



POLICY BRIEF

THE GENDER DIMENSION TO TRAFFICKING IN PERSON



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INTRODUCTION

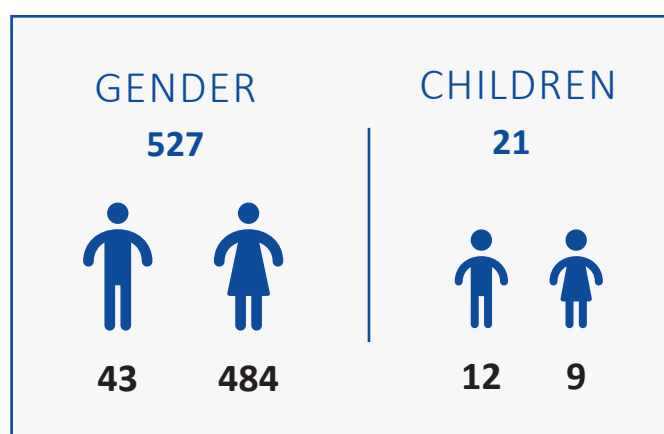
According to the Report of the Regional Conference of ECOWAS States on Ending Human Trafficking 2023 women and girls constitute the majority of identified victims of trafficking (VoTs) in Sub-Saharan Africa, making up 62% of the total VoTs. However, men and boys also fall victim to various forms of trafficking. The disproportionate impact on women and girls can be attributed to factors such as gender inequality, gender-based violence, discriminatory laws, gender-blind policies, conflict, post-conflict settings, and humanitarian crises. Additionally, gender stereotypes and traditional notions of masculinity can hinder the provision and acceptance of necessary assistance and protection services for male VoTs.

A large proportion of VoTs identified are thus women, as Trafficking in Persons (TiP) has generally been seen as a crime which affects mostly women. Over time, a higher percentage of men have been identified and it is acknowledged that men are also vulnerable to human trafficking. Worldwide the proportion of children relative to adults for each age group is about the same. There is a higher percentage of women in lower age groups, while men tend to have a larger share in the age groups over 30. The highest percentage of female victims can be found in the 18-20 age group, while the highest percentage of male victims can be found particularly in the lowest age groups and above 39 years of age. (Data from the Counter Trafficking Data Collaborative ([CTDC](#))).



Effective responses to trafficking in persons must adopt a rights and trauma-based approach that is **sensitive to gender and age**. This ensures the tailored needs of women, girls, men, and boys are met. Analysing the gender dimension of trafficking can lead to the development of more robust policies and prevention strategies. These strategies should address the root causes and risk factors that increase the vulnerability of all individuals while also providing adequate support and comprehensive services to all VoTs.

THE SIERRA LEONEAN CONTEXT

Sierra Leone is a source, transit, and destination country for thousands of children and women trafficked for forced labour and sexual exploitation every year. **Although no official database exists to accurately measure the scope of the phenomenon in the country**, IOM's figures from VoTs identified amongst return migrants from September 2017 to 7 July 2024 show a majority of women identified as VoTs:



Official governmental figures of identifies VoTs are:

YEAR	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
	24	30	60	44	45	18	35
	4	3	16	6	5	16	16
TOTAL	28	33	76	50	50	34	51

According to the [US TiP report of 2024](#) (capturing 2023) reported investigating 34 trafficking cases, compared with investigating 26 cases in the previous reporting period. The government also reported 41 investigations remained ongoing from the previous reporting period. The government reported prosecuting an unknown number of suspects in 12 cases, compared with prosecuting 13 suspects in 13 cases in the previous reporting period.

During the consultative process for the development of this Policy Brief it was highlighted that Sierra Leonean young women and girls are promised work in the urban centres but will frequently end up being trafficked for domestic work or sexual exploitation, while men are mostly trafficked for labour exploitation, following global trends.

A specific practice which poses risk to trafficking is the traditional practice of “men pikin”. According to the US TiP Report of [2022](#) traffickers exploit traditional foster care practices called “menpikin” to convince parents to hand over their children by promising to provide an education or better life but instead exploit the children in various forms of forced labor, including domestic servitude, street vending, mining, agriculture, scavenging for scrap metal, okada (motorbike taxi) driving, and sometimes commercial sex. Economic vulnerability due to the pandemic increased children’s susceptibility to exploitation, including in commercial sex and forced marriage.

Reported and investigated gender-based violence (GBV) cases have in certain cases led to uncovering cases of trafficking in persons, the Sierra Leonean Ministry of Gender and Children’s Affairs is promoting guidance on understanding GBV and anti-trafficking activities, and promoting that such interventions have an all of government approach.

The Republic of Sierra Leone passed and enacted the [Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act](#) in 2022, which increased penalties prescribed for trafficking crimes and removed the option for a fine in lieu of imprisonment for convicted traffickers.

Also in 2022 Sierra Leone launched the National Strategy to end Human Trafficking 2022-2026 which specifically mentions the importance of including a series of stakeholders and social partner on all aspects of anti-trafficking activities.

In this context Sierra Leone has a dedicated Anti-Trafficking in Persons Taskforce Secretariat with the designated responsibility to coordinate anti-trafficking activities of the involved national institutions and partners.

The link between irregular labour migration and trafficking should not be underestimated, why it is important to underline the efforts made by Sierra Leone to review and update their Labour Migration Policy from 2018 is reviewed, to ensure that the policy is fit for purpose including to discourage dangerous irregular migration.

The [National Migration Policy](#) of the Republic of Sierra Leone recognizes that Sierra Leone is a country of origin as well as transit for TIP.

In 2023 Freetown hosted a High Level Meeting between representatives from member countries of the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) who unveiled a roadmap to end human trafficking in the region. The roadmap further enhances the effectiveness of measures already outlined in the ECOWAS Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. It will set anti-trafficking priorities for the region – such as sharing lessons learned and strategies to implement national action plans, promote stronger data collection mechanisms, and find opportunities for regional mechanisms to strengthen prevention, protection of trafficking victims, and prosecute traffickers.

An issue which has specific impact on girls in Sierra Leone is the tradition of forced marriages. H.E the First Lady of Sierra Leone has launched a campaign called “[Hands of Our Girls](#)” to raise awareness of the issue and the harm this practice has on girls and women. In 2024 the Republic of Sierra Leone passed an Act making child marriage illegal.

The [Sierra Leone Medium-Term National Development Plan 2024-2030](#) has amongst its objectives to address trafficking both in the context of employment as well as irregular migration.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for Sierra Leone for 2025-2030 has amongst its outputs, under output 2.1 on “People, especially most vulnerable groups, have increased access to, and use of, quality essential and social protection services which are participatory, gender-responsive and inclusive, including during emergencies”, the objective to “implement public awareness on the risks of irregular migration and human trafficking and support the provision of direct assistance (i.e. shelter, NFIs, Assisted Voluntary Return, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support) to survivors of human trafficking and stranded Sierra Leonean nationals abroad, especially women and girls.”

Sierra Leone is a Champion Country of the Global Compact on Migration (GCM) and Objective 10 of the GCM is specifically on “Prevent, combat and eradicate trafficking in persons in the context of international migration”. Measures include laws and policies to combat trafficking and exploitation of women and girls in line with international human rights frameworks, specifically the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, the International Labour Organization (ILO) Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) and its 2014 Protocol, the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). It is also paramount that national coordination to align policies on gender equality, criminal justice, trafficking in persons, migration governance and sustainable development in order to ensure an effective, gender-responsive and human rights-based approach to combat trafficking in women and girls.

WHAT IS GENDER LENS?

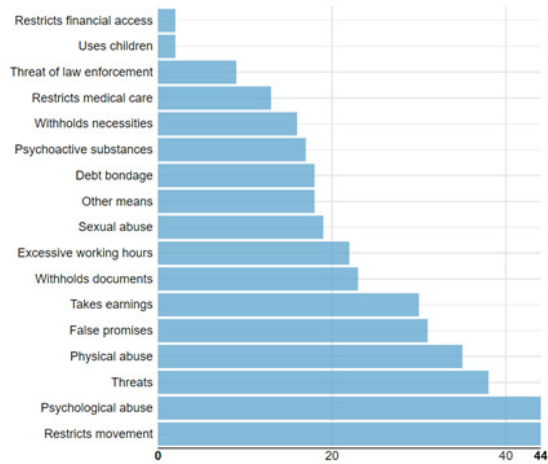
Gender is not just about counting in women or studying it as separate to other development processes. Nor is it about biological difference based on women’s reproductive role or ending sexual violence. It refers to systemic structures that institutionalize power of one group (most often men) over another group (women but also those identifying differently) on multiple scales that are economically, culturally and socially determined.

Gender operates at every level of human experience, from economic arrangements, culture and state to interpersonal relationships and individual emotions. This does not mean that everybody experiences gender in the same way. Gender is lived differently in diverse places, bodies and locations.

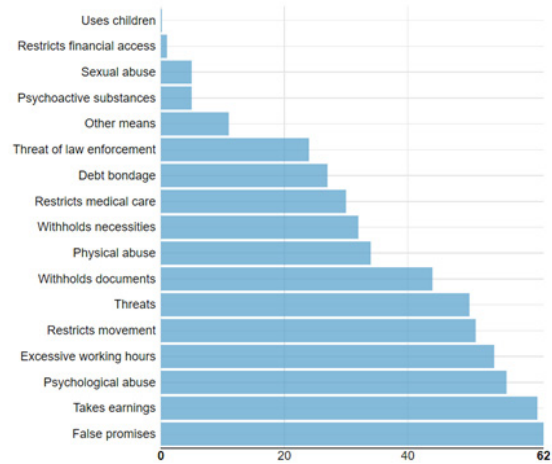
A gender lens allows to see the ways in which gendered power relations permeate structures and institutions, so that gender is never absent. Applying a gender lens is necessary to untangle the gender bias that informs social, political and economic practice in development.

An interesting point to underline is that it is not only in terms of vulnerability to recruitment or in the variations in the main sectors of exploitation that TIP is gendered, it is also in the means that traffickers use to keep victims under control:

MEANS OF CONTROL USED ON FEMALE VICTIMS



MEANS OF CONTROL USED ON MALE VICTIMS



Source CTCD <https://www.ctdatacollaborative.org/>

Gender bias contributes to the creation of an “ideal victim” image (often female, but varying by work sector). If an individual does not fit this ideal image, it hinders the identification process, as the conduct of trafficking victims often falls into a grey area between victim and offender. In such cases, the focus shifts to the victims’ criminal activity rather than the exploitation they have been subjected to.

This is evident in recurring gendered cases, such as the exploitation of women in prostitution in countries where prostitution is illegal, and the exploitation of young men forced into criminality. Despite indicators of trafficking, these individuals are often arrested and charged with criminal offenses, while protection systems fail to recognize them as victims of trafficking.

GENDER AND OTHER VULNERABILITIES

Discrimination in the denial of economic and social rights critically exacerbates the vulnerability of certain individuals and groups. Poverty and discrimination severely limit life choices, often compelling individuals to take risks or make decisions they would otherwise avoid if their basic needs were met. This constrained decision-making increases the vulnerability of groups such as minorities, migrants, and women and girls, making them more susceptible to trafficking.

Further [harmful practices](#), which are persistent practices and behaviours that are grounded on discrimination on the basis of sex, gender, age and other grounds as well as multiple and/or intersecting forms of discrimination that often involve violence and cause physical and/or psychological harm or suffering, contribute to creating vulnerability. Such practices include child marriages.

Economic deprivation and inequality are significant contributors to this vulnerability, but discrimination based on gender further restricts life choices and opportunities. These intersecting forms of discrimination compound the difficulties faced by certain communities, making them prime targets for traffickers.

Evidence shows that various factors can intersect to increase the risk of individuals being targeted and recruited by traffickers. These factors include poverty, social identity-based marginalization, financial exclusion, irregular migration status, low educational background, mental and physical disabilities, and dysfunctional family environments. Additionally, environmental disasters, climate change impacts, armed conflicts, displacements, economic recessions, and health, humanitarian, and other crises significantly contribute to individuals' vulnerability to trafficking. These risks are especially pronounced when such events lead to the erosion of the rule of law, sharp increases in unemployment rates, or the disruption of social safety nets.

Given this context, understanding vulnerability is crucial in effectively responding to and preventing the crime of trafficking in persons. And it is therefore crucial to understand how gender influences the risk of being exposed to other vulnerabilities such as whether girls have less access to education, less access to owning property, less access to gainful employment, but also how certain situations and circumstances affect men differently – e.g. in identification as a victim of crime.

Vulnerability varies across different locations and periods due to numerous factors. Changes in demographic patterns, shifts in disease prevalence or the emergence of new diseases, evolving rights and responsibilities between genders, climate change impacts, decisions made by local business communities, and international investments all contribute to altering the vulnerability of communities and groups. Therefore, it is crucial to understand how vulnerability and the resilience of these groups and communities evolve over time.

The initial step in measuring progress involves establishing a baseline scenario of vulnerable groups and communities relevant to various areas of work, laws, or interventions, and including a gender lens into such a baseline. This baseline provides a foundation for assessing changes and improvements in addressing vulnerabilities and addressing situations of trafficking in persons and exploitation.

A response to vulnerability must take into account both the external conditions affecting individuals and their coping mechanisms that enable them to mitigate negative impacts from these conditions. Communities that belong to minorities, face economic disadvantage, or experience discrimination often confront multiple challenges, such as socioeconomic exclusion, which heighten their vulnerability to exploitation and transnational organized crime, including trafficking in persons. These groups are particularly susceptible to trafficking due to structural disadvantages that exacerbate economic desperation.

In Sierra Leone women and girls, especially those from marginalized communities, are particularly vulnerable to trafficking. However, while women and girls are predominantly affected, men can also become vulnerable under certain circumstances, such as experiencing low socioeconomic status within their communities.

GENDER BIAS

Equality and fairness, fundamental to any anti-trafficking activity and initiative, are compromised by pervasive gender and other stereotypes within the justice system. These stereotypes affect various legal arenas: criminal courts confronting alleged perpetrators, civil tribunals handling protective orders, and family or administrative bodies dealing with issues like child custody and maintenance payments as well as the ability of first responders to identify potential cases of TiP.

These biases are compounded by stereotypes based on race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and disability. These social divisions operate within unfair power structures, negatively influencing resource allocation, including justice distribution. Women from marginalized groups face additional barriers to justice, exacerbated by stereotypes and prejudices that lead decision-makers to make uninformed or discriminatory judgments based on preconceived beliefs and biases rather than factual evidence.

Gender bias, whether implicit or explicit, reflects prejudicial inclinations towards one gender over others. It stems from stereotypes and attitudes assigning specific characteristics, roles, and behaviors to men and women, including sexual roles and behaviors. This bias undermines the perceived objectivity and gender neutrality of the law and challenges the very principles of the rule of law itself.

GENDERED CRIME

UNWOMEN underlines that “violence against women and girls is a human rights violation, and the immediate and long-term physical, sexual, and mental consequences for women and girls can be devastating, including death.

Violence negatively affects women’s general well-being and prevents women from fully participating in society. It impacts their families, their community, and the country at large. It has tremendous costs, from greater strains on health care to legal expenses and losses in productivity.”

Gender plays a significant role in the factors that contribute to vulnerability and being at risk of becoming the intended victim of a crime, this includes susceptibility to transnational organized crime. Gender-based violence and discrimination against women often result in poverty, heightening their vulnerability to trafficking in persons and other forms of exploitation.

Additionally, gender-based stereotypes influence how problems are addressed, affecting the screening and identification of individuals, the services provided to them, and the sentences imposed on convicted perpetrators.

Women, men, girls and boys face different risks of TiP not only because of their gender but also due to intersecting factors such as age, nationality, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. Gender inequalities are often compounded by discrimination based on race, ethnicity, migrant status, national or social origins, poverty, weak social and economic structures, and lack of employment and equal opportunities. These intersecting characteristics create multiple forms of discrimination, which intensify an individual’s vulnerability to trafficking.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Responding effectively to trafficking in a manner that is both effective and gender-responsive necessitates a strategic commitment from police leadership to ensure meaningful participation of victims and survivors.

Meaningful participation means that individuals and their communities have the right to be involved in decisions that directly impact them. This includes being part of the planning, implementation, and monitoring of interventions. It also entails providing victims and survivors with balanced, objective information so they can maintain control over key decisions affecting their well-being. Additionally, consulting them to gather feedback on decision-making processes and exploring alternative solutions is crucial.

The concept of ‘meaningful’ participation requires that all potentially vulnerable, marginalized, or concerned groups not only have a seat at the table but that their concerns are heard and genuinely considered. These stakeholders play a vital role in creating and benefiting from peaceful and safe communities. They should have opportunities to share their knowledge and articulate their needs to ensure that anti-trafficking strategies are informed by a gender perspective and that resulting outcomes benefit society as a whole.

Stakeholder engagement is an ongoing process of interaction and dialogue between an entity and those who may be affected by its actions. This process allows any entity to listen, understand, and respond to the interests and concerns of stakeholders through collaborative approaches. It’s a continual effort to maintain open lines of communication and foster mutual understanding and cooperation.

PREVENTION

Ensuring that response strategies to trafficking are in place is crucial. The Prevention in the 3 Ps (Prevention, Protection and Prosecution) must focus also on root causes to TiP to have any meaningful impact.

Prevention efforts should include amending labour laws to ensure that no category of workers, recognizing that labour sectors can be very gendered) are excluded from coverage, robustly enforcing labour laws to safeguard against exploitation and abuse, and developing and monitoring labour recruitment programs to protect workers from exploitation. Strengthening partnerships among law enforcement officials, foreign governments, and NGOs, as well as monitoring supply chains to address potential forced labour issues, are also crucial. Additionally, awareness-raising and community engagement are essential to prevent trafficking, particularly in vulnerable communities and among at-risk youth with a gender lens as per above.

Prevention measures should be strengthened through awareness-raising, including on gender issues and on how gender is a contributing factor to how vulnerabilities are created/perpetuate for those at risk of trafficking, including specifically targeting groups of vulnerable populations that are at risk of becoming victims of trafficking.

Respect of rights of all individuals with due attention to factors which make groups and individuals specifically vulnerable and puts them specifically at risk is paramount to prevent TiP by rendering people less vulnerable and at risk of recruitment.

Preventing Trafficking by Addressing Root Causes of Trafficking

Prevention strategies should therefore **also include measures addressing the root causes and risk factors** that increase the vulnerability of women, men, girls and boys – including on how each demographic group is impacted differently- with particular emphasis on how intersectionalities render certain groups more vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation. States should therefore expand their trafficking prevention measures to address gender norms and unequal power relationships, which contribute to gender specific poverty, unemployment, limited access to education, gender specific risks posed by unsafe migration processes and gender-based discrimination in general.

Awareness of the root causes and contributing factors that increase victims’ vulnerability to trafficking is crucial for developing and implementing effective prevention measures that address the gendered nature of trafficking.

Additionally, harmful notions of **masculinity and patriarchal expectations** regarding work and gender roles negatively affect men and boys, who are often seen as the primary breadwinners. Economic insecurity in households, especially during crises, is a major risk factor for men and boys becoming victims of trafficking, particularly for forced labor, forced criminality, and organ removal.

PROTECTION

Protecting trafficking victims requires a gender-sensitive approach because victims of different genders experience distinct forms of exploitation and have varying needs. For example, trafficked women and girls often face high rates of physical and sexual violence and thus require specialized support and empowerment measures. In contrast, male victims might need psychological support, medical assistance, and healthcare tailored to their specific experiences.

Identifying trafficking victims is crucial, as it can mean the difference between receiving assistance and access to justice or facing prosecution. However, the prevailing image of a trafficking victim as typically female, or as someone possessing characteristics associated with vulnerability, weakness, and innocence, impedes the identification process and the allocation of resources to those who do not fit this perception. Gender plays a crucial role in shaping these social assumptions, which explains why certain groups are more readily identified as victims than others.

Men and boys, in particular, often struggle to see themselves as victims. They fear stigmatization and loss of dignity associated with accepting victimhood, which, due to stereotypical constructions of masculinity, can be considered more devastating than physical harm. Both male and female victims face numerous obstacles in seeking and accepting assistance. Additionally, there is a scarcity of tailored support, such as differential healthcare provision or safe accommodation, that addresses victims' gender-specific needs according to the type of harm and exploitation they have endured.

PROSECUTION

Society, and by extension law enforcement, is influenced by gendered assumptions that perceive women and girls as potential victims and men and boys as potential perpetrators. Consequently, the rights of men and boys as trafficking victims are often overlooked, especially in cases of forced participation in criminal activities. This results in a limited ability of the criminal justice system to recognize men and boys as trafficked persons as well as women as perpetrators.

In this context it is crucial to be mindful that victims can become perpetrators and that the mental impact being a victim may have on the individual must be considered in eventual prosecution.

Challenges exist at various stages of the criminal justice process, including the need for gender-appropriate pairing of victims and law enforcement officials, increasing female representation in the criminal justice sector, and enhancing gender knowledge and awareness among criminal justice practitioners. Gender dynamics are crucial for establishing trust with a victim. A victim's personal history, cultural background, and individual preferences should be considered when pairing them with a criminal justice officer.

Sentencing disparities often reflect gender expectations, resulting in harsher penalties for women compared to men, even for similar crimes. This bias stems from societal perceptions that women's criminality is more morally egregious. Furthermore, judicial systems may not adequately consider the pathways that lead women into crime, often marked by histories of abuse and victimization, or criminal behaviours influenced by relationships. Consequently, sentences may not appropriately reflect these mitigating factors, contributing to unjust outcomes.

Conversely, research has also indicated that female criminal behaviour is at times viewed as **less** serious than male criminal behaviour, leading to more lenient sentencing due to perceptions of women lacking agency in their actions.

CHALLENGES IN SIERRA LEONE

During the consultative process leading to the development of this Policy Brief it was highlighted by stakeholders how there is a lack of reliable data on numbers of victims in Sierra Leone which hampers an evidence based and data driven response.

It has likewise been identified by stakeholders that effective reintegration of VoTs who return is a major challenge because of the discrimination and marginalisation they face due to erroneous expectations of families and communities and the misrepresentation of the migratory journey as an almost automatic success, which distorts the image of returning VOTs who, due to no fault of their own, come back after harrowing experiences of abuse and neglect.

The young population of Sierra Leone is being specifically targeted with messaging around becoming “rich fast” if they migrate, and a mindset has developed around earning money fast. Messaging to change this narrative and the mindset to e.g. make certain sectors of industry “attractive” is a challenge. This perception that migrating is a certain way to riches makes particularly young people susceptible to the methods of recruitment traffickers use, luring the former into exploitation.

It has been noted that the Sierra Leonean National Referral Mechanism’s line of reporting and effective use is not always clear to all actors and may be slow to respond when a potential victim has been identified.

Accommodation for VoTs is very limited as are centres for victims of domestic violence. It is therefore extremely difficult to offer adequate protection, in terms of a safe space, for victims.

Officers at e.g. border points do not have sufficient capacity to identify potential victims and needs reinforced training on a gender sensitive approach in carrying out their tasks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

General for all actors (Government, NGOs, International Partners and private sector actors)

When discussing gender considerations, it is essential to include the experiences of men. Traditional gender norms perpetuate harmful practices that make both women and men vulnerable. A gender-sensitive approach that acknowledges intersecting vulnerabilities is necessary to support survivors of trafficking in persons (TiP).

The inclusion of local communities is paramount to address gender bias and harmful gendered practices. The inclusion of local communities is important to shift mindsets both in terms of creating opportunities which will make individual less vulnerable to trafficking as well as when victims go back to their communities they are able to thrive instead of continuing in a circle of marginalisation and risk.

Ensure that all actors providing services to VoTs (government agencies, NGOs and other social partners) are able to do so with a gender sensitive approach.

Specific for Government

It is paramount to ensure policy coherence between anti-trafficking, migration and labour market regulations in line with a human rights based and gender-based approach. For example, migration and anti-trafficking policies must ensure that trafficking victims are not wrongfully punished as “illegal” migrants.

A person can never be “illegal”. A migrant entering or residing without proper documentation and permist in a country is to be termed “irregular” or “undocumented”. For further information see https://www.unhcr.org/cy/wp-content/uploads/sites/41/2018/09/TerminologyLeaflet_EN_PICUM.pdf

Promote a Whole of Government approach as promoted in the GCM, for which Sierra Leone is a Champion Country, in both policy development as well as in activities, so that all actors are involved as well as sensitized to both TiP and gender issues, as well as ensure collaboration and streamlining (e..g concretely on help lines).

Include a holistic and whole of government approach in legal responses, including at the judicial level by involving dedicated courts such as the Special Court for Sexual Violence which is to be endorsed by the Government of Sierra Leone (at the point of writing July 2024 this is to be confirmed).

The effects of various types of legislation and policies on various gender and age groups should be continuously assessed, making specific reference to potential differences in impact due to various vulnerabilities (socio-economic etc.) including gender.

Prioritizing education, institutional strengthening, and reintegration services through a gender lens is crucial, as TiP impacts genders differently.

Efforts to promote gender equality, combat gender-based violence and stereotypes, and support policies promoting the socio-economical empowering women are essential in addressing the root causes of human trafficking. This must include programmes and policies which aim at bridging any gender gaps in education, access to resources and mindsets and stereotypes which see women as “less than” men.

Promote a gender-lens to job creation and to equal opportunities for men and women as well as in access to education and skills training, thus contributing to eliminating socio-economical disparity which creates increased vulnerabilities. In this context ensure that re-integration of VOTs returned is sustainable and long-term and based on a labour market analysis to avoid supporting the creation of e.g. small business with little viability instead of insertion into an existing or emerging labour market.

Continued efforts to eradicate gender biases and discriminatory practices by intervening in schools and with youth to change such practices and mindsets. This should include information about rights in work and dangers of TiP and labour exploitation.

Continued consultation with local communities and representative of affected groups – including labour unions and including the voice of male victims of trafficking. Legislation and policy should transform the landscape in which organized crime thrives and contribute to creating an environment in which the creation of risks and vulnerability and marginalisation becomes the distinct exception. Consultation with affected communities, engagement with civil society groups and robust evidence on which to build law and policy is critical to mainstreaming gender and human rights in ways that are responsive to how marginalized groups are uniquely impacted by organized crime and exploitation.

National and regional actions to combat trafficking must be comprehensive, addressing all victims and forms of exploitation within the legal and policy framework.

The National Action Plan should be implemented with a gender lens, avoiding to focus only on women and children, while recognizing their specific vulnerabilities. Given the gendered nature of trafficking, many countries have focused anti-trafficking policies and practices on women. However, assistance and protection measures, including safe accommodation, must also be extended to male victims of trafficking.

The demand side of human trafficking is often neglected in prevention programs, collaboration with countries of destination to enhance their awareness of the demand on their territory, with a gender lens, can have an impact on prevention of TiP.

The absence of effective regulation in certain labour market segments, such as domestic work, contributes to an environment where exploitation can thrive. It is important to continuously review the impact of such legislation on identifying trafficking victims, providing protection and assistance, and effectively prosecuting traffickers.

Ensure that the National Anti-Trafficking Taskforce is capacitated to apply a gender lens to its work and initiatives.

Court personnel and the members of the Judiciary are aware of and apply a gender sensitive approach in their dealings with victims as well as perpetrators, from investigation to sentencing.

Reinforce the capacity of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) to respond quicker and staff to be trained in having a gendered approach. It is also recommended that awareness raising on the existence and functions of the NRM be carried out.

Reinforce capacity of border police to identify potential cases of TiP as well as carry out training on having a gender sensitive approach to carrying out their task.

Create Safe Houses and Centres for victims of all gender-based violence, and for VoTs. These must ensure that adults and children are not housed together (unless in the best interests of the child) and that women and men are housed apart.

Multiple actors (Government, private sector, NGOs, International partners, media)

Collaborative efforts including media and the private sector as well as local communities and local traditional leaders must be promoted through awareness raising and prevention activities, with full respect of data protection principles.

Ensure that budgets include gender sensitive programming, capacity building and outrolling of gender sensitive initiatives and sensitization activities around gender bias, discrimination, harmful practices and traditions.

Promote proactive data collection mechanisms to gather gender-disaggregated data, with an emphasis on under-researched areas to ensure data informed and evidence based decision making.

Bridging the research gap and carry out in-depth qualitative research to examine the nexus between gender and trafficking situations, in particular less visible forms of trafficking such as domestic servitude and organ removal, as well as the sexual exploitation of men and boys and other persons who do not fit the ideal victim profile. Such research should start by baseline studies of intersectionality of vulnerabilities to TiP.

Professionals dealing with human trafficking require tailored training that supports a gender and age-sensitive approach, which ensures the protection and adequate provision of services to victims (including health, justice, immigration, education, shelter, etc.).

Actors working specifically on gender should be sensitised to TiP so as enhance the capacity of all actors to work on gender and TiP in concert.

Communication strategies should be gender sensitive and break stereotypes and not only focus on girls or women trafficked for sexual exploitation or as domestic workers but also include dangers to boys and girls.

Sensitisation around dangers of TiP as well as campaigns to address bias and gender discrimination should be done across the country in.

ACRONYMS AND KEY TERMINOLOGY

ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States

CTDC: Counter Trafficking Data Collaborative (CTDC)

GCM: Global Compact on Migration

GBV: Gender Based Violence

ILO: International Labour Organization

IOM: International Organization for Migration

NGO: Non Governmental Organisation

NFI: Non Food Item

NRM: National Referral Mechanism

SDGs: UN Sustainable Development Goals

TiP: Trafficking in Persons

VoT: Victim of Trafficking

UNGPs: UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

UNSDCF: National United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

Gender: UNWOMEN defines [Gender](#) as “Gender refers to the roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society at a given time considers appropriate for men and women. In addition to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, gender also refers to the relations among women and those among men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context/time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision making opportunities. Gender is part of the broader sociocultural context, as are other important criteria for sociocultural analysis including class, race, poverty level, ethnic group, sexual orientation, age, etc.”

Gender Equality as defined by UNWOMEN: [Gender equality](#) refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women, men, girls and boys. Equality does not imply sameness but that the rights of women and men will not depend on the gender they were born with. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of all genders are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups. Gender equality is not a women’s issue but should concern and fully engage all genders while recognizing that neither all men nor all women are a homogenous group.



