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An Investigation into the Causes and Impacts of Human Trafficking in Sex, Labour and Organs

By Shravan Gopal and Iris Brandon

Briefing Note

This report will highlight the worldwide issue of human trafficking, which especially plagues underdeveloped countries in Africa and Asia. We will look at three key areas: sex trafficking, forced labour and organ trafficking. We focus our report on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), as human trafficking is a particularly problematic issue here; it allows us to analyse human trafficking in greater depth. This briefing section gives an overview of the key issues in the aforementioned three areas, summarising their key causes, consequences and significance. We shall then proceed to provide more detailed insights.

Overview

In this section, we find that human traffickers target vulnerable people, such as refugees, people in extreme poverty, women and children. They are enabled to do so by poor enforcement of laws, which is seen especially in the DRC due to an unstable state. The impacts of human trafficking are serious; victims suffer marginalisation, abuse, severe health risks and children suffer immensely in their development.

SEX TRAFFICKING

Sex trafficking

Sex trafficking victimises those in vulnerable social, political and economic conditions.

- Sex trafficking typically victimises those living in extreme poverty and facing political or economic instability and marginalisation, as they often lack rights, education and access to basic services¹.
- This extremely vulnerable position makes victims easier to exploit; victims are typically lured by false promises of economic opportunities such as employment or education².
- Many people in the DRC are particularly vulnerable to sex trafficking due to these conditions.
 - 73% of the population of the DRC live in poverty³ and around 5.3 million people are displaced due to political crisis, conflict and violence⁴.
 - An estimated 99% of sex trafficking victims in the DRC are illiterate and have never attended school, and do not recognise that they are victims of sex trafficking⁵.
- The majority of victims of sex trafficking and exploitation are women and girls⁶.
- Women lack power in the household and political sphere in the DRC⁷ and have faced significant sexual violence in areas of conflict⁸, which makes them particularly vulnerable.

¹ End Slavery Now. (n.d.). *Sex Trafficking | Human Trafficking for Sex*. End Slavery Now. Retrieved February 6, 2022, from <http://www.endslaverynow.org/learn/slavery-today/sex-trafficking>

² Ibid

³ The World Bank. (2021, October 27th). *Democratic Republic of Congo Overview: Development news, research, data | World Bank*. World Bank Group. Retrieved February 6, 2022, from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/drc/overview#1>

⁴ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. (2021, January 31st). *Democratic Republic of the Congo | IDMC*. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. Retrieved February 6, 2022, from <https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/democratic-republic-of-the-congo>

⁵ Jenkins, S. D. (2012, March). *Preliminary Assessment of Trafficking in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*. The International Criminal Court Forum — Human Rights and International Criminal Law Debates. Retrieved February 6, 2022, from https://iccforum.com/media/sdj_human_rights_project/2012-03_SDJ_Human_Rights_Project_at_UCLA_Report-Trafficking_in_the_DRC.pdf

⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (n.d.). *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Retrieved February 6, 2022, from https://www.unodc.org/documents/Global_Report_on_TIP.pdf

⁷ Gliniecki, B. (2012, March 12). *Oppression of women in the Democratic Republic of Congo, "the Rape Capital of the World"*. Marxist.com. Retrieved February 6, 2022, from <https://www.marxist.com/opression-of-women-in-congo.htm>

⁸ UN official calls DR Congo 'rape capital of the world'. (2010, April 28). *BBC News*. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8650112.stm>

- In Eastern DRC, where there are high levels of conflict, 8000 women were raped in 2009 and 60% of these rape victims were gang raped by armed men⁹.
- Rape and sexual violence is used as a war tactic to shame families and communities¹⁰.
- Victims of sex trafficking crimes are discouraged to file reports through fear and coercion¹¹.

The legal framework around sex trafficking in the DRC is inadequately enforced.

- The legal framework around sex trafficking in the DRC criminalises and prosecutes all forms of sex trafficking to a sufficient extent, with punishments in line with other serious crimes¹².
 - The 2006 Sexual Violence Law criminalised child sex trafficking and sexual slavery¹³.
 - Child sex trafficking carries a penalty of 10 - 20 years imprisonment, while penalties for sexual slavery range from around 5 to 20 years imprisonment and fines of up to \$120¹⁴.
- However, there is a large difference between the punishment of sex trafficking in law and in reality. The weakness of the judicial system in preventing, investigating and punishing sex trafficking crimes may be due to state corruption and officials' lack of understanding of sex trafficking crimes¹⁵.
 - Despite reports of wide scale sex trafficking by NGOs (such as the abduction of 1,135 women by armed groups for sexual slavery in April 2019), the government of the DRC continue to make insufficient efforts to investigate and prosecute sex trafficking crimes¹⁶.
 - In 2020, only one person was convicted of sex trafficking crimes in the DRC¹⁷.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (n.d.). *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Retrieved February 6, 2022, from https://www.unodc.org/documents/Global_Report_on_TIP.pdf

¹¹ The Borgen Project. (2020, November 25). *Human Trafficking in the DRC*. The Borgen Project. Retrieved February 6, 2022, from <https://borgenproject.org/human-trafficking-in-the-drc/>

¹² US Department of State. (2020). *2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: Democratic Republic of the Congo*. State Department. Retrieved February 6, 2022, from <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-trafficking-in-persons-report/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Ibid

- State corruption and involvement in sex trafficking, particularly perpetrated by the FARDC (the military in the DRC) is a major concern as it is largely unpunished¹⁸.
- Margot Wallstrom - the UN's special representative on sexual violence in conflict - attributes sexual violence in the DRC to the inadequate enforcement of the law, rather than the law itself¹⁹.
- Wallstrom suggests that impunity is the rule rather than the exception regarding crimes of sexual violence or exploitation, and that "women have no rights, if those who violate their rights go unpunished"²⁰.

Sex trafficking is harmful to victims as well as to society, the economy and health

- Sex trafficking denies victims of their human rights and exposes them to highly dangerous conditions such as physical, emotional and sexual abuse and increased risks of contracting HIV and other STIs²¹.
- There is a large societal cost of sex trafficking: the forced absence of women may lead to family breakdown and the neglect of children and the elderly; victims of human trafficking are often ostracised from their communities if they return; young victims may face developmental problems²².
- Sex trafficking also poses an economic and political issue for states because sex trafficking attracts large crime syndicates which can use violence, bribes and intimidation to control communities and officials, and may have more control of an area than the government²³.

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ UN official calls DR Congo 'rape capital of the world'. (2010, April 28). *BBC News*. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8650112.stm>

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ M'Cormack, F. (2011, December 8). *Helpdesk Research Report: The impact of human trafficking on people and countries* Date: 12/08/2011 Query: Please provide an over. GSDRC. Retrieved February 6, 2022, from <http://gsdrc.org/docs/open/hd780.pdf>

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid

**FORCED
LABOUR**

Forced labour

Labour trafficking is particularly prevalent in the DRC due to rampant poverty and a strong mining industry.

- Approximately 73% of people in the DRC live in extreme poverty, classified as living on less than \$1.90 per day²⁴
- 43% of children are malnourished²⁵
- The country has had numerous developmental challenges, such as 13 waves of the Ebola virus and the disastrous impacts of climate change on rainfall patterns and biodiversity²⁶
- There are numerous armed groups in the DRC that used forced labour to gain profit, particularly in the mining industry²⁷
- Two of the largest groups, the FDLR and the FARDC for example, control the sale of minerals such as gold and tungsten using forced labour²⁸
- The labour-intensive nature of these unregulated mining operations means that human trafficking is particularly prevalent²⁹ (Verité, n.d.)

The unstable socio-political background of the DRC means that forced labour persists despite national and international laws.

- There is a lack of state authority and thus, laws aren't effectively enforced. This allows militant groups to attack villages and take hostages as slaves to work in mines and other jobs³⁰
- Victims are sometimes also unaware of the laws that forbid forced labour³¹

²⁴ World Bank. (2021, October 27). *Democratic Republic of Congo Overview: Development news, research, data | World Bank*. World Bank Group. Retrieved January 29, 2022, from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/drc/overview#1>

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Sanela Diana Jenkins Human Rights Project. (2012, March). *Preliminary Assessment of Trafficking in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*. The International Criminal Court Forum — Human Rights and International Criminal Law Debates.

https://iccforum.com/media/sdj_human_rights_project/2012-03_SDJ_Human_Rights_Project_at_UCLA_Report-Trafficking_in_the_DRC.pdf

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Verité. (n.d.). *Trafficking Risk in Sub-Saharan African Supply Chains*. Retrieved January 29, 2022, from <https://www.verite.org/africa/explore-by-commodity/gold/>

³⁰ Sanela Diana Jenkins Human Rights Project. (2012, March). *Preliminary Assessment of Trafficking in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*. The International Criminal Court Forum

³¹ Ibid

- The fact that victims are in great poverty means that they essentially become dependent on the traffickers for survival³²
- Another significant issue is the lack of a school system in the DRC, which enables children to be sent to mines, often encouraged by their parents. Children are particularly targeted by traffickers because they tend to be less aware of the dangers of the labour that they are involved in³³

Forced labour is economically and politically detrimental to the DRC.

- Forced labour is economically damaging to the DRC because the removal of trafficking victims from the workforce reduces human resources and future productivity (10).
- Human traffickers often force their victims into debt, which means that they are often unable to pay remittances which is particularly impactful in developing countries such as the DRC. It is estimated that this lack of remittances due to these forced debts reduces developing countries' development by \$60 billion annually (10).
- Human trafficking attracts large crime syndicates due to the industry's profitability (generating an estimated \$9.5b annually). These syndicates unofficially control large trade routes and territories which undermines the governments' ability to monitor or police these areas, thus reducing both the governments' economic and political power (10).
- Additionally, unregulated migration can put strain on countries' economy and services (10).

³² Ibid

³³ Ibid

ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Organ trafficking

Organ trafficking is a hugely manipulative industry that ruins victims' lives.

- Organ trafficking is the illegal harvesting and trade of organs in order to provide transplants for wealthy individuals. Organ harvesting can be forced, but more often it is agreed upon consensually, before the victim is scammed³⁴
- Brokers target people who are financially vulnerable and promise them a sum of money in return for an organ³⁵
- However, according to a gang member interviewed by the BBC, almost half of the victims don't get paid afterwards³⁶
- Even when they are paid, they are paid on average only \$5000, whereas an organ buyer spends on average \$150,000 for an organ³⁷
- Victims face a life of poor health afterwards, as they are vulnerable to disease and riddled with healthcare costs as a result³⁸

Organ trafficking brokers target the poor and migrants desperate to cross into Europe

- Those who attempt to leave Africa for Europe are particularly vulnerable to organ trafficking, as brokers promise to help them make the border crossing, or offer enough money for them to do so³⁹
- EU clampdowns on refugees in recent years has led to this issue becoming more prominent, as people become more desperate to reach Europe through unconventional means⁴⁰. This has given more opportunities for trafficking networks to manipulate migrants

³⁴ Jack, V. (2020, November 5). *COVID-19 a 'perfect storm' for organ trafficking victims*. SciDev.Net. Retrieved January 23, 2022, from <https://www.scidev.net/global/features/covid-19-a-perfect-storm-for-organ-trafficking-victims/>

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ BBC. (2020, September 14). *Egypt's organ traffickers: 'I woke up screaming'*. Retrieved January 23, 2022, from <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-middle-east-54150076>

³⁷ Koigi, B. (n.d.). *A penny for a kidney - Illegal organ trafficking in Africa*. FairPlanet. Retrieved January 23, 2022, from <https://www.fairplanet.org/story/a-penny-for-a-kidney-illegal-organ-trafficking-in-africa/>

³⁸ Farrer, S., & Cusack, J. (2020, June 16). *Why Illegal Trafficking in Organs is growing fast but few are talking about it*. Financial Crime News. Retrieved January 23, 2022, from <https://thefinancialcrimenews.com/why-illegal-trafficking-in-organs-is-growing-fastbut-few-are-talking-about-itby-steve-farrer/>

³⁹ Columb, S. (2019, February 9). *Organ trafficking in Egypt: 'They locked me in and took my kidney'*. The Guardian. Retrieved January 23, 2022, from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/feb/09/trafficking-people-smugglers-organs-egypt-mediterranean-refugees-migrants>

⁴⁰ Ibid

- Organ trafficking is hugely problematic in north Africa, with many smugglers operating in Egypt and Libya⁴¹
- Refugees who reach Egypt from Eritrea, Sudan and Syria are often targeted⁴²
- It is near impossible to quantify the size of the problem, due to the cross-border nature of organ trafficking and widespread under-reporting of the crimes⁴³
- However, it is estimated that 10% of all organ donations are made illegally⁴⁴
- There are also links to labour trafficking, with reports that migrants who don't find jobs are sold for organs⁴⁵

There is huge corruption and a poor legal framework, which has meant that organ trafficking persists.

- Government officials are reportedly involved in organ trafficking syndicates and personnel at border posts also take bribes, allowing the syndicate to thrive⁴⁶. This means that there is less political will to tackle the issue
- The extent of corruption is huge, with doctors in large hospitals and businessmen also involved in enabling organ trafficking to occur⁴⁷
- Organ traffickers are unlikely to be prosecuted, whereas their victims are at a much greater risk of being arrested, as traffickers target undocumented immigrants⁴⁸
- Criminal sanctions against organ trafficking have simply pushed the trade further underground, reducing the bargaining position of organ 'donors' and making it difficult to investigate the issue⁴⁹

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Jack, V. (2020, November 5). *COVID-19 a 'perfect storm' for organ trafficking victims*. SciDev.Net.

⁴³ Columb, S. (2019, February 9). *Organ trafficking in Egypt: 'They locked me in and took my kidney'*. The Guardian.

⁴⁴ Koigi, B. (n.d.). *A penny for a kidney - Illegal organ trafficking in Africa*. FairPlanet.

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ Columb, S. (2020, September 23). *Tracking down organ traffickers and their victims*. Thomson Reuters Foundation News. Retrieved January 23, 2022, from <https://news.trust.org/item/20200923161904-x3ozy/>

⁴⁹ Columb, S. (2016, August 27). *Excavating the Organ Trade: An empirical study of organ trading networks in Cairo, Egypt*. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 57(6), 1301-1321.

Insight

Overview

In this insight section, we delve deeper into the three types of trafficking that we outlined in the briefing section. We explore the causes of trafficking and explain some of the effects in more depth. Broadly, trafficking is prevalent due to extreme poverty and a lack of effective state enforcement of laws, which leaves people vulnerable without state protection.

Sex trafficking is prevalent due to a lack of government resources, the normalisation of sex crimes against women and government corruption

There is a damaging disparity between the investigation, punishment and prevention of sex trafficking crimes in law and in reality. The US Department of States' *2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: DRC*⁵⁰ states that the 'government did not make sufficient efforts to investigate the sex trafficking of women and children'. While the law outlines harsh punishments for traffickers, only one person was convicted of sex trafficking crimes in the DRC in 2020⁵¹, which leaves traffickers largely safe from punishment and victims extremely vulnerable. The worrying trend of impunity as the trend rather than the rule is encapsulated by UN special representative Margot Wallstrom: 'women have no rights, if those who violate their rights go unpunished'⁵². This section will address the main causes for the insufficient enforcement of the legal framework around sex trafficking crimes in the DRC. Firstly, a lack of government resources, procedures and training; secondly, state unwillingness to investigate sex crimes against women; and thirdly, state corruption and involvement in sex trafficking.

The lack of government training, procedures and resources dedicated to sex trafficking crimes certainly impedes on the ability of the DRC to investigate, prosecute and prevent against sex trafficking crimes. Firstly, the US Department of States' *2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: DRC*⁵³ suggests that law enforcement officers have a limited understanding and training in sex trafficking crimes. In particular, officers lack training in victim identification and often confuse sex trafficking crimes with other crimes such as illegal international adoption. Secondly, this report also cites the government's lack of 'standard operating procedures to systematically identify and refer trafficking victims to appropriate care'. Certainly, a lack of such effective procedures impedes the government's ability to investigate and protect the victims of sex trafficking crimes. For example, the DRC failed to effectively screen for trafficking among vulnerable populations, which contributed to the number of victims who remain detained and unidentified in the law enforcement system. Thirdly, the report suggests that the government of the DRC dedicate insufficient funding and resources to anti-trafficking efforts. For example, a body of

⁵⁰ US Department of State. (2020). *2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: Democratic Republic of the Congo*. State Department. Retrieved February 6, 2022, from <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-trafficking-in-persons-report/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² UN official calls DR Congo 'rape capital of the world'. (2010, April 28). *BBC News*. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8650112.stm>

⁵³ US Department of State. (2020). *2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: Democratic Republic of the Congo*. State Department. Retrieved February 6, 2022, from <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-trafficking-in-persons-report/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>

government officials, NGOs and international organisations created by the DRC in April 2019 to evaluate and enforce anti-trafficking policy, has not received the necessary funding to enforce the action plan. In short, the lack of training, effective procedures and resources place severe limitations on the ability of the DRC to police human trafficking.

In addition to an inability to effectively police sex trafficking crimes, there may also be an state unwillingness to do so due to the normalisation of sex crimes against women. The majority of sex trafficking crimes are against women and girls, who have significantly less domestic and political power than men⁵⁴. The commonplace nature of (unpunished) sex based violence may reduce the perceived severity of sex trafficking crimes. Women and girls have faced significant gender based violence in recent years, particularly in areas of conflict⁵⁵. Margot Wallstrom, the UN's special representative on sexual violence in conflict described DRC as the 'rape capital of the world'⁵⁶. Additionally, a mid-level local government employee stated that sex-based violence was a cultural norm and that women are blamed as provoking violence and abuse from their husbands⁵⁷. This rape culture seems to pervade the justice system of the DRC. Victims of sex trafficking are discouraged from filing reports due to fear and coercion⁵⁸ and victims' cases are tried in civil courts which very rarely compensate victims and thus discourage victims from pursuing justice⁵⁹. Therefore, the DRC seem somewhat unwilling to prosecute sex traffickers due to the normalisation of sex crimes against women.

Lastly, state corruption in the DRC and the alleged involvement of the armed forces in sex trafficking crimes hugely reduces government willingness to investigate and prosecute sex based crimes. The US Department of States' *2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: DRC*⁶⁰ states that widespread corruption hinders sex trafficking efforts across the country. The report suggests that the governments is complicit in some sex trafficking crimes and that the DRC continuously fails to hold its complicit

⁵⁴ Gliniecki, B. (2012, March 12). *Oppression of women in the Democratic Republic of Congo, "the Rape Capital of the World"*. Marxist.com. Retrieved February 6, 2022, from <https://www.marxist.com/opression-of-women-in-congo.htm>

⁵⁵ UN official calls DR Congo 'rape capital of the world'. (2010, April 28). *BBC News*. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8650112.stm>

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ Gliniecki, B. (2012, March 12). *Oppression of women in the Democratic Republic of Congo, "the Rape Capital of the World"*. Marxist.com. Retrieved February 6, 2022, from <https://www.marxist.com/opression-of-women-in-congo.htm>

⁵⁸ The Borgen Project. (2020, November 25). *Human Trafficking in the DRC*. The Borgen Project. Retrieved February 6, 2022, from <https://borgenproject.org/human-trafficking-in-the-drc/>

⁵⁹ US Department of State. (2020). *2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: Democratic Republic of the Congo*. State Department. Retrieved February 6, 2022, from <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-trafficking-in-persons-report/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>

⁶⁰ Ibid

officials to account. Due to the lack of data published by the DRC, it is particularly difficult to evaluate the extent of government corruption and compliance in sex trafficking crimes. However, 80% of public service employees in the DRC were paid a bribe in 2019 alone⁶¹ which suggests that corruption is a large problem. In particular, the US Department of States' *2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: DRC*⁶² cites credible allegations that the FARDC (the armed forces in the DRC) forcibly sex trafficked women and girls for sex slavery. Although 10 soldiers were detained for rape and abduction, they were released as victim identification originally showed that the women were over 18 years of age, although further investigation proved that many of the victims were girls.

⁶¹ Transparency International. (n.d.). *Democratic Republic of the Congo - Transparency.org*. Transparency International. Retrieved February 6, 2022, from <https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/democratic-republic-of-the-congo>

⁶² US Department of State. (2020). *2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: Democratic Republic of the Congo*. State Department. Retrieved February 6, 2022, from <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-trafficking-in-persons-report/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>

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Forced labour is enabled by widespread poverty and poor state law enforcement

A key driving force behind the prevalence of forced labour in the DRC is widespread poverty, which pushes people into conditions of exploitation. The DRC ranks 175th out of 189 countries in the Human Development Index (HDI) and 43% of children in the DRC are malnourished⁶³. Such poverty means that people are forced to extreme lengths to gain income and avoid food poverty. For example, there are cases of orphans working as slaves for rich families, with girls (most of whom are under 13) also being forced into sexual slavery alongside this⁶⁴. Another practice, called 'ingamba', is followed where parents send children to work for farmers in return for payment⁶⁵. This is done without regard for the child's preferences⁶⁶. In the case of children, forced labour often occurs due to them not being able to attend school, which means that they aren't given the means to gain formal employment and are left idle⁶⁷. Thus, they are left vulnerable to exploitation.

Another important cause of forced labour is the absence of state enforcement of the law, which allows militia gangs to force people into slavery. Certain parts of the DRC are under siege from militant groups, while armed groups in eastern DRC regularly attack or take control of villages⁶⁸. These areas are particularly prone to forced labour, as militant groups use forced labour in mines and other industries in order to profit themselves. This means that even if the legal framework forbids human trafficking, the lack of a state presence especially in the eastern regions means that trafficking is very prevalent.

Forced labour has a detrimental impact on the DRC, particularly on the economy, national security and the rule of law. The report 'The impact of human trafficking on people and countries' by M'Cormack explains the economic losses of forced labour due to loss of human capital, loss of remittances and use of funds to police forced labour. Firstly, forced labour creates a loss of human resources which reduces future economic productivity in the DRC. In particular, M'Cormack suggests that child victims do not have access to the safe conditions, healthcare or education, which reduces their capability of adding to the future productivity of the DRC. Secondly, the

⁶³ World Bank. (2021, October 27). *Democratic Republic of Congo Overview: Development news, research, data* | World Bank. World Bank Group.

⁶⁴ Jenkins, S. D. (2012, March). *Preliminary Assessment of Trafficking in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*. The International Criminal Court Forum — Human Rights and International Criminal Law Debates.

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ Ibid

⁶⁸ UK Government. (n.d.). *Safety and security - Democratic Republic of the Congo travel advice*. GOV.UK. Retrieved February 13, 2022

report states that victims of forced labour are often forced into debt, which means that they are unable to pay remittances. In developing countries including the DRC, remittances net around \$325 billion annually; lack of remittances from human trafficking victims reduce this figure by an estimated \$60 billion, thereby reducing economic development. Thirdly, M'Cormack explains that the funds used to prevent, police and punish forced labour detract from the funding dedicated to other projects.

Additionally, the report 'The impact of human trafficking on people and countries' highlights how forced labour threatens national security and weakens the rule of law in the DRC. The report suggests that human trafficking and forced labour attract large crime syndicates because they can be highly profitable - human trafficking profits are around \$9.5 billion annually, but require large operations. These crime syndicates often combine human trafficking with other illegal activities, such as the drug trade, which M'Cormack suggests presents a large, national security risk for countries. The report further suggests that human trafficking operations undermine the rule of law and government authority in its territory, through its widespread power and through bribes paid to government officials. This makes the populations of these regions vulnerable and unprotected by the law.

The growth of the organ trade is due to both supply and demand-side factors

The illegal organ trade is a relatively niche topic of research under the bracket of human trafficking, yet it is becoming an increasingly prevalent issue. In order to better understand the issue, one must analyse both the demand-side and supply-side of this organ trade. The demand-side is relatively under-researched⁶⁹ and we turn to this first.

The organ trade has grown in recent years, which can be at least in part explained by the rise in kidney failures worldwide⁷⁰ (kidneys are the most trafficked organs). More widely, the rise in cardiometabolic diseases and ageing populations across the world has meant that there are increasing requirements on healthcare systems, one of which are organ transplants⁷¹. This has led to a growth in demand for organs, while there is a severe shortage in the supply of organs through legal channels⁷². Thus, there are long waiting lists for legal organ transplants across the world, which means there is a heightened risk of dying⁷³. This desperation to find an organ donor has led to increasing demand for organs through illegal channels. One possible solution on the demand side is to encourage people to donate organs, through informational campaigns or even use an opt-out system.

On the supply-side, people who are trafficked for organs come from poor countries, as well as potentially living below the poverty line as well⁷⁴. Other vulnerabilities, such as being a refugee or illegal immigrant also make individuals targets for organ trafficking gangs⁷⁵, as previously explained in the Briefing section. These vulnerabilities make victims desperate for money, or leave them unaware of the dangers (due to being uneducated), which allows gangs to coerce or deceive them⁷⁶. The pandemic left many people particularly vulnerable in undeveloped and developing countries, due to job losses and the lack of a social safety net⁷⁷. The poor and uneducated became even more desperate for money, leaving them especially

⁶⁹ BOS, M. (2015, June 18). *Trafficking in human organs*. European Parliament. Retrieved February 2, 2022, from [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/549055/EXPO_STU\(2015\)549055_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/549055/EXPO_STU(2015)549055_EN.pdf)

⁷⁰ Jafar, T. H. (2009, December 1). *Organ Trafficking: Global Solutions for a Global Problem*. American Journal of Kidney Diseases. Retrieved February 2, 2022, from [https://www.ajkd.org/article/S0272-6386\(09\)01177-9/fulltext](https://www.ajkd.org/article/S0272-6386(09)01177-9/fulltext)

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² Ibid

⁷³ BOS, M. (2015, June 18). *Trafficking in human organs*. European Parliament.

⁷⁴ Ibid

⁷⁵ Ibid

⁷⁶ Ibid

⁷⁷ Jack, V. (2020, November 5). *COVID-19 a 'perfect storm' for organ trafficking victims*. SciDev.Net.

exposed to manipulation by organ traffickers. The pandemic also influenced the demand-side of the illegal organ trade, as resources were diverted towards tackling COVID-19 and away from legal transplant operations⁷⁸. This lengthened waiting lists, meaning that demand for organs through illegal channels rose further⁷⁹. Therefore, the pandemic accelerated the rising trend of organ trafficking, leaving more people in the clutches of manipulative trafficking gangs. It's also important to consider how the supply and demand of the illegal organ trade has been connected; social media has been influential in this⁸⁰. Organ brokers have used Facebook to advertise the sale of kidneys in recent years and this trend accelerated during the pandemic⁸¹. This necessitates much stricter regulation of social media to tackle this ongoing issue. Governments have a major role to play in making social media sites more accountable for what is posted on their platforms.

⁷⁸ Ibid

⁷⁹ Ibid

⁸⁰ Jack, V. (2020, November 5). *COVID-19 a 'perfect storm' for organ trafficking victims*. SciDev.Net.

⁸¹ Ibid

Conclusion

To conclude, in this section we have explored the prevalence of sex trafficking, forced labour and organ trafficking in the DRC. As we have suggested, human trafficking is highly damaging to the victims as well as the wider society and economy of the DRC. In the next section we will consider how we can improve the policing, punishment and prevention of human trafficking.

Policy Recommendations

Overview

In this section, we will outline three policy recommendations that aim to tackle the issues that we have highlighted earlier. These three recommendations are:

1. Increasing NGO presence to help victims and avoid further trafficking in underdeveloped areas.
2. Using transnational governing bodies to train DRC officials on the identification and prevention of human trafficking crimes.
3. Breaking up the supply chain of goods produced using trafficked labour.

Action 1: Increasing NGO presence to help victims and avoid further trafficking in underdeveloped areas

As we have already highlighted, human trafficking is especially prevalent in areas where there is a lack of state presence to enforce laws, such as eastern DRC. Expanding state presence into these areas is geopolitically challenging and complicated. Thus, we would recommend that NGOs continue to expand their presence in these areas, in order to educate and help potential victims avoid falling into trafficking.

There are a number of things that NGOs can contribute to the DRC to alleviate the issue of trafficking⁸²:

1. Educate people, particularly females, about the nature of trafficking and why it is important to resist it
2. Rehabilitate victims of human trafficking, as they are often stigmatised by society
3. Support victims who require legal assistance, particularly aiding them in collecting evidence

With regards to education, we have previously shown that illiterate people are more vulnerable to being trafficked. Some NGOs are stepping in to provide education or widen accessibility to education facilities⁸³. This not only makes people more aware of their rights and the dangers of trafficking, but also provides them with the opportunity to gain employment; this can have a marked impact on children especially. Taking organ trafficking more specifically, NGOs need to do more to educate people about the manipulation and dangers involved in the organ trade, as there is not enough awareness about this issue compared to other forms of trafficking.

Organisations such as UNICEF are already involved in rehabilitating trafficking victims⁸⁴, which includes providing education, but also psychological support and shelter. Victims of trafficking are stigmatised, meaning that many cannot return home⁸⁵; thus, NGOs have an important role here to protect victims and help them find their place in society.

⁸² Sanela Diana Jenkins Human Rights Project. (2012, March). *Preliminary Assessment of Trafficking in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*. The International Criminal Court Forum — Human Rights and International Criminal Law Debates.

⁸³ The Borgen Project. (2020, November 25). *Human Trafficking in the DRC*. The Borgen Project.

⁸⁴ Daems, T. (2020, February 12). *A stolen childhood*. UNICEF. Retrieved February 18, 2022

⁸⁵ Ibid

Lastly, victims who are aware of their legal rights and need legal assistance often struggle when trying to collate evidence⁸⁶. NGOs can offer the administrative capacity and expertise that victims may lack here. This is something that can be expanded upon, so that more victims are able to utilise the legal framework to gain justice.

Overall, NGOs have the potential to have a great impact in countries like the DRC, where state resources are extremely limited in some areas. They can offer support to both victims and state officials to raise awareness of the dangers of trafficking and how to tackle the problem. The international community can offer greater backing to NGOs (for example by offering grants), which would empower them to go further than they already are.

⁸⁶ Sanela Diana Jenkins Human Rights Project. (2012, March). *Preliminary Assessment of Trafficking in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*. The International Criminal Court Forum — Human Rights and International Criminal Law Debates

Action 2: Using transnational governing bodies to train DRC officials on the identification and prevention of human trafficking crimes

As we have previously explored, many law enforcement officials in the DRC lack sufficient training and expertise on human trafficking. This lack of training is particularly pronounced in victim identification and officials often confuse human trafficking cases with other crimes.⁸⁷ This significantly restricts the government's ability to effectively implement its anti-trafficking policies. It is therefore imperative to improve the training given to officials, and we have therefore prioritised this recommendation. Indeed, the US Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report: DRC*⁸⁸ highlights the importance of 'providing training for frontline officials' in order to improve the proactive identification of trafficking victims and the subsequent referral of these victims to care.

We recommend that training is given by transnational governing bodies such as the UN, the OSCE (Organisation for Cooperation and Security in Europe) and NATO. Using organisations with existing training policies is likely to be advantageous because it removes the need for the DRC to establish its own training. Firstly, creating a training program could be time consuming and expensive which may reduce the quality of the training or government motivation to pursue a new training program. Transnational governing bodies also have access to more experts and case studies⁸⁹ to draw upon than the DRC could access. Secondly, a training program created by the DRC may be tainted by issues connected to human trafficking which we have discussed such as the normalisation of sex-based violence⁹⁰ or government corruption⁹¹.

In particular, the training offered by NATO could be advantageous in identifying human trafficking - the specific area highlighted by the US Department of State⁹² in which officials lacked the most expertise and knowledge. NATO emphasises the importance of training and creating awareness in the successful implementation of

⁸⁷ US Department of State. (2020). *2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: Democratic Republic of the Congo*. State Department. Retrieved February 6, 2022, from <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-trafficking-in-persons-report/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>

⁸⁸ Ibid

⁸⁹ NATO. (2004, July 9). *NATO Policy document*. NATO. Retrieved February 19, 2022, from <https://www.nato.int/docu/comm/2004/06-istanbul/docu-traffic-app2.htm>

⁹⁰ Gliniecki, B. (2012, March 12). *Oppression of women in the Democratic Republic of Congo, "the Rape Capital of the World"*. Marxist.com. Retrieved February 6, 2022, from <https://www.marxist.com/opression-of-women-in-congo.htm>

⁹¹ US Department of State. (2020). *2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: Democratic Republic of the Congo*. State Department. Retrieved February 6, 2022, from <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-trafficking-in-persons-report/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>

⁹² Ibid

its anti-human trafficking policy.⁹³ NATO uses a short online course to train all of its personnel (both military and civilian), in addition to specific courses for those with more specific responsibilities.⁹⁴ As the course is short and delivered online, officials could likely complete the training without significantly disrupting their work. The general course provides participants with information on the identification of trafficking cases and their consequences, specifically⁹⁵:

- Contextual information on the origins, victims, perpetrators and purpose of human trafficking
- Guidelines on how to detect human trafficking cases or victims and the appropriate course of action to pursue, following identification
- Information on the legal framework around human trafficking

Overall, transnational governing bodies have the resources and experience to offer helpful training to officials in the DRC. Better training could vastly improve the identification and prevention of human trafficking in the DRC as it would ensure that government policy is more effectively translated into practice.

⁹³ NATO. (2004, July 9). *NATO Policy document*. NATO. Retrieved February 19, 2022, from <https://www.nato.int/docu/comm/2004/06-istanbul/docu-traffic-app2.htm>

⁹⁴ Ibid

⁹⁵ NATO. (2004, July 9). *NATO Policy document*. NATO. Retrieved February 19, 2022, from <https://www.nato.int/docu/comm/2004/06-istanbul/docu-traffic-app2.htm>

Action 3: Breaking up the supply chain of goods produced using trafficked labour

Forced labour and trafficking is sustained not only due to a lack of action from domestic governments, but also foreign governments, whose countries are involved in the supply chains.⁹⁶ One example is Rwanda, minerals sourced using forced labour are imported from the DRC.⁹⁷ Tackling this illegal trade requires these foreign governments to strengthen their customs arrangements to disrupt the supply chain. This would damage trafficking groups' revenue streams, thus weakening their grip over DRC territories and trafficking victims. A relatively straightforward way of making progress in this area is by recognising the use of fake documents by trafficking groups and forbidding the import of minerals that are connected to these faked documents.⁹⁸

Particularly crucial to breaking up the global supply chains built on trafficking is monitoring international financial flows that are linked to trafficking groups.⁹⁹ Governments can use forensic accounting techniques to identify financial flows that are linked to human trafficking, which would help disrupt these financial flows and help law enforcement tackle the crimes.¹⁰⁰ Foreign governments, such as the US, track international flows and use targeted sanctions to damage transnational trafficking groups.¹⁰¹ This method can be extended to empower countries suffering from large-scale trafficking issues by equipping them to track financial flows efficiently; there have been a number of red flag indicators identified by the US Department of State that would help authorities recognise monetary flows linked to trafficking.¹⁰² This would facilitate wider international cooperation to tackle human trafficking and provide underdeveloped countries with the capabilities to more easily identify traffickers.

M'Cormack's report highlights the de facto control that crime syndicates involved in trafficking have over some territories in the DRC which threatens the rule of law. In order to break up the supply chains used in trafficked labour, it is crucial that the government can increase its level of control in these areas. While this goal may be

⁹⁶ Jenkins, S. D. (2012, March). *Preliminary Assessment of Trafficking in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*. The International Criminal Court Forum — Human Rights and International Criminal Law Debates

⁹⁷ Ibid

⁹⁸ Ibid

⁹⁹ Ibid

¹⁰⁰ US Department of State. (2018, June 28). *Tracking Suspicious Financial Activity To Address Human Trafficking*. Retrieved February 27, 2022, from <https://2017-2021.state.gov/tracking-suspicious-financial-activity-to-address-human-trafficking/index.html>

¹⁰¹ Ibid

¹⁰² Ibid

quite challenging, increasing the number of officials in these areas and ensuring that they have adequate training, as detailed in the previous section, would certainly decrease the extent of criminal control in these regions.

Conclusion

Overall, as a response to the serious issues which we have outlined in this report regarding human trafficking, we have established three policy recommendations. We first chose to increase the presence of NGOs to help victims and avoid further trafficking in underdeveloped areas. Secondly, we recommended using transnational governing bodies to train DRC officials on the identification and prevention of human trafficking crimes. Thirdly, we advocated breaking up the supply chain of goods produced using trafficked labour. These recommendations take into account various other economic, political and social issues in the DRC which increase the populations' vulnerability and the governments' instability.