



**Assessing Changes in Child Trafficking  
and the Worst Forms of Child Labor  
in Sierra Leone from 2019- 2024**



UNIVERSITY OF  
LIVERPOOL



# Assessing Changes in Child Trafficking and the Worst Forms of Child Labor in Sierra Leone from 2019– 2024

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This report was co-authored by CenHTRO and CMDA–SL.

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**About Center on Human Trafficking Research and Outreach (CenHTRO)**

The Center on Human Trafficking Research & Outreach (CenHTRO) was formally established in 2019 as a collaborative, cross-disciplinary, and international research hub in the global effort to combat human trafficking. CenHTRO draws upon three decades of cumulative research and practice by its faculty in Sub-Saharan Africa. Based in the University of Georgia School of Social Work and led by founding director Dr. David Okech, the center conducts research, develops programming, and influences policies that drastically and measurably reduce human trafficking and other forms of exploitation.

**CenHTRO Aims:**

- Enhance the science of human trafficking prevalence measurement across the world.
- Implement policies and programs that protect victims, prevent trafficking, strengthen prosecution, and enhance partnerships.
- Equip the next generation of human trafficking researchers with competencies that can enhance social justice for trafficking survivors and victims.

**About Conflict Management Development Associates (CMDA-SL)**

CMDA-SL was founded in 2002, directly following the end of the decade-long civil war in Sierra Leone. Based in Freetown, CMDA conducts development, social, and policy research in Sierra Leone. They have partnered with CenHTRO since 2019 to conduct research and evaluation related to estimating the prevalence of child trafficking and child labor and evaluating prevention and protection programs. CMDA-SL provides a diverse range of research, consultancy, and capacity-building services, helping organizations and businesses enhance efficiency, improve decision-making, and strengthen their impact. Our core areas of expertise include:

1. Applied Research & Policy Analysis
2. Project & Program Evaluations
3. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) & Spatial Data Analytics
4. Environmental, Social, and Health Impact Assessments (ESHIA)
5. Data Collection, Management & Analysis
6. Capacity Building & Organizational Development
7. Management Information Systems (MIS) & Digital Solutions

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# ACRONYMS

|                |                                                                           |                   |                                                         |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>ACT</b>     | Anti-Child Trafficking                                                    | <b>TIP Office</b> | DOS Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons |
| <b>CenHTRO</b> | Center on Human Trafficking Research & Outreach                           | <b>TOT</b>        | Training of trainers                                    |
| <b>CFNs</b>    | Children's Forum Networks                                                 | <b>TVPA</b>       | Trafficking Victims Protection Act                      |
| <b>CMDA</b>    | Conflict Management Development Association                               | <b>UNDP</b>       | United Nations Development Programme                    |
| <b>CNLTPPA</b> | National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons and Similar Practices | <b>UNODC</b>      | United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime                |
| <b>CSO</b>     | Civil Society Organization                                                | <b>VPGs</b>       | Village Parenting Groups                                |
| <b>CWCs</b>    | Child Welfare Committees                                                  |                   |                                                         |
| <b>DCISL</b>   | Defence for Children International Sierra Leone                           |                   |                                                         |
| <b>DOS</b>     | US Department of State                                                    |                   |                                                         |
| <b>EA</b>      | Enumeration Area                                                          |                   |                                                         |
| <b>ECOWAS</b>  | Economic Community of West African States                                 |                   |                                                         |
| <b>FGD</b>     | Focus Group Discussion                                                    |                   |                                                         |
| <b>FSU</b>     | Family Support Unit                                                       |                   |                                                         |
| <b>GOSL</b>    | Government of Sierra Leone                                                |                   |                                                         |
| <b>IDI</b>     | In-depth Interview                                                        |                   |                                                         |
| <b>ILO</b>     | International Labor Organisation                                          |                   |                                                         |
| <b>IOM</b>     | International Organization for Migration                                  |                   |                                                         |
| <b>IRB</b>     | Institutional Review Board                                                |                   |                                                         |
| <b>KII</b>     | Key Informant Interview                                                   |                   |                                                         |
| <b>NGO</b>     | Non-governmental Organization                                             |                   |                                                         |
| <b>SDOs</b>    | Senior District Officers                                                  |                   |                                                         |
| <b>SGD</b>     | Sustainable Development Goal                                              |                   |                                                         |
| <b>TIP</b>     | Trafficking in Persons                                                    |                   |                                                         |

# KEY TERMS

## Bylaws

Bylaws are community rules that are developed and implemented by chiefdom leaders as part of the customary justice tradition. Bylaws sometimes relate to or uphold national laws, but are often contextually specific and highly linked to the community context wherein they were developed (Corradi, 2010).

## Child Labor

Work that is harmful to a child's physical and mental development, depriving children of their childhood, their potential, and their dignity. Children are considered involved in child labor if they work excessive hours for their age. That is, children below 12 years of age working in any economic activities, children aged 12–14 engaged in more than light work, and all children engaged in the worst forms of child labor (ILO Conventions 138, 182 and UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, Art 32). In addition, children aged 15–17 are considered involved in child labor if they exceed work hour limits established by the ILO (Global Estimates of Child Labor, 2024).

## Child trafficking

Any of the “worst forms of child labor,” per Article 3 of ILO Convention Number 182, including:

1. *Exposing children to any form of slavery or practice similar to slavery, including the recruitment of children in armed conflict.*
2. *Using children in prostitution.*
3. *Using children in illicit activities such as the production and trafficking of drugs.*
4. *Having children perform work that is likely to harm their health, safety, or morals, or work in hazardous conditions, which are harmful to their physical and mental development.*

The government of Sierra Leone describes prohibition of child trafficking in the Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act, 2022:

“the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be regarded as human trafficking even if this does not involve any of the specified means of exploitation;” Part V, Section 17.b

And in the Child Rights Act of 2025:

“A person, court or other authority shall take appropriate protection legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from human trafficking including the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, or the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability

or the giving or receiving of payment to obtain the consent of a person having control over a child.” Child Rights Act, 2025, Part 4, Section 2

## Coercion

“(a) Threats of serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; (b) Any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that failure to perform an act would result in serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; or (c) The abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process.” (As referenced in the Department of State [DoS] Terms and Definitions, pg. 22: Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), Section 103, Amended as 22 U.S.C. 7102.)

## Debt bondage

“The status or condition of a debtor arising from a pledge by the debtor of his or her personal services or of those of a person under his or her control as a security for debt, if the value of those services as reasonably assessed is not applied toward the liquidation of the debt or the length and nature of those services are not respectively limited and defined.” (TVPA, Section 103, Amended as 22 U.S.C. 7102.)

## Forced Labor

Labor obtained through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery (ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) ; Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 ; Forced Labor (Supplementary Measures) Recommendation, 2014 (No. 203) ), by recruiting, harboring, transporting, provisioning, or obtaining of a person. Note: The “force, fraud, or coercion” requirement does not have to be met for persons under the age of 18 for the activity to be defined as trafficking.

## Hazardous Work

The Child Rights Act, 2025 of Sierra Leone, specifies definition for hazardous work. Which states:

- “(1) *The engagement of a child in hazardous work is prohibited.*
- (2) *Hazardous work under subsection (1) constitutes work which poses danger to the health, safety or morals of a person.*
- (3) *Hazardous work includes—*
- (a) *going to sea*
  - (b) *mining and quarrying;*
  - (c) *portage of heavy loads;*
  - (d) *manufacturing industries where chemicals are produced or used;*
  - (e) *work in places where machines are used*
  - (f) *work in places such as bars, hotels and places of entertainment where a person may be exposed to immoral behaviour.”*

– Child Rights Act, 2025, Part 5, Section 36



**Human trafficking**

“The act of recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing, or obtaining a person for compelled labor or commercial sex acts through the use of force, fraud, or coercion” (United Nations, 2000). According to the UN (United Nations) Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons (Palermo Protocol), “individuals may be trafficking victims regardless of whether they once consented, participated in a crime as a direct result of being trafficked, were transported into the exploitative situation, or were simply born into a state of servitude. Despite a term that seems to connote movement, at the heart of the phenomenon of trafficking in persons are the many forms of enslavement, not the activities involved in international transportation.” (DoS Award Stipulations, pp 8–9).

**Menpikin**

Refers to the practice of informal fostering, where a child is sent to live with a relative or friend. Menpikin placements have traditionally been done to promote family bonds and to enable children to access educational and economic opportunities (Cody et al., 2024; Gale, 2008; Okech et al., 2023).

**Percentage point change**

Indicates the amount of change between two percentages (Ordway, 2022). For example, 40% at baseline – 35% at endline = 5 percentage point decrease between baseline and endline. Percentage point change is different from percent change, which indicates the rate of change (Ordway, 2022). The percentage decrease for the previous example would be calculated as  $(35-40)/40 \times 100 = -12.5\%$  (Eurostat, nd), indicating a 12.5% decrease. For the purposes of this report, we primarily use percentage point change, to ease interpretability and reduce potential for error or presentation of potentially misleading results (Ordway, 2022).

**Survivor of human trafficking**

An individual who has previously experienced human trafficking, as defined in this document, but is not currently in a trafficking situation.

**Trafficking in persons or human trafficking or modern-days slavery:**

“The act of recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing, or obtaining a person for labor, commercial sex or other services related to exploitation through the use of force, fraud, or coercion” (United Nations, 2000). Modern-day slavery encompasses, but is not limited to, movement. Therefore, people may be considered victims of human trafficking if they were born into servitude, were exploited in their hometown, were transported to the exploitative situation, previously consented to work for a trafficker, or participated in a crime as a direct result of being trafficked (United Nations, 2000).

**Victim of human trafficking**

An individual who is currently experiencing human trafficking, as defined in this document.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**This endline report describes changes in child trafficking and child labor prevalence within four districts in Sierra Leone, Kailahun, Kenema, Kono (Eastern Province), and Kambia (North Western Province), from baseline (2019) to endline (2024).**

**The executive summary will discuss key findings from quantitative and qualitative analysis, report on key recommendations, and provide a summary overview of the methodology for the overall study, including a description of the baseline, programs, and endline study phases.**

## KEY QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

### **Child Trafficking Prevalence Among Children, 5 to 17 Years Old, Measurably Reduced in All Four Study Districts Between Baseline (2019) and Endline (2024)**

Direct prevalence estimates for the population of children, 5 to 17 years old, in each study district indicate a large reduction in the number of children estimated to experience child trafficking between baseline and endline. Kono had the largest decrease in child trafficking from 76,824 children at baseline to 24,541 children at endline (67% decrease), Kambia had a decrease from 39,155 children at baseline to 21,575 children at endline (45% decrease), Kenema saw a decrease from 51,949 children at baseline to 29,563 children at endline (43% decrease), and Kailahun had a decrease from 60,866 children at baseline to 43,867 children at endline (28% decrease).

Overall, within the district populations of children, 5 to 17 years old, prevalence rates decreased by between 9 and 31 percentage points per district. The prevalence rate in Kono decreased by 31 percentage points from 46% (rounded) at baseline to 15% at endline, Kambia saw a decrease of 15 percentage points from 34% (rounded) at baseline to 18% at endline, Kenema had an 11 percentage point decrease from 27% (rounded) at baseline to 15% at endline, and Kailahun saw a decrease of 9 percentage points from 33% at baseline to 24% at endline.

*To date, this is the only large-scale report that documents measurable reductions in child trafficking across project implementation sites.*

### **Largest Reductions in Child Trafficking Reports among Surveyed Households were Primarily within Non-Hazardous Labor Sectors. Child Trafficking Events within Hazardous Labor Sectors had Small Changes between Baseline and Endline**

Within surveyed households, the bulk of reductions in child trafficking reports were in non-hazardous labor sectors, especially agriculture, domestic work and trading and vending. For example, reports of child trafficking in agriculture and domestic work dropped by 56 percentage points in Kambia, (from 76% at baseline, 20% at endline for agriculture and from 96%, rounded, at baseline to 39% at endline for domestic work), reports of child trafficking in trading and vending reduced by 23 percentage points in Kailahun (from 32% at baseline to 9% at endline). Among hazardous labor sectors, the largest percentage point changes were in portering and fishing, however, only some districts indicated reductions, while the others indicated increases in these and other hazardous labor sectors. For example, Kambia had an 11 percentage point decrease in portering (13% (rounded) at baseline to 24% at endline), but Kenema had an 11 percentage point increase (20% at baseline to 31% at endline).

### **Dangerous Labor Conditions (e.g., Exposure to Extreme Heat) Where Children Experienced Trafficking Increased in Most Districts between Baseline and Endline**

Several dangerous working conditions were reported to have increased between baseline and endline, across districts. Kono reported the largest increase in children reporting work in dangerous conditions, specifically in carrying heavy loads (35 percentage point increase), exposure to extreme cold, heat, or humidity (38 percentage point increase), and exposure to dust, fumes, or gas (up by 35 percentage points). Kailahun also reported large increases in reporting of exposure to dust, fumes, or gas (increase by 33 percentage points), as well as exposure to loud noise (up by 26 percentage points) and reports of children operating heavy machinery (increase by 21 percentage points). Kambia and Kenema saw the largest increases in exposure to dust, fumes, or gas (up by 23 percentage points in Kambia and 14 percentage points in Kenema) and exposure to load noise (12 percentage point increase in Kambia and 9 percentage point increase in Kenema).

The largest reductions between baseline and endline in dangerous labor conditions were in carrying heavy loads, which had decreases of between 5 and 24 percentage points in three districts, Kambia, Kenema, and Kailahun. In addition, Kambia had a small decrease in exposure to extreme cold, heat, or humidity (a decrease of 4 percentage points), and Kenema had a small decrease in reports of operating heavy machinery or working with dangerous tools (a decrease of 2 percentage points).

## **Overall Experiences of Force, Fraud and Coercion Among Children Who Experienced Trafficking Greatly Reduced Between Baseline and Endline Across All Study Districts**

In comparing the experiences of force, fraud, and coercion among children who experienced child trafficking in the surveyed households, significant reductions were seen in all study districts. The largest reductions were in reports of children “being forced to work for someone who is not a member of their household”: Kono had a 25 percentage point decrease, and Kailahun indicated a 13 percentage point decrease. The next largest reductions were in “worked outside of the home for little or no wages,” which had a 13 percentage point decrease in Kambia and an 11 percentage point decrease in Kono. Reports of children being “made to work to pay school fees” also decreased in Kono by 11 percentage points and by 10 percentage points in Kenema.

There was only one increase, which was larger than 5 percentage points different from endline, this was in Kailahun, which reported a 7 percentage point increase in children reporting work “outside of the home for little to no wages.”

### **Child Labor Prevalence Reduced in Kono, but Increased in Kailahun, Kenema and Kambia.**

Prevalence rates for child labor, which encompasses child trafficking but also includes other forms of labor exploitation, increased by 11 to 15 percentage points from baseline to endline among children, 5 to 17 years old, in three of the study districts. In Kambia, the child labor rate rose by 15 percentage points from 40% at baseline to 55% at endline, Kenema saw a 12 percentage point increase from 29% (rounded) at baseline to 41% at endline and Kailahun had an 11 percentage point increase from 35% (rounded) at baseline to 46% (rounded) at endline. Kono had an 11 percentage point decrease from 52% at baseline to 41% at baseline.

Among children in the study districts, Kenema had the largest percent increase, 43%, between point estimates, 56,197 children at baseline compared to 80,471 children endline. Kambia had an increase of 37% between point estimates at baseline, 46,794 children, and endline, 64,315 children. Kailahun had an increase of 32%, from between 64,265 children at baseline to 84,953 children at endline. Estimates in Kono indicate a 21% decrease in child labor prevalence from 88,095 children at baseline to 69,394 children at endline.

### **Excessive Working Hours among Children who Experienced Child Labor Drastically Reduced Across All Study Districts**

Overall, within all study districts, there was a significant reduction in reports of excessive hours worked among children who had experienced child labor. When comparing reports of excessive hours between

the three age groups, younger children (5 to 11 years old) had the largest reductions, between 29 to 48 percentage points, in all districts, middle children (12 to 14 years old) also reported large reductions of between 13 to 27 percentage points, in three districts (Kenema, Kono and Kambia). However, in three districts (Kailahun, Kenema and Kambia), older children (15 to 17 years old) who had experienced child labor reported an increase in engaging in excessive working hours with an 11 to 12 percentage point increase. In Kailahun, among 12–14 year old children who experienced child labor there was an increase in excessive work hours by 11 percentage points from baseline to endline. Generally, the results indicate a reversal of the situation at baseline, where younger children who had experienced child labor were more often working excessive hours compared with older children.

## **KEY QUALITATIVE FINDINGS**

### **Increased Awareness about Recently Revised National Anti-Trafficking Laws**

Overall, respondents suggested that since 2019, there has been a notable increase in awareness and support for anti-trafficking policy initiatives (the Anti-Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act (2022), and the Child Rights Act (2022) at the national level. Also, key informants and adult community members reported generally positive perceptions of new national legislation and national-level initiatives addressing child trafficking. Stakeholders indicated that overall, the new laws were perceived as contributing to reductions in child trafficking and are perceived as being useful for providing guidance intended to protect children from trafficking, abuse, and other forms of exploitation. Respondents described hearing about anti-trafficking initiatives through broad-based awareness raising campaigns (e.g., radio, television, and plays) as well as through training opportunities.

### **Impact on Actions and Practices to Respond to Child Trafficking from Adoption of Strengthened Anti-Trafficking Policies and Initiatives**

#### *Reduced number of child trafficking cases*

Stakeholders noted a reduction in child trafficking cases and an increase in prosecutions. They attributed this reduction to an increase in data sharing and coordination between stakeholders. Some respondents also noted an increase in sharing responsibilities, leading to more timely responses to suspected trafficking cases.

#### *Survivor-centered and enabling collaboration*

Community members generally perceived the laws, such as the 2022 national anti-trafficking law and the Child Rights Act, as having a positive impact because they were more survivor-centered and focused on strengthening collaboration. For example, respondents

noted that the anti-trafficking law provided for victim compensation through restitution from the perpetrator. Some respondents felt that the new law supported increased collaboration (e.g., information sharing) and coordination of services and supports for human trafficking survivors. Generally, respondents emphasized the critical importance of collaboration as the “umbrella for our gains in the fight against trafficking”.

### **Effectiveness and Impact of New Local Anti-Child Trafficking (ACT) Bylaws**

According to respondents, ACT bylaws were working to reduce child trafficking and child labor. The ACT bylaws were said to bring increased awareness to the challenges that children face and support the development of a sense of community caring for children, especially those who are living in menpikin placements. Some respondents described how the ACT bylaws have changed the way that families approach sending children to menpikin placements, such as through keeping them with family rather than sending to a stranger and increasing the awareness about the importance of monitoring placements to make sure that children are cared for and sent to school. Respondents also described how the ACT bylaws were important for addressing gender-based violence and generally reducing children’s suffering.

#### *Impact on Children’s Lives*

Generally, respondents reported a positive impact on children’s lives in that the ACT bylaws were seen as helpful to protect access to education, increase community accountability for child well-being, and increase advocacy and empowerment opportunities for youth.

- **Protection For Education Access and Against Forced Marriage:** Youth respondents described ACT bylaws related to strengthening education access and against forced marriage as being particularly important for supporting youth well-being and enabling young people to stay in school.
- **Increasing Community Accountability for Monitoring Menpikin Placements:** Several youth respondents described how ACT bylaws increased community accountability, such as by increasing the accountability of menpikin foster parents, strengthening judicial and law enforcement involvement in monitoring child fostering placements, and improving the treatment of children in menpikin placements.
- **Potential for Increased Agency and Empowerment for Children and Youth:** Youth respondents described how the ACT bylaws could have a positive impact on youth agency and empowerment. For example, they discussed the importance of including children in the reporting process, as this was said to increase their agency. Some young people report-

ed that the ACT bylaws promoted a positive shift towards encouraging children to report exploitation or abuse to the police and be taken seriously. Further, youth respondents discussed that the ACT bylaws had the potential to increase their voice and support them in being heard in decision-making processes, which, they felt, could have a positive impact on their empowerment.

### **Remaining Challenges to Child Trafficking Prevention and Response**

Although respondents described many positive aspirations related to new anti-trafficking laws and initiatives, they highlighted several key implementation challenges and policy gaps. Respondents cited: 1) remaining gaps in collaboration across systems which were said to be tied to insufficient resources, 2) concerns that the anti-human trafficking act of 2022 was seen as not directly addressing child trafficking, 3) anti-trafficking initiatives not seen as doing enough to address root causes of trafficking (poverty), and 4) remaining barriers to prosecution due to hesitancy to pursue formal process for redress and perceptions that sexual abuse cases are prioritized over child trafficking cases. In addition, some youth respondents described that they often felt their voice was not heard or taken seriously, indicating that this could be a barrier to effective prevention and response efforts.

- **Remaining Gaps in Collaboration between Local, Regional, and National stakeholders Tied to Insufficient Resources.** Stakeholders described several potential gaps in collaboration, especially between local leaders and community groups, and regional/ National level agencies and stakeholders. Some respondents also described a need for local and district-level stakeholders to have more resources and autonomy for implementing anti-trafficking policies and offering services for survivors. Despite a perceived increase in prosecutions, stakeholders indicated that convictions remain low. Low rates of convictions were linked to a lack of cases being brought to the judiciary through law enforcement, as well as continued difficulties with supporting witnesses to testify (such as through the provision of safe housing). Several youth respondents expressed concerns regarding limited resources available for implementation of ACT bylaws, in particular, monitoring menpikin placements by child welfare committee members, as well as parents.
- **Some perceived the Anti-Human Trafficking Act of 2022 as Not Directly Addressing Child Trafficking or Not Including Strong Enough Punishments for Trafficking.** Some stakeholders suggested that child trafficking wasn’t specifically included in the 2022 Anti-Trafficking Act and implied that this might impact how the act is viewed in terms of specifically addressing child trafficking. However, many stake-



holders described the 2022 Act as being complementary to other laws such as the Child Rights Act, which work together to address child trafficking. Some respondents suggested that the law be enhanced with stronger punishments for people engaging in child trafficking.

- **Anti-trafficking Initiatives are Sometimes Viewed as Not Doing Enough to Address the Root Causes of Trafficking.** Respondents described how root causes, such as poverty, as described above, may hinder the implementation of anti-trafficking initiatives. Some respondents shared that financial hardships make it difficult to comply with laws related to child labor and child trafficking, especially as they relate to discouragement from sending children to live in menpikin placements. Echoing adult respondents, some young people described concerns that it may be difficult to implement anti-child trafficking bylaws within a context where there is economic hardship, such that parents may feel they have few options but to send their child to live elsewhere.
- **Hesitancy to Report and Pursue Cases of Child Trafficking Remains a Barrier to Prosecution.** Respondents described how community members are often hesitant to report cases of child trafficking, especially when the situation involves a relative. As observed by some KII respondents, community hesitancy to report can often hinder response, due to a compromise between family and neighbors being prioritized over seeking a formal response to a situation of child exploitation. Some respondents also described frustration with lack of enforcement of laws, such as when reporting a case of child trafficking and seeing no action from the local leaders or authorities. Relatedly, some respondents indicated that child trafficking is sometimes not considered as serious as sexual abuse or other crimes. Which they implied could make it difficult for a child trafficking case to be brought through the justice process. A few community members expressed concerns that anti-child trafficking and child rights laws, which uphold children's and women's rights, may be disruptive to the traditional order. Thus, some communities' hesitancy to report cases of child trafficking may be related to negative perceptions about or misunderstandings of rights-based laws.
- **Youth Experiencing a Lack of Agency.** Although young people often described feeling that ACT bylaws and other children's legislation could have a positive impact on their agency and empowerment, several youth respondents described that they often felt ignored and unheard because they are youth. They implied that the limitation of voices and agency of young people may stifle the improvement, efficiency, and enforcement of the anti-trafficking laws and may negatively impact youth safety.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

**This section presents a summary of key recommendations organized around the “4 P’s” for trafficking response: Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, and Partnership. In addition, recommendations related to sustainability for anti-trafficking initiatives are summarized. Recommendations from stakeholders who participated in this study were integrated with recommendations from CenHTRO, CMDA, and implementing partners.**

### PREVENTION

#### **Continue Investments in Broad-Based Sensitization and Awareness Raising**

Respondents recommended greater and sustained investments in broad-based sensitization and awareness raising by government agencies and community structures (e.g., schools) regarding what constitutes child trafficking and related factors. Respondents indicated that effective strategies could include simplifying and translating anti-human trafficking messages (including policies and laws) into local languages/dialects, and using local radios, billboards, posters, and plays to promote anti-child trafficking messages.

#### **Increase Targeted Awareness Raising to Address Child Labor and Hazardous Working Conditions**

The endline results from this study indicate that there have been decreases in child trafficking, especially within non-hazardous settings, such as domestic work and agriculture; however, there appears to have been increases in child labor in some study districts. Therefore, we recommend increasing attention during awareness-raising activities to children engaged in working in dangerous conditions (extreme heat), in hazardous labor sectors (e.g., portering), or engaged in work that is detrimental to their well-being, in addition to continuing to provide information about potential risks of menpikin placements. Young people also wanted to see increased efforts to end to child labor, especially children being involved in hazardous activities, like mining.

#### **Alleviate Poverty and Address Rural-Urban Inequities**

Many community members and key informants who participated in this study recommended that the government address poverty through expanding development projects, social welfare programs, and micro-credits for business start-up and support with farming inputs and equip-



ment. Related to this, some respondents recommended that more training centers and vocational opportunities be made available to families, especially in rural communities. Youth respondents recommended more investments in centers for youth, where young people could have access to a range of services and programs within or near their home communities.

### **Strengthen Buy-in and Community Support for Human Rights, Especially the Rights of Children and Women**

Given the finding that hesitancy to report about child trafficking within communities may come in part from distrust in or misperceptions about rights-based approaches to addressing child trafficking, we recommend creating community spaces to discuss and address concerns related to human rights. One approach that may be beneficial could be to foster and facilitate inter-generational community dialogues about human rights, focused on building understanding about the aims for human rights, and to mitigate myths that question the validity of children's and women's rights.

## **PROTECTION**

### **Scale-Up ACT Bylaws to All Districts in Sierra Leone**

ACT bylaws developed in the study districts were identified by respondents as effective in increasing awareness about child trafficking and driving reductions in the prevalence of child trafficking, especially for child trafficking in domestic work and agriculture, typically linked to exploitative menpikin placements. Therefore, we recommend that the community-led process for development of contextually relevant ACT bylaws be replicated and scaled-up to all districts in Sierra Leone.

### **Continue to Support Anti-Trafficking Training Initiatives.**

Continue to advance training on anti-trafficking policies and initiatives for justice and social services stakeholders, as well as community leaders and advocacy groups. Respondents recommended increased investments in training and capacity building among child protection actors to build on progress made in the past 5 years, such as through implementing a system where resources and logistical support are provided for frontline agencies and personnel to enhance their effectiveness in providing services for and protecting child trafficking victims.

### **Increased Resource Allocation for Implementation of Anti-trafficking Laws**

Implementors recommended an increase in allocation of resources to ensure effective enforcement of ACT bylaws and other anti-trafficking laws, particularly in rural areas. For example, respondents recommended adequately funding and resourcing systems and processes for parents, community members, and key stakeholders to monitor

the well-being of menpikin children who are placed in informal foster care. Providing ongoing training about child trafficking response for community stakeholders, including leaders, advocacy groups, and children's clubs, was also recommended. Some young people recommended that a child welfare committee be established in every community, so that young people can feel safer within their community.

### **Provide Safe Homes and Recovery Centers for Child Trafficking Survivors**

Respondents recommended the establishment of safe homes and recovery centers throughout Sierra Leone, as well as increased provision of resources for child protection. There were also recommendations to increase access to comprehensive psychosocial support and trauma-informed care for survivors within existing recovery centers.

### **Increase Investment in Well-being and Sustainment for Survivors and Vulnerable Families**

Support sustainable access to livelihood support for families and survivors. Findings from the PARC-TIP program evaluation indicated that survivors benefit from long-term support for their well-being and sustainability, and families benefit from access to livelihood support. We recommend increasing investments in survivor well-being, such as through expanding access to the survivor trust fund.

### **Increase Children and Youth's Participation, Agency, and Empowerment**

Young people interviewed for this study indicated that the ACT bylaws had the potential to increase children's agency, especially in terms of empowering children to report and seek help when they are in an exploitative situation. Young people also recommended that children and youth be included in decision-making and that there should be more recognition of the youth perspectives related to the development and implementation of laws intended to protect children. Therefore, we recommend that stakeholders develop standardized processes and mechanisms for children and youth to report experiences of exploitation and to regularly participate in decision-making with communities and households.

## **PROSECUTION**

### **Increase Resources for Justice**

Future initiatives should address systemic barriers within the judicial system by ensuring sufficient resources, such as personnel, training, and logistical support, are available. Several respondents recommended providing agencies responsible for prosecution (mainly the courts, police, and family support units) with needed resources and logistical support to make their work as effective as possible, such as by establishing a fund at the district

level, which could be used to respond to child trafficking cases.

### **Address Corruption and Reduce Compromise of Justice**

Young people emphasized the importance of addressing potential for corruption or social influence, which may lead to not formally addressing child trafficking cases. They also suggested that enforcement of laws that aim to support safety and well-being for children should be prioritized over personal compromises sometimes made between family members and justice officials.

### **Standardize ACT Training for Justice Stakeholders**

Regular training for justice stakeholders, including police personnel who investigate trafficking offenses and paralegals who provide legal aid, was recommended to ensure that officers implement the highest professional standards where cases are not compromised. Training in engagement with survivors during the justice process and for understanding how to prosecute trafficking crimes was noted as being of critical importance.

## **PARTNERSHIP**

### **Foster Stronger Multi-Sectoral Collaboration**

There was a call for greater collaboration and coordination between law enforcement, social services, and community-based structures at the local, regional, and national levels. Stakeholders recommended having regular (monthly) multi-stakeholder meetings, in which stakeholders reflect on and address child trafficking and other child protection-related issues, were suggested as a major means to enhance coordination and collaboration.

### **Clearly Define Roles and Promote Teamwork Between Stakeholders**

Develop shared understandings of the roles that various stakeholders have in anti-trafficking work. Encourage diverse stakeholders, including senior district officers (SDOs), child welfare committees (CWCs), children's groups (e.g., Children's Forum Network and School clubs), and local chiefs, to improve coordination and consistency in anti-child trafficking initiatives across districts. Some respondents indicated that there was a need to promote teamwork between governmental, NGOs, and community-based organizations.

## **SUSTAINABILITY**

### **Increase Community and GoSL Ownership of Anti-Trafficking Initiatives**

Initiatives and programs primarily facilitated by NGOs

and INGOs could be reorganized under the purview of community and GoSL stakeholders. NGOs and INGOs that work on Anti-Trafficking initiatives should have a transparent sustainability plan for programs developed in collaboration with local and government stakeholders.

### **Support Community Response Structures**

Stakeholders recommended continued investment in supporting and empowering community structures, especially among youth and adult advocacy groups, such as CWCs and VPGs, engaged in anti-child trafficking sensitization to take local ownership of ongoing effort and program activities. Continue training of existing community structures (e.g., CWCs) and training new groups in unserved communities to empower local structures and enhance sustainability. Providing members of the local structures (including CWC and VPG) with uniforms and other relevant tools could help with their empowerment and capacity to engage with communities.

## **METHODS SUMMARY**

**The overall aim of this multi-year, mixed-methods study was to reduce the prevalence of child trafficking and child labor. There were three interconnected phases for the overall study: 1) Baseline, 2) Program Implementation and Monitoring, and 3) Endline and Final Evaluation.**

## **BASELINE AND PREVALENCE**

In the first phase, the baseline prevalence of child trafficking and child labor within the study districts was estimated for 2019–2020 in Kailahun, Keneba, and Kono (Okech et al., 2022) and 2020–2021 in Kambia (Okech et al., 2023). In addition to measuring prevalence, baseline data were analyzed to report on types of child trafficking and child labor, labor sectors where children experience child trafficking and child labor, experiences of force, fraud, and coercion among children who had experienced child trafficking and child labor, and characteristics of children who experienced child trafficking and child labor. During the baseline phase, qualitative interviews (with adult survivors of child trafficking, parents of children who had experienced trafficking, and key informants) and focus groups (with community members and anti-trafficking taskforce members) were conducted to understand the context of child trafficking and child labor. We used the data collected to identify and understand the extent and context of child trafficking and child labor in the study districts and to identify gaps in services and policies that may have hindered

effective prevention and response. The evidence collected was then used to develop and facilitate phase 2, the program implementation phase.

## PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION AND CONTINUOUS PROCESS EVALUATION

Building on evidence collected during the baseline (phase 1), the program's phase involved extensive collaboration with implementing partners and stakeholders through the two major projects: 1) Prevention and Response to Child Trafficking in Persons (PARC-TIP) Program and 2) Prosecution Project to Counter Child Trafficking and Exploitation in Sierra Leone. Programs were multi-sectoral and multi-level, typically focusing on strategies to support increased coordination of and investment in anti-child trafficking initiatives (see Okech et al, (2024b). Overall the primary aims for programs were to: 1) support strengthening and development of ACT policies for improved and coordinated justice response at the National, district and community level, 2) increase community and stakeholder awareness about child trafficking and ACT policies, 3) increase access to training and support for stakeholders to improve capacity to respond to and prevent child trafficking (such as through enforcement of laws, and having access to reporting tools) and 4) to improve services for survivors through building capacity for adoption of trauma-informed practices and strengthening access to livelihood support to promote sustainability for survivors and their families.

- **PARC-TIP Program.** CenHTRO partnered with WHI to implement the PARC-TIP which ran between October 2021 – March 2024 (CenHTRO, n.d.). PARC-TIP encompassed two components: 1) the Survivor Project which enhanced survivor protection and support through provision of psychosocial, community and justice services and 2) the Community Project which targeting community awareness initiatives to strengthen knowledge about child trafficking and enhance collaboration for ACT policy implementation, such as through development of ACT bylaws (CenHTRO, n.d.).
- **Prosecution Project to Counter Child Trafficking and Exploitation in Sierra Leone.** CenHTRO partnered with UNODC to strengthen the justice response and enhance capacity for investigating human trafficking cases and prosecuting perpetrators through engaging with law enforcement officers and justice stakeholders (CenHTRO, n.d.). The UNODC Prosecution Project was implemented starting in April 2022 and ran through March 2024 (CenHTRO, n.d.). The program focused on conducting needs assessments and targeted trainings to address gaps in justice stakeholders' knowledge about implementation of anti-human trafficking laws, especially about prosecution of human trafficking crimes. The program utilized a 'train the trainers' (ToT) model whereby law enforcement leaders and judges were engaged in-

depth trainings, which they then used to train their own staff and justice colleagues (CenHTRO, n.d.).

Programs were evaluated at midline and endline. Midline evaluation focused on the implementation process, benchmarks towards reaching goals, and an assessment of the various project components to explore what could be added or removed.

## ENDLINE AND FINAL EVALUATION

Data for the endline phase were collected from 2023 to 2024 in all study districts. Replicating quantitative methodology from the baseline studies (Okech et al., 2022, 2023), the quantitative survey and prevalence estimation methods used for this endline study employed a two-stage stratified sampling strategy for direct estimation among households in study districts with children between the ages of 5 to 17 years old. Across the four study districts, a total of 4,131 households were surveyed using probabilistic random sampling to ensure representativeness. In Kailahun, 885 households were surveyed with 2,205 children aged 5 to 17. In Kambia, 1,059 households with 2,622 children included. Kenema had the largest survey sample, with 1,238 households and 2,914 household members who were 5 to 17 year old children. Kono had 949 households surveyed with 2,089 children within the surveyed households.

Qualitative data were also collected with the aim of capturing people's perspectives about and experiences with community and government responses to child trafficking. During the endline phase, interviews were conducted with key informants (n=29) who shared their views about the national and local response to child trafficking. In addition, a total of 36 focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with diverse stakeholder groups to strengthen understanding about people's views on recent anti-child trafficking initiatives and recommendations they have for future initiatives to address child trafficking. Children who were involved with school-based children's clubs (n=8 FGDs) and youth who were members of Children's Forum Networks (n=4 FGDs) were engaged in focus group discussions as well as community members (n=16 FGDs) and adult advocacy groups (such as village parent groups and child welfare committees, n=8 FGDs).

The final evaluation report indicated that programs were largely successful in supporting development of stronger anti-child trafficking policies at the national and community level (e.g. ACT bylaw development), facilitating improved coordination between anti-child trafficking stakeholders within study districts, and improving services for child trafficking survivors to support well-being and promote sustainability (CenHTRO, n.d.; Jalloh et al., 2024).

# INTRODUCTION

This report presents endline results from a 5-year research and programming intervention study designed to estimate and reduce the prevalence of child trafficking and child labor in Sierra Leone. Child Trafficking takes place when a child is recruited, transported, harbored or received for the purposes of exploitation (Cockbain, & Oliver, 2019; Okech et al., 2018; UN, 2000). 3.3 million children experience trafficking and forced labor in agriculture, mining, domestic work and sexual exploitation (ILO, 2022). Sierra Leone, a country in West Africa, has identified child trafficking as a problem of national concern (Balch et al., 2024; Okech et al., 2024). Sierra Leonean stakeholders engaged with CenHTRO to estimate prevalence and understand the context of child trafficking (Okech, et al. 2022).

In 2019, CenHTRO [formerly known as the African Programming and Research Institute to End Slavery (APRIES)] in partnership with CMDA-SL and the ResilientAfrica Network (RAN), conducted baseline studies within three districts in the Eastern Province; Kailahun, Kono and Kenema (Okech, et al., 2022) and one district in the North Western Province, Kambia in 2020 (Okech, et al., 2023). The aim of the baseline studies was to estimate the prevalence of child trafficking and the worst forms of child labor within the study districts. The baseline study also included a rigorous qualitative component to understand the context for child trafficking as well as gather community perspectives about the issue.

This endline study replicates the quantitative survey design of the baseline study (Okech et al., 2022; 2023) to estimate changes in prevalence of child trafficking and the worst forms of child labor in the 4 districts since 2019. Qualitative data were also collected to gather community perceptions about changes in child trafficking and child labor prevalence and perspectives about the effectiveness of anti-trafficking policies and interventions adopted within the 5-year study period.

## CenHTRO Anti-Human Trafficking Research and Programming in Sierra Leone

The CenHTRO research and programming initiative in Sierra Leone, funded by the U.S. Department of State Program to End Modern Slavery (PEMS), was a multi-pronged study that aimed to understand and address child trafficking and child labor. The initiative included a research arm, which conducted baseline studies and this endline research. The research arm focused on building capacity to estimate the prevalence of child trafficking and child labor and understand the context for child trafficking, in addition to identifying key service and policy gaps related to child trafficking prevention and response efforts. The programming arm included multi-level intervention projects that aimed to impact change (through reductions in child trafficking and child labor) at the systems, community, and individual levels. Through close collaboration with implementors, stakeholders, and communities, the program was able to strengthen shelter services for children who had experienced or been at risk of experiencing child trafficking, support development of policies and guidelines to address and respond to child trafficking at the national, district, and community levels, and generally strengthen awareness about child trafficking prevalence, risks and prevention strategies.

### **BASELINE RESEARCH OVERVIEW**

CenHTRO [through its former APRIES initiative] in partnership with its Sierra Leonean research partners, CMDA and the Resilient Africa Network, conducted a baseline study in the Eastern Province, Sierra Leone between 2019 and 2020 (Okech et al., 2022).

Data were collected, in Kailahun, Kenema and Kono (three districts in the Eastern Province) including: 3,070



household surveys, and qualitative interviews conducted with 23 young people (18 to 25 year olds) who had experienced child trafficking, 17 parents/guardians of young people who had experienced child trafficking, and 15 key informants (including governmental officials, NGO staff, Child Protection Officers, and community leaders, such as paramount chiefs). In addition, 23 focus group discussions were held with community members, and 1 focus group discussion was conducted with the National Anti-Trafficking Taskforce.

Kambia district (Western Province) baseline data were collected in 2020 in partnership with CMDA (Okech, et al., 2023). In Kambia, 1,008 households were surveyed, and qualitative interviews were conducted with 16 stakeholders including: 7 young adults (18 to 25 year olds) who had experienced child trafficking, 7 parents/guardians of young people who had experienced child trafficking, and 2 key informants who had professional knowledge about the problem of child trafficking in Sierra Leone. Focus group discussions with 4 groups of community members were also conducted.

## SELECTED KEY FINDINGS FROM BASELINE RESEARCH

- We estimated the prevalence of child trafficking among children, ages 5 to 17, in the study districts in 2019 was 45.7% (76,823) in Kono, 32.9% (60,866) in Kailahun, 26.6% (51,948) in Kenema, and 33.52% (39,155 children) in Kambia (2020).
- Child labor prevalence was estimated to be 52.3% (88,095) in Kono, 34.7% (64,265) in Kailahun, 40.06% (46,794) in Kambia and 28.8% (56,197) in Kenema.
- Across the Eastern Province, according to the household survey, 19.26% of children who experienced child trafficking were reported as experiencing force, fraud, or coercion while being trafficked. In Kambia, 61.29% (399 out of 651 children) who experienced trafficking reported experiencing at least one type of force, fraud, or coercion. Among this group, 174 experienced more than one form of force, fraud, or coercion.
- Survivors and parents who were interviewed reported they were subjected to several methods used by traffickers to keep them in the situation of exploitation, including violence, abusive relationships, isolation, denial of basic needs, and psychological manipulation.
- Leaving or exiting the trafficking situation by getting help from family was most often reported among survivors interviewed in the baseline studies. Very few survivors and parents received help to exit from authorities (such as law enforcement).
- Survivors in all study districts reported that they had unaddressed needs post-trafficking, which could increase their vulnerability to re-trafficking or exploitation.

## CENHTRO SIERRA LEONE PROGRAMS OVERVIEW

Following rigorous baseline studies in 2019 and 2020, CenHTRO collaborated with World Hope International (WHI) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), as well as relevant structures at national, district, chiefdom and community levels to strengthen prevention and response efforts in addressing child trafficking with an overall aim to reduce the prevalence of child trafficking (CenHTRO, n.d). This section reports on key results from a final program evaluation conducted by CMDA (Jalloh et al., 2024).

### *PARC-TIP Program*

CenHTRO partnered with WHI to implement the PARC-TIP (Prevention and Response to Child Trafficking in Persons) which ran between October 2021 and March 2024 (CenHTRO, n.d.). PARC-TIP encompassed two components: 1) the Survivor Project [a program to enhance survivor protection and support through provision of psychosocial, community, and justice services] and 2) the Community Project [a program targeting community awareness about child trafficking and collaborating to enhance anti-trafficking policy implementation] (CenHTRO, n.d). The overall program had three primary objectives 1: to strengthen the justice process for child trafficking survivors, through collaborating with national and local leaders to establish and harmonize anti-child trafficking (ACT) laws and through provision of legal aid services to child trafficking survivors, 2: to provide rehabilitation and protection of child trafficking survivors such as through provision of mental health, social support, and shelter services, and 3: to collaborate with community stakeholders (including community leaders, members and school-based outreach) to raise awareness and advocate for community-based interventions to address child trafficking (CenHTRO, n.d; Jalloh et al., 2024).

### *PARC-TIP Survivor Project*

WHI provided shelter, case management, and support services for children who were survivors of child trafficking through their Recovery Center based in Freetown, between October 2021 and March 2024 (CenHTRO, n.d). Children admitted to the recovery center received a needs assessment to identify social, psychological, or medical needs. They were encouraged to participate in group educational opportunities, life skills training, and counseling sessions. The length of time that children lived in the recovery center varied by the individual child, with some children staying for only a few months and others residing in the center for up to 1 year. Following completion of the individualized program, children were supported to unify with their families or to reintegrate into the community (CenHTRO, n.d).

During the reintegration process, WHI conducted safety assessments and offered additional follow-up support

after the children left the recovery center. For example, when child survivors' families indicated a financial need, they were provided with a reintegration package, which included provision for income-generating activities to support sustainability for survivors and their families. WHI also provided legal aid support, by supporting the investigation process and advocating for increasing child survivors' access to justice (CenHTRO, n.d). Through the survivor project, WHI, in partnership with CenHTRO, also provided training to district-level service providers, including social workers and police officers, to enhance their capacity to support children who are survivors of child trafficking (CenHTRO, n.d).

#### *PARC-TIP Community Project.*

The PARC-TIP community project aimed to increase awareness about child trafficking, specifically the potential for menpikin [informal foster placements] to become exploitative (CenHTRO, n.d). The project centered around developing partnerships with a wide range of partners, including: community members (such as children's school clubs and parents' groups), local leaders (paramount chiefs, religious leaders), government ministry officials and staff, NGO and INGO officials and staff. During the project period, WHI coordinated with the local government and community to develop harmonized ACT bylaws [community-specific rules implemented by traditional authorities such as paramount chiefs] to support implementation of a cohesive and transparent response to child trafficking throughout communities within study districts (CenHTRO, n.d). The process of developing ACT bylaws included three elements: 1) community advocacy meetings to identify gaps in response to child trafficking, 2) training to enhance community members' awareness about and understanding of child trafficking and potential impacts from child trafficking, and 3) local leaders then shared their knowledge and insights about child trafficking with their chiefdom communities (CenHTRO, n.d). In addition to providing training to community leaders, WHI also facilitated anti-human trafficking trainings in schools, such as through partnerships with school clubs and the Children's Forum Network. National-level advocacy efforts were also part of the PARC-TIP community project; these involved collaborating with the Ministry of Social Welfare and the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs to establish a trust fund for survivors of human trafficking, which was provisioned in the 2022 Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act (CenHTRO, n.d).

#### *Prosecution Project to Counter Child Trafficking and Exploitation in Sierra Leone*

CenHTRO partnered with UNODC to strengthen the justice response and enhance capacity for investigating human trafficking cases and prosecuting perpetrators through engaging with law enforcement officers and justice stakeholders (CenHTRO, n.d). The UNODC

Prosecution Project was implemented starting in April 2022 and ran through March 2024 (CenHTRO, n.d). The program focused on conducting needs assessments and targeted trainings to address gaps in justice stakeholders' knowledge about the implementation of anti-human trafficking laws, especially about the prosecution of human trafficking crimes. The program utilized a 'train the trainers' (ToT) model whereby law enforcement leaders and judges were engaged in in-depth training, which they then used to train their own staff and justice colleagues (CenHTRO, n.d.).

Specific activities included: 1) needs assessment of justice stakeholders' understanding of Anti-Human Trafficking policies, such as based on the revised National Anti-Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act, 2) support justice stakeholders (such as the Sierra Leone Police Academy and Judicial Training Institutes) in updating and/or revising training manuals according to results from the needs assessment, 3) develop relevant training manuals and deliver ToT sessions for law enforcement leadership as well as judge and magistrates from the four study districts and Freetown, 4) facilitate implementation workshops for law enforcement officers, prosecutors, magistrates and judges (CenHTRO, n.d; Jalloh et al., 2024).

#### *CenHTRO's Sierra Leone Think Tank*

To support the community awareness-raising efforts of the PARC-TIP program and Prosecution project, CenHTRO [formerly known as APRIES] established a think tank to expand and strengthen broad-based awareness related to ongoing anti-human trafficking efforts, share key research findings, report on program impacts, and strengthen engagement with policy stakeholders (CenHTRO, 2022). The think tank played a critical role in establishing a base of knowledge and insights for use by stakeholders and leaders in the efforts to strengthen the response to child trafficking. As well as in translating research and programming-related lessons learned for the public, communities, and governmental stakeholders. They helped in publications and made over 20 appearances on local TV and radio, as well as community forums, to enhance evidence-based awareness-raising on the problem of child trafficking. Their campaigns were based on data from our baseline study.

## KEY RESULTS FROM FINAL PROGRAM EVALUATION

The overall program was described by respondents as in strong alignment with Sierra Leone's national anti-trafficking agenda and community-level child protection needs, addressing critical gaps in the justice process and local vulnerabilities in rural and border communities (Jalloh et al., 2024). The programs led to a:

**200%+**

increase in the number of survivors identified and referred for protection services;

**261**

trainings aided over

**900**

individuals in protection, prevention, and prosecution response; and

**21**

journalists were trained to improve investigative reporting on human trafficking.

Key impacts include:

- Supporting the strengthening of the Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling bill. CenHTRO and project partners collaborated with the Ministry of Social Welfare and provided extensive contributions in the review of the Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling bill before its introduction to Sierra Leone's parliament. The Bill was enacted by the Parliament in April 2022.
- Enhanced regional response to child trafficking. Alongside the Government of Sierra Leone, CenHTRO hosted the Regional Conference of ECOWAS States on Ending Human Trafficking in Freetown in April 2023. The Freetown Roadmap, which is guiding the next ECOWAS Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons, was the outcome of this conference.
- Partnered with local communities to enhance prosecution, prevention, and response to child trafficking. CenHTRO and WHI partnered with district leaders, including District Officers and Paramount Chiefs within study districts, to develop and implement ACT bylaws across 55 chiefdoms in Kambia, Kono, Kailahun, and Kenema Districts. Village parenting groups (VPGs), child welfare committees, and community stakeholders were trained to identify and refer potential cases of child trafficking to local leaders. Ward leaders helped sustain community awareness by cascading trafficking prevention messages during ward meetings and local sporting events. School-based outreach further strengthened prevention efforts through advocacy and sensitization on child

rights. This included the formation and implementation of school clubs comprised of both school authorities and students, which provided a structured platform to raise awareness of trafficking in persons (TIP) within schools. Additionally, CenHTRO partnered with the Journalism Center on Global Trafficking in Sierra Leone and trained 12 journalists on investigating and reporting human trafficking, thereby expanding awareness and accountability through the media. The journalism fellows produced newspaper, TV, and radio items and communicated at a very nuanced and local level.

- Improved quality of services and programs for survivors. Through the program, social workers and community caregivers were trained in trauma-informed care approaches for working with child trafficking survivors. Through the CenHTRO-WHI partnership, child trafficking survivors were supported with shelter services, psychosocial services, healthcare, and educational opportunities. Following reintegration into their home communities, parents of child survivors were assisted with income-generating activity support. To further promote sustainability, support for victims and survivors of TIP was enhanced by introducing income-generating activities for VPGs, who are instrumental in the identification and referral of TIP victims and survivors.
- Strengthened justice stakeholder capacity for responding to child trafficking. CenHTRO and prosecution partner UNODC created a Training Manual on Human Trafficking for Sierra Leone Law Enforcement. Trainings were conducted with law enforcement, prosecutors, and judicial actors to enhance the investigation and prosecution of human trafficking cases and the incorporation of trauma-informed techniques into prosecution.

Overall, results from the evaluation indicated that the program had a substantial impact on reducing child trafficking, particularly in Kenema and Kono. In Kambia and Kailahun, while the impact was less pronounced, there was still an observable shift in community attitudes, with more cases being reported and increased involvement in child protection efforts (Jalloh et al., 2024).

### Sustainability

Institutionalizing anti-trafficking training within law enforcement and judicial curricula, strengthening district and community-level task forces, and ongoing partnerships with local NGOs and government agencies were some of the measures taken to ensure long-term sustainability. Respondents described how the program had built a foundation for continued efforts to prevent and respond to child trafficking. However, respondents also noted that additional resources will be necessary to maintain momentum, particularly in remote districts (Jalloh et al., 2024).



# Policy Context

## ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MIGRANT SMUGGLING ACT OF 2022

In the period between the 2019–2020 baseline and this 2024 endline study, the Government of Sierra Leone enacted the Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Amendment Act to replace the previous Anti-trafficking Act of 2005. The 2005 Act was obsolete and disconnected from the current realities and intervention needs within the nation. It came to be understood that it lacked appropriate penalties for traffickers, compensation for victims, physical and psychological restitutions for victims, and coordination of interministerial committees, amongst other weaknesses (Lewis, 2023). Additionally, it was criticized for lacking country-specific contextualization, including addressing issues such as ‘Menpikin’ [informal fostering], which intersect with cultural traditions (Cody et al., 2024).

The 2022 Act makes great strides in addressing these prior deficiencies. For one, the Act establishes a comprehensive institutional and regulatory framework for institutional actors, guided by the leadership of the TIP Secretariat attached to the Ministry of Social Welfare. Additionally, the new act improves upon prosecution by upholding more stringent punishment of traffickers and building in more effective frameworks for prevention that seek to address and provide remedies for social vulnerabilities. Provisions directing protection measures also advanced in great strides, including guaranteeing more protection for children who are adopted, in foster care, or are in situations of labor or sexual exploitation (Lewis, 2023).

### DEVELOPING ACT BYLAWS IN STUDY DISTRICTS

Once the 2022 Act was set into effect, efforts to promote the establishment of supportive ACT bylaws within local government structures were taken on by CenHTRO and its implementing partner, World Hope International through the PARC-TIP Community Project (CenHTRO, n.d.; Lewis, 2023). In each of the four districts, CenHTRO and WHI worked alongside the local Paramount Chiefs, Chiefdom Administrative Clerks, Inter-Religious Council Leaders, and District Officers, to harmonize the National Anti-Human Trafficking Act of 2022 with the Child Rights Act, Adoption Laws, Three Gender Acts, Sexual Offences Act, Labor Laws, and other related legislations. Specific ACT bylaws varied district to district, but all emphasized a coordinated understanding of an approach to child trafficking, building from the data collected through initial baseline reports on trends, vulnerabilities, traditional cultural practices, and appropriate protective measures. See the appendix for copies of the ACT bylaws for each district.

ACT bylaw provisions across the four districts include:

- Emphasizing the importance of registering the births, deaths, and occurrences of missing or stolen children within chiefdoms to appropriate authorities.

- Establishing Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) in each chiefdom within a district.
- Encouraging parents with children in foster care to make quarterly visits to their children to check on their status and report findings to appropriate entities.
- Requiring that any suspected incidence of child trafficking be reported to the police by the chiefdom authorities.
- Prohibiting any instances of forced or child marriage and requiring the reporting of any such instances.
- Clarifying penalties to those who impose child labor or child trafficking, or who compromise any suspected occurrence of it.

Working on the local government level, within structures that are viewed as trusted authorities within communities, allowed for the establishment of ACT bylaws to make significant strides in awareness-raising measures that also impact prosecution, prevention, and protection of child trafficking in substantial ways.

## THE CHILD'S RIGHTS ACT OF 2025

Following data collection for the endline study, the Government of Sierra Leone passed the Child Rights Act of 2025, an amendment to the original 2007 version. The amendment represents significant efforts to improve the alignment of domestic law with international child protection standards. The 2007 Act was understood to be inadequate for multiple reasons, including but not limited to the permission of corporal punishment, conflicting marriage laws, and weak punishment for those obstructing or infringing on the rights of children.

The 2025 Child Rights Act, unlike the original act and the amendments that followed, directly addresses protection from child trafficking in Section 27. It states:

*“A person, court, or other authority shall take appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from human trafficking including the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of a child, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, or the abuse of power or a position of vulnerability or the giving or receiving of payment to obtain the consent of a person having control over a child.”*

This provision aligns with the definition of human trafficking provided within the 2022 Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act and exemplifies a unified commitment, across issues and responsible institutions, to acknowledge, combat, and prevent the trafficking of children within Sierra Leone. Although its enactment followed the data collection period, it is important to note this significant policy advancement.



# ENDLINE STUDY OVERVIEW

This child trafficking prevalence endline study aimed to estimate changes in child trafficking and child labor prevalence since the baseline study was conducted in 2019–2020. We also aimed to understand stakeholders’ perspectives about where progress has been made with respect to policy, strategy, and action, to address the problem of child trafficking and child labor in Sierra Leone. In addition, we prioritized identifying plans and recommendations related to the sustainment of anti-child trafficking initiatives. Data for the endline phase were collected from 2023 to 2024 in all study districts.



**Figure 1: Study districts.**

Scale 1:3143375. Map produced by CenHTRO using QGIS Version 3.28.3

Geodata sourced from Humanitarian Data Exchange managed by the Centre for Humanitarian Data at the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. <https://data.humdata.org/dataset/cod-ab-sle>.

## Study Districts

The endline study was conducted in the same Sierra Leonean districts as the baseline study: Kailahun, Kambia, Kenema, and Kono. There were also interviews that took place with national stakeholders and key actors in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone. Study districts were identified as areas where there may be increased vulnerability to child labor and child trafficking (Okech et al., 2022; 2023). District selection was made prior to the baseline study during scoping visits and in close collaboration with community and governmental stakeholders (Okech et al., 2022; 2023).

## **GEOGRAPHY**

Kailahun, Kenema, and Kono, located in the Eastern Province of Sierra Leone, border Liberia to the South and Guinea to the North. Kambia, located in the North Western Province, borders Guinea to the Northwest and the Atlantic Ocean to the Southwest. Kambia, is approximately 78 miles (125.7 km) from Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital city. Kenema City, the capital of the Eastern Province, is located approximately 190 miles (306 km) from Freetown. Each district is comprised of chiefdoms, administered jointly through chiefs (customary leaders) and the Sierra Leonean government. In Kenema (capital Kenema), there are 16 chiefdoms; Kailahun (capital Kailahun) has 15 chiefdoms; Kono (capital Koidu City) has 14 chiefdoms; and Kambia (capital Kambia city) has 10 chiefdoms. Among the study districts, Kenema has the largest proportion of the population living within urban areas (44.5%), which is due to the district including Kenema city, the capital of the Eastern Province. In Kailahun and Kambia, around 29% of the population lives in urban areas, and 24.6% of people live in urban areas in Kono (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2016).

### **Labor Sectors**

Farming and fishing are the most prominent labor sectors in the country (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2016d). Kailahun has a thriving agricultural sector, which produces cocoa and coffee (OCHA, 2015a), and rice, cassava, and sweet potatoes are also staple crops for the other districts in the Eastern Province. In Kambia, due to the proximity to the ocean, fishing is a key industry (Parliamentary Budget Office, 2019).

## **CHILD POPULATION AND DEPENDENCY RATIOS**

Based on the estimates from the currently available census, in 2015 between 40%–46% of the total population of each study district were children under 15-years-old: 40% (245,634 children) in Kenema, 42% (219,198 children) in Kailahun, 42% (212,853) in Kono and 46% (158,918 children) in Kambia (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2016). Sierra Leone has a high age dependency ratio at 79.5 (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2016). This indicates that for every 100 working-age individuals (15–64), there are 79.5 children (under 15 years of age) or elderly (65 and older) household members who are economically dependent on the working-age adults. The dependency ratio can provide insight into the level of financial strain and stress that working-age adults may be experiencing. Among the study districts, Kambia's dependency ratio of 95.3 is the only district that has a higher dependency ratio than the national rate. The other districts have high dependency ratios, but these are the same as or slightly less than the national rate. Kono (82.9) and Kailahun (82.8) have nearly the same rates, whereas Kenema has the lowest rate at 77.8 (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2016).

## **SCHOOL ENROLLMENT AND CHILDREN'S ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES**

As of 2015, 65% of 6-to-11-year-old children across the country were enrolled in primary school (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2016). All study districts had comparable rates (71% in Kailahun, 66% in Kenema, and 65% in Kono) except for Kambia, where the enrollment rate was much lower at 59%. National enrollment rates for Junior Secondary School (JSS), among 12-to-14-year-old youth, were lower compared to enrollment among young children, with an overall rate of 21% (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2016). The study districts had similarly low rates of enrollment in JSS, coinciding with the national rate (24% in Kailahun, 23% in Kenema, and 19% in Kono), except for Kambia, where the rate was much lower at 14% (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2016). The most recent Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2017 survey reported rates of children 5–11 years old engaged in economic activities for at least one hour within each district among sampled households including: Kambia at 39.6% (732 children), Kailahun at 37.7% (1,028 children), Kono at 26.4% (1,254 children) and Kenema at 24.9% (1,541 children) (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2018).

### **MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY**

In 2023, UNDP estimated that 58% of the total population of Sierra Leone is experiencing multidimensional poverty. All study districts were estimated to have a higher population experiencing multi-dimensional poverty compared with the national average: 61.3% (Kono), 61% (Kenema), 71.8% (Kailahun), and 64.9% (Kambia) (UNDP, 2023).

# METHODOLOGY

This mixed-methods study used a community-based research design, which was strengthened by collaboration with community and stakeholder groups (including policy and decision makers, central and local government officials, and community representatives). We collected quantitative household surveys from sampled households in the study districts, as well as conducted qualitative interviews and focus groups with community members and key stakeholders.

## RESEARCH DESIGN COMPONENTS AND APPROACH

*Quantitative Household Survey:* This component targeted adult members from households across selected Enumeration Areas (EAs), focusing on changes in trafficking and labor indicators since the baseline.

*Key Informant Interviews (KIs):* Interviews with representatives from government, social services, law enforcement, local councils, NGOs, and other stakeholders provided expert insights into institutional responses, intervention effectiveness, and trafficking dynamics.

*Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):* FGDs involved a range of community-based organizations, such as Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), and general community members. Children within Children's Forum Networks (CFNs) and school-based clubs were engaged in activity-based focus group discussions. In the children's focus groups, participants had the opportunity to explore the anti-child trafficking bylaws relevant to their district and to discuss their perspectives about children's experiences in their communities. [See appendix for a full copy of the children's focus group discussion guide and consent process.]

The study design and data collection tools were validated through collaboration between the CenHTRO and CMDA technical teams, ensuring alignment with study goals and ethical standards.

## HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

The study population is children aged 5–17 who reside in the sampled households across the four study districts. We used the same two-stage stratified sampling as in the baseline studies, where select enumeration (EAs) were selected first and then households second to preserve comparability and representativeness (Levy & Lemeshow, 2008; Okech et al., 2022; 2023). In total, 4,131 households were surveyed from a sample frame of 25,419 households. These surveys were conducted using probabilistic random sampling to ensure representativeness. In Kailahun, 885 households were surveyed, accounting for 5,122 household members, with 2,205 children aged 5–17. In Kambia, 1,059 households with

7,452 members were included, representing 2,622 children. Kenema had the largest survey sample, with 1,238 households and 7,013 members, 2,914 of whom were children aged 5–17. Kono followed with 949 households, 5,832 members, and 2,089 children.

## HOUSEHOLD SURVEY SAMPLING STRATEGY AND DATA COLLECTION

The household survey was designed to replicate the baseline study's sampling framework for direct comparability and reliability. We used the Probability Proportional to Size (PPS) sampling to distribute 195 EAs across the four districts. Key steps included:

1. **EA Selection:** The 195 EAs were categorized into "old" EAs (included in the baseline study) and "new" EAs (sampled for the first time in the endline). Of these, 49 old EAs were retained from the baseline, and 146 new EAs were selected for the endline study, achieving a balanced representation across districts.
2. **Household Listing and Sampling:** In each selected EA, households were systematically listed with key characteristics, including the household head's name, size, and presence of children (aged 5–17 years). In "old" EAs, only households that had participated in the baseline were included, while in "new" EAs, a comprehensive listing was conducted. From these lists, a simple random sampling technique was applied to select households from each EA, totaling 4,095 households across the four districts, with an emphasis on rural areas due to their higher population densities.
3. **Household Interview Process:** Fieldwork was conducted by trained Research Assistants (RAs) experienced in child trafficking and child labor research. Interviews prioritized the oldest available female member in each household to respond, with male household heads or other adults interviewed if needed. Data were collected on KoboCollect, a mobile platform enabling real-time entry, quality control, and data security.

## QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Qualitative data were collected from a range of community members, local leaders, and district and ministry officials. The sampling for the qualitative study was purposive, targeting respondents who could provide a depth of perspectives about child trafficking and ongoing efforts to address the problem at various levels in Sierra Leone. Respondent groups were carefully selected to ensure that we gathered perspectives from diverse respondent groups, including community members, professional stakeholders, and children and youth. For study recruitment, CMDA drew on existing connections between the study team and the various agencies and key actors involved in the fight against child trafficking, and who had earlier been engaged during the baseline study as part of the collaborative/participatory approach.

Qualitative data collection activities included:

1. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): 29 stakeholders, including central and district government officials, Paramount Chiefs, judiciary and law enforcement officers, Family Support Unit (FSUs) Officers, and NGO representatives, were interviewed. These informants offered institutional perspectives on child trafficking, responses to child labor, and community-level impacts.
2. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): FGDs were organized with community members and child-focused groups across the districts to gather local perspectives. A total of 36 FGDs were conducted, in each of the 4 study districts with groups of ~ 8 participants each, totaling 288 focus group participants including:
  - 4 FGDs with child welfare committees (CWCs)
  - 4 FGDs with anti-trafficking district level taskforces
  - 16 FGDs with community members in the study districts
  - 8 FGDs with school-based children's clubs (13 – 17-year-olds separated by gender)
  - 4 FGDs with children and youth members of children's forum networks (CFNs)

## QUALITATIVE RESPONDENT GROUP DESCRIPTIONS

### *Child Welfare Committees (CWCs)*

Local community-based structures, comprised of community members, established to safeguard children, prevent trafficking, and provide support for trafficking survivors.

### *Children's forum network (CFN)*

"The children's forum network is a child-led advocacy group that focuses on children's issues with a presence in all study districts and is supported by the government through the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs and NGO partners active in child protection sector. This advocacy group for children and by children was created in 1999 during the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) at the end of the civil war in Sierra Leone. It was legislated for Government support under the Ministry of Social Welfare and decentralized to be operational in all districts and supported by NGOs active in the child protection sector in the country." (Jalloh et al., 2024, page 14).

### *Anti-Trafficking District Level Taskforces*

District level taskforces charged with coordinating and implementing anti-trafficking initiatives among chiefdoms within the district.

### *School-based children's clubs*

Children's Clubs, established by the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE), are groups within schools that engage students in activities aimed at preventing trafficking and raising awareness about child rights and exploitation. (Jalloh et al., 2024, page 13).

## Data Collection Field Team Recruitment and Training

In total, CMDA recruited, trained, and supervised 147 research staff, assistants, and consultants to conduct data collection, comprising mappers, enumerators, facilitators, district coordinators, and technical support staff. Data was collected by local research assistants (RAs) with graduate-level training and prior experience in administering quantitative surveys and/or conducting KIIs and FGDs to collect qualitative data. RA's local knowledge of regional political, cultural, and socio-economic contexts strengthened data quality and respondent rapport.

Prior to data collection, all field staff completed a 3-day training on study protocols and procedures, including ethical principles and standards. CenHTRO collaborated with CMDA to develop a comprehensive training, covering basic concepts of human trafficking and child trafficking; guidelines and strategies for data collection on sensitive topics; child safeguarding protocols; and ethical standards for involving children in research. The RAs responsible for semi-structured interviews and focus groups worked with supervisors to practice and pre-test the data collection and reconvened to refine the data collection instruments before using them in the field. To ensure maximum fidelity to the study protocol, field activities were closely supervised by CMDA field supervisors and leadership throughout data collection.



## ETHICS AND DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

This study was reviewed and approved by ethics committees in Sierra Leone, the University of Liverpool in the UK, and the University of Georgia in the USA. In addition, we sought feedback from the National Taskforce Committee Against Human Trafficking in Sierra Leone and permission from local leaders and chiefdoms. Affirming respondents' confidentiality and rights was a priority for the study team. Respondents were provided with information about the study purpose, and their verbal informed consent was sought prior to any interview or focus group discussion. Respondents were asked to refrain from using names and other identifiable information when participating in an interview or focus group.

Following informed consent, household surveys were conducted within sampled households. Focus groups and interviews were conducted in spaces that were convenient, comfortable, and safe for respondents, including workplaces (for key informants), community centers or outdoor spaces where community groups typically gather, and in school classrooms (for children and youth groups). FGDs involving children followed strict consent procedures. Parental consent was first obtained from school authorities or relevant ministries, and then assent was sought from the children (See appendix for example of youth focus group discussion guide and assent process). Focus group discussions with children and youth were activity-based, and refreshments were provided to ensure a comfortable atmosphere for open dialogue and enable young people to fully participate.

## DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

### *Household Survey Tool*

The endline study used the same questionnaire as the baseline studies. A full copy of the survey tool can be accessed in the baseline reports appendices (See Okech et al., 2022 or Okech et al., 2023). The survey was designed to measure labor activities of children residing in the sampled households and within the household respondents' networks. The finalized tool was translated into local languages (Krio and Temne) and programmed into KoboCollect for data collection purposes.

### *Qualitative Tools*

Qualitative tools include interview and focus group guides, which aimed to gather respondents' perspectives about how the prevalence of child trafficking and the response to child trafficking have changed since 2019, when the baseline study was conducted. Targeted guides were tailored to each respondent group. The guide for key informants and community members focused on understanding their knowledge about changes in policies, laws, and bylaws relating to child trafficking prevention and response, as well as perspectives about the effectiveness of these initiatives. Activity-based

focus group discussions (see appendix for tool) with children and youth included questions which sought to gather youth perspectives about childhood and protection of children within their communities, ACT initiatives (such as implementation of ACT bylaws), and what they think would help keep children/youth safe. As part of the focus group activity with children and youth, bylaws for the relevant study district were shared with the children and youth groups, who were then guided in a discussion to gauge their perspectives about the effectiveness, potential impact, and gaps in the laws.

## DATA MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS

### *Quantitative Data*

Quantitative data collected on KoboCollect were transferred daily, verified, and aggregated using Excel. Analyses were conducted using SPSS to produce descriptive statistics, including frequencies, contingency tables, and cross-tabulations, supporting a comparative analysis with baseline findings. Prevalence estimation calculations were performed using R software.

### *Qualitative Data*

All interviews and focus groups were recorded using portable audio recorders. Each recording was assigned a unique identification code, and all were de-identified before analyses. The recordings were downloaded to a computer daily and backed up on another password-protected computer. Audio files were transcribed in two rounds. In round 1, audio files were transcribed by a local transcriber fluent in English and the local language. Of note, interviews were conducted in either English or Krio, which is widely spoken across Sierra Leone. The transcribers, fluent in English and Krio, transcribed all the audio recordings into English using verbatim translation — ensuring that the inherent meaning or context of the interview was not lost. Transcribed qualitative data were analyzed in NVivo and Excel, using a domain-based, comparative thematic methodology (King & Brooks, 2021), which incorporated a matrix to enable comparisons between respondent groups (Gale et al., 2013; Averill, 2002). Through this process, patterns and themes were identified, aligning with study objectives and providing contextual insights into changes in trafficking and child labor dynamics since the baseline study in 2019.

# FINDINGS

This section reports on key findings from quantitative household surveys, qualitative interviews, and focus group discussions. In the quantitative findings section, results from the endline household survey are presented and compared with results from the Eastern Province baseline study (Okech et al., 2022) and the Kambia District baseline study (Okech, et al. 2023). The quantitative findings section reports on: 1) prevalence estimation of child trafficking and child labor, 2) key demographic characteristics and potential vulnerabilities to child trafficking, 3) child trafficking types, 4) rates of excessive hours worked, and 5) rates of force, fraud, and coercion experiences within child trafficking situations.

Following reporting on the quantitative results, the qualitative findings section reports on respondents’ perspectives about: 1) changes in national–level anti–trafficking initiatives and policies since 2019, 2) effectiveness and impact of new local policies and ACT bylaws related to addressing child trafficking, 3) implementation challenges 4) recommendations to strengthen prevention and response to child trafficking and exploitation.

## KEY QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

### Prevalence Estimates of Child Trafficking and Child Labor

Prevalence estimates from baseline (2019–2020) compared with endline (2024) (Figure 2, Table 1) indicate a significant reduction in child trafficking across all four study districts. During the same time period, child labor (Figure 1, Table 2) was estimated to have increased in Kailahun, Kenema, and Kambia and reduced in Kono.

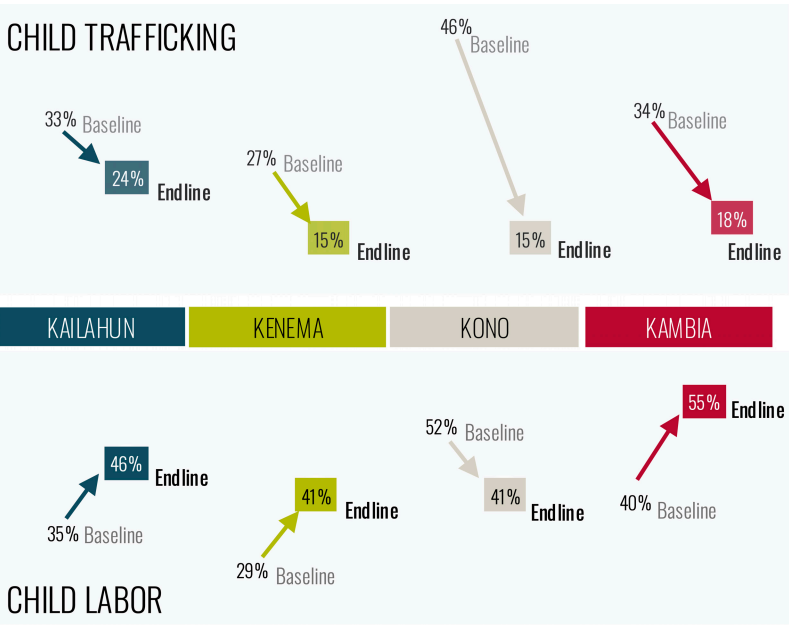


Figure 2. Prevalence Rates for Child Trafficking (%) and Child Labor (%) Children, Aged 5 to 17, by District, Comparing % Baseline to % Endline (rounded, for point estimates see table 1)

Direct estimation is based on the reports of respondents about the activities of the household children that were classified to be trafficking or labor. The prevalence rates of CT and CT in the households are then extrapolated to the entire region. The bootstrap resampling procedure (Efron & Tibshirani, 1994) is conducted to produce 95% CI for the Direct Estimators in each region. The resampling is repeated 500 times with replacement.

## Child Trafficking

There were measurable reductions in child trafficking within the four study districts between baseline (2019) and endline (2024). Percentage change between point estimates for child trafficking at baseline and endline (table 1) indicates that Kono had a 67% decrease (76,824 at baseline to 24,541 at endline), Kambia had a 45% decrease (39,155 at baseline to 21,575 at endline), Kenema saw a 43% decrease (51,949 at baseline to 29,563 at endline), and Kailahun had a 28% decrease (60,866 at baseline to 43,867 at endline). Overall, prevalence rates decreased between 9 and 31 percentage points per district. For example, the prevalence rate in Kono decreased by 31 percentage points from 46% (rounded) at baseline to 15% at endline.

in child trafficking among children, aged 5 to 17, from baseline, 76,824 (CI: 72,626, 81,195) to endline, 25,451 (CI: 22,070, 28,748). The prevalence rate decreased by 31 percentage points from baseline, 45.67% (CI: 43.18%, 48.27%), to endline, 15.13% (CI: 13.12%, 17.09%).

### Kambia

Kambia had a 45% decrease in the estimated number of children who experienced child trafficking from 39,155 (CI: 36,889, 41,542) to 21,575 (CI: 19,472, 23,888) at endline. The prevalence rate decreased by 15 percentage points from 33.52% (CI: 31.58%, 35.56%) to 18.47% (CI: 16.67%, 20.45%) at endline.

### Kailahun

In Kailahun, there was a 28% decrease in the estimated number of children who experienced child trafficking between baseline and endline, from 60,866 (CI: 57,094, 64,948) at baseline to 43,867 (CI: 39,238, 48,163) at endline. Within the total population of 5–17 year-olds in Kailahun, an estimated 32.87% (CI: 30.84%, 35.08%) experienced child trafficking at baseline, which decreased by 9 percentage points to 23.69% (CI: 21.19%, 26.01%) at endline.

**Table 1: Point Estimates and Prevalence Rate (%) of Child Trafficking among Children, 5 to 17 years old, by District, Change between Baseline and Endline**

| District | Point Estimate                |                              | CHILD TRAFFICKING |                   |                            |                            |                            |
|----------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
|          | Baseline Estimate<br>(95% CI) | Endline Estimate<br>(95% CI) | Total<br>Change   | Percent<br>Change | Baseline Rate<br>(95% CI)  | Endline Rate<br>(95% CI)   | Percentage<br>Point Change |
| Kailahun | 60,866<br>(57,094, 64,948)    | 43,867<br>(39,238, 48,163)   | -16,999           | -28%              | 32.87%<br>(30.84%, 35.08%) | 23.69%<br>(21.19%, 26.01%) | -9 ↓                       |
| Kenema   | 51,949<br>(49,162, 54,980)    | 29,563<br>(26,092, 32,917)   | -22,386           | -43%              | 26.64%<br>(25.21%, 28.20%) | 15.16%<br>(13.38%, 16.88%) | -11 ↓                      |
| Kono     | 76,824<br>(72,626, 81,195)    | 25,451<br>(22,070, 28,748)   | -51,373           | -67%              | 45.67%<br>(43.18%, 48.27%) | 15.13%<br>(13.12%, 17.09%) | -31 ↓                      |
| Kambia   | 39,155<br>(36,889, 41,542)    | 21,575<br>(19,472, 23,888)   | -17,580           | -45%              | 33.52%<br>(31.58%, 35.56%) | 18.47%<br>(16.67%, 20.45%) | -15 ↓                      |

### Kenema

The number of 5–17 year olds who experienced trafficking was estimated to decrease by 43% from baseline 51,949 (CI: 49,162, 54,980) to endline 29,563 (CI: 26,092, 32,917). The prevalence rate of child trafficking for this population decreased by 11 percentage points from 26.64% (CI: 25.21%, 28.20%) at baseline to 15.16% (CI: 13.38%, 16.88%) at endline.

### Kono

Kono had the largest estimated reductions in child trafficking prevalence, indicating a 67% decrease

**Table 2: Point Estimates and Prevalence Rate (%) of Child Labor among Children, 5 to 17 years old, by District, Change between Baseline and Endline**

| District | Point Estimate                |                              | CHILD LABOR     |                   |                            |                            |                            |
|----------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
|          | Baseline Estimate<br>(95% CI) | Endline Estimate<br>(95% CI) | Total<br>Change | Percent<br>Change | Baseline Rate<br>(95% CI)  | Endline Rate<br>(95% CI)   | Percentage<br>Point Change |
| Kailahun | 64,265<br>(60,395, 68,058)    | 84,953<br>(79,494, 90,208)   | 20,688          | 32%               | 34.73%<br>(32.62%, 36.76%) | 45.91%<br>(42.96%, 48.75%) | 11 ↑                       |
| Kenema   | 56,197<br>(52,977, 59,178)    | 80,471<br>(75,690, 84,939)   | 24,274          | 43%               | 28.8%<br>(27.17%, 30.35%)  | 41.24%<br>(38.79%, 43.53%) | 12 ↑                       |
| Kono     | 88,095<br>(83,879, 92,404)    | 69,394<br>(65,014, 74,381)   | -18,701         | -21%              | 52.29%<br>(49.87%, 54.94%) | 41.19%<br>(38.59%, 44.15%) | -11 ↓                      |
| Kambia   | 46,794<br>(44,271, 49,323)    | 64,315<br>(61,150, 67,060)   | 14,521          | 37%               | 40.06%<br>(37.90%, 42.23%) | 55.06%<br>(52.35%, 57.41%) | 15 ↑                       |

## CHILD LABOR

Prevalence estimates for child labor, which encompasses child trafficking but also includes other forms of labor exploitation, indicated a statistically significant increase (between 11 and 15 percentage points) among children, aged 5–17, in three of the study districts. Among the study districts (Table 2), Kenema had the largest percentage increase (43%) between point estimates at baseline (56,197) compared to endline (80,471). Kambia was estimated to have an increase of 37% in the point estimates between baseline (46,794) and endline (64,315), and Kailahun had an increase of 32% between 64,265 at baseline to 84,953 at endline. Estimates in Kono indicate a 21% decrease between 88,095 at baseline to 69,394 at endline.

### Kailahun

Within the total population of children, aged 5 to 17, in Kailahun, 34.73% (CI: 32.62%, 36.76%) were estimated to experience child labor at baseline, which increased by 11 percentage points to 45.91% (CI: 42.96%, 48.75%) at endline. The point estimate for child labor prevalence was 64,265 (CI: 60,395, 68,058) in 2020 and 84,953 (CI: 79,494, 90,208) in 2024, indicating an increase of 32%.

### Kenema

28.80% (CI: 27.17%, 30.35%) of children, aged 5 to 17, in Kenema were estimated to experience child labor in 2020, which increased by 12 percentage points to 41.24% (CI: 38.79%, 43.53%). The point estimate indicated a 43% increase between baseline at 56,197 (CI: 52,977, 59,178) and endline at 80,471 (CI: 75,690, 84,939).

### Kono

There was a 11 percentage point decrease in child labor prevalence among 5 to 17 year old children in Kono, from 52.29% (CI: 49.87%, 54.94%) at baseline to 41.19% (CI: 38.59%, 44.15%) at endline. The point estimate in 2020 was 88,095 (CI: 83,879, 92,404) children, which reduced to 69,394 (CI: 65,014, 74,381), indicating a 21% decrease between baseline and endline.

### Kambia

40.06% (CI: 37.90%, 42.23%) were estimated to experience child labor in 2020, with a 15 percentage point increase

to 55.06% (CI: 52.35%, 57.41%). The point estimate increased by 37% from 46,794 (44,271, 49,323) at baseline to 64,315 (CI: 61,150, 67,060) at endline.

In summary, we estimated that there has been a meaningful decrease in child trafficking in all study districts and decrease in child labor in Kono. However, our data indicates an increase in child labor among children aged 5 to 17 in Kailahun, Kenema, and Kambia districts between 2019 and 2024.

## Characteristics of Children who Experienced Child Trafficking or Child Labor

In this section, we report on characteristics of children who experienced child trafficking and child labor in the household survey sample. We also report on the results of odds ratio tests to identify potential characteristics that may contribute to or reduce child trafficking vulnerabilities among children in the surveyed households.

Overall, [Table 3] a slightly larger proportion of boys [50%–56%] experienced child trafficking compared to girls [44%–50%], but slightly more girls [51%–53%] compared to boys [47% to 49%] experienced child labor across all districts. In each district, a larger percentage of 15–17 year-olds [34% to 44%] experienced child trafficking compared to 5–11-year-old children [30% to 36%] or 12–14-year-old children [25% to 33%], whereas the reverse was the case for child labor, where younger children [59%–65% were 5–11 years old] accounted for a larger proportion of children who experienced child labor compared to older children [19% to 25% were 12–14 years old] [10% to 16% were 15–17 years old]. Across all districts, between 76% to 89% of children who experienced child trafficking were enrolled in formal non-Madrassa schools (e.g., primary, secondary), and

Table 3: Selected Demographic Characteristics for children who experienced CT and CL

|                              | Kailahun  |           | Kenema    |            | Kono      |           | Kambia    |            |
|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
|                              | CT        | CL        | CT        | CL         | CT        | CL        | CT        | CL         |
| Total Unweighted             | 507       | 993       | 449       | 1253       | 337       | 881       | 529       | 1496       |
| Total Weighted               | 534       | 1044      | 443       | 1239       | 338       | 883       | 520       | 1461       |
| Characteristics (Weighted)   | % (n)     | % (n)     | % (n)     | % (n)      | % (n)     | % (n)     | % (n)     | % (n)      |
| Sex                          |           |           |           |            |           |           |           |            |
| Female                       | 50% (265) | 52% (542) | 47% (209) | 53% (658)  | 44% (148) | 52% (456) | 44% (228) | 51% (746)  |
| Male                         | 50% (269) | 48% (502) | 53% (234) | 47% (581)  | 56% (189) | 48% (427) | 56% (291) | 49% (714)  |
| Age                          |           |           |           |            |           |           |           |            |
| Age 5-11                     | 34% (182) | 59% (616) | 30% (134) | 65% (808)  | 36% (123) | 62% (549) | 33% (174) | 63% (915)  |
| Age 12-14                    | 27% (142) | 21% (218) | 26% (116) | 19% (238)  | 25% (84)  | 23% (203) | 33% (170) | 25% (359)  |
| Age 15-17                    | 39% (210) | 10% (210) | 44% (193) | 16% (193)  | 39% (131) | 15% (131) | 34% (176) | 13% (187)  |
| School Enrollment Status     |           |           |           |            |           |           |           |            |
| Formal school (non-Madrassa) | 79% (422) | 85% (885) | 76% (337) | 82% (1019) | 82% (278) | 89% (784) | 89% (465) | 92% (1346) |
| Enrolled in Madrassa         | 7% (37)   | 5% (52)   | 6% (27)   | 5% (62)    | 0% (0)    | 1% (10)   | 1% (5)    | 0.5% (7)   |
| Not enrolled                 | 14% (75)  | 10% (107) | 18% (79)  | 13% (158)  | 17% (59)  | 10% (89)  | 9% (49)   | 7% (108)   |



there was a similar formal school enrollment rate among children who experienced child labor (between 82% to 92%). Enrollment in Madrasa school had a very low rate in all districts for children who experienced CT [between 0% to 7%] and CL [between 0.5% to 5%]. The highest rate of Madrasa enrollment among children who experienced CT and CL was in Kailahun (7%) and Kenema (6%). Across districts, between 9% to 18% of children who experienced CT and 7% to 13% of children who experienced CL were not enrolled in either formal school (non-Madrasa) or Madrasa.

## Odds of Experiencing CT and CL by Characteristic

Odds ratios [appendix tables 4–8] for single-item characteristics (e.g., gender, age) were used to identify factors that may increase or decrease the odds of experiencing child trafficking or child labor. Odds ratios were produced using weighted data to improve accuracy because weighting data accounts for proportional differences between samples. Generally, odds ratios that are  $<1$  indicate lower odds of an event, while odds ratios  $>1$  indicate higher odds of an event. This univariate analysis should be interpreted with caution as it does not account for or control for confounding variables and/or interactions between variables. For example, enrollment in formal schooling may appear not to be significantly associated with CT or CL odds, but accounting for the effects of age may reveal a statistically significant relationship. We report odds ratios here to provide a description of the range of potential factors that may contribute to the odds of experiencing CT and CL for children in the study districts. Future analysis should include multivariate analysis to better understand the complex ways in which these factors may influence each other. Characteristics that were statistically significant are discussed in this section; see full tables 4–8 in the appendix.

### Gender

In Kenema, Kono, and Kambia, boys had higher odds of experiencing child trafficking, and girls had lower odds. In Kailahun, there was no statistically significant gender association for child trafficking. The odds of child labor were not significantly gendered in any of the study districts, suggesting that boys and girls had the same odds of experiencing child labor.

**Kailahun:** No statistically significant differences were observed for gender.

**Kenema:** Boys had significantly greater odds of experiencing child trafficking ( $OR = 1.29, p = .01$ ), and girls had significantly lower odds of child trafficking ( $OR = 0.77, p = .01$ ). Gender was not significant for odds of experiencing child labor.

**Kono:** Boys had greater odds ( $OR = 1.36, p = .01$ ) and girls had lower odds ( $OR = 0.74, p = .01$ ) of experiencing child

trafficking. Whereas gender was not significantly associated with the odds of experiencing child labor.

**Kambia:** Boys had higher odds of experiencing child trafficking ( $OR = 1.45, p < .001$ ) and girls had lower odds ( $OR = 0.69, p < .001$ ). There were no statistically significant gender differences in the odds of child labor.

### Age

Across all districts, older children (15–17 years old) had greater odds of experiencing child trafficking compared to younger children (5–11 years old), but younger children (5–11 years old) had greater odds of experiencing child labor compared to older children (15–17) years old. Odds of experiencing CT and CL among 12–14-year-old children varied by district, with greater odds of CT for 12–14 year olds in Kailahun and Kenema, and greater odds of CL in Kambia.

**Kailahun:** Older children aged 12–14 ( $OR = 1.45, p < .001$ ) and those aged 15–17 ( $OR = 2.62, p < .001$ ) had significantly higher odds of experiencing child trafficking, whereas younger children, aged 5–11 had significantly lower odds ( $OR = 0.34, p < .001$ ). However, children 5–11 had higher odds ( $OR = 1.43, p < .001$ ) of experiencing child labor, whereas adolescents (15–17 years old) had lower odds of CL ( $OR = 0.65, p < .001$ ). Children who were 12–14 years old did not have statistically significant differences ( $OR = 0.94, p = .54$ ) in odds of experiencing child labor.

**Kenema:** Relative to younger children, those aged 12–14 ( $OR = 1.47, p < .001$ ) and 15–17 ( $OR = 3.26, p < .001$ ) had higher odds of experiencing CT, whereas children 5–11 years old had lower odds ( $OR = 0.27, p < .001$ ). However, younger children, 5–11 years old, had higher odds ( $OR = 1.88, p < .001$ ) of experiencing child labor, whereas older adolescents (15–17 years old) had lower odds of CL ( $OR = 0.47, p < .001$ ). Children who were 12–14 years old did not have statistically significant differences ( $OR = 0.86, p = .11$ ) in odds of experiencing child labor.

**Kono:** Older children, 15–17 year olds, had higher odds of CT ( $OR = 2.15, p < .001$ ), whereas children aged 5–11 had lower odds ( $OR = 0.45, p < .001$ ) of child trafficking. Child labor odds were higher among younger children, 5–11 years old ( $OR = 1.91, p < .001$ ) and lower among older children, 15–17 years old ( $OR = 0.35, p < .001$ ). Middle-age children, between 12 and 14 years old did not differ significantly in odds of child trafficking or child labor.

**Kambia:** Compared with younger children, older children aged 12–14 years old ( $OR = 2.23, p < .001$ ) and 15–17 years old ( $OR = 2.25, p < .001$ ) have significantly higher odds of CT, whereas younger children, aged 5–11 years old, have lower odds ( $OR = 0.29, p < .001$ ) of CT. Odds of child labor were increased for middle age children, 12–14 years, ( $OR = 1.71, p < .001$ ) and younger children, 5–11 years, ( $OR = 1.64, p < .001$ ), whereas adolescents, 15–17 years, had lower odds ( $OR = 0.29, p < .001$ ).

### Contributions to Household Income

Children who contributed to the household income had greater odds of experiencing CT and CL in Kailahun, Kenema, and Kambia. In Kono, estimates for this characteristic were unstable, and no statistical significance was observed.

**Kailahun:** Children who contributed to household income had elevated odds of experiencing child trafficking (OR = 4.24,  $p < .001$ ) and child labor (OR = 3.38,  $p < .001$ ).

**Kenema:** Children who contributed to household income had significantly elevated odds of experiencing child trafficking (OR = 5.01,  $p < .001$ ) and child labor (OR = 2.51,  $p < .001$ ).

**Kono:** Estimates for “contributions to household income” had extreme class imbalances, which are known to produce unstable results. No statistically significant differences were observed for contributions to household income among children in Kono.

**Kambia:** Children who contribute to household income had elevated odds of experiencing child trafficking (OR = 5.19,  $p < .001$ ) and child labor (OR = 2.18,  $p < .001$ ).

### School Enrollment

Children who were enrolled in formal school (non-Madrassa) had lower odds of experiencing CT and CL in Kailahun and Kenema. Children in Kono had lower odds of experiencing CT if they were enrolled in formal school (non-Madrassa) but there was no statistically significant association between odds of experiencing CL and enrollment in formal (non-Madrassa) or Madrassa school. Children in Kailahun and Kenema who were enrolled in Madrassa schools had greater odds of experiencing CT and CL. In Kambia, there was no association between school enrollment of any type and CT or CL. However, this result should be interpreted with caution, as extreme group imbalances (79% children enrolled in formal school did not experience CT, whereas 21% of children enrolled in formal school did experience CT) were noted, which may produce unstable results.

**Kailahun:** Madrassa attendance was associated with higher odds of experiencing child trafficking (OR = 2.83,  $p < .001$ ) and child labor (OR = 2.16,  $p < .001$ ), while enrollment in formal schooling (non-madrassa) was protective against child trafficking (OR = 0.43,  $p < .001$ ) and child labor (OR = 0.67,  $p < .001$ ).

**Kenema:** Madrassa attendance was associated with increased risk for child trafficking (OR = 2.39,  $p < .001$ ) and child labor (OR = 2.71,  $p < .001$ ), while formal schooling (non-Madrassa) lowered odds of child trafficking (OR = 0.52,  $p < .001$ ) and child labor (OR = 0.76,  $p = .01$ ).

**Kono:** Children who were enrolled in formal schooling (non-Madrassa) had lower odds (OR = 0.62,  $p < .001$ ) of experiencing child trafficking. Enrollment in formal school or Madrassa was not a significant factor related to the odds of child labor experience.

**Kambia:** Estimates for school enrollment in Kambia had extreme class imbalances, which are known to produce unstable results. No statistically significant differences were observed related to schooling type (madrassa or non-madrassa formal school).

### Religious Affiliation

Note that, as described above, odds ratios for individual characteristics should be interpreted with great caution, because they do not account for or control for interactions between characteristics. This means that some characteristics that appear to be statistically significant when assessed individually may no longer be statistically significant or the direction of the association may change when adding or controlling for additional variables. Associations found between single characteristics, such as religious affiliation, might therefore reflect the impact of a confounding variable.

Associations between religious affiliations and odds of CT/CL were mixed and varied greatly across districts. Children who had Muslim affiliations had lower odds of CT in Kono and lower odds of CL in Kailahun but higher odds of CL in Kenema. Children who had Catholic affiliations had lower odds of CT in Kailahun but higher odds of CT in Kono. Anglican/Protestant affiliation was associated with higher odds of CT and CL in Kailahun. Pentecostal affiliation was associated with higher odds of CT and CL in Kono and CT only in Kenema. In Kambia, only children who reported affiliation with the category “other religion” (where households reported a religious affiliation that was not listed as an option in the survey) had increased odds of experiencing CL; no other religious affiliations of children in Kambia were associated with CT or CL odds.

**Kailahun:** Catholic affiliation was associated with lower odds (OR = 0.65,  $p < .001$ ) of child trafficking and Muslim affiliation was associated with lower odds of experiencing child labor (OR = 0.80,  $p = .01$ ). Whereas Anglican (Protestant) households had higher odds of child trafficking (OR = 1.50,  $p = .04$ ) and child labor (OR = 1.56,  $p = .02$ ).

**Kenema:** Religious affiliation shows mixed patterns, with Pentecostal (OR = 2.04,  $p = .01$ ) associated with higher odds of child trafficking and Muslim (OR = 1.31,  $p = .03$ ) associated with slightly higher odds of child labor. Religion “Other” was associated with lower odds (OR = 0.21,  $p = .03$ ) of child trafficking.

**Kono:** Religious affiliation shows mixed associations; Catholic affiliation had higher odds for child trafficking (OR = 1.69,  $p < .001$ ) but lower odds for child labor (OR = 0.62,  $p < .001$ ). Pentecostal affiliations were associated with higher odds for child trafficking (OR = 1.99,  $p < .001$ ) and child labor (OR = 1.49,  $p < .001$ ). Muslim affiliation was associated with lower odds for child trafficking (OR = 0.66,  $p < .001$ ) and was not related to odds of child trafficking.

**Kambia:** Overall, religious affiliation was not statistically

significant or had sparse cells, resulting in unstable estimates. However, households that reported “other” for religious affiliation had elevated odds for child labor (OR = 2, p = .02).

**Other characteristics:** Disability and marital status were generally not found to be related to odds of CT or CL. In Kenema, children with “single” marital status show marginally lower odds (OR = 0.36, p = .05) for child trafficking. However, estimates related to marital status and disability were based on either sparse cells (e.g., small numbers of children with the characteristic)/or unbalanced cells. For example, overall, few children were reported to be married, and a very small number reported being divorced or separated. Therefore, the estimates related to these characteristics may be unstable and should be interpreted with caution.

## Types of Child Trafficking and Child Labor

Child trafficking and child labor were experienced in a variety of labor sectors. Consistent with what we found in the baseline, children were often reported to engage in multiple sectors (e.g., portering and domestic work). This section reports on labor sectors and dangerous conditions where children were reported to be engaged, resulting in their classification as experiencing child trafficking or child labor.

### HAZARDOUS LABOR SECTORS

Children engaged in labor sectors designated as “hazardous” are classified as experiencing child trafficking due to the potential for risk to children’s well-being from engaging in the sectors. Overall, as in the baseline study, portering (e.g., carrying heavy loads) remains the most prevalent hazardous labor sector where children are engaged (Table 4). The exception is in Kambia, where children are more often reported to be engaged in fishing. Fishing, mining, and construction were the next most prevalent hazardous labor sectors where children were reported to be engaged. Commercial sexual exploitation and manufacturing were the least prevalent across all districts.

**Kailahun:** Portering was the most reported hazardous labor sector, where

17% (86 children) of children who experienced child trafficking were engaged, followed by fishing at 10% (51 children). Mining/quarrying at 5% (23) and construction at 4% (19) were much less prevalent, while commercial sexual exploitation and manufacturing were the least reported hazardous labor sectors at 1–2% (4 to 10 children).

**Kambia:** Fishing was the most prevalent hazardous labor sector reported, with 20% (105 children) who experienced child trafficking engaged in this sector. Portering followed at 13% (68 children), with mining/quarrying 4% (19), and other hazardous labor sectors reported as the least prevalent. Construction, commercial sexual exploitation, and manufacturing were all reported at between 1–2% (4 to 10 children).

**Kenema:** Portering reported by 31% (140 children) of children who experienced child trafficking was the most prevalent hazardous labor sector, while mining/quarrying accounted for 6% (25) and construction 4% (16). Manufacturing, fishing and commercial sexual exploitation were reported to be the least prevalent at a rate of 2% or less (between 3 to 10 children) per sector.

**Kono:** Portering was the most prevalent hazardous labor sector where children experienced child trafficking at 22% (75 children). Fishing was reported among 10% (33 children), and mining/quarrying was 8% (27 children). Commercial sexual exploitation, manufacturing, and construction were the least prevalent hazardous labor sectors reported at 1% (between 2 to 5 children) per sector.

### NON-HAZARDOUS LABOR SECTORS

Children who experienced trafficking were also reported to

Table 4. Percentage of Children experiencing Child Trafficking within Hazardous Labor Sectors (Heatmap)

|                         | Kailahun<br>(N=506) | Kenema<br>(N=448) | Kambia<br>(N=529) | Kono<br>(N=337) |
|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Hazardous Labor Sectors | % (n)               | % (n)             | % (n)             | % (n)           |
| Mining/quarrying        | 5% (23)             | 6% (25)           | 4% (19)           | 8% (27)         |
| Fishing                 | 10% (51)            | 2% (10)           | 20% (105)         | 10% (33)        |
| Portering               | 17% (86)            | 31% (140)         | 13% (68)          | 22% (75)        |
| Sex work                | 2% (10)             | 2% (10)           | 1% (4)            | 1% (3)          |
| Manufacturing           | 1% (4)              | 1% (3)            | 1% (4)            | 1% (2)          |
| Construction            | 4% (19)             | 4% (16)           | 2% (10)           | 1% (5)          |

Note: Darker shading indicates larger percentage, lighter shading indicates smaller percentage



be involved in labor sectors that are not classified as hazardous. These sectors include domestic work, agriculture, trading or vending, working in workshops (e.g., crafts and mechanics), begging, and motorcycle taxi driving. Overall, child trafficking events within domestic work was the most reported among non-hazardous labor sectors across all study districts (see Table 5): 77% (343) in Kenema, 64% (217 in Kono), 48% (242 children) in Kailahun, and 39% (207 children) in Kambia. Child trafficking events within the agricultural sector were the next most prominent, reported by 29% (130 children) in Kenema, 23% in Kailahun (118 children) and Kono (76 children) and 20% (103 children) in Kambia. The third most reported non-hazardous labor sector with child trafficking events was trading and vending activities, which was reported by 12% (65 children) in Kambia, 9% in Kailahun (43 children) and Kenema (39 children), and 7% (25 children) in Kono. Child trafficking events in sectors: motorcycle taxi driving, working in workshops (e.g., crafts and mechanics), and begging, were rarely reported at rates between 0% and <1% (between 0–4 children per sector).

**Kailahun:** Portering was the most reported hazardous labor sector, where 17% (86 children) of children who experienced child trafficking were engaged, followed by fishing at 10% (51 children). Mining/quarrying at 5% (23) and construction at 4% (19) were much less prevalent, while commercial sexual exploitation and manufacturing were the least reported hazardous labor sectors at 1–2% (4 to 10 children).

**Kambia:** Fishing was the most prevalent hazardous labor sector reported, with 20% (105 children) who experienced child trafficking engaged in this sector. Portering followed at 13% (68 children), with mining/quarrying 4% (19), and other hazardous labor sectors reported as the least prevalent. Construction, commercial sexual exploitation, and manufacturing were all reported at between 1–2% (4 to 10 children).

**Kenema:** Portering reported by 31% (140 children) of children who experienced child trafficking was the most

prevalent hazardous labor sector, while mining/quarrying accounted for 6% (25) and construction 4% (16). Manufacturing, fishing and commercial sexual exploitation were reported to be the least prevalent at a rate of 2% or less (between 3 to 10 children) per sector.

**Kono:** Portering was the most prevalent hazardous labor sector where children experienced child trafficking at 22% (75 children). Fishing was reported among 10% (33 children), and mining/quarrying was 8% (27 children). Commercial sexual exploitation, manufacturing, and construction were the least prevalent hazardous labor sectors reported at 1% (between 2 to 5 children) per sector.

## Changes in Child Trafficking Events by Labor Sectors between Baseline and Endline

This section reports on percentage point changes between baseline and endline in reported child trafficking events by labor sector. This information is useful for understanding where decreases and increases in percentages of child trafficking events were found among the various labor sectors.

### HAZARDOUS LABOR SECTORS: CHILD TRAFFICKING EVENTS BETWEEN BASELINE AND ENDLINE

Overall, results [table 6] indicate that Kono and Kenema show percentage point decreases in reported child trafficking events in most hazardous labor sectors, while Kailahun and Kambia show percentage point increases in child trafficking events for many hazardous labor sectors in Kailahun and Kambia. In most cases, differences between percentage points at baseline and endline for reported child trafficking events within the hazardous labor sectors were very small, between 1 to 2 percentage point changes, indicating that there was minimal practical difference between baseline and endline specific hazardous labor sectors. For example, reports of child trafficking events within the min-

ing sector in Kailahun increased by only about 1 percentage point from 3.7% at baseline to 4.6% at endline.

Portering and fishing were the two hazardous labor sectors that indicated the largest percentage point changes in child trafficking events between baseline and endline. Child trafficking events reported in the portering sector indicated a 11 percentage point decrease in Kambia (12.9% at baseline to 24.3% at endline), an 11 percentage point increase in Kenema (20.2% at baseline to 31.2% at endline), and a 5 percentage point increase in Kailahun (11.7% at baseline and 16.9%

**Table 5. Percentage of Children Experiencing Child Trafficking within Non-Hazardous Labor Sectors (Heatmap)**

|                                    | Kailahun<br>(N=506) | Kenema<br>(N=448) | Kambia<br>(N=529) | Kono<br>(N=337) |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Non-Hazardous Labor Sector         | % (n)               | % (n)             | % (n)             | % (n)           |
| Domestic work                      | 48% (242)           | 77% (343)         | 39% (207)         | 64% (217)       |
| Agricultural work                  | 23% (118)           | 29% (130)         | 20% (103)         | 23% (76)        |
| Trading/vending activities         | 9% (43)             | 9% (39)           | 12% (65)          | 7% (25)         |
| Motorcycle taxi driving            | <1% (1)             | <1% (1)           | <1% (1)           | 0               |
| Workshops (e.g. crafts, mechanics) | <1% (2)             | 0                 | <1% (3)           | <1% (2)         |
| Begging                            | <1% (2)             | 0                 | <1% (4)           | 0               |

Note: Darker shading indicates larger percentage, lighter shading indicates smaller percentage



at endline). The fishing sector indicated a percentage point decrease in Kenema by around 7 points (9.2% at baseline to 2.2% at endline) and an increase by 6 points in Kailahun (4.2% at baseline and 10.1% at endline) and (13.7% at baseline and 19.7% at endline).

**Portering:** The percentage of children who engaged in portering increased in three study districts: Kailahun (12% baseline to 17% endline, 5 percentage point increase), Kenema (20% baseline to 31% endline, 11 percentage point increase), and Kono (20% baseline to 22% endline, 1 percentage point increase). However, there was a decrease in Kambia (24% baseline to 13% endline, 11 percentage point decrease).

**Fishing:** Reports of children who experienced child trafficking engaging in fishing increased in 2 districts, in Kailahun (4% baseline to 10% endline, 6 percentage point increase) and Kambia (14% baseline to 20% endline, 6 percentage point increase). Kenema (9% baseline to 2% endline, 7 percentage point decrease) and Kono (12% baseline to 10% endline, 2 percentage point decrease) saw decreases in the percentage of children reporting fishing.

**Mining:** There were reports of a slight increase in percentages of children reporting engaging in mining within a child trafficking situation within all study districts (between 1 to 2 percentage point increases in all districts): Kailahun (4% baseline to 5% endline); Kenema (7% in baseline to 6% in endline); Kono (7% in baseline to 8% in endline), and Kambia, (2% in baseline to 4% in endline).

**Construction:** The percentage of children who engaged in construction very slightly decreased in three study districts: Kambia (5% baseline and 2% endline, 3 percentage point decrease); Kono (4% in baseline and 1% in endline, 3 percentage point decrease), and Kambia (5% baseline and 2% endline). The rate remained nearly the same at 4 % in Kailahun (0.4 percentage point increase) and Kenema (0.2 percentage point decrease).

**Manufacturing:** Manufacturing remained one of the least prevalent labor sectors where children were reported

to be engaged across all districts. The rate (1%–2%) remained the same, with all districts showing a reduction of less than 1 percentage point.

**Commercial Sexual Exploitation:** Reports of children experiencing trafficking within commercial sexual exploitation also remained one of the least prevalent hazardous labor sectors. The rate of 2% in Kenema and 1% in Kono remained the same between baseline and endline (less than 1 percentage point change). There was a slight increase in Kailahun (from 1% in baseline to 2% in endline, 1 percentage point increase) and Kambia (from <1% in baseline to 1% in endline, less than 1 percentage point increase).

## NON-HAZARDOUS LABOR SECTORS: CHILD TRAFFICKING EVENTS BETWEEN BASELINE AND ENDLINE

There was a percentage point decrease in reporting of child trafficking events for all non-hazardous labor sectors within all study districts between baseline and endline (Table 7). Notably, several of the percentage point decreases were significantly large, especially for child trafficking events in domestic work, agriculture, and trading and vending. Child trafficking events within the agricultural sector decreased by 56 percentage points in Kambia, 46 percentage points in Kailahun, 44 percentage points in Kono, and 19 percentage points in Kenema. Among child trafficking events reported in the domestic work labor sector Kambia saw a decrease of 56 percentage points, Kailahun saw a 39 percentage point decrease, Kono a 31 percentage point decrease, and Kenema had an 11 percentage point decrease. Child trafficking

**Table 6. Count and Percentage Child Trafficking Events within Hazardous–Labor Sectors: Percentage Point Changes between Baseline and Endline**

| Hazardous Labor Sectors                                    | Study Phase | Kailahun |         |                | Kenema |         |                | Kono  |         |                | Kambia  |         |                |         |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|----------|---------|----------------|--------|---------|----------------|-------|---------|----------------|---------|---------|----------------|---------|
|                                                            |             | Count    | Percent | % Point Change | Count  | Percent | % Point Change | Count | Percent | % Point Change | Count   | Percent | % Point Change |         |
| Mining/<br>quarrying                                       | Baseline    | 21       | 3.70%   | 0.9 ↑          | 54     | 6.70%   | -1.2 ↓         | 46    | 6.60%   | 1.4 ↑          | 15      | 2.30%   | 1.2 ↑          |         |
|                                                            | Endline     | 23       | 4.60%   |                | 25     | 5.50%   |                | 27    | 8.00%   |                | 19      | 3.50%   |                |         |
| Fishing                                                    | Baseline    | 24       | 4.20%   | 5.9 ↑          | 74     | 9.20%   | -7 ↓           | 81    | 11.50%  | -1.6 ↓         | 89      | 13.70%  | 6 ↑            |         |
|                                                            | Endline     | 51       | 10.10%  |                | 10     | 2.20%   |                | 33    | 9.90%   |                | 105     | 19.70%  |                |         |
| Portering                                                  | Baseline    | 67       | 11.70%  | 5.2 ↑          | 163    | 20.20%  | 11 ↑           | 147   | 20.90%  | 1.3 ↑          | 158     | 24.30%  | -11.4 ↓        |         |
|                                                            | Endline     | 86       | 16.90%  |                | 140    | 31.20%  |                | 75    | 22.20%  |                | 68      | 12.90%  |                |         |
| Commercial Sexual Exploitation                             | Baseline    | 5        | 0.90%   | 1.1 ↑          | 12     | 1.50%   | 0.6 ↑          | 10    | 1.40%   | -0.5 ↓         | 3       | 0.46%   | 0.34 ↑         |         |
|                                                            | Endline     | 10       | 2.00%   |                | 10     | 2.10%   |                | 3     | 0.90%   |                | 4       | 0.80%   |                |         |
| Manufacturing                                              | Baseline    | 9        | 1.60%   | -0.7 ↓         | 11     | 1.40%   | -0.7 ↓         | 10    | 1.40%   | -0.9 ↓         | 8       | 1.23%   | -0.53 ↓        |         |
|                                                            | Endline     | 4        | 0.90%   |                | 3      | 0.70%   |                | 2     | 0.50%   |                | 4       | 0.70%   |                |         |
| Construction                                               | Baseline    | 19       | 3.30%   | 0.4 ↑          | 31     | 3.80%   | -0.2 ↓         | 28    | 4.00%   | -2.6 ↓         | 31      | 4.76%   | -2.96 ↓        |         |
|                                                            | Endline     | 19       | 3.70%   |                | 16     | 3.60%   |                | 5     | 1.40%   |                | 10      | 1.80%   |                |         |
| Baseline: Total count children who experienced trafficking |             | 573      | 100.00% |                | 807    |         | 100.00%        |       | 702     |                | 100.00% | 651     |                | 100.00% |
| Endline: Total count children who experienced trafficking  |             | 506      | 100.00% |                | 448    |         | 100.00%        |       | 337     |                | 100.00% | 529     |                | 100.00% |

↑ Increase in percentage points

↓ Decrease in percentage points between baseline and endline

Cell shading highlights changes (increase or decrease) between baseline and endline which are 5 percentage points or larger

events reported in the trading and vending labor sector also had large decreases of 39 and 35 percentage points in Kambia and Kono respectively, as well as a 25 percentage point decrease in Kenema and a reduction by 23 percentage points in Kailahun.

**Kailahun:** In Kailahun, the largest decreases reported were in Agricultural work (69% at baseline, 23% at endline, 46 percentage point decrease), Domestic Work (90% at baseline, 45% at endline, 39 percentage point decrease), and Trading/Vending activities (32% at baseline, 9% at endline, 23 percentage point decrease). There were also small reductions (between 0.85 and 3.61 percentage points) reported in the other non-hazardous labor sectors.

**Kambia:** Kambia saw nearly identical reductions in child trafficking events within the Domestic Work (96% at baseline 39% at endline, 57 percentage point decrease) and Agricultural work (76% at baseline, 20% at endline, 56 percentage point decrease) sectors. Trading/Vending activities were also reported to be greatly reduced, (52% at baseline 12% at endline, 39 percentage point decrease). The other non-hazardous labor sectors saw smaller reductions (between 0.47 and 5.8 percentage point decreases); Motorcycle taxi driving (6% at baseline, <1% at endline), Working in workshops (3% at baseline, <1% at endline), and Begging (8% at baseline, <1% at endline).

**Kenema:** Child trafficking events within trading and vending activities was greatly reduced in Kenema (32% at baseline to 9% at endline, 25 percentage point decrease). Significant reductions were also seen in the Agricultural work sector (48% at baseline to 29% at endline, 19 percentage point decrease) and Domestic work (87% at baseline to 77% at endline, 11 percentage point decrease). Similar to the other study districts, there were small reductions in child trafficking events within other non-hazardous labor sectors.

**Kono:** Within Kono, child trafficking events were reported to be greatly reduced within the agricultural work sector (66% at baseline to 23% at endline, 44 percentage point decrease), trading and vending sector (42% at baseline to 7% at endline, 35 percentage point

decrease) and domestic work (96% at baseline to 64% at endline, 32 percentage point decrease). There were smaller reductions in the child trafficking events reported in other non-hazardous labor sectors of between 1.99 and 3.97 percentage points.

## DANGEROUS LABOR CONDITIONS

Among children who experienced child trafficking, it was commonly reported that they worked within dangerous labor conditions, such as carrying heavy loads, operating dangerous machinery, and exposure to potentially harmful conditions. Overall, carrying heavy loads, akin to portering, was the most prominent dangerous labor condition among children who had experienced child trafficking in Kailahun, Kenema, and Kono (Table 8). Whereas exposure to extreme cold, heat, or humidity was the most prevalent dangerous labor conditions among children who experienced child trafficking in Kambia, and the second most prevalent dangerous labor conditions among children in the other three districts. Exposure to dust, fumes, or gas was the third most prevalent dangerous labor conditions across all districts.

**Kailahun:** 42% (211) of children who experienced child trafficking reported the dangerous condition of carrying heavy loads. Whereas 40% (202) reported being subjected to extreme cold, heat, or humidity. Exposure to dust, fumes, or gas was reported by 35% (179). Exposure to loud noise or vibration was commonly reported among children who experienced child trafficking at a rate of 28% (141), and 24% (122) reported operating heavy machinery or using dangerous tools.

**Table 7. Count and percentage child trafficking events within non-hazardous-labor sectors: Percentage point changes between baseline and endline**

| Non-Hazardous Labor Sectors                                | Study Phase | Kailahun |         |                | Kenema |         |                | Kono  |         |                | Kambia |         |                |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|----------|---------|----------------|--------|---------|----------------|-------|---------|----------------|--------|---------|----------------|
|                                                            |             | Count    | Percent | % Point Change | Count  | Percent | % Point Change | Count | Percent | % Point Change | Count  | Percent | % Point Change |
| Domestic work                                              | Baseline    | 498      | 86.91%  | -39.11 ↓       | 704    | 87.24%  | -10.68 ↓       | 675   | 96.15%  | -31.76 ↓       | 624    | 95.90%  | -56.8 ↓        |
|                                                            | Endline     | 242      | 47.80%  |                | 343    | 76.56%  |                | 217   | 64.39%  |                | 207    | 39.10%  |                |
| Agricultural work                                          | Baseline    | 396      | 69.11%  | -45.81 ↓       | 386    | 47.83%  | -18.81 ↓       | 464   | 66.10%  | -43.55 ↓       | 494    | 75.90%  | -56.4 ↓        |
|                                                            | Endline     | 118      | 23.30%  |                | 130    | 29.02%  |                | 76    | 22.55%  |                | 103    | 19.50%  |                |
| Trading/vending activities                                 | Baseline    | 182      | 31.76%  | -23.26 ↓       | 274    | 33.95%  | -25.24 ↓       | 295   | 42.02%  | -34.6 ↓        | 335    | 51.50%  | -39.2 ↓        |
|                                                            | Endline     | 43       | 8.50%   |                | 39     | 8.71%   |                | 25    | 7.42%   |                | 65     | 12.30%  |                |
| Motorcycle taxi driving                                    | Baseline    | 6        | 1.05%   | -0.85 ↓        | 17     | 2.11%   | -1.89 ↓        | 16    | 2.28%   | -2.28 ↓        | 39     | 5.99%   | -5.8 ↓         |
|                                                            | Endline     | 1        | 0.20%   |                | 1      | 0.22%   |                | 0     | 0%      |                | 1      | 0.19%   |                |
| Workshop (crafts, mechanics)                               | Baseline    | 23       | 4.01%   | -3.61 ↓        | 24     | 2.97%   | -2.97 ↓        | 32    | 4.56%   | -3.97 ↓        | 22     | 3.38%   | -2.81 ↓        |
|                                                            | Endline     | 2        | 0.40%   |                | 0      | 0.00%   |                | 2     | 0.59%   |                | 3      | 0.57%   |                |
| Begging                                                    | Baseline    | 11       | 1.92%   | -1.52 ↓        | 32     | 3.97%   | -3.97 ↓        | 14    | 1.99%   | -1.99 ↓        | 8      | 1.23%   | -0.47 ↓        |
|                                                            | Endline     | 2        | 0.40%   |                | 0      | 0.00%   |                | 0     | 0%      |                | 4      | 0.76%   |                |
| Baseline: Total count children who experienced trafficking |             | 573      | 100.00% |                | 807    | 100.00% |                | 702   | 100.00% |                | 651    | 100.00% |                |
| Endline: Total count children who experienced trafficking  |             | 506      | 100.00% |                | 448    | 100.00% |                | 337   | 100.00% |                | 529    | 100.00% |                |

↓ Decrease in percentage points between baseline and endline

Cell shading highlights decreases between baseline and endline which are 10 percentage points or larger

**Kambia:** Among children who had experienced child trafficking, 42% (225) reported exposure to extreme cold, heat or humidity. 33% (172) reported being subjected to dust, fumes, or gas. Carrying heavy loads was reported by 22% (106) of children who have experienced child trafficking. Whereas 20% (106) reported being involved with operating heavy machinery or dangerous tools, and 14% (75) encountered loud noise or vibration.

**Kenema:** 50% (224) of children who had experienced child trafficking reported carrying heavy loads. Other dangerous conditions reported by children in Kenema were significantly lower than in the other districts. For example, 22% (98) of children who had experienced child trafficking were reported to have been exposed to extreme cold, heat, or humidity, whereas 15% (68) of children reported exposure to dust, fumes, or gas. 10% (44) reported being subjected to loud noise and vibrations, and 9% (42) reported being involved with operating heavy equipment or dangerous tools.

**Kono:** Children who had experienced child trafficking from Kono reported the highest rate of carrying heavy loads at 53% (180). Exposure to extreme cold, heat, or humidity (38%, 128) and exposure to dust, fumes, or gas (35%, 119) were next most reported. 23% (77) reported operating heavy machinery or using dangerous tools, and 12% (41) were exposed to loud noise or vibration.

posure to extreme cold, heat, or humidity (38 percentage point increase), and exposure to dust, fumes, or gas (up by 35 percentage points). Kailahun also reported large increases in reporting of exposure to dust, fumes, or gas (increase by 33 percentage points), as well as exposure to loud noise (up by 26 percentage points) and reports of children operating heavy machinery (increase by 21 percentage points). Kambia and Kenema similarly saw the largest increases in exposure to dust, fumes, or gas (up by 23 percentage points in Kambia and 14 percentage points in Kenema) and exposure to load noise (12 percentage point increase in Kambia and 9 percentage point increase in Kenema).

**Carrying heavy loads:** The rate of children reported to be carrying heavy loads reduced significantly in Kambia. (from 46% at baseline to 22% at endline, 24 percentage point decrease) and in Kenema (64% at baseline to 50% at endline, 14 percentage point decrease); and slightly decreased in Kailahun (47% at baseline to 42% at endline, 5 percentage point decrease). However, there was a marked rise in rates within Kono (19% at baseline to 53% at endline, 35 percentage point increase).

**Operating heavy machinery:** Among children who experienced child trafficking, reports of operating heavy machinery or working with dangerous tools increased in all study districts from baseline to endline. Kailahun reported an increase from 3% in baseline to 24% in endline (21 percentage point increase). Kambia reported a jump from 14% in baseline to 20% in endline (increase by 6 percentage

CHANGES IN  
DANGEROUS LABOR  
CONDITIONS SINCE BASELINE

The largest reductions between baseline and endline in dangerous labor conditions were in carrying heavy loads [Table 9]. In three districts, Kambia, Kenema, and Kailahun, there were decreases of between 24 and 5 percentage points. In addition, Kambia had a small decrease in exposure to extreme cold, heat, or humidity (decrease of 4 percentage points) and Kenema had a small decrease in reports of operating heavy machinery or working with dangerous tools (decrease of 2 percentage points).

All other dangerous working conditions were reported to increase between baseline and endline, across districts. Kono reported the largest increases in children reporting work in dangerous conditions, specifically in carrying heavy loads (35 percentage point increase), ex-

Table 8. Dangerous Labor Conditions among Children who Experienced Child Trafficking (Heatmap)

|                                                         | Kailahun<br>(N=506) | Kenema<br>(N=448) | Kambia<br>(N=529) | Kono<br>(N=337) |
|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
|                                                         | % (n)               | % (n)             | % (n)             | % (n)           |
| Carrying heavy loads                                    | 42% (211)           | 50% (224)         | 22% (117)         | 54% (180)       |
| Operated heavy machinery or worked with dangerous tools | 24% (122)           | 9% (41)           | 20% (106)         | 23% (77)        |
| Exposure to dust, fumes, or gas                         | 35% (179)           | 15% (68)          | 33% (172)         | 35% (119)       |
| Exposure to extreme cold, heat, or humidity             | 40% (202)           | 22% (98)          | 42% (225)         | 38% (128)       |
| Exposure to loud noise or vibration                     | 28% (141)           | 10% (44)          | 14% (75)          | 12% (41)        |

Note: Darker shading indicates larger percentage, lighter shading indicates smaller percentage



points), Kono was reported to shift from 0% in baseline to 23% in endline. Kenema had a 2 percentage point decrease from 9% at baseline to 11% at endline.

**Exposure to dust, fumes or gas:** Rates of exposure to dust, gas, or fumes increased significantly for all study districts between baseline and endline: Kailahun (from 2% at baseline to 35% at endline, 34 percentage point increase), Kenema (from 2% at baseline to 15% at endline, 14 percentage point increase), Kono (from 0% at baseline to 35% at endline), and Kambia (10% at baseline to 33% at endline, 23 percentage point increase).

**Exposure to extreme cold, heat, or humidity:** In three study districts, there was a marked increase in exposure to extreme temperatures: Kailahun (31% at baseline to 40% at endline, 9 percentage point increase), Kenema (11% at baseline to 22% at endline, 10 percentage point increase) and Kono (0% at baseline to 38% at endline). There was a slight decrease in Kambia (47% at baseline to 42% at baseline, 5 percentage point decrease).

**Exposure to loud noise or vibration:** There were increases in exposure to loud noise and vibrations in all study districts between baseline and endline: Kailahun (2% at baseline to 28% at endline, increase of 26 percentage points), Kenema (1% at baseline to 10% at endline, 9 percentage point increase), Kono (0% at baseline to 12% at endline), and Kambia (2% at baseline to 14% at endline, 12 percentage point increase).

## Exploitation that Involved Force, Fraud, or Coercion

Force, fraud, or coercion is often referred to as “means” in the context of classifying human trafficking. Although force, fraud, or coercion is often experienced by children in the context of a trafficking situation, it is not required for classifying human trafficking among children experiencing commercial sexual exploitation or engagement in hazardous labor sectors, understanding how children who are being trafficked also experience force, fraud, or coercion

is important. For example, deceiving children entering a trafficking situation or keeping them under control during the exploitative experience can be particularly harmful and result in potentially lasting impacts on child survivors’ well-being.

This section reports on the types of force, fraud, or coercion reported among children in the endline study who experienced child trafficking. Types of force, fraud, or coercion include: being forced to work for non-household members, working to repay debts, working for little to no wages, performing work that was not initially agreed upon, begging for alms, engaging in illegal activities, and/or being forced to work to pay school fees.

Children in the endline study, as in the baseline study, commonly reported experiencing force, fraud, or coercion within the context of a child trafficking situation. Overall, being forced to work for someone who is not a member of the child’s household was the most reported “means” of exploitation among children in 2 districts (Kambia and Kenema). Being forced to work outside the home was the most reported “means” of exploitation among children in Kailahun and Kono and was the second most reported type among children in the other districts. Being forced to work to pay school fees was also very commonly reported, especially among children who had experienced trafficking in Kailahun and Kambia.

**Kailahun:** Among children who experienced child trafficking, 32% (163) reported working for little or no wages, 30% (154) were forced to work to pay school fees, and 27% (135) were forced to work for someone outside their household. In addition, 21% (105) were subjected to work that was different from what was originally agreed upon. 5% (25) of

**Table 9. Dangerous labor conditions: Count and percentage of child trafficking events by condition, percentage point changes between baseline and endline**

| Dangerous Labor Conditions                                 | Study Phase | Kailahun |         |                | Kenema |         |                | Kono  |         |                | Kambia |         |                |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|----------|---------|----------------|--------|---------|----------------|-------|---------|----------------|--------|---------|----------------|
|                                                            |             | Count    | %       | % Point Change | Count  | %       | % Point Change | Count | %       | % Point Change | Count  | %       | % Point Change |
| Carrying heavy loads                                       | Baseline    | 268      | 46.77%  | -5.17 ↓        | 516    | 63.94%  | -14.04 ↓       | 133   | 18.95   | 34.55 ↑        | 302    | 46.39%  | -24.29 ↓       |
|                                                            | Endline     | 211      | 41.60%  |                | 224    | 49.90%  |                | 180   | 53.50%  |                | 117    | 22.10%  |                |
| Operated heavy machinery                                   | Baseline    | 15       | 2.62%   | 21.38 ↑        | 89     | 11.03%  | -1.83 ↓        | 0     | 0       | 23 ↑           | 88     | 13.52%  | 6.48 ↑         |
|                                                            | Endline     | 122      | 24.00%  |                | 41     | 9.20%   |                | 77    | 23.00%  |                | 106    | 20.00%  |                |
| Dust, fumes, gas                                           | Baseline    | 11       | 1.92%   | 33.48 ↑        | 12     | 1.49%   | 13.61 ↑        | 0     | 0       | 35.2 ↑         | 64     | 9.83%   | 22.67 ↑        |
|                                                            | Endline     | 179      | 35.40%  |                | 68     | 15.10%  |                | 119   | 35.20%  |                | 172    | 32.50%  |                |
| Extreme cold, heat, or humidity                            | Baseline    | 177      | 30.89%  | 9.01 ↑         | 92     | 11.40%  | 10.4 ↑         | 0     | 0       | 38.1 ↑         | 305    | 46.85%  | -4.45 ↓        |
|                                                            | Endline     | 202      | 39.90%  |                | 98     | 21.80%  |                | 128   | 38.10%  |                | 225    | 42.40%  |                |
| Exposure to loud noise or vibration                        | Baseline    | 13       | 2.27%   | 25.53 ↑        | 7      | 0.87%   | 8.83 ↑         | 0     | 0       | 12.1 ↑         | 13     | 2.00%   | 12.30 ↑        |
|                                                            | Endline     | 141      | 27.80%  |                | 44     | 9.70%   |                | 41    | 12.10%  |                | 75     | 14.30%  |                |
| Baseline: Total count children who experienced trafficking |             | 573      | 100.00% |                | 807    | 100.00% |                | 702   | 100.00% |                | 651    | 100.00% |                |
| Endline: Total count children who experienced trafficking  |             | 506      | 100.00% |                | 448    | 100.00% |                | 337   | 100.00% |                | 529    | 100.00% |                |

↑ Increase in percentage points   ↓ Decrease in percentage points between baseline and endline   Cell shading highlights changes (increase or decrease) between baseline and endline which are 9 percentage points or larger



children reported being forced to work to pay a debt.

**Kambia:** In Kambia, 31% (161) of children who had experienced child trafficking were forced to work for someone outside the household, with 24% (125) working for little or no wages. Additionally, 18% (96) reported being forced to work to cover school fees. 5% (24) of children reported being forced to work to pay a debt.

**Kenema:** 25% (112) of children who had experienced child trafficking reported that they were forced to work for non-household members, while 21% (93 children) worked for little to no wages. Children were also reported to be forced to work to pay school fees, with 9% (42) affected. In addition, 7% (30) of children reported being forced to work to pay a debt.

**Kono:** In Kono, the percentage of children reporting experiencing “means” during their trafficking situation was generally lower compared to other districts. 20% (69) of children who experienced child trafficking report working for little or no wages and 8% (26) reported being forced to work for non-household members.

## Changes in Experiences of Force, Fraud and Coercion since Baseline

In comparing experiences of force, fraud, and coercion among children who experienced child trafficking, significant reductions were seen in several forms of coercion and control (Table 11). The largest reductions were in reports of children “being forced to work for someone who is not a member of their household”: Kono had a 25 percentage point decrease, and Kailahun indicated a 13 percentage point decrease. The next largest reductions were in “worked outside of the home for little or no wages,” which had a 13 percentage point decrease in Kambia and an 11 percentage point decrease in Kono. Reports of children being “made to work to pay school fees” also decreased in Kono by 11 percentage points and reduced by 10 percentage points in Kenema. Kailahun had a small decrease, 6 percentage points, in the number of children who reported that they were “made to work to repay a debt. There was only one increase which was larger than 5 percentage points different from endline, this was in Kailahun, which reported a 7 percentage point increase in children reporting work “outside of the home for little to no wages.

**Forced to work for someone who is not a member of the household:** There was a significant decrease by 25 percentage points in Kono (33% at baseline and 8% at endline) and Kailahun with a decrease by 13 percentage points (39% at baseline and 27% at endline). Kambia had a slight increase of 3 percentage points (28% at baseline and 31% at endline). Kenema nearly stayed the same, with a very small 0.06 percentage point increase (24% at baseline 25% at endline).

**Forced to work outside of the home for little or no wages:** There were notable decreases in Kono (32% at baseline to 20% at endline, 11 percentage point decrease), Kambia (37% at baseline to 24% at endline, 13 percentage point decrease). Kenema had a slight decrease of 3 percentage points (24% at baseline to 21% at endline). Kailahun (25% at baseline to 32% at endline) showed an increase of 7 percentage points among children who experienced child trafficking reporting work outside of the home for little or no wages.

**Forced or made to work to pay for their school fees:** There was a decrease in children reporting being forced to work to pay school fees in all study districts. Kono (15% at baseline to 4% at endline) and Kenema (20% at baseline to 9% at endline) showed the largest decreases of 11 percentage points. Kambia had a slight decrease by 4 percentage points (22% at baseline to 18% at endline). Kailahun nearly stayed the same reporting a very small decrease of 0.03 percentage points (31% at baseline to 30% at endline).

**Performing work that was not agreed upon:** Performing work that was not agreed upon (e.g., told that they would

**Table 10. Force, Fraud and Coercion within CT Experiences (Heatmap)**

|                                                                                                        | Kailahun<br>N=506 | Kambia<br>N= 529 | Kenema<br>N= 448 | Kono<br>N= 337 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|
|                                                                                                        | % (n)             | % (n)            | % (n)            | % (n)          |
| Forced to work for someone who is not a member of this household                                       | 27% (135)         | 31% (161)        | 25% (112)        | 8% (26)        |
| Forced to work to repay a debt with an employer or recruiter                                           | 5% (25)           | 5% (24)          | 7% (30)          | <1% (1)        |
| Worked outside the home for little or no wages                                                         | 32% (163)         | 24% (125)        | 21% (93)         | 20% (69)       |
| Performed work that was not agreed upon (e.g., hired for one type of work, but ended up doing another) | 21% (105)         | 3% (13)          | 6% (26)          | 4% (12)        |
| Forced or made to beg for alms                                                                         | 3% (13)           | 4% (22)          | 3% (15)          | 1% (4)         |
| Performed work that was illegal or immoral (such as stealing, prostitution)                            | 1% (4)            | 1% (4)           | 2% (8)           | 2% (6)         |
| Forced or made to work to pay for their school fees                                                    | 30% (154)         | 18% (96)         | 9% (42)          | 4% (13)        |
| Not allowed to leave or contact their parents                                                          | 3% (15)           | <1% (2)          | 4% (16)          | 11% (6)        |

Note: Darker shading indicates larger percentage, lighter shading indicates smaller percentage

be doing one job but then made to do something else) remained nearly the same between baseline and endline (between 1 to 2 percentage point changes for each district). Children who experienced trafficking in Kailahun continued to report performing work that was not agreed upon (19% at baseline to 21% at endline) and less common in the other study districts: Kenema (5% at baseline to 6% at endline), Kono (6% at baseline to 4% at endline), and Kambia (4% at baseline to 3% at endline).

**Forced to work to repay a debt with an employer or recruiter:** Rates of children reporting being forced to work to repay a debt with an employer remained nearly the same between baseline and endline, reporting 1 to 3 percentage point changes in Kono (3% at baseline to <1% at endline), Kenema (5% at baseline to 7% at endline), and Kambia (3% at baseline to 5% at endline). Kailahun had a slightly larger decrease in children reporting being forced to repay a debt at 6 percentage points (11% at baseline to 5% at endline).

Less commonly reported forms of force, fraud, and coercion, such as “Forced or made to beg for alms” or “Performed work that was illegal or immoral,” were relatively unchanged at endline at rates of 4% or less, with <1 to 3 percentage point changes per district.

## Excessive Hours Worked

Excessive work hours reported by children who experienced child labor were common (Table 10). Classification of “excessive” hours varies according to age groups, such that young children (5–11) are classified as working “excessive hours” if they are engaged in economic activities for at least 1 hour per week, whereas older children (15–17) are classified as working excessive hours if they work at least 43 hours per week. Children who are between 12–14 years old are classified as working excessive hours if they are engaged in economic activities for at least 14 hours per week.

Overall, within all study districts, there was a significant reduction in reports of excessive hours worked among children who had experienced child labor (Table 10). When comparing reports of excessive hours between the three age groups, younger children (5–11-years-old) had the largest reductions, between 29 to 48 percentage points, in all districts, middle children (12–14

years-old) also reported large reductions of between 13 to 27 percentage points, in three districts (Kenema, Kono and Kambia). However, in three districts, (Kailahun, Kenema and Kambia) older children (15 to 17-years-old) who had experienced child labor reported an increase in engaging in excessive working hours with an 11 to 12 percentage point increase. In Kailahun, among 12–14-year-old children who experienced child labor there was an increase in excessive work hours by 11 percentage points from baseline to endline. Generally, the results indicate a reversal of the situation at baseline, where younger children who had experienced child labor were more often working excessive hours compared with older children.

**Children Aged 5–11:** At endline, among children in the youngest age group (5–11 years) who had experienced child labor, a small percentage (between 7–13%) were reported to be working excessive hours. In Kono, 13% (69 children) who had experienced child labor reported working excessive hours, 7% (40 children) in Kailahun, and 6% in Kenema (53 children) and Kambia (60 children).

### Comparing Baseline and Endline

Across all study districts, there was a large decrease among 5–11 year old children who experienced child labor reporting working excessive hours between baseline and endline: Kailahun had a reduction of 34 percentage points from 41% (141 children) at baseline to 7% (40 children) at endline, Kenema had a reduction of 29 percentage points from 35% (168 children) at baseline to 6% (53 children) at endline, Kono had a reduction by 31 percentage points from 44% (194 children) at baseline to 13% (69 children) at endline and reports of excessive hours among young children who had experienced child labor in Kambia reduced by 48 per-

**Table 11. Force, Fraud, and Coercion: Count and percentage child trafficking events, percentage point changes between baseline and endline**

| Force, Fraud or Coercion                                   | Study Phase | Kailahun |         |                | Kenema |         |                | Kono  |         |                | Kambia |         |                |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|----------|---------|----------------|--------|---------|----------------|-------|---------|----------------|--------|---------|----------------|
|                                                            |             | Count    | %       | % Point Change | Count  | %       | % Point Change | Count | %       | % Point Change | Count  | %       | % Point Change |
| Forced to work for someone who is not a household member   | Baseline    | 226      | 39.44%  | -12.74 ↓       | 197    | 24.41%  | 0.06 ↑         | 230   | 32.76%  | -25.06 ↓       | 181    | 27.80%  | 2.7 ↑          |
|                                                            | Endline     | 135      | 26.70%  |                | 112    | 25.00%  |                | 26    | 7.70%   |                | 161    | 30.50%  |                |
| Forced to work to repay a debt with an employer            | Baseline    | 64       | 11.17%  | -6.27 ↓        | 43     | 5.33%   | 1.37 ↑         | 22    | 3.13%   | -2.73 ↓        | 18     | 2.76%   | 1.74 ↑         |
|                                                            | Endline     | 25       | 4.90%   |                | 30     | 6.70%   |                | 1     | 0.40%   |                | 24     | 4.50%   |                |
| Worked outside the home for little or no wages             | Baseline    | 146      | 25.48%  | 6.62 ↑         | 194    | 24.04%  | -3.34 ↓        | 221   | 31.48%  | -11.18 ↓       | 238    | 36.56%  | -13.06 ↓       |
|                                                            | Endline     | 163      | 32.10%  |                | 93     | 20.70%  |                | 69    | 20.30%  |                | 125    | 23.50%  |                |
| Performed work not agreed upon                             | Baseline    | 108      | 18.85%  | 1.95 ↑         | 41     | 5.08%   | 0.62 ↑         | 40    | 5.70%   | -2.00 ↓        | 28     | 4.30%   | -1.8 ↓         |
|                                                            | Endline     | 105      | 20.80%  |                | 26     | 5.70%   |                | 12    | 3.70%   |                | 13     | 2.50%   |                |
| Forced or made to beg for alms                             | Baseline    | 24       | 4.19%   | -1.59 ↓        | 40     | 4.96%   | -1.66 ↓        | 28    | 3.99%   | -2.79 ↓        | 15     | 2.30%   | 1.8 ↑          |
|                                                            | Endline     | 13       | 2.60%   |                | 15     | 3.30%   |                | 4     | 1.20%   |                | 22     | 4.10%   |                |
| Performed work that was illegal or immoral                 | Baseline    | 17       | 2.97%   | -2.17 ↓        | 12     | 1.49%   | 0.41 ↑         | 12    | 1.71%   | -0.01 ↓        | 12     | 1.84%   | -1.14 ↓        |
|                                                            | Endline     | 4        | 0.80%   |                | 8      | 1.90%   |                | 6     | 1.70%   |                | 4      | 0.70%   |                |
| Forced or made to work to pay for their school fees        | Baseline    | 176      | 30.72%  | -0.032 ↓       | 160    | 19.83%  | -10.43 ↓       | 105   | 14.96%  | -11.06 ↓       | 145    | 22.27%  | -4.07 ↓        |
|                                                            | Endline     | 154      | 30.40%  |                | 42     | 9.40%   |                | 13    | 3.90%   |                | 96     | 18.20%  |                |
| Not allowed to leave or contact their parents              | Baseline    | 11       | 1.92%   | 1.04 ↑         | 48     | 5.95%   | -2.38 ↓        | 16    | 2.28%   | -0.50 ↓        | 5      | 0.77%   | -0.39 ↓        |
|                                                            | Endline     | 15       | 2.96%   |                | 16     | 3.57%   |                | 6     | 1.78%   |                | 2      | 0.38%   |                |
| Baseline: Total count children who experienced trafficking |             | 573      | 100.00% |                | 807    | 100.00% |                | 702   | 100.00% |                | 651    | 100.00% |                |
| Endline: Total count children who experienced trafficking  |             | 506      | 100.00% |                | 448    | 100.00% |                | 337   | 100.00% |                | 529    | 100.00% |                |

↑ Increase in percentage points   ↓ Decrease in percentage points between baseline and endline   Cell shading highlights changes (increase or decrease) between baseline and endline which are 9 percentage points or larger

centage points, from 54% (180 children) at baseline to 6% (60 children) at endline.

**Children Aged 12–14:** At endline, among children in the middle age group who experienced child labor, the percentage who reported working excessive hours was slightly more than the rate among young children in all districts except for Kono. 15% (36) reported working excessive hours in Kenema, 23% (48) in Kailahun, 14% (53) in Kambia, and 9% (19) in Kono.

#### Comparing Baseline and Endline

Between baseline and endline rates of excessive hours worked among children aged 12–14 who experienced child labor decreased in Kambia by 27 percentage points [41% (87 children) at baseline to 14% (53 children) at endline], Kono by 25 percentage points [from 34% (89 children) at baseline to 9% (19 children) at endline] and Kenema by 13 percentage points [from 28% (77 children) at baseline to 15% (36 children) at endline. Among 12–14-year-old children who experience child labor in Kailahun, there was an increase in excessive work hours reported by 18 percentage points, from 5% (8 children) at baseline to 23% (48 children) at endline.

**Children Aged 15–17:** At endline, in Kambia, 17% (32) of children between 15–17 years old who experienced child labor reported working excessive hours, 15% (30) in Kenema, and 11% in Kailahun (21) and 8% (11) in Kono. Generally, the percentage of children who had experienced child labor within this age group and reported excessive working hours is similar to that of middle-aged children.

#### Comparing Baseline and Endline

The proportion of older children who had experienced child labor and engaged in working excessive hours increased across three districts between baseline and endline: in Kailahun by 11 percentage points [from 0% (0 children) at baseline to 11% (21) at endline], in Kenema by 12 percentage points, [from 3% (8 children) at baseline to 15% (30 children) at endline], and Kambia by 12 percentage points [from 5% (11 children) at baseline to 17% (32 children) at endline]. In Kono, the proportion of 15–17-year-old children who had experienced child labor and reported excessive hours

increased slightly at endline by 4 percentage points from baseline. However, given the small differences in the number of 5–17-year-old children who experienced child labor reporting excessive working hours between baseline (n=11) and endline (n=13) the percentage point difference does not have practical significance. Thus, among older children who experienced child labor in Kono, reports of excessive working hours remained the same between baseline and endline.

**Table 12. Excessive Work Hours by Age Group: Count and percentage of child trafficking events, percentage point changes between baseline and endline**

| Excessive Hours Worked by Age Group |       |     |                |                     |       |     |                |                     |       |     |                |                        |       |     |                |
|-------------------------------------|-------|-----|----------------|---------------------|-------|-----|----------------|---------------------|-------|-----|----------------|------------------------|-------|-----|----------------|
| 5 to 11 years old                   |       |     |                | 12 to 14            |       |     |                | 15 to 17            |       |     |                | Total (5-17 years old) |       |     |                |
| Study Phase                         | Count | %   | % Point Change | Study Phase         | Count | %   | % Point Change | Study Phase         | Count | %   | % Point Change | Study Phase            | Count | %   | % Point Change |
| <b>Kailahun</b>                     |       |     |                |                     |       |     |                |                     |       |     |                |                        |       |     |                |
| Baseline CL (n=343)                 | 141   | 41% |                | Baseline CL (n=160) | 8     | 5%  |                | Baseline CL (n=219) | 0     | 0%  |                | Baseline CL (N=722)    | 149   | 21% |                |
| Endline CL (n=585)                  | 40    | 7%  | -34 ↓          | Endline CL (n=208)  | 48    | 23% | 18 ↑           | Endline CL (n=200)  | 21    | 11% | 11 ↑           | Endline CL (N=993)     | 109   | 11% | -11 ↓          |
| <b>Kenema</b>                       |       |     |                |                     |       |     |                |                     |       |     |                |                        |       |     |                |
| Baseline CL (n=482)                 | 168   | 35% |                | Baseline CL (n=274) | 77    | 28% |                | Baseline CL (n=304) | 8     | 3%  |                | Baseline CL (N=1060)   | 253   | 24% |                |
| Endline CL (n=817)                  | 53    | 6%  | -29 ↓          | Endline CL (n=240)  | 36    | 15% | -13 ↓          | Endline CL (n=196)  | 30    | 15% | 12 ↑           | Endline CL (N=1253)    | 119   | 9%  | -15 ↓          |
| <b>Kono</b>                         |       |     |                |                     |       |     |                |                     |       |     |                |                        |       |     |                |
| Baseline CL (n=442)                 | 194   | 44% |                | Baseline CL (n=265) | 89    | 34% |                | Baseline CL (n=291) | 13    | 4%  |                | Baseline CL (N=998)    | 296   | 30% |                |
| Endline CL (n=547)                  | 69    | 13% | -31 ↓          | Endline CL (n=203)  | 19    | 9%  | -25 ↓          | Endline CL (n=131)  | 11    | 8%  | 4 ↑            | Endline CL (N=881)     | 99    | 11% | -19 ↓          |
| <b>Kambia</b>                       |       |     |                |                     |       |     |                |                     |       |     |                |                        |       |     |                |
| Baseline CL (n=334)                 | 180   | 54% |                | Baseline CL (n=211) | 87    | 41% |                | Baseline CL (n=233) | 11    | 5%  |                | Baseline CL (N=778)    | 278   | 36% |                |
| Endline CL (n=938)                  | 60    | 6%  | -48 ↓          | Endline CL (n=367)  | 53    | 14% | -27 ↓          | Endline CL (n=191)  | 32    | 17% | 12 ↑           | Endline CL (N=1496)    | 145   | 10% | -26 ↓          |

↑ Increase in percentage points between baseline and endline

↓ Decrease in percentage points between baseline and endline



# KEY QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

The qualitative findings section reports on respondents' perspectives about: 1) changes in national-level anti-trafficking initiatives and policies since 2019, 2) effectiveness and impact of new local policies and ACT bylaws related to addressing child trafficking, 3) implementation challenges, and 4) recommendations to strengthen prevention and response to child trafficking and exploitation.

## Changes in Anti-Trafficking Policies and Initiatives Since 2019

Overall, respondents suggested that since 2019, there has been a notable increase in awareness and support for anti-trafficking policy initiatives at the national level. Also, key informants and adult community members reported generally positive perceptions of new national legislation and national-level initiatives addressing child trafficking. Stakeholders indicated that overall, the new laws were perceived as contributing to reductions in child trafficking and are useful for providing guidance intended to protect children from trafficking, abuse, and other forms of exploitation. The primary changes noted by respondents at the national level were: 1) increased awareness about anti-trafficking policies and initiatives (such as an increase in awareness about national anti-trafficking laws, increased awareness raising activities through broad communications, and increase in training events), 2) impacts on actions/practices for addressing child trafficking (such as through establishment of a trust fund for survivors). This section also highlights respondents' views on gaps in the implementation of national-level anti-trafficking laws.

*"My assessment is that at the national level, there has been tremendous effort, progresses and developments. These efforts have helped to strengthen the fight against child trafficking. Major progresses are the establishment of the anti-human trafficking secretariat, the development of the new law [anti-trafficking law of 2022], the development of the ministry of gender and children's affairs as an independent entity to focus mainly on child protection."*

— Child protection officer, Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, Man, Freetown, KII Respondent #10

### INCREASED AWARENESS ABOUT ANTI-TRAFFICKING POLICIES AND INITIATIVES

**Increased awareness about national laws, the Anti-Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act (2022), and the Child Rights Act (2022)<sup>1</sup>.** Respondents reported an overall increase in knowledge about new leg

islation aimed at reducing human trafficking and supporting child protection.

*"On the legislative ground, there is a law that was in acted which is the anti-human trafficking and migrants smuggling act 2022 that covers all forms of trafficking be it human or child trafficking internally or externally and we have the child right act which is a child protection policy that complements the law. There are also plans to develop harmonized bylaws that will guide community people and stakeholders in preventing and identifying child trafficking cases in these vulnerable communities. However, there is no law that was made just for child trafficking."*

— Member of National Anti-Trafficking Taskforce, Man, Freetown, KII Respondent #8

In a sign of increased awareness among the public, community members who participated in focus groups routinely described awareness of new national laws, especially the anti-trafficking law and the revised child rights act.

*"In this community, we have laws like the Child Rights Act and the Anti-Human Trafficking law that clearly prohibit child trafficking with punishments for anyone or parent we catch or suspect of such acts. You will pay a huge sum of money and also be charged and sentenced to prison. This has helped to minimize child trafficking in our community."*

— 75-year-old man, Farmer, community member, never attended school, Kambia district, Participant #3, FGD #8

Respondents emphasized messaging around the seriousness of child trafficking and punishments for people involved in child trafficking.

### AWARENESS RAISING THROUGH BROAD COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Community members described hearing about new national laws and punishments related to child trafficking violations through broad-based communication initiatives, such as radio and television ads, dramas, and religious services/prayer sessions at churches and mosques.

<sup>1</sup>At the time of data collection, the Child Rights Act of 2025 had not yet been passed. This Act, which is in force as of the time of writing this report, specifies protections for children experiencing child trafficking and explicitly references the 2022 Anti-Human Trafficking Act.



*“They have passed a law in parliament that if anyone is caught doing child trafficking, that person will face the law because it is a very big offence; we are hearing about it over the radio.”*

**— 38-year-old man, Trader, community member, attended school up to SSS, Kono district, Participant #4, FGD # 15**

*“Also, the government plays its own part with regards to the sensitization. We also have the media doing its own bit to ensure that knowledge on child trafficking cuts across the chiefdom. The media put out jingles to be aired on radio and broadcast on TV. It is through these means that we come to know about the punishment against perpetrators of child trafficking, fines levied and the laws concerning it.”*

**— 35-year-old man, community member, Kambia district, Participant #8, FGD #7**

Some respondents described ACT messaging being focused on increasing monitoring and careful consideration prior to sending a child to live in a menpikin placement.

*“Well for us here, we have our community radios, and every week, these radios broadcast the information about child trafficking. They go around informing people not to leave their children in the hands of a stranger thinking they’re going to help you raise your child. Even in the hands of your brother or sister that you don’t visit on a regular basis, you must not send your child away to them just because of your relations. So it’s a good thing that you people are also on the move, tracing cases like this. Because with the constant circulation of this message, there would be higher chances for the continual decrease in the occurrence of this issue.”*

**— Chiefdom Leader, Man, Kono district, KII Respondent #5**

#### **AWARENESS RAISING THROUGH TRAINING ABOUT CHILD TRAFFICKING**

In addition to broad-based communications, respondents noted that knowledge about laws were also shared through community meetings involving engagements with justice stakeholders (police) and local leaders. Some respondents also described an increase in available training and suggested that many stakeholders who regularly engage with anti-trafficking work have received training about child trafficking, anti-child trafficking laws, and related topics such as child rights and safeguarding.

*“... for every staff working in this ministry has undergone series of trainings on child right and safeguarding which also covers child trafficking and child labor.”*

**— Child Protection Officer, Ministry of Gender and Children’s Affairs, Man, Freetown, KII Respondent #10**  
Training for Justice Stakeholders. Stakeholders who mentioned participating in trainings include staff and administrators from family support units, law enforcement agen-

cies, ministry of justice officials, prosecutors, and judges, and NGO staff. Trainings for justice stakeholders were said to focus on problem-solving around challenges faced during the justice process, especially convictions, and to better understand and find common ground with the new law.

*“I have attended training sessions which taught me about trafficking and its elements. This is because I and my colleagues needed to know the kind of situations that could be referred to as trafficking. This training was held in Makeni by UNODC and was sponsored by CenHTRO. Moreover, we have to understand that traffickers are highly influential people. Therefore, tracking them down requires adequate capacity building to identify key players. Moreover, regarding prosecution, I’ve had training conducted by UNODC with some layers and high court judges. During that training, we were guided about the key indicators we should look out for in determining child trafficking. For instance, to establish the purpose for which the action was done.”*

**— Line manager, FSU, Police department, Man, Kailahun district, KII Respondent #13**

Trainings Largely Funded by NGOs. Trainings specific to child trafficking prevention and response were described as funded and facilitated largely by NGOs, including local and international NGOs, as well as research-based organizations such as CenHTRO. Community members who were part of child welfare committees (CWCs) described attending trainings and then utilizing the information to support strengthened engagement with children.

*“We went to a training workshop, and when we came back, we called a meeting to sensitize our people regarding the safety of our children....before the training our knowledge about child trafficking was all about selling a child, not knowing that carrying a child to work for you and not putting them in school is tantamount to child trafficking. Through the training, we learned a lot of positive things, for example without child labor, children can concentrate on education and be brighter future leaders.”*

**— 46-year-old woman, Child welfare committee member, Kono district, attended school up to O level, Participant #5, FGD# 18**

#### **IMPACT ON ACTIONS/PRACTICES TO ADDRESS CHILD TRAFFICKING**

Many stakeholders perceived the 2022 national anti-trafficking law and the Child Rights Act positively and suggested that they were impacting actions and practices to address child trafficking and related child protection concerns. Community members generally perceived the laws as having a positive impact, some had lots of knowledge about national laws and policies that aim to address human trafficking.

*"I know of national laws, policies and guidelines in Sierra Leone which are meant to protect children against trafficking. I know laws like the Anti-Trafficking and Forced Migration Act, 2022; the Child Rights Act, 2007; and I also know we have the National Task Force on Human Trafficking. Again, the Legal Aid Board and Family Support Unit (FSU), have their own guidelines to combat child trafficking and child labor. So, whenever there is a perpetrator of child trafficking, that person will face the full force of the law. I think the laws are good, and I believe it is a good idea that they are in place because they are helping greatly to reduce the practice of child trafficking. Here, the current national laws are being implemented and are working, although not 100%."*

**— 38-year-old man, community member, Kambia district, Participant #6, FGD #7**

New Law More Survivor Centered. Some respondents suggested that the anti-trafficking law was particularly helpful because it was centered around protecting survivors and covered internal as well as external trafficking. Respondents also noted that the law provided for victim compensation through restitution from the perpetrator. Some respondents felt that the new law supported increased collaboration (e.g., information sharing) and coordination of services and supports for human trafficking survivors.

*"My professional opinion about the act is that it is a good act and it covers most of the things we envisage it was supposed to cover, more so the idea that it covers a section of the smuggling of migrants and it has re-define the human trafficking aspect. But it is difficult to prosecute all offenses considered to be trafficking under the act because of what we call the mental element that is required for it to be established, which means that if one is to successfully prove a case for human trafficking, you also need to prove that the purpose of which this person is trafficked is for exploitation. Another good thing about the act that I like is that the act is centered around protecting victims and also unlike the other act where when a perpetrator is evicted the case is over, but for this act the perpetrator has to compensate the victim."*

**— State Council Officer, AG Office, Ministry of Justice, Man, Freetown, KII Respondent #11**

Beyond the passage of the new anti-trafficking law, protection and justice capacities were said to be strengthened through initiatives such as the creation of the secretariat of anti-trafficking, the establishment of a trust fund for survivors, and the initiation of a hotline for emergency cases. Also, some respondents noted an increased support for the empowerment of children and youth. Highlighting that participation in community conversations and decisions made about their own lives was a form of protection. *"As a government, they have done a lot, even though they need to try and increase support in that direction. But in the area of protection, I believe we have school clubs. For example, we have the CFN [children's Forum Network]; this is a club that we form so that the children will be able to interact with their*

*colleagues in schools and tell them some of the issues. These are some of the protection concern issues that we raised; that is why we always have our child protection meetings monthly where they will come and give us feedback on what they have done, and where there is a problem or issues, and whether an investigation is going on or not. So as peer groups, they would be able to identify problems that are affecting their colleagues in school."*

**— 37-year-old man, Office worker, Member of Kono District Anti-Human Trafficking Taskforce, University graduate, Participant #5, Kono, FGD #22**

*"One of our major plans is to implement the victims of human trafficking trust fund which we have just launched, which was provided for under the act."*

**— Leadership, National Anti-Trafficking in Persons Taskforce, Man, Freetown, KII Respondent #8**

**Strengthening Collaboration.** Respondents reported that partnership and collaboration are critical to ensuring effective and efficient responses to child trafficking, especially where there remain challenges with having adequate funding for anti-trafficking initiatives and programs.

*"It's teamwork and partnership. There are times, the money is not there but teamwork and partnership help greatly. There was one time, NGO came to our aid and assisted us in Kono, to trace a child that was trafficked from Freetown to Kono...So swift response has been a success, because at times, with the way the cases are delayed, you won't be able to capture perpetrators of trafficking. But by the swift response of the police and other partners, we have scored a lot of success and gains in the area of nabbing trafficking cases in Kono."*

**— Social Welfare Officer, Ministry of Social Welfare, Man, Kono district, KII Respondent #29**

In addition, there appears to be increased support for building structures to enable implementation of anti-trafficking laws, such as embedding social workers through family support units (FSUs) in police stations.

*"I am at the FSU department...As my colleagues have rightly said, we are there to actually make sure that the cases of trafficking, especially for children, are being reported because we are having most of those cases...We will follow up on those matters up to court level, especially when it comes to children's business because we, the social workers who are attached to those FSU departments in police stations, always make sure that we pursue those matters until they reach the appropriate side, which is the magistrate court."*

**— 32-year-old man, Office worker, Member of Kono District Anti-Trafficking Taskforce, University graduate, Participant #3, Kono district, FGD #22**

Generally, respondents emphasized the critical importance of collaboration as the “umbrella for our gains in the fight of trafficking”.

*“One major factor is the commitment we made to stop child trafficking. If we weren’t committed, we wouldn’t have been able to record all of these recent cases. We always bear in mind that this is our country and we must try our best to protect children from trafficking. Collaboration is one key factor responsible for the gains. The Ministry of Social Welfare would not be able to fight alone without support from NGO and NGO who provide shelter and food for victims. In addition to that, collaborating with the police has helped us greatly. Working together is the umbrella for our gains in the fight of trafficking.”*

— **Social Services Officer, Ministry of Social Welfare, Man, Kambia district, KII Respondent #19**

**Reduced Number of Child Trafficking Cases.** Stakeholders noted a reduction in child trafficking cases and an increase in prosecutions. They attributed this reduction to an increase in data sharing and coordination between stakeholders. Some respondents also noted an increase in sharing responsibilities, leading to more timely responses to suspected trafficking cases.

*“With collaboration and coordination, we have made progress in which together we have developed a new law in 2022, there has been improvement in information sharing, sharing of responsibilities, which has led to timely response to these cases and in general reduced the amount of cases country-wide. And the major factor for such progress is the collective work of all entities involved in the fight against child trafficking.”*

— **FSU Leader, Man, Freetown, KII Respondent # 7**

## Perspectives about New Local Policies and Anti-Child Trafficking (ACT) Bylaws

This section reports on respondents’ views about district-level ACT bylaws and local policies/initiatives to prevent and respond to child trafficking. Respondent’s perspectives about impacts from the bylaws are also discussed.

**Overall positive perception of bylaws.** Community members and leaders generally described a positive view of ACT bylaws that have recently been developed and put into place to prevent and respond to child trafficking.

*“P6: Over the past 2–3 years, we teamed up with the traditional authorities to ensure we stop child trafficking in our community/Chiefdom. We put bylaws in place...”*

*P7:...anybody who is caught trafficking a child, or anybody who takes a “menpikin” without bringing it to the knowledge of the Chief, or the worse, if that “menpikin” is not sent to school, and/or they are subjected to hard labor and exploitation, the carer of that “menpikin” could be fined 1 male goat, 1 “batter” (five gallons) of Palm oil, and a bag of clean rice. Again, such parents or guardians will be handed over to the police after a full payment of the fine.”*

— **35–38-year-old men, community members, Kambia district, Participant #6 and #7, FGD #7**

ACT bylaws most often described by respondents included ones related to prevention of exploitative menpikin (through monitoring of children’s placements in informal fostering settings), prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation, encouragement to send children to school, and discouragement from asking children to engage in work which may be harmful to their well-being.

*“P3: For things that are happening in our community, one of the bylaws is the one that is protecting our young people and if you are found guilty the law will take its course.”*

*P6: There is also a law against someone who punishes his or her child to the extent of hurting them. It is also considered a crime. When a child is given a heavy load to carry is also a crime especially if he or she is not 18 years old.”*

— **27–29-year-old women, community members, Kenema district, Participant #3 and #6 (Trader, attended school up to JSS), FGD #9**

Several respondents described detailed knowledge about bylaws, including the types of activities that constitute a violation, the duty to report, and punishments levied for those found in violation of the bylaws.

*“The laws we agreed on to protect the children are many, but let me just talk on few. The first step we took as a community, is to embark on a thorough sensitization of the community. Especially on issues of trafficking and other forms of abuse. As a community, the children have their roles and so also the parent. We make law on the issue of child labor. If you’re found wanting of this offense, you’ll be fine. Failing to pay, you will be put in cell at the NA court. Secondly, child trafficking. If you take someone’s child to the farm and spent the rest of the day there, without the knowledge of the parent, if it reaches us, we will consider it a trafficking offense and you’ll be fine for that. All of these laws and many more are currently with us and are functional.”*

— **65-year-old man, Chief, Farmer, attended school up to SSS, Kono district, Participant #1, FGD #16**

Some community members indicated that they not only approved of ACT bylaws but also felt involved in their development and shared that they feel a personal responsibility to uphold ACT bylaws.



*“The new bylaws tell us that it is everyone’s responsibility to prevent children from being trafficked and that if you suspect any child trafficking matter, you need to report as quickly as possible. This law has helped to prevent children from getting trafficked and the punishment is huge if caught...”*

**– 72-year-old man, Farmer, community member, never attended school, Kambia district, Participant #2, FGD #8**

Some described how ACT bylaws are critical for protecting children’s and the communities’ futures, through the protection of children.

*“All the laws that the government has put in place, together with our own bylaws are not bad. Because, the main intention of the government and us is to protect our children and help them to be safe. Secondly, it is also for our own protection, because these children will one day be our parents. So, when you take care of your children today, they will also take care of you when you are old. If government is making all these laws, it is not just for now but for the future. So, if they protect the children today, they will not only benefit their parents but the nation as a whole.”*

**– 47-year-old man, community member, attended school up to class 4, Kono district, Participant #5, FGD #15**

#### PERCEIVED IMPACT FROM BYLAWS

Yes, these laws enacted by the chief, is helping us greatly. Because, if these laws are not functional, anybody can do whatever he/she fills like doing. But when there is law guiding the community and you violate it. You won’t blame anybody but your very self. So, the laws are helping us greatly.” – Adult man, community member, Kono district, Participant #9, FGD #16

#### REDUCING CHILD TRAFFICKING AND CHILD LABOR

Community members perceived that the bylaws were working to reduce child trafficking and child labor because they brought increased awareness to the challenges that children face and supported the development of a sense of caring for children, especially those who are living in menpikin placements. Some respondents described how the bylaws have changed the way that families approach sending children to menpikin placements, such as through keeping them with family rather than sending to a stranger and increasing the awareness about the importance of monitoring placements to make sure that children are cared for and sent to school.

*“My opinion on these bylaws currently in place is that they have been implemented well and they’re good for our community. These bylaws have changed some parent’s mentality about menpikin culture. Parents no longer treat menpikin like before with no care and love.”*

**–24-year-old-man, Farmer, community member, attended school up to JSS, Kambia district, Participant #4, FGD #8**

Some respondents indicated that ACT bylaws have had an impact on parenting because they levy heavy punishments for violations and protect children from experiencing abuse.

*“P6 (41-year-old woman): There are laws in the community that protect children from being trafficked, whether it is your child or menpikin. If you are caught first, you will be warned. If you don’t stop, then the authorities will punish you by stopping you from accessing all the land you have been working on over the previous years.”*

*P2 (35-year-old woman): Since these bylaws began to take effect, the issue of child trafficking has reduced. People were really wicked to children, even their biological ones but since the laws have been implemented and perpetrators are being punished, people are now afraid of the laws.”*

**– Adult women, community members, Kambia district, FGD #5**

**Impact on Girls’ Lives.** Some respondents reported a positive impact on girls’ lives, in terms of perceived reductions in early marriage and a related emphasis on ensuring that girls are able to attend school.

*“The bylaws are working. Before now girls were meant to work at home or be sent for early marriage but that has also changed a lot. It is now a custom in our community that young girls should be in school. The bylaws are also protecting young girls in our community. Now parents are more determined to see their girl child being educated.”*

**– 29-year-old woman, Farmer, community member, never attended school, Kenema district, Participant # 8, FGD #10**

**Increased Awareness about Child Trafficking.** Some respondents described that ACT bylaws increased their own and their community’s awareness about child trafficking, which they felt was important for reducing child trafficking. Respondents also described how ACT bylaws were important for addressing gender-based violence and generally reducing children’s suffering.

*“P10 (60-year-old woman): As for me, they are good bylaws. Previously, we had no idea about child trafficking, but now the government has raised awareness among us all. Those bylaws have helped reduce child trafficking.”*

*P 7 (41-year-old woman): We are really happy about these laws. If these laws were not in place, children would still suffer, but their implementation has reduced the sufferings.*

*P 9 (50-year-old woman): We are happy about these laws; another bad thing that was happening was boys/men raping*



*girls; when the law found them guilty, they put them in prison. It's been a while since we've heard about raping."*

**— Adult women, community members,  
Kono district, FGD #14**

## Child and Youth Perspectives about ACT Bylaws

Children and youth who are members of school clubs and children's groups within communities were asked about their views on ACT bylaws recently passed to prevent and respond to child trafficking. They were asked to share their views about how the ACT bylaws may help or not help in responding to and preventing child trafficking. Young people were also asked what they perceived to be missing from the ACT bylaws or what they think adults could do to strengthen the response to child trafficking. The discussions began by reviewing the ACT bylaws for the specific district for each group of children and youth. This is because the substance of the ACT bylaws varied between different districts. For more about the content of the ACT bylaws and the activity-based discussion process for youth groups, see the methodology section of this report.

Overall, the youth who participated in the focus group discussions expressed mixed opinions regarding the ACT bylaws. Many supported the ACT bylaws and viewed them as helpful, praising the ACT bylaws for addressing the issues to limit trafficking, increasing community accountability, encouraging awareness and advocacy, and empowering and agency of the youth.

*"Child labor laws would help us in our community. Many parents are accustomed to assigning heavy loads to their children without considering whether the child can handle it or not. Some children are seen crying while carrying these heavy loads, indicating that it is too much for them. Some guardians disregard the feelings of children, assuming they can treat them as they wish because the children are not their own."*

**— Boy, currently enrolled in school, Member of  
Children's Forum Network, aspires to be a medical doctor,  
Kailahun district, Participant #5, FGD #23**

There were also views that the ACT bylaws may not be helpful or face a multitude of implementation challenges. Youth who expressed these perspectives were concerned about the enforcement of the ACT bylaws, structural issues, other avenues of trafficking that the ACT bylaws do not address, and a lack of agency for young people. The youth participants discussed a few recommendations, namely calling for stricter laws, enforcement, and better enforcement as well as an increase in community awareness and protection. Youth perspectives about challenges with implementing ACT bylaws are presented in the next section.

## PERSPECTIVES ABOUT HOW ACT BYLAWS MAY BE HELPFUL

### *Addressing and Limiting Trafficking*

Many viewed the ACT bylaws as helpful in addressing trafficking directly. For example, some indicated that ACT bylaws which addressed sexual abuse (such as exploitative sexual penetration) were helpful, and that "if passed and enforced" the "community would be safer from harms". Some respondents pointed out that ACT bylaws focused on preventing child labor may be very helpful to children in preventing them from being overworked and maltreated. For example, young people shared that bylaws can be protective for youths in harmful situations, including involving family members.

*"Some of our aunts went to the villages and collected children to take care of them. Before, they were treated badly but because of the bylaw, we can see things are changing now. That really surprised me a lot."*

**— 16-year-old girl, currently enrolled in school, Member of School-based Children's Club, advocates for girls' education,  
Kambia district, Participant #1, FGD #25**

Youth respondents viewed the role of community leaders, such as chiefs, as critical for ensuring accountability and implementation of the bylaws.

*"Child trafficking is a law I know and have witnessed its enforcement. Anyone caught giving away their child without the consent of the chiefs will be held and punished. Every child has the right to move freely and should not be forced. Someone has been penalized for such an act because they forced their child without informing the chiefs."*

**— Girl, currently enrolled in school, Member of School-based Children's Club, aspires to be a lawyer,  
Kailahun district, Participant #6, FGD #24**

### *Protecting Access to Education*

Youth respondents reported that they viewed ACT bylaws related to education access as important for supporting young people to stay in school. Young people highlighted how they feel that taking a child out of school to work is wrong and that doing so is disruptive to the child's education. They felt that the ACT bylaws could discourage adults from removing children from school and could also support reporting of cases where children are made to leave school.

*P6: Education is the best for a child, and it is wrong to take a child away from that. Such a law will protect the education of the child.*

*P5: It will give me the right to report if an incident like this occurs....*

*P4: If taken from school, the education of the child will be de-*

*stroyed, but with such a law, the child will be given the right to be educated. If the child is asked to leave school just to do domestic work, the child will not benefit from that day's teaching.*

*P1: It is very wrong to ask your child to leave school just because of work. If they are reported, they will deviate from that practice.*

**— Boys, currently enrolled in school, Members of School-based Children's Club, role models are soccer players: Ronaldo, Mohamed Salah, Mbappe, Messi and Rashford, Kono district, FGD #31**

#### *Protection Against Forced Marriage*

Another way the respondents highlighted that the ACT bylaws address ending exploitation and trafficking is through the laws against forced marriage. Several respondents highlight how important it is to address forced marriage, especially to promote the well-being of girls. Forced marriage exploitation was seen as having a negative impact on girls' dreams, access to education, and limited agency.

*"Marriage exploitation is another issue that, if enforced by law, would be beneficial. Girls are often forced into marriage against their wishes and exploited because of poverty. Our parents value money more than their daughters' happiness, and as long as the man gives them what they want, everything else is unquestioned."*

**— Boy, currently enrolled in school, Member of Children's Forum Network, aspires to be an engineer, Kailahun district, Participant #4, FGD #23**

*"Child marriage prevents girls from focusing on and achieving their dreams. However, with the help of laws in our country, we witness girls going to school and becoming prominent figures."*

**— Girl, currently enrolled in school, Member of School-based Children's Club, aspires to be a police officer, Kailahun district, Participant #2, FGD #24**

Some respondents emphasized that ACT bylaws addressing child marriages also had a positive effect for supporting children to stay in school, by protecting them from being removed from school due to marriage.

*"The law against child marriage has helped a lot; if not for it, it would be hard to see girls in school these days. All they would care about is ensuring that their children are accepted by society, and the next step would be for them to get married and give them grandchildren."*

**— Girl, currently enrolled in school, Member of School-based Children's Club, aspires to be a lawyer, Kailahun district, Participant # 5, FGD# 24**

*"This law would be used as a positive tool for preventing teen-*

*age pregnancy, child trafficking and early marriage. There are some caregivers that have positive intention of sponsoring their family relation through education."*

**— Girl, currently enrolled in school, Member of Children's Forum Network, advocates against sexual harassment, Kono district, Participant #5, FGD #30**

#### *Increasing Community Accountability*

Several youth respondents discussed that the ACT bylaws increased community accountability, such as by increasing the accountability of foster parents, strengthening judicial and law enforcement involvement in monitoring child fostering placements, and improving the treatment of children in menpikin placements. Some respondents described how the ACT bylaws put safeguarding into place for children in Menpikin placements, such as ensuring that agencies like Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) can check in on the child's well-being.

*"I believe this law would protect children reason being is that, when once a parent and a member of the CWC accompany the child to the residence of the foster parent, the child would be treated with respect. In addition, if the parent is an illiterate, but will be able be visiting the child once in a while even if members of the CWC do not make follow up visit to the foster arrangement. So, the foster parent would be afraid to mistreat the child."*

**— 17-year-old girl, currently enrolled in school, Member of Children's Forum Network, key concern: how drug abuse affects youth, Kenema district, Participant #4, FGD #27**

Several young people who participated in the focus groups suggested that the ACT bylaws would promote positive treatment of foster children, prevent mistreatment, and also provide a monitoring process that can work to ensure children are safe.

*P1: This law would protect us because, by doing so, the parents and the CWC would know the address of the foster home the child is living.*

*P2: That would show the exact address the child is living and would also enable the parents to know whether their child is living in good or bad condition.*

*P3: By so doing, foster parents would be afraid to treat the menpikin badly.*

*P6: This law would help to protect children here if it is fully enforced because, it is a good law. Children would not be mistreated by their foster parents.*

**— 16-year-old girls, currently enrolled in school, Members of School-based Children's Club, key concerns: illiteracy, youth unemployment, theft, and violence, Kenema district, FGD #29**

Community accountability through judicial and law enforcement involvement was also emphasized by youth respondents who indicated that the ACT bylaws underlined the role of authority figures, such as chiefdom authorities in collaboration with police, in enforcing consequences for exploitation. They suggested that the ACT bylaws provide guidance for collaboration between multiple stakeholders who would be involved with holding perpetrators accountable.

*P7: Since any occurrence of child trafficking is reported to the chiefdom authorities, the CWC would investigate and bring perpetrators to book. This law would definitely keep children safe in this chiefdom.*

*P6: If suspected cases of child trafficking are being reported to chiefdom authorities, then the police would investigate them. This would really help to protect children here.*

**— 16-year-old boys, currently enrolled in school, Members of School-based Children's Club, key concerns: violence against girls and poor electrical supply impacting studying, Kenema district, FGD #28**

#### ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS

Some youth respondents described how the ACT bylaws were useful for strengthening advocacy for the prevention of and awareness about child trafficking. This included reflections that child trafficking prevention advocacy networks provided safe spaces for young people to discuss youth challenges, share their perspectives, and feel heard.

*P5: The advocacy network is working well in our community because it has provided us with the space to express ourselves about issues that affect us, the children in our community.*

*P3: We have been given the opportunity to voice our thoughts by speaking on radio stations and participating in debates and other events. This has helped us children to feel safer in our community because we now have a platform to speak about issues affecting us, ensuring that our voices are heard.*

**— Boys, currently enrolled in school, Members of Children's Forum Network, Kailahun district, Participant #5 (aspires to be a medical doctor), Participant #3 (aspires to be a lawyer), FGD #23**

The young people who participated in the focus groups emphasized the importance of having a community and a safe space to express thoughts and perspectives, especially for children who are often unheard voices. Further, they indicated that outlets like radio stations are important for raising community awareness. Young people suggested that through these mechanisms, not only are youth voices being heard, but the community can hear diverse perspectives of youth on this topic.

#### Agency for Children and Empowerment

Youth respondents described the potential impact of the ACT bylaws on youth agency and empowerment. For example, they discussed the importance of including children in the reporting process, as this was said to increase their agency. Further, youth respondents discussed that the bylaws could increase their voice, and support them in being heard in decision-making processes, which, therefore, may have a positive impact on their empowerment.

For example, some young people reported that the bylaws promoted a positive shift towards encouraging children to report exploitation or abuse to the police.

*"Children are now allowed to report to the police whenever they witness matters or someone tries to take advantage of them. Our concerns are not taken lightly these days because they have realized that we are the future of this country."*

**— Girl, currently enrolled in school, Member of School-based Children's Clubs aspires to be a lawyer, Kailahun district, Participant #5, FGD # 24**

Some youth respondents emphasized how the ACT bylaws may create opportunities for the youth to have agency in exploitative situations, because they are empowered and encouraged to report and fight for their rights. The youth felt there was value in knowing that the ACT bylaws state that they can report maltreatment and feel empowered to do so. In addition, young people were encouraged to see that the ACT bylaws focused on spreading awareness of the issue of child trafficking and the consequences for young people, families, and communities.

*P2: It helps because if I see a police officer or any authority, I will report it. Since the act is considered an offense, the authority will then send me back to my parents.*

*P7: It creates opportunities for us to report any maltreatment.*

*P4: It helps because if we report, they will call our parents and guardians and talk to them to stop the bad behavior.*

*P1: Since we are now aware that the purpose for which the child is taken should stand and he or she should not be maltreated in any way, I will report if treated badly because I know it's an offense.*

*P3: It gives us the courage to report to either neighbors or the authorities and fight for our rights.*

*P6: Maltreatment is very bad, and the law will help us be aware of that.*

**— Boys, ages unknown, currently enrolled in school, Members of School-based Children's Club, key concerns: electrical blackouts, not enough resources for school or farming, drug abuse, Kono district, FGD #31**



# IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES OF ACT LAWS AND INITIATIVES

Although respondents described many positive aspirations related to new ACT National policies, bylaws and initiatives, they highlighted several key implementation challenges and policy gaps including: 1) remaining gaps in collaboration across systems, 2) constrained resources to implement ACT laws, 3) gaps in knowledge about ACT laws, 4) ACT initiatives not seen as doing enough to address root causes of trafficking (poverty), 5) the anti-human trafficking act of 2022 was seen as not directly addressing child trafficking, 6) hesitancy to report and pursue cases of child trafficking seen as a barrier to response, and 6) youth respondents described that they often felt their voice was not heard or taken seriously.

## 1. Remaining Gaps in Collaboration between Local, Regional, and National stakeholders, Tied to Insufficient Resources

Respondents described several potential gaps in collaboration, especially between local leaders and community groups, regional/National level agencies, and stakeholders, such as a lack of coordination about cases (between stakeholders), and insufficient resources impeding collaboration.

*“... there are barriers affecting these efforts. I will say coordination is a challenge, but again I feel like it is tied to resource availability and allocation, as insufficient resource and improper allocation of these resources may hinder the efforts of all.”*

— **National Anti-Trafficking Taskforce Leader, Man, Freetown, KII Respondent #8**

A lack of coordination and sharing within the context of case management for survivors was reported as an issue of concern and one that can directly impact survivor care and support.

*“Some children are trafficked, and once we identify them, we have to wait for [NGO] to come and take the child from us here to Freetown. And sometimes it can be challenging, and in most cases when they take the child to Freetown, we don’t know the whereabouts of the child because every information of the child would have been transferred to Freetown.”*

— **Social Welfare Officer, Ministry of Social Welfare, Man, Kono district, KII Respondent #29**

*“The welfare of the victims is one of the resource gaps we have, this is because there is a coordination and communication gap in the responses between the district coordinator and the headquarters.”*

— **30-year-old man, Office worker, Member of Kambia District Anti-Trafficking Taskforce, University graduate, Participant # 4, FGD #20**

## 2. Constrained Resources to Implement ACT Laws

Resource constraints were described by respondents as major barriers to implementing ACT laws. For example, inadequate funds and logistical challenges were reported to hinder investigations of suspected trafficking cases and limit support offered to survivors, especially at the local level. In addition, several youth respondents expressed concerns regarding limited resources available for implementation/enforcement of ACT bylaws, such as for monitoring menpikin placements within communities.

### *Limited Resources for Survivor Support Hinder Convictions*

Low rates of convictions were linked by respondents to a lack of cases being brought to the judiciary through law enforcement, as well as continued difficulties with supporting witnesses to testify (such as through the provision of safe housing).

*“Progress in terms of having a new act of parliament and integrating migrant smuggling that’s progress...initially not up to a year ago when we were to go to tier 3 of the state department report, we prosecuted and convicted 6 people of human trafficking, but since that time, nothing much has been done by way of conviction...we could not prosecute successfully if we do not have witnesses available, so keeping these witnesses safe was key [also] if we don’t have the police who investigate the cases, we can’t come to court...then [there is] little progress in terms of bringing these matters [to] magistrate court and what’s responsible for this [justice gap] is just the attitudes of those involved.”*

— **Judge, Judiciary System of Sierra Leone, Male, Freetown, KII Respondent #9**

Some respondents also described that local and district-level stakeholders often lack resources for implementing anti-trafficking policies and offering services for survivors. Recovery centers are centralized in Freetown, which leaves provincial areas marginalized and stretches anti-child trafficking protection efforts, where survivors often come from the rural areas. In addition, funds targeted for ACT initiatives have been reported to not “cascade” down to the local level.

*“Unfortunately, we currently lack a standing fund dedicated to addressing trafficking cases. Even when they recently launched a trust fund for trafficking in February in Freetown, the funds remain centralized there at the Sierra Leone Commercial Bank. It would be beneficial if these funds could cascade down to the district level to address the needs of trafficking victims. As of now, when we encounter trafficking cases, we rely on partners to assist in addressing them.”*

— **37-year-old man, Office worker, Member of Kono District Anti-Human Trafficking Taskforce, university graduate, Participant #5, FGD #22**



## **Law Enforcement and ACT Agencies Face Transportation and Communications Constraints**

Transportation challenges, including poor road conditions and limited access to vehicles, were reported to be a barrier to implementing ACT laws. Respondents reported that without vehicles, it makes it difficult for the police to investigate cases and facilitate the movement of witnesses, especially in rural communities. There are also poor telecom signals in many rural locations, which hinder timely telephone communications between communities and anti-child trafficking agencies.

*“Yes, there are poor road networks and weak communication networks in many communities. If something happens and a parent wants to complain or call Kenema, they will face problems.”*

**— District Officer, Legal Aid Board, Man, Kenema district, KII Respondent #24**

Some respondents noted a critical shortage of key staff, especially trained social workers, in local communities and even at the district level.

*“The government needs to recruit more staff in the Ministry. Like I told you earlier, since the separated of these two ministries, there have not been any recruitment in the Ministry of Gender and Children’s Affairs. The current staff base is small, with just one pin-coded staff at the moment, while the rest are volunteers whom we do not have hold of, so they could leave anytime in search of better opportunities.”*

**— Social Worker, Ministry of Gender and Children’s Affairs, Kailahun district, KII Respondent #14**

### ***Social and Economic Constraints on Community-level ACT Law Enforcement.***

Several youth respondents expressed concerns regarding limited resources available for implementation of ACT bylaws, in particular, monitoring menpikin placements by child welfare committee members, as well as parents.

*“Insufficient and non-availability of resources might prevent committee members from following up on the children.”*

**— Boy, currently enrolled in school, Member of Children’s Forum Network, key concern: impacts of teenage pregnancy on school dropout, Kono district, Participant #6, FGD # 30**

*“I am not sure this law would protect children reason being is that, most parents will not be able to afford the cost of transportation fare to be making quarterly visit to the address of the foster home. But however, I think*

*it is the responsibility of the CWC to be quarterly visiting the foster arrangement and report findings to the child’s parents instead.”*

**— 16-year-old boy, completed up to SSS 3, no longer enrolled in school, Member of Children’s Forum Network, key concerns: child trafficking and sexual harassment, Kenema district, Participant #6, FGD #27**

Relatedly, some young people described being unaware of a child welfare committee in their area and suggested that some communities may be lacking these community protection structures for children.

*“If a foster parent comes from Kenema city to adopt a child and there is no CWC existing here, the parents would not be able to accompany their child to the address of the foster parent and so, this law might not help in protecting children.”*

**— 14-year-old boy, currently enrolled in school, Member of School-based Children’s Club, key concern: child abduction, Kenema district, Participant #4, FGD #28**

Another resource-related issue highlighted by young people was concerns that ACT bylaws that mandate registration of strangers may be impractical in some communities where there is a lack of resources or a standardized process to do this.

*“To enforce a law requiring registration of strangers entering the community would not work in our community because it is large, and people do not have the time to engage in such activities.”*

**— Girl, currently enrolled in school, Member of Children’s Forum Network, aspires to be a bank manager, Kailahun district, Participant #2, FGD #23**

To add to the funding challenges, there remain problems with the sustainability of NGO sponsored programs in local communities. Respondents report that NGO ACT programs tend to be short-term (or time-bound), and often there are limited mechanisms for or a lack of a plan for sustainability.

*“Resources would be the biggest challenge. And also, some NGOs work on a time frame. There might be a project that is supposed to last for two years, so after those two years, it would be very difficult for the community to continue the progress. And also, the sustainability of the work done in the community, so that the community would be able to take up from where you left off after you leave.”*

**— Project Coordinator, Youth-serving NGO, Kono district, KII Respondent #28**

### 3. Gaps in Knowledge About ACT Policies and Laws

Although most respondents, especially community members, who engaged in this study reported some awareness of ACT bylaws, there were a few community groups who described having no knowledge about ACT bylaws. This could indicate that the information about ACT bylaws may be harder to access for some communities, especially isolated or rural communities.

*“P1: ...we have not made such laws. Now that you have enlightened us, we will inform the chiefdom authorities to make such laws. But no law says someone should not send their children outside.”*

*P5: The law is not in our minds; only the chiefs will help us. If the chiefdom summons and talks to us about this kind of law, we can at least give our opinions and evaluation as to how best such laws have helped reduce child trafficking.”*

— Adult men, community members,  
Kailahun district, FGD # 3

In addition, a few national-level stakeholders appeared to have no knowledge of the new ACT bylaws. This suggests a need for increased communication between national and district-level stakeholders around current initiatives to address child trafficking and child labor.

*“I am not sure of a bylaw that is specifically designed for child trafficking, although there are bylaws on other child-related issues in the communities.”*

— State Council Officer, AG Office, Ministry of Justice,  
Man, Freetown, KII Respondent #11

*“At community levels the paramount chiefs have their own bylaws but it has nothing to do with trafficking, in essence there are no bylaws for trafficking that I am aware of.”*

— Judge, Judiciary System of Sierra Leone, Man,  
Freetown, KII Respondent #9

#### *Lack of Awareness about Content of Law*

Despite the reported general awareness about the new child-trafficking law, some KIIs, especially local leaders, suggested that they were aware of a new national anti-trafficking law but hadn't read it themselves, so were not certain of the content.

*“Yes, the Child Rights laws. The act states that children also have rights accorded to them, and all must respect those rights. However, I have not read through the act of trafficking to have a thorough understanding of what it entails.”*

— Chiefdom Administrative Leader, Man, Kailahun  
district, KII Respondent #1

*“I do hear about the said policies, but I haven't seen them yet. For instance, I do hear about an act against child trafficking, but I do not know what it entails. I have not read it yet.”*

— Chiefdom Administrative Leader, Man, Kenema  
district, KII Respondent #4

### 4. Anti-trafficking Initiatives Sometimes Viewed as Not Doing Enough to Address the Root Causes of Trafficking

Respondents described how root causes, such as poverty, as described above, may hinder the implementation of anti-trafficking initiatives. Some respondents shared that financial hardships make it difficult to comply with laws related to child labor and child trafficking, especially as they relate to discouragement from sending children to live in menpikin placements. The concerns extend even to members of child welfare committees, who have increased responsibility for implementing ACT initiatives and bylaws.

*“The law has constrained me in managing the affairs of my home. I'm being denied the chance to send my children as menpikin to my relatives, this has made things very difficult to survive in the home. How can we survive with just two butter cups of rice for my four children and my husband? The good thing is that it forces to go the extra to provide for our family, so we adapt to it.”*

— 40-year-old woman, Farmer, Child Welfare  
Committee Member, Kenema district,  
Participant #6, FGD #17

*“My opinion is that with the implementation of these new national laws, it will be difficult to abolish internal child trafficking as a result of poverty. There are people who couldn't report even after they had realized their children have been trafficked because they are poor...Poverty is the reason why we wouldn't abolish internal child trafficking regardless of the formulated policies.”*

— District Council Administrator, Male, Kailahun  
district, KII Respondent #12

Echoing adult respondents, several young people described their concern that implementing ACT bylaws within a context where there is economic hardship may be very challenging. These young respondents suggested that without some economic intervention to support family financial well-being in communities with a high rate of economic hardship, parents may feel they have few options but to send their child to live elsewhere.

*“The reason I said I am not sure this law would help protect children is, let's say a poor household of five including kids, that used to cook two cups of rice daily. Should there be a foster parent wanting to adopt a child from such household, the parents would instantly hand over their child to such foster*

*parent without even letting him or her go through the CWC. Due to food shortage in their home.”*

- **15-year-old boy, currently enrolled in school, Member of School-based Children’s Club, enjoys playing soccer but wishes that he could buy a ball, Kenema district, Participant #5, FGD #28**

*“The law concerning illegal migration will not work because many people want their children to travel out of town for their survival. Therefore, such laws will not be effective.”*

- **Girl, currently enrolled in school, Member of School-based Children’s Club, key concern: drugs impacting boys’ lives, Kailahun district, Participant #8, FGD #24**

Additionally, some youth respondents were concerned that implementation of ACT bylaws, especially as they relate to menpikin placements, is contingent on parents to act, and suggested that some parents may not embrace their role in monitoring to ensure their children’s safety.

*“I am not sure this law would protect children because, some parents as long as they are the foster parents informed them on phone that their children are fine, they would rely on that and not bother to be visiting the foster arrangements.”*

- **16-year-old girl, currently enrolled in school, Member of School-based Children’s Clubs, advocates for children to attend school, Kenema Participant #1, FGD #29**

## **5. Some Perceived the Anti-Human Trafficking Act of 2022 as Not Directly Addressing Child Trafficking or Not Including Strong Enough Punishments for Trafficking**

Some stakeholders suggested that child trafficking wasn’t specifically included in the 2022 Anti-Trafficking Act and implied that this might impact how the act is viewed in terms of specifically addressing child trafficking.

*“When it comes to child trafficking, as the law itself did not specify for child trafficking, however, a child is considered a human and those provisions were found in the new act like protection orders, prevention orders which social welfare can apply to the court for these orders against a person who is likely involved in child or human trafficking.”*

- **Judge, Judiciary System of Sierra Leone, Male, Freetown, KII Respondent #9**

However, many stakeholders described the 2022 Act as being complementary to other laws such as the Child Rights Act, which work together to address child trafficking.

*“On the legislative ground, there is a law that was enacted which is the anti-human trafficking and migrants smuggling act 2022 that covers all forms of trafficking be it human or child trafficking internally or externally and we have the child right act which is a child protection policy that complements the law. There are also plans to develop harmonized bylaws that will guide community people and stakeholders in preventing and identifying child trafficking cases in these vulnerable communities. However, there is no law that was made just for child trafficking.”*

*gling act 2022 that covers all forms of trafficking be it human or child trafficking internally or externally and we have the child right act which is a child protection policy that complements the law. There are also plans to develop harmonized bylaws that will guide community people and stakeholders in preventing and identifying child trafficking cases in these vulnerable communities. However, there is no law that was made just for child trafficking.”*

- **National Anti-Trafficking Taskforce Leader, Man, Freetown, KII Respondent #8**

Some respondents suggested that the law be enhanced with stronger punishments for people engaging in child trafficking.

*“The big problem arises when these cases go to court. There is no specific law that provides the actual punishment for trafficking unless it is related to other cases before passing judgment or sentencing. We want the court to establish standout sentences or laws for perpetrators of trafficking...For instance, when someone commits the crime of trafficking a child (menpikin), they often receive only a basic fine. This punishment does not adequately reflect the suffering the child has endured. Therefore, we advocate for distinct laws, and we will collaborate with the court to determine appropriate punishments for trafficking offenses.”*

- **37-year-old man, Office worker, Member of Kono District Anti-Human Trafficking Taskforce, university graduate, Participant #5, FGD #22**

Relatedly, some respondents indicated that child trafficking is sometimes not considered as serious as sexual abuse or other crimes. Which they implied could make it difficult for a child trafficking case to be brought through the justice process.

*...when those cases are being charge to court the ones that the magistrate will take serious are the ones that have sexual abuse and ritual matters, when it comes to trafficking the magistrate will not take it serious they will just give common fines like three months, one year ...so as my colleague was saying there should be a specific fine for trafficking they should not only take cases that have sexual penetration serious and just look at trafficking as a minor case...”*

- **31-year-old man, Office worker, Member of Kono District Anti-Trafficking Taskforce, university graduate, Participant #4, FGD #22**

## **6. Hesitancy to Report and Pursue Cases of Child Trafficking Remains a Barrier to Prosecution.**

Respondents described how community members are often hesitant to report cases of child trafficking, especially when the situation involves a relative. As observed by some KII respondents, community hesitancy to report can often



hinder response, due to a compromise between family and neighbors being prioritized over seeking a formal response to a situation of child exploitation.

*“...The issue of compromise is a major barrier....sometimes the issue is taken to the magistrate court, and after reviewing the case they call for the offender and maybe the parent and family of the victim. The family who you’d think is supposed to take the leading role in the fight would tell you, he/she is not interested and doesn’t want to fight, but prefers to settle the issue amicably as a community. So as soon as this happens, you as a partner have no admissible evidence to prosecute the offenders and the case would immediately be dismissed. So all of these are major barriers.”*

— **Project Coordinator, NGO, Man, Kono district, KII Respondent #28**

Community members suggested that social pressure not to get involved or intervene in potential child trafficking situations may hinder reporting. Some respondents suggested that authorities consider how to empower community members to intervene when they witness a child experiencing abuse or exploitation.

*“P9: We have a law that you should not send your child to the farm or make him or her sell during school hours, you will be queried by the chief and possibly pay a fine before they will allow you to go home, so next time you will not do it again. And if you see another parent doing the same thing you will serve as advisor....*

*P3: Government needs to include the parents in implementing the laws, because sometimes if parents are maltreating their children and you want to tell them it’s wrong, they will shut you up by saying that ‘it is not your business’. So, I think some of the parents should be appointed to be on the watch out for anything.”*

— **Adult women, community members, Participant #9 (42-year-old farmer, never attended school) and Participant #3 (32-year-old farmer, never attended school), Kono district, FGD #13**

Some young people also noted that there appears to be little evidence of formal consequences for engaging in child exploitation and suggested that child trafficking and child labor may still be viewed by some as a personal, family matter.

*P1: It is a fact that there are laws against child trafficking and labor exploitation, but I haven’t seen people being punished for these crimes, is really surprising.*

*P7: It is really surprising to see that most laws exist, but we are not practicing them. Instead, we settle things among ourselves, thinking they are family matters and should be dealt with privately.*

— **Boys, currently enrolled in school, Members of Chil-**

**dren’s Forum Network, Participant #1 (aspires to be a doctor), Participant #7 (aspires to be a lawyer), Kailahun district, FGD # 23**

#### *Frustration with Lack of Policy Enforcement*

Some respondents described frustration with a lack of enforcement of laws as having a chilling effect on reporting efforts. For example, when community members report a case of child trafficking and see no action from the local leaders or authorities, this creates a sense that reporting may not be important.

*“Some community members are annoyed when they see victims of child abuse and child trafficking. When they report of child labor and child trafficking, there are no positive measures taken against the perpetrators.”*

— **41-year-old man, Farmer, community member, attended school up to class 3, Kenema district, Participant #7, FGD #11**

Several youth respondents suggested that the perceived implementation of ACT bylaws as weak, because they still witness children in their community being exploited for domestic work by relatives.

*“The reason why I said these laws are not protecting us is because some of our aunts have their own children but still go and take someone’s child. Upon arrival the “menpikin” will do all the household chores. Time for pleasure is only for their own children.”*

— **16-year-old girl, currently enrolled in school, Member of School-based Children’s Club, key concern: drug use affecting youth, Kambia district, Participant #1, FGD #25**

#### *Corruption Hinders Enforcement of Laws*

Some youth respondents emphasized that corruption may hinder enforcement and reduce consequences for people engaged in exploitation. Generally, young people suggested that favoritism, related to political party affiliation or family relationships, presents challenges for the implementation of ACT bylaws.

*“If a perpetrator is found wanting by the law, and at the same time happens to be a relative of either of the chieftdom authorities, there is a great tendency for such authority not to prosecute the case because of nepotism.”*

— **15-year-old girl, attended school up to SSS 3, no longer enrolled in school, Member of Children’s Forum Network, advocates against school-related gender-based violence, Kenema district, Participant #2, FGD # 27**



### *Rights Philosophy Viewed as Disruptive to Traditional Order*

A few community members expressed concerns that anti-trafficking and child rights may impose white Western values on communities and disrupt traditional social order. Respondents who expressed these concerns indicated that they viewed laws supporting children's and women's rights as disruptive to the traditional patriarchal order. These kinds of concerns were shared by a minority of stakeholders but indicate that sometimes community hesitancy to report cases of child trafficking may be related to negative perceptions of or misunderstandings about rights-based laws.

*"I know of the existence of so many child right acts; in fact, these have led to our children disobeying our authorities. When we talk about child right abuse, that have given us the parents to be afraid to do anything harsh to our children. At first our fathers used to beat us when we did bad things. And when they flogged us for any wrongdoing, tomorrow it will not repeat itself. We followed strictly what they wanted us to do. But now we are afraid to do the same to our own children because of the laws. So too much of these white man's laws have really disturbed our children."*

**— 50-year-old man, community member, Kenema district, Participant #5, FGD #12**

## **7. Youth Experiencing a Lack of Agency**

Although young people often described feeling that ACT bylaws and other children's legislation could have a positive impact on their agency and empowerment, several youth respondents described that they often felt ignored and unheard because they are youth. They implied that the limitation of voices and agency of young people may stifle the improvement, efficiency, and enforcement of ACT laws and may negatively impact youth safety and well-being.

*"They are not listening to us because they say, we are mere children with no ideas. But failing to understand that some of us might even have [more] ideas than some elderly people."*

**— 14-year-old boy, currently enrolled in school, Member of School-based Children's Club, key concern: child abduction, Kenema district, Participant #4, FGD # 28**

*"[Adults] should listen to children because most times, the children have something factual to say but they do not give us listening ears."*

**— 13-year-old boy, currently enrolled in school, Member of School-based Children's Club, key concern: lack of attention to the needs of boys who are vulnerable, Kambia district, Participant #6, FGD #26**

Overall, adult and youth respondents were generally supportive of the ACT National bylaws and initiatives, and they indicated that they could see an impact from the adoption of the ACT bylaws. However, there are critical concerns about the feasibility of sustained implementation. Respondents suggest that more should be done to strengthen mechanisms and processes to implement ACT initiatives, especially through the allocation of resources, especially more toward the local level, and enhancing social support programs for families to address the root causes of child trafficking. The next section will describe recommendations for addressing key challenges.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents recommendations organized around the “4 P’s” for trafficking response: Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, and Partnership. In addition, recommendations related to sustainability for anti-trafficking initiatives are summarized. Recommendations from stakeholders who participated in this study were integrated with recommendations from CenHTRO, CMDA, and implementing partners.

## Prevention

### 1. Continue Investments in Broad-based Sensitization and Awareness Raising

Respondents recommended greater and sustained investments in broad-based sensitization and awareness raising by government agencies and community structures (e.g., schools) regarding what constitutes child trafficking and related factors.

*“Another recommendation is to include teaching child trafficking as a subject in schools. This will help to create more awareness and understanding amongst children about what trafficking is and the impacts. This will teach the children how to protect themselves from being trafficked and it will also help to sensitise their friends and families about child trafficking. By doing so, child trafficking awareness will increase in the district and even the country at large.”*

— 56-year-old man, Office worker, Member of Kambia District Anti-Trafficking Taskforce, attended school up to SSS, Participant #2, FGD #20

Young people who participated in the study also highlighted the importance of awareness-raising activities in schools.

*“My wish for children's safety is to continue my advocacy work, especially for girls. Many of them drop out of school when they become pregnant, but advocating and talking to them can change their minds and encourage them to return to school. They are the future of our country.”*

— Boy, currently enrolled in school, Member of Children’s Forum Network, aspires to be an engineer, Kailahun district, Participant #4, FGD #23

Strategies such as simplifying and translating anti-human trafficking messages (including policies and laws) into local languages/dialects, and using local radios, billboards, posters, and plays to promote anti-child trafficking messages, were suggested as potentially effective.

*“Well as a ministry, we want to see more sensitization, more community engagement, with the paramount chiefs and section chiefs. We want to see these laws (the anti-hu-*

*man trafficking and migrant smuggling act) that are formulated on sign boards, handbills, ply cards, and even as SMS. We want it to go down to the village level, even if they can make them in our own local dialects. So, if it’s in their own language, they’ll have more understanding about what constitutes child trafficking and how traffickers behave.”*

— Social Welfare Officer, Ministry of Social Welfare, Man, Kono district, Key Informant Respondent #29

*“We will also have to pay for airtime on the radio so that we can reach out to people relating to child trafficking and also human rights.”*

— 46-year-old woman, Member Child Welfare Committee, attended school up to O level, Kono district, Participant #5, FGD #18

Community members also described the community’s role in raising awareness in neighboring areas, especially neighboring rural or more isolated communities.

*“We have plans to be reaching to other communities who are not aware of child trafficking or the dangers it poses to the community and the welfare of the child.”*

— 54-year-old woman, Trader, Member of Child Welfare Committee, never attended school, Kenema district, Participant #2, FGD #17

Relatedly, some respondents indicated plans to distribute bylaws within districts and to specifically work to reach rural or more isolated communities.

*“Our future plan is to engage chiefdoms – Paramount chiefs, community people – for them to know that child trafficking case is a crime.”*

— Social Welfare Officer, Ministry of Social Welfare, Man, Kono district, KI Respondent #29

*“The plan we have now is that the bylaws made so far are to be disseminated to various tribal heads so that in their meetings, they will inform their people about the bylaws made.”*

— Adult man, Community Member, Kailahun district, Participant #3, FGD #4

## 2. Increase Targeted Awareness Raising to Address Child Labor and Hazardous Working Conditions

The endline results from this study indicate that there have been decreases in child trafficking, especially with—in non-hazardous settings, such as domestic work and agriculture; however, there appears to have been increases in child labor in some study districts. Therefore, the study team and partners recommend increasing attention during awareness-raising activities to children engaged in working in dangerous conditions (extreme heat), in hazardous labor sectors (e.g., portering), or engaged in work that is detrimental to their well-being, in addition to continuing to provide information about potential risks of menpikin placements. Young people also wanted to see increased efforts to end child labor, especially children being involved in hazardous activities, like mining.

*“Child labor in mining sector to stop.”*

— Girl, currently enrolled in school, Member of School-based Children’s Club, aspiring medical doctor, Kono district, Participant #8, FGD #32

*“Child labor is prevalent in our community. I would like to see changes where children are not being given heavy loads to carry”*

— Girl, currently enrolled in school, Member of Children’s Forum Network aspiring medical doctor, Kailahun district, Participant #1, FGD #23

## 3. Alleviate Poverty and Address Rural–Urban Inequities

Many community members and key informants who participated in this study recommended that the government address poverty through expanding development projects, social welfare programs, and micro-credits for business start-up and support with farming inputs and equipment.

*“What I think we should do is to improve on the living condition of the local people... Most of these families may not even afford one square meal a day. Nobody wants to part with their child, but if they cannot afford to take care of that child and you don’t have any control overbearing children.”*

— Paramount Chief, Male, Kambia district, KII Respondent #3

*“Government should endeavour to develop projects that are in line with community needs...Children will not leave their fathers if there is adequate support for them not to go outside to look for a living.”*

— 58-year-old man, Farmer, addended some school, Kenema district, Participant #8, FDG #11

Additionally, some respondents recommended that more training centers and vocational opportunities be made available to families, especially in rural communities, to reduce poverty.

*“Government should give assistance by way of establishing a training institute to empower the people in the community. That would be a great deed from the Government, and this in turn would stop our children from going outside. Rather they will remain here and learn a trade or skill, such as soap making, gara-tie dying, tailoring, etc. Parents won’t have the urge to send their children away.”*

— Chiefdom Administrative Clerk, Man, Kono district, KII Respondent #5

## 4. Increase Universal Services and Supports for Children and Youth

Youth respondents recommended more investments in services and support for children and youth in general. The suggested development of youth centers where young people could have access to a range of services and programs within or near their home communities.

*“My wish is [for] health centers for kids in Kailahun and recreational centers where they can play and engage in various activities such as role plays, drama, quizzes, and debates to express themselves.”*

— Girl, currently enrolled in school, Member of Children’s Forum Network, aspiring bank manager, Kailahun district, Participant #2, FGD #23

Some key informants described plans to embed guidance and counseling units into schools so that children and youth could seek help, support, advice, and also have a safe place to report if they or their friends might be experiencing child trafficking and other forms of exploitation.

*“We are planning to set up guidance and counselling sessions in all of the schools... Children are suffering from trafficking but they don’t have anyone they can talk with.”*

— Line Manager, FSU, Police Department, Woman, Kambia district, KII Respondent #17

## 5. Strengthen Buy-in and Community Support for Human Rights, Especially the Rights of Children and Women

Given the findings from this endline study, that hesitancy to report about child trafficking within communities may come in part from distrust in or misperceptions about rights-based approaches to addressing child trafficking, the study team and partners recommend creating community spaces to discuss and address concerns related to human rights. One approach that may be beneficial could be to foster and facilitate inter-generational community dialogues about human rights, focused on building understanding about the aims for human rights, and to mitigate myths that question the validity of children's and women's rights.

## Protection

### 1. Scale-Up ACT Bylaws to All Districts in Sierra Leone

ACT bylaws developed in the study districts were identified by respondents as effective in increasing awareness about child trafficking and driving reductions in the prevalence of child trafficking, especially for child trafficking in domestic work and agriculture, typically linked to exploitative menpikin placements. Therefore, the study team and partners recommend that the community-led process for the development of contextually relevant ACT bylaws be replicated and scaled up to all districts in Sierra Leone.

### 2. Continue to Support Anti-Trafficking Training Initiatives

Respondents recommended increased investments in training and capacity building among child protection actors, justice, and social services stakeholders.

*“In terms of improvements in service provision, I recommend that we capacitate all the service providers in dealing with the children and also train them in psycho-social support. It's not always about money, we need people who can counsel victims and help them settle emotionally. I also recommend that we get more funds/resources.”*

— 30-year-old man, Office worker, university graduate, Member of Kambia District Human Trafficking Taskforce, Participant #4, FGD #20

*“The long-term plan is around education, on how trafficking can be brought into our learning curriculum, trainings on safeguarding measures for teachers and most government officers occupying government offices and even the general public if possible. Also there are plans to amend the child right act in parliament.”*

— Child Protection Officer, Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, Man, Freetown, KII Respondent #10

Training and capacity building for community stakeholders, including leaders, advocacy groups, and children's clubs, to strengthen community-based child trafficking response was also recommended. Some respondents suggested that training could focus more on practical tips for reporting and responding to child trafficking relevant for local community contexts (e.g., training about where to report, how to report). Several key informants indicated that there were plans to “step up” community training about reporting and referral processes.

*“We want to be sure that the awareness is fully created in these communities. They must be able to step up and handle the issue if there's any, and the referral pathways and channelling patterns must be known to them as well. How they should contact and pass the issues to other partners, the FSU, or the Ministry, for immediate action. All of these are short term plans. And the long-term plans would be, how to strengthen them for a particular structure to be in for resources, in case there's an issue of such nature they must be able to address it.”*

— Project Coordinator, NGO, Man, Kono district, KII Respondent #28

### 3. Increase Local Resource Allocation for Implementation of Anti-trafficking Laws

Implementors recommended an increase in allocation of resources to ensure effective enforcement of ACT bylaws and other anti-trafficking laws, particularly in rural areas. Suggestions were also made to implement a system where resources and logistical support are provided for frontline agencies and communities to enhance their effectiveness in responding to child trafficking. For example, respondents recommended adequately funding and resourcing systems and processes for parents, community members, and key stakeholders to monitor the well-being of menpikin children who are placed in informal foster care.

*“If we have the support of having committees in the sections and in the villages, it will be good because if someone is carrying a child, they will be able to ask and intervene easily. So that's our plan.”*

— 46-year-old woman, attended school up to O level, Member of Child Welfare Committee, Kono district, Participant # 5, FGD #18



*“As a community, the plan for the future is that if we hear any trafficking case related to a child, we will work as a team to go and bring the child back and take the necessary actions against the perpetrator.”*

**— 35-year-old woman, attended school up to SSS 3, Kambia district, Participant #2, FGD #5**

Some young people recommended that a child welfare committee be established in every community, so that young people can feel safer within their community.

*“Establishing the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) in this community will help reduce the crime rate and keep children safe.”*

**— 14-year-old girl, currently enrolled in school, Member of School-based Children’s Club, key concern: sexual assault and drug use among youth, Kenema district, Participant #5, FGD #29**

#### **4. Provide [Local] Safe Homes and Recovery Centers for Child Trafficking Survivors**

Respondents recommended the establishment of safe homes and recovery centers throughout Sierra Leone, especially in local communities, as well as increased provision of resources for child protection. There were also recommendations to increase access to comprehensive psychosocial support and trauma-informed care for survivors within existing recovery centers.

*“One recommendation that I want to make is that we need a shelter or a home for children who are victims of trafficking so that while investigations are ongoing, they will have a place to stay.”*

**— 39-year-old man, Trader, attended school up to class 7, Member of Kono District Human Trafficking Taskforce, Participant #2, FGD #22**

In an encouraging sign, there were reports that some initiatives are happening to support the building of safer homes in a few specific districts. However, the general perspective was that there is a need to increase investment in safe housing for survivors of child trafficking

*“In the short term, we are working on plans to have a safe home constructed here in Kenema for children rescued from trafficking... Quite recently, we had a meeting with the Minister of Gender and Children’s Affairs in Freetown, who assured us that the Chinese government has pledged to construct a safe home in Kenema not only as a district, but got the entire Eastern region.”*

**— Leadership, Ministry of Gender and Children’s Affairs, Man, Kenema district, KII Respondent #23**

#### **5. Increase Investment in Well-being and Sustainment for Survivors and Vulnerable Families**

Support sustainable access to livelihood support for families and survivors. Findings from the PARC-TIP program evaluation indicated that survivors benefit from long-term support for their well-being and sustainability, and families benefited from access to livelihood support.

The study team and partners recommend increasing investments in survivor well-being, such as by expanding access to the survivor trust fund to the local level. The benefits of investing in survivors not only impact on the individual survivor’s well-being but may also serve to reduce the occurrence of re-trafficking and uplift whole communities.

#### **6. Increase Children and Youth’s Participation, Agency, and Empowerment**

Young people interviewed for this study indicated that ACT bylaws had the potential to increase children’s agency, especially in terms of empowering children to report and seek help when they are in an exploitative situation. Young people also recommended that children and youth be included in decision-making and that there should be more recognition of the youth perspectives related to the development and implementation of laws intended to protect children.

*“Our opinions need to be valued because we are the most affected and let them enforce all the laws made to protect us the children.”*

**— 15-year-old girl, attended school up to SSS 3, no longer enrolled in school, Member of Children’s Forum Network, advocates against school related gender-based violence, Kenema district, Participant #2, FGD #27**

Therefore, the study team and partners recommend that stakeholders develop standardized processes and mechanisms for children and youth to report experiences of exploitation and to regularly participate in decision-making with communities and households.

### **Prosecution**

#### **1. Increase [local] Resources for Justice**

Respondents recommended that future initiatives should address systemic barriers within the judicial system by ensuring sufficient resources, such as personnel, training, and logistical support, are available. Several respondents recommended providing agencies responsible for prosecution (mainly the courts, police, and family

support units) with needed resources and logistical support to make their work as effective as possible, such as by establishing a fund at the district level, which could be used to respond to child trafficking cases.

*“We are talking about how government has been prosecuting traffickers, government alone cannot do the work that is why we have various bodies in the district, one way to prosecute those cases is by supporting those smaller groups in the district, chiefdom and the towns because they are the ones directly involve, and there for those groups that are there are the ones helping the government...”*

— 39-year-old man, Trader, Member of Kono District Anti-Trafficking Taskforce, attended school up to class 7, Participant #2, Kono district, FGD# 22

*“...we should do more to support investigation because that is normally where the cases die. Each time you go to the Police Family Support Unit, they complain about not having fuel or a motorbike. If we don't have speedy investigations and we lack evidence, cases will die down.”*

— Adult man, Member of Kailahun Human Trafficking Taskforce, Participant #5, Kailahun district, FGD #19,

## 2. Enhance Access to Justice for Survivors

Respondents recommended establishing an oversight body responsible for monitoring all child trafficking cases to enable a fair, prompt, and speedy trial of perpetrators and to advocate for the imposition of the harshest possible penalties for engaging in child exploitation. This recommendation was based on a need to accelerate the processing of trafficking cases and to provide victims with stronger legal support to navigate the complexities of the justice system.

*“...we want the government to really put more focus on strengthening the judiciary system because they are responsible for deciding child trafficking cases. This judiciary system must be closely monitored regarding the way they handle child trafficking cases when they reach court level. The judiciary needs to be giving the proper punishment to these perpetrators so it will serve as a warning to others.”*

— 72-year-old Man, Farmer, community member, Kambia district, Participant #2, FGD #8

## 3. Address Corruption and Reduce Compromise of Justice.

Young people who participated in this study emphasized the importance of addressing potential for corruption or social influence, which may lead to not formally addressing child trafficking cases. They also suggested that enforcement of laws that aim to support safety and well-being for children should be prioritized over personal compromises sometimes made between family members and justice officials.

*“I wish they [those responsible for holding perpetrators to account] would stop compromising serious crimes that are affecting children.”*

— 16-year-old boy, currently enrolled in school, Member of School-based Children's Club, key concern: community access to basic resources such as water and electricity, Kambia District, Participant #2, FGD #26

## 4. Standardize ACT Training for Justice Stakeholders.

Regular training for justice stakeholders, including police personnel who investigate trafficking offenses and paralegals who provide legal aid, was recommended to ensure that officers implement the highest professional standards where cases are not compromised. Training in engagement with survivors during the justice process and for understanding how to prosecute trafficking crimes was noted as being of critical importance.

*“I'm not familiar with the new national laws and policies currently in place to reduce the practice of internal child trafficking. Therefore, it's crucial for the government to ensure they conduct trainings for us to build our knowledge in this regard. This should be done because we can't fully embark on a fight when we're not capacitated....Let there be systems in place even for law enforcement bodies that will compel them to apply the full force of the law...Conduct of training mainly for the Police personnel will also be helpful.”*

— Line Manager, Family Support Unit, Police, Man, Kailahun District, KII Respondent # 13

## Partnership

### 1. Foster Stronger Multi-Sectoral Collaboration

There was a call, from many respondents, for greater collaboration and coordination between law enforcement, social services, and community-based structures at the local, regional, and national levels. Stakeholders recommended having regular (monthly) multi-stakeholder meetings, in which stakeholders reflect on and address child trafficking and other child protection-related issues, were suggested as a major means to enhance coordination and collaboration.

*“There is more to be done on the side of coordination and collaboration because given the nature of trafficking cases, if collaboration and coordination is not done in a timely manner there is tendency to lose everything we've worked on or gathered.”*

— State Council Officer, AG Office, Ministry of Justice, Man, Freetown, KII Respondent #11

*“My recommendation is for us as government to work together and coordinate collectively and effectively as a team to ensure these victims get the justice they deserve and retain the trust they have in us as a government.”*

— Senior child protection officer, Ministry of Gender and Children’s Affairs, Man, Freetown, Key Informant #10

## 2. Clearly Define Roles and Promote Teamwork Between Stakeholders

Respondents recommended that efforts be made to develop shared understandings of the roles that various stakeholders have in anti-trafficking work. Encourage diverse stakeholders, including senior district officers (SDOs), child welfare committees (CWCs), children’s groups (e.g., Children’s Forum Network and School clubs), and local chiefs to improve coordination and consistency in anti-child trafficking initiatives across districts. Some respondents indicated that there was a need to promote teamwork between governmental, NGOs, and community-based organizations.

*“My recommendations are to ensure that we continue with our community engagement approach. We should empower the community to take ownership of our efforts. Instead of viewing us solely as service providers, they should see us as equal partners dedicated to supporting and protecting our children...Therefore, I advise the government to continue community engagement, improve networking, and ensure mutual support among stakeholders.”*

— Field Manager, NGO, Man, Kailahun District, KII respondent #16

## Sustainability

### 1. Increase Community and GoSL Ownership of Anti-Trafficking Initiatives.

Respondents suggested that sustainability and continuity are fundamental to ensuring that the benefits of a social intervention like the ongoing anti-child trafficking efforts in Sierra Leone have a lasting impact. Respondents noted the importance of the Government at the national and subnational levels and communities taking full ownership of anti-trafficking initiatives. The recommendation by respondents and implementors was that initiatives and programs primarily facilitated by NGOs and INGOs could be reorganized under the purview of community and GoSL stakeholders. NGOs and INGOs that work on Anti-Trafficking initiatives should have a transparent sustainability plan for programs developed in collaboration with local and government stakeholders.

*“...on the side of partners or NGOs, there has been a reduction in the support from them in the past years as most*

*partners no longer give projects to government to implement, they rather implement their own project and this has led to a reduction of support given to us, as for government, the support is there but it is not enough.”*

— Senior Child Protection Officer, Man, Ministry of Gender and Children’s Affairs, Freetown, KII #10

## 2. Support Community Response Structures

Stakeholders recommended continued investment in supporting and empowering community structures, especially among youth and adult advocacy groups, such as CWCs and VPGs, engaged in anti-child trafficking sensitization to take local ownership of ongoing effort and program activities. They emphasized the importance of continuing training of existing community structures (e.g., CWCs) and training new groups in unserved communities to empower local structures and enhance sustainability. Also, it is suggested that the government and NGOs should provide members of community child protection structures (including CWC and VPG) with uniforms and other relevant tools could help with their empowerment and capacity to engage with communities.

*“P7 (48-year-old man, office worker, university educated): ...sometimes we put aside our jobs and families to engaged in anti-trafficking related activities. And at the end of the day, we return home empty handed. So, we are pleading for them [govt and NGOs] to consider that...”*

*“P3 (75-year-old man, farmer, never attended school): ...we have some hard-to-reach communities that we are dealing with, so going to these communities is always a challenge for us. Sometimes information reaches us about a suspected child trafficking case that needs immediate intervention but since there’s no transportation, we can’t get there.”*

*P2 (72-year-old man, farmer, never attended school): We want materials that can identify us...like ID cards, T-shirts, caps or even uniforms that will identify us a child trafficking service providers or social welfare agents in this community...People will simply identify us whenever we go and out services will have more respect and impact. Without these identification materials, sometimes people disrespect us by saying we are all farmers with nothing useful to tell them. So...we want something that will identify us and give us power to do our work.”*

— Adult men, Community members, Kambia district, FGD #8



# LIMITATIONS, CHALLENGES & LESSONS LEARNED

This section reports on limitations, challenges, and lessons learned during the research and program implementation. These sections draw from reports written by CMDA as part of the research and program evaluation process, including: the final research field report, following the endline data collection (Konteh et al., 2024), and the final program evaluation report (Jalloh et al., 2024). We share these reflections and recommendations with the aim of strengthening and supporting the research community. The first section will share challenges and lessons learned from the research process, and the next section will share learnings from the program implementation.

## RESEARCH AND EVALUATION (KONTEH ET AL., 2024)

### *Challenges Encountered During the Field Data Collection*

**1. Severe weather conditions created a barrier for reaching the households, conducting interviews, uploading data, etc.** Travelling to most of the EAs during the rainy season was hugely challenging. Data collectors sometimes had to travel across swollen and fast-current rivers by paddle-driven canoes to access the target communities and conduct interviews. Weather challenges posed by torrential rains and heavy winds impaired travel in some locations. RAs recounted thunderclaps and lightning experiences during the evening hours, which deterred phone usage and subsequently affected the submission of timely updates to compile the coordinators daily debrief reports.

**2. Rice harvest season hindered data collection.** The data collection exercise coincided with the rice harvest season in the rural areas of all four study districts. Most sampled respondents who were farmers would not return home to their communities until nightfall when the interviews were too late per the established protocols. RAs had to track sampled respondents during the day at their farms to conduct interviews in these circumstances.

**3. High transportation cost.** The poor road network delayed the journey to and within communities. Transportation was generally expensive, making the transport allowance inadequate.

**4. Efforts for geographical mapping.** Identification of the demarcation boundaries of EAs was another challenge, especially in urban areas. Some communities in the EA maps captured in the 2015 National Population Census no longer existed or had been renamed by the time the baseline and endline fieldwork was rolled out in 2020 and 2024, respectively.

**5. Difficulty in reaching the sampled households that participated in the baseline study.** It was very chal-

lenging to reach some households interviewed during the baseline, as some had moved to other locations, and no one knew where they had gone. There were instances when some identified respondents in baseline households could not recall the project due to time lapses. This type of recall bias can, however, improve the reliability of longitudinal studies.

**6. Electricity loss and lack of internet hindered the interview and uploading data in rural areas.** Power loss to handsets was another challenge, as most rural communities lacked electricity to recharge phones despite the availability of power banks. District Coordinators played a critical role here by traveling back and forth, recharging phones and power banks for their teams to ensure the continuation of field data collection. Uploading forms and data to the online server met some difficulties, which RAs primarily attributed to poor communication network access in some rural communities.

**7. Coordinating with local community leaders and stakeholders.** Administrative obstacles included the time-consuming process of obtaining permissions from local authorities, the need for careful coordination with various stakeholders, including local community chiefs, and the necessity for sensitization efforts before engaging with urban communities due to their hesitancy in providing information.

### *Lessons Learned*

**1. Obtainment of administrative data.** It's critical to collaborate with the national statistics office to obtain the most up-to-date administrative data at various administrative levels (e.g., of district, chiefdom, and enumeration area), which was the foundation for implementing a two-stage stratified household sampling design, which ensured an equal probability of selection.

**2. Sampling design and data mapping.** The sampling design for the endline study required not only a systematic examination of the administrative records but also consistent and accurate data mapping from the base-



line study. This process was tedious and time-consuming, but important, which therefore ensured the accurate comparison and detection of prevalence changes between baseline and endline studies.

**3. Survey Design.** The new sampling design was incorporated into the endline survey design to capture the different types of households being sampled as well as other nuanced factors involved in data collection. The NSUM component in the endline survey was updated, informed by the findings about the method from the baseline.

**4. Survey Programming.** It was critical for the survey tool to be programmed into the ODK platform efficiently and appropriately.

**5. Quality monitor and control measures.** During the three weeks of fieldwork, the CenHTRO team worked alongside the research partner, the CMDA team, to ensure a smooth process of data collection. We coordinatively reviewed the daily debriefs and performed quality check analysis for the data collected and uploaded to the ODK server. Progress and feedback were shared and discussed via weekly Zoom meetings on a biweekly basis. This coordinated work ensured the high quality of data that truly represented the study population.

**6. Data analysis.** The endline data analysis was more complicated than that of the baseline due to the complex data structure (i.e., household samples were comprised of  $\frac{1}{4}$  original baseline households that participated in the baseline study and  $\frac{3}{4}$  newly sampled households), which therefore required the application of a sample weighting scheme. This was done in a statistically sound manner.

#### *Recommendations for Future Data Collection*

**1. Critical role of IRB approval letters.** Obtaining approval from the Ethics Board was instrumental in gaining the local councils' support and confidence, and the Paramount Chiefs' support for the study.

**2. Conduct transportation cost analysis and coordinate additional support for remote or difficult-to-reach areas.** Conduct a transport cost analysis to cover the target data collection areas to reduce the transportation burden for data collectors. The thoroughness of the micro-planning processes before deployment ensured that the right field staff was identified, guaranteeing a greater chance of accessing remote and difficult-to-reach EAs and communities.

**3. Scientific team management.** The number of days for fieldwork and the amount allotted as transportation allowance encouraged the field staff to travel and collect data in the assigned areas with sufficient motivation. Using knowledgeable local guides to identify EA boundaries and names of household heads on the listings was

instrumental in identifying eligible respondents. Establishing reliable communication channels and feedback mechanisms proved vital for successful project outcomes, particularly in remote fieldwork settings.

**4. Ensure that language requirements are met when recruiting data collectors.** The recruitment of high-caliber RAs who were mostly originally from the study districts and spoke the local dialects and were familiar with the local cultures and terrains helped the exercise.

**5. Adequate training of trainers was essential.** The quality of the training's delivery ensured that trainees were sufficiently confident and empowered to conduct the data collection despite numerous challenges faced in the field. Feedback from data collectors indicates that interviewees were mostly apprehensive in their initial meeting, but that they were later ready to cooperate after the data collector introduced and explained the study objectives.

**6. Development of protocol and community engagement.** Adequate training in community engagement and entry/exit protocols was also critical in ensuring local authorities and household heads' cooperation and support for the exercise. In areas with no commercial accommodation facilities, local Chiefs hosted the visiting data collection teams in their homes, which helped them access households and facilitated their work immensely. Always follow the Entry/Exit Protocol for easy access and good community engagement with the respondents.

**7. Gender balanced approach in recruiting data collectors.** Arranging the field teams with an adequate gender mix ensured counterbalance and enhanced field support. Interview teams were able to understand the different respondents' requirements better, providing reassurance whenever needed.

**8. Appropriate behavioral training.** Modest dressing and culturally acceptable behavior in local communities will promote good working relationships between the data collectors and community members.

**9. Quality monitor and control measures.** Quantitative data collected should be downloaded from the server, a quick analysis conducted, and the results shared at least every other day with field teams to help track progress. Feedback should not be shared at the end when the teams have left the target locations.

**10. Health and Safety Support.** Providing essential medical supplies for field preparedness and sharing important field health tips helped keep the teams safe and healthy.

## PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION LESSONS LEARNED, CHALLENGES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The three-year implementation of the CenHTRO anti-trafficking program in Sierra Leone, comprising the WHI PARC-TIP and UNODC prosecution projects, has provided invaluable insights into combating child trafficking in Sierra Leone (Jalloh et al., 2024). Through its focus on prevention, protection, and prosecution, the program sought to address the multifaceted challenges posed by trafficking in persons, particularly vulnerable children. This chapter outlines the key lessons learned from the program's implementation, the significant challenges encountered, and the recommendations for future interventions. By reflecting on the successes and obstacles faced, this chapter aims to provide actionable insights that will enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of anti-trafficking efforts in Sierra Leone and inform future projects designed to combat this pervasive issue.

### KEY LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

One major takeaway from this project on the prevalence reduction of child trafficking is that effective and sustainable interventions do not need to be expensive. A multi-level approach that pays particular attention to the major drivers of child trafficking and the main policy and service gaps can result in significant positive results. In this case, a focus on community-level bylaws in addition to other interventions resulted in the reduction of child trafficking across the four districts. To date, we are not aware of any existing large-scale implementation research project that includes baseline and endline data in the field of human trafficking.

**1. Capacity Building and Institutional Strengthening are Critical:** One of the significant lessons learned from the PEMS 3 program is that building the capacity of law enforcement officers, social workers, and community leaders is crucial to the success of anti-trafficking efforts. The provision of tailored training incorporating trauma-informed approaches improved the skills of stakeholders in both the prevention and prosecution of trafficking, especially when linked to the revised Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act, 2022. This capacity building created a foundation for better case management and increased community involvement in trafficking detection and reporting.

**2. Community Engagement is Key to Prevention** Engaging local communities, including Village Parent Groups (VPGs) and Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), played a vital role in preventing child trafficking. This involvement allowed the communities to take ownership of trafficking prevention efforts, ensuring long-term sustainability. The integration of child rights education in schools through the "I Am Special" curriculum also helped to increase awareness among children, empowering them to recognize and report cases of trafficking.

**3. Survivor-Centered Approaches Yield Positive Results:** Focusing on providing trauma-informed care and psychosocial support to survivors proved effective in their recovery and reintegration. The provision of mental health services and follow-up support significantly enhanced survivors' well-being and readiness for reintegration. Additionally, supporting survivors through the provision of income-generating activities for their parents/guardians enabled survivors to achieve sustainable livelihoods post-reintegration.

**4. Community engagement and collaboration between leaders are essential for effective bylaws implementation.** Active involvement of all stakeholders, including Senior District Officers (SDOs), Paramount Chiefs, and CWCs, leads to greater success because, through active involvement, the bylaws gain legitimacy and are more readily enforced within communities. For instance, Paramount Chiefs, as traditional authorities, play a critical role in mobilizing communities and ensuring cultural acceptance of new measures such as the bylaws, while SDOs provide administrative oversight and link the bylaws to district governance structures. CWCs, with their grassroots presence, ensure that the bylaws are understood at the village level and that violations are promptly reported to the relevant authorities.

### CHALLENGES FACED DURING IMPLEMENTATION

COVID-19 delayed the research activities that were expected to inform the intervention. We overcame this by using a rapid analysis approach in data analysis and using the relevant data to start project implementation.

**1. Systemic and Logistical Barriers to Prosecution:** One of the significant challenges the project faced was delays in prosecuting traffickers. The judicial system struggled with resource constraints, including limited staff and logistical support, which resulted in slow case progression. Additionally, the frequent personnel transfer affected continuity and the ability to prosecute trafficking cases efficiently.

**2. Coordination and Resource Limitations:** Although coordination between law enforcement, judiciary, and community structures improved, there were still significant challenges in ensuring consistent collaboration across all stakeholders. Resource limitations, such as insufficient logistical support for law enforcement to reach remote areas, also hindered the detection and prosecution of trafficking cases. The lack of consistent meetings and financial resources often disrupted coordination within District TIP Task Forces.

**3. Insufficient Data for Monitoring and Reporting:** Another challenge was tracking specific outcomes and performance indicators due to gaps in data collection. This limited the ability to fully assess some interventions' impact, particularly in documenting successful prosecutions and community-based activities. The lack

of real-time data also affected timely decision-making and the ability to adapt project strategies.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

**1. Strengthen Judicial Support and Legal Services:** Future projects should address systemic barriers within the judicial system by ensuring sufficient resources, such as personnel, training, and logistical support, are available. This includes speeding up the processing of trafficking cases and providing victims with stronger legal support to navigate the complexities of the justice system.

**2. Enhance Data Collection and Monitoring Systems:** Improving data collection mechanisms is essential for future success. Real-time monitoring and robust reporting structures should be implemented to ensure all key performance indicators are effectively tracked. This will allow for better intervention adaptation and ensure that critical milestones are met in a timely manner.

**3. Foster Stronger Multi-Sectoral Collaboration:** The program should enhance coordination between law enforcement, social services, and community-based structures. This can be achieved through regular multi-stakeholder meetings, improved resource allocation, and the establishment of clear channels of communication. A stronger focus on building trust among stakeholders will also improve the efficiency and effectiveness of anti-trafficking efforts.

**4. Increase resource allocation and expand awareness campaigns** on bylaws implementation to ensure effective enforcement, particularly in remote and border areas, and provide ongoing training for community enforcers.

**5. Strengthen collaboration and clearly define roles** between SDOs, CWCs, and local chiefs to improve coordination and consistency in bylaw enforcement across all districts.

**6. Identify the key drivers and service gaps at the onset of the project,** as this increases the effectiveness of the project and resource allocation. By embedding your staff in the national and local decision-making spaces, you can stay informed of any social, economic, political, or environmental dynamics that affect the problem. Both the problem and its context may not be static, even though your research should be able to identify key areas that need intervention.

By addressing these challenges and building on the lessons learned, future iterations of the PEMS 3 program or similar initiatives will be better positioned to achieve more significant and sustainable impacts in combating child trafficking.

# CONCLUSION

This report presents findings from the endline study of a 5-year research study and programming intervention, which aimed to strengthen the response to child trafficking and child labor in Sierra Leone. This endline study measured changes in the prevalence of child trafficking and child labor between 2019 and 2024. We found a significant reduction in child trafficking in Kailahun, Kono, Kenema, and Kambia. We also found a marked increase in awareness and proactive initiatives to address child trafficking within communities in all study districts, as well as at the national level. During the study period, government stakeholders, advocates, implementing partners, CWCs, VPGs, Anti-Trafficking Taskforce members, NGOs, journalists, community members, and children and youth in Sierra Leone have made great strides to strengthen and enhance the response to child trafficking. As the respondents interviewed for the endline suggested, it is through these collaborative efforts and continued supportive engagement in learning and building capacity together that there has been a measurable reduction in child trafficking within the study districts. Work remains to be done, as the rate of child labor appears to have increased in three of the study districts, and there continue to be challenges with the implementation of anti-trafficking laws, as well as resource gaps for long-term sustainability. However, as the results from this report indicate, a strong foundation has been developed to continue to make an impact on the lives of children, youth, and communities through preventing and responding to child trafficking and child labor. As we have noted before and to our best knowledge, this is the first documentation of a measurable reduction in child trafficking in large implementation research. We know it will not be the last one.

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# TABLES

**Table 1: Endline Household Survey Sampling Distribution**

| District                              | Kailahun | Kambia  | Kenema  | Kono    | Total     |
|---------------------------------------|----------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Population Size**                     | 545,947  | 367,699 | 774,472 | 620,703 | 2,308,821 |
| No. of Residential Structures**       | 56,697   | 38,132  | 71,831  | 58,002  | 224,662   |
| No. of Sampled Households             | 885      | 1,059   | 1,238   | 949     | 4,131     |
| No. of Children in Sampled Households | 2,205    | 2,622   | 2,914   | 2,089   | 9,830     |
| % Urban                               | 29%      | 30%     | 46%     | 24%     |           |
| No. of Urban EAs                      | 12       | 15      | 26      | 11      | 64        |
| No. of Rural EAs                      | 30       | 35      | 32      | 34      | 131       |
| No. of Urban Households               | 255      | 317     | 569     | 226     | 1,367     |
| No. of Rural Households               | 630      | 742     | 669     | 723     | 2,764     |

\*\*Data source: SSL 2021. Sierra Leone 2021 Digital Mid-Term Census Provisional Results. Note that the number of households was unavailable in the 2021 mid-term census. Here we report the number of residential structures as a proxy for the number of households although the number of residential structures is likely lower than the actual number of households. The previous census (2015) indicated that there were approximately 1.5 households per residential structure in the study districts. Therefore, the number of households in Kailahun, for example, might be closer to 85,045 (which is 1.5 times 56,697).

Table 1 provides an overview of the endline household survey sampling distribution across four districts in Sierra Leone: Kailahun, Kambia, Kenema, and Kono. It includes details on the population size, total number of residential structures and sampled households, and additional demographic factors such as the number of children within sampled households and the distribution of urban and rural households. In total, 2,308,821 individuals were recorded across the four districts, and 224,662 residences with 4,131 households sampled for the survey. Among the districts, Kenema has the highest population count at 774,472, followed by Kono, Kailahun, and Kambia.

**Number of Children in Sampled Households:** At endline, a total of 9,830 children were recorded across the four districts, with Kenema having the largest number (2,914 children), reflecting its larger household size. Kambia and Kailahun followed with 2,622 and 2,205 children, respectively, while Kono had 2,089 children in the sampled households. This data is crucial for understanding the child population distribution in the sample, which serves as the basis for subsequent analyses on child trafficking and child labor.

**Urban and Rural Households:** The urban household proportion is relatively low across all districts, with the highest percentage found in Kenema (46%), followed by Kambia (30%), Kailahun (29%), and Kono (24%). This indicates that the majority of the households surveyed were rural, a factor that may influence the dynamics of child labor and trafficking in these regions, as rural areas often have distinct socio-economic conditions compared to urban areas.

In addition, the table provides information on the exact number of urban and rural households sampled. For example, in Kailahun, 255 of the 885 sampled households are urban, while the remaining 630 are rural. Similar patterns are observed in the other districts, reinforcing the predominantly rural nature of the regions under study. In conclusion, Table 1 outlines a well-distributed sample across the four districts, covering both urban and rural

households. It provides a solid foundation for further analysis of child demographics and the potential prevalence of child trafficking and labor. The relatively small proportion of urban households and the large rural majority suggest that the survey findings will likely reflect rural conditions, where child labor may be more prevalent due to agricultural work and traditional labor practices.

**Table 2: Welfare of the Sampled Households (All Respondents)**

| Categories                                                                                      | Kailahun | Kambia  | Kenema  | Kono    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|---------|---------|---------|
| By {district} standards, your household is really well-off                                      | 2(1,5)   | 2(1,5)  | 2(1,5)  | 2(1,5)  |
| Your household finds it difficult to live on its current income                                 | 4 (1,5)  | 3 (1,5) | 4 (1,5) | 4 (1,5) |
| Generally, there is enough food for all the people in this household                            | 2(1,5)   | 2 (1,5) | 2 (1,5) | 2 (1,5) |
| Generally, there is enough money for school fees to send every child in the household to school | 2 (1,5)  | 2 (1,5) | 2 (1,5) | 2 (1,5) |
| Generally, there is enough money to supply clothing for everyone in the household               | 2 (1,5)  | 2 (1,5) | 2 (1,5) | 2 (1,5) |
| Generally, there is enough money to buy medicine for everyone in the household                  | 2 (1,5)  | 2 (1,5) | 2 (1,5) | 2 (1,5) |

Each cell contains the mean value of the characteristics and the 95% confidence interval in parenthesis. The items evaluate household welfare on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being strongly Disagree and 5 being Strongly Agree.

Table 2 examines the self-reported welfare status of households across four districts in Sierra Leone: Kailahun, Kambia, Kenema, and Kono. The categories represent households' perceptions of their financial well-being, food security, and access to necessary educational resources. Responses are reported on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest. Each cell contains both the median score and the interquartile range (IQR) to provide an understanding of the distribution of responses across households.

**Household Well-being:** In terms of general financial well-being, households across all four districts rate their situation relatively low. For example, in the category "By [district] standards, your household is really well off," the median response in each district is 2, with an IQR of (1,5), indicating that while a few households consider themselves well-off, the majority feel that they are struggling financially. This pattern is consistent across Kailahun, Kambia, Kenema, and Kono, showing widespread economic hardship.

**Living Standards:** Another indicator, "Your household finds it difficult to live on its present income," also reflects significant financial difficulty. The median response is 4, with an IQR of (1,5), particularly in Kambia, Kenema, and Kono, suggesting that most households find it challenging to meet their daily needs with their current income. This reinforces the theme of economic vulnerability across the sampled population.

**Food Security and Education:** Responses to statements about food availability ("Generally, there is enough food for all the people in your household") and the ability to afford school fees ("Generally, there is enough money for school fees for the children in the household") are similarly concerning. The median for both categories across all districts is 2, with an IQR of (1,5). This suggests that many households struggle to consistently provide food and education support for their children, a significant factor that may exacerbate child labor or trafficking in vulnerable areas.

In conclusion, Table 2 clearly shows households' economic challenges in the four study districts. The consistently low median scores across multiple welfare indicators highlight widespread financial hardship, food insecurity, and difficulties in affording education. These challenges may increase vulnerability to child labor and trafficking, making the



findings critical for targeting future interventions aimed at improving household welfare and protecting children.

**Table 3: Endline Household Sanitation, Source of Drinking Water, and Main Fuel Used for Cooking**

| Characteristics                                 | Kailahun |        | Kambia |        | Kenema |        | Kono |        |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------|--------|
|                                                 | N        | %      | N      | %      | N      | %      | N    | %      |
| Total                                           | 885      | 100    | 1059   | 100    | 1238   | 100    | 949  | 100    |
| Type of toilet used by the household            |          |        |        |        |        |        |      |        |
| Flush/pour flush to piped sewer system          | 1        | 0.10%  | 2      | 0.20%  | 33     | 2.60%  | 1    | 0.10%  |
| Flush/pour flush to septic tank                 | 17       | 1.90%  | 44     | 4.20%  | 54     | 4.40%  | 17   | 1.80%  |
| Flush/pour to pit latrine                       | 27       | 3.10%  | 38     | 3.60%  | 23     | 1.80%  | 18   | 1.90%  |
| Ventilated improved pit (VIP) latrine           | 49       | 5.60%  | 40     | 3.80%  | 122    | 9.90%  | 17   | 1.80%  |
| Pit Latrine with slab                           | 632      | 71.40% | 783    | 74.00% | 823    | 66.50% | 850  | 89.50% |
| Composting Toilet                               | 12       | 1.40%  | 103    | 9.70%  | 6      | 0.40%  | 22   | 2.30%  |
| Bush                                            | 147      | 16.60% | 49     | 4.60%  | 178    | 14.40% | 24   | 2.60%  |
| Main source of drinking water for the household |          |        |        |        |        |        |      |        |
| Public tap                                      | 383      | 43.30% | 390    | 36.90% | 722    | 58.30% | 569  | 60.00% |
| Dug well                                        | 319      | 36.10% | 401    | 37.80% | 361    | 29.10% | 136  | 14.30% |
| Natural Spring                                  | 33       | 3.70%  | 1      | 0.10%  | 0      | 0.00%  | 29   | 3.10%  |
| Rainwater                                       | 0        | 0.00%  | 1      | 0.10%  | 0      | 0.00%  | 1    | 0.10%  |
| Bottled Water                                   | 1        | 0.10%  | 0      | 0.00%  | 10     | 0.80%  | 0    | 0.00%  |
| River/Stream                                    | 145      | 16.40% | 223    | 21.00% | 133    | 10.70% | 208  | 21.90% |
| Other                                           | 3        | 0.30%  | 43     | 4.00%  | 13     | 1.00%  | 6    | 0.60%  |
| Main fuel used by the household for cooking     |          |        |        |        |        |        |      |        |
| Electricity                                     | 0        | 0.00%  | 0      | 0.00%  | 1      | 0.10%  | 0    | 0.00%  |
| LPG/natural gas/biogas                          | 0        | 0.00%  | 1      | 0.10%  | 0      | 0.00%  | 0    | 0.00%  |
| Kerosene                                        | 0        | 0.00%  | 0      | 0.00%  | 0      | 0.00%  | 1    | 0.10%  |
| Coal/lignite                                    | 0        | 0.00%  | 0      | 0.00%  | 4      | 0.30%  | 0    | 0.00%  |
| Charcoal                                        | 73       | 8.30%  | 155    | 14.60% | 260    | 21.00% | 146  | 15.40% |
| Wood                                            | 811      | 91.70% | 869    | 82.10% | 963    | 77.80% | 795  | 83.80% |
| Straw/Shrub/grass                               | 0        | 0.00%  | 32     | 3.10%  | 0      | 0.00%  | 0    | 0.00%  |
| Agricultural crop                               | 0        | 0.00%  | 0      | 0.00%  | 0      | 0.00%  | 0    | 0.00%  |
| No food cooked in household                     | 0        | 0.00%  | 1      | 0.10%  | 0      | 0.00%  | 0    | 0.00%  |
| other                                           | 0        | 0.00%  | 0      | 0.00%  | 10     | 0.80%  | 6    | 0.60%  |

Table 3 presents absolute counts and percentages for each district, reflecting living conditions and infrastructure access.

**Sanitation:** The data reveals stark disparities in sanitation infrastructure across the districts:

In Kailahun, only 0.1% of households have a flush or pour-flush toilet connected to a piped sewer system, with 1.9% using septic tanks. Most households rely on traditional sanitation, with 5.6% using ventilated improved pit (VIP) latrines and 71.4% using pit latrines with slabs.

Kambia has similar patterns, with only 0.2% using flush toilets connected to a sewer system and 4.2% connected to septic tanks. A significant number of households (74.0%) rely on pit latrines with slabs.

Kenema shows better infrastructure, with 2.6% of households using flush toilets connected to sewers and 4.4% connected to septic tanks. However, a large portion of households (66.5%) still use pit latrines.

In Kono, only 0.1% of households have flush toilets connected to sewers, 1.8% use septic tanks, and the majority (89.5%) rely on pit latrines.

These figures highlight the challenges in sanitation infrastructure, with Kenema standing out for better access to flush toilets, while Kailahun, Kambia, and Kono continue to depend heavily on pit latrines.

**Main Source of Drinking Water:** Access to safe drinking water is crucial for public health, and the data indicate varying levels of access across the districts:

In Kailahun, 43.3% of households rely on public tap drinking water, while 36.1% use dug wells. A smaller percentage (3.7%) use natural springs, reflecting the challenges in accessing piped water.

Kambia relies similarly on public taps (36.9%) and dug wells (37.8%). However, the use of natural springs is negligible.

Kenema stands out, with 58.3% of households using public taps, indicating better access to treated water sources. However, 29.1% still rely on dug wells.

Kono reflects a more rural setup, with 60.0% of households using public taps and 14.3% relying on dug wells. Additionally, 3.1% of households use natural springs, suggesting limited access to treated water.

The data shows that Kenema has the best access to public water sources, while Kono and Kailahun still face significant challenges in securing safe, treated drinking water.

**Main Fuel used for Cooking:** The data on fuel use for cooking across Kailahun, Kambia, Kenema, and Kono reveals a strong dependence on traditional fuels, particularly wood and charcoal. More than 75% of households in each district rely on wood, which has implications for environmental sustainability and health due to indoor air pollution from inefficient stoves. Although Kenema shows a slightly lower reliance on wood and a higher use of charcoal, access to modern fuels like LPG and electricity remains extremely limited across all districts. Improving access to clean cooking energy is critical in these regions to reduce deforestation and enhance household health outcomes.

In conclusion, Table 3 paints a comprehensive picture of the varying levels of infrastructure development across Kailahun, Kambia, Kenema, and Kono. Kenema consistently emerges as having better sanitation facilities and likely improved access to other infrastructure, such as drinking water and modern cooking fuels. In contrast, Kailahun and Kono heavily rely on traditional and less hygienic options, such as pit latrines and wood fuel. These findings underscore the need for targeted infrastructure improvements, particularly in the more rural and underdeveloped districts, to improve public health and living standards.

**Table 4. Characteristics CT/Non-CT and CL/Non-CL Children in the Sampled Households in Kailahun at Endline**

| Characteristics                              | Children in Households | CT count  | Non-CT count |            |       | CL count   | Non-CL count |            |       |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------|--------------|------------|-------|------------|--------------|------------|-------|
| Total Unweighted                             | 2205                   | 507       | 1699         |            |       | 993        | 1212         |            |       |
| Total Weighted                               | 2309                   | 534       | 1776         |            |       | 1044       | 1266         |            |       |
| Characteristics (Weighted)                   | Children in households | CT % (n)  | non-CT % (n) | Odds Ratio | p     | CL % (n)   | non-CL % (n) | Odds Ratio | p     |
| <b>Age</b>                                   |                        |           |              |            |       |            |              |            |       |
| Age 5-11                                     | 1252                   | 15% (182) | 85% (1070)   | 0.34       | <.001 | 49% (616)  | 51% (636)    | 1.43       | <.001 |
| Age 12-14                                    | 495                    | 29% (142) | 71% (354)    | 1.45       | <.001 | 44% (218)  | 56% (278)    | 0.94       | 0.54  |
| Age 15-17                                    | 562                    | 37% (210) | 63% (352)    | 2.62       | <.001 | 38% (210)  | 63% (352)    | 0.65       | <.001 |
| <b>Sex</b>                                   |                        |           |              |            |       |            |              |            |       |
| Female                                       | 1218                   | 22% (265) | 78% (953)    | 0.85       | 0.1   | 45% (542)  | 56% (676)    | 0.94       | 0.47  |
| Male                                         | 1091                   | 25% (269) | 75% (822)    | 1.18       | 0.1   | 46% (502)  | 54% (589)    | 1.06       | 0.47  |
| <b>Child Has a Disability</b>                |                        |           |              |            |       |            |              |            |       |
| Disability                                   | 83                     | 28% (24)  | 72% (59)     | 1.36       | 0.22  | 47% (39)   | 53% (44)     | 1.09       | 0.7   |
| <b>Child Contributes to Household Income</b> |                        |           |              |            |       |            |              |            |       |
| Contributes                                  | 390                    | 48% (188) | 52% (202)    | 4.24       | <.001 | 70% (271)  | 30% (119)    | 3.38       | <.001 |
| <b>School Enrollment Status</b>              |                        |           |              |            |       |            |              |            |       |
| Formal school (non-Madrassa)                 | 2014                   | 21% (422) | 79% (1592)   | 0.43       | <.001 | 44% (885)  | 56% (1129)   | 0.67       | <.001 |
| Enrolled in Madrassa                         | 82                     | 45% (37)  | 55% (45)     | 2.83       | <.001 | 64% (52)   | 36% (30)     | 2.16       | <.001 |
| <b>Child's Marital Status</b>                |                        |           |              |            |       |            |              |            |       |
| Single                                       | 2281                   | 23% (528) | 77% (1753)   | 1.23       | 0.66  | 45% (1035) | 55% (1246)   | 1.95       | 0.1   |
| Married                                      | 16                     | 33% (5)   | 67% (11)     | NA         | NA    | 52% (8)    | 49% (8)      | NA         | NA    |
| Marital Other                                | 12                     | 0% (0)    | 100% (12)    | NA         | NA    | 0% (0)     | 100% (12)    | NA         | NA    |
| <b>Religion</b>                              |                        |           |              |            |       |            |              |            |       |
| Muslim                                       | 1447                   | 24% (342) | 77% (1104)   | 1.09       | 0.42  | 43% (623)  | 60% (824)    | 0.8        | 0.01  |
| Catholic                                     | 430                    | 17% (74)  | 83% (355)    | 0.65       | <.001 | 47% (201)  | 53% (229)    | 1.07       | 0.5   |
| Anglican/Protestant                          | 125                    | 30% (125) | 70% (87)     | 1.5        | 0.04  | 56% (70)   | 44% (55)     | 1.56       | 0.02  |
| Pentecostal                                  | 103                    | 27% (28)  | 73% (76)     | 1.24       | 0.34  | 52% (53)   | 49% (50)     | 1.3        | 0.19  |
| Seventh Day Adventist                        | 25                     | 29% (7)   | 71% (18)     | 1.39       | 0.45  | 43% (11)   | 57% (14)     | 0.92       | 0.83  |
| Other                                        | 178                    | 25% (44)  | 75% (134)    | 1.11       | 0.57  | 48% (85)   | 52% (93)     | 1.12       | 0.45  |
| None                                         | 1                      | 0% (0)    | 100% (1)     | NA         | NA    | 100% (1)   | 0% (0)       | NA         | NA    |

Notes. Statistically significant at  $p < .05$ . Odds ratios shown as “NA” indicate categories with extreme class imbalance or sparse cell counts ( $<5$ ), which can yield unstable estimates and overconfident  $p$ -values (e.g., non-madrassa for formal school in Kambia, where 88% of children were enrolled; and contribution to household in Kono, where only 6% reported contributing). For these cases, the OR is suppressed to avoid misinterpretation. Descriptive percentages and sample sizes are reported alongside inferential results. All analyses are based on weighted data. Fisher’s exact tests were used.

Table 5. Characteristics CT/Non-CT and CL/Non-CL Children in the Sampled Households in Kenema at Endline

| Characteristics<br>(Weighted)                | Children in<br>Households | CT count    | Non-CT<br>count |               |       | CL count    | Non-CL<br>count |               |       |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|-----------------|---------------|-------|-------------|-----------------|---------------|-------|
| Total Unweighted                             | 2914                      | 449         | 2466            |               |       | 1253        | 1661            |               |       |
| Total Weighted                               | 2876                      | 443         | 2434            |               |       | 1239        | 1637            |               |       |
| Characteristics<br>(Weighted)                | Children in<br>households | CT<br>% (n) | non-CT<br>% (n) | Odds<br>Ratio | p     | CL<br>% (n) | non-CL<br>% (n) | Odds<br>Ratio | p     |
| <b>Age</b>                                   |                           |             |                 |               |       |             |                 |               |       |
| Age 5-11                                     | 1626                      | 8% (134)    | 92% (1493)      | 0.27          | <.001 | 50% (808)   | 50% (818)       | 1.88          | <.001 |
| Age 12-14                                    | 591                       | 20% (116)   | 80% (475)       | 1.47          | <.001 | 40% (238)   | 60% (354)       | 0.86          | 0.11  |
| Age 15-17                                    | 659                       | 29% (193)   | 71% (466)       | 3.26          | <.001 | 29% (193)   | 71% (465)       | 0.47          | <.001 |
| <b>Sex</b>                                   |                           |             |                 |               |       |             |                 |               |       |
| Female                                       | 1515                      | 14% (209)   | 86% (1306)      | 0.77          | 0.01  | 43% (658)   | 57% (857)       | 1.03          | 0.68  |
| Male                                         | 1361                      | 17% (234)   | 83% (1127)      | 1.29          | 0.01  | 43% (581)   | 57% (780)       | 0.97          | 0.68  |
| <b>Child Has a Disability</b>                |                           |             |                 |               |       |             |                 |               |       |
| Disability                                   | 101                       | 17% (17)    | 83% (84)        | 1.12          | 0.67  | 33% (34)    | 67% (67)        | 0.66          | 0.05  |
| <b>Child Contributes to Household Income</b> |                           |             |                 |               |       |             |                 |               |       |
| Contributes                                  | 161                       | 44% (71)    | 56% (90)        | 5.01          | <.001 | 64% (104)   | 36% (57)        | 2.51          | <.001 |
| <b>School Enrollment Status</b>              |                           |             |                 |               |       |             |                 |               |       |
| Formal school (non-Madrassa)                 | 2424                      | 14% (337)   | 86% (2088)      | 0.52          | <.001 | 42% (1019)  | 58% (1406)      | 0.76          | 0.01  |
| Enrolled in Madrassa                         | 93                        | 29% (27)    | 71% (66)        | 2.39          | <.001 | 67% (62)    | 33% (31)        | 2.71          | <.001 |
| <b>Child's Marital Status</b>                |                           |             |                 |               |       |             |                 |               |       |
| Single                                       | 2860                      | 15% (438)   | 85% (2422)      | 0.36          | 0.05  | 43% (1233)  | 57% (1627)      | 1.27          | 0.63  |
| Married                                      | 15                        | 27% (4)     | 73% (11)        | NA            | NA    | 31% (5)     | 69% (10)        | NA            | NA    |
| Marital Other                                | 1                         | 100% (1)    | 0% (0)          | NA            | NA    | 100% (1)    | 0% (0)          | NA            | NA    |
| <b>Religion</b>                              |                           |             |                 |               |       |             |                 |               |       |
| Muslim                                       | 2568                      | 15% (394)   | 85% (2174)      | 0.94          | 0.72  | 44% (1124)  | 56% (1444)      | 1.31          | 0.03  |
| Catholic                                     | 118                       | 12% (15)    | 88% (103)       | 0.79          | 0.39  | 36% (42)    | 64% (75)        | 0.74          | 0.12  |
| Anglican                                     | 61                        | 24% (14)    | 77% (46)        | 1.75          | 0.06  | 37% (23)    | 63% (38)        | 0.79          | 0.37  |
| Pentecostal                                  | 72                        | 26% (19)    | 74% (53)        | 2.04          | 0.01  | 47% (34)    | 53% (38)        | 1.17          | 0.52  |
| Seventh Day Adventist                        | 2                         | 0% (0)      | 100% (2)        | NA            | NA    | 100% (2)    | 0% (0)          | NA            | NA    |
| Other                                        | 52                        | 3% (2)      | 97% (51)        | NA            | NA    | 28% (15)    | 73% (38)        | 0.51          | 0.03  |
| None                                         | 1                         | 0% (0)      | 100% (1)        | NA            | NA    | 0% (0)      | 100% (1)        | NA            | NA    |
| Do not know                                  | 2                         | 0% (0)      | 100% (2)        | NA            | NA    | 0% (0)      | 100% (2)        | NA            | NA    |

Notes. Statistically significant at  $p < .05$ . Odds ratios shown as “NA” indicate categories with extreme class imbalance or sparse cell counts ( $<5$ ), which can yield unstable estimates and overconfident  $p$ -values (e.g., non-madrassa for formal school in Kambia, where 88% of children were enrolled; and contribution to household in Kono, where only 6% reported contributing). For these cases, the OR is suppressed to avoid misinterpretation. Descriptive percentages and sample sizes are reported alongside inferential results. All analyses are based on weighted data. Fisher’s exact tests were used.



Table 6. Characteristics CT/Non-CT and CL/Non-CL Children in the Sampled Households in Kono at Endline

| Characteristics<br>(Weighted)                | Children in<br>Households | CT count    | Non-CT<br>count |               |        | CL count    | Non-CL<br>count |               |        |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|-----------------|---------------|--------|-------------|-----------------|---------------|--------|
| Total Unweighted                             | 2089                      | 337         | 1752            |               |        | 881         | 1208            |               |        |
| Total Weighted                               | 2095                      | 338         | 1757            |               |        | 883         | 1212            |               |        |
| Characteristics<br>(Weighted)                | Children in<br>households | CT<br>% (n) | non-CT<br>% (n) | Odds<br>Ratio | p      | CL<br>% (n) | non-CL<br>% (n) | Odds<br>Ratio | p      |
| <b>Age</b>                                   |                           |             |                 |               |        |             |                 |               |        |
| Age 5-11                                     | 1108                      | 11% (123)   | 89% (985)       | 0.45          | < .001 | 50% (549)   | 50% (559)       | 1.91          | < .001 |
| Age 12-14                                    | 454                       | 18% (84)    | 82% (370)       | 1.24          | 0.13   | 45% (203)   | 55% (251)       | 1.14          | 0.21   |
| Age 15-17                                    | 533                       | 25% (131)   | 75% (402)       | 2.15          | < .001 | 25% (131)   | 75% (402)       | 0.35          | < .001 |
| <b>Sex</b>                                   |                           |             |                 |               |        |             |                 |               |        |
| Female                                       | 1054                      | 14% (148)   | 86% (906)       | 0.74          | 0.01   | 43% (456)   | 57% (598)       | 1.1           | 0.3    |
| Male                                         | 1041                      | 18% (189)   | 82% (852)       | 1.36          | 0.01   | 41% (427)   | 59% (614)       | 0.91          | 0.3    |
| <b>Child Has a Disability</b>                |                           |             |                 |               |        |             |                 |               |        |
| Disability                                   | 44                        | 8% (4)      | 92% (41)        | NA            | NA     | 24% (11)    | 76% (34)        | 0.45          | 0.02   |
| <b>Child Contributes to Household Income</b> |                           |             |                 |               |        |             |                 |               |        |
| Contributes                                  | 121                       | 20% (25)    | 80% (97)        | NA            | NA     | 28% (34)    | 72% (88)        | NA            | NA     |
| <b>School Enrollment Status</b>              |                           |             |                 |               |        |             |                 |               |        |
| Formal school (non-Madrassa)                 | 1826                      | 15% (278)   | 85% (1548)      | 0.62          | < .001 | 43% (784)   | 57% (1042)      | 1.28          | 0.07   |
| Enrolled in Madrassa                         | 25                        | 0% (0)      | 100% (25)       | NA            | NA     | 39% (10)    | 61% (15)        | 0.88          | 0.76   |
| <b>Child's Marital Status</b>                |                           |             |                 |               |        |             |                 |               |        |
| Single                                       | 2085                      | 16% (336)   | 84% (1748)      | 1.1           | 0.91   | 42% (882)   | 58% (1203)      | 4.18          | 0.09   |
| Married                                      | 10                        | 12% (1)     | 88% (9)         | NA            | NA     | 12% (1)     | 88% (9)         | NA            | NA     |
| <b>Religion</b>                              |                           |             |                 |               |        |             |                 |               |        |
| Muslim                                       | 1295                      | 14% (181)   | 86% (1115)      | 0.66          | < .001 | 44% (566)   | 56% (730)       | 1.18          | 0.08   |
| Catholic                                     | 319                       | 23% (73)    | 77% (246)       | 1.69          | < .001 | 33% (104)   | 67% (215)       | 0.62          | < .001 |
| Anglican                                     | 86                        | 4% (4)      | 96% (82)        | NA            | NA     | 29% (24)    | 71% (61)        | 0.54          | 0.01   |
| Pentecostal                                  | 226                       | 26% (58)    | 74% (168)       | 1.99          | < .001 | 51% (115)   | 49% (111)       | 1.49          | < .001 |
| Seventh Day Adventist                        | 6                         | 0% (0)      | 100% (6)        | NA            | NA     | 33% (2)     | 67% (4)         | NA            | NA     |
| None                                         | 2                         | 0% (0)      | 100% (2)        | NA            | NA     | 0% (0)      | 100% (2)        | NA            | NA     |
| Other                                        | 161                       | 14% (22)    | 86% (138)       | 0.85          | 0.47   | 45% (72)    | 55% (88)        | 1.14          | 0.44   |

Notes. Statistically significant at  $p < .05$ . Odds ratios shown as “NA” indicate categories with extreme class imbalance or sparse cell counts ( $< 5$ ), which can yield unstable estimates and overconfident  $p$ -values (e.g., non-madrassa for formal school in Kambia, where 88% of children were enrolled; and contribution to household in Kono, where only 6% reported contributing). For these cases, the OR is suppressed to avoid misinterpretation. Descriptive percentages and sample sizes are reported alongside inferential results. All analyses are based on weighted data. Fisher’s exact tests were used.

Table 7. Characteristics CT/Non-CT and CL/Non-CL Children in the Sampled Households in Kambia at Endline

| Characteristics<br>(Weighted)                | Children in<br>Households | CT count    | Non-CT<br>count |               |       | CL count    | Non-CL<br>count |               |       |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|-----------------|---------------|-------|-------------|-----------------|---------------|-------|
| Total Unweighted                             | 2622                      | 529         | 2092            |               |       | 1496        | 1126            |               |       |
| Total Weighted                               | 2550                      | 520         | 2031            |               |       | 1461        | 1090            |               |       |
| Characteristics<br>(Weighted)                | Children in<br>households | CT<br>% (n) | non-CT<br>% (n) | Odds<br>Ratio | p     | CL<br>% (n) | non-CL<br>% (n) | Odds<br>Ratio | p     |
| <b>Age</b>                                   |                           |             |                 |               |       |             |                 |               |       |
| Age 5-11                                     | 1465                      | 12% (174)   | 88% (1292)      | 0.29          | <.001 | 62% (915)   | 38% (550)       | 1.64          | <.001 |
| Age 12-14                                    | 533                       | 32% (170)   | 68% (363)       | 2.23          | <.001 | 67% (359)   | 33% (174)       | 1.71          | <.001 |
| Age 15-17                                    | 552                       | 32% (176)   | 68% (376)       | 2.25          | <.001 | 34% (187)   | 66% (366)       | 0.29          | <.001 |
| <b>Sex</b>                                   |                           |             |                 |               |       |             |                 |               |       |
| Female                                       | 1309                      | 17% (228)   | 83% (1081)      | 0.69          | <.001 | 57% (746)   | 43% (564)       | 0.97          | 0.75  |
| Male                                         | 1241                      | 23% (291)   | 77% (950)       | 1.45          | <.001 | 58% (714)   | 42% (526)       | 1.03          | 0.75  |
| <b>Child Has a Disability</b>                |                           |             |                 |               |       |             |                 |               |       |
| Disability                                   | 78                        | 22% (17)    | 78% (61)        | 1.1           | 0.74  | 50% (39)    | 50% (39)        | 0.74          | 0.18  |
| <b>Child Contributes to Household Income</b> |                           |             |                 |               |       |             |                 |               |       |
| Contributes                                  | 413                       | 48% (198)   | 52% (215)       | 5.19          | <.001 | 72% (299)   | 28% (115)       | 2.18          | <.001 |
| <b>School Enrollment Status</b>              |                           |             |                 |               |       |             |                 |               |       |
| Formal school (non-Madrassa)                 | 2266                      | 21% (465)   | 79% (1801)      | NA            | NA    | 59% (1346)  | 41% (920)       | NA            | NA    |
| Enrolled in Madrassa                         | 14                        | 33% (5)     | 67% (9)         | NA            | NA    | 50% (7)     | 50% (7)         | NA            | NA    |
| <b>Child's Marital Status</b>                |                           |             |                 |               |       |             |                 |               |       |
| Single                                       | 2537                      | 20% (515)   | 80% (2022)      | 0.43          | 0.13  | 57% (1452)  | 43% (1085)      | 0.81          | 0.7   |
| Married                                      | 13                        | 36% (5)     | 64% (8)         | NA            | NA    | 63% (8)     | 37% (5)         | NA            | NA    |
| <b>Religion</b>                              |                           |             |                 |               |       |             |                 |               |       |
| Muslim                                       | 2440                      | 20% (498)   | 80% (1942)      | 1.03          | 0.89  | 57% (1391)  | 43% (1049)      | 0.79          | 0.23  |
| Catholic                                     | 28                        | 10% (3)     | 90% (25)        | NA            | NA    | 57% (16)    | 43% (12)        | 0.99          | 0.97  |
| Anglican                                     | 1                         | 0% (0)      | 100% (1)        | NA            | NA    | 100% (1)    | 0% (0)          | NA            | NA    |
| Pentecostal                                  | 23                        | 20% (5)     | 80% (18)        | 1.06          | 0.91  | 44% (10)    | 56% (13)        | 0.58          | 0.18  |
| Other                                        | 57                        | 25% (14)    | 75% (43)        | 1.34          | 0.34  | 73% (41)    | 27% (15)        | 2             | 0.02  |

Notes. Statistically significant at  $p < .05$ . Odds ratios shown as “NA” indicate categories with extreme class imbalance or sparse cell counts ( $<5$ ), which can yield unstable estimates and overconfident  $p$ -values (e.g., non-madrassa formal school in Kambia, where 88% of children were enrolled; and contribution to household in Kono, where only 6% reported contributing). For these cases, the OR is suppressed to avoid misinterpretation. Descriptive percentages and sample sizes are reported alongside inferential results. All analyses are based on weighted data. Fisher’s exact tests were used.

## Appendix A: Child Trafficking – Statistical Definition

Children are classified as victims of child trafficking if, in the last year, they were subject to any of the “worst forms of child labor,” per Article 3 of ILO Convention Number 182<sup>2</sup>:

- a) Exposing children to any form of slavery or practice similar to slavery, including recruitment of children in armed conflict
- b) Using children in prostitution
- c) Using children in illicit activities such as the production and trafficking of drugs
- d) Having children to perform work which is likely to harm their health, safety or morals, or work in hazardous conditions, which are harmful to their physical and mental development.

These conditions translate into the following observable states:

1. Hazardous work outside the home, as defined by either employment sector or labor activity<sup>3</sup>
  - a. Sectors<sup>4</sup>
    - i. fishing
    - ii. mining
    - iii. quarrying
    - iv. construction
    - v. portering
    - vi. manufacturing
  - b. Activities<sup>5</sup>
    - i. carries heavy loads
    - ii. uses dangerous tools or operates heavy machinery
    - iii. is exposed to dust/fumes/gas
    - iv. is exposed to extreme cold/heat/humidity
    - v. is exposed to loud noise or vibration

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C182](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C182)

<sup>3</sup> International Labour Organization. 2008. Report of the 18<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Labour Statisticians.

<sup>4</sup> These sectors are defined as hazardous by law in either Guinea or Sierra Leone.

International Labor Bureau. 2018. Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor, Guinea.

[https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child\\_labor\\_reports/tda2018/Guinea.pdf](https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child_labor_reports/tda2018/Guinea.pdf)

International Labor Bureau. 2018. Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor, Sierra Leone

[https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child\\_labor\\_reports/tda2018/Sierra%20Leone.pdf](https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child_labor_reports/tda2018/Sierra%20Leone.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> “How sensitive are estimates of working children and child labour to definitions? A comparative analysis.” MICS Methodology Paper, No. 1, 2012. Melton Dayioğlu.

2. Illegal activities (e.g., theft; involvement in the drug trade)
3. Forced or coerced labor
4. Work experiences that involve violence or restrictions on freedom
5. Sex Work [counts toward prevalence estimate of child trafficking, but does not count toward prevalence estimate of child labor trafficking]

#### Child Trafficking – Operational Definition

##### Classification of Household Children (Sections B2 and B3)

Household children are classified as having been trafficked if “yes” responses are recorded on any of the following questions:

##### Section B2, Q3 b, e, f, g, i, l

Has..... [name of the child] been involved in any of the following type of work in the last year?

- a. domestic work
- b. mining/quarrying
- c. agricultural work
- d. trading/vending activities
- e. fishing
- f. portering
- g. sex work (selling or giving any type of sexual service)
- h. begging
- i. motorcycle taxi driving
- j. manufacturing
- k. working in workshops (e.g., crafts, mechanics)
- l. construction
- m. Other (specify)

##### Section B2, Q4 – “yes” to any item

Has [name of the child]) performed work away from the home in the last year that involved any of the following:

- a. carrying heavy loads
- b. using dangerous tools or operating heavy machinery
- c. exposure to dust/fumes/gas
- d. exposure to extreme cold/heat/humidity
- e. exposure to loud noise or vibration



Section B3, Q1

was forced to work for someone who is not a member of this household

Section B3, Q2

was forced to work to repay a debt with an employer or recruiter

Section B3, Q3

worked outside the home for little or no wages

Section B3, Q4

performed work that was not agreed upon (e.g., hired for one type of work, but ended up doing another)

Section B3, Q5

was forced or made to beg for alms

Section B3, Q6

performed work that was illegal or immoral (such as stealing, prostitution)

Section B3, Q7

was forced or made to work to pay for their school fees

Section B3, Q8

was not allowed to leave or contact their parents

## **Appendix B: Child Labor – Statistical Definition**

### **Child Labor – Conceptual Definition**

Child Labor: work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. In particular: children below 12 years working in any economic activities, children aged 12-14 engaged in more than light work, and all children engaged in the worst forms of child labor (ILO Conventions 138, 182 and UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, Art 32). In addition, children aged 15-17 are considered to be engaged in child labor if they exceed work hour limits established by the ILO (Global Estimates of Child Labor, 2017)<sup>6</sup>.

### **Child Labor – Statistical Definition**

Per the above definition, all children classified as victims of trafficking are also classified as involved in child labor. Thus, children who meet the statistical definition of child trafficking described in Section I also meet the statistical definition of child labor.

In addition, children who exceed the work hour limits described below are also classified as involved in child labor.

- Children aged 5-11 engaged in economic activity for at least 1 hour in the previous seven days
- Children aged 12-14 engaged in economic activity for at least 14 hours in the previous seven days
- Children aged 15-17 engaged in economic activity for at least 43 hours in the previous seven days

### **Child Labor – Operational Definition**

Classification of Household Children (Sections B2 and B3)

Household children are classified as having been involved in child labor if they have been classified as a victim of child labor, per Section I.

In addition, household children are classified as having been involved in child labor if the following responses are recorded on Section B2, Q6 (“Approximately how many hours of work did [name of child] perform outside the home in the last 7 days?”)

If child is aged 5-11:

Section B2, Q6 => 1 hour

If child is aged 12-14:

Section B2, Q6 => 14 hours

If child is aged 15-17

Section B2, Q6 => 43

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<sup>6</sup> International Labour Office. 2017. *Global estimates of child labour: Results and trends, 2012-2016* Geneva.

## **Appendix C: Focus Group Discussion Guide for Children and Youth discussion groups**

### **[Introduction]**

*Good morning/afternoon. My name is..... I work for... I am here to learn about what is working well for young people in this community and what could be made better. During our time together we will talk about what it's like for young people in this community. We are working on a research study about how to keep kids safe from being overworked and mistreated. We want to hear your views about the kinds of things that adults have been doing to make things better for kids. We will also do an activity where we look at some laws that were recently made to keep children and young people safe. We want to hear what you think about these laws and hear your ideas for how to help people know about and use the laws.*

*We may talk about some upsetting things happening to kids and this might make you feel sad or uncomfortable. If you don't feel like it, you do not have to share your views or engage in the activities. It is up to you IF and HOW you want to participate with us.*

### **[Assent Process]**

*Let's go over the discussion information sheet together. [Review information sheet with young person, see "Information Sheet for young people".]*

*Do you have any questions for me? ☐ Yes; ☐ No [Respond to questions]*

*Do you all agree to participate in this discussion with me? ☐ Yes; ☐ No [Facilitator: If a young person does not agree to participate ask them to go to a different room with the teacher, who will provide an alternative activity]. *Thanks for taking some time to talk with me. Have a great rest of your day!**

*[If the young person agrees to participate] Great! Thanks so much.*

*I plan to record the interview so that we don't miss anything that you all share. Is everyone okay with me turning on the recorder?* ☐ Yes; ☐ No [If the young people agree, turn on the recorder. If not, then take detailed notes during and immediately after the interview.]

## **[Begin FGD]**

### **[Part 1: Rapport Building]**

[Spend about 10 minutes getting to know the group. Select one icebreaker questions<sup>1</sup> to kick off the discussion, see examples below]

*Thanks everyone for taking some time to talk with me/us today! Before we get into our discussion, we wanted to take a few minutes to get to know you all a bit. Could everyone take turns saying your first name and [Ice Breaker Question]?*

Example Ice Breaker Questions below. **Choose one** or use your own question that you like to use with groups of young people

- *If you were to go on the radio, what would you like to speak about? Why?*
- *Who is your role model? Why?*
- *If you had a superpower, what would it be? Why?*
- *The person who makes me laugh the most is...*
- *Favourite colour...*
- *The food I love the most is...*

[Facilitator note: It may be good for you to model this for the young people, so you can kick it off, Your first name and answer the selected icebreaker.]

*Thank you all for sharing!* [Say something that shows you were listening to what the young people shared. Such as Wow! It looks like we have a lot of budding radio stars in the group!]

*Let's get started with our discussion.*

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<sup>1</sup> Example questions pulled from Tulsa's youth participation tool kit --  
[https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Tusla\\_-\\_Toolkit\\_\(web\\_version\).pdf](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Tusla_-_Toolkit_(web_version).pdf)



**[Part 2: General discussion questions (aim for ~ 10 minutes of discussion)]**

1. *Tell me about the ups and downs of living here?*
2. *Sometimes children can't do things that they enjoy (e.g. play or go to school) because there is not enough money in the family to do enjoyable activities, what is your experience with being able to do things you enjoy?*

**[Part 3: Bylaws discussion/activity (aim for ~ 45 minutes of discussion/activity)]**

*Thank you for sharing your insights and ideas with us! Now we are going to do an activity to get us all thinking about some laws that are in your community to keep kids safe.*

*[Facilitator note: Ensure that you have the relevant bylaw for the youth group that you are visiting. For example, if you are in Kono, read the bylaws for Kono.]*

*[Facilitator: hold up the full bylaw so that everyone can see them.] This is what the new bylaws for protecting kids in your community looks like. These bylaws were made by your community leaders because they wanted to make sure kids were safe here and protected from exploitation, especially when moving to a new household or family. The bylaws are a list of rules that the leaders want everyone to follow, sort of like the rules in your school.*

*We are going to read a few parts of them together, after I read each part, I'm going to ask you to show me what you think.*



*If you think the bylaw might help kids, give a thumbs up [facilitator: show thumbs up]*



*If you think the law might not help kids give a thumbs down [facilitator: show thumbs down]*



*If you aren't sure if the law would help show a sideways thumb [facilitator: show sideways thumb]*

*Any questions for me before we start?*

*[Facilitator: Read youth friendly, highlights version of the bylaws. After each item, pause and ask the young people to gesture what they think. Then have a brief discussion about the young people's responses following each item.]*

**[Probes for bylaw review discussion.** Use as relevant during discussion of bylaws. For example, if most young people show a thumbs up and a few show a 'not sure' sign. Then you would ask the group why did you show a thumbs up? And then after a few young people respond then you would ask the young people who did a 'not sure' sign about why they choose 'not sure'.]

- *Why do you think this one would help?*
- *Why do you think this one might not help?*
- *Why did you show that you aren't sure if it would help or not?*

*Thank you for letting me know what you think about the laws! [Facilitator end this activity with a large group discussion using the following prompts.]*

1. *What surprised you most about these laws?*
2. *What have you heard about these laws before?*
3. *What kinds of changes do you think might happen in your community as people start to use these laws?*
4. *What is missing here? What might the adults want to consider adding to these laws?*

#### **Part 4: Closing Discussion (aim for 10 minutes of discussion)**

1. *What is working well right now in your community to keep kids safe?*
2. *Do you feel like the chiefs and local rule makers understand you or listen to you?*
3. *What would you like to see change in your community to keep kids safe?*
4. *If you had one wish for keeping kids safe in your community or country what would that be?*

**[END FGD]**

## Appendix D: Information/Assent for children and youth FGDs

### Information Sheet for Young People

#### Having your say!

You are invited to participate in a research study about what has changed in the past 5 years to help keep kids safe from being overworked and mistreated. Before you decide, we want you to understand why this research study is being done and what will happen during the focus group discussion.

#### Who am I?

My name is [NAME]. I work for a research team called CMDA who is doing this research study about child trafficking in Sierra Leone. Child trafficking happens when a child is made to work long hours or in dangerous jobs. We are working with a team of people around the world to try to understand how to prevent child trafficking.

#### What will you have to do?

We want to have a group discussion with your school club about how things are going for kids in your community. We want to hear what you think about laws that have been put in place to keep kids safe. Our discussion will take about an hour. You can decide if you want to talk or not. You can stop talking anytime. Your grades will not be impacted in any way by whether or not you participate in this interview.



#### What will we ask you about?

We want to know what life is like for young people in your community. We will be asking about the ups and downs of living here, and how you feel about your life. You do not need to share anything about your personal life, but if you would like to you can share your views about what you think works well for keeping kids safe. We will also do an activity where we read parts of a law together and talk about what everyone thinks.

#### What will happen to the information that you collect?

We will ask you if it is okay if we record the interview. We record just to make sure that we can capture what everyone shares. After we record the interview, we will type it out. We won't use your name. Then the audio file will be deleted. We will gather the information that everyone has shared and write a report so that



WHI can use it to plan services for the future. We will not use your name, or anyone else's name in anything we write.

**Who can I contact if I am worried about something about this research study?**

CMDA research Team Lead [CONTACT information]

Sierra Leone Research Ethics Board [CONTACT information]



## KENEMA ANTI-CHILD TRAFFICKING BYLAWS

This is a consolidated and harmonized Anti-Child Trafficking bylaw put together by all the 16 Paramount Chiefs and the Senior District Officer in Kenema District. The process was facilitated by World Hope International with funds from African Programming Research Initiative to End Slavery (APRIES), University of Georgia, USA.

1. Parents are encouraged to register the births and deaths of children within the chiefdom to the appropriate authorities.
2. Every chiefdom within the district should establish or revive the CWC (Child Welfare Committee) aiming to promote and protect the welfare of children within the chiefdom.
3. Before a child is given to a foster parent, the chiefdom authorities should be notified. Defaulters should be reported to the nearest police post for further investigations.
4. Prospective foster parents should comply with the instructions of the CWC (Child Welfare Committee). Failure to comply will attract the attention of the police for further investigations.
5. The CWC (Child Welfare Committee) should endeavor to take the personal details of any prospective foster parent.
6. At least a parent and a member of the CWC (Child Welfare Committee) should accompany the child to the residence of the foster parent.
7. Parents should endeavor to make quarterly visits to a child in foster arrangement to know the status of the child and report findings to the CWC (Child Welfare Committee). Defaulters should be reported to the nearest police post for further investigations.
8. All biological parents within the chiefdom are encouraged to register any child intended to be fostered to the CWC (Child Welfare Committee). Failure to comply will attract the attention of the police for further investigations.
9. Any incidence of child trafficking should be reported to the police by the chiefdom authorities.
10. Nobody should compromise any issue of suspected human trafficking. Defaulters should be reported to the nearest police post for further investigations.

Approved by:

Senior District Officer Kenema

NAME: William R. Rasmussen, Jr.

SIGNATURE:

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved by:

Paramount Chief Council Chairman, Kenema

NAME: P.C. today S. Kookin

SIGNATURE:

DATE: 20.3.23



## Appendix F: Kambia Anti-Child Trafficking Bylaws

### KAMBIA ANTI-CHILD TRAFFICKING BYLAWS

#### PART 1 (ONE): PREAMBLE

This is a consolidated and harmonized Anti-Child Trafficking bylaw put together by all the 10 Paramount Chiefs, 10 Chiefdom Administrative Clerks and 2 Inter-Religious Council Leaders and the District Officer in Kambia District. The process was facilitated by World Hope International with funds from African Programming Research Initiative to End Slavery (APRIES), University of Georgia, USA. The Portloko resident State Counsel reviewed the bylaw and gave legal advice.

#### PART 2 (TWO): GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. **Menpikin:** All Paramount Chiefs should have knowledge of all menpikin cases, Failure to do so shall result to the following customary Kassie:
  - ✓ A bag of parboiled rice
  - ✓ A container of palm oil and a goat
2. **Child Marriage:** Anybody wishing to marry a woman must produce a birth certificate presiding Imam or Clerk to ascertain the actual age of the woman in question.

Failure to do so will result to the following punishment:

- ✓ Parents of the girl should be punished as indicated above
  - ✓ The presiding Imam/Clergy's place of worship will be reported to the Police.
  - ✓ The suitor will be reported to the Police.
3. **TEENAGE PREGNANCY/SEXUAL PENETRATION:**
    - ✓ Any person who commits the above act shall be referred to police for legal action
    - ✓ Anyone caught compromising such cases shall be reported to the Police.
  4. **FORCED LABOUR:** Children are gift from God and must be treated nicely. Anyone who engages a child into forced labour shall be referred to police for legal action.
  5. Any strangers coming to reside in any part of the chiefdom should be reported to the local authorities in the area (Paramount Chief, Section Chief, Village heads and councilors).
  6. Any suspicious stranger, adult and children, detected in any area of the chiefdom, should be reported to the local authorities.
  7. **Foster Care:** Whosoever wishes to foster a child from this Chiefdom must first inform the traditional leaders.
  8. The chiefdom people should be sensitized and to be vigilant over the movement of children. Any eventuality detected must be reported to the local authorities.
  9. **Sexual Penetration/ Harassment:** This is prohibited, and all such cases should be immediately referred to the appropriate authorities.
  10. Any Child under 18 years shall not be subjected to hard labour (Fishing, sand mining, Stone Breaking, Petty Trading etc).

11. The parent(s) of any school going child found selling in the streets during school hours will reported to the appropriate authorities.

**DATED THIS 30<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF NOVEMBER 2022**

Approved by:

District Officer Kambia

NAME: *Alexander M. Sama*

SIGNATURE: *[Signature]*

DATE: *16/03/23*



Approved by:

Paramount Chief Council Chairman, Kambia (Secretary)

NAME: *Hon. P.C. Bai Farana Tass Bubu N'ghakid*

SIGNATURE: *[Signature]*

DATE: *16/03/23*



## KAILAHUN ANTI-CHILD TRAFFICKING BYLAWS

### PART 1 (ONE): PREAMBLE

This is a consolidated and harmonized Anti-Child Trafficking bylaws put together by all the 15 Paramount Chiefs, 15 Chiefdom Administrative Clerks, 2 Inter-Religious Council Leaders and the District Officer in Kailahun District. The process was facilitated by World Hope International with funds from African Programming Research Initiative to End Slavery (APRIES), University of Georgia, USA. The Kailahun resident State Counsel was also present and gave legal advice throughout the process.

### PART 2 (TWO): GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. Any stranger coming into the chiefdom must first report to the Chiefdom Authorities.
2. Suspected issues of child labour must be reported to the Police.
3. Anybody suspected of compromising any issue of child trafficking will be reported to the Police.
4. Anyone that is suspected of sexually penetrating a child will be reported to the Police.
5. Any unusual movement of children or of adults together with children in and out of the chiefdom must be reported to the chiefdom authorities.
6. Every suspicion of child trafficking issues must be brought to the attention of the police or the chiefdom authorities.
7. Smuggling of anybody in and out of the chiefdom is prohibited. Defaulters will be arrested and handed over to the police.
8. Child marriage for the purpose of exploitation is prohibited. Defaulters will be reported to the Police.
9. Suspected illegal migration must be reported to the Police.
10. Forced marriage is prohibited. Defaulters will be reported to the police.
11. Any person that comes to the chiefdom to take a child must first inform the chiefdom authorities.
12. All suspected child trafficking issues must be reported to the Police.
13. All night clubs must not allow children to go in.
14. No discrimination of survivors of child trafficking.

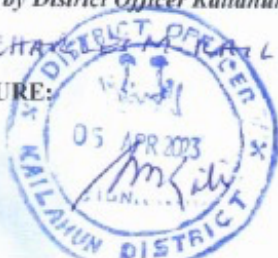
DATED THIS 27<sup>th</sup> DAY OF OCTOBER 2022.

Approved by District Officer Kailahun

NAME: CHANCELLER

SIGNATURE:

DATE:



Chairman, Council of Paramount Chiefs, Kailahun

NAME:

SIGNATURE:

DATE:





## **CONSOLIDATED AND HARMONIZED ANTI-CHILD TRAFFICKING BYLAWS IN KONO DISTRICT.**

**DATE: 29<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

**The following clauses were put together by  
Paramount Chiefs, Chieftdom  
Administrative Clerks, and members of the  
Interreligious Council, with the guidance of  
the State Counsel and Senior District  
Officer, with support from World Hope  
International and Africa Programming  
Research Initiative to End Slavery.**

1. Everybody in the Chiefdom should report any strange child that is brought to him/her to the nearest chiefdom authority. Failure to do so, the defaulter will be referred to the Local Court for appropriate action.
2. Maltreatment of children in any form is prohibited. Offenders will be referred to the Local Court for appropriate action.
3. Compromise of any suspected child trafficking issue within the chiefdom is prohibited. Defaulters will be referred to the Police for appropriate action.
4.
  - a. The chiefdom should set a committee in every community within the Chiefdom to approve applications for Menpikin. It is mandatory for anybody wishing to take men pikin from the chiefdom to apply and get approval from the men pikin committee. Failure to go through the vetting committee for due diligence is an offence and defaulters will be referred to the Local Court.
  - b. All applications received by the vetting committee should be directed to the ministry of social welfare.
5. Child marriage without the consent of the parents is prohibited within the chiefdom. Defaulters will be referred to the Local Court.
6. Parents that fail to take responsibility of their children will be referred to the MoSW, MoGCA, and the District Council for appropriate action.
7. Any parent that gives market for sale or engage the child in other labour activity during school hours will be referred to the Local Court for appropriate action.
8. Any issue of missing or stolen child should be reported to the police.
9. Any parent that abandons his/her child to live on his/her own should be referred to the Local Court for appropriate action.
11. The men pikin committee should also act as a child trafficking committee to monitor movement or underage children within and outside the chiefdom.
12. Any person(s) who is suspected of engaging in child trafficking will be referred to the Police for investigation.
13. Any person who receives an underage child for the purposes of sending that child to school but instead subject the child to exploitation will be referred to the Police for investigation.
14. Any parent or guardian who take his/her child out of school hour to do farm work is an offence and will be referred to the Local Court for appropriate action.

16. Compromising any suspected issue of child trafficking is prohibited. Defaulters will be referred to the Police for investigation. Any person entering a town to get a child should meet the committee for verification, and the person from whom the child to be taken should also inform the committee. Failure the defiant shall pay a fine of LE 400
17. A person who imposes child labour commits an offence and liable to a fine of LE 500
18. Early marriage organize is an offence liable to a fine of LE 400 to be by both parents
19. Any child brought from outside the chiefdom should be reported to the sub section head of the area or the town chief for onward transmission to the chiefdom administration. Failure to comply, the defaulter will be referred to the Local Court.
20. Any person wishing to take a child from the chiefdom should first report to the town chief before leaving the town. Failure to comply, the defaulter will be referred to the Local Court.
21. No house owner in a town, in the chiefdom is allowed to rent a room or house to any person below 18 years of age. Failure to comply, the defaulter will be referred to the Local Court for appropriate action.
22. Any parent who does not send his/her children to school, while child has attained school going age, should be referred to the chiefdom authorities to look into the matter and take the appropriate action.
23. Persons in position of trust and influence subjecting children to exploitation must be reported to the police.

Approved by:

Senior District Officer Kono

NAME: - AUGUSTINE A. FOGBEI

SIGNATURE:

DATE: 14/04/2023.

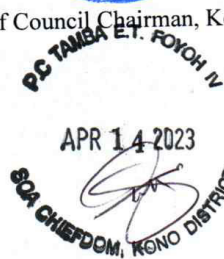
Approved by:

Paramount Chief Council Chairman, Kono

NAME:

SIGNATURE:

DATE:



**END OF REPORT**