

Human Trafficking in Ghana

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Ghana Background

- Located in Western Africa on the Gulf of Guinea
- Country is 71.2% Christian, 17.6% Muslim, 6% traditional/other and 5.2% no religious affiliation
- English is official language but more than 250 languages and dialects are spoken in the country.
- 76.6% literacy rate



Connections

Classroom Connections:

- SW 648 Issues in Global Social Work Practice - This course helped me understand the foundations of social work as a global practice. It truly helped me recognize the multiple ways in which social work can be a global field of practice and how it is our ethical and moral responsibility to advocate for global social work practice.
- SW 583 Independent Studies in Research- This course empowered me to synthesize SW 522, Basic Social Work Research, with my global independent study. I learned how to use basic social work research skills and examination of data sets to inform my work. I used course assignments and content to lay the ground work on researching the human trafficking and human rights violations policy of Ghana to inform my independent study.

Career Connections:

It is my passion to work in a government setting or at a nonprofit working to advocate for human rights through policy evaluation and analysis. This project helped me explore how human rights look internationally and empowered me to think critically about the concept of justice and if it looks the same all over the globe. The skills and lessons learned from this independent study will also help me in the research and policy analysis pieces of my career goals.

Global Independent Study Information

Project:

My project started a semester prior to travel with secondary research to understand the cultural implications and existing public policies on human trafficking in Ghana. I also studied international protocol of trafficking in persons and sought to find best practices for working with trafficking victims. While in Ghana, I spend three-weeks doing an exploratory study to observe nonprofits working to free and rehabilitate children of forced labor. I partnered with a local nonprofit in Accra for this research while also working to understand the current climate of human trafficking in Ghana. I presented the information we found to local people, schools, and nonprofits to further spread awareness of human trafficking and the rights of victims under Ghana law.

Agency:

I was placed through Kaya International Travel with Volunteer Partners of West Africa (VPWA). VPWA was founded by, Hayford Siaw, as an agency to work with volunteers from around the globe to empower local solutions with local people in rural communities of West Africa to alleviate poverty through the multiple mechanisms that push it forward. VPWA also focuses on working with young people and people of marginalized identities to become positive agents of change, working towards sustainable development (vpwa.org).

In my time with VPWA, I served as a research associate. I worked with local community members, non-profits, schools, and stakeholders to spread awareness on human trafficking. VPWA and I worked to understand the multiple social, cultural, and political factors working to propel trafficking forward while researching best practices to rehabilitate trafficked children. The research was focused on community strengths and surveying what non-profits in the area are already doing to rescue trafficked children and how their work can be improved through government intervention.



Why Human Trafficking?

Human Trafficking has been identified as a global epidemic that plagues every nation of the world by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Ghana is currently identified as a "Tier 2 Watch List" country on the 2016 Trafficking in Person's Report from the U.S. Department of State (U.S. Department of State, 2016). This identifies Ghana as having a significant amount of trafficking victims in a variety of severe forms. It labels the Ghana government as one that has taken some action in improving conditions for trafficking but shows there is much progress to be made to eliminate trafficking in the country.

Ghana's trafficking victims range from children to adults and are of all identities and genders. The most prominent type of trafficking in Ghana is the exploitation of children within the country (World Factbook, 2017). Children are often exploited through forced labor in the form of fishing, gold mining, agricultural work, and begging. Sexual exploitation and transnational sex trafficking is also prevalent in the country, mostly with young girls (U.S. Department of State, 2016).

Skills Utilized & Developed

- The ability to utilize multiple research methods to build an understanding of a social issue and the community/ people that are most impacted by its continuation.
- Synthesizing research and existing policy to analyze and debrief how a policy both helps and limits communities from mobilizing to alleviate a social issue. I also learned how to provide policy recommendations based on community identified needs and solutions.
- Cross-cultural communication and building rapport in a community that I am an outsider to.

Advice

- Take it all in.
- Think critically, seek to raise your critical consciousness.
- It's okay to ask questions and it's okay to be uncomfortable; in fact it's probably best you're uncomfortable to really grow.
- Take as many ethical pictures as possible.
- Find a way to reflect that works for you so that you can build from your experience and learn from your time abroad.



Outcomes

- Awareness of human trafficking, specifically child labor as a form of trafficking, was spread to schools and community members.
- Research was developed on the social, cultural, and political factors working to propel trafficking forward.
- Reports written on the trafficking policies in Ghana and the rights granted for trafficked persons.

Lessons Learned

Critical reflection and understanding of how my role as a social worker and advocate for social change transcends borders. I learned how systems of privilege and oppression perpetuate internationally and how to work towards cultural humility when seeking to advance social and economic justice.



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