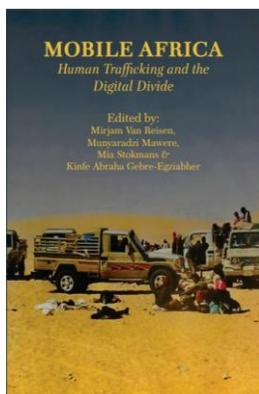


Bound Together in the Digital Era: Poverty, Migration and Human Trafficking

Munyaradzi Mawere

Chapter in: Mobile Africa: Human Trafficking and the Digital Divide

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Bound Together in the Digital Era: Poverty, Migration and Human Trafficking

Munyaradzi Mawere

Introduction

Mixed migration is a hot topic of discussion at the moment with talk of a ‘migration crisis’, viewed mostly from a Western perspective. At the same time, human trafficking has become a global epidemic, which occurs in all countries of the world, but more often from ‘less developed’ to ‘developed’ countries. Although different in scope and nature, trafficking is often conflated with mixed migration. There is a relationship between the two phenomena – although this link is not always clear.

Poverty in the digital era has a new face. Those living in poverty are often attracted by the opportunities offered by migration or targeted by traffickers, who lure them with false promises of marriage or a high-paying job. However, rather than lifting them out of poverty, many find themselves trapped in a cycle, where poverty drives migration and trafficking, which results in more poverty. The solution? Tackle the root cause: enhance livelihoods and the resilience of vulnerable people living in poverty by democratising access to digital innovation.

Analysis of the literature on trafficking in persons and mixed migration shows that there is a lack of research in Africa on the link between poverty, human trafficking and mixed migration. For instance, Kashumba (2014, p. 3) observed that “the prevalence of human trafficking and mixed migration in Zimbabwe has not been empirically and scientifically verified due to challenges which include the absence of enabling legislation and limited funding to undertake

the research at a national level”. The question, therefore, remains: *What are the root causes of human trafficking and mixed migration?*

This chapter looks at the underlying causes of human trafficking and mixed migration in the context of mixed migration trajectories, with a focus on Africa. In the following sections, I will critically examine the intricate relationship between human trafficking and mixed migration, and how the two are connected to poverty. I will then look at the political-economy sustaining human trafficking and mixed migration in an attempt to unravel their underlying causes. Finally, I will come to some conclusions and hopefully inform those who seek to make policies to protect those vulnerable to human trafficking and to enable Africans to find futures at home.

The relationship between human trafficking and mixed migration

Although a relatively recent phenomenon, mixed migration has come to mean different things to different people depending on their orientation. The term has become the latest buzzword, assuming different definitions and interpretations, both conceptually and historically. It has indeed become “the cliché of our times” (Held, McGrew, Golblatt & Perratin, 1999, p. 6), with scholars like Castles and Miller (1998) pronouncing that “we are living in the age of migration”. However, generally speaking, mixed migration can be understood as the complex and irregular movement of people to a foreign country for a certain length of time and includes refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants and other migrants (UNHCR, 2006). It can be broken into four different sub-categories, some of which overlap: migration, irregularised migration, smuggling, and human trafficking. These categories, captured under the rubric of mixed migration, serve as a contra point to the concept of ‘mobility’, which is generally understood as a positive thing, practised for economic growth, tourism, upward mobility, exposure and experience.

Human trafficking can be understood as one element of mixed migration. Van Reisen and Rijken (2015) describe how the terms

smuggling and human trafficking are often used interchangeably, depending on the person's knowledge of the deliberate exploitative nature of the journey. Smuggling can also become trafficking: migrants may initially pay smugglers to start their journey, but end up in the hands of traffickers. Human trafficking often has multiple layers and can be difficult to distinguish from mixed migration, particularly migration in irregularised situations, where people without documents are assisted to illegally traverse national borders. In fact, many migrants in irregularised situations use smugglers to facilitate their journey, inadvertently ending up in the hands of traffickers. The United Nations Convention on Human Trafficking defines human trafficking (or trafficking in persons) as:

...the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons either by threat or use of abduction, force, fraud, deception or coercion, or by the giving or receiving of unlawful payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having the control over another person for the purpose of exploitation. (UNODC, 2004)

Similarly, the US Department of State (United States, 2013) defines human trafficking as “the act of recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing, or obtaining a person for compelled labour or commercial sex acts through the use of force, fraud, or coercion”. It is on this basis that the US Attorney General, Loretta Lynch, in her introduction to the *National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking*, describes human trafficking as: “a devastating crime that threatens society's most vulnerable members, exploiting them for sex, labour, and servitude of all kinds... destroying families, shattering lives, and undermines our most fundamental beliefs about the dignity of all people” (United States, 2017).

The term mixed migration seems to be associated with poverty, not mobility, and has a negative connotation. However, mixed migration may include the movement of highly skilled and wealthy people, as well as unaccompanied minors, smuggled persons, stateless persons, victims of human trafficking, stranded migrants and other vulnerable persons in transit. Different forms of migration are highly stigmatised. In Zimbabwe, the local Shona vernacular distinguishes

‘bad’ migration (*kujamba bhodha*/border jumping) from ‘good’ migration (*kuenda mhiri*/going abroad). In the first form, the people involved usually migrate illegally to another country without proper documentation (such as a valid passport), mainly because they cannot afford to secure proper documentation. These people are generally fleeing poverty in the place of origin. This differs from the good form of migration, which refers to people who go abroad and who, because of their status (as wealthy or educated), can financially and legally afford to travel. This means that migration has different values attached to it. While seeking to become part of the ‘good’ high-end spectrum of migration, mixed migration trajectories are followed. Human traffickers and smugglers prey on people with such aspirations.

A close look at human trafficking and mixed migration clearly shows that both are complex, multi-layered and diverse social phenomena, especially if we realise that the movement of both migrants and human trafficking victims can be forced. In addition, both types of migrants are increasingly making use of the same routes and means of transport to get to their destination (Van Reisen & Rijken, 2015). Worse still, where legal entry to the preferred state is impossible, both mixed migrants and human trafficking victims often use the services of human smugglers, putting their own human rights at risk. Thus, more often than not, mixed migrants and the victims of human trafficking are both vulnerable groups – the defenceless and people in poverty – whose rights end up in the hands of criminals. Their situations pose a formidable challenge to humanitarian aid actors in terms of accessing and assisting these people.

In addition, there can be a continuum between mixed migration and human trafficking as migrants – for example, economic migrants and refugees – can become trafficking victims, and vice-versa. Different forms of migration may intersect at some point in the migration process, for example, in relation to the motivation to move, use of the same agents or brokers, and interactions with mixed communities. This mixed migration-trafficking nexus makes human trafficking and mixed migration a more complex multi-layered problem that needs

researching beyond the borders of one discipline in order to understand and contain it. Thus, although different in nature and scope, efforts to address the problems associated with mixed migration and human trafficking go hand-in-hand, making it even more difficult to deal with either issue, especially at policy and judicial levels:

Trends in global patterns of migrant smuggling are difficult to assess. A range of factors such as the lack of regular migration channels, high visa fees, the often lengthy bureaucratic procedures and increasingly restrictive entry requirements, coupled with a demand for the various contributions migrants make and services they provide, may create the conditions and incentives for migrants to engage the services of smugglers.
(United Nations, n.d.)

Mixed migration, therefore, encompasses those forms of migration that are the opposite of regularised and organised migration for work in formalised market environments. It is understood in this chapter as mobility that can change form during the one journey. Mixed migration is generally carried out along migratory pathways in which regularised and irregularised migration, as well as smuggling and human trafficking, may be present simultaneously or successively in one trajectory. Thus, mixed migration can also involve human trafficking.

Poverty, the main driver of mixed migration

In Africa, poverty remains an issue, not because the continent lacks natural and human resources, but due to the continued influence of neo-colonialism, which maintains a stranglehold on Africa and its resources. While poverty on the continent was previously driven by conquest and subjugation by the colonial regime, which, besides looting, instituted the privatisation of communally-owned resources, today it is perpetuated in more subtle ways, such as direct resource externalisation, under-invoicing, tax evasion, capital flight, corruption, bribery and debt repayment, all with the complicity of African governments (Mtapuri, 2017; Mawere & Nhemachena, 2017). One of the most debilitating aspects of the fight against poverty on

the continent is the political denial of the fact that poverty is manmade and the result of the denial of rights.

One of the major problems that co-exists with poverty is migration, which also promotes (human) capital flight from Africa, thereby, depriving the continent of its human resources. Mixed migration is acknowledged as having multiple causes (see, for example, Brewer, 2008; Lehnardt, 2016), which vary from one country (or place) and continent to another. However, in many countries of the world, especially in Africa, there seems to be one main cause of mixed migration: poverty.

This brings us to the topic of development, and the relationship between migration and development. De Haas, a leading scholar in the area, warns against a deterministic theorising of the relationship between migration and development. He claims that development may in fact encourage migration, stating:

Rather than absolute poverty, a certain level of socioeconomic development, combined with relative deprivation in the form of global inequality of development opportunities, seems to be the most important cause of migration. To a large extent this can also explain why leading emigration countries (e.g. Mexico, Morocco, Turkey, the Philippines) typically do not belong to the group of least developed countries. (De Haas, 2005, p. 1271)

Warning against a naive connection between migration and poverty, De Haas (2010) proposes an empirical-based approach to explain the relationship between migration and development.

While the link between migration and development has been extensively studied (for an overview, see De Haas, 2010), the causes of new forms of human trafficking and its rapid expansion in the last decade have been much less considered. Chuang (2006) warns that the socio-economic causes of human trafficking are often overlooked and points to the need to address lack of access to economic, social and cultural rights as a long-term remedy to effectively combat human trafficking. Poverty, which can be understood as the *lack* of material or immaterial ‘necessities’ (see Mawere, 2017; Sen, 1999), creates and

sustains the economy of mixed migration and human trafficking. There is an intricate relationship between poverty and mixed migration/human trafficking, in terms of both their root causes and their impact on human society, as will be discussed in the next section.

The cycle of poverty and human trafficking

The past few decades have witnessed an uptick in human trafficking (Finn, 2016; SIDC, 2003; Russell, 2014). It is widely acknowledged that poverty is both a cause and a consequence of human trafficking (in as much as it is also a cause and a result of mixed migration) (Mawere, 2017). Abundant literature on human trafficking exists. Most of it, understandably, emphasises economic hardship, political instability, lack of a safe environment for children, early marriages, population explosion, discrimination, and lack of birth registration as causes of human trafficking (see, for instance, Brewer, 2008; Lehnardt, 2016). These are all symptoms of poverty.

Basing his argument on a literature review, Adepoju (2005) identifies the root cause of human trafficking as poverty, citing “deepening poverty, deteriorating living conditions, persistent unemployment, conflicts, human deprivation, and hopelessness” (see also, Salah, 2004). He states:

Deepening rural poverty forces poor families to give up their children to traffickers, under the pretext of providing them the opportunity to secure good jobs and better lives (Dottridge, 2002). Poverty, lack of access to education, unemployment, family disintegration as a result of death or divorce, and neglected AIDS-orphaned children, make young persons vulnerable to traffickers (ILO, 2003; Moore, 1994). (Adepoju, 2005)

As mentioned in the previous section, poverty is multi-dimensional and generally connotes a state of lack (of necessities, opportunities, and freedom) (see Sen, 1999; Mawere, 2017). This resonates with Ramlogan’s (2004, p. 140) observation that “poverty, in its most extreme form, is the condition that exists when people lack the means to fulfil basic human needs, adequate and nutritious food, clothing,

housing, clean water, and health services”. It also coheres with Narayan and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development’s (2000, pp. 4–5) assertion that poverty is a multi-dimensional deprivation that “includes hunger, illiteracy, illness and poor health, powerlessness, voicelessness, insecurity, humiliation, and lack of access to basic infrastructure”. Poverty, therefore, undermines people’s liberty to make independent decisions over their own lives; it robs them of the chance to decide on matters of basic importance to them as people and is, therefore, a denial of rights.

Poverty has political, economic, cultural and social implications. It renders people powerless: it deprives them of choice, access to protection from the violation of their rights, and access to material resources. The powerlessness and vulnerability that come with poverty render victims worthless and prone to making risky choices (Kidane & Van Reisen, 2017). Such choices may “include resorting to migrant smugglers, which in turn makes them more vulnerable to trafficking in persons (TiP) and associated forms of exploitation and abuse” (United Nations, n.d.).

Unfortunately, there is a knowledge gap that exists on the link between poverty and the various forms of human trafficking, as well as how to combat them. More specifically, poverty is rarely considered as the greatest contributor to human trafficking in global discussions and national-level policy frameworks, such that the nexus between them remains underexplored. The few studies that do link poverty to human trafficking focus more on the feminisation of poverty, as they seek to link poverty and human trafficking with the sex trade (Fayomi, 2009; Bancroft-Hinchey, 2001). This calls for a need to constantly interrogate the epistemological, methodological and theoretical approaches to the study of human trafficking.

Inserting Africa and its people at the centre of that interrogation, I argue the centrality of poverty as a cause of human trafficking (and migration), which is supported by the fact that there have been several decades of initiatives to curb trafficking in persons that have failed to improve the situation of the vulnerable and those in poverty.

Basically, there is a two-way causality, whereby people (and countries) in poverty have a greater disposition to human trafficking, while at the same time poverty itself is an outcome of human trafficking. In other words, poverty can put people at risk of human trafficking and human trafficking results in poverty.

In many countries in Africa, victims who are living in extreme poverty, who have limited economic and social opportunities and are largely unprotected in terms of their rights, are often targeted by traffickers who lure them to leave their homes with false promises of marriage, high-paying jobs, and a good life. Observing the situation in Africa, a report by Swedish International Development Cooperation revealed that:

People become the victims of human traffickers mainly due to inequitable resource allocation and the absence of viable sources of income. Families have no assets and incomes are inadequate. In the countryside, agriculture is less profitable than formerly and land has become increasingly scarce. Women and children are therefore compelled to contribute more towards the family's subsistence than in the past. Households become increasingly vulnerable as margins shrink. Social security schemes are either lacking or do not reach the poorest, most disadvantaged sections of the community... In many countries in Africa, the spread of HIV/AIDS places ever increasing responsibility for support on the surviving family members, themselves often children. The principal economic causes on the demand side of the equation include the substantial profits to be made in the sex trade and the call for cheap labour. (SIDC, 2003, pp. 15–16)

In Africa, the vulnerable – particularly women and children – are the most targeted when it comes to human trafficking. Women comprise at least 56% of the world's trafficking victims (Kubatana.net, 2010). The presence of women and children as victims of human trafficking can be explained by the feminisation of poverty, in that women and children can access rights to a lesser extent and are, therefore, more prone to exploitation and extortion in mixed migration trajectories. However, Yuval-Davis (2009) observes, importantly, that human trafficking is larger than just a gender problem and she warns that the equation of women and children as the sole victims of human

trafficking creates a bias in the empirical understanding of human trafficking. She states that “the idea of a female ‘victim’ of trafficking who is in need of ‘rescue’ and ‘return’ is a pervasive image that is often conjured up and negates scholarly attempts to establish a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of trafficking” (see also Jeanse, 2007; Jobe, 2008; Ihme, 2008; Gregoriou, 2018).

Once entrapped, traffickers manipulate the victim’s lack of means to get themselves back home, limited ability to communicate in the language spoken in the place where the victim is dislocated, and isolation from friends and family to compel them to comply with the traffickers’ demands. The label of ‘illegality’ that is increasingly accompanying persons in ‘mixed migration’ trajectories, compounds the denial of their right to protection and inclusion in the place where the migrants find themselves.

Moreover, “while often thought to be largely comprised of sexual exploitation, people are also trafficked for the purpose of forced labour, i.e., working as domestic servants without pay or similar practices” (Finn, 2016, p. 2; see also Reianu, 2012). However, some, especially in Africa, are trafficked for ritual purposes. Markets for body parts in Africa are on the rise, with the number of missing women and girls shooting up, as some people believe that human body parts, especially those of women and girls, enhance profits in business (The Herald, 2007; United States, 2009; The Australian, 2004).

Studies on trafficking in the Southern Africa region (IOM, 2003; Katerere, 2007) estimate that 1,000 Mozambican women and children are trafficked to South Africa every year for slavery and sexual exploitation, while in Zimbabwe over 200 women were allegedly lured by Kuwait’s former ambassador to Zimbabwe, Ahmed Al-Jeeran, before being trafficked to Kuwait with the promise of lucrative jobs (All Africa, 2016). A report by the Daily News in Zimbabwe alleged that, “from February to August 2016, Zimbabwe has been affected by trafficking in persons at an unprecedented scale, with an estimated 200 victims trafficked to Kuwait, and just over 101

repatriated by August 2016” (Mananavire, 2016). Survivors of trafficking described themselves as socio-economically disadvantaged people, impoverished by the faltering economy in Zimbabwe, who were lured by opportunistic predators who promised them lucrative jobs. Some of the women trafficked were sexually abused while others were subjected to forced labour and other forms of slavery. A report released by News Day in May 2016 spoke of 32 women who had returned home after escaping from their captors; one was pregnant from sexual abuse (News Day, 2016). The US State Department’s Trafficking in Persons report states the following:

South Africa is a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking. South Africans constitute the largest number of victims within the country. South African children are recruited from poor rural areas to urban centers, such as Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, and Bloemfontein, where girls are subjected to sex trafficking and domestic servitude and boys are forced to work in street vending, food service, begging, criminal activities, and agriculture. Many children, including those with disabilities, are exploited in forced begging. (United States, 2016, p. 2)

In 2013, the US State Department’s Trafficking in Persons report revealed that Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi are among the nations that remain source and destination countries for men, women and children subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking (United States, 2013).

Given the exploitative nature of human trafficking, the worst form is equal to slavery. Without control over their body and mind, and in no way benefiting from the profits made from their exploitation, the victims of human trafficking are held as slaves. The Global Slavery Index (Walk Free Foundation, 2014) estimated that 106,000 people were enslaved in South Africa, while Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo had 762,900 and 834,200 enslaved people, respectively.

Deliberate poverty

The process of human trafficking can be divided into three main phases: recruitment, transfer from the country (or place) of origin, and exploitation. Of interest here is the third phase, where it becomes clear that the victim has been trafficked. Trafficking is made possible by the deliberate impoverishment and control of the victim. This is explicitly captured by Van Reisen, Estefanos and Reim (2017) in relation to human trafficking in Eritrea; these authors argue that, through its state officials, Eritrea has been engaging in the trafficking of its own people for ransom since the end of 2010 or even earlier. As the authors note, “a deliberate policy of impoverishment [in Eritrea] is at the basis of the system, which promotes the black-market economy and creates dependency” (Van Reisen *et al.*, p. 22). The authors emphasise the deliberate creation of a poverty-based society as prey for the human traffickers, made possible by complicity between officials and human trafficking networks.

In Southern Africa, especially Zimbabwe, the black-market economy has dominated since the dawn of the new millennium, forcing many into unemployment and poverty. A former teacher previously employed in the Zimbabwean Ministry of Education, who is now a black market money changer in Masvingo City, commented as follows:

With the current inflation in Zimbabwe, working in the formal sector has become useless. Basic commodities have become scarce in the formal market. You go to the black market, everything you want is found in excess, but at an exorbitantly high price. What pains most is that the black market is sustained by the government bigwigs-cum-business people, who create artificial shortages so that they [can] channel the basic commodities to [the] black market where they fetch more. The situation is difficult to control because those who should control it are government officials (or highly connected people linked to government officials), who happen to own the black market. It's difficult, but who suffers is us the ordinary people. This is why many people, especially the young and unemployed, go out of the country, others ending up in the hands of human traffickers. (Anon., personal communication, 30 October 2018)

What the government officials in Zimbabwe and Eritrea have been allegedly involved in may be regarded as a deliberate attempt not only to impoverish, but to dehumanise and control their people. This, the officials do by making sure that everyone focuses on survival. This is a form of manipulation aimed at stifling people's self-respect and limiting their potential to influence events. In this way, the officials keep a tight grip on both political and economic power.

Also, important to note is that trafficking does not only occur across borders, but also happens inside a country. There are cases of under-aged forced marriages. In addition, many young girls are brought from rural areas and exploited as maids in domestic servitude after being promised a good salary; young boys are brought to farms and exploited as farm labourers after being promised good working conditions. All are forms of internal trafficking. Furthermore, indefinite conscription in the military, such as in Eritrea (United Nations, 2016), which qualifies as slavery according to the United Nations, is another form of deliberate impoverishment and servitude.

Human trafficking is described by many scholars and organisations as modern-day slavery (Fayomi, 2009; US Department of State, 2009). The suffering involved in human trafficking makes it one of the most despicable, degrading and inhumane forms of abuse and exploitation, one that fragments communities, distorts victims' personalities, disrupts their family institutions, and leaves them broken and impoverished. The cost of human trafficking to its victims is incalculable and the ill-treatment suffered ranks among the most abusive and damaging atrocities in human history. What also remains clear is that there is a cyclical element to trafficking that involves being trapped in a cycle of poverty and vulnerability on which human trafficking networks prey, rendering communities and people even more vulnerable as the cycle goes on (see also, Van Reisen, Estefanos & Rijken, 2013).

Trafficking in a digital age

With the spread of digital technology, human trafficking and mixed migration have become even more common and complex. Technology has made trafficking easier. It has made people more mobile and opened up new ways of communication, facilitating the transfer of money and information beyond borders. Global communities (diasporas, family and friends in the country of origin and fellow migrants) support each other, increasing the access of migrants to economic and social capital (De Haas, 2010; Ong'ayo, 2019). However, such technology has also affected the social fabric of communities (Van Stam, 2017) and undermined systems of social protection in local spaces, resulting in new forms of vulnerability and insecurity.

What is even more worrying is that technology continues to transform in a manner that outpaces current trends in human security. The differentiated access of people to technology is exploited, resulting in new and extensive intercontinental human trafficking operations supported by digital technologies (Van Reisen & Mawere, 2017; Van Reisen *et al.*, 2017. In a recent study, Van Reisen and Rijken (2015) elaborated a new form of human trafficking – human trafficking for ransom – which they say is specifically related to digitalisation. The authors point out that trafficking for ransom emerged more or less at the same time as mobile connectivity became a global phenomenon and is now common at the border between Eritrea and Sudan, as well as in countries like Mexico, Malaysia, and the United States of America.

Digital technologies have allowed those at the top of the human trafficking networks to remain invisible, directing global networks of handlers to do the dirty work, while they enjoy the profits, enabling them to invest in new routes in order to traffic even more victims. Remittances through mobile money transfers facilitate such journeys, while further impoverishing communities and relatives in the diaspora and enriching the global criminal human trafficking networks, which continue to operate largely with impunity.

Slavery and trafficking for ransom: A profitable industry

Adepoju (2005) identifies different forms of human trafficking within Africa, including the trafficking of women and children from rural areas to capital cities for bonded labour, as well as onwards journeys to Europe (Veil, 1998), pointing to the global connectedness and organisation of such trade. Worldwide, human trafficking has resulted in an estimated 27 million victims, with at least 14,000 people being trafficked annually into the United States (ILO, 2012; Gutow, 2010). Victims are reduced to commodities and traded on the international market. The ‘industry’ brings in annual profits of about USD 32 billion worldwide to perpetrators and is the third largest illicit economy in the world, after drugs and arms smuggling (Chiweshe, 2017). As Ludwig Fairberg, a convicted trafficker, revealed: “You can buy a woman for USD 10,000 and make your money back in a week if she is pretty, healthy and young. Then everything else is profit.” (Fairberg, cited in Lehnardt, 2016, p. 2)

Lehnardt goes on to say that:

A human trafficker can earn 20 times what he or she paid for a girl. Provided the girl was not physically brutalised to the point of ruining her beauty, the pimp could sell her again for a greater price because he had trained her and broken her spirit, which saves future buyers the hassle. A 2003 study in the Netherlands found that, on average, a single sex slave earned her pimp at least USD 250,000 a year. (Lehnardt, 2016., p. 3)

Shifman (2003) shows that human trafficking is increasing each year, as its lucrative nature continues to attract more traffickers. While human trafficking is historically a recurrent phenomenon, more people are currently living in bondage than at any other time in human history (Gutow, 2010). Although reportedly concentrated in South Asia, Northern Africa, East Asia, and Latin America, human trafficking, as with mixed migration, affects every country in the world, either as countries of origin, transit or destination.

Regrettably, although there is ample evidence that human trafficking occurs in Africa, there has been no systematic study on how the practice is carried out. A study by the Swedish International Development Cooperation found that:

Although data for other areas in Africa are sparse in the extreme, there is evidence that the trafficking in persons does occur. Women and children are transported from different parts of Africa to the Arabian Peninsula, Europe and other African countries. The victims are usually exploited for sexual purposes, domestic work or as cheap labour. For example, South Africa has now become a destination country, reflecting the rapidly expanding sex trade there. Crime syndicates from Central and Eastern Europe, South Asia and West Africa are thought to be involved in the trafficking. (SIDC, 2003, p. 13)

In a study on human trafficking for ransom in the Sinai, Van Reisen *et al.* (2013) estimated that 35,000 persons had been trafficked between 2006 and 2012 for a total estimated value of USD 600 million. These ransom payments are nearly all profit, once the cost of transport and protection money to pay off officials and handlers have been subtracted. This makes trafficking a profitable business, with the possibility of expansion in countries with large informal economies and people with a high level of vulnerability and limited protection (Van Reisen & Mawere, 2017). Trafficking operations are spread across continents (Van Reisen & Mawere, 2017). In fact, human trafficking is one of the fastest growing criminal enterprises in the world, because it carries relatively low risk and has high profit potential. Criminal organisations are increasingly attracted to human trafficking because, unlike drugs, humans can be sold repeatedly (Lehnardt, 2016).

Kidane and Van Reisen (2017) point to the extractive nature of human trafficking, countering the argument that mixed migration can be a source of development on the continent. Having extensively researched the individual and collective trauma resulting from people's experiences while on mixed migration journeys, they identify the state of hopelessness of many migrants as a motivating factor in their choice to take risky onward journeys. They identify the

unscrupulous extraction of resources (including financial resources) of entire communities as a factor that helps sustain mixed migration pathways, seriously undermining the resilience of communities at home and in the diaspora. This affects the mental health of all those involved and generates a cycle of hopelessness, which feeds into their engagement with risky migration trajectories. The vicious negative spiral of mixed migration, based on increased fear and lack of hope, provides fertile ground for human traffickers.

An African perspective on combatting human trafficking through the eradication of poverty

Human trafficking is a cross-cutting problem: it respects no boundaries, whether national or continental. With increased globalisation, the problem crosses national borders and, therefore, requires cooperation between countries. The political and socio-economic nature of human trafficking, thus, necessitates a sustained, comprehensive continental and global strategy to address it. As Karlsson (2003, p. 5) notes, “combating human trafficking as combating mixed migration is no simple task”. A wide range of collaborative action is needed in several policy areas and sectors across the whole of society.

However, research demonstrates that there is reason for hope, despite factors that conspire against social protection and those living in poverty, the powerless, the dispossessed, and the vulnerable (Mameli, 2002). There are a number of strategies that Africa (and the world) can adopt to successfully combat this deliberate and calculated exploitation of the powerless. The need to monitor trends related to poverty, particularly in areas vulnerable to disasters, climate change, and political instability and that lack rule of law, is one such strategy. As Mameli (2002) suggests, transnational police organisations can play a significant role with respect to preventing and investigating the activities of the global sex industry. This resonates with Naim’s (2003) argument that strengthening existing multilateral institutions, revising our universal conception of sovereignty when it comes to allowing states to pursue traffickers in other countries, and devising new

mechanisms and institutions with which to enforce laws would go a long way to combatting human trafficking.

I would like to add that awareness campaigns on human trafficking in migrant source areas, especially among local communities and governments, can also help prevent human trafficking. This can be facilitated by training community leaders, holding community meetings, and making drama shows, posters, and video documentaries that highlight the dangers of human trafficking. At the national and international levels, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) emphasises the following action as vital:

...counter trafficking orientation for police, military and local government officers in partnership with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Protection Cluster; and co-organising capacity-building trainings for government and non-governmental organisation partners on victim identification, referral and assistance with UN partners and other relevant stakeholders. (IOM, 2016, p. 10)

Another effective way of dealing with human trafficking is by ensuring equality, especially gender equality. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Radhika Coomaraswamy, explains the predominance of women as victims of human trafficking as follows:

The lack of rights afforded to women serves as the primary causative factor at the root of both women's migrations and trafficking in women. The failure of existing economic, political and social structures to provide equal and just opportunities for women to work has contributed to the feminisation of poverty, which in turn has led to the feminisation of migration as women leave their homes in search of viable economic options. Further, instability, militarism, civil unrest, internal armed conflicts and natural disasters also exacerbate women's vulnerabilities and may result in [an] increase in trafficking. (Fayomi, 2009, pp. 75–76)

This observation by Coomaraswamy is a cause of concern. In view of this observation, I argue that progressive strengthening of the role and status of women and girls, while promoting gender equality in all aspects of development cooperation work, is more urgently needed

now than ever to put an end to women's subordination and to guarantee them equal opportunities. This is critical if we are to provide women and girls with a life free from violence and discrimination, which in itself "reinforces and magnifies poverty, powerlessness and vulnerability of women" (Fayomi, 2009, p. 76).

In addition, building the capacity of governmental and non-governmental institutions to effectively respond to the challenges posed by human trafficking can also be of great help. All governments of the world, under the terms of the human rights instruments currently in force, are responsible for protecting people against human trafficking and abuse of their rights. This means that "the governments of the countries of origin, all transit countries and final destination countries respectively are directly responsible for implementing the necessary measures to prevent and fight human trafficking, protect the victims and provide adequate support" (SIDC, 2003, p. 7). Thus, collaboration between countries and with the assistance of the international community is critical to combat human trafficking. This can be facilitated by ensuring that perpetrators are prosecuted and that there are measures for protection, not only for prevention, in place at the national level. This means that governments should protect, through legislation and policies, those who are vulnerable to trafficking. Law and policy, if effectively enforced, can constrain the demand for the services of smugglers and reliance on trafficking. The first step is to ensure that all countries are signatories to important conventions and regulatory frameworks for human trafficking.¹

¹ These include the 2000 United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children; 1979 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); and 1999 Convention 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, among other instruments. The adoption and effective implementation of these legally-binding documents would make all countries stakeholders in the global struggle against human trafficking.

Furthermore, monitoring the outflow of vulnerable populations by setting up screening desks at strategic exit points such as border posts, while linking these populations to preventive, rescue and support programmes and international networks can also help address human trafficking. This would help establish a registration database for all displaced persons in camps, with camps established according to updated guidelines for a secure environment. In addition, such monitoring would ensure that information on trafficking in persons reaches the grass-roots level, as it connects the victims (and potential victims) with organisations involved in the prevention (of human trafficking), prosecution (of perpetrators), and protection (of victims of human trafficking) and that partner (with victims and potential victims) to help them change their lives for the better.²

Lastly, I think addressing poverty at all levels is the most effective way of addressing human trafficking. In this chapter I have argued that poverty is the main cause of human trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa, yet more often than not, efforts are made to address the symptoms, without tackling the root causes, of human trafficking. It is always better to promote durable solutions to a problem than short-lived ones. In fact, for Africa to effectively deal with the human trafficking crisis requires both political and economic commitments. While those culpable for committing human trafficking can be directly blamed for the practice, blame should also be apportioned to national governments that are either reluctant to vigorously pursue cases of human trafficking or fail to implement an action package that would address the transformational needs of vulnerable people. Unfortunately, the current politico-economic responses to human trafficking in Africa fail to address the socio-economic causes that make people vulnerable to traffickers and human smugglers. We should remember that the unchanging status of the marginalised –

² Prominent among such organisations and international networks which rescue and support victims of trafficking include Anti-Slavery International; Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE); End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking in Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT); Human Rights Watch; Plan International; Save the Children Alliance; World Vision; Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW); and Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (GAATW).

the impoverished, the powerless, women and children – in Africa, as elsewhere, is reflected the rise of human trafficking in society at large.

What Africa needs to do in the face of such an overwhelming reality is to ensure that poverty (and its cause, inequality) is eradicated from the face of the continent. Such a grass-root remedy would help ensure that the basic economic, social, political, and cultural rights of the powerless, the stigmatised and the devalued are promoted. This proactive approach, however, is often overlooked in research and work on human trafficking. Unfortunately, human trafficking will forever remain a problem for Africa and the world as long as we live in an unequal society marred by poverty. For the eradication of human trafficking, those in poverty and the powerless need to have a ‘place in the world’ – a place where their status is improved and their rights fully recognised and respected by others. There is an urgent need for Africa and the world to promote sustainable development and for the deeper cooperation of the wealthy with those living in poverty for the betterment of all. I am convinced that progress in these areas can greatly advance efforts to eliminate human trafficking from the face of the Earth.

Conclusion

Addressing human trafficking, is both a worthy and honourable challenge to our *being*, our humanity. The academic world can play its part in addressing this challenge by answering the question ‘what needs to be done’. It is in this light that I have examined the political economy of mixed migration and human trafficking, which expose millions to abuse, exploitation and servitude. I have underlined the lack of systematic research, especially in Africa, on the link between poverty and human trafficking. I have also highlighted the little understood link with digital technology. I have described human trafficking and poverty as bound together, noting that in Africa (as in many other parts of the world) poverty is both a cause and a consequence of human trafficking. Human trafficking constitutes a crime against humanity. Hence, I am calling on all governments, institutions, researchers and individuals to do what is necessary to

ameliorate poverty and prevent the continuation of this demeaning and destructive act against humankind.

I argue that poverty, rooted in inequality and lack of protection of rights, is intricately linked to mixed migration and human trafficking. Due to poverty, people are motivated to migrate, and it is during their migration journeys that they fall victim to human trafficking. Hence, to a great extent, poverty motivates migration, while migration forms a centre point between poverty and human trafficking.

This chapter, thus, argues that developing countries and people living in poverty have a greater disposition to human trafficking. As such, human trafficking feeds off poverty, inequality, scarcity of resources and external extracting economic forces. Similarly, human trafficking, as evidenced in Eritrea, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and South Africa, result in poverty. I argue that, in Africa (as in many parts of the world), poverty is the principal driver of human trafficking. In this analysis, human trafficking is seen as a symptom of poverty.

In light of this understanding, I advance that as long as we live in a poverty-stricken society where inequality runs deep, human trafficking (and mixed migration) will remain a global problem. Deliberate poverty traps communities in a vicious cycle of poverty and human trafficking, from which human trafficking networks and the officials who maintain the state of deliberate poverty are profiting. Outside actors may strengthen the policies that advance deliberate poverty by rewarding officials who keep their people in a state of oppression, sustaining mixed migration and human trafficking.

Human trafficking can only be eliminated if governments and the people of Africa, and the world at large, fully commit to eradicating poverty. We need to recognise that everyone needs 'a-place-to-be' and those trapped in the downward spiral of mixed migration and human trafficking are most of all in need of a safe place where they can live in dignity. Victims of Human Trafficking deserve to be recognised as rights holders and it is an international responsibility to protect them.

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