

Analyzing the strategies of prevention and control of human trafficking in Rwanda

Abstract

Human trafficking is a worldwide phenomenon in which victims of human trafficking coming from 127 countries have been found in 137 countries around the world. It therefore requires transnational policies that engage international cooperation through information exchange and mutual assistance. Since 2009, about 153 cases of human trafficking have been recorded by the Rwanda National police. The aim of this study was to analyze preventive strategies that should be adopted to reduce the current level of human trafficking in Rwanda. Qualitative data was collected and analyzed using documentary technique. Secondary data was analyzed and the following strategies were found to be currently used for prevention and control of human trafficking in Rwanda; Making the public aware of the dangers of human trafficking, enhance coordination and cooperation, and improve capacity of law enforcers, legislation, reduce poverty and unemployment, improve on gender equality and education of the masses on cultural norms that condone conditions that favor human trafficking. These findings show that Rwanda is on the fore front in combating human trafficking. It can be better if the fight against this vice not only utilizes reactive measures but also preventive ones especially focusing on reducing vulnerabilities faced by communities at risk of human trafficking through socio-economic development. Let it be everybody's responsibility to think globally and act locally in this noble mission of preventing and controlling human trafficking in Rwanda.

Keywords: human trafficking, strategies, prevention and combat, development, enforcers, legislation, reduce poverty

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Introduction

Human trafficking is a worldwide phenomenon in which victims of human trafficking coming from 127 countries have been found in 137 countries around the world.¹ It is estimated that there are at least 2.4 million persons who are the victims of trafficking at any time. The most visible forms of human trafficking are sexual and labor. Approximately 79% of trafficking victims are trafficked for sexual exploitation, with 18% being trafficked for forced labor, it is estimated that over US\$30 billion are generated in profits through trafficked persons every year.¹

By 2008, Eighty percent (80%) of states in the world had reportedly criminalized trafficking in persons. However, the implementation of the domestic laws on human trafficking is doubted because it has not been into practice. Much work on combating human trafficking worldwide has been on developing the capacity of criminal justice in order to handle the prosecutions as well as coordination and cooperation on matters of human trafficking combat.¹

Tavanti² adds that approximately 7 million people were trafficked in 2011, but only 7,909 traffickers were prosecuted and, 3,969 were convicted and that human traffickers are part of international criminal organizations and difficult to prosecute. Migiro³ the Deputy Secretary General United Nations, asserted that, "Human trafficking affects us all, whether we live in countries of origin, transit or destination. Preventing and combating it requires a comprehensive international approach. We must act together to stop a crime in our midst that deprives countless victims of their liberty, dignity and human rights". On this note, UNODC⁴ finds that fighting human trafficking requires from the onset to identify the causes of vulnerability to trafficking, determine the range and magnitude of the impact of this crime,

increase awareness and knowledge about human trafficking, identify partners in the fight against it, and mobilize financial resources to support action. In 2013, about 141,484 victims of human trafficking arrived in Europe by the Mediterranean Sea quite as 170, 100 victims of human trafficking reached Europe in 2014. These victims of human trafficking were from Syria, Eritrea, Mali, Nigeria, Gambia, Somalia and some other countries.⁵ Similarly, the collapse of the former Soviet Union states and simultaneous political developments in Eastern Europe resulted into developments socio- economic conditions breeding poverty, mass unemployment, lack of resources to manage migration flows, which resulted in new sources and markets for trafficked women and children.²

Ribando⁵ observes that trafficking in person laws should not be modeled to other countries but rather related to the trafficking in person problems and law enforcement capacities. He mentions that once legislation is in place resources should be availed to ease implementation of legislation, and then further assistance should go to training and more attention given to address the issue of police corruption that has plagued countries. Once legislation is in place, more attention and resources may be needed to help countries implement that legislation, and that assistance may need to go beyond training for law enforcement and legal professionals. To address the issue of police corruption that has long plagued many countries, stiffening penalties for police, border guards and other officials in the criminal justice needs to be opted. Ribando⁵ further finds that one of the troubling issues that developing states face is the problem of data of data collection. Cases of human trafficking are not reported as it is a clandestine crime. There is also fear of retaliation and intimidation in case victims report comes out. In, Africa trafficking has been associated with colonialism and occupation. In the recent

times human trafficking is mainly linked with informal agriculture and mining areas of Congo by use of child labor as well as sexual exploitation in Kenya.⁶

In some countries not all aspects of the Palermo protocol that define human trafficking are taken into account. A splendid example is in Brazil, China, Luxembourg, Nicaragua, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia where national codes only criminalize sexual exploitation of women and children and does not give criminal justice officials full protocol version to deal with human trafficking.⁶ Mazuru⁸ indicates that gender discrimination in developing states such as Ethiopia, Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, Mozambique, Malawi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Angola is the main cause of women trafficking especially in the aftermath of post war period. Therefore, prevention and control of human trafficking should be sought by empowering women. This can be achieved by providing them the equality they deserve in terms of political and socio-economic wellbeing.

Mazimpaka⁹ observes that border posts such as Gatuna and others are used by traffickers to transport victims across Rwandan border posts. Immigration and emigration authorities in Rwanda should be extra strict on people entering and leaving border posts. The Rwanda National police¹⁰ indicates that it intercepted 51 Bangladesh destined to Mozambique through Rwanda. Rwanda National Police has also rescued 138 victims of who 86 were destined to Uganda. Most victims who are taken out of Rwanda are sent to China, Malaysia, Thailand, Dubai, Zambia, Malawi and Tanzania for exploitation in terms of forced marriage, labor and sex working. In this respect, close cooperation between countries to rescue victims as well as arresting human traffickers is underway. Laczko & Godzdiak¹¹ add that current concerns in terms of human trafficking include; revising migration policy, control of human rights violations, strict border controls, increasing law enforcement and mobilization of funds committed to combat the vice of human trafficking.

Thus, strategies to combat human trafficking should take into consideration of social, cultural economic practices that marginalize people and make them vulnerable to human trafficking. To prevent this, governments with assistance from first responders, NGOs, and local communities, should consider their own populations, cultures, and policies to identify those individuals who may be uniquely vulnerable within their borders. On this basis, communities can develop effective strategies to increase awareness and prevent human trafficking from occurring.¹² Despite progress made in human trafficking prevention and control, low levels of awareness of human trafficking still exist in the communities as criminals still use ICT to lure people into human trafficking crime.¹³ It is important to note that there is a strong political will in Rwanda to ensure gender equality as well as amending the law in place to avoid gender discrimination.¹⁴

Problem statement

Globally, it is approximated that 7 million people were trafficked in 2011, but only 7,909 traffickers were prosecuted and, 3,969 were convicted and that human traffickers are part of international criminal organizations and difficult to prosecute⁵ Rwanda is a source and, not very much a transit and destination country for victims of human trafficking who are mainly women and children.¹² Since 2009, about 153 cases of human trafficking have been recorded by the Rwanda National police. According to United Nations fight against drug and crime (2008), victims of human trafficking in Rwanda have been

common criminals and all groups who are poverty stricken such as street children, prostitutes, army deserters and other uneducated people. Poor young girls are recruited by older females and provided accommodation to serve as sex workers. These old ladies also offer the young girls to clients staying in hotels, and girls from the refugee camps in Rwanda are trafficked by fellow refugees to Uganda and Kenya.¹² Despite the fact that the government of Rwanda in collaboration with international organizations have come up with various strategies to prevent and control human trafficking such as: Increasing the knowledge and understanding of human trafficking amongst key stakeholders from the government and civil society, building the capacity of law enforcement officials and immigration officers to identify and respond to cases of human trafficking, sensitizing the Rwandan public and local leadership on the different forms of human trafficking and the risks associated, and establishing a victim referral and assistance mechanism through training and support, there is still a portion of the Rwandan population that still shows signs of vulnerability to the causes of human trafficking. It is from this point of view that the researcher seeks to analyze strategies the government of Rwanda has adopted to prevent human trafficking.

Research objective

This study seeks to analyze preventive strategies that should be adopted to reduce the current level of human trafficking in Rwanda.

Literature review

The literature was reviewed basing on integrative theories. The strategies for prevention of human trafficking were viewed from a perspective of social control, strain and social learning.¹⁵ Kalbhenn¹⁶ finds that human trafficking should be addressed by ironing out social and economic differentials, which push people to accept the first job proposed by developed states in the hope of a better future. This is why European Employment and the Social Inclusion Strategies are designed to address unemployment and poverty at the roots of trafficking. The researcher is in agreement with this author because once the economic and social inequities are addressed, even the poor gain hope and self-confidence which reduces the level of vulnerability to human trafficking.

Cave¹⁷ notes that human trafficking should be fought by combining effort that are international, specifically for countries that have trafficking relationship. South Africa has trafficking relationships with Thailand and so the two countries should share information with regard to human traffickers in order to increase the volume of prosecutions and reduce case delays. The researcher strongly concurs with Cave.¹⁷ Information sharing among countries on human trafficking issues is a very important strategy. This makes return of victims to their home countries easily coordinated. Workshops and seminars coordinated by the member countries can yield a lot of useful information that can be used in combating human trafficking.

Msuya¹⁸ states that a school curriculum for teaching human trafficking should be developed in schools of higher learning, universities and law Enforcement academies. The school curriculum should capture human trafficking as an organized crime, as a violation of human, labor and migration rights. The curriculum should offer strategies for investigating and prosecuting trafficking crimes as well as protecting the victims and witnesses of human trafficking. In line with Msuya,¹⁸ integrating human trafficking in the national curriculum

of Rwanda at all levels of education can be a sustainable strategy for the prevention of human trafficking in Rwanda. This is true because it is applicable right away from the grass root levels.

Baker & Campbell¹⁹ asserts that the G8 countries such as Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, U.S., and United Kingdom have recommended the use of High-Tech solutions to investigate, prosecute, and prevent crimes that include human trafficking. More so, Interpol, the world's largest international police organization, made combating trafficking in persons a key priority. Interpol provides intelligence clearing house on traffickers to help identify international links in trafficking investigations and they have established a standardized format for exchanging information across the globe through their "I-24/7" communications system. In this sense, an automated data collection tool can review a large number of advertisements and flag keywords that suggest potential trafficking cases. Similarly, face recognition technology is being developed in order to track photos of victims across multiple websites. Also, Mapping technologies are used to extract location-based information to locate potential victims mentioned in advertisements. Law enforcement may also utilize crowd sourcing technologies which enable groups to send information that can help with an investigation.

Ribando²⁰ finds that Latin American states have had initiatives in the anti -trafficking drive. Various regional anti-trafficking meetings are held geared towards cooperation and coordination in various fields of the anti-trafficking move such as drawing up anti -trafficking policies, exchange of information and best practices, implementation of training programs and having a common front in terms of prevention of human trafficking, prosecution of human traffickers , punishment and protection of victims of human trafficking. This strategy is relevant especially in developing countries with high vulnerabilities due to extreme poverty. Developing countries can benefit a lot from more developed countries during anti-trafficking meetings and trainings. Meng²¹ observes that European Union has anti-human trafficking strategy where economic aid to developing states will be provided. In return developing countries have to accept admission of their nations where the attention will be paid to the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa. Such economic aid strategy is bound to reduce the root causes of human trafficking such as poverty, improving living conditions and job opportunities, preventing conflicts and consolidating democratic states, and ensuring respect for human rights, in particular rights of minorities, women and children. In line with Meng,²¹ economic aid directed to finance anti-human trafficking activities especially in regions that are still struggling financially can serve as a quick solution to the current increasing rate of human trafficking. Gallagher²² explains the role of criminal justice system in combating human trafficking; an effective and complete legislation in human trafficking is a necessity for a proper working of the criminal justice system. Criminal justice system will work effectively where the crime of human trafficking has been criminalized.²² All elements of trafficking as defined by the international law have to be taken into account and criminalized so that the criminal justice system is able to deal with human trafficking effectively. Precisely, labor and child trafficking, illegal recruitment of children into the army, forced marriage, sexual trafficking, and debt bondage among others have to be criminalized. Sanctions for such crimes should be enough to deter potential offenders from committing further human trafficking.²²

The protocol to prevent, suppress and punish human traffickers of 2003 and its closely related legal instrument which is the United

Nations convention against transnational organized crime are two international legal platforms that domestic legislations depend on drafting national laws.²³ No country can work alone to combat human trafficking as countries are restricted to their own borders. All practices as defined in the protocol to prevent, suppress and prosecute of 2003 should be criminalized to provide a basis for investigations and prosecution of human trafficking offenders. Penalties should be enough to deter potential offenders from committing human trafficking.²⁴

Much as the strategy of criminal justice to combat human trafficking by punishing human traffickers has worked in some countries including Rwanda, it is not sustainable and reliable in as far as preventing human trafficking is concerned because the prevention mechanism does not empower the vulnerable groups to say no to the vice. Costa²⁴ asserts member countries to the protocol to prevent, suppress and punish human trafficking are as well obliged to incorporate elements of prevention, protection and prosecution of human traffickers and these should as well be included in the domestic laws of countries. In the area of prevention, legislating countries should think of alleviating factors that cause vulnerability of women and children such as poverty, social and economic marginalization. In terms of prosecution, legislation should consider to make human trafficking a criminal offense. Provisions should be there to the protection of the victims of human trafficking so that physical safety is guaranteed after the victims are rescued.²⁴

UNODC⁴ finds that fighting human trafficking requires from the onset to identify the causes of vulnerability to trafficking, determine the range and magnitude of the impact of this crime, increase awareness and knowledge about human trafficking, identify partners in the fight against it, and mobilise financial resources to support action. Absolutely, economic empowerment and social transformation through financial resource mobilization is the best way to reduce causes of vulnerability in developing countries. According to ILO,²⁵ providing job training and creating more jobs in the community at risk of human trafficking should be adopted so that vulnerable populations do not necessarily need to go to the city or abroad to obtain a job.²⁵ Ensuring labor safeguards that include an anti-trafficking component in development projects for the following sectors that are particularly common for labor trafficking mining, fisheries, agriculture, logging, and construction.²⁵ Definitely, the bigger the portion of the employed people in the country, the less is the community at the risk of trafficking since those who are desperate to leave their countries in search for jobs can be few.

According to UNGIFT,²⁶ research can help to understand circumstances that lead to human trafficking. Also Governments need to know nature and forms of human trafficking. There is also need to know the extent and pattern of human trafficking in the country. Research can help countries to know the modus operandi of human traffickers.²⁶ Once the evidence based data is obtained, it will be shared and used to assess the impact of human trafficking and solutions sought to eradicate the vice from a preventive outlook.

Methodology and material

In this study documentary research was applied. According to Harelimana,²⁷ documentary research refers to that kind of research that uses written and non-written documents. Written documents are derived from books, periodicals, scientific papers, press and journals.

For non-written documents there is use of oral sources, electronic sources, recorded Images and sounds as well as material objects.

Results and discussion

In this study, it was found that strategies that have been used to stamp out human trafficking include and are not limited to improve national and international cooperation and coordination, raising the level of awareness, equipping border posts, enhancing capacity building, reducing vulnerability of potential victims, discouraging demand for services of trafficked persons as well as amending laws and policies. Improve and ensure National and International coordination and cooperation against human trafficking. Rwanda is committed to cooperation in the fight against transnational crimes that include human trafficking and the joint work includes; investigating transnational trafficking offenses, facilitating the repatriation of victims, and disrupting trafficking operations.²⁸ In this sense Rwanda has signed memorandum of understanding with many countries including Egypt to extradite criminals and exchange of information, knowledge and capacity building as well as joint investigations.²⁹ Rwanda has joined regional and international cooperation operations in identification and rescue of victims of human trafficking enslaved within states as well as apprehension and breaking trafficking rings.³⁰ On the national level Rwanda national police coordinates a campaign against human trafficking comprising of government institutions, development partners, police ambassadors, Rwanda Youth Volunteers in Community Policing, associations and cooperatives of public transporters, anti-crime clubs in schools among others.¹⁰ On the global level the IOM and UNODC are already working with the government of Rwanda to increase the knowledge and understanding of human trafficking amongst key stakeholders.²³ They are also building capacity of law enforcement officials and immigration officers to identify and respond to cases of human trafficking. These organizations, (IOM and UNODC) offer support to victims of human trafficking.

Rwanda National police has joined the rest of the world in fighting crime including human trafficking. The evolving and sophisticated policing ground requires collective efforts. For at least two decades Rwanda national police has joined and even participated in regional and international groupings such as the; Interpol, the Eastern Africa Police Cooperation Organization (EAPCCO), International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), Eastern Africa Standby Force (EASF), Regional Centre on Small Arms (RECSA), African Police (AfriPol), East African Community Northern Corridor Integration Projects (EAC-NCIP) and engaged in peacekeeping missions.³¹ More so, Rwanda National Police has as well signed close to 30 Memorandum of Understanding under bilateral arrangements and about 10 others under multilateral frameworks. Some of the countries Rwanda National Police has signed Memorandum of Understanding with include; Uganda, Kenya, Burundi, Namibia, Tanzania, Turkey, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Zambia and Qatar.³¹ But, Rwanda national police³⁰ still sees limited cooperation amongst countries in dealing with the vice jointly. Despite this setback Rwanda is making significant improvement in combating human trafficking through joint conferences and financial resource mobilization in partnership with other states.

Raising the levels of education and awareness

Community awareness and sensitization programs through media, community meetings, schools and faith-based organizations

strengthened partnership among national stakeholders. Awareness raising is recognized as one of the tools for preventing human trafficking. In Rwanda, public awareness is geared towards educating a broad range of stakeholders who include the general public, civil society, law enforcement, border security and many other government institutions.³⁰ Through community policing, Rwandans are informed of the nature of human trafficking, tricks used by traffickers to obtain victims, groups of people targeted, destinations and consequences of human trafficking on victims during transportation and destination.³⁰ Without enough education, Rwandan women have limited understanding of outside environment and so fall easy prey to human traffickers. Through the community policing most of the Rwandans have become empowered to fight human trafficking scourge and are willing to be part of the solution in overcoming the vice.

Equipping Rwanda border posts

The establishment of Interpol's I-24/7 communication system at all exit and entry points in 2013 has enhanced the capacity to detect movement of human traffickers. Interpol's "I-24/7" has helped to obtain data on victims and culprits through joint action.¹⁰ The I-24/7 Interpol communication system has helped to identify human traffickers and victims of human trafficking and thus has improved data building.

Enhance capacity building

Rwandan police officers are trained to identify victims of human trafficking and how to handle cases of human trafficking required for prosecution.²⁸ Rwanda has developed "ISANGE" One Stop Center mechanism that offers supports in terms of medical, rehabilitation and ensuring justice at no cost for victims.³⁰ This why 26 "Isange" one stop centers are operating in the country and are expected to provide comprehensive services to victims of gender-based violence and child abuse in order to reduce further vulnerabilities. Isange one stop center has been decentralized and is at every police station and give assistance to victims of human trafficking. Isange one stop center has provided support to the victims of human trafficking and in this sense, recidivism is reduced.

Reducing the vulnerability of potential victims through social and economic development

Human trafficking should be prevented by warning vulnerable groups of the menace of human trafficking. Further, socio-economic conditions that confront the vulnerable such as poverty, unemployment and lack of opportunity should be reduced if not alleviated.⁴ Rwanda hopes to alleviate human trafficking through economic development poverty strategy 2 (EDPRS 2). Among the programs of EDPRS 2, is the Vision 'Umurenge' and 'Girinka' Programs that have transformed the lives of local communities in order to reduce social inequalities and the risk of further vulnerability.

Deterring the demand for the services of trafficked persons

The problem of human trafficking can be attacked by lowering the incentives to trade in human beings. Heavy penalties on offenders of human trafficking should be instituted. The services offered and products produced by trafficked people should be outlawed.⁴ In this case article 266 of Rwandan penal code³² yields to heavy penalty and asserts that, " Any person who sells body organs of a living person even if he/she proves that such person is expected to die shall be

liable to a term of imprisonment of more than five (5) years to seven (7) years and a fine of fifteen million (15,000,000) to thirty million (30,000,000) Rwandan francs or who sells a dead body or dead body organs contrary to scientific or rescue rules shall be liable to a term of imprisonment of seven (7) years to ten (10) years and a fine of thirty million (30,000,000) to fifty million (50,000,000) Rwandan francs or sells the organs of a person he/ she has killed or when such removal may result in his/her death shall be liable to life imprisonment⁷.

Conclusion

In the combat against human trafficking in Rwanda, the Rwandan government has consistently centered its efforts on: Improving national and international coordination and cooperation against human trafficking, raising the levels of education and awareness, equipping Rwanda border posts and enhancing capacity building.³³⁻²⁶ These measures have really worked and a significant success has been registered on several occasions in controlling human trafficking; but the numbers of the citizens who are vulnerable to this vice remain remarkably high. This is an indication that the control measures currently in place will remain inadequate until the solution strategy is seen from socio-economic preventive outlook. This involves reducing poverty levels through job creation, economic empowerment, and hanging on the current gender mainstreaming policy in the country thereby reducing all possible inequalities that increase the vulnerability of the Rwandan population to human trafficking.³⁷

Recommendation

Rwanda should enhance cooperation at national, regional and global levels and incorporate international agencies, the NGO community and the business community. Cooperation and coordination against human trafficking is as such a necessity for effective human trafficking reduction and control. Human trafficking is a transnational organized crime and requires international outlook in terms of operations. Rwanda cannot operate in isolation against human trafficking and needs to secure full cooperation and coordination of regional countries in matters of prevention of human trafficking, prosecution of traffickers and protection of victims of human trafficking. Develop a comprehensive or holistic strategy in which various components are mutually reinforcing. Recognize, in particular, that attacking networks and attacking markets are complementary approaches. Use of technology to track victims and traffickers alike is very necessary in this respect.³⁸⁻⁴¹ There should be laws to determine digital material storage, maintenance and transmission. There should be focus on profits of traffickers and the infrastructure they use and these should be confiscated. Human trafficking should be transformed into a high risk and low profit activity. Develop knowledge-creation and knowledge-sharing mechanisms at several interlocking and reinforcing levels, with varying degrees of sensitivity.⁴² These knowledge-sharing mechanisms would offer opportunities for developing evidence-based policies and strategies. Attacking Trafficking Networks is essential in order to reduce demand and supply of victims of human trafficking. Economic aid should be directed to poverty alleviation programs in countries that are so poor. Once the economic aid is acquired it will be sunk in the economy to boost growth and creation of employment opportunities, thus reducing vulnerabilities that breed human trafficking.

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Conflicts of interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest.

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