.

[8]   Anarfi, J. S., Ofosu-Mensah A., & Tiemoko. R. (2003). Migration from and to Ghana: A background paper. Working paper C4, Sussex: Centre for Migration Research, Institute of Development Studies.

[9]   Tengey, W., & Oguaah, E. (2002). *The little Ghanaian slaves: A cry for help of child trafficking in Ghana*. Accra: The Danish International Development Agency – Ghana Office.

[10]   UNICEF, (2003). *Trafficking in human beings, especially women and children in Africa.* Florence: Innocenti Research Centre, United Nations Children's Fund.

[11]   IOM (2004). *Yeji trafficked children project: First circular report.* Accra: Ghana.

[12]   ILO/IPEC (2004). *Support for the implementation of time-bound measures for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour in Ghana.* Geneva: International Labour Organisation and International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour.

[13]   Brown, C. K. (2005). A study on child trafficking in sending communities of the Central Region of Ghana. Research report, University of Cape Coast, Centre for Development Studies.

[14]   Swepston, L. (2014). *Forced and compulsory labour in international human rights law*. Geneva: ILO.

[15]   Guinn, D. E. (2007). *Defining the problem of trafficking: The interplay of U.S. law, donor and NGO engagement and the*

local context in Latin America. Retrieved from https://ssrn.com/abstract=892154 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.892154.

[16] Children's Act (1998). Act of Parliament of the Republic of Ghana. Accra, Ghana.

[17] De Lange, A. (2007). Child labour migration and trafficking in rural Burkina Faso. *International Migration, 45* (2), 147-167.

[18] Iversen, V. (2002). Autonomy in child labour migrants. *World Development, 30* (5), 817-834.

[19] Thorsen, D. (2006). Child migrants in transit: Strategies to assert new identities in rural Burkina Faso. In C. Christiansen, M. Utas., & H. E. Vigh, (Eds), *Navigating youth, generating adulthood: Social becoming in an African context* (pp. 88-114). Uppsala: Nordiska Afrika institutet.

[20] Punch, S. (2007). Negotiating migrant identities: Young people in Bolivia and Argentina. *Children's Geographies, 5* (1), 95-112.

[21] UN Palermo Protocol (2000), Adopted by UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/55/25 of November, 2000 entered into force 25 Dec. 2003 United Nations Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.

[22] ILO (2009). *Training manual to fight trafficking in children for labour, sexual and other forms of exploitation*. Geneva: ILO.

[23] McGregor, J. A., & Kebede, B. (2002). *Resource profiles and the social and cultural construction of wellbeing*. Bath: University of Bath.

[24] Ansell, N. (2009). Childhood and the politics of scale: Descaling children's geographies? *Progress in Human Geography, 33* (2), 190-109.

[25] Dobson, M. E. (2009). Unpacking children in migration research. *Children's Geographies, 7* (3), 355-360.

[26] Whitehead, A., & Hashim, I. (2005). *Children and migration: Background paper for DfID migration team*. London: Department for International Development.

[27] Kabeer, N. (2000). *The power to choose: Bangladeshi women and labour market decisions in London and Dhaka*. New York: Verso.

[28] Kabeer, N. (1999). Resources, agency, achievements: Reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment. *Development and Change, 30* (3), 435-464.

[29] Sen, A. K. (1990). Development as capability expansion. In K. Griffin., & J. Knight (eds.), *Human development and international development strategy for the 1990s*. London: MacMillan.

[30] Redmond, G. (2009). Children as actors: How does the child perspectives literature treat agency in the context of poverty? *Social Policy, 8* (4), 541-550.

[31] Lister, R. (2004) *Poverty*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

[32] Panter-Brick, C. (2002). Street children, human rights, and public health: A critique and future directions. *Annual Review of Anthropology, 31*, 147-171.

[33] Green, S., & Hill, M. (2005). *Researching children's experiences: Methods and methodological issues*. London: Sage Publications.

[34] Massey, D. S., Hugo, J. A., Kouaouci, A. G., Pellegrino, A., & Taylor, J. E. (19930). Theories of international migration: A review and appraisal. *Population and Development Review, 19* (3), 431-466.

[35] Curran, S. R., & Saguy, A. C. (2001). Migration and cultural change: A role for gender and social networks. *Journal of International Women's Studies, 2* (3), 54-77.

[36] De Haan, A. & Rogaly, B. (2002). Introduction: Migrant workers and their role in rural change. *Journal of Development Studies, 38* (5), 1-14.

[37] Jónsson, G. (2008). *African perspectives on human mobility*. Oxford: International Migration Institute, Oxford Department of International Development, University of Oxford.

[38] Agarwal, B. (1997). Bargaining and gender relations: Within and beyond the household. *Feminist Economics, 3* (1), 1-51.

[39] Sathar, Z. A, Shahnaz, K. (2000). Women's autonomy in the context of rural Pakistan. *Pakistan Development Review, 39*, 89-110.

[40] Eshun, I., Golo, H. K., &., Dankwa, S. (2018). Livelihood strategies and outcomes of fisher folks in selected rural coastal communities of Ghana. *Journal of Culture, Society and Development, 48,* 35-46.

[41] Golo, H. K., & Eshun, I. (2018). Assessing climate change related events on the rights of subsistence in the rural coastal communities of Ghana. *International Journal of Weather, Climate Change and Conservation Research, 4* (2), 1-17.

[42] Golo, H. K., Attom, L. E., Brew, E., & Eshun, I. (2018). Human rights issues of child labour and economic activities: The way forward. *American Journal of Social Science Research, 4* (2), 40-52.

[43] Skelton, R. (2000) Trafficking: A perspective from Asia. *International Migration (Special Issue), 1,* 7-28.

[44] Sparkes, S. (2005). *Spirits and Souls: Gender and cosmology in an Isan village in Northeast Thailand*. Bangkok: White Lotus.

[45] Sen, A. K. (1999). *Development as freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[46] Sen A., (2007). Children and human rights. *Indian Journal of Human Development, 1* (2), 1-12.

[47] Punch, S. (2001). Negotiating autonomy: Childhoods in rural Bolivia In L. Alanen and B. Mayall (eds), *Conceptualizing child–adult relations*. London: Routledge.