

INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION

Child Trafficking into Forced Labor on Lake Volta, Ghana

A Mixed-Methods Assessment



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IJM

International Justice Mission

**Baseline Study of Child Trafficking into
Forced Labor on Lake Volta, Ghana**

STUDY HIGHLIGHTS

Trafficking children into forced labor in Lake Volta's fishing industry is prevalent.

The 2013 operational assessment found that more than half (57.6%, 444/771) of children working on southern Lake Volta's waters were trafficked into forced labor.

The majority of children are too young to legally conduct the hazardous tasks inherent in many aspects of the fishing industry.

Approximately one-fifth of children working in the fishing industry were six years old or younger.

Traffickers controlled children through violence; limiting access to food; and sometimes kept older boys in their employment through sexual rewards and marriage.

The latter control tactics render girls in the fishing industry vulnerable to multiple forms of victimization.

Government and other stakeholders can help by:

- 1) prioritizing the arrest, prosecution and conviction of perpetrators of child trafficking into forced labor and the related psycho-social support of trafficked children; and
- 2) reducing vulnerability through increased access to education and through economic empowerment.

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Acronyms

AHTU	Anti-Human Trafficking Unit
DSW	Department of Social Welfare
DOVVSU	Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit
FGD	Focus group discussion
KII	Key informant interview
MoGCSP	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
IPEC	International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor
ILO	International Labor Organization

Key Definitions

Child: Any person below the age of 18 years old (Children’s Act, 1998 §1).

Child labor: “Work that deprives children of their childhood, potential, dignity, and that which is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that deprives them of the opportunity to attend school, leave school prematurely, or requires them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work” (ILO).

Contract: For the purpose of this report, a contract includes verbal agreements as well as written agreements for employing children in the fishing industry.

Data collector: In the operational assessment, data collectors were IJM staff who brought significant undercover law enforcement experience. In the qualitative study, data collectors were from Participatory Development Associates (PDA), a Ghanaian research firm with experience conducting trafficking research, working with youth, and conducting focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) in rural locations within Ghana.

Drowning: Community members in Ghana frequently used the term “drowning” interchangeably with not coming back from a task in the water or dying as a result of falling into the Lake.

Employment: Engagement in any economic work or activity which is performed during a specified period for pay (whether in cash or kind), profit or family gain (ILO).

Exploitative labor: Work that deprives the child of his or her health, education or development.

Fishing industry: Incorporates all aspects of obtaining and preparing fish for consumption, including: catching, processing, preserving, and selling fish. “On the lake” references in this report refer only to data collection activities in 2013.

Fishing-related activity: Includes paddling, fetching water from the boat, casting and pulling the net, checking it and taking fish out, diving to free nets entangled between tree stumps, removing the fish from the nets, carrying the net and fish, mending or adapting the net, and cleaning the fish for sale.

Focus group discussion: A qualitative research method systematically implemented with a set of questions or topics decided in advance for which the facilitator aims to identify themes from the group. It is typically conducted with eight to 10 participants and a separate note-taker. In this qualitative study, the data collection team aimed for eight to 10 participants but allowed for groups as small as six and as large as 12.

Forced labor: “Work or service that is exacted from a person under threat of a penalty and for which that person has not offered himself or herself voluntarily” (Labor Act, 2003).

Fostering: The practice of raising or providing primary care for a child who is not one’s own by birth or legal adoption.

Hazardous work: Employment that poses a danger to the health, safety or morals of a person, including: going to sea (including the fishing industry); night work exceeding eight continuous hours; mining and quarrying; carrying heavy loads exceeding 25 KG; manufacturing industries where chemical are produced or used; environments with excessive noise; felling of timber; production and screening of pornographic material; work in places where machines are used; and work in places such as bars, hotels and places of entertainment where a person may be exposed to immoral behavior (Children’s Act, 1998 §91 and Labor Regulations #7).

Human trafficking: The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, trading or receipt of persons within and across national border by: use of threats, force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, the abuse of power or exploitation of vulnerability, or giving or receiving payments and benefits to achieve consent. Exploitation includes at the minimum: induced prostitution or sexual exploitation; forced labor or services; salary or practices similar to slavery; servitude or removal of organs; or the placement for sale, bonded placement, temporary placement, placement as service where exploitation by someone else is the motivating factor (Human Trafficking Amendment Act, 2009).

Key informant interview: This qualitative research method identifies individuals who can share unique perspectives about an aspect of the study.

Night work: Work between the hours of 8 p.m. and 6 a.m. (Children’s Act, 1998 §88).

Respondent: In this report, a respondent represents a FGD or a key informant. Therefore, it is not synonymous with an individual as the focus groups were comprised of six-12 individuals.

Executive Summary

Background and Introduction

Past studies have demonstrated the presence of child work, child labor, and child trafficking within Lake Volta's fishing industry—highlighting that many children live outside the legal safeguards Ghana has established to protect child welfare—and have also documented the hazards and hardships faced by these children. However, prior to this mixed-methods baseline study, the extent of child trafficking into forced labor on Lake Volta could only be inferred. The purpose of this baseline study was to document the scope and nature of child trafficking in Lake Volta's fishing industry.

Methodology

IJM conducted two primary data collection efforts: 1) an operational assessment in the southern region of Lake Volta in 2013; and 2) a qualitative research study in destination and source communities in 2015.¹

- 1. Operational assessment in the southern region of Lake Volta:** In 2013, IJM conducted an operational assessment on Lake Volta to determine the scale of child trafficking into forced labor. This assessment was conducted in IJM's intended project area (the southern portion of the lake, which ranges from south of the Abotasi fishing village and east of the Akosombo Dam). Over the course of 17 days during June and July, data collectors conducted interviews with children and/or adults in a total of 982 occupied boats (canoes) classifying the trafficking status of all children interviewed or observed.
- 2. Qualitative study in destination and source communities:** In 2015, IJM hired a local Ghanaian research firm to conduct in-depth qualitative research in the top three destination and top three source communities identified by the southern operational assessment. In total, the study team conducted 32 focus group discussions with targeted community members involved in Lake Volta's fishing industry—including young adults who had worked in the fishing industry as children; men in the fishing industry; women in destination communities who host children; and parents/guardians who send children to Lake Volta—and interviewed 51 key informants. To further triangulate information, the study team documented five accounts with survivors of trafficking and profiled six fishing villages in which focus group discussions were conducted.

Results

Findings from the distinct yet complementary studies in 2013 and 2015 reveal that the majority of children working in Lake Volta's fishing industry are 10 years old or younger. This shows that the majority of children are too young to legally conduct the hazardous tasks inherent in many aspects of the fishing industry. Although the 2013 operational assessment overwhelmingly found boys working on Lake Volta (99.3% of children on the southern region of the lake were boys), the 2015 study found that girls also work in—and are trafficked into—the fishing industry. The findings demonstrate that girls have different roles in the fishing industry, completing most tasks somewhere onshore or further inland instead of on the lake where the 2013 assessment occurred. The 2015 study also revealed that both boys and girls have physically demanding, and sometimes hazardous, roles in Lake Volta's fishing industry.

The 2013 operational assessment found that more than half (57.6%, 444/771) of children working on southern Lake Volta's waters were trafficked into forced labor. In 2015, each of the fishing communities sampled during the qualitative study confirmed the presence of child trafficking. Across destination communities, most respondents estimated that 60% or more of the children working in the fishing industry were born in other communities. In source communities, most respondents estimated that between 20-50% of children leave the community specifically to work in Lake Volta's fishing industry.

Data collection in 2013 and 2015 found that children trafficked into the fishing industry had contractual agreements for their exploitation, which were frequently between the trafficker and the child's parent/guardian. The 2015 study found that while many perpetrators may be low-income fishermen themselves, they do not use trafficked children merely to survive. In fact, exploiting trafficked children enabled them to send their biological children to school and provide better accommodations and clothing for their own family. One male survivor accounted that, "We were more or less like house slaves, because their own children did nothing." Thus, several factors distinguished trafficked from non-trafficked children, including: access to education, working conditions—such as working longer hours and being assigned more intense, hazardous, or difficult tasks—and improper clothing and shelter. Physical violence committed against children was widespread in Lake Volta's fishing industry, with parents/guardians in source communities reporting that children were "beaten like goats." While trafficked children overwhelmingly experienced violence, this was not unique to trafficked children due to the cultural acceptance of physical discipline in Ghana.

Qualitative data in 2015 revealed that traffickers controlled children through violence and limiting access to food; and sometimes kept older boys in their employment through sexual rewards and marriage. The latter control tactics rendered girls in the fishing industry vulnerable to multiple forms of victimization. These means of control combined with the working and living conditions affected trafficked children, with key informants citing that survivors displayed signs of trauma and underdeveloped social skills. Further, although everyone acknowledged that there are government programs in place and NGOs that serve trafficking survivors, the service needs of trafficked children far exceeded the availability and accessibility of services.

Recommendations

The study's results revealed the need for a holistic, multidisciplinary anti-trafficking intervention which includes: 1) prioritizing the arrest, prosecution and conviction of perpetrators of child trafficking into forced labor and the related psycho-social support of trafficked children; and 2) reducing vulnerability through increased access to education and through economic empowerment.

The information in this report can help inform strategies for the identification and investigation of cases of child trafficking, including: methods to reach hidden populations and routine monitoring of trafficking hotspots. Once identified, trafficked children must be provided with appropriate services by the Ghanaian government as well as other community and non-governmental stakeholders. Findings demonstrate the need for strong trauma-informed recovery services for survivors and reintegration support.

¹ In addition to these two primary methods, IJM used an abbreviated version of the operational assessment in the northern portion of Lake Volta in 2014. The findings from this data collection—drawn from observations of 1,187 boats (canoes) and only 8% of children observed were interviewed—are presented in Appendix A, since they differ markedly and are not directly comparable.



1 Introduction

Trafficking of children into forced labor is common in the Lake Volta fishing industry. IJM conducted this study to document the nature and scale of child trafficking into forced labor on Lake Volta, Ghana.

1.1 Child Trafficking in Ghana

1.1.1 Ghana's Fishing Industry

Ghana is a lower middle-income country. The agriculture sector is one of its main economies.² In 2014, the agricultural sector contributed \$5.51 billion USD (or 22%) to national gross domestic product (GDP).³ Of this, inland and coastal fishing combined contributed \$298 million USD to national GDP in 2014, representing 1.2% of the total GDP of Ghana.⁴ It is estimated that fishing on Lake Volta, the fourth largest reservoir in the world, accounts for 90% of the total inland fisheries output for Ghana,⁵ and approximately 20% of the nation's total fish catch.⁶ Lake Volta is an important resource for transportation and fishing with a shoreline of 5,271 km. Along the shoreline lie 1,232 fishing villages⁷ inhabited largely by an impoverished rural population. An estimated 300,000 people depend on the Lake for their livelihoods,⁸ of which approximately 80,000 are fishermen and 20,000 are fish processors and traders operating within numerous fishing syndicates on Lake Volta.⁹ More than 70% of children involved in the Ghana fishing industry can be found in the Volta Region and other eastern regions that surround Lake Volta.¹⁰



1.1.2 Child Trafficking and the Law in Ghana

Trafficking of children into forced labor situations is illegal in Ghana. The United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol), is the main international legal framework to combat trafficking, with the objective of protecting and assisting victims of human trafficking with full respect for their human rights.¹¹ The composition of the Ghanaian Human Trafficking Act, 2005 (HTA) was mainly

guided by the Protocol and the HTA adopts the definition of human trafficking¹² as provided in the Palermo Protocol.¹³ The Government of Ghana has also ratified several fundamental International Labor Organization (ILO) standards relevant to trafficking children into forced child labor.¹⁴ The Government of Ghana has also acceded to (but not ratified) the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.¹⁵ This convention requires member states to enhance international cooperation in the fight against human trafficking and to promote training of and technical assistance for building or upgrading the capacity of national authorities.¹⁶

Indeed, the laws of Ghana promise adequate protection to children from forced labor and trafficking. The Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992 (CRG) requires that Parliament enact laws that protect children against exposure to physical and moral hazards and work that adversely affects their development.¹⁷ The Ghanaian HTA prohibits human trafficking¹⁸ into, within, and through Ghana;¹⁹ secures the government's commitment to provide for the care and rehabilitation of trafficked persons;²⁰ and prohibits the use of trafficked persons in labor situations²¹—the penalty for which is imprisonment for a term of no less than five years.²² Under the statute, a person who provides another person for purposes of trafficking commits an offense even when the provider is a parent.²³

Provisions of the Children's Act, 1998 (CA), the Labor Act, 2003 (LA), the Criminal Code, 1960 (CC), and the Domestic Violence Act, 2006 (Act 732) define child welfare and criminalize the use of child labor that jeopardizes it. Under Ghanaian law, a child is engaged in child labor if: 1) they are doing hazardous work;²⁴ 2) they are less than 12 years old and are employed in economic activity;²⁵ or 3) they are 12 to 14 years old and involved in economic activities that are not defined as *light work*.²⁶ The penalties for these offenses range from fines not exceeding 10 million old GHC (\$265 USD at the time of the report)²⁷ and/or imprisonment of up to two years. Engaging a child in *exploitative labor*²⁸ (CA §12) or *night work*²⁹ (CA §88) is also illegal, and no child should be employed in work likely to expose them to physical or moral danger (LA §53, LR #8).³⁰

Ghana has an Anti-Trafficking National Policy Framework and Implementing Institutions. The trafficking of children into forced labor is addressed in the National Plan of Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor in Ghana. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP), advised by the Human Trafficking Management Board (HTMB), is responsible for determining trafficking policy and is working on a new National Plan of Action to extend the current plan that ends in 2015, implemented by the National Steering Committee on Child Labor.³¹ The current plan promotes the enactment of subsidiary legislation that would facilitate enforcement of the HTA, and makes imperative offender prosecution.³² It identifies practical measures to aid the enforcement of the HTA, including educating law enforcement officers on its legal provisions.³³

The United States Department of Labor (DOL) identified four government agencies responsible for enforcing the HTA.³⁴ The Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) within the Ghanaian Police Service exist at the national and regional level and have the role of enforcing the HTA through conducting investigations and making arrests related to child trafficking through the AHTU of the Criminal Investigation Department. The Department of Social Welfare (DSW) of the MoGCSP is responsible for investigating child labor violations in the informal sector and reporting findings to police. The Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the police is also mandated to refer cases of trafficking to AHTU. The Office of the Attorney General is responsible for prosecuting child trafficking crimes.

Key Legal Terms

Child labor is “work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that: is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and interferes with their schooling by: depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work” (ILO).

Forced Labor is “work or service that is exacted from a person under threat of a penalty and for which that person has not offered himself or herself voluntarily” (Act 732).

1.2 Literature Review: Child Trafficking into Forced Labor on Lake Volta in Ghana

Past studies demonstrate the widespread use of children involved in the fishing industry, as well as the conditions of and process for trafficking children into forced labor on Lake Volta. Despite this body of research, the prevalence of child trafficking into the fishing industry on Lake Volta had not been quantified.

1.2.1 The Prevalence of Child Labor and Trafficking in Ghana's Fishing Industry

Multiple studies from 2003 to 2014 have documented children's involvement in various aspects of the fishing industry throughout Ghana. In 2003, the Ghana Child Labor Survey Report—published by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS)—found that over 49,000 children were involved in the fishing industry in Ghana, with many being disproportionately young or underage to legally perform tasks in the fishing industry (which are deemed to be hazardous under the law). Indeed, 25% of the children were 5-9 years of age, 41% were 10-14 years of age, and 34% were 15-17 years of age.³⁵ However, this study did not specify the number of children working within Lake Volta's fishing industry or how many of these children had been trafficked.

To learn more about trafficking and child labor specifically in Lake Volta's fishing industry, the Ghana Ministry of Manpower Development and Employment (GMMDE) and the ILO/International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC) jointly conducted research in 2013.³⁶ Although the report was unable to specify how many children had been trafficked or were currently in situations of forced labor, it did confirm the presence of trafficking and forced labor on Lake Volta through data gathered in more than 40 fishing communities.³⁷ For example, 46% of respondents confirmed that trafficking children into forced labor occurred in their community,³⁸ and 81% of respondents affirmed that forced labor occurred in their community.³⁹ The ILO/IPEC stated that trafficking and child labor “indeed exist” and was “growing” in these communities.⁴⁰ Moreover, a range of government and nongovernmental organization (NGO) stakeholders identified Lake Volta as a common destination for children to be trafficked into, with the Volta and Brong-Ahafo regions being particularly problematic.⁴¹ The report concluded: “In Ghana, trafficking is known to occur in several economic sectors key among which include agriculture where fishing along the Lake Volta dominates significantly.”⁴²

In 2014, the GSS Ghana Child Labor Survey reported broadly on child labor around Lake Volta. The survey found that in all three regions surrounding Lake Volta, around one in three children were reportedly engaged in child labor⁴³ and one in five children were reportedly engaged in hazardous forms of child labor (defined to include fishing).⁴⁴ Though not specific to trafficking in the fishing industry on Lake Volta, this research highlights the extent to which child labor is a widespread practice in the regions around Lake Volta.

1.2.2 Characteristics and Conditions of Children in the Fishing Industry

Roles within the fishing industry are frequently bifurcated by gender, and these roles are often located in different geographic spaces on and around Lake Volta. For example, fishing on the lake is mainly the work of men and boys,⁴⁵ who are therefore found working on both the water and shore. The processing—mainly smoking, but also drying, salting or frying—and marketing of fish is mainly tasked to women and girls, who may work near the shore of the lake, but are more commonly located in towns and villages around Lake Volta. Through interviews with teachers and other community members, the aforementioned ILO/IPEC study found that potentially trafficked children (mainly girls) help in fish processing and trade; and that the mechanisms to traffic a girl into forced labor were similar to those used to traffic boys into fishing on the lake.

Both boys and girls face hazards in the fishing industry. In a field study of 350 working children from 10 districts around Lake Volta, drowning as a result of diving to disentangle nets was the most noted hazard faced by young boys as reported by both children and experts.⁴⁶ For girls, the main work hazards include serious burns, inhalation of smoke, and cuts endured while cleaning fish.⁴⁷ Overall, the ILO/IPEC report found that about 13% of children indicated drowning as a major risk, 11% indicated effects of storms, 10% indicated physical injuries, and 6% said propeller accidents were a threat.⁴⁸ Parents, employees, and community members perceived these dangers as either occurring “very often” (35% of respondents) or “often enough to note” (27% of respondents).⁴⁹

More than one-fifth of the working children interviewed by the ILO/IPEC had cuts and bruises, which were likely due to intentional violence from their masters.⁵⁰ While not limited to trafficked children in the fishing industry, the GSS Child Labor Survey 2014 highlights the widespread nature of abuse and harm for children engaged in child labor in the regions surrounding Lake Volta. The survey found that at least 87.3% of children engaged in child labor suffered from abuse.⁵¹

These commonplace hazards are compounded for trafficked children. ILO/IPEC found that the conditions under which trafficked children work were more atrocious than those conditions faced by non-trafficked children; this difference was because trafficked children were considered dispensable due to the poverty of their families and the ease

of acquiring more children. These findings were supported by a 2014 report of 43 rescued children, which found that masters profited from trafficked children in order to provide better care to their biological children.⁵² Moreover, 19 out of these 43 children had “endured moments of continuous abuse from the hands of their masters,” and victims mentioned verbal abuse and sexual harassment as well.⁵³ This type of abuse is confirmed by the ILO/IPEC study⁵⁴—as well as studies by Sossou and Yogtiba⁵⁵ and Agbenya⁵⁶—which reported that children trafficked to Lake Volta suffer from verbal, physical, and sexual abuse; and are especially prone to suffer as a result of disobeying their masters’ orders. The masters would enforce obedience by starving children if they failed to follow orders or execute directions properly.⁵⁷ Children were often denied sleep in order to complete their work, sometimes sleeping only three hours a day or sleeping on improper bedding such as canoes or fishing nets if they were on a trip.⁵⁸

Trafficked children also have other health effects from their time in the fishing industry on Lake Volta. Medical reports from the rescue of 30 trafficked children by the Association of People for Practical Life Education (APPLE) in 2007 revealed that 14 of these children were “suffering from serious illnesses, urgently needing treatment” for illness and symptoms such as “malaria, skin infections, blood in urine, boils on the neck, and abdominal wall, chest infections, stomach pain, and vomiting.”⁵⁹ A study by Afendayu in 2009 found that only 6% of injured children along Lake Volta were likely to be treated by a formal health facility,⁶⁰ demonstrating how masters would deny children essential medical care or administer herbs and drugs to the children based only on their personal knowledge, even if the illness was unknown.⁶¹

Trafficked children are frequently forced to finish all of their fishing industry work before going to school; this can severely limit their access to education.⁶² Children may not attend school at all if the fishing industry has removed them from accessible schools—which is often a problem in remote villages such as those around Lake Volta.⁶³ Work often leaves children behind in school so that even if children have the opportunity return to school, they may not want to because they feel inadequate or insecure about enrolling at a lower level with children younger than them.⁶⁴ As a result, many do not attend school, especially children engaged in night fishing, and the area suffers from high rates of school drop outs.⁶⁵

Even non-trafficked children in the fishing industry may experience challenges in attending school. Academic performance is often negatively impacted due to physical injury, malnutrition or extreme fatigue, as children may work up to a combined six hours a day before and after school.⁶⁶

1.2.3 Means and Process of Trafficking

Through a survey of 254 community members across 10 districts around Lake Volta, the ILO/IPEC found that parents and relatives were commonly involved in the trafficking of children to work on the lake. In fact, 42% of respondents indicated that trafficked children are obtained from their own parents, and 37% of respondents said trafficked children are obtained from relatives other than parents. In contrast, only 17% of survey respondents indicated that children offer themselves.⁶⁷

The ILO/IPEC report found that the typical mechanism by which trafficked children ended up on Lake Volta was a contractual agreement made between the employer and the child’s parents or caretaker. These agreements commonly last between one and three years or more with the possibility for renewal; and a total of three years being the average time spent under a contractual engagement. When the contract ends, children may return home to transition to a new work contract,⁶⁸ but more often the child stays for a longer period of time than indicated by the work agreement.⁶⁹ Some factors that commonly contribute to a child being kept longer include: 1) they are too far from their home to be able to return on their own;⁷⁰ 2) they feel obligated to keep working for their families to help economically or come to understand the fishing industry as a way of life once being deprived of an education⁷¹; 3) there is only a verbal agreement made between the trafficker and the family members, thus making it harder to hold the trafficker liable to the contract,⁷² or 4) children may become dependent on their masters for survival because they provide minimal food, clothing, or other items.⁷³ The ILO/IPEC report found that 64% of working children stayed because they were provided with food.⁷⁴ Information from these case studies and qualitative reports were the most accessible data on what happens to children when the contract ends, indicating a larger need for research to gain a holistic understanding of the entire lifecycle of trafficking as well as why it continues to occur in the region.

With regard to payment, the fishermen sometimes agree to pay the parents once a year for their child’s work. This yearly amount ranged between 100 and 500 GHS (\$90-400 USD at the time of the report),⁷⁵ depending on factors such as the age and health of the child. In other cases the children, parents, or guardians receive \$50-100 USD worth in

advanced wages with little chance of receiving further payment;⁷⁶ or they may receive an agreed sum or an asset (commonly a cow) at the end of the contract.⁷⁷

However, while parents and relatives are complicit in handing their children over to traffickers, the ILO/IPEC study concluded that: “parents more often than not may not be fully aware of where their wards are being sent and the nature of work they would be engaged in.”⁷⁸ A study by Afenyadu in 2008 found that 33% of parents of trafficked children were unaware of the conditions their children were living under, 35% thought that the conditions were good, 7% thought they were very good conditions, and only 15% affirmed knowing that the conditions were bad.⁷⁹ Agbenya found that parents may actually believe that sending their children away was in the best interest of the child; many parents consider learning a trade to be more valuable than formal education, especially in rural areas where schooling is not easily accessible.⁸⁰ The ILO/IPEC report suggested that parents “resort to” giving their children to traffickers because they “are confronted with poverty and the difficulty in meeting basic needs and other cost of living.”⁸¹

Available literature reveals that the major pull factor is that children are a source of cheap labor.⁸² Given that fishing on the lake is small scale in nature, fishermen prefer to operate with the lowest possible costs and therefore use children to offset labor costs.⁸³ Children “are considered as cheap labor compared to adults” because of their weaker negotiating power with regard to the conditions of work and their pay.⁸⁴ Agbenya also learned that children are used in the fishing industry because they are “obedient” and “can easily be cheated and exploited to the fishers’ own benefits.”⁸⁵ Moreover, cultural norms in Ghana dictate that children will obey orders from their elders.⁸⁶

Additional cultural norms enable the process of child trafficking. The Walk Free Foundation, an anti-slavery organization, released a report in 2014 stating that small, family-related networks are easy to exploit and are often the mechanism through which trafficking occurs.⁸⁷ In Ghana, socio-cultural practices of fostering and child placement for vocational training are common and assumed to be trustworthy and beneficial.⁸⁸ Traffickers and intermediaries exploit these cultural practices intended for good⁸⁹ because the economic poverty faced by the families leaves them vulnerable to being manipulated, deceived, and bullied into placing children in worse working conditions than they would reasonably choose.⁹⁰ Traffickers avoid prosecution by using intermediaries to avoid direct contact with the families or traveling to recruit in different communities.⁹¹

1.2.4 Government Response to Trafficking

Ghana has robust laws setting forth the rights of children and criminalizing trafficking, but enforcement of these laws is weak. Both the 2014 and 2015 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) reports highlighted this lack of implementation. In 2015, the TIP Report noted that the Government of Ghana made 94 investigations (compared to 140 in 2014)—the majority of which involved suspected transnational trafficking— but only 15 prosecutions were initiated (compared to 20 in 2014) and seven convictions were made (compared to six in 2014). One of these convictions was a case of forced child labor, while the remaining six involved sex trafficking of adult victims. The 2015 report downgraded Ghana to Tier 2 Watchlist and reiterated the findings of the 2014 report, emphasizing official acknowledgment that prosecutors lack training and resources for law enforcement; anti-trafficking training has not been provided to prosecutors since 2011.

Ghana has reported success in reducing child trafficking in other industries—for example, the National Program for the Elimination of Child Labor in Cocoa (NPECLC), whereby international consumers, retailers and producers of cocoa goods aimed to impact production and processing practices along their cocoa supply chains.⁹² The same international economic pressure does not exist in the predominantly domestic fishing industry on Lake Volta. Demonstrating the limitations of the NPECLC model, the DOL 2013 evaluation reported “moderate success” of the NPECLC and concluded that while there are strong expressions of government political will to prevent the trafficking of children into forced labor, resources should be redirected and capacity built to ensure the effective enforcement of domestic laws.⁹³

The ILO/IPEC study notes that community awareness of the laws and regulations around child labor and child trafficking is low. However, awareness is growing due to the efforts of NGOs and has led to gradual changes in perception so that mainland communities now view the use of children in fishing as an illegal activity. As demonstrated in the recent TIP reports, this awareness has not translated into increased enforcement. Moreover, some communities may not trust or report crimes to local authorities.

The lack of investigations into child trafficking is highlighted by the ILO/IPEC study, which notes that the minimal risks to traffickers are far surpassed by the benefits of using trafficked children.⁹⁴ Therefore, the ILO/IPEC recom-

mends: “Whilst the development, enactment or publicizing of these laws, regulations and action programmes are important, it is absolutely necessary to enforce their implementation. The law enforcement agencies and interested entities must enforce these laws and apply the sanctions to offenders.”⁹⁵

1.3 Study Purpose and Objectives

Through a mixed methods approach in 2013 and 2015, IJM conducted baseline data collection to determine the nature and scale of forced child labor trafficking in targeted areas of Lake Volta. Specifically, the key objectives of these two efforts were to:

1. Document the physical characteristics and roles of boys and girls trafficked into forced labor on Lake Volta;
2. Illuminate the conditions of trafficked boys and girls and how these conditions impact them;
3. Determine the scale of forced labor trafficking on Lake Volta;⁹⁶
4. Determine the means and key players by which children are trafficked to Lake Volta and forced to stay within the fishing industry;
5. Identify the geographic areas in which children are trafficked into forced labor (i.e., destination communities) and geographic areas from which children forced into labor trafficking are sourced (i.e., source communities) during the time of the assessment on southern Lake Volta;
6. Identify the push and pull factors for the trafficking of children from source communities to destination communities;
7. Document the attitudes, beliefs, and practices around the trafficking of children into forced labor in both destination and source communities; and
8. Capture the service needs of trafficking victims as well as the availability and accessibility of these services.

²Ghana Statistical Service, HYPERLINK “http://www.statsghana.gov.gh/doc-files/GDP/GDP2015/AnnualGDP2014_template_2014Q4_April%202015%20edition_web.pdf” Gross Domestic Product 2014 (April 2014) at 4 and 5”
³Ibid, at 5.

⁴Ibid.

⁵ILO/IPEC, Analytical Study on Child Labour in Lake Volta fishing in Ghana. International Labour Office / International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)—Geneva: ILO (2013) at 2.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Lilian Agbenya. Child Labour Trafficking in the Lake Volta Fishery of Ghana: A Case Study of Ogetse in the Krachi West District of the Volta Region. University of Tromsø (May 2009) at 51.

⁸Ibid.

⁹ILO/IPEC, op cit., at ix.

¹⁰ILO/IPEC, op cit., at 2.

¹¹United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Chapter 18 Penal Matters: Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000). Doc. A/55/383. Registration 2003 (Status as at 2008).

¹²Trafficking in persons is defined in the Palermo Protocol as the “recruitment, transportation or receipt of persons through the threat or use of coercion or the making of benefits to a person with control over another, for the purpose of exploitation; exploitation includes forced labor and slavery.”

¹³Section 1, HTA §1 2005 (amended 2009).

¹⁴Including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which declares that States must recognize the right of children to be free from economic exploitation and from performing work that is likely to interfere with the child’s education or to be harmful to the child’s health. The Government of Ghana has also ratified The Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention, which requires ratifying states to eliminate the worst forms of child labor, including all forms of slavery, the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage, and forced labor. Finally, the government has also subscribed to the Minimum Age Convention, which sets the general minimum age for admission to employment at 15 years and the minimum age for hazardous work at 18 years.

¹⁵United Nations Treaty Collection: Chapter 18 Penal Matters: United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Registration in 2003 (Status as at 2015).

¹⁶UNODC, United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols Thereto, found here: <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/treaties/CTOC/>.

- ¹⁷Art 28(1)(d) and 28(2).
- ¹⁸HTA §1; Human Trafficking (Amendment) Act (2009) §1. Exploitation is defined as including a minimum of one of the following: “induced prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.” (HTA §2).
- ¹⁹Section §2.
- ²⁰Section §15 and Section §18.
- ²¹Section §4.
- ²²Section §4.
- ²³Section §3.
- ²⁴CA §91. Hazardous Work: “Employment that poses a danger to the health, safety or morals of a person, including: (1) Going to sea, (2) Night work exceeding 8 continuous hours, (3) Mining and quarrying; Carrying heavy loads exceeding 25 KG; Manufacturing industries where chemicals are produced or used; environments with excessive noise; felling of timber; Production and screening pornographic material; Work in places where machines are used; and work in places such as bars, hotels and places of entertainment where a person may be exposed to immoral behavior.” NOTE: Although Ghana does not use the ILO term “Worst Forms of Child Labor” in any legislation, but their legal definition of hazardous work is commensurate with WFCL.
- ²⁵CA §89.
- ²⁶Light Work: Work which is not likely to: (1) be harmful to the health or development of the child and (2) does not affect the child’s attendance at school or his/her capacity to benefit from school work.
- ²⁷CA §94.
- ²⁸Exploitative Labor: Work that that deprives the child of its health, education or development.
- ²⁹Night Work: Work between the hours of 8 p.m. and 6 a.m.
- ³⁰Section 58(4). A person who contravenes subsection (1) or (3) commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding 100 penalty units.
- ³¹United States Department of Labor, Ghana: 2013 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor, Moderate Advancement. 2013
- ³²Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare, National Plan of Action (NPA) for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Ghana, 2009-2015, at 18 and 24.
- ³³Ibid, at 26.
- ³⁴United States Department of Labor, op cit. 2013.
- ³⁵ILO, Ghana Statistical Services: Ghana Child Labour Survey (GCLS). International Labour Organization/ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour; Ghana Statistical Service - Accra: ILO (2003) at 64.
- ³⁶ILO/IPEC, op cit., at 101.
- ³⁷Ibid, at xv.
- ³⁸Ibid, at 36.
- ³⁹Ibid, at 37.
- ⁴⁰ILO/IPEC, op cit., at 101.
- ⁴¹Walk Free Foundation, Country Strategy Report: Modern Slavery Landscape in Ghana. Participatory Development Associates. (2014) at 17 and 28.
- ⁴²ILO/IPEC, op cit, at 45
- ⁴³ILO, Ghana Statistical Services: Ghana Child Labour Survey (GCLS). International Labour Organization/ ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour; Ghana Statistical Service - Accra: ILO (2014) at 38. The approximation was concluded from a report indicating that 26.9% of children in Volta Region, 29.0% of children in Eastern Region, and 33.5% of children in Brong-Ahafo Region were engaged in child labor.
- ⁴⁴Ibid. The approximation was concluded from the report indicating that 19.3% of children in Volta Region, 21.0% of children in Eastern Region, and 24.4% of children in Brong-Ahafo Region were engaged in hazardous forms of child labor.
- ⁴⁵Although they did observe that some girls worked in the crews pulling the nets and the boats to the beach. Other occupations in which boys and girls were involved were carrying the nets to and from the boats, removing the fish from the nets and carrying it as headloads to processing or selling sites.
- ⁴⁶FAO (2009), op cit., at 28.
- ⁴⁷Ibid.
- ⁴⁸ILO/IPEC, op cit., at 46
- ⁴⁹Ibid, at 46 and 47.
- ⁵⁰ILO/IPEC, op cit., at 49.
- ⁵¹GCLS, op cit, 45. The survey found that in the three regions surrounding Lake Volta (the Volta, Eastern and Brong Ahafo region), on average 87.3% of children suffered abuse while engaged in child labor. The survey does not report the prevalence of harm for the fishing industry specifically, but the high statistics below should be considered in light of the ILO/IPEC 2013 report stating that the fishing industry dominates the child trafficking industry.
- ⁵²Seyram Hamenoo and Cynthia Akorfa Sottie, Stories from Lake Volta: The lived experiences of trafficked children in Ghana (2014). Child Abuse & Neglect (40), pages 103-112 (2015) at 108.
- ⁵³Ibid, at 110.
- ⁵⁴ILO/IPEC, op cit., at 17.
- ⁵⁵Sossou, M. & Yogtiba, J. (2009). Abuse of children in West Africa: Implications for social work education and practice. British Journal of Social Work, 39(7): 1218-1234 at 1234.
- ⁵⁶Lilian Agbenya. Child Labour Trafficking in the Lake Volta Fishery of Ghana: A Case Study of Ogetse in the Krachi West District of the Volta Region. University of Tromso (May 2009) at 81.
- ⁵⁷Ibid, at 109.
- ⁵⁸Ibid.
- ⁵⁹Ginny Baumann, Eradicating Child Slavery in West Africa: Priorities emerging from our work in Ghana. Free the Slaves (2007) at 1
- ⁶⁰Ibid, at 9.
- ⁶¹Emma Seyram Hamenoo and Cynthia Akorfa Sottie, op cit., at 109.
- ⁶²Ibid, at 109.
- ⁶³Ibid, at 53. NOTE: The GSS GCLS 2014 report indicated that between 15.8 and 28.1% of children in the three regions surrounding Lake Volta reported this being the cause of never attending school
- ⁶⁴Marlysa Thomas, Child Trafficking in Ghana: An Examination of the Cultural Impact. Prospect Journal, UCSD (2011).
- ⁶⁵Sossou and Yogtiba, op cit.
- ⁶⁶FAO (2009), op cit, at 32.
- ⁶⁷The remaining 4% of respondents said none of these sources provided the children.
- ⁶⁸Vegard Iverson, Children’s Work in Fisheries: A Cause for Alarm? Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme. School of Development Studies, University of East Anglia, Norwich NR4 7TJ, U.K (2006) at 9.
- ⁶⁹Multiple organizations, such as Reach for Change and Association of People for Practical Life Education (APPLE) report the unlikelihood that the child is returned home in the given time frame.
- ⁷⁰Challenging Heights. The Evidence of Slavery in Ghana is Undeniable. Press Release (2015).
- ⁷¹Agbenya, op cit., at 61
- ⁷²Marlysa Thomas, op cit.
- ⁷³Reach for Change: Kofi and Eric rescued from slavery (2013) found here: Kofi and Eric rescued from slavery
- ⁷⁴ILO/IPEC, op cit., at 38.
- ⁷⁵FAO (2009) at 32. NOTE: The USD range given in the report used the currency conversion at that time, but as of 2015 the currency conversion has decreased and the conversion would be \$22 - \$115 USD as of 2015.
- ⁷⁶Ginny Baumann, op cit.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸ILO/IPEC, op cit., at 50.

⁷⁹Dela Afenyadu, Report, Baseline Study into Childhood Fishing; INN-Ghana; Awareness Raising, Rescue and Rehabilitation Project North Tongu District; Accra, Ghana; Sponsored by Geneva Global (2008) at 9.

⁸⁰Lilian Agbenya, Child Labor Trafficking in the Lake Volta Fishery of Ghana: A Case Study of Ogetse in the Krachi West District of the Volta Region. University of Tromso (May 2009) at 81-82.

⁸¹ILO/IPEC, op cit., at 53-54.

⁸²Ibid, at 24.

⁸³Ibid, at 54.

⁸⁴ILO/IPEC, op cit., at 24.

⁸⁵Agbenya, op cit., at 55 and 80.

⁸⁶Ibid, at 69.

⁸⁷Walk Free Foundation, op cit., at 17

⁸⁸Ibid, at 19.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²United States Department of Labor, op cit., at 1 and 4

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴ILO/IPEC, op cit., at 51.

⁹⁵"ILO/IPEC, ibid, at 84-85

⁹⁶The 2013 operational assessment also sought to learn whether this methodology could be implemented and provide insights into future data collection efforts.



2 Methods

To fulfill the study purpose and objectives, IJM conducted two primary data collection efforts: 1) an operational assessment in the southern region of Lake Volta in 2013; and 2) a qualitative research study in destination and source communities in 2015. The methods and data sources of each of these efforts are described in the following section.

2.1 Methods for Data Collected on Southern Lake Volta

In exploring the possibility of opening a field office in Ghana to intervene in cases of child trafficking into forced labor, IJM conducted an operational assessment on southern Lake Volta in 2013. The purpose of this assessment was to understand the nature of trafficking and provide a prevalence rate of trafficked children in IJM's project area. A second assessment was collected in 2014 on the northern section of Lake Volta, which is outside IJM's initial project area, and should be used for reference only. The areas for these two assessments are displayed in Figure 1. The assessment methods are different and were completed at different times of year, so they are not directly comparable. The assessment of northern Lake Volta is provided in the appendix. The methodology and results discussed in this report about southern Lake Volta pertain only to the 2013 assessment.

Figure 1: Southern and Northern Assessment Regions on Lake Volta



2.1.1 Southern Lake Volta Operational Assessment Design

In line with IJM’s proposed target area for interventions, the assessment covered the section of Lake Volta south of the Abotasi fishing village and east of Akosombo Dam. This area was then divided in half longitudinally, as Lake Volta is very narrow. Data collectors split the shoreline into sections with an average shore span of 100 km that could realistically be surveyed in one day and would provide a suitable landing site for sleeping at night. Because all visible boats (canoes) met the inclusion criteria, a boat did not have to contain children to be approached. In fact, children were sometimes found hiding on the floor of boats.

The data collectors who conducted this assessment have several decades of combined experience in criminal investigations and collecting data from brief interactions with survivors of violence, criminal suspects, and other key informants. The assessment team employed a ruse under the auspices of which the questions could be asked and thereby assess the trafficked status of a child. Because these were situations where traffickers (or “masters”) were present on the boats with the children, it was not feasible to collect honest information through an informed consent process.

2.1.2 Measurement of Trafficking into Forced Labor

The construct of trafficking into forced labor was operationalized iteratively, or refined on an ongoing basis, by the assessment team. The initial stage was to identify the conditions that would meet the legal requirements under Ghanaian law (excerpted directly from field notes):

- The child is 17 years old or younger, **and**
- The child was not born in the area where he or she works (this is a credible indicator that movement of the child has occurred), **and**
- The child did not move with either of his or her parents, or his or her spouse, **and**
- The movement was solely for labor purposes—whether a job offer already existed or the child moved in search of a job.

The next step was to embed these questions within a protocol administered as a semi-structured interview. After using these questions for two days on the lake with a local, NGO-employed anti-trafficking expert, the assessment team determined that physical appearances and mannerisms could be used as proxy indicators of “suspected” trafficking. If the assessment team was able to directly interact (non-verbally) or interview children (and/or adults) and obtain statement evidence to support trafficking, then these children were classified as “confirmed” trafficked. The measurement criteria of trafficking status is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Trafficking Status Criteria

Suspected trafficked child	Confirmed trafficked child
Measured by totality of the compelling physical <u>and</u> mannerism (non-verbal) evidence such as: 1. Fear—no eye contact, diving inside boat to hide, physically shaken; 2. Deference to owner—never answering questions directly, looking at owner for cues; 3. Injuries and/or scars; 4. Clothing and grooming compared to other children or adults in the boat.	Measured by suspected trafficked criteria AND statement evidence. ⁹⁷

The excerpt below is an example of transcribed field notes of an interview that resulted in two children who were classified as “confirmed” trafficked:

“Adult says other 2 work there as student helpers...adult said he was 28 and owned his own boat for five years; ... adult said he pays parents of the children 400 Cedis per year; said [child1] and [child2] had been with him for 4 years; offered to take us to Ningo and introduce us to families that would rent kids...”

Sometimes data collectors could only make classifications on nonverbal behavior. For example, if a child avoided eye contact, hid, or otherwise visibly displayed fear or deference to the adult on the boat, it was concluded that the child was “suspected” trafficked and not free to speak in the presence of his master.

2.1.3 Data Collection

Data collectors completed the assessment over the course of 17 days, spanning June and July of 2013 on the southern region of the lake. The assessment team included two primary data collectors, an additional person present for translation, and a data manager. To match daily fishing patterns, data collectors left camps each day around 5 a.m. and began conducting interviews and observations with children and adults on boats by 6 a.m. They interviewed for 12 hours on most days with exceptions due to inclement weather or securing translation assistance. Data collectors captured information for all boats spotted and for any boat out on the water. The study team would pull up next to it and converse with the children and/or adults, often through a translator due to language barriers.

The questions posed were semi-structured because of the nature of assessing the safety of children on the boats. The goal with each boat was to interview children individually, on all topics. A ‘complete’ interview included the following topics: age and sex of each child, trafficking status, place of origin (where child was born), payment for work, length of time working on lake, and injuries. If a child or groups of children were alone when approached, the assessment team conducted a more detailed interview. When children were nonresponsive—if they looked at adults on the boat in deference or fear—information was attempted to be collected from the adult. Given the active nature of the trafficking situations, the experienced data collectors made judgment calls about the extent to which they should ask questions and which questions to ask. Safety of the children and the assessment team was paramount. If an adult approached the boat in the course of engagement and was difficult to engage in conversation, the assessment team would then ask the most important questions (i.e., focused on ascertaining trafficking status, age) first and skip over the other topics. If further engagement with the targeted or surrounding boat occupants seemed hostile or significantly increased risk of harm to anyone, the only data recorded was based on observations of a child’s sex and estimated age. In these instances when an age was estimated, data collectors only counted a person as a child if perceived to be 15 years old or younger. The rationale stated by data collectors was that they wanted the data to be valid and it would have been too difficult to tell based on observation alone. As a result, the data presented in this report as to numbers of children or specific ages err on the conservative side.

When approaching each boat, in addition to making observations and interviewing, data collectors would also capture the GPS coordinates of the interview location on the water using a hand-held GPS device. The team also used this device to send key data from the interview, including the coordinates, to the data manager in real-time.

2.1.4 Data Management

Data collectors made contact with or recorded observations from 100% of boats visible to them while on the lake. After the assessment team collected data and moved away from the boat, data collectors recorded as much information as possible on a waterproof notebook. The team would then send back data in real-time to the data manager on the count of children and their trafficking classification, as well as the GPS coordinates.

Every few days, the data manager would debrief with the assessment team in-person to clarify numbers and classifications and add notes where possible. The data manager entered all information into Excel. A data auditor later conducted a hard-to-soft copy comparison, verifying and reconciling the original data file with the assessment team’s waterproof notebooks data files. When data entries in the Excel file and the waterproof notebooks were unclear, the data auditor conferred with the data collectors and ultimately relied on memory as the true source of data.

2.1.5 Limitations

This assessment sought to measure the scale and nature of trafficking into forced labor by direct engagement with victims and traffickers while they were fishing on the lake. As a result, there were significant security risks to both the assessment team collecting the data and children on the lake that did not permit a survey design to capture all data uniformly from each child counted on the lake.

Although the assessment team worked with a local, NGO-employed anti-trafficking expert who trained the data collectors on how to identify trafficking victims, the assessment design may have some degree of measurement error. For example, the interview or observation approach did not permit more comprehensive data to be collected from every child observed or interviewed. Consequently, the study recognizes that some children identified as trafficked on the basis of physical appearance and mannerisms may have displayed those attributes solely due to poverty, culturally accepted corporal punishment, or hazards of fishing. The data collectors, however, mitigated this limitation by comparing a child's physical appearance and mannerisms to other children on the boat. For example, the data collectors consistently found that boat owners' biological children had markedly different appearances than children who were confirmed trafficked.

The design of this assessment relied on capturing data from boats visible to the data collectors along the daily route prescribed. It is possible that boats in the catchment area could have been missed. For example, Lake Volta is a man-made lake so there are many tree stumps just below the water's surface. Data collectors did try to traverse these difficult-to-reach areas by using a paddle to push their boat through shallow water, but they were not able to cover all areas of southern Lake Volta. Boats would have also been missed if they were on the lake at a different time of day than the data collectors. There were also significant item-nonresponse challenges present with the way the data was coded during this operational assessment (*see text box below*).

Finally, this assessment's original implementation design would be very difficult to replicate. The data collection expertise required significant law enforcement experience and a willingness to conduct interviews in life-threatening situations. Additionally, a subsequent assessment would require a different ruse in order to be successful in gathering truthful data. Both of these factors inhibited data verification in this study and will present challenges for future replication.

2013 Data Coding Limitations

The data collected on southern Lake Volta was not designed as a research study; it was collected to inform future IJM interventions. There were also significant personal safety threats to mitigate for data collectors and boat occupants. As a result, the data was not coded in a manner to know whether missing data was a cognitive "don't know," based only on observation, or some other reason. As a result, these data are referred to as not recorded in 2013 tables.

2.2 Methods for the Qualitative Study

To complement the operational assessment, IJM conducted a qualitative study in early 2015 to determine the nature of forced labor trafficking of children (both boys and girls) into the fishing industry on Lake Volta.

IJM drafted the methodology with input from Ghanaian partners—including the contracted local Ghanaian research firm, Participatory Development Associates (PDA), tasked with data collection. PDA has experience conducting trafficking research; working with youth; conducting focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) in rural locations within Ghana; and the staff had the necessary language capacity—a critical need for data collection, particularly given the sensitivity of the subject matter.

2.2.1 Selection Strategy for Data Collection Sites

The research team employed three phases to select the data collection sites for the qualitative study. Phase 1 used sequential mixed methods, and Phases 2 and 3 involved multiple steps to ensure informed, purposeful selection.

Phase 1: To identify the areas for the FGDs and KIIs

Using the quantitative data obtained from the 2013 operational assessment, IJM identified the three most prevalent areas in which trafficking occurred in southern Lake Volta (hereafter referred to as “destination communities”) and the three most frequently cited communities of origin (hereafter referred to as “source communities”). Below are these most common areas—in alphabetical order—identified during the initial data analysis:

- **Destination communities:** Akosombo, Kpando, and Kpeve
- **Source communities:** Ada, Ningo, and Winneba.

Phase 2: To confirm the identified areas for FGDs and KIIs

After the initial identification of three destination and three source communities, IJM took four additional steps to make the final determination:

1. IJM re-analyzed the assessment data to take into account other factors—such as ages of children in the fishing industry. This additional analysis revealed the above identified areas were either the most common areas, or amongst the most common areas.
2. IJM provided all of these data to its staff members who had worked on the operational assessments or were responsible for developing IJM’s casework strategy in Ghana. These staff members and the study team then considered: 1) the data from the operational assessments, including the analysis of other important factors for consideration; 2) geographic plots of data from the operational assessment; 3) investigative experiences in Ghana; and 4) the initial strategy for IJM’s casework. These four considerations led internal IJM stakeholders to confirm the selection of the above identified areas.
3. IJM also contacted stakeholders in Ghana and asked them if the identified six communities were well-known destination and source communities. All agreed that these locations did in fact have trafficking. One stakeholder confirmed that these were common areas for trafficking, but also suggested choosing more geographically-diverse source communities to identify any similarities or differences in trafficking mechanisms. IJM considered this suggestion but determined: 1) the suggested locations were outside IJM’s targeted project area for the first phase of its program; 2) it would take additional data collection efforts to confirm the correct selection of these more geographically-diverse locations; and 3) it was possible that sufficient saturation may not have been reached to determine these similarities and differences, and therefore additional communities in each area would need to be selected—which was outside the resource constraints for this study.
4. IJM asked for the input from the hired research firm, PDA. This firm has experience conducting anti-human trafficking research within Ghana, and they confirmed the selection of the six communities.

Based on the above steps, IJM concluded that the originally identified communities would yield the richest data, and were in fact the right communities in which to conduct the qualitative study.

Phase 3: To select specific locations for data collection

Each of the destination communities actually represent about 20.12 km shoreline stretches in which prevalence was the highest in the southern operational assessment. For ease of data management, the study team called these stretches by the largest—or most prominent—community in the area (e.g., Akosombo). The large community served as an ideal location for research with anti-trafficking and other relevant professional stakeholders, who were likely to have an office in this community. However, the town would not have served as a strategic location for research with community members who were possibly involved in child trafficking into forced labor. To reach this population, the research team needed to identify the communities in which fishing actually occurs, which were often smaller, and less accessible than the town.

Using the GPS coordinates from the operational assessment on southern Lake Volta, IJM sent an advance team to map and scout all three destination community areas—which included islands and other remote locations—to determine viable fishing villages for the study. The advance team then mapped the larger area for the source communities (as children often referred to the more identifiable town rather than their specific fishing village of origin). These

destination and source villages needed to be moderately accessible to data collectors, and large enough to conduct the requisite number of FGDs in order to reach saturation. IJM shared all the findings from the advance team with PDA; and provided recommendations for data collection sites. PDA used these recommendations, along with the communities in which they had mobilization contacts, and worked with IJM to determine the specific data collection locations. To protect the privacy of people who participated in the FGDs and KIIs, this report will not name the specific fishing villages in which data collection occurred. Instead, the report will refer to the large towns and areas.

2.2.2 Target Populations and Selection Strategy

In developing the methodology, the study team determined that the targeted populations for data collection should be: 1) community members who possibly participate in child trafficking into the fishing industry and provide greater insights into the nature, mechanisms, experiences, drivers, and cultural factors for child trafficking; 2) key informants in the community who could triangulate the information provided by potentially participatory community members; and 3) key local professionals who worked on anti-trafficking interventions and/or were tasked with anti-trafficking interventions. Because the greatest use of the first targeted population was to understand community practices, attitudes, and norms, FGDs were the best way to reach the greatest number of people and determine areas of agreement and disagreement within the community. The second and third populations were better suited to in-depth interviews through KIIs. Table 2 below provides further details on the targeted populations; and Table 3 provides the selection criteria for KIIs. More details about data collection methods are included in sections regarding FGD and KII methods (Sections 2.2.6 and 2.2.7).

Table 2: Target Populations and Participant Criteria for Focus Group Discussions in Destination and Source Communities

Criteria	Destination Community	Source Community
Hereafter referred to as “Men’s Group”		
<i>Criteria to participate in the FGD</i>	Men (26-50 years old) currently working in the fishing industry.	Men (26-50 years old) from whose home a child or ward ⁹⁸ had been sent to Lake Volta.
<i>Anticipated perspectives</i>	Men familiar with the fishing industry. These men may use trafficked children, or interact with them in the community.	Men familiar with child migration to Lake Volta. These men may have trafficked their child/ward.
Hereafter referred to as “Women’s Group”		
<i>Criteria to participate in the FGD</i>	Women (26-50 years old) who host children from other communities.	Women (26-50) ⁹⁹ from whose home a child or ward had been sent to Lake Volta.
<i>Anticipated perspectives</i>	Women familiar with child migration to the fishing village on/near Lake Volta. These women may host trafficked children, or interact with them in the community.	Women familiar with child migration to Lake Volta. These women may have trafficked their child/ward.
Hereafter referred to as “Young Men’s Group”		
<i>Criteria to participate in the FGD</i>	Young men (18-25 years old) in destination communities who entered the fishing industry on Lake Volta as children.	Young men (18-25 years old) who had worked in the fishing industry on Lake Volta as children and since returned to the source community.
<i>Additional, preferred criteria</i>	Young men who migrated to Lake Volta to work in the fishing industry as children (relevant for destination communities). Young men identified as survivors of child trafficking by NGOs or other survivors through snowball sampling. ¹⁰⁰	
<i>Anticipated perspectives</i>	Young men who experienced working in the fishing industry as children. These young men may have been trafficked themselves, or interacted with trafficked children.	

Criteria	Destination Community	Source Community
Hereafter referred to as “Young Women’s Group”		
<i>Criteria to participate in the FGD</i>	Young women (18-25 years old) who entered the fishing industry on Lake Volta as children.	Young women (18-25 years old) ¹⁰¹ who had worked in the fishing industry on Lake Volta as children and since returned to the source community.
<i>Additional, preferred criteria</i>	Young women who migrated to Lake Volta to work in the fishing industry as children (relevant for destination communities). Young women identified as survivors of child trafficking by NGOs or other survivors through snowball sampling.	
<i>Anticipated perspectives</i>	Young women who experienced working in the fishing industry as children. These young women may have been trafficked themselves, or interacted with trafficked children.	

Although the selection strategies and criteria for young men’s and young women’s groups were designed to capture survivor perspectives, not all participants were actually survivors of trafficking. For example, some had fished with their biological parents instead of a trafficker. When non-trafficked young adults were included in the young adult group, he or she was able to provide information about the experiences of trafficked and non-trafficked children into forced labor in the fishing industry. This information was further triangulated with accounts from confirmed survivors.

To reach the targeted key informants (described in Table 3 below), the research team conducted KIIs in 1) the same fishing villages as the focus groups, and 2) the large community where relevant professionals were located (e.g., Akosombo). In general, researchers administered KIIs with community leader and teacher KIIs in the same fishing villages as the focus groups; whereas the other KIIs (NGOs, law enforcement officers, medical providers, other relevant government agencies, and social workers) usually occurred in larger communities. In addition to the three destination community areas that researchers identified from the operational assessment, KIIs were also conducted in Ho. Ho serves as a regional hub for several anti-trafficking professionals whose jurisdiction extends to Akosombo, Kpeve, and Kpando.

Table 3: Types of Key Informants, and Selection Criteria by Destination and Source Communities

Descriptor	Destination Community Selection Criteria	Source Community Selection Criteria
<i>Community Leader</i>	Identified during community entry	
<i>Law Enforcement</i>	Specifically, law enforcement officers who work on child protection issues. Preferred agencies included: the AHTU and DOVVSU. In destination communities, the navy and marine police were also relevant key informants	
<i>Medical Provider</i>	Specifically, emergency medicine providers; providers that work with children and could speak to injuries; and providers recommended by NGOs, teachers, and/or social workers	Specifically, medical providers who would provide services to children who returned from the fishing industry on Lake Volta
<i>Nongovernmental organization (NGO)</i>	Specifically, NGOs that work on issues of child trafficking, child labor, child protection, child health, or economic empowerment	
<i>Social Worker</i>	Specifically, social workers in the nearest DSW outpost to the selected community. Interviewees were prioritized when they worked with children, or on child protection issues in the selected fishing village	
<i>Teacher</i>	Specifically, teachers of kindergarten and primary school students	Specifically, teachers of kindergarten, primary school, and junior high school students
Additional, Preferred Key Informants		
<i>Other Relevant Government Agency</i>	Agencies that work on child trafficking, child labor, child protection, or child health	
<i>Drivers of Public Transport and/or Intermediaries¹⁰²</i>	Specifically, drivers that could speak to the movement of children from source to destination communities	Specifically, drivers that could speak to the movement of children from source to destination communities

2.2.3 Training of Data Collectors and Pilot Exercises

The data collection team was comprised of six experienced researchers—one of whom served as the field coordinator—and an additional lead researcher who provided oversight and quality assurance. All seven researchers participated in the training, pilot exercises, and data collection in the first destination community. The lead researcher also went to the field for data collection in the first source community to gauge participant reactions and to monitor if methodological and implementation issues arose.

IJM trained the data collectors on multiple topics including: 1) the research purpose; 2) study questions; 3) indicators of child work, child labor, forced labor, and trafficking into forced labor; 4) methodology—including target populations and selection criteria; 5) data collection tools and key questions; 6) ethical procedures—including informed consent and referral protocols; 7) study implementation protocols; 8) documentation; and 9) data confidentiality, management,

and cleaning. IJM collaborated with PDA to train on research principles, working with traumatized populations, roles and responsibilities, working as a team, debriefing topics, field entry and mobilization, and facilitation techniques. During the training, data collectors practiced with one another on facilitating the FGDs and provided ongoing input on the line of inquiry and best practices for interpretation.

Staff from IJM's field office in Ghana who had language capacity attended parts of the training to assist data collectors with practicing facilitation, and to oversee and test data collectors' interpretation from Ewe, Twi, and Ga into English. Throughout the collaborative training, IJM observed and tested data collectors' understanding of the material and their ability to implement the study. IJM was highly confident in data collectors' ability to implement the study and in their facilitation skills. Training, practice, interpretation, and finalization of the researcher's handbook took approximately three days. After the data collection team completed the training, IJM and PDA went to a community—which served as both a destination and source community for trafficking of children into the fishing industry—to test the data collection tools and implementation procedures. The data collection team conducted FGDs with community leaders, young men, men, and women. They conducted KIIs with a social worker and teacher. IJM's staff from the Ghana field office observed all the FGDs to note the groups' reactions to questions, and any areas for clarification or re-training. Data collectors noted the participants' reactions and provided recommendations on any necessary changes to the data collection tools and procedures. After field testing, IJM and PDA debriefed and decided how to update the tools.

During field testing, men's and women's FGDs were particularly challenging. The groups denied the presence of children working in the fishing industry (even children working with their parents) and instead insisted that all children were in school. This was untenable as the study team observed children during school hours who were fixing nets or selling fish. Given the strong reactions, and initial input by PDA that it would be extremely difficult to ask about child trafficking, the final guides for community members did not ask about trafficking directly. Data collectors were able to get narrative descriptions from young men who had been in the fishing industry as children and used these to further hone research questions. The team was also able to take the account of a confirmed survivor of child trafficking into the fishing industry, which helped them to identify actual survivors and to determine that it would be feasible to conduct unstructured interviews with survivors.

Given the usefulness of the young men's FGDs and the flat-out denials of child labor and child trafficking with the men and women's groups, the study team also decided to organize young men's and young women's groups FGDs in the fishing villages first so that data could be collected before knowledge of the research team spread throughout the community; as there was potential that the team would be asked to leave the community, or that targeted participants would be warned by community leaders not to participate. The study team also decided to conduct a minimum of two FGDs with young men in each community in the event that the focus groups with older populations yielded less rich data.

The study team also refined the KII guides to add scale to certain statements and ensure that data collectors gained a thorough understanding of the knowledge and experiences of the key informant.

Although the data analyst excluded testing data from the study report, the data collection team did transcribe some of the recordings to practice documentation, data management, and submitting research team notes and observations. IJM and PDA leadership reviewed these deliverables and provided feedback before data collection began.

The study team then traveled to the first destination site for data collection. This served as an additional time to test and confirm the study questions and protocols, as the data collection team debriefed with IJM each day upon returning from the field. The presence of the non-Ghanaian trainers would have been noticed in the fishing villages, so the project manager and qualitative methodologist did not join the data collection team. After data collection completed, IJM and PDA debriefed a final time, updated the researcher handbook, and provided one final training on data collection in both destination and source communities.

2.2.4 Data Collection Tools and Key Constructs

The research team developed and tested tailored, semi-structured guides for all FGD and KII participant types; with the men's and women's groups sharing one FGD guide and NGOs and social workers sharing one KII guide. While questions varied across stakeholder types—as well as destination community perspectives and source community perspectives—all guides contained the following seven key constructs outlined in Table 4 below. For copies of the data collection tools, please email contact@ijm.org.

Table 4: Key Constructs for Data Collection Tools

1. Child migration to Lake Volta to work in the fishing industry
a. Scale of child migration
b. Origin communities and destination communities
c. Adults involved, and routes/process for bringing children
d. Ages of children when migrating and when entering the fishing industry
e. Roles of migrant children
f. Differences from children born in the community who also work in the fishing industry
2. Adults involved
a. Types of adults who oversee the work in the fishing industry
b. Push and pull factors for bringing children to work in the fishing industry
3. Children's work hours and access to education
4. Income and contractual terms for migrant children
5. Children's experiences and well-being
a. Expectations before leaving the source community
b. Ability to end the contract and return to the source community
c. Injuries and health
d. Physical and sexual violence
6. Key stakeholders in the community
a. Interventions
b. Service needs of children
c. Accessibility and availability of services
6. Recommendations

Young men's and young women's guides gathered more details on trafficking indicators and experiences, while KIIs with law enforcement, NGOs, and social workers asked directly about child trafficking.

In addition, community members were not asked about the prevalence of child trafficking into forced labor for three reasons: 1) this was not the objective of the qualitative study; 2) PDA, which has conducted research on trafficking in Ghana, said that it would not be feasible to ask about trafficking directly; and 3) field testing the interview guides validated PDA's assertion. Men's and women's groups were hesitant to even admit to child labor in the fishing industry. During the testing day, these populations denied the presence of children in the fishing industry even though researchers did not observe children in school during school hours but did observe children (including young children) mending nets and carrying fish. During data collection, community members also became defensive when asked about children working in the fishing industry. Therefore, researchers adapted a line of inquiry to start with priming concepts such as fostering and child migration. This multi-step line of inquiry was imperative, as men's groups, women's groups, and community leaders sometimes categorically denied that children worked in or would leave for the purpose of working in the fishing industry. When this occurred, the researchers were able to go back to the last answer and re-state what the respondents reported (e.g., in source communities, children leave for fostering, children leave for other purposes, children go to Lake Volta) and re-ask the question as to whether any of the children (which the respondents previously stated left the community for Lake Volta) were going for the purpose of working in the fishing industry. The different topics directed towards the stakeholder groups are displayed in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Topics Asked of Each Stakeholder Group*

Stakeholder type	Fostering	Child migration to Lake Volta	Child migration specifically to work in the fishing industry on Lake Volta	Child trafficking into forced labor in the fishing industry
Men's FGD	✓	✓	✓	
Women's FGD	✓	✓	✓	
Young Men FGD			✓	
Young Women FGD			✓	
Community Leader KII	✓	✓	✓	
Teacher KII			✓	
Law Enforcement KII			✓	✓
Medical Provider KII			✓	
Nongovernmental Organization (NGO) KII			✓	✓
Other Relevant Government Agency KII			✓	✓
Social Worker KII			✓	✓

*Some stakeholders volunteered additional information; but this table displays the data routinely asked of each stakeholder group

2.2.5 Data Collection Overview

There were two primary sources of qualitative data for this study: (1) FGDs; and (2) KIIs. To supplement these data sources, the research team identified survivors of child trafficking from focus groups with young adults. Survivor accounts were unstructured stories that allowed the survivor to provide more details regarding their experiences to the research team in a one-on-one setting away from other community members. Additionally, researchers conducted community profiles in each of the six targeted locations with community leaders. These profiles provided context for the fishing village in which the focus groups were conducted. Both survivor accounts and community profiles served as important means to triangulate data from the primary sources of FGDs and KIIs. In addition, data collectors also provided field notes and observations, which lent greater texture to the data sources. The research team collected field notes alongside primary data, but field notes were separate and distinct in order to ensure the accurate documentation of community members' and key informants' perspectives.

The findings presented in this report are drawn from 32 focus groups and 51 KIIs, five survivor accounts, and six community profiles. The breakdown of data collection sources is displayed in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Data Collection Sources

	Destination Communities	Source Communities	Study Total
Men's FGD	3	4	7 Participant Total N=51
Women's FGD	3	3	6 Participant Total N=50
Young Men's FGD	6	7	13 ¹⁰³ Participant Total N=88
Young Women's FGD	3	3	6 Participant Total N=44
Total FGDs	15	17	32 FGDs with 233 participants
Community Leader KII	6	4	10
Law Enforcement KII	3	3	6
Medical Provider KII	3	2	5
Nongovernmental Organization (NGO) KII	6	6	12
Other Relevant Government Agency KII	1	1	2
Social Worker KII	3	2	5
Teacher KII	5	6	11
Total KIIs	27	24	51
Survivor Account	2	3	5 ¹⁰⁴
Community Profile	3	3	6

2.2.6 Focus Group Methods

The data collection team conducted FGDs in the fishing villages before conducting KIIs as a precaution to preserve data integrity—there was reason to believe that willing FGD participants would be warned to keep silent if community leaders heard that the research team was meeting with informants such as law enforcement and anti-trafficking NGOs. Another factor requiring FGD data collection to begin first was that FGDs could also take longer to mobilize to ensure that all participants met eligibility criteria.

The focus groups had between six to 12 participants each, with the data collection team aiming for eight to 10 participants. To maximize the engagement of all participants, the researchers used culturally-appropriate group composition guidelines which included:

- Excluding community leaders from each focus group, instead conducting KIIs with this population, which is a best practice for community entry and data collection in West African villages;
- Segmenting groups by sex; and
- Segmenting the groups by age. No participants under the age of 25 were mixed with older participants.

Researchers used semi-structured focus group discussion guides tailored for young men's and young women's groups, and a joint guide for men's and women's group that took 1 to 2 hours to implement. The research team used two members to conduct each focus group: one who led facilitation and another who took notes. Most focus groups also utilized an interpreter. Even when both the facilitator and the note-taker had language capacity, there were sometimes dialect issues or fishing terminology with which it was helpful to have an interpreter's assistance.

Almost every focus group gave consent to be audio-recorded (in addition to the note-taking). The study team later transcribed the audio-recorded FGDs and simultaneously translated the transcripts into English. When consent for recording was not obtained, the data collection team provided detailed notes instead of a transcription from the audio recording. Note-taking occurred in English during the FGD; as the data collectors were all practiced in listening to Ewe, Ga, or Twi and writing the meaning in English. When only one member of the two-person data collection team had language capacity, that person conducted the facilitation. The other team member (i.e., the note-taker) sat near the interpreter, who provided a verbatim translation into English while the note-taker recorded the discussion in English.

Final documentation from the FGD was placed in a note-taking template, which included additional information such as: 1) participant demographic information; 2) length of the focus group; 3) researcher observations of body language and dynamics; 4) discrepant information; and 5) themes that emerged, as noted by the interview team.

2.2.7 Key Informant Methods

To identify key informants matching the selection criteria in Table 3, the data collection team employed three tactics:

- IJM and PDA both had contacts in the anti-trafficking field, and used these to identify key stakeholders
- During Phase 3 of location selection, the mapping team also noted key stakeholders in the roughly 20-kilometer area and provided this information to the data collection team.
- PDA identified additional contacts through snowball sampling, either through the FGDs or KIIs.

Researchers used semi-structured interview guides tailored for each population, with NGOs sharing the same guide as social workers. Interviews with representatives from NGOs typically took more than 90 minutes to implement; whereas interviews with medical providers usually took 30 minutes.

KIIs were implemented by a two-person team—one interviewer and one note-taker—except when the interview was conducted in English and the key informant consented to be audio-recorded. Many key informant interviews were conducted in English,¹⁰⁵ or in a mixture of English and the local language. No KIIs required an interpreter because the research team spoke the language and there were not dialect issues as there were in fishing villages. Most key informants consented to be audio-recorded, and these were transcribed in English. When consent for recording was not obtained, the data collection team provided detailed notes in English instead of a transcription from the audio-recording. The note-taking template for KIIs included all the additional data points collected in FGDs as well as any documents referred to or received in the KII.

2.2.8 Ethical Considerations

The research team intentionally did not interview any minors as part of the qualitative study. Instead, they asked young adults who had entered the fishing industry as children to describe their past experiences as well as current practices in the community. Unlike the quantitative assessment, the qualitative study required more in-depth discussion regarding the experiences of victimization. In keeping with best practices of ethical research, the research team determined that the potential harm to minors currently being trafficked outweighed the benefits to the study, especially as there was a dearth of services and resources available in many of the sampled fishing villages.

The research team administered informed consent verbally with all participants. This consisted of: requesting permission to continue with the FGD or KII after a description of the study purpose (described to FGDs as child migration to Lake Volta, experiences of children in fishing, and local services relevant to children in fishing), followed by requesting permission to record the KII or FGD. The facilitator informed participants that the data reported would be anonymous, and that study materials (e.g., audio recordings) would be destroyed upon completion of the study. Focus group participants identified ground rules for participation, and the facilitator recommended any key ground rules that the group didn't suggest (such as keeping the process confidential and respecting the opinions of others).

In addition, protocols were put in place for immediately reporting all child endangerment to IJM, which would directly contact experienced government stakeholders in the event of criminal activity. The study team noted no such instances during data collection. There was a training on victim-sensitive interviews and how to preserve emotional well-being in the focus group. Some of these ethical principles are reflected in the outline below of the session guide for all FGDs.

2.2.9 Analysis

The qualitative data analyst used NVivo 10 software to analyze all of the qualitative data. The analyst uploaded all of the transcripts and used an original deductive coding structure derived from the key constructs across the research instruments. Upon reading all of the transcripts, the data analyst created additional codes inductively based on themes that emerged from the transcripts. The analysis distinguished between potentially trafficked and non-trafficked children, but analysis erred on the side of excluding data in the absence of sufficient evidence. The study team also ensured the consistency of analysis by using one coder to analyze all data.

2.2.10 Reliability and Validity

The study followed best practices for qualitative research in order to ensure reliability (consistency) and validity (accuracy) of findings. Throughout the study, the study team monitored incoming data in order to make necessary changes to the methodology and/or data collection team if there were threats to data reliability and/or validity.

Data reliability

The research team ensured consistency across data collectors by: (1) training all data collectors on the research purpose, study questions, methodology, data collection tools, research protocols, and study implementation procedures; (2) conducting a field test in a community that serves as both a source and destination location, and then using this field test to inform any necessary changes to the study methodology, tools, protocols, and implementation procedures; (3) retraining the data collection team based on any changes from the field test; and (4) ongoing review of field notes and transcripts.

A key component of the qualitative data was to ensure linguistic and documentation accuracy. As a result, key terminology and key questions were translated into Ewe, Ga, and Twi. The entire data collection team also practiced interpretation of the entire guides and discussed interpretation nuances throughout the training; and they noted these again after the field testing exercise. In addition, the data collection team employed multiple levels of review for transcripts; approximately 30% of completed transcripts were further audited to ensure that the English transcription was a complete and accurate record of the recorded FGD and/or KII.

Validity

Considerable means were taken to ensure that the qualitative data would be valid. For example, Ghanaian researchers

and other experts reviewed the instruments (questions) used to collect data in the focus groups and KIIs. Field testing, or pilots, further refined the instruments used to collect data for the analysis.¹⁰⁶

Another key strength of the qualitative data was that it incorporated multiple perspectives (e.g., parents, survivors, teachers, community leaders, etc.) both within and across selected communities.

2.2.11 Limitations of the Qualitative Study

The primary limitation of the qualitative study is that focus group participants were not asked directly about trafficking, but instead were led through a series of questions that included indicators of trafficking. In a one-on-one survey, this could have been used to identify trafficking with certainty because there was one participant answering affirmatively in all instances. In focus groups, which include multiple perspectives, this categorization could be done with less certainty. To mitigate the potential for mischaracterization, analysis always erred on the side of identifying the experiences as that of “all children” rather than “trafficked children.” Therefore, the results and conclusions are more likely to under-report the experiences of trafficked children.

Even though the research team did not ask about trafficking directly, many FGD participants understood the criminal ramifications for their answers and some of them intentionally withheld information, or signaled that other members of the FGD should not answer the questions posed by the facilitator. In many of the men’s and women’s FGDs, the group began by denying children’s participation in the fishing industry and then later admitted to this fact and then described some of the roles and experiences of children in Lake Volta’s fishing industry. However, the majority of focus group participants—particularly the young men’s and young women’s groups—were open with the researchers, and saturation was reached.

While the study reached saturation and included multiple perspectives in each of the six communities, not all intended key informants were able to be interviewed. In some instances, experts from government institutions refused to be interviewed, or they were unable to obtain proper clearance from their organization’s headquarters. In other cases, respondents declined the interview (in the case of KIIs) or held back during the discussions (in the focus groups) because the interview was being recorded. This occurred despite the fact that researchers offered the respondents the opportunity to be interviewed without being recorded.

The use of interpreters was minimal in most communities, however in some others (where specific dialects were spoken), the ability of the interviewees to respond adequately to the questions depended on the ability of the interpreter to clearly translate and explain the question. The facilitator mitigated the effect on the interview because of his/her own language capacity, prompting the interpreter when the proper explanation was not being conveyed.

⁹⁷According to field notes, “...statement evidence was only counted when an owner or child clearly confessed to or described the trafficking that took place, or when the statements differed significantly such that we were able to catch the owners or children in a lie. In nearly every case, the owners (or owners’ designee) were present, so reliable and compelling statement evidence was difficult to gather.”

⁹⁸A ward is a child in care of a guardian.

⁹⁹The criteria was 26- to 50-year-old women, but one 25-year-old participated in one of the FGDs.

¹⁰⁰Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique frequently used with difficult-to-reach populations in which existing study subjects who meet the selection criteria identify and recruit other study subjects from among their acquaintances.

¹⁰¹One of these young women’s groups was originally convened based on “women’s group” criteria, but found to be returnees from Lake Volta themselves. Therefore, the research team employed the young women’s questionnaire and the group was re-classified as a “young women’s group” for analysis. This group included 18- to 30-year-old women.

¹⁰²The study team was unable to conduct KIIs with any drivers of public transport. Please see Table 5 for an overview of data collection.

¹⁰³One-third of young men’s groups were comprised solely of young men who were still working in the fishing industry; one-third had exited the fishing industry; and one-third were mixed.

¹⁰⁴One of these was most likely a labor issue rather than trafficking; and was not analyzed as a survivor account.

¹⁰⁵Ghana’s educational system is in English, and many key informants were educated.

¹⁰⁶The analyst coded the transcripts from the pilot test as a means to verify the findings from the selected destination and source communities. The analysis does not include the pilot community data and is not presented in this report. However, the same key themes and patterns emerged, which further strengthens the validity of findings.



3 Results

This study found that child trafficking into forced labor in southern Lake Volta is common, violent, and often involves young boys and girls.

3.1 Demographics for Children in Lake Volta's Fishing Industry: Findings from the Mixed-Methods Baseline Study

This section includes the demographics for all children working in the fishing industry, whereas Section 3.5 contains information pertaining to children determined to be trafficked. The following information is derived from the observations of all children during the 2013 operational assessment, and from the 2015 qualitative study.

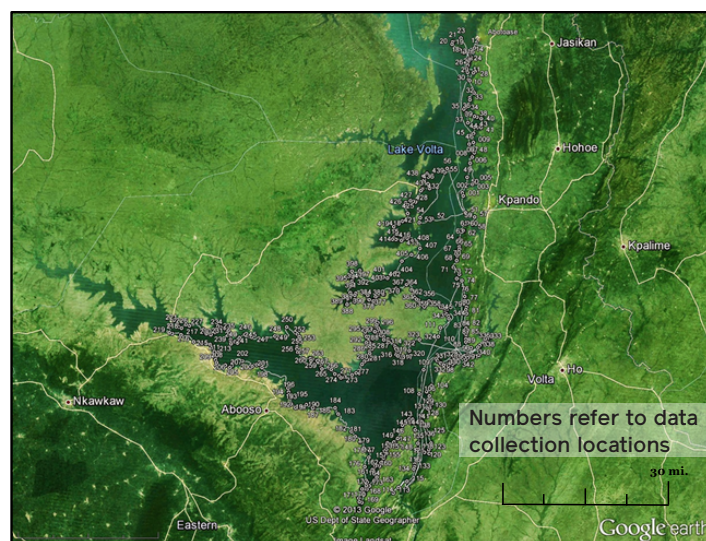
Key findings:

- Findings from mixed methods used to collect data in 2013 and 2015 reveal that the majority of children (both boys and girls) working in the fishing industry were 10 years old or younger. Ten years old was the most frequently observed age of children in the 2013 operational assessment; and was also the most frequently referenced age that boys work in Lake Volta's fishing industry by stakeholders in the 2015 qualitative study.
- In 2013, 20.5% of children observed or interviewed while they were working on Lake Volta were 6 years old or younger. In 2015, 0-6 years old constituted 21.3% of the references to the ages that boys work in Lake Volta's fishing industry.
- In 2015, source communities reported that girls leave for Lake Volta at slightly younger ages than boys, with five years old being the most commonly cited age for girls going to work in the fishing industry on Lake Volta.

3.1.1 Demographics of Children in the 2013 Operational Assessment

For this assessment, data collectors conducted interviews with children and/or adults in a total of 982 occupied boats (canoes). Figure 2 shows the locations of the visible boats. The boats are clustered closer to shore because that is where most fishing occurs. For example, in the early morning hours, data collectors observed boys swimming out to cast nets at a distance of approximately 1 kilometer offshore.

Figure 2: Area Covered in the Operational Assessment on Southern Lake Volta



Over the span of 17 days during June and July 2013, data collectors interviewed or observed 771 children engaged in fishing activities on Lake Volta. Female children only made up 0.4% (3/771) of the children observed on the lake in boats, as fishing on Lake Volta was primarily carried out by boys. Further analysis of these 771 children shows that these were young boys. The most common (16.6%, 128/771) age of a child observed or interviewed on Lake Volta was 10 years old. One-fifth (20.5%, 113/771) of children were 6 or under, and nearly three-quarters (74.3%, 573/771) were 12 or under.

Table 7: Sex of Children Observed or Interviewed on Southern Lake Volta

Sex	Number	Percent
Male	768	99.6%
Female	3	0.4%
Total	n=771	100.0%

The most common (16.6%, 128/771) age of a child observed or interviewed on Lake Volta was 10 years old. One-fifth (20.5%, 113/771) of children were 6 or under, and nearly three-quarters (74.3%, 573/771) were 12 or under.

Table 8: Age of Children Observed or Interviewed on Southern Lake Volta

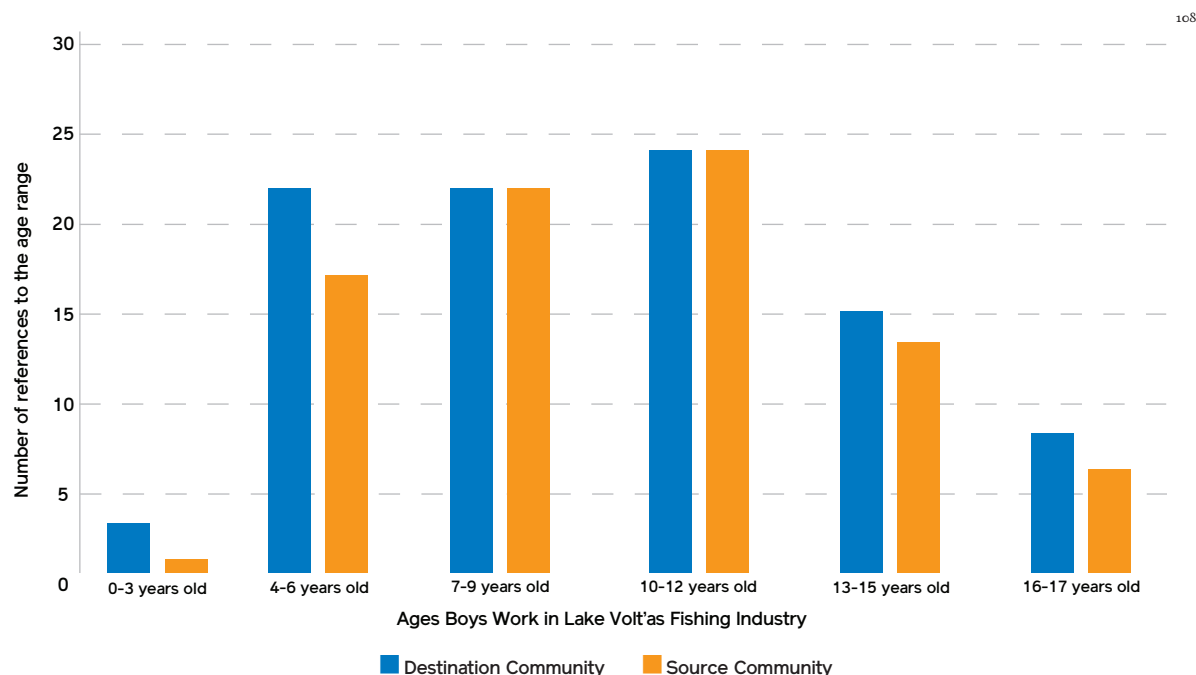
Age	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
0-2	0	0.0%	0.0%
3	6	0.8%	0.8%
4	43	5.6%	6.4%
5	64	8.3%	14.7%
6	45	5.8%	20.5%
7	34	4.4%	24.9%
8	56	7.3%	32.2%
9	60	7.8%	39.9%
10	128	16.6%	56.5%
11	50	6.5%	63.0%
12	87	11.3%	74.3%
13	38	4.9%	79.2%
14	50	6.5%	85.7%
15	37	4.8%	90.5%
16*	21	2.7%	93.3%
17*	10	1.3%	94.6%
Not recorded ¹⁰⁷	42	5.4%	100.0%
Total	n=771	100.0%	

*Number of children age 16 or 17 could be an undercount since data collected erred on the conservative side if it was based solely on observation (i.e., age estimation).

3.1.2 Ages Boys Work in Lake Volta's Fishing Industry: Stakeholder Reports from the Qualitative Study

In the qualitative study within destination and source communities, stakeholders were asked about the ages boys start working in the fishing industry on Lake Volta. Destination and source communities displayed similar patterns in the range of ages that boys work in fishing on Lake Volta (as seen in Figure 3). This correlation makes sense, as respondents were also asked if there was any lag time between when boys arrive in destination communities and when they start working. Overwhelmingly, stakeholders confirmed that boys begin working as soon as they arrive. "They start working immediately [after] they arrive. That was what the person took you there for," described a young men's group.

Figure 3: Age Ranges for When Boys Work in Lake Volta's Fishing Industry, by Source and Destination Communities



Respondents in destination communities most frequently reported age 10 as the point in time when boys begin working in the fishing industry (which is consistent with the distribution of ages observed in the 2013 operational assessment). Across destination communities, reports of boys' ages were similar, with respondents in Akosombo reporting older ages of boys.

In source communities, 7 years old was the most frequently reported age that boys leave for Lake Volta. Age estimates were fairly consistent across the three source communities, with respondents in Ada reporting slightly younger ages and Ningo reporting slightly older ages.

When aggregating stakeholders' reports of ages in both destination and source communities, 10 years old was the most frequently reported age for boys working in fishing and leaving to work on the Lake, with 62% of all references citing 10 years or younger as the age that children begin working on/leave to work on Lake Volta. References to 0- to 6-year-old boys working in the fishing industry account for 21.3% of all age references. When asked about the youngest age that children can work in the fishing industry on Lake Volta, 3 years old was cited by four different respondents, 4 years old was cited by 11 respondents, and 5 years old was cited by 20 respondents. Less than 13% of references were to older children (15, 16, or 17 years old).

Table 9: References to Individual Ages Boys Work on or Leave for Lake Volta Aggregated across Destination and Source Communities

Age of boys	Aggregated references	Percent	Cumulative percent
0	1	0.3%	0.3%
1	1	0.3%	0.7%
2	1	0.3%	1.0%
3	4	1.3%	2.3%
4	11	3.7%	6.0%
5	20	6.7%	12.7%
6	26	8.7%	21.3%
7	35	11.7%	33.0%
8	30	10.0%	43.0%
9	19	6.3%	49.3%
10	38	12.7%	62.0%
11	19	6.3%	68.3%
12	25	8.3%	76.7%
13	17	5.7%	82.3%
14	15	5.0%	87.3%
15	23	7.7%	95.0%
16	6	2.0%	97.0%
17	9	3.0%	100.0%

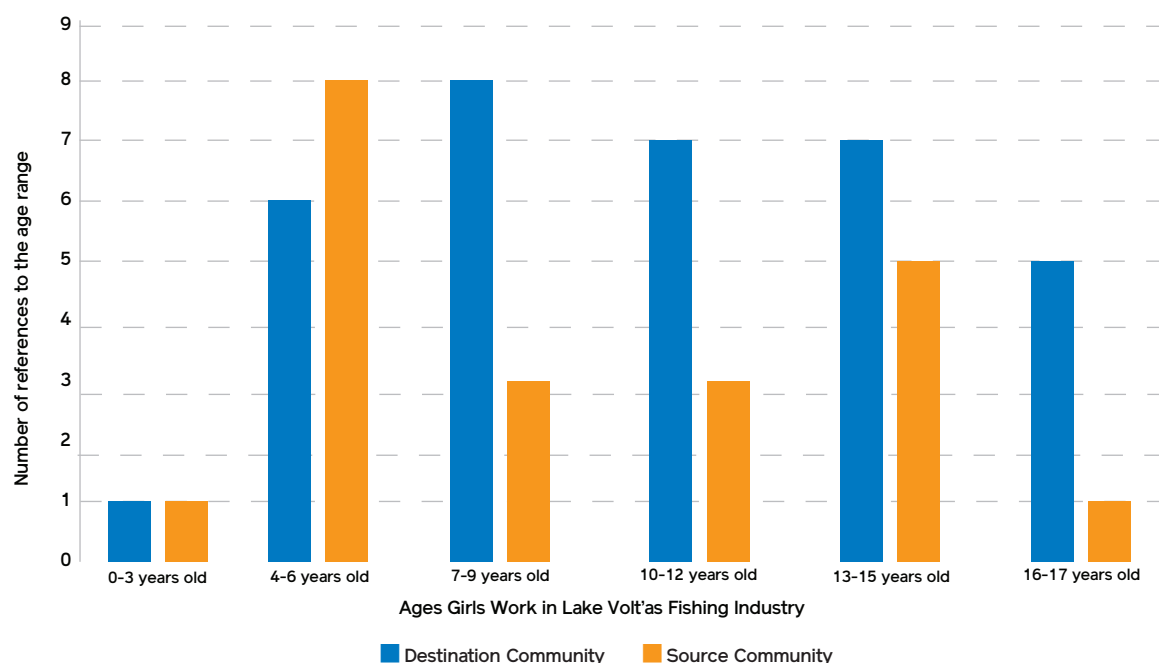
Note: Age references were only counted once per respondent, but some respondents reported multiple ages.

3.1.3 Ages Girls Work in the Fishing Industry: Stakeholder Reports from the Qualitative Study

According to the qualitative study in destination and source communities, girls began working in the fishing industry at similar ages to those of boys, with slightly younger ages being reported. A few female respondents explained the reason for hiring younger girls is that older girls may “snatch their husband” while another noted that girls can become pregnant at 12-14 years old.

Reports of the age ranges for girls beginning work in destination communities and leaving for Lake Volta were less consistent than boys’ ages, but still similar (Figure 4). Source communities reported slightly younger ages of girls going to the lake, with 5-year-old girls being the most commonly cited age for leaving for Lake Volta.

Figure 4: Age Ranges for When Girls Work on or Leave for Lake Volta, by Destination and Source Communities



Aggregating reports across destination and source communities revealed 6 and 10 years old as tied for the most frequently reported ages, followed (by only one less reference) to the next frequently reported ages of 5 years old and 8 years old (which were also tied).

3.2 Roles of Children in the Fishing Industry: Findings from the 2015 Qualitative Study

Key findings:

- Although the 2013 operational assessment overwhelmingly surveyed boys, the 2015 study found that girls also work in the fishing industry.
- The 2015 study also revealed that both boys and girls have physically demanding, and sometimes hazardous, roles in Lake Volta's fishing industry.
- Both boys and girls worked long hours, often obtaining little sleep and working during hazardous times (such as at night).

3.2.1 Boys' Roles

In all destination and source communities, respondents had similar answers about boys' roles in the fishing industry with only slight variations by the type of fishing conducted. Very young boys (frequently referred to as being 7 years old and younger) were responsible for bailing water out of the canoe or boat. Some of these young boys also helped to cast nets, cleaned canoes, and dove. Only a few respondents mentioned 6-year-olds diving; however, diving was a ubiquitously mentioned task, particularly for boys age 8 years and older. Children were used for diving for multiple reasons. Respondents explained that fishermen use children because children are lighter and therefore fishermen think that they have an advantage in diving. Many also noted that older children and adults would refuse to dive due to risk of injury and drowning (see Sections 3.3.2 and 3.3.3).

Different types of fishing required children to dive. In areas of the lake where tree stumps were common, nets can get snagged and need to be disentangled. Other forms of fishing in which traps or nets are laid also required the children to dive in order to set and retrieve these contraptions. One survivor mentioned that they frequently dove down several meters. Although several respondents reported laying nets or traps by diving, only one men's group participant referred to this form of net fishing as the “mumee” method. When he mentioned this form of net fishing in which children dive deep into the lake to ensure the net is set to catch the fish, he was hushed by the other participants to keep quiet. The research team noted that the other participants did not want the mumee method to be mentioned because it is a dangerous form of fishing.

In addition, there were specific roles for different types of fishing (frequently described in conjunction with roles for boys age 10 and older). In the Akosombo area, one community leader noted that the Ewes in the area tended to use net fishing whereas the Adas and the Ningos tended to use bamboo fishing. However, many respondents said that boys may employ multiple methods together or at different times of the day or year.

- *With net fishing:* boys wove, mended, cast, set, and drew nets. It should be noted that the nets themselves can be quite heavy and even casting empty nets correctly was an arduous task.
- *With hook fishing:* boys threw a hook or bait into the water and then pulled in the fish.
- *With trap/bamboo fishing:* boys set and retrieved bamboo traps.

Across types of fishing, boys (particularly older boys) paddled the canoe. However, one law enforcement officer in a destination community described younger children paddling the canoe:

“But these children who are between seven to nine years would be given the matured person’s paddle to be used. If you are not convinced, you can go to Yeji right now. All the canoes you see on the water are full of kids; there is no matured person amongst them. That’s why when there is a little storm the boat capsizes because they do not have the experience [to control the boat].”

When night fishing, one boy may serve as the lookout for tree stumps and other obstacles as they navigate in the dark. If there was an outboard motor, the older boys controlled the motor. Some boys also cleaned the fish. One young man mentioned selling at the market to gain extra money for school supplies. Three respondents in Ada, and two in different destination communities, also mentioned that boys may work primarily in fishing but also help with farming or cattle rearing activities.

A small number of respondents reported that boys may help with housework. Many described long days with various tasks, as illustrated by one survivor whose account was summarized by the data collection team:

He normally woke up at dawn between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m. to start fishing. If where they were going was very far, they set off at 10 p.m. the previous night. He and his brother set the nets and the traps and then fished until it was daylight. They returned with the catch, and then cleaned and processed the fish. In the afternoon, they went back to the lake to do the same thing. When they returned in the evening, they did the house chores.

3.2.2 Girls’ Roles

Across destination and source communities, respondents had similar descriptions of girls’ roles in the fishing industry. The most common tasks were processing, preserving, and selling the fish; and doing household chores and cooking for their hosts and/or other children. Respondents used the terms “processing and preserving” differently, but these tasks normally entailed cleaning the fish by de-gutting and de-scaling, smoking, salting, sun-drying, pickling and/or packaging the fish; smoking the fish comprised approximately half of all descriptions of this process.

Carrying fishing gear and/or fish to and from the boats was another frequently reported task. Most respondents stated that girls did not fish on the lake, and this was supported by the operational assessment which found that 99.6% of all children on southern Lake Volta were boys. However, a few of the 2015 respondents mentioned that girls work on the lake when fishermen are understaffed. Of those who affirmed that girls work in fishing, most stated that girls did not dive as the boys did while others stated that girls perform the exact same tasks as boys (including diving). One female survivor in a destination community described:

“After about a week of staying with her, she started to make me [clean] the fish, even the tiniest of them and also smoke them all by myself. After smoking one side of the fish, you have to turn the other side as well and smoke it till it is well done. From about 2 p.m. to 3 p.m., I return to the lake to draw the net or dive to disentangle the net underneath the water. When you dive under the water and are unable to disentangle the net before coming up to the surface of the water, you are hit with the paddle and asked to go back into the water to disentangle the net. I have scars on my skull to show. When we go fishing, we sometimes return at midnight and I have to stay up to clean and smoke all that fish.”

Another female survivor who had returned to a source community had also performed a variety of tasks on the lake, and in the house:

“I helped pull the net from the river. I scooped water from the canoe.... We sometimes went to the lake very early in the morning.... Then I returned home to cook.... These were very difficult times, but I went through them because I thought they were training me to be a hardworking and responsible person in the future.”

Less commonly mentioned tasks included bringing water to and from the boats and repairing fishing gear. Two respondents in source communities also mentioned that girls are brought to Lake Volta for sexual exploitation and forced marriage (see Section 3.6.5).

3.2.3 Work Hours

Children’s work hours depended on: (1) the style of fishing; (2) roles in the fishing industry; (3) availability of fish during that season; (4) drive of their master; and (5) whether the child attended school. Regardless of these factors, both destination and source community data demonstrated that many children work long hours and that children’s sleep and work patterns are at the mercy of others’ needs and demands.

Children who used net fishing often went out on the water twice a day to set the nets and then to draw in the fish. This happened at different times, with 3 a.m. to 6 a.m. being the most frequently cited departure time. Some of these children returned to the shore in time for school, whereas others returned around 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.. Children not in school returned to set the nets for the next day, frequently around 3 p.m. to 4 p.m., or at night. Between these times on the boat, children usually mended the nets or cleaned the fish. Some groups mentioned that children ate or slept during this time period, especially if they were working late the previous night. Only one group mentioned that children play games such as football between shifts on the lake.

Some groups recounted that bamboo fishing occurs on Lake Volta for 9-13 hour stretches of time. Even when respondents provided example hours, they clarified that these times vary depending on the availability of fish and the need to travel to other locations for a greater haul. For example, a few groups noted that children will travel at night in order to pursue a larger catch nearby and then work the entire next day. Many of the young men’s and young women’s groups recounted being woken up at all hours when they were children. In particular, girls who work in fish cleaning, smoking and processing tended to have unusual schedules entirely dependent upon when the catch is brought back to the shore. A young women’s group recounted:

“There are times you have to work throughout the night until daybreak. You are sometimes deprived of sleep because you have to work the following day.”

One respondent from an NGO confirmed that boys will fish at night when fish are plentiful and girls will work around the clock to scale the fish brought in during these busy seasons. Two separate groups of young adults insisted that children only sleep two hours a night. A shelter for previously trafficked children noted that many in their care wake up around 1 a.m. because of the sleep patterns formed from their time in fishing.

Data revealed that it is not unusual for children to work at night. Night work occurred regularly in cases when the master prefers to fish at night (particularly with net fishing); or occurred infrequently when necessitated by travel to another location or seasons when fish are plentiful. One group noted the dangers of fishing at night: there is limited visibility and the canoe is likely to hit stumps in the water.

3.3 Conditions of Children in the Fishing Industry: Findings from the 2015 Qualitative Study

The below sections report the conditions of both trafficked and non-trafficked children in the fishing industry, as revealed in the 2015 qualitative study. Unique conditions for trafficked children are detailed in Section 3.6.

Key findings

- The 2015 qualitative study found that children in the fishing industry were frequently prevented from attending school; and demonstrated that access to education was one of the key differentiators between trafficked and non-trafficked children.
- Key informants described fishing as “hazardous” and stated that “almost all” children are injured in the course of fishing. Almost everyone cited drowning as a risk to children in the fishing industry.
- Physical violence committed against children was widespread in Lake Volta’s fishing industry, with parents/guardians in source communities reporting that children were “beaten like goats.” While trafficked children overwhelmingly experienced violence, this was not unique to trafficked children due to the cultural acceptance of physical discipline in Ghana.
- Girls in the fishing industry were also vulnerable to sexual violence. Many of the trafficking survivors who provided accounts had been raped during the course of their labor exploitation.

3.3.1 Access to Education

Less than a quarter of stakeholders responded that children fishing on Lake Volta also attend school. Many identified the ability to attend school as a key area of distinction between trafficked and non-trafficked children (described further in Section 3.6). Some stated that schools do not exist in many of the remote fishing villages on Lake Volta. One teacher in a source community described a failed attempt to start a school in the southern region of Lake Volta:

“The nature of the work does not permit the children to go to school. People have tried to establish schools over there, but it did not work out well. I personally went to [the southern part of Lake Volta] to establish a school and the parents became annoyed. They complained that I was trying to spoil their jobs. Some of the children are willing to go to school and learn, but they are prevented by their masters.”

Stakeholders in destination communities clarified that even when children are able to work in fishing while also attending school, the demands of fishing often cause the children to: 1) be late for class; 2) miss class; or 3) fall asleep in class. One NGO respondent that had campaigned for children to attend school realized that this was ineffective because all the children sleep in school, but decided to continue the campaign because “the children are just happy to have the opportunity to leave the fishing community and come to class to sleep.”

3.3.2 Injuries

Researchers asked all stakeholders about injuries sustained by children in the fishing industry as a gateway to learning about physical and sexual violence committed against children; and to gain additional information about overall health impacts on children. Therefore, most injuries are reported in the following sections. Outside of these experiences, many stakeholders cited other injuries and danger associated with child fishing.

Key informants described fishing as “hazardous” and stated that “almost all” children are injured in the course of fishing. A law enforcement officer expressed that children receive “one thousand and one” types of injuries in the course of their work. Other community members equivocated that all children get injured. As one men’s group conveyed, “There is danger of injury in any work. Even in school, children can get hurt.”

Overwhelmingly, stakeholders reported three main causes of injury:

- *Fish.* Both boys and girls were injured by fish, either in the water or when cleaning. Many noted that fish can prick or shock children while in the water, with some saying that this results in swollen feet or hands.
- *Stumps, stones and other objects in the river* (see Section 3.3.3). Children could hit objects in the water, which could result in injuries such as cuts, bruises, sores, and drowning (i.e., death). One respondent noted that broken bottles in the Lake can cut children when they dive. Open wounds can also become infected and frequently are not treated immediately.
- *Falling in or off the boat.* Many also noted that children can fall in or out of the boat, with some stating that injuries sustained can result in children becoming disabled. A representative from an NGO expounded:

“[Children get] seriously injured. There is a child in [a shelter for trafficked children who]... slipped and fell on the boat and broke his spinal cord. He is now paralyzed and funds are being solicited to help him get an operation. Others have scars that are tell-signs of injuries and abuse.”

NGOs as well as a social worker and young men’s group noted that severe injuries can result in physical deformity (see Section 3.3.8 for more information). One participant from an NGO elaborated about the severity and frequency of injury:

“To get an idea of the danger, most children rescued [from trafficking] can name a child they know that died on the lake while working. They know the name of a child that has died.”

Others noted that both boys and girls get cuts and other injuries from working with knives and other fishing equipment. Less frequently reported sources of injuries were: snakes and other animals; carrying heavy loads on their heads; cooking for the household; smoking fish; outboard motors; capsized boats; accidents and negligence; and sun exposure.

3.3.3 Drowning

Drowning was a commonly reported risk for children working in the fishing industry. Drowning was frequently described as “not coming back” from diving or falling off the boat. Most conveyed that drowning occurred when children hit their heads on stumps and rocks in the water, or when children become ensnared in the nets. A teacher in a source community illustrated:

“The Lake Volta has a lot of tree stumps and when a net is caught in a stump, the [boys] are made to dive into the water to disentangle or pull out the net. The risk involved is that some of them drown ... At times some [boys] are accidentally ensnared by ropes and are unable to swim; thus they drown. It is a risky job.”

Injuries Associated with Different Types of Fishing

During the 2013 operational assessment, data collectors noted the associated hazards and injuries observed with these three types of fishing:

Net Fishing

- Falling injuries
- Fish-related injuries
- Pulling injuries
- Drowning

Hook Fishing

- Routine puncture wounds from the hooks

Trap Fishing

- Burns and scars from cooking bait

Wind strength and storms were also factors in drowning. This was described by one source community NGO as:

“[A]part from these stumps and the net, there are heavy storms. When these children are alone on the lake and they encounter these storms, it’s like giving a heavy car to these small children to drive.”

Several expressed that new, inexperienced, and/or young children were at the greatest risk of drowning. One young men’s group stated that 60% of children who don’t know how to swim end up drowning. Some stated that this risk was heightened when the children were tired or hungry and forced to dive. Others noted that drowning was a risk after being beaten or falling into the lake.

Despite the ubiquitous mentions of drowning or “not coming back” from diving, there was wide disagreement as to the actualization of this risk and number of children who drown in the fishing industry. In both destination and source communities, NGOs and social workers were more likely than community groups to posit that drowning occurs; however, both NGOs and social workers were frequently unable to estimate the frequency of drownings because the cases are not reported. An NGO representative in a destination community expounded, “we get such reports [of drowning] and the fisherman was saying ‘no child, no evidence.’” A young men’s focus group affirmed that:

“Sometimes, the masters can force the boys to dive even when they are tired or hungry, this can make them drown. So, when the masters come ashore, instead of saying that the boys have drowned, [the masters] will lie and say that the boys are lost or have run away.”

Five stakeholders in destination communities, including a young men’s group, reported that drowning does not happen because children know how to swim or because the winds are not strong in that particular community (but noted that boats capsize in other areas on the lake where the winds are stronger). In source communities, only the men’s and women’s groups stated that drowning does not occur. Nine additional destination stakeholders reported that drowning occurs rarely, including two young men’s groups. Most quantified “rare” occurrence as one drowning every several years; whereas another stated that “uncommon” occurrence entails approximately one child per year.

Twelve stakeholders in destination communities and 21 in source communities reported that drowning occurs “sometimes.” Again, stakeholders were often unable to quantify “sometimes.” A young men’s group clarified that one child drowns each year when they are unable to untangle the nets under the water. Three stakeholders defined “sometimes” as 10% of boys in fishing drowning. Two stakeholders estimated that 20% of boys drown. One teacher in a destination community said that 30% of boys drown each year. Another leader in a source community discussed the frequency of drowning as follows:

“I know a family that lost three children between the ages of 8 and 10 who all drowned in Yeji after being sent to a family member who also gave them away to somebody. You see, it’s part of slave trade.”

Many stakeholders reported that drowning has decreased over the years, citing factors such as: (1) training children how to swim; (2) safety measures like floating balls and life jackets;¹⁰⁹ (3) NGO and police intervention; and (4) recruiting older children to work. A young men’s group in a source community expounded that young children used to get caught in the net and, because of the high death rate, traffickers now prefer to take “children who are older, like 10, 12, 13” years old.

3.3.4 Health

Across destination and source communities, the majority of stakeholders reported health issues associated with children working in the fishing industry. However, some reported that children rarely get sick due to the physical nature of the work. One potential trafficker in a young men’s group insisted:

“[Children in fishing] are very healthy. They don’t easily fall ill. As for sickness, everybody gets ill, but it’s not because of the work.”

Bilharzia and other water-borne illnesses were the most frequently cited health issues. NGOs that work with trafficked children and conduct medical screenings reported that bilharzia was the most common health issue. One of these NGOs expounded that 50-75% of the trafficked children they served had bilharzia; the second NGO quantified that “most” traf-

ficked children have bilharzia; and the third stated that “all rescued children have bilharzia.” Exposure to bilharzia and other water-borne illnesses is not unique to trafficked children. Multiple young men’s groups and social workers also reported that all children in the fishing industry have bilharzia, as did a teacher, law enforcement officer, women’s group, men’s group, and medical provider.

NGOs’ medical assessments also revealed malaria, hepatitis, and typhoid fever. Although hepatitis and typhoid were not reported by other stakeholders, malaria was the second most frequently reported health issue, with references by young men’s groups, medical providers, NGOs, as well as a teacher and law enforcement officer.

Young men’s groups primarily reported health issues of headaches, eye issues, and dizziness. Eye problems and headaches for both boys and girls were cited by other stakeholders, and frequently described as a result of diving and smoking fish. A destination community women’s group described:

“Because the children keep their eyes open under water while setting the net, most of them have reddened eyes and develop eye problems. Some even go blind.”

Improper or too-frequent diving can also result in deafness, as was reported by a destination community women’s group and a source community young men’s group. Young men and young women alike also reported stomach issues and diarrhea, sometimes from spoiled food.

Key informants also reported that children in fishing have stunted growth, over-developed muscles, and hernias. Others confirmed this observation by saying that it is difficult to guess the age of children in the fishing industry because of stunted growth. In describing the overall physical health of children in the fishing industry, one medical provider stated:

“It’s appalling. When you look at the physical structure of the children compared to their age, you will realize they are really suffering at the hands of their masters.”

Less commonly cited health issues included: skin diseases; feet and hand injuries, including rot and cancer from being in the water too long; breathing problems; pneumonia and other issues from improper clothing during cold nights; cholera; other worm-related illnesses; anemia; and alcohol abuse.

When asked about medical treatment, a community leader and a men’s group stated that children receive immediate medical attention. However, young men and young women reported being forced to work when they were sick, having no access to medical attention, or experiencing prolonged periods before being treated. A young women’s group reported:

“When they are sick, they are not sent to the doctor. Some get so sick, they die when they [are] brought back.”

3.3.5 Nutrition

Respondents in destination communities were almost equally divided between the opinions that (1) children in fishing are fed well; (2) starved or malnourished; and (3) that nutrition can vary by master or based on the performance of the child. This division was similar in source communities, with more stakeholders positing that children are malnourished.

Those who thought children are fed well said that fish were plentiful in destination communities, leading to more nutritious meals than in source communities. They also stated that children needed to eat well because the work is physically exerting. Three young men’s groups in destination communities and one in a source community said that boys in fishing are well fed. Three of these groups qualified this answer, with two answering that 70% of boys are well

Health of Children in the 2013 Assessment

During the course of the operational assessment on southern Lake Volta, data collectors observed that a large number of children displayed one or more of the following symptoms of bilharzia: 1) severe skin rash manifesting in lesions and resulting scars; 2) abdominal distention from the enlargement of the bladder, intestines, liver and colon from the presence of parasitic worms; or 3) fever and lethargy.

Numerous children also displayed severe infections of the feet, toes, legs, fingers, hands and arms from work-related injuries and exposure to unsanitary conditions.

fed and one estimating 90% of children are well fed. One teacher in a source community said that children return from Lake Volta looking better fed than the children who stay in the community, and that this is used to entice other children into the fishing industry.

In contrast, most young adult groups in source communities said that children in fishing are malnourished. One young woman recounted that she was so starved that she would steal food, and a young man said he went a week without food. Others described working long hours without sufficient food, or leaving to work before dawn without food. Some noted that children are fed rotten food, with one teacher witnessing children vomit from eating spoiled food. Stakeholders observed that trafficked children often display signs of malnutrition such as loss of hair or hair color, and bell-shaped stomachs. A few cited local names for malnutrition disorders, such as kwashiorkor (displayed by an enlarged stomach and small body) and beriberi (an itchy, rash-like illness caused by eating too many carbohydrates without other forms of nutrition).

Others noted that nutrition depends on the kindness of the master, or can hinge on the performance of the child. Young adult groups and community leaders described how food would be used as punishment, with only a few clarifying that it was also used as an incentive. Many described that meals would be delayed until the children finished their tasks, or it would be withheld if they were unable to complete a task such as disentangling a net.

Across source and destination communities, banku¹¹⁰ was the most frequently reported food given to children in the fishing industry, followed by raw pepper (which is a spicy pepper served with tomatoes and often eaten with a cheap carbohydrate, fish, or meat), fish, and cassava.

3.3.6 Physical Violence

Children in the fishing industry on Lake Volta overwhelmingly experienced violence. The majority of descriptions of physical violence involved children being beaten with paddles. Other common examples included children being thrown into the lake, caned, slapped, and beaten with ropes. A law enforcement officer who had previously worked in fishing reported that some children were “tortured with the rough ropes used to tie bamboo.” A few noted that beatings can result in children developing hunchbacks, having eye problems, and can even lead to death.

Throughout destination and source communities, descriptions of physical violence seem to have three main drivers: (1) children’s inability or unwillingness to perform certain tasks; (2) the cultural practice in Ghana of using physical violence to discipline children or ensure that instructions are followed; and, less commonly, (3) a sense that trafficked children are replaceable (which is described further in *Section 3.6.4*).

Most accounts of violence fell into the first driver listed above. Many young men noted that they were beaten when they refused to dive, or were unable to untangle a net under the water. As one male survivor accounted:

“We had gone to draw the net and I was asked to dive and disentangle the net. When I went down, I was unable to disentangle it because it was dark down there. So I came up and was hit by the paddle at the back of my head. That’s how I got the scars.”

Descriptions of physical violence against children displayed a lack of awareness on the part of the abusers of the limitations of children to perform difficult tasks in the fishing industry. One young men’s group explained, “When the child is not able to do the hard labor, the master gets bitter since he has already paid some money to the mother. Out of frustration, he can hit the child with a stick, paddle or any other thing.” Another stated that “some of the older [boys] beat the younger ones when they are not able to do the work because they all have similar agreements and should be doing the work equally.”

Descriptions of children’s refusal or inability to perform tasks frequently overlapped with the mindset that “stubborn” children need to be physically disciplined. A participant in a young men’s group who appeared to be a current trafficker explained:

“They get beaten when they are stubborn... They are laid on a table and lashed with the ropes or bamboo sticks. They lash them well and next time they will not misbehave. Some of the children are just too stubborn. Like the one who is living with me.”

Many recounted that physical violence is “how these children are trained” and that children will not learn properly if violence does not reinforce important lessons. A community leader blatantly stated:

“Yes, they beat [children] if they are not doing the right thing. But you learned people are saying they shouldn’t be beating them, which has led to some of the kids dying from doing the wrong things.”

An NGO located in a destination community estimated that, “ninety percent [of children experience violence] because that’s the way to put fear in the children. It’s a way to discipline the children.” Many community members equivocated that children would be physically disciplined regardless of whether they were on the lake, as voiced below from a women’s group in a destination community:

“Yes they beat them on the lake when they are naughty. When a child misbehaves towards his mother even at home he is beaten, so in every work place when you misbehave you must be beaten.”

An NGO respondent located in a source community further explained this cultural context and went on to differentiate between the severity of violence faced by children in the fishing industry and children staying at home:

“When kids complain that they are being abused at the lake, it is very hard for that to be taken seriously because parents will think that for a child to be hit is necessary. It is understood that hitting a child is a necessary discipline... Among middle-income countries, Ghana is the seventh most violent according to UNICEF... Physical violence is culturally acceptable here. It is condoned in schools by the law. My impression is that I am yet to meet anyone who says they won’t hit a child. Every child on the lake is hit as every child in the community is hit. The level of violence on the lake is excessive.”

The above descriptions were supported by other stakeholders in source communities who were aware of the violence committed against children on Lake Volta. One source community women’s focus group noted, “Some of the masters beat the children so hard that [the children] do not wish to return to the lake after they come home for vacation.” Another stated, “Sometimes the fishermen beat the children like goats.”

Several respondents stated that it is more common for supervisors and older boys than for masters to perpetrate violence on younger boys. However, some young adult focus groups also said that violence depends on the disposition of the supervisor. One young men’s group explained:

“Most supervisors are quick-tempered and with least provocation, they go into action to beat the child. Some supervisors are of the view that it is only the beatings that can make a child more focused, alert and above all, remember all the instructions regarding safety and fishing as a whole.”

Although some stakeholders posited that girls experience less violence than boys, young women’s groups frequently reported physical violence—including being beaten with paddles. One survivor testified that she “was beaten with TV cables several times, both on the lake and at home,” and that this mistreatment led her to attempt suicide several times until her relatives intervened in the abuse. Another young women’s group stated that “girls who are perceived to be slow and inefficient are struck with the paddle and are forced by the master to work harder.” This experience was echoed by a young man who witnessed:

“I have seen some [girls beaten] before. A boy beat a girl who was working on the lake with them to death. The girl was feeling sleepy on the canoe, so she dozed off. Whilst she was still dozing at a corner, the boy hit her so hard that she fell into the water and drowned. She died as a result.”

3.3.7 Sexual Violence

Focus groups in destination communities were reluctant to talk about sexual violence committed against children in the fishing industry, with most stating that it did not happen, happened rarely, or occurred sometimes. When conceding that sexual violence against children occurs in Lake Volta’s fishing industry, destination community respondents averred that it happens only to girls. Sexual violence, especially against boys, is a taboo subject in Ghana; and many respondents expressed surprise or repulsion when asked if boys in the fishing industry experienced sexual violence. Only two respondents in source communities mentioned that boys can be sexually abused in Lake Volta’s fishing

industry, with one young men's group noting that the fishermen's wives sometimes sexually assault or force the boys to have sex with them. One NGO representative stated:

"Some of the young boys are sexually abused too but [this is] not spoken of much. This is because of the tradition of taboo in Ghana. Boys don't generally speak of it when they are sexually abused. This is a long term cultural issue of blaming the victims. We know that boys are abused as well."

While destination community FGDs were uncomfortable discussing sexual violence against both boys and girls, key informants in destination communities were able to provide more information. These key informants were split between estimating the scale of sexual violence against girls in the fishing industry as being 20-40%, 90-100%, and being unable to provide an estimate. Some mentioned that sexual abuse is hidden, and even raped girls who are provided with medical services lie about what they experienced. When key informants were unable to estimate the prevalence of sexual violence, the majority noted unusually high rates of teenage pregnancies as evidence of potential sexual abuse.

In source communities, more than a third of respondents noted that they hadn't heard of sexual violence. Of those who heard about sexual violence, about half reported that it happens, one-fourth said that sexual violence is very common; and the remaining one-fourth said that it rarely happens. To put this in context, one law enforcement official described a "low" prevalence as about 40-50% of girls experiencing sexual assault.

In both destination and source communities, respondents reported that the perpetrators of violence were the masters. In destination communities, many noted that masters sexually abuse girls either when the masters are unmarried or when their wives are away. One source community young men's group elaborated that when the masters get the girls pregnant they blame the boys in the fishing industry. In destination communities, the next most commonly reported perpetrators were masters' sons or brothers; and a few mentioned that trafficked and non-trafficked boys working in the fishing industry perpetrate sexual assault against girls. Source communities were more likely than destination community respondents to report that boys in the fishing industry were the perpetrators; and only one source community respondent noted that the masters' brothers and sons perpetrate sexual violence.

Although source community respondents were more open about the occurrence of sexual violence against children working in the fishing industry on Lake Volta, one women's group silenced a participant who said: "I was raped and got pregnant whilst working in the fishing industry." This focus group averred, "There is nothing wrong with it. These things are bound to happen when you have boys and girls working together."

Several female survivors reported that they had been sexually assaulted. One described:

"I was 7 years old when I was raped. When I told [the female trafficker], she collected compensation from her husband—a fowl, white cloth and sandals, head gear and other things. However, [my trafficker] never gave any of these to me. She kept them for herself. I never reported or complained to anyone initially. This went on for many years."

Another young women's group reported that sexual assault happens "a lot" and that "the men are not really bothered by the age [of the girl]. When the girls are 12, 13 to 14 years, they can come and catch you and rape." A law enforcement officer also reported that girls as young as 4 and 5 years old can be sexually assaulted.

3.4 Prevalence: Findings from the Mixed Methods Baseline Study

Key findings:

- The 2013 operational assessment found that more than half (57.6%, 444/771) of children working on southern Lake Volta's waters were trafficked into forced labor.
- The 2015 qualitative study found that child migration to Lake Volta for the purpose of working within the fishing industry was common. Across destination communities, most respondents estimated that 60% or more of the children working in the fishing industry were born in other communities. In source communities, most respondents estimated that between 20-50% of children leave the community specifically to work in Lake Volta's fishing industry.
- Every destination and source community confirmed the current existence of trafficking both girls and boys into the fishing industry on Lake Volta.

3.4.1 Trafficking into Forced Labor on Southern Lake Volta's Waters: Prevalence Rate from the 2013 Operational Assessment

The 2013 operational assessment found that more than half (57.6%, 444/771) of children working on southern Lake Volta's waters were trafficked into forced labor. As explained in the methodology (Section 2.1), the design of the data collection did not permit interviewing all 771 children. Data collectors classified more than one-third (37.2%, 287/771) of children as "suspected" trafficked if they exhibited a physical appearance and mannerisms consistent with trafficked children. About one-fifth (20.4%, 157/771) of children were classified as "confirmed" trafficked if an interview was conducted and statement evidence was offered either by the child or an adult on the boat to the data collectors. The remaining 42.4% (327/771) of children observed or interviewed did not meet the trafficking criteria.

Table 10: Prevalence of Children Trafficked into Forced Labor, by Trafficked Status

Status	Number of children	Percent
Trafficked	444	57.6%
Suspected	287	37.2%
Confirmed	157	20.4%
Not trafficked	327	42.4%
Total	n=771	100.0%

Note: The 57.6% prevalence rate in this study should be interpreted as a conservative estimate of the trafficking on southern Lake Volta. Field notes from the data collectors indicated that the "not trafficked" children observed could possibly have been trafficked.

3.4.2 Stakeholder Estimates of Child Migration for the Purpose of Working in the Fishing Industry on Lake Volta, and Related Phenomena: from the 2015 Qualitative Study

To triangulate findings from the operational assessment—and to provide a current snapshot of prevalence from stakeholders' estimates—respondents in FGDs and KIIs were asked questions pertaining to prevalence of child migration for the purpose of working in the fishing industry on Lake Volta, and related phenomena. As detailed in *Section 2.2.4*, all stakeholders were asked questions related to child migration to Lake Volta for the purpose of working in the fishing industry. Men's groups, women's groups, and community leaders were first asked a series of questions about fostering and child migration to Lake Volta as a gateway to asking more sensitive questions about children working in the fishing industry specifically. Key informants currently or likely to work on anti-trafficking interventions were asked more directly about the presence of child trafficking into forced labor in the fishing industry.

While community members were not asked directly about child trafficking, child migration to Lake Volta for the purpose of working in the fishing industry does serve as the broader context in which trafficking occurs. Moreover, additional factors were discussed to learn about child trafficking including, recruitment and means of travel to Lake Volta; payment from fishermen to parents; with whom the children stay and work; access to education (which signals child labor, not forced labor); and elements of force (e.g., ability to leave the fishing industry, presence of violence, other means of control). Based on community members' reactions to these questions, they understood the underlying conversation. For example, in one community a mother pulled her adult child out of the focus group and threatened the researchers. In other communities, young adults opened up and shared testimonies of their experience—all but one of which can be confidently categorized as survivors of child trafficking into forced labor on Lake Volta. Furthermore, the presence of movement, payment exchange, work that interferes with the well-being of the child, and elements of force demonstrate that trafficking occurs, even if the scale cannot be estimated through the qualitative study.

Due to the low levels of education in these fishing villages, facilitators used a scoring technique to estimate proportions within the population. For example, in destination communities 10 stones were used to represent all the children in the fishing industry in that community. The focus group was then asked to divide and agree how many of those 10 stones would represent children born in other communities and how many represented children from the community. This proportional scoring method has been employed by PDA in similar research contexts, and proportional piling/scoring techniques are used in Rapid Rural Appraisals and Participatory Rural Appraisals.¹¹¹ This visual and tactile method allows groups—that may not be literate or able to numerate—the ability to visualize proportions, discuss divisions, and agree on their perception of scale. It should be noted that not all respondents were able to provide scale estimates, and that they sometimes used other measures (e.g., the number of children who come to the community for the purpose of fishing each year). This supplemental data is included when available, but only data measuring the same factors in the same way is aggregated or compared throughout the report.

3.4.3 Stakeholder Estimates of Fostering

With men's groups, women's groups, and community leaders, researchers sought information on fostering before beginning the line of inquiry on child migration to Lake Volta for the purpose of working in the fishing industry. Previous literature (*Section 1.2.3*) and key stakeholders (*Section 3.8*) identified that trafficking can occur within the context of fostering, or can be facilitated by the normalization of child migration through legitimate fostering. However, fostering is not trafficking, and the below information should not be conflated with estimates of trafficking.

In both destination and source communities, there was overwhelming agreement in the following areas: 1) fostering was a common practice within the community; and 2) fostered children helped with whatever trades (including fishing) their hosts practice. To demonstrate the scale of fostering in researched fishing villages, Table 11 below outlines the scale of hosting children within each destination community.

Table 11: Scale of Fostering by Destination Community

	Community members host children?	Estimated percent of households that host children*	Estimates were consistent amongst stakeholders?	Estimated number of children that come to the community**
Akosombo area	✓	60-70% of households	✓	15 children per year
Kpando area	✓	15%-100% of households	No. There was a large variance with a community leader estimating 15-20%; another leader 50%; and a women's group 100%	50-100 children per year
Kpeve area	✓	20-30% of households	✓	--not estimated--

* The community members used the '10 stones' method to provide these estimations.

**This question was not asked, but some stakeholders provided this information as additional context for the scale of fostering in the community.

In source communities, respondents also reported that fostering is an ubiquitous practice. However, community members were less consistent in their estimation of the scale of fostering within the community (Table 12).

Table 12: Scale of Fostering by Source Community

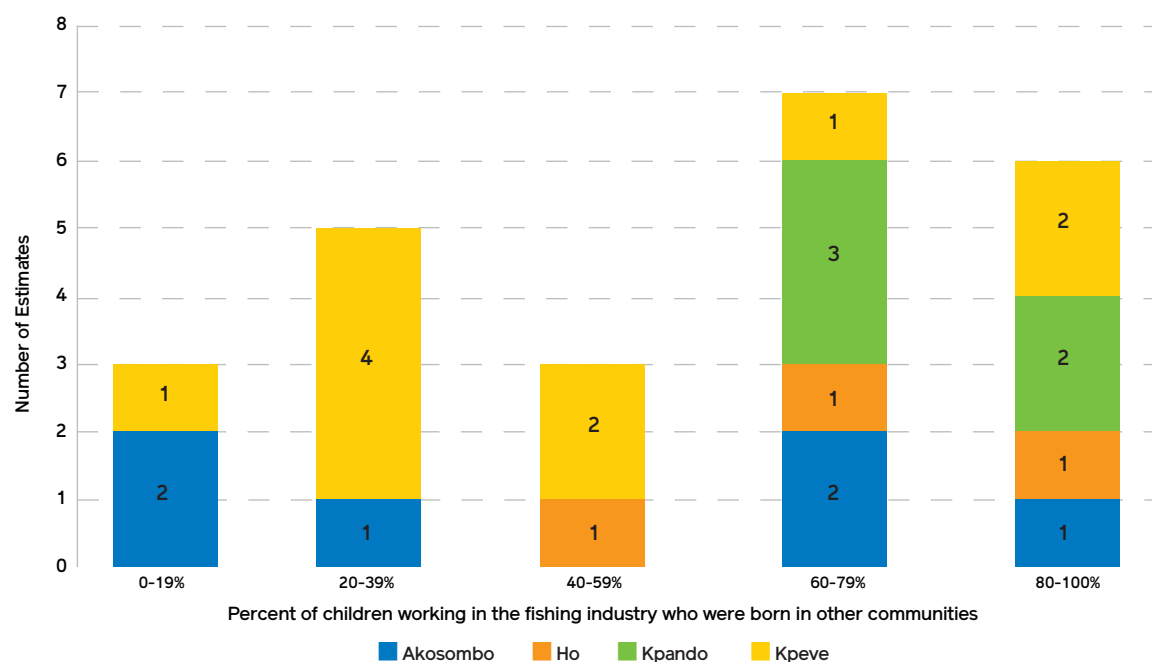
	Community members send children?	Estimated percent of children in the community sent for fostering	Estimates were consistent amongst stakeholders?
Ada area	✓	40-100% of children in the community were sent for fostering	No. Most parents/guardians estimated 40-60%, but one estimated 100%
Ningo area	✓	20-60% of children in the community were sent for fostering	No. Parents/guardians estimated 20-40% and a community leader estimated 60%
Winneba area	✓	30-80% of children in the community were sent for fostering	No. Parents/guardians estimated 50-80%; and a community leader estimated 30-40%

3.4.4 Destination Community Estimates of Child Migration for the Purpose of Working in the Fishing Industry

In destination communities, researchers asked stakeholders about the percentage of children working in the fishing industry who were born in other locations. However, the estimation did not include indicators around force, payment, ability to attend school, and working conditions to determine whether these children could be categorized as trafficked for the purpose of forced labor. Therefore, this estimation should not be equated with trafficking into forced labor, as children born in other locations may have moved to the destination community with their parents and simply assist their family with fishing when they are not attending school.

Across destination communities, most respondents (54%) estimated that the percentage of children working in the fishing industry who were born in other communities was 60% or greater. However, there was a wide range of estimates that varied by community (Figure 5) and by stakeholder group (Figure 6).

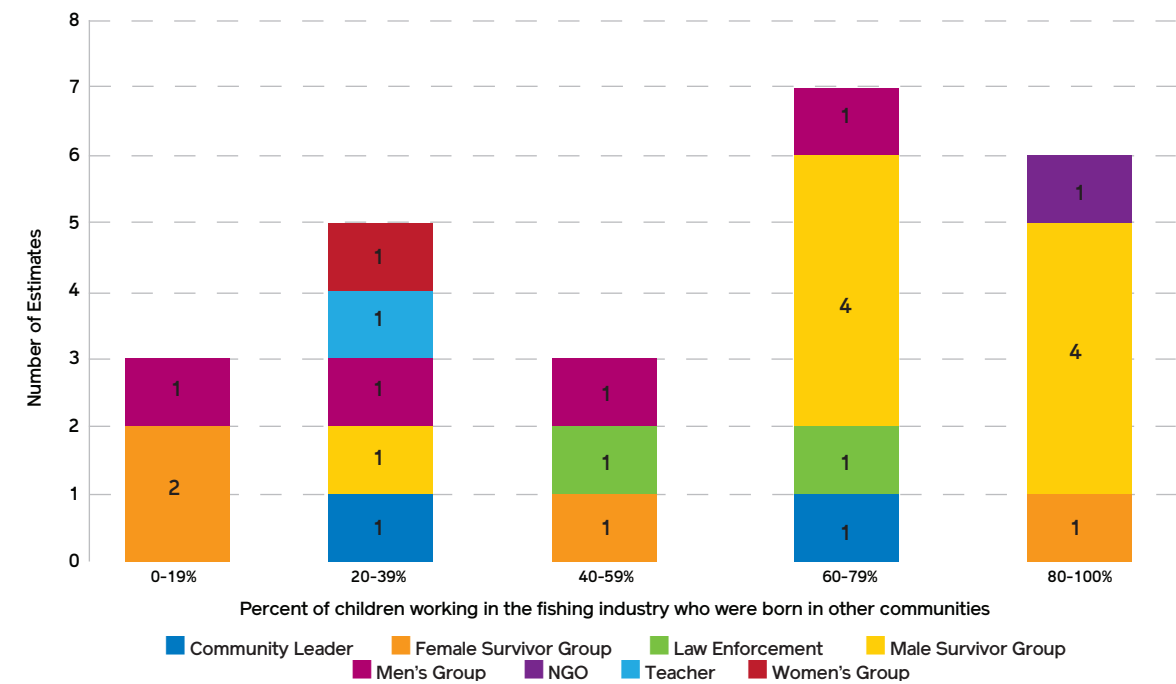
Figure 5: Distribution of Estimates by Destination Community



*This table represents the number of respondents who reported the estimated percentage. Respondents include FGDs and KIIs. In some instances, FGDs reported two or three estimations. In these instances, the FGD transcript did not include the number of participants who supported one estimation and the number of participants who supported the other estimation. Therefore, data cannot be reported by the total number of individuals (e.g., 10 FGD participants and 1 key informant); and in the cases of FGDs, one respondent could represent multiple individuals.

As can be seen in the above Figure 5, answers were most consistent in Kpeve (with most estimating 20-30%); and Kpando (estimating greater than 60%). Among professionals located in Ho, all estimated that more than 40% of children working in the fishing industry were born in other locations. Akosombo yielded the most disparate answers, with young men's groups perceiving a higher proportion than other community members. Across communities, young men's groups consistently answered that more than 60% of the children working in the fishing industry were born in other communities. This division between stakeholder perceptions can be seen in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6: Distribution of Estimates by Stakeholder Type

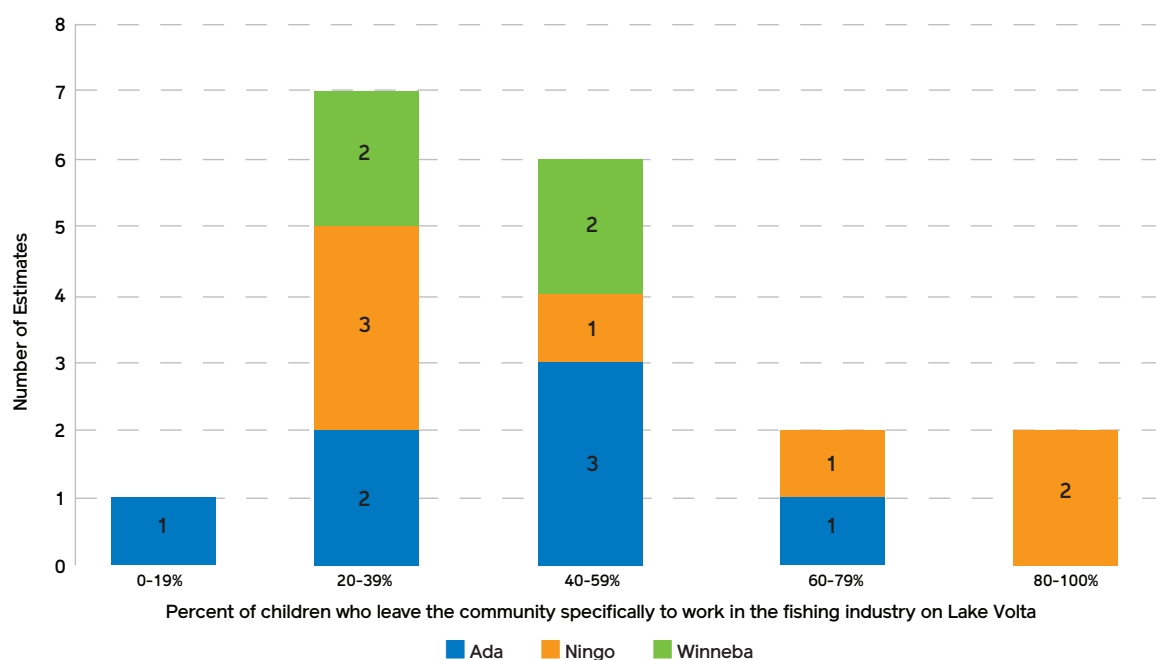


Some stakeholders in destination communities were asked about the trends in child migration for the purpose of working in the fishing industry, and others volunteered this information. Most agreed that the numbers of children migrating for work on Lake Volta has decreased over the past five years. In Akosombo, one group noted that they “do not go for boys, we only bring girls.” One community leader explained that the driver for this decrease is that “parents are unwilling to send children.” This was echoed by a social worker who noted that the numbers of children working in Akosombo are lower than in Kpando-Torkor and Yeji because “parents have caught on.” In Kpando, respondents explained that the decrease occurred due to anti-trafficking interventions by law enforcement and NGOs, as well as greater community awareness.

3.4.5 Source Community Estimates of Child Migration for the Purpose of Working in the Fishing Industry on Lake Volta

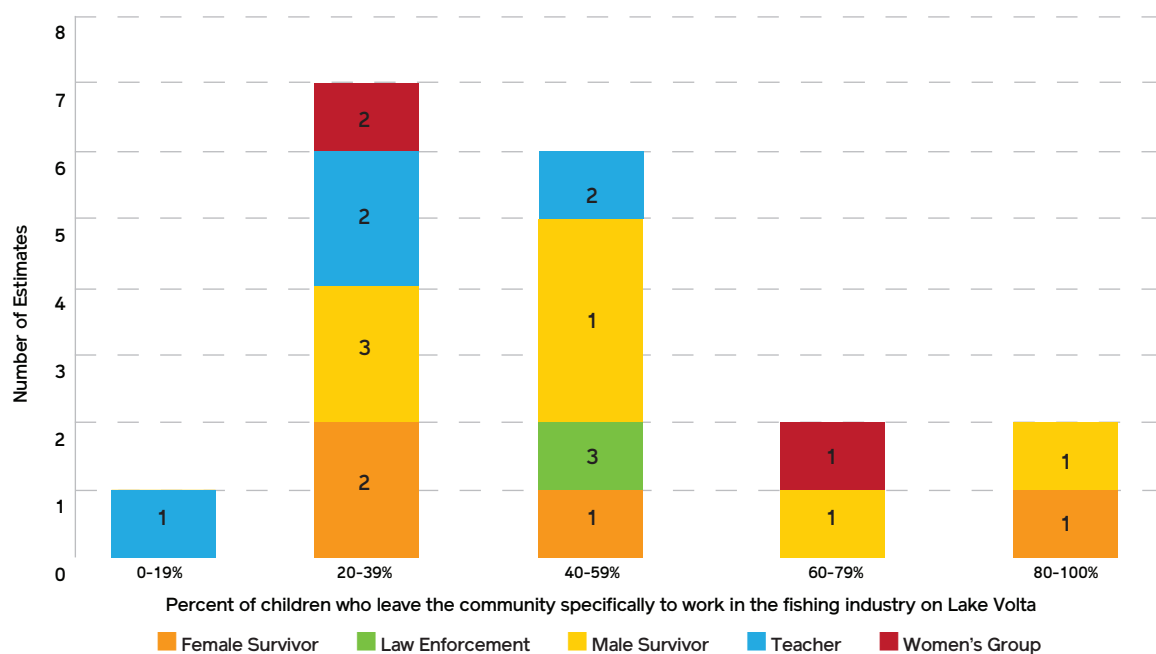
Most respondents estimated that between 20-50% of children leave the community specifically to work on Lake Volta, as seen in Figure 7. These estimates were fairly consistent across communities, with 20-50% being the most common answers in all three source communities.

Figure 7: Distribution of Estimates by Source Community



Whereas estimates were highly related to the stakeholder type in destination communities, there was less variation by stakeholder types in source communities (Figure 8) and more saturation overall.

Figure 8: Distribution of Estimates by Stakeholder Type



As can be seen in Figure 8, no data is present from men's groups or community leaders. Young men's and young women's groups, teachers, and other key informants were asked directly about the percent of children who migrate for the purpose of working in the fishing industry; but not all of them answered this question in a way that would be comparable to other stakeholders. Therefore, the data is excluded from the above estimates. However, Table 13 below displays the data from these excluded discussions and also shows the estimated scale of child migration for the fishing industry within the broader context of children leaving to go to Lake Volta (which could include the purpose of schooling or fostering).

Table 13: Scale of Child Migration to Lake Volta and Scale of Migration for the Purpose of Working in the Fishing Industry, by Source Community

Community	Estimated percent of children leaving the community who go to Lake Volta	Do these children work in the fishing industry on Lake Volta?	Estimated scale of children going to Lake Volta who work in the fishing industry	Estimates were consistent amongst stakeholders?
Ada area	50-100% of the children who leave the community	✓	60-100% of the children who go to Lake Volta were going to work in the fishing industry	✓
Ningo area	40-50% of the children who leave the community	✓	20-100% of the children who go to Lake Volta were going to work in the fishing industry	No. Most agreed that the minority of children go to work in the fishing industry; but one community leader stated that all children who go to Lake Volta go to work in the fishing industry.
Winneba area	70-80% of the children who leave the community	✓	"some" to "all" of the children who go to Lake Volta were going to work in the fishing industry	No. There was more agreement that the majority of children go to work in the fishing industry; but one men's group stated that children primarily go to Lake Volta to attend school.

Some stakeholders in source communities were also asked about trends; however, Ada provided the greatest saturation and information regarding changes in the number of children migrating for work on Lake Volta. Most noted that the numbers had decreased, citing causes such as: 1) less fishermen come to Ada to negotiate for children; 2) more schools have been established in the area alongside an "outcry for education;" 3) children refuse to work in the fishing industry on Lake Volta; and 4) parents refuse to send their children. The men noted that they "would not allow their children to go [to work in the fishing industry on Lake Volta] again."

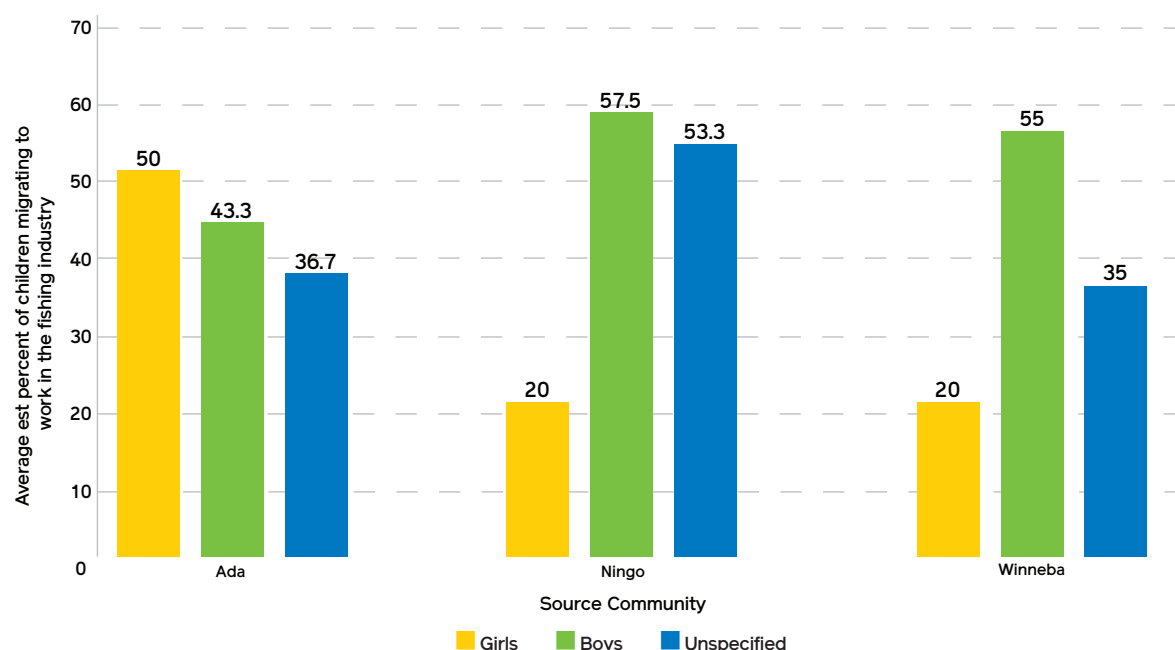
Some stakeholders in Ada also observed that child migration has morphed such that children only travel during school holidays for short-term contracts in the fishing industry with most children returning a few weeks into the school year. This appears to be a unique trend in Ada and not present in other communities, which described greater lengths of time that children spend contracted for fishing.

3.4.6 Estimated Percentage of Girls Migrating to Work in Lake Volta's Fishing Industry

In destination communities, the estimated percent of girls who had migrated into the fishing industry was similar to the estimates of boys and/or all children. While the estimates were similar, it should be noted that they measured a percentage and not relative size, so it is unknown how the number of girls working in the fishing industry compares to the number of boys.

In source communities, some stakeholders reported that the migration of girls to the fishing industry was slightly higher than that of boys in Ada and was lower in Ningo and Winneba (Figure 9).¹¹²

Figure 9: Estimated Percent (Averaged) of Children Migrating to Work in the Fishing Industry by Sex and Source Community



3.4.7 Presence of Child Trafficking into Lake Volta's Fishing Industry

Although the scale of trafficking cannot be adequately portrayed, there was widespread confirmation of the *presence* of child trafficking in every community. For example, one participant from an NGO in a destination community quantified the prevalence as, “plenty of trafficked children in fishing.” Table 14 displays the multi-disciplinary agreement of the *presence* of child trafficking within the destination communities; and Table 15 displays the same agreement regarding the occurrence of children being trafficked from source communities for the purpose of forced labor in the fishing industry on Lake Volta.

Table 14: Presence of Trafficking Confirmed by Key Informant Interviews in Destination Communities

Community	Community Leader*	Law Enforcement	NGO	Other Relevant Agency	Social Worker
Akosombo area	✓	Hear of it	✓	N/A**	<i>Hear of it</i>
Ho***	N/A	✓	✓	✓	N/A
Kpando area	✓	N/A	✓	N/A	✓
Kpeve area	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	<i>Yes, in the wider area—does not have resources to go to Kpeve area</i>

*Community leaders were not asked about the presence of trafficking; these signify interviewees who volunteered this information.

**N/A indicates that there was not a KII for this stakeholder type in the community.

***Many relevant stakeholders have offices in Ho, which is not along Lake Volta. They are speaking about the presence of trafficking in the southern Volta region; they are not speaking about the presence of trafficking in Ho.

Table 15: Presence of Trafficking Confirmed by Key Informant Interviews in Source Communities

Community	Community Leader*	Law Enforcement	NGO	Other Relevant Agency	Social Worker
Ada area	--	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ningo area	✓	✓	✓	N/A	N/A
Winneba area	✓	✓	✓	N/A	✓

*Community leaders were not asked about the presence of trafficking; these signify interviewees who volunteered this information.

3.5 Demographics of Children Trafficked into Forced Labor on Southern Lake Volta's Waters: Findings from the 2013 Operational Assessment

This section presents demographic information solely for children determined to be trafficked through the 2013 operational assessment. In contrast, Section 3.1 displays information for all children observed on southern Lake Volta.

Key findings:

- The 2013 operational assessment found that more than 99.3% (441/444) of trafficked children working on southern Lake Volta's waters were boys. Trafficked boys are easily visible on the lake, whereas trafficked girls have roles on the shore (which were not surveyed during the 2013 assessment).
- When interviews were conducted on southern Lake Volta in 2013, nearly a quarter (22.7%, 51/225) of trafficked children were age 6 years old or younger, and almost two-thirds (62.2%, 140/225) were 10 years old or younger.

The next two tables and discussion are limited to the children interviewed or observed on southern Lake Volta in 2013 who meet the "trafficking" criteria. Findings revealed that trafficking of children on Lake Volta was most visibly inflicted upon boys (99.3%, 441/444). Less than 1% of all trafficked children observed on Lake Volta were female.

Table 16: Sex of Children Trafficked into Forced Labor on Southern Lake Volta

Sex	Number	Percent
Male	441	99.3%
Determined directly through interview	222	50.0%
Non-interviewed males*	219	49.3%
Female	3	0.7%
Determined directly through interview	3	0.7%
Total	n=444	100.0%

*The sex of children was not recorded for all interviews or observations. Data collectors indicated that all children were boys unless otherwise noted (all girls were coded as F for female, or G for girl), so this is a derived number.

Additional information from 225 of the trafficked children was collected through interviews. Tables that account for a sample size of n=225 are findings drawn from this subset of trafficked children. The 2013 assessment found that perpetration of trafficking into forced labor on Lake Volta was concentrated on younger children. Less than one in 10 trafficked children were 14 to 17 years old, but 7.1% (16/225) were 3 to 4 years old. When an age was reported to or estimated by data collectors, nearly a quarter (22.7%, 51/225) were age 6 or younger and almost two-thirds (62.2%, 140/225) were 10 years or younger.

Table 17: Age of Interviewed Children Trafficked into Forced Labor on Southern Lake Volta

Age	Number	Percent	Cumulative percent
0-2	0	0.0%	0.0%
3	2	0.9%	0.9%
4	14	6.2%	7.1%
5	19	8.4%	15.6%
6	16	7.1%	22.7%
7	12	5.3%	28.0%
8	21	9.3%	37.35
9	20	8.9%	46.2%
10	36	16.0%	62.2%
11	18	8.0%	70.2%
12	22	9.8%	80.0%
13	11	4.9%	84.9%
14	14	6.2%	91.1%
15	7	3.1%	94.2%
16	7	3.1%	97.3%
17	6	2.7%	100.0%
Total	n=225	100.0%	

When interviews were conducted on southern Lake Volta in 2013, nearly a quarter (22.7%, 51/225) of trafficked children were age 6 years old or younger, and almost two-thirds (62.2%, 140/225) were 10 years old or younger.

3.6 Conditions of Children Trafficked into Forced Labor in the Fishing Industry: Findings from the Mixed Methods Baseline Study

The below section discusses the unique conditions of trafficked children, whereas Section 3.3 provides an overview of the conditions faced by both trafficked and non-trafficked children.

Key findings:

- Data collected in 2013 and 2015 shows that trafficked children were prevented from attending school. Access to education distinguished trafficked from non-trafficked children, as one men's group illustrated: "My biological children will go to school, but the children who are working for me would not be allowed to go to school."
- The 2015 qualitative study found that trafficked children are exploited in order to provide better access to education as well as work and living conditions for the traffickers' biological children.
- Girls in the fishing industry were vulnerable to multiple forms of victimization. About half of the young men's groups affirmed that traffickers use girls for sexual exploitation and forced marriage as a means of controlling the older boys.
- Trafficking into the fishing industry had impacts upon children, with key informants citing that survivors display signs of trauma and underdeveloped social skills.

3.6.1 Access to Education

Trafficked children were frequently prevented from attending school, either because of the long hours or because their trafficker purposefully brought them to work on Lake Volta and would not allow them to attend school. Thirteen respondents provided unsolicited statements that fishermen will send their biological children to school, and hire other children to work in the fishing industry. One men's group stated, "My biological children will go to school but the children who are working for me would not be allowed to go to school." All young men's groups and teachers in source communities attested that children who leave for Lake Volta do not attend school.

Many described how the long work hours are incongruent with school times; and even more confirmed that hired children are not allowed to go to school. A young men's group in a destination community said:

"[Fishing] affects their ability to go to school because they don't come back early, so they can't go to school. Mostly, they don't allow them to go to school because the master has bought them so there's no chance for you to say 'I'm going to school' until you have finished the years that you are supposed to serve."

Source community respondents pointed out that upon return, trafficked children are behind their peers. Key informants indicated that children who return from the lake as adults are in primary school. Teachers and young adult groups shared that those who return from Lake Volta and enroll in primary school feel ashamed or uncomfortable with being behind educationally.

Data collected during the 2013 operational assessment also revealed that trafficked children were on the lake on weekdays and times when they should have been in school. Although some children or adults informed data collectors through translators that the children attended school, the young age at which children are trafficked onto southern Lake Volta combined with the hours associated with the fishing industry make it difficult for a child to successfully attend school. Data collectors attempted to ask questions about attending school, but they were not able to obtain responses in many of the interviews or they believed the child or adult provided untruthful answers. As a result, the *time of day the child was observed working* on the lake served as the proxy measure for trafficked children's school attendance. Nearly half of trafficked children (48.9%, 217/444) were interviewed or observed on the lake from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., or the typical Ghanaian school hours.¹¹³

Table 18: Time of Day Trafficked Children were Observed or Interviewed on Southern Lake Volta

Time of day	Number	Percent
6 a.m.-8 a.m.	90	20.3%
8 a.m.-2 p.m.	217	48.9%
2 p.m. or later	51	11.5%
Not recorded	86	19.4%
Total	n=444	100.0%

3.6.2 Working and Living Conditions

Some respondents noted that trafficked children work longer hours—including fishing at night or in the early morning—and are assigned more intense, hazardous or difficult tasks such as diving. One male survivor accounted that, “We were more or less like house slaves, because their own children did nothing.” A young women’s group noted that other children can find alternate employment, whereas trafficked children have to stay with their contractual master.

Although not specifically asked about clothing and shelter, some respondents reported that trafficked children “do not have proper clothing and shelter” and noted this as a distinguishing feature from non-trafficked children in the fishing industry. Several female survivors provided accounts that they were not clothed as well as the biological children, with one saying she only received second-hand underwear while the daughters of the trafficker always had new clothing. Several indicated that poor clothing can affect health; as a participant in a young men’s group stated, “All my clothes were torn, and I was only wearing my underpants around. I even wore it to bed and would be cold throughout the night.” A teacher described trafficked children who “go fishing without attire no matter the weather conditions.”

Other respondents noted poor living conditions. A law enforcement officer elaborated that trafficked children sleep on mats or non-cemented, wet floors while biological children have beds. A participant from an NGO described the sleeping conditions as, “the accommodation they provide for the children is horrible. You will find about eight children sleeping in a small room.” A few respondents stated that girls’ living conditions render them vulnerable to sexual violence.

3.6.3 Injuries

In the 2015 qualitative study, the research team observed that many of the male and female survivors who provided accounts had visible scars, including one male who had scars, sores and burn marks all the way from his scalp to his toenails. In the 2013 operational assessment on southern Lake Volta, data collectors also visually assessed children for injuries or signs of bodily harm or illness. Over a third (36.4%, 82/225) exhibited some sign of bodily harm or illness. About one-fifth (19.6%, 44/225) of trafficked children exhibited scars on some portion of their body (torso, legs, arms, head), and 8.4% (19/225) had visible sores. Another 6.7% (15/225) of trafficked children had physical signs of some other form of injury such as a hernia, abscess, malnourishment or signs of recent caning. Slightly less than half (42.7%, 96/225) of the trafficked children who were interviewed did not have any visible injuries.

Table 19: Visible Injuries on Interviewed Children Trafficked on Southern Lake Volta

Types of injury*	Number	Percent
Any type of injury	82	36.4%
Scars	44	19.6%
Sores	19	8.4%
Hands/fishhook-related	4	1.8%
Other*	15	6.7%
None visible	96	42.7%
Not recorded	47	20.9%
Total	n=225	100.0%

*More than one type of injury could be observed, so percentages will exceed 100.

**Other injuries include hernias, abscesses, malnourishment, caning, etc.

3.6.4 Physical Violence

In the 2015 study, the vast majority of respondents affirmed that both trafficked and non-trafficked children were beaten. While the study demonstrated that all children in Lake Volta's fishing industry overwhelmingly experience violence, some respondents reported that violence committed against trafficked children exceeded that committed against the biological children of fishermen. One NGO in a destination community explained, "Children are abused because the master believes that he bought them at a price, and it is therefore [his] right to use them as he pleased." A few respondents in destination communities reported that traffickers intentionally murder or maim trafficked children. Of these, some said that traffickers use children's bodies or blood as bait for fish. Others in destination communities said that traffickers will intentionally harm children at the end of the contract to avoid repaying the child's parents for the work the child did.¹¹⁴

3.6.5 Sexual Exploitation and Forced Marriage

The 2015 study found that girls were trafficked for the purpose of working in the fishing industry; and that some girls were also sexually exploited. Six young men's groups stated that fishermen sometimes use girls as a means to keep older boys in their employment, either through sexual exploitation or forced marriage.¹¹⁵ One young men's group described sexual exploitation as a new practice:

"Previously, the masters did not bring the girls for us. They wanted them for themselves; but nowadays they bring us girls to lure us into staying."

Some revealed that the fishermen's wives are the ones who sexually exploit the girls. One young women's group shared:

"Some mistresses send their wards to the health posts and clinics and have them undergo family planning. Soon after this, they are pimped to fishermen for sex [in return for money, free fish or fish at a reduced cost]."

This was confirmed by a teacher in a destination community who posited that 40% of girls are sexually exploited:

“[Girls] have no choice. Some of the lady masters that the girls work for offer them to the fishermen in order to get more fish at a cheap price. The girls are coaxed by the fishermen who sell to their masters.”

3.6.6 Trauma and Social Development

Across destination and source communities, key informants observed that children trafficked into the fishing industry demonstrate signs of trauma. To support this assessment, a few key informants reported that they observed the following indicators of trauma: nightmares and flashbacks; withdrawal from other people, isolating themselves, and difficulty approaching others; being timid or easily frightened; reluctance to make eye contact; dejected expressions and body language; weeping; mistrust of others demonstrated by unwillingness to share their actual names; fear and expectation of being beaten in situations that would not warrant physical discipline; behavioral issues; and begging for money to run away from their master. An NGO elaborated:

“They become very emotional, cry and isolate themselves when they reflect on the things that they went through in the past. They have been affected emotionally and psychologically and these are reflected in their actions. They find it difficult to adjust.”

The research team also noted some behaviors among the young adult focus groups and survivor accounts that were consistent with unresolved trauma. These included: regressed “childlike tendencies,” emotional outbursts, and lack of trust displayed by avoiding eye contact and timidity.

Many key informants also reported that victims display underdeveloped social skills. Some cited behavioral issues, including the inability to empathize with others and quarreling. A few noted that victims don’t know how to greet people. One NGO described victims as “not too civilized,” and another stated that victims instantly inhale their food because they are fearful that they won’t have another meal. As explained by a participant from an NGO:

“All they know is fishing. When they come back from the fishing communities, they cannot even go to school, they cannot even mix with their colleagues because he or she has experienced so much out there. So when they come, going back to school becomes a problem [and] reintegrating them in the family becomes a problem. Some also expressed that they do not want to go back to school because it’s been years since they went to school. We counsel them and let them understand their situation. Sometimes when they come back, they are not even interested in schooling, they just continue with the fishing. So the social development is a bit difficult.”

There was insufficient data to determine the prevalence of trauma and underdeveloped social skills in trafficked children; as well as the interest in attending school and ability to reintegrate into the community. Given the variation in experiences and the fact that children will experience and recover from traumatic experiences differently, anti-trafficking practitioners should expect and plan for a variety of responses (see Section 3.10 and Section 5).

3.7 Means of Trafficking: Findings from the Mixed Methods Baseline Study

Key findings

- Data collection in 2013 and 2015 found that children trafficked into the fishing industry had contractual agreements for their exploitation, which were frequently between the trafficker and the child's parent/guardian.
- In 2015, payment per child per year ranged from 10–1,000 GHS (\$3.33–333.33 USD), with the amount frequently falling at or below 50 GHS per year (\$16.67 USD).
- Qualitative data in 2015 revealed that traffickers control children through violence and food, and sometimes keep older boys in their employment through sexual rewards and marriage.
- In 2015, stakeholders cited four primary barriers for children leaving their traffickers: (1) lack of funds for transportation; (2) children do not know how to get home, especially if they were taken when they were very young; (3) traffickers will physically stop them through search parties and will then punish them for running away; and (4) fear.

3.7.1 Key Players

Fishermen in destination communities who source children from other areas fall into one or multiple of the following types of key players: 1) boat/canoe owners; 2) masters; and 3) supervisors. In some instances, boat/canoe owners are the financiers, or company owners, and employ masters and supervisors. However, many respondents used these terms interchangeably as some small-scale traffickers may own the boat, be the master, and supervise the children.

Boat/canoe owners and masters are responsible for all of the fishing equipment, business transactions, hiring the children, and teaching the children how to conduct fishing. Owners and masters were frequently synonymous, and were terms used to describe the fishermen who controlled the work of the children. Trafficked children lived with these employers.

Some owners and masters go fishing with the children, and supervise the work of the children. In describing the roles and responsibilities of owners and masters, respondents were almost evenly divided as to whether these adults conduct the difficult tasks (such as paddling and diving) or make the children do the hard work. A few also noted that once children are trained, owners and masters allow the children to work on their own—or return early to sleep while the children continue fishing on the lake. Eight respondents, including five young adult groups, noted that owners and masters hire supervisors to go fishing with the children.

Terminology

Interviews during the 2015 study revealed that many children call their traffickers “father,” “mother,” “auntie,” or “uncle” when they may not be biologically related. This is a part of Ghanaian culture and is used to imply respect or deference; but some traffickers also intentionally use this reference to conceal the true relationship to the child. As described by one young women's group, “Some say the children they work with are related to them, but when you ask the child you will know that it is not true.”

Supervisors can be older children, friends or relatives of the owners/masters or seasoned fishermen. Supervisors are responsible for going fishing with the children, or overseeing the children's work. Four young adult groups characterized the treatment of the supervisors as more harsh than that of the master (see Section 3.3.5). Unlike owners and masters, supervisors are not responsible for hiring children and do not house the children. However, supervisors may live with the children if they themselves live with the trafficker (or if the supervisor is also the owner/master, as a few noted that small-scale traffickers perform all three roles). Three respondents referred to the supervisor as the “senior man,” and one respondent called the supervisor the “Bosom.” It appeared that trafficked children can become supervisors.

Other key players in fishing industry are **fishermen/owners/masters' wives**, who can be **fishmongers**. Frequently, the wives were responsible for overseeing the work of the girls. Trafficked children sometimes refer to these women as “madam,” “mistress,” or “mother.”

Thirty respondents, including 13 young adult groups, admitted that fishermen and their wives may employ **middlemen**, whom most referred to as “**agents**.” Fishermen’s agents are responsible for hiring children from source communities to work for fishermen in destination communities. Agents can be related to the fishermen in the destination community, related to the parents/guardians in the source community, or businessmen who facilitate the trafficking of children into the fishing industry. One law enforcement officer identified transportation drivers as middlemen. Although many respondents did not have details about the financial transaction between fishermen and their agents, 20 respondents confirmed that agents are paid for their services. One young men’s group explained that the amount paid to the agent depends on the distance traveled to acquire the child. Another group posited that the agent charges about three times the transportation amount, with the example of a 30 GHS (\$10 USD) agent fee for a trip that cost 10 GHS (\$3.33 USD). Other guesses ranged from 2 GHS per child to 500 GHS per child (\$0.67-166.67 USD). One teacher posited that agent would receive the same amount given to the parent/guardian for the child (*see Section 3.7.3*).

Parents/Guardians are the other key players in the trafficking of children. Overwhelmingly, children are hired with the consent of their parents. Although parents appear to be aware of the conditions of trafficked children, a few survivors clarified that when their parents learned of mistreatment, they intervened on behalf of the children. A few noted that mothers and other female guardians are the primary negotiators with traffickers.

3.7.2 Recruitment

In the 2015 qualitative study, respondents across destination and source communities identified relatives as the primary facilitator for the recruitment of children into the fishing industry on Lake Volta. Family friends and relations often overlapped with the next most frequently cited types of recruiters: fishermen and middlemen/agents. Others noted the strong kinship and ethnic ties between destination and source communities. As described in *Trafficking Routes and Movement (Section 3.7.4 below)*, trafficking frequently occurs within the same ethnic group. Oftentimes fishermen that relocate to Lake Volta return to their source community to hire children; or relatives serve as informal agents or informants about children in the community.

Although most sources identified relatives as the ones who recruit children, a women’s group admitted that children are given out to strangers; and several stakeholders said that children are frequently told that they are going to stay with relatives when in fact there is no connection to their trafficker. A few also noted that the first trafficker may sublet the child to work for another fishermen once they arrive.

In addition to relatives, fishermen and middlemen/agents, other recruiters include: masters, boat owners/company owners, fish mongers and fishermen’s wives. One law enforcement official affirmed that it is more common for wives to come now that fishermen are afraid of being arrested.

The majority reported that recruiters make arrangements with parents, with only a few stating that recruiters may approach children directly in the source community. Overwhelmingly, parents seem to be aware of the recruiter’s intentions and the fact that their child is going to work in the fishing industry on Lake Volta. Only some stakeholders noted that parents may be deceived that their child will attend school while working in the fishing industry. A few noted that parents may also be lied to about the living conditions. For example, a few said that recruiters will wear their best clothes when in the source community to appear wealthy. In addition, some parents do not know the specific location to which their children are taken. Parents may also be deceived as to the length of time the child will be in fishing and the amount owed to the parent (*see Section 3.7.3*).

In contrast, most reported that children are intentionally deceived by their parents or the recruiter. Many children are told that they are being sent away to attend school. Some are told that they are going to live with a relative, and others are told that they will be able to earn a lot of money in the fishing industry. While it appears that most children are unaware of the trafficking arrangements, not all children are deceived. Three young men’s groups and one young women’s group reported that children know they are going to work in fishing; and one women’s group said that children were deceived in the past but currently children are now made fully aware.

Many stakeholders reported that recruitment happens year-round, but there are higher levels during festivals. This was because recruiters may return to their home communities for festivals, holidays and funerals. Sometimes these recruiters brought their currently trafficked children back to the community during these festivals to visit the child’s family or return them at the end of the child’s contract.

3.7.3 Terms of the Contractual Agreement

In the 2015 study, stakeholders overwhelmingly reported that parents and recruiters have agreements for hiring the children, and often referred to these as agreements as contracts.¹¹⁶ Terms for the contract included the length of time that the child would work for the fishermen, the total amount to be paid to the parent, type of payment (e.g., money, cattle, gifts) and how that money would be paid (e.g., all upfront, some through an advance and the rest at the end of the contract or yearly).

Length of Time in Trafficking

Source communities provided more data than destination communities on the length of time that children spend working in the fishing industry; and source community responses were aligned with those provided in destination communities.

Two to three years was the most frequently cited length of time, which was followed closely by responses of 10 years and more. In particular, stakeholders reported that girls may not return to source communities after becoming pregnant or married while working in the fishing industry. Respondents cited four to five years as another frequent tenure. Many stakeholders in Ada noted that children go for a few years, or several months during the long summer vacation.

One women's group noted that children used to go to the lake for two to three years, but recently children return within one year. This group later explained that some children who are mistreated return earlier.

Many noted that contracts are often extended, sometimes without the permission of the parents. Some women's groups noted that they needed to go to the lake in order to get their children back; and a few cited procedures for registering their children before the child is taken to the lake in the event that the child is not returned as promised. As one young men's group described:

“Even when they tell our mothers that we are going to work for two years, the children eventually work for three or four years... This is because when the contract is about to end, the master would call the mother and tell her that the catch is not too good and that more time is needed to ensure there is adequate money to settle payments for the services of the child. He then negotiates for the child to work for some extra years. The masters do this extension in order to ensure that they always have boys to help them on the lake.”

Payment

The 2015 qualitative study collected information about the payment for children in the fishing industry. Stakeholders agreed that parents¹¹⁷ and guardians are the negotiators and recipients of the payment for children working in fishing, with only a few mentioning that some children may receive some of the money.¹¹⁸ This was supported by the fact that many young adult groups were unaware of the terms of their contracts, and stated that they did not receive any money. Several survivors noted that they only received a piece of cloth at the end of their service (instead of payment). One participant in a young men's group stated, “I was there for seven years and still did not make enough money to even buy a loaf of bread.”

A few respondents in source communities noted that no payment is exchanged if the fisherman hiring the child is a relative; and a few destination community stakeholders also reported that feeding and clothing the child is sufficient and no other forms of payment are exchanged.

A few stakeholders reported that parents are paid per year, while most reported that payment is for the entirety of the contract and can be split between an upfront payment and payment at the end of the contract. Most explained that parents receive an advance payment before the child is taken, with only four stakeholders reporting that payment occurs solely at the end of the contract. Some stated that all the money is paid upfront.

The amount the parents received before the child leaves for Lake Volta—either as an advance or as the full payment—ranged from a small token (e.g., an alcoholic drink, specifically schnapps; a piece of cloth or less than 100 GHS) to 1,000 GHS, with most responses falling into 100–500 GHS.¹¹⁹ Some stakeholders noted the benefits of receiving upfront payments, and/or an initial advance, stating that the end of contract amount is not always fulfilled. A source community men's group stated that parents receive 500–1000 GHS (\$166.67–333.33 USD) all upfront if the child is taken for light fishing, as this is an illegal method. Others explained that the fishermen will use the advance given to the parents as a form of debt bondage, saying that the harvest earnings did not cover the advance amount in the agreed number of

years in the contract. A few also said that parents may seek to borrow money from the fishermen, particularly for funeral payments, that then require additional years to be added to their child's service. One participant in a young men's group said:

"If your parents take about 300 GHS before you go, you will work till you are an old man. You will not come back."

Approximately half of the amounts of payment reported were for unspecified contract periods. These amounts ranged from 20-1,000 GHS (\$6.67-333.33 USD). When stakeholders provided information about the yearly amount, or amount of years specified in the contract, the amount per child per year ranged from 10-1,000 GHS (\$3.33-333.33 USD),¹²⁰ with the amount frequently falling at or below 50 GHS per year (\$16.67 USD). One male survivor reported that his mother received 50 GHS for his two years of work and then offered him this money:

"I initially rejected the money, but rescinded my decision after some elders advised me to the contrary. The money was too little. I was very angry, and a family feud almost ensued as a result."

In destination communities, a few stakeholders reported that parents were paid with a cow in lieu of, or in addition to, monetary payment. One stakeholder mentioned that cows were preferable, because alcoholic parents could not use them to buy alcohol. When cows were mentioned, it was frequently for a period of three or four years of service.

In source communities, a few noted that boys are worth twice as much as girls because girls become pregnant around 12 or 13 years old. One women's group also noted that the cost of children is higher now than it was several years ago; this may be due to the slightly decreased prevalence and increased awareness surrounding this practice. Another group posited that younger children fetch a higher price, because they can be used for a longer period of time.

Only a few stakeholders noted that fishermen sometimes pay more than the agreed amount when they are pleased with the child's service, or when the harvest was particularly bountiful. Only a few participants in young men's groups noted that they may receive their own boats, or be put through school if they were valuable employees.¹²¹ In contrast, many noted that fishermen may not fulfill the terms of the contract, both in the number of years that the child was supposed to work and the agreed payment amount. Several survivors recounted that their parents never received remuneration from their traffickers, even when the traffickers were related to the parents. In addition, a law enforcement officer noted that they receive complaints from parents whose contracts were not fulfilled.

3.7.4 Trafficking Routes and Movement

During the 2013 operational assessment—when data collectors determined it was safe to ask more questions—children or adults provided the names of the community or town where the child was born. Almost a quarter (22.2%) of the trafficked children were sourced from Ningo. The second most frequent community was Ada in which 6.7% of this subset of trafficked children were born. Less than 5% of children came from the communities of Winneba, Dzemini, Cape Coast, Apam or Sidam. Communities that received less than five references were classified as "other."

In contrast, many noted that fishermen may not fulfill the terms of the contract, both in the number of years that the child was supposed to work and the agreed payment amount. Several survivors recounted that their parents never received remuneration from their traffickers, even when the traffickers were related to the parents.

Table 20: Source Communities of Children Trafficked to Southern Lake Volta

Community	Number	Percent
Ningo	50	22.2%
Ada	15	6.7%
Winneba	8	3.6%
Dzemini	8	3.6%
Cape Coast	7	3.1%
Apam	6	2.7%
Sidam	5	2.2%
Other*	97	43.1%
Not recorded	29	12.9%
Total	n=225	100.0%

*Communities that received four or fewer references in interviews were grouped together in an “other” category.

The 2015 qualitative study revealed the same top three source communities for children working in Lake Volta’s fishing industry. Across all destination community interviews, the top three source communities referenced were:

- Ada (23 references)
- Ningo (18 references)
- Winneba (seven references)

These mirror the source communities found in the operational assessments, and are the same three used in the qualitative study (displayed above in Table 20). In Akosombo, Ho, Kpeve and Kpando, the top two source communities referenced in the qualitative study were either Ada, Ningo or Pampram (which is a suburb of Ningo). All but one reference to Winneba came from stakeholders in Kpando, with Winneba being Kpando’s third most cited source community. Other commonly cited source communities include: Battor, Pampram, Keta, Afram Plains, Cape Coast, Central Region, Greater Accra, Maafi and Mepe.

The top three destination communities referenced by source communities were:

- Yeji (37 references)
- Akosombo (21 references)
- Kpando (nine references)

Yeji and Akosombo were the top two destination communities listed by all three destination communities. It should be noted that researchers observed that stakeholders in source communities referred to Lake Volta as either Yeji or Akosombo; and key informants confirmed that source communities use these labels broadly and sometimes don’t know the names of the actual destination community villages to which children are sent. Therefore, destination communities have less reliability and there was also less saturation with other communities mentioned. A few of these include Dambai, Kwamekrom, Nketepa and Abodwese.

Most stakeholders in the qualitative study reported that children are taken directly from the source community to the location where they will work. Several noted that there are direct buses from source communities to Lake Volta, with

one noting that the bus leaves at night to avoid police interference. A few mentioned that children are routed through transportation hubs, such as Kpando, Torkor and Yeji. Of these, a few said that the children may stay in these hubs if the middleman/agent has not finished negotiating the contract or does not yet have a “customer” for the child.

Upon arriving in the destination community, most children did not permanently relocate again unless they returned to the source community at the end of the contract. However, most young adult groups affirmed that children will temporarily move in order to follow the migrating fish, or pursue a bumper harvest.¹²² Many stated that temporarily chasing fish occurs year-round, with a few mentioning that this movement is seasonal. For example, some fishermen that use bamboo floats travel when the dry season renders the water level too low for the traps to be effective. Another noted that fish are more plentiful in the rainy season so there is more movement to take advantage of the harvest. Some qualified that following the fish may only take a few days, whereas one teacher in a destination community said that children may be gone for two or three months if there is a bumper harvest they are pursuing.

While fish migration appears to be the primary driver of movement for trafficked children, a few mentioned that children can be temporarily “sublet” to other persons. One female survivor described:

“There were times my hosts took me and the other children in the house ... to other villages. They abandoned us in those places for two or three months to work for other people.”

An NGO and a community leader also said that traffickers send children to more remote islands whenever NGOs or the Navy are attempting to intervene or rescue children.

3.7.5 Means of Control

Traffickers control children through violence (see Section 3.3.5) and food (see Section 3.3.4), and sometimes keep older boys in their employment through sexual rewards and marriage (see Section 3.6.5).

Stakeholders confirmed that many children want to leave their situation of exploitation, with one young adult group positing that 80% of children want to leave the fishing industry. The desire to leave was almost always linked to physical violence and mistreatment or wanting to attend school. A few noted that the work is too hard, and some men and women’s groups justified that children want to leave because they are lazy or stubborn. Many reported that some children are able to run away, and some source community stakeholders explained that it has become easier for children to leave the fishing industry.

However, many cited significant barriers to children leaving their traffickers. The top barriers were: (1) lack of funds for transportation; (2) children do not know how to get home, especially if they were taken when they were very young; (3) traffickers will physically stop them through search parties and will then punish them for running away; and (4) fear. A young men’s group explained many of the barriers:

“Many boys who cannot stand the harsh tasks as well as those who have the urge for education, always feel like leaving the fishing industry on Lake Volta to fight for their dreams to come true. However, their efforts are usually crushed by unavailability of money, which they do not have to even buy clothing and shoes to wear when the opportunity arises for them to run or travel away from their doom. Others too are scared to leave since their masters make them swear an oath of allegiance to them only, promising they wouldn’t run away, no matter what; but if they do, a load of curses are pronounced to follow and destroy their lives. Most of the masters do not take these things lightly since they claim they have already parted monies to their parents and so therefore, [the children] have to benefit their value for money. Another factor that stops them from leaving is the fact that if they even succeed in escaping, they may throw themselves from the ‘frying pan into the fire.’ Since their parents do not have enough to help in their upkeep, they are highly unwelcome back home. Others too have their contracts extended or renewed, making it difficult to break off. Others too compare themselves to the living standards of where they came from, where even breakfast was hard to get; they prefer to stay on to face the future, after all, they do now have at least two square meals a day.”

Some also explained that community members will prevent trafficked children from returning home. This can be particularly effective in geographically isolated locations, such as islands. Some young adult groups recounted that public transport drivers, particularly boats, will not take trafficked youth, as the drivers are friends with, or have been warned

by, the traffickers. A young men's group blatantly stated, "If you run away, you will be caught. When they take us to the overbank communities¹²³, the masters warn the boat owners who transport people not to allow you onto their boats." This exact situation was recounted in a survivor account.

In addition, traffickers control the movement of children, and children may be hidden from family members or professionals seeking to intervene. One survivor attested that they would be moved whenever their parent came to visit, and that only the trafficker would interact with the parent in order to control information about the situation. Another survivor noted that they were not allowed to return home for funerals. One of these stakeholders described how children would be hidden whenever community members heard an outboard motor, as they assumed that the equipment was piloted by law enforcement.

A few mentioned that children will not leave because of financial obligations, such as: the children would be in breach of contract; their parents are in debt to the trafficker; the children believe that their parents are being paid for their services; or their parents would have to return any money received to the trafficker. One young women's group also stated that parents will return children who run away to their trafficker; however, several survivor accounts displayed parents who took care of their children upon their escape.

Less frequently noted means of control noted by stakeholders included: (1) parents are not told the precise locations that traffickers take their children; (2) children stay in hopes that their traffickers' promises will be fulfilled, particularly that they will be able to go to school; (3) traffickers may change the children's names, making it more difficult to locate them; (4) traffickers isolate children, and control their social interactions; and (5) traffickers lie that the parents have died.

3.8 Push and Pull Factors: Findings from the 2015 Qualitative Study

Key findings

- The qualitative study revealed that poverty renders parents and guardians vulnerable to trafficking their children to work in Lake Volta's fishing industry, and is the primary push factor for children being trafficked.
- Stakeholders overwhelmingly reported two main pull factors: 1) children are a source of cheap labor and 2) they are easy to exploit.

3.8.1 Push Factors

Stakeholders identified poverty as the primary push factor for children being trafficked into the fishing industry on Lake Volta, along with several interrelated strains on family resources. Fostering and cultural norms also contributed to the practice of trafficking children.

Poverty

More than 50 stakeholders attributed child migration to Lake Volta and the practice of trafficking children to poverty. One women's group in a source community explained:

"Children between 8 to 10 years old should not work on the lake. However, we do this out of necessity; it is as a result of hunger and financial difficulties. We know it is a bad practice to force children to work in the fishing industry on Lake Volta."

A few also explained that there are no financial opportunities in source communities, and that Lake Volta is where there are economic opportunities. An NGO also noted that fishing is seasonal and fishing villages may not have steady incomes to be able to provide for their families.

Many noted additional strains on family resources, which exacerbate the vulnerabilities faced by poor parents. Large

family size was frequently cited as a contributing factor to parents trafficking their children. An NGO explained: “If I have five children and I cannot take care of them and someone comes to take three of them, it releases a lot of pressure on me.” A group of young men also said:

“Because of poor financial status of some parents who cannot afford caring for their children at school, there are occasions when some boys are made to sacrifice themselves in servitude so as to earn some income to cater for the education of their siblings who are enrolled in schools. This tends to benefit the whole family.”

Not only are there large families, but it also appears that girls and women begin having children at an early age with many stakeholders reporting high rates of teenage pregnancy. Another contributing factor is single-parent households, as mentioned by eight stakeholders, some of whom reported that absent fathers affect families’ ability to make ends meet. As described by one women’s group in a source community:

“The children are being given away to be used in the fishing industry because men have been shirking their responsibilities. They have neglected and abandoned their children... So when the women are overburdened, the best option is to send the children away to work in the fishing industry on Lake Volta.”

Cultural Practices and Societal Norms

There are several norms and practices—driven by factors such as poverty and large, single-parent families—that contribute to the prevalence of child trafficking. Fostering children is an overwhelmingly prevalent practice in destination and source communities (see Section 3.4.3). It is common for poor families to send children to other communities to be raised by more well-to-do relatives. This practice is typically not exploitative, but it lends itself to abuse by traffickers. As one participant from an NGO described:

“The tradition in Ghana of children moving between extended family is also an issue. It is a noble practice for say an aunt who can support a child better [than the parents] by looking after them; or a cousin living in a house to help care for a baby ... But then this is exploited by traffickers and uncaring parents who think they can use their [fostered] children as an income source.”

Fostering can be driven by orphaned children, large family size, teenage pregnancy and absent fathers. Some also stated that having multiple people involved in raising the children is viewed to be good for the child’s upbringing. One female survivor testified that:

“My father did not look after us. We were 12 siblings but six passed. I was the only girl among the remaining six, and my mother said she would not allow me to stay with her because of that. She said if I did [stay], she would end up pampering me so I always had to live with other people. That’s why I came here.”

Another related social norm is the value of children working and not being lazy. For example, a few respondents noted that children are recruited when they are “not doing anything.” Many parents also expect their children to help their hosts with their work in the fishing industry and with household chores, likely as a tradeoff for being fostered. In addition, many settlers in Lake Volta were originally from source communities and these historic and kinship ties can contribute to the practice of child trafficking.

A few also described how community well-being outweighed individual rights. For example, some children may be expected to pay for the other siblings’ education. A few survivors also described familial or community pressure to drop any grievances against relatives that trafficked them. This was described in a survivor account summarized by the data collection team:

After he and his brother had run away, he shared the details of what had happened with his father who got angry and demanded that their former master pay compensation as he had rather used the boys like hired hands. This became a big and dividing issue in the family. The issue was later dropped so as not to destroy the family.

Additional Push Factors

Education may also be a factor in child trafficking. A few noted that schools are not available in some source communities, which can lead to children being sent to other areas where traffickers promised that the child will be placed in school. A few others also said that education may not be valued as highly as making an income. Still others explained

that children only go to Lake Volta in order to earn money for school supplies. A few others noted that “ignorance” and lack of education is the reason that parents send their children to work on Lake Volta.

3.8.2 Pull Factors

Stakeholders overwhelmingly reported two main pull factors: 1) children are a source of cheap labor, and 2) they are easy to exploit.

Cheap Labor

More than 50 respondents explained that fishermen prefer to hire children because children are cheaper than adults. Many expounded that children work without being paid, whereas adults will require minimum wage. As explained by a destination community leader, “You see, the reason why the fishermen and the market women prefer the children is because the children only need food.” Many others said that children don’t understand financial transactions and will not negotiate a fair share of the fisherman’s earnings, as illustrated by a young men’s group: “The adults want a fair share of the money made per catch, but the child has no clue. That is why most of them like to use children.” Many explained the benefit of cheap labor in terms of being able to cheat the children, with a few also noting that fishermen will not be cheated by children, as they may with adult workers. One teacher said that adults tend to steal and that fishermen employ children who will report any of these misdeeds to the fishermen.

While the vast majority explained that traffickers can make a profit by using children, a few highlighted that some fishermen are struggling to provide for their own families and cannot afford to hire adults to help them in their work. Therefore, poverty can be both a push and a pull factor.

Easy to Exploit

More than 40 respondents declared that children are easy to exploit, which was most frequently described as being “obedient,” “easy to control” and “respectful.” A few expanded that this obedience comes from being easily intimidated, as one young men’s group described:

“You cannot treat an adult anyhow you want to. He may disagree with you, and this might end up in a confrontation. But as for a child, he/she obeys the moment you lift a rod.”

Several noted that children can be forced to work and to complete difficult or hazardous tasks that an adult would refuse to conduct. A men’s group explained:

“When they take children, they use them for dangerous work or hard labor, which adults would not do. Because children are afraid, they would do anything.”

As a women’s group said, “children will only rebel or desist from working when they are hungry, but generally they are pliant.” A few also noted that adults can find other employment when they receive unfair treatment. A young men’s group characterized this by saying that adults can run away, unlike children.

Additional Pull Factors

Women’s and men’s groups frequently justified the use of children because fishermen “cannot do the work alone.” Some respondents explained that children are ideal for hazardous fishing work: that children are better at diving, can fit within small spaces between stumps, and their small fingers are better at untangling fishing nets. Because fishermen want children to dive, a social worker said that fishermen “prefer to use other people’s children” because “it’s a risky job.”

A few also explained that boys are more desirable than adult men because: 1) adults want their own boat; and 2) adults can have alcohol addictions that make them unfit for fishing. Some also explained that young girls are desirable because adult women, or older girls, can steal the fishmonger’s husband.

3.9 Community Attitudes and Proposed Solutions: Findings from the 2015 Qualitative Study

To gauge attitudes about children in the fishing industry, key informants were asked about community reactions to rescue operations on behalf of trafficked children; and community members were asked if there are any ages or ways in which children should not be used in the fishing industry.

When asked about how the community responded to anti-trafficking interventions, key informants were quite divided in how they characterized the community response (with some even describing opposite reactions to the exact same event). When the community was characterized as being unhappy with trafficking interventions, the following actions occurred: arrested perpetrators were released; anti-trafficking professionals were discouraged or disempowered from further interventions on behalf of trafficked children; and those professionals were personally threatened. Some noted that community attitudes have changed, with one teacher in a source community noting that the community used to interfere with interventions and now supports anti-trafficking interventions.

Community members often displayed acceptance of child labor. Ten respondents noted that children should be at least 15 years old before working in the fishing industry; and Ghanaian law allows for light work at 15 years old. However, one women's group clarified that "in the case where the child is the fishermen's own child, he can take him to fishing even at age one." In contrast, 11 respondents noted that it is acceptable to use children over the age of 8 years old, with many of these noting that only 5 and 6-year-olds are too young.

As for tasks that children should not undertake, most noted that young children should not dive as this is too hazardous a task. A few noted that children should not be fishing at all.

Proposed solutions

Stakeholders proposed three primary solutions for child trafficking into the fishing industry, and child endangerment in the fishing industry: (1) better access to education for children (i.e., children should be in school and barriers—such as the cost of school supplies or lack of schools in remote areas—should be removed); (2) enforcement of the law, especially arrests and prosecution; and (3) economic empowerment and monetary assistance.

Several groups noted that enforcement is the only way to solve the problem, as one young women's group noted:

"As long as the sea and the lake are not dried up, these things would not end. We think that the women who maltreat these girls should be arrested and prosecuted. That is the only way to end the problem."

And a young men's group said:

"When the police and others send them to court, when force is applied, they would stop those things... Otherwise, it cannot stop. We know it is the government that takes care of everything, so if those rules come here, those things would stop."

One law enforcement official suggested, however, that increasing law enforcement without addressing poverty would not end child trafficking. As one women's group said:

"No, these laws don't work, because we are not rich and we need the children to help us on the lake. If the children stop helping us on the lake, we will not have the resources to take care of them when we have about five to six children. When the children stop helping me, will you bring me food to eat? So I have to use them on the lake."

Some stakeholders noted that all three solutions were needed to solve the problem, and when proposing only one solution, the need for the others was often implied in their answers.

3.10 Service Needs of Trafficked Children and Availability of Services: Findings from the 2015 Qualitative Study

Key findings

- Key informants reported that the primary service needs of trafficked children are: counseling or therapy; medical services; school or vocational training; reintegration with parents; and shelter.
- Although there were government programs in place and NGOs that served trafficking survivors, the service needs of trafficking victims far exceeded the availability and accessibility of services.

Researchers asked key informants about the services needed by trafficked children recovering from forced labor exploitation, experiences of reintegrating children of trafficking and availability and accessibility of these services.

Counseling or therapy was the most frequently noted service need, which was followed closely by medical services, school or vocational training, reintegration with parents (described further below), and shelter. These primary needs for services were consistent with the issues trafficked children faced as a result of the conditions of children in the fishing industry. For example, counseling or therapy was a need because of the trauma endured by trafficked children; medical services were a result of the health issues, malnutrition, injuries and violence; and most trafficked children did not have access to education while in the fishing industry.

Additional service needs reported by a few key informants include: social support or socialization; financial support; sign language for those who have hearing impairments from injuries sustained in the fishing industry; legal documentation; case management or a caretaker; and basic life skills, including brushing teeth. A few also stressed the importance of reimbursing the masters for the rescued child so that the masters do not demand repayment from the family of the trafficked child.

When elaborating about the experiences of reintegration, key informants overwhelmingly reported that survivors and their families require economic empowerment in order to be successful. The next reported service need for successful reintegration was education or vocational training. This was followed by counseling or therapy. Less frequently mentioned service needs were community/family awareness or sensitization; medical services; food; housing/accommodation; social support; socialization support; clothing and case management or caretaking. Many expanded that the success of the reintegration is contingent upon financial support or empowerment, and that one of the primary reasons that victims are re-trafficked is lack of financial support. The majority of key informants shared that victims can be re-trafficked. Another reason that victims can return to the fishing industry on Lake Volta—either via trafficking or voluntarily—is lack of social support or feeling out of place in the source community. A few noted that rescued victims can face stigma upon re-entry to the community, because they are viewed as having put their parents into debt. Others noted that victims feel uncomfortable or ashamed in school for being so far behind their peers.

Key informants overwhelmingly affirmed that service needs are the same for girls as they are for boys, and that service needs are dependent upon the experiences of the individual child rather than gender. One NGO elaborated that while the service needs are the same, the NGO often ends up spending more money to provide for trafficked girls than for trafficked boys. One social worker clarified that girls will need different services when they have been sexually assaulted or exploited. Two NGOs also noted that the vocational and educational needs are different for girls, with one stating that girls require more educational support and another clarifying that the vocational avenues are different.

Although there were government programs in place and NGOs that served trafficking survivors, the service needs of trafficking victims far exceed the availability and accessibility of services. Every key informant averred that there is not enough shelter space for trafficking victims. Even when attempting family reintegration—which was affirmed as a primary service need for trafficking victims—lack of shelter space can have significant impacts. For example, a social worker recounted that while a trafficking victim was waiting to be reunited with their family, they were placed in temporary foster care because shelter was not available, and the victim ran away from the foster care placement that very night.

Most key informants reported that services are not available, with even more clarifying that when services are available they are not accessible to victims of trafficking. There were multiple examples to illustrate the inaccessibility of services, with lack of financial and human resources being the primary drivers. Several stakeholders described government officials who expend their personal resources in order to cover the costs of services to and interventions on behalf of child victims. As one law enforcement officer emphasized, “The issue is, how long and how often can we sustain to [sponsor these interventions from our own pockets]?” A social worker explained that even when the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) learns of trafficking cases, they do not have funding, transportation or personnel available to “do anything” in response to the report. Another social worker expounded that the lack of vehicles means that DSW cannot travel to fishing villages in which child trafficking occurs. Hospitals or medical services may not be geographically accessible to some child trafficking victims, and when hospitals are geographically accessible, the costs are too high. Overwhelmingly, anti-trafficking stakeholders rely on NGO services and even those were reported to be inadequate for the sheer number of child trafficking victims and breadth of their service needs.

¹⁰⁷As discussed in the 2013 Data Coding Limitations section in the methodology for this report, reasons for missing or don't know responses were not recorded resulting in high item-nonresponse displayed reported as “not recorded.”

¹⁰⁸Respondents reported the ages of boys, girls and children who work in the fishing industry. Gender-neutral responses of “children” were coded as boys because researchers found that respondents conflated boys with children working in fishing. Only ages listed in response to specific questions about girls, or that mentioned girls, were coded as girls’ ages (see section 3.2.2).

¹⁰⁹In 2013, data collectors did not observe a single child wearing a life jacket or a boat that included a life jacket.

¹¹⁰Banku is a staple food in Ghana that is made from corn and cassava.

¹¹¹Proportional piling is often used with more stones, such as 50 or 100 when looking at multiple factors. Given that there were only two categories and that PDA has used 10 stones in similar research contexts, it was agreed that 10 stones would be the simplest way to engage the focus group. One limitation of using 10 stones is that is difficult to capture nuance, particularly with answers between 0-10%. However, respondents were rarely able to provide information to this level of detail. In one case where the respondent wanted more variation, they were asked to estimate out of 100 stones instead.

¹¹²In 2013, data collectors visited 15 villages in addition to the operational assessment conducted on the lake. These data collectors did not observe any girls who appeared to be trafficked, or appeared to be migrating for the purpose of working in the fishing industry.

¹¹³As discussed in the data coding limitations, a high level of item-nonresponse, or missing data for each question, was present. When multiple variables were combined—time of day, age of child, and day of week—the impact of not recorded data was multiplied. Thus, 9.0% (40/444) of children were of school age in Ghana (6 to 16 years old) and were observed on a weekday during Ghanaian school hours.

¹¹⁴No respondents in source communities reported traffickers intentionally murdering children to attract fish or avoid fulfilling the terms of the child’s contract.

¹¹⁵Young men’s groups did not report whether the girls who were being exploited sexually were also being trafficked for the purpose of forced labor. Other perspectives revealed that trafficked girls are sexually exploited, which is why these findings are presented in the section regarding the experiences of trafficked children.

¹¹⁶The 2013 operational assessment supports this finding with 18.2% (41/225) of trafficked children interviewed reporting there was a contract. Another 15.2% (34/225) reported there was not a contract. Due to a 66.7% rate of not recorded data, *these findings should be interpreted with caution.*

¹¹⁷Several groups noted that the money is paid specifically to the mothers, with very few singling out fathers as the primary contract holder. One of these groups was a source community men’s group fearful of implicating themselves in their child’s trafficking.

¹¹⁸The 2013 operational assessment supports this finding with 17.3% (39/225) of trafficked children interviewed who reported payment was given to a parent. Another 14.7% (33/225) of children interviewed reported they directly received payment. Due to a 65.8% rate of not recorded data, *these findings should be interpreted with caution.*

¹¹⁹At the time of data collection, the exchange rate was approximately 3 GHS to \$1 USD. Therefore, the high range of 1,000 GHS is approximately \$333.33 USD; and the most common range represents \$33.33-166.67 USD.

¹²⁰The 2013 operational assessment supports this finding with 8.9% (20/225) of trafficked children interviewed who reported a monetary payment that converted to less than 1,000 GHS (\$494.55 USD at the time of data collection) per year. Another 4.9% (11/225) reported they were paid in the form of a cow. Due to a 74.2% rate of not recorded data, *these findings should be interpreted with caution.*

¹²¹During the 2013 operational assessment, data collectors engaged in conversations with older boys who served as supervisors; and none of these supervisors mentioned that they expected to receive their own boats, or be put through school in exchange for their service.

¹²²An unusually high yield of fish.

¹²³Overbank communities are the difficult to reach settlements along the Lake Volta.



4 Conclusions and Discussion

The conclusions and discussion of the mixed methods

Roles of Children in the Fishing Industry

- The majority of children working in Lake Volta's fishing industry were 10 years old or younger, performing physically demanding, and sometimes hazardous, roles including night work. This indicates that even non-trafficked children are likely operating outside the legal safeguards Ghana has established to protect child welfare. For example, it is illegal to employ children: 1) in hazardous work¹²⁴, or work that exposes them to physical danger¹²⁵; 2) younger than 12 years old in economic activities¹²⁶; and 3) in night work.¹²⁷
- Though trafficked boys were far more visible because of their dominant labor role on Lake Volta's waters, girls were also trafficked into the fishing industry for forced labor and exploitation on shore. For example, the 2013 operational assessment found that 99.3% of children working on southern Lake Volta's waters were boys. This finding was supported by the 2015 study in which stakeholders advised that boys' work and exploitation occurred overwhelmingly on the water, whereas girls' work and exploitation occurred on the shore, in homes, at markets and in processing. The 2015 study found the boys and girls are commonly trafficked into the Lake Volta fishing industry, because they are cheap and easy to exploit.

Scale of Forced Labor Trafficking on Lake Volta

- The use of trafficked children in the fishing industry on Lake Volta is widespread. The 2013 operational assessment found that more than half (57.6%, 444/771) of children working on southern Lake Volta's waters were trafficked into forced labor.
- Although some community members noted that the prevalence decreased between 2010 and 2015, it is clear that the practice is still commonplace. Each of the fishing communities sampled during the 2015 qualitative study confirmed the presence of child trafficking. The presence of trafficking was supported by proxy data, which found that child migration to Lake Volta for the purpose of working within the fishing industry was common. Across destination communities, most respondents estimated that 60% or more of the children working in the fishing industry were born in other communities. In source communities, most respondents estimated that between 20-50% of children leave the community specifically to work in Lake Volta's fishing industry.

Conditions of and Impacts on Trafficked Boys and Girls

- Trafficked children experienced more harsh conditions than non-trafficked children, which can lead to more extreme impacts. For example, trafficked children worked longer hours—including fishing at night or in the early morning—and were assigned more intense, hazardous or difficult tasks such as diving. Trafficked children also had improper clothing—which could lead to health impacts—and shelter, which could render girls more vulnerable to sexual assault. In addition, traffickers frequently prevented children in forced labor from attending school, either because of the long hours or because their trafficker pur-

posefully brought them to work. Inability to attend school limits the vocational opportunities available to trafficked children even after their contract ends, and can be barrier to children leaving the industry while also creating an added risk of re-trafficking. Overall, these conditions impact children, with key informants citing that survivors display signs of trauma and underdeveloped social skills.

- Almost all children in the fishing industry experience violence due to the cultural practices of corporal punishment in Ghana and the unrealistic expectations of what types of work can be accomplished by children. Trafficked children were further vulnerable to physical violence, as one NGO respondent in a destination community explained: “Children are abused because the master believes that he bought them at a price and is therefore [his] right to use them as he pleased.” In addition, girls in the fishing industry were vulnerable to multiple forms of victimization. About half of the young men’s groups affirmed that traffickers use girls for sexual exploitation and forced marriage as a means of controlling the older boys.

Mechanisms of trafficking

- Most trafficking appeared to be less networked, meaning that it was perpetrated by fishermen directly rather than through an organized hierarchy in which boat owners have multiple layers of employment and exploitation. While many perpetrators may be low-income fishermen themselves, the findings suggest that fishermen do not use trafficked children merely to survive. In fact, exploiting trafficking children enabled them to send their biological children to school and provide better accommodations and clothing for their own family. Thirteen respondents provided unsolicited statements that fishermen will send their biological children to school and hire other children to work in the fishing industry. One men’s group stated, “My biological children will go to school, but the children who are working for me would not be allowed to go to school.” One male survivor described his experience as: “We were more or less like house slaves, because their own children did nothing.”
- Traffickers controlled children through violence, limiting access to food, and at times, kept older boys in their employment through sexual rewards and marriage. Barriers to children leaving their traffickers included: (1) lack of funds for transportation; (2) children do not know how to get home, especially if they were taken when they were very young; (3) traffickers will physically stop them through search parties and will then punish them for running away; and (4) fear. Survivors explained that community members will prevent trafficked children from returning home. In addition, traffickers controlled the movement of children, and children may be hidden from family members or professionals seeking to intervene. Children also feared the financial implications of leaving their trafficker if they broke their contract.
- Data collection in 2013 and 2015 found that children trafficked into the fishing industry had contractual agreements for their exploitation, which were frequently between the trafficker and the child’s parent/guardian. In the 2015 study, two to three years was the most frequently cited length of time—which would indicate that in some instances the crime may be more similar to an apprentice model rather than generational bonded labor. However, these short-term contracts may not actually be the most common form of child trafficking into Lake Volta’s fishing industry. The tenure of two to three years was followed closely by responses of 10 years and more; and several of the respondents noted that contracts are often extended and the original terms are sometimes breached by the traffickers. Additionally, some children may become stuck in a cycle of abuse. In particular, stakeholders reported that girls may not return to source communities after becoming pregnant or married while working in the fishing industry.
- It appears that victims may become perpetrators of trafficking into forced labor. Some participants in source community women’s and men’s groups revealed that they had not only consented to their children going to Lake Volta, but they themselves had experienced this victimization as children. Moreover, some child victims become adults in the fishing industry who use trafficked children for forced labor. One participant in a young men’s group revealed that he uses trafficked children to complete his work in fishing, and others reported that older victims can become supervisors who abuse younger children on the boats. As one young women’s group admitted, “We are all guilty of using children on the lake.”
- Both boys and girls who are victimized may become trapped and continue this abuse on other children. Boys—especially those who do not attend or complete school—may not have any alternative skills or access to alternative livelihoods and thereby become perpetrators themselves. Almost all key informants referred to high rates of teenage pregnancy in fishing villages. Girls who become pregnant may end up in the same situation as their own parent or guardian who gave their daughter to traffickers. Girls may also become

stuck in the destination community if they become pregnant or married, and thereby become the fishermen's wives who host children and oversee the children's work in the house or fish processing. It should be noted, however, that some survivors sought out alternative livelihoods with a few stating that they wanted to help other people who are vulnerable to trafficking so that this crime can end.

¹²⁴CA §91. Hazardous Work: Employment that poses a danger to the health, safety or morals of a person, including: (1) Going to sea, (2) Night work exceeding 8 continuous hours, (3) Mining and quarrying; Carrying heavy loads exceeding 25 KG; Manufacturing industries where chemical are produced or used; environments with excessive noise; felling of timber; Production and screening pornographic material; Work in places where machines are used; and work in places such as bars, hotels and places of entertainment where a person may be exposed to immoral behavior (LR #7, TCA §91). NOTE: Ghana does not use the ILO term "Worst Forms of Child Labor" in any legislation but their legal definition of hazardous work is commensurate with WFCL.

¹²⁵Section 58(4). A person who contravenes subsection (1) or (3) commits an offense and is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding 100 penalty units.

¹²⁶CA §89.

¹²⁷Night Work: Work between the hours of 8 p.m. and 6 a.m.

5 Recommendations

These recommendations are suggested for Ghanaian stakeholders and larger international community implementing programs; formulating policy or protocols; or conducting research related to children trafficked into forced labor.

“My problem is that this is a research work, and I am aware the results may not even come today or tomorrow, that would take some time. A lot of people come like this and nothing happens... We do all these things and nothing happens. I know it shouldn't happen today or the next day, but my suggestion is that something should happen so that we don't get frustrated. Something must surely happen.” —Social Worker

5.1 Holistic Intervention

Trafficking within the fishing industry on Lake Volta is a complex issue with a range of push and pull factors. A multidisciplinary approach, therefore, is needed to end such trafficking. Below are the two critical elements needed for holistic anti-trafficking interventions:

- **Prioritize the arrest, prosecution and conviction of perpetrators of child trafficking into forced labor and the related psychosocial support of trafficked children.** Currently on Lake Volta, labor traffickers recruit and exploit children with impunity. In fact, when communities were asked how they believed trafficking into forced labor could be stopped, one of the most frequently cited solutions was law enforcement. In particular, young adult groups emphasized that the practice of child trafficking will not end without perpetrators being arrested and held accountable under Ghanaian law. As one men's group recommended: “People should be punished to serve as a deterrent to others. And then it should be irrespective of persons, whether the person is a chief fisherman or an ordinary person.” If Ghana's laws are consistently enforced and these traffickers are unswervingly held to account, others who would plan to exploit children will be deterred.
- To prioritize the arrest, prosecution and conviction of traffickers and related psycho-social support for trafficked children, it is necessary to resource, equip and empower government agencies tasked with anti-trafficking interventions such as the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit, Department of Social Welfare (DSW) and MoGCSP. The qualitative study findings demonstrate that these agencies currently do not have the resources necessary to perform their mandate. For example, some officials clearly stated that they could not follow-up on actual reports of trafficking because of the lack of transportation. Even when government officials did follow-up, they lacked resources to respond adequately. For example, DSW lacked shelter space which led to the trafficked child running away.
- Similarly, qualitative study findings demonstrate that government agencies tasked with anti-trafficking interventions were often disempowered from prioritizing the arrest, prosecution and conviction of traffickers. Respondents described that relevant stakeholders—such as the police—were disempowered from engaging in future anti-trafficking interventions when the community responded negatively to an interven-

tion. Stakeholders must have sufficient high-level and community support in order to effectively engage in anti-trafficking efforts. This can be achieved, as one women's group in a source community expressed the beginnings of social demand for anti-trafficking interventions: "We want the Assemblyman and the police to collaborate to stop the children from getting into the fishing industry." To generate social demand and political will necessary to empower law enforcement, the findings of this study and other research can be used to expose the scale and brutality of child trafficking on Lake Volta. Where this support for law enforcement is generated and when arrests, prosecutions and convictions are prioritized, the environment of impunity can end.

- **Reduce vulnerability through increased access to education and through economic empowerment.** A frequently cited solution for ending child labor and trafficking into forced labor (*Section 3.9*) was increasing access to education, which included: increasing the demand for education; ensuring that children in remote locations have access to schooling and educating source communities on the benefits of education and devastating downstream effects of child labor at the expense of such education. School was often described as the more preferable alternative to child fishing; parents often said that instead of child migration and trafficking into fishing they wanted their children to be in school. Also cited was the need to increase access to education by eliminating the cost of school supplies.¹²⁸ As one women's group in a source community demonstrated the desire for increased access to education: "We want our children to go to school... We want you [the research team] to help us with these children so that one day they become like you."
- Stakeholders' third most frequent solution for child trafficking was economic empowerment and alternative livelihoods. Given that poverty was the primary push factor for child trafficking, economic empowerment should be deployed in tandem with other solutions to ensure child protection.

When these investments are made, and where enforcement of trafficking law and greater access to education are also prioritized, Ghana's fight to end trafficking in the fishing industry can be won.

5.2 Law Enforcement Identification and Investigation Strategies

The information gathered from this study can help inform strategies for identification and investigation of cases of child trafficking.

- **Intervene on behalf of both trafficked boys and girls in the fishing industry.** The 2013 operational assessment found that more than half (57.6%, 444/771) of children working on southern Lake Volta's waters were trafficked into forced labor. Trafficked boys and girls were found across every community in which data was collected during the 2015 qualitative study. Different intervention strategies are required for boys and girls who work in separate geographic locations. For boys, interventions on Lake Volta itself will be necessary (the operational assessment on Lake Volta which concluded that 99.6% of children on the Lake are boys). The qualitative study found that trafficked girls between the ages of 4 and 15 are also trafficked, and they experience multiple forms of victimization—some that are most likely different from boys. Based on the findings of the qualitative study, investigators may find trafficked girls in the following locations: the market, processing facilities (including houses of fishermen) and on the shore when the boats return with the fish for the girls to process. Girls may be more isolated and/or less visible. It is precisely because they may be more difficult to reach and more vulnerable that action must be taken on their behalf. Law enforcement will likely need to develop good informants in the community to identify trafficked children and also to locate parents of trafficked children. To locate trafficked girls, boys working in the fishing industry may be able to serve in this informant role along with other trafficked girls.
- **Increase routine law enforcement patrols of child movement and migration to, from and through hotspots of trafficking.** Five stakeholders in source communities noted that trafficking decreased when law enforcement officers intercepted buses of children on their way from source to destination communities, and when law enforcement intervened directly on the lake. This demonstrates the potential impact of law enforcement interventions in deterring potential traffickers. However, several noted that these activities have not continued, and recommended reinstating these protective practices.
- **Invest in training on child trafficking indicators.** Given the prevalence of trafficking into forced labor and the health and safety risks posed to these children, law enforcement agencies—especially the AHTU and the Navy—should be trained on trafficking indicators and assess any child discovered fishing during school hours or at night for potential victimization and on next steps for care and placement. As part of this train-

ing, law enforcement should be trained to look beyond familial terminology. Because many children refer to their traffickers as “father” or “mother,” it is important to conduct further screening and/or investigation to determine the nature of the relationship between the fisherman and the child.

- **Be aware of informal fostering practices that may be exploited to traffic children.** Fostering is not trafficking. However, focus groups in source and destination communities reported that fostering is a ubiquitous practice, and key stakeholders identified that trafficking can occur within the context of fostering, or can be facilitated by the normalization of child migration through legitimate fostering.
- **Target more isolated areas, especially islands.** Some stakeholders noted that prevalence of bringing children to work in the fishing industry had decreased in their community, but that the practice continued in more remote locations (often referred to as “overbank” areas). Key informants also noted that traffickers have adapted to current interventions by moving children to more geographically isolated locations to hide children from law enforcement. However, many noted that government officials lack transportation to get to fishing villages and even more so to islands, leaving trafficking in these locations unaddressed.
- **Collaborate with health workers.** In destination communities, medical clinics may be a unique place to screen girls for labor trafficking, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. One female survivor described how the trafficker sent girls trafficked for the purpose of forced labor to receive family planning services before the girls were trafficked for sexual exploitation. Health workers may also be able to identify and screen boys for trafficking.
- **Collaborate with teachers.** In destination communities, teachers may be able to identify children in the community who do not attend school, or frequently miss class.

5.3 Service Provision

Survivors of child trafficking must be provided with appropriate services by the Ghanaian government as well as other community and non-governmental stakeholders.

- **Ensure trauma-informed care is provided to survivors of trafficking.** As demonstrated in Section 3.6.6, children who work on Lake Volta experience trauma which, if not well-managed, may interfere with their overall development. Therefore, this phenomenon should not be treated simply as a labor issue and interventions should be infused with trauma-informed care. Moreover, anti-trafficking stakeholders—particularly shelters provided by the Department of Social Welfare and NGOs—should be equipped to deal with the sometimes challenging behaviors that are consistent with trauma reactions and poor social development.
- **Provide reintegration support.** As noted in sections 3.10 and Section 4, trafficked children require comprehensive reintegration support to ensure that they are not re-trafficked. This should involve parental and community leader education in both prevention of trafficking and support for returned survivors. Reintegration services should include appropriate education channels—as older children may feel uncomfortable participating in primary education with much younger students—and/or access to vocational training or economic empowerment opportunities. The second-most commonly reported service need for successful reintegration was counseling or therapy, demonstrating that it is imperative to address trauma in survivors.
- **Provide appropriate services for trafficked children.** Stakeholders noted that the service needs are not dependent on whether the victim is male or female but rather what the victim experienced. Interventions on behalf of trafficked children should have the appropriate services to address the spectrum of victimization that girls may have underwent. However, it should be noted that girls may have experienced sexual violence, sexual exploitation, forced marriage, or underage pregnancy. About half of young men’s groups affirmed that traffickers use girls for sexual exploitation and forced marriage as a means of controlling the older boys.

5.4 Areas for Further Research

The study raised additional questions for further research and exploration, and also provided some insights about how to quantitatively measure child trafficking in the future.

- **Study the Public Justice System's response to child trafficking in Lake Volta's fishing industry.** Because both victims and perpetrators are Ghanaian, and the fishing industry on Lake Volta largely provides fish for domestic consumption, this crime is indeed an internal issue that must be addressed by the Ghanaian government. The current study has examined the scale and phenomenon of trafficking into the fishing industry on Lake Volta. Further research is needed on the government's response to child trafficking on Lake Volta as well as the barriers to implementing current legal frameworks. This study should identify key gaps and provide practical recommendations on opportunities for collaboration, investment and how to leverage resources effectively in addressing the crime.
- **Conduct a quantitative study to measure the scale of girls trafficked into forced labor within the fishing industry.** This would likely require a non-parametric approach, potentially with capture-recapture, respondent-driven sampling or multi-stage cluster sampling. Researchers could design a survey instrument with key indicators for trafficking and potentially access girls at the market, in facilities or on shore when the boats come in. In order for the study to be feasible, enumerators must be Ghanaian nationals with language capacity.
- **Identify the necessary level and type of service provision to survivors.** Stakeholders should consider gathering in a multidisciplinary workgroup (comprised of government and non-government actors) to agree on standards of care for child trafficking victims; and then invest in and support both the implementation of this service model as well as the monitoring and evaluation of services to survivors. This service model could be evaluated if there is good documentation of both the services provided to survivors as well as the outcomes of those services. Regardless of whether there is an agreed-upon service model—once a sufficient cohort of survivors have completed any comprehensive service program—researchers should design an ethical study to determine the effectiveness of services and provide deeper insights on the necessary standards of care to reduce vulnerability to re-trafficking and ensure survivor well-being.
- **Study the overall health and well-being of trafficked children in comparison to non-trafficked children in the community.** While key distinctions between trafficked and non-trafficked children were revealed in the 2015 data, an in-depth study of physical health (including tropical diseases and parasites), psychosocial well-being, school attendance and pregnancy could disaggregate the impacts of victimization versus poverty in Lake Volta's fishing communities.

¹²⁸The Ghanaian Government pays capitation grant for basic education in public schools. Parents therefore don't pay fees from KG1—KG6. Though there are other PTA levies, they are minimal (around 30 GHS per year).

Appendix

Appendix A:

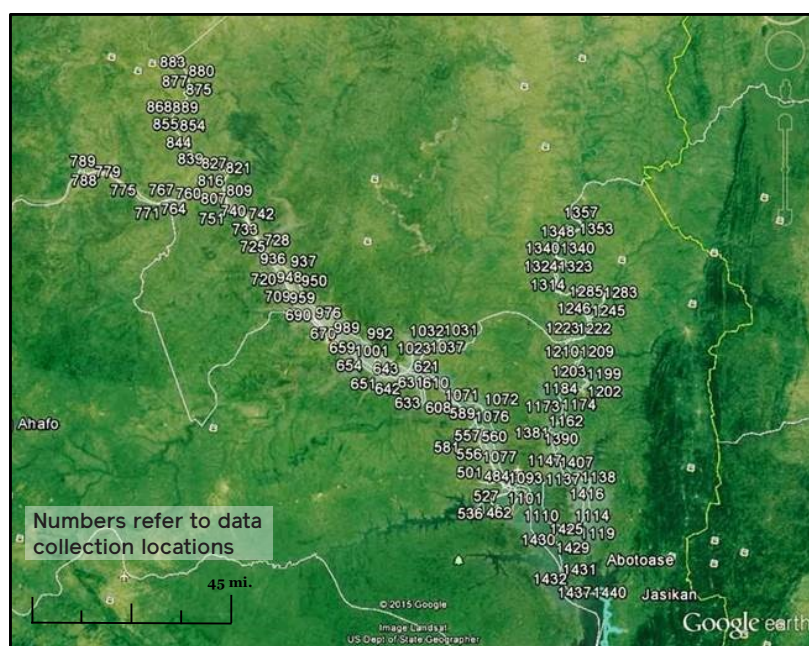
Investigative assessment on northern Lake Volta in 2014

In October of 2014, IJM conducted a second, more informal investigative assessment on Lake Volta, in the areas of the lake outside of IJM's project area. The purpose of the assessment was to document the general trends around the number of children in boats and the number of boats out on the lake in this northern region, where other NGOs were already working.

The assessment on northern Lake Volta used one of the same data collectors who interviewed children in the southern assessment, for the purposes of consistency. Using the criteria explained in the main body of this report, children were classified as “suspected” or “not trafficked” with respect to their trafficking status. As a quality assurance measure, the data collectors attempted to interview every tenth child spotted. Of the 817 children observed engaged in fishing activities, data collectors interviewed 8.0% of these children, albeit with an abbreviated form compared to the interview in the south that ascertained more details about the child's situation.

Over the course of 10 days, data collectors observed 1,187 boats (canoes). The team travelled an average distance of 134.2km per day and collected data from all visible boats from the locations depicted in figure 10. As was the pattern on southern Lake Volta, nearly all of the children suspected as trafficked were boys (98.9%). Data collectors documented six girls on the lake who met criteria for suspected trafficking. Two-thirds (66.6%) of the children observed (or interviewed) classified as trafficked, while the other third (33.4%) were classified as not trafficked. The age distribution is not available since data collectors conducted this assessment primarily through observation.

Figure 10: Area Covered in Data Collection in the Northern Region of Lake Volta





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INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION is a global organization that protects the poor from violence throughout the developing world. IJM partners with local authorities to rescue victims of violence, bring criminals to justice, restore survivors, and strengthen justice systems.

Highlighted as one of 10 non-profits "making a difference" by *U.S. News and World Report*, IJM's effective model has been recognized by the U.S. State Department, the World Economic Forum and leaders around the globe, as well as featured by *Forbes*, *Foreign Affairs*, *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, *The Phnom Penh Post*, *The Times of India*, National Public Radio and CNN, among many other outlets.

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