

CENTER ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING RESEARCH & OUTREACH

African Programming & Research Initiative to End Slavery

Sierra Leone Implementation Projects

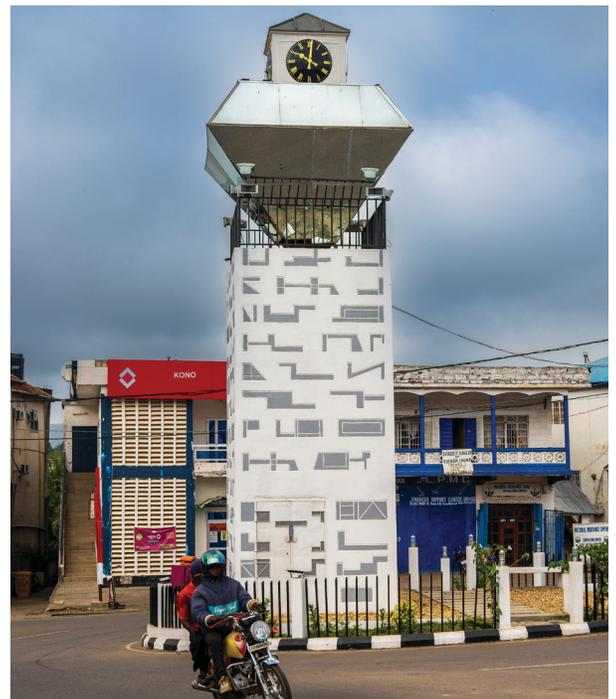
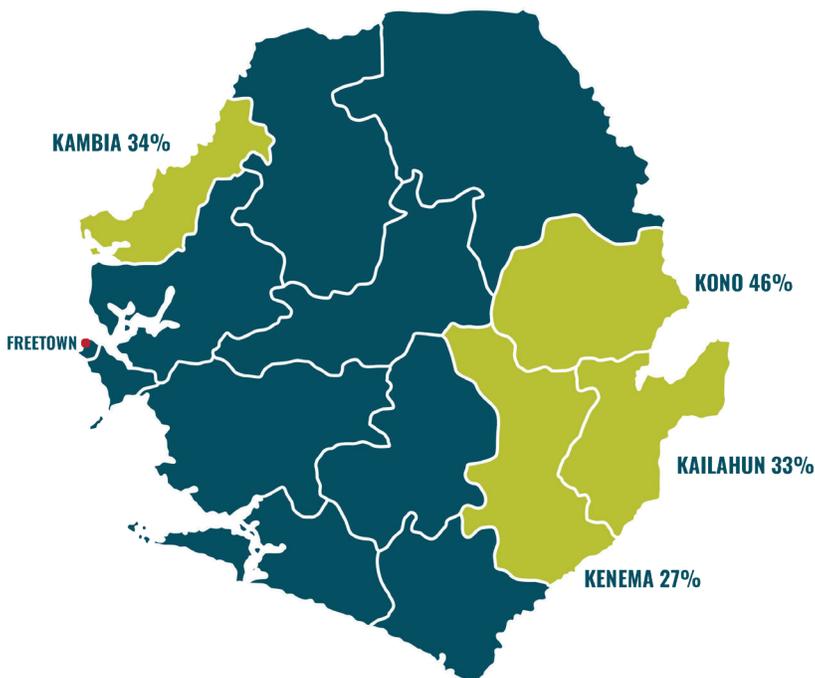
The mission of the Center on Human Trafficking Research & Outreach (CenHTRO) is to conduct research, develop programming, and influence policies that drastically and measurably reduce human trafficking and other forms of exploitation. We are an interdisciplinary center housed within the School of Social Work at the University of Georgia (UGA), with current engagements in 10 countries across the world.

Program to End Modern Slavery Award (PEMS)

CenHTRO has received a PEMS award from the U.S. Department of State Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons to reduce the prevalence of all forms of child trafficking in Sierra Leone by conducting targeted prevalence baselines and developing programming that builds on this research. World Hope International (WHI) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) are CenHTRO's implementing partners in Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone Baseline Study Findings

- The **overall rate of child trafficking** based on direct prevalence estimates among the household sample of children aged 5–17 years old in Kailahun, Kambia, Kenema, and Kono was **33%**. See map for district rates.
- **Survivors reported unaddressed needs post-trafficking which could increase their vulnerability to re-trafficking or exploitation.** For example, survivors described lacking resources to pay school fees, having unmet medical and psychosocial needs, as well as housing needs post-trafficking. Key informants reported a lack of basic resources (such as staffing, funding, and transportation) to support survivors in their recovery. Comprehensive reintegration services do not appear to be present in local communities.
- Reports from key informants and community members who participated in focus groups indicate that **there is a lack of sustainable collaboration and trust between local authorities (such as paramount chiefs) and governmental authorities** which results in an uncoordinated response to child trafficking, difficulty in reporting child trafficking incidents, and disruptions in prosecutions of traffickers.



Survivor Protective Services and Judicial Support (Survivor Project)

AGENCY: World Hope International (WHI)

INTERVENTION: Prosecution, Protection

LOCATIONS: Kailahun, Kambia, Kenema, Kono, Freetown

TIMELINE: October 2021-March 2024

IDENTIFIED GAPS: Psychosocial, community, and judicial support for survivors of trafficking

TARGET POPULATION: Child survivors of trafficking and their families

The WHI Survivor Project aims to strengthen the prosecution of perpetrators, provide shelter and psychosocial services, and ensure community support for the successful reintegration of survivors. During its implementation from October 2021 to March 2024, the project aims to serve 90 child trafficking survivors and their families through its Recovery Centre in Freetown and through services provided to survivors who reside in other shelters or communities. The project personnel include staff members with training, experience, and expertise in the assessment of trafficking survivors' needs, assistance with legal processes, and implementation of psychosocial therapy, life skills training, and educational services.

PROTECTION

WHI operates its Recovery Centre, the only confidential shelter for female survivors of child trafficking in the country. Upon admission to the Recovery Centre, child survivors' needs are assessed and, if needed, referred for additional medical or psychiatric care. Every child survivor is offered individual and group counseling sessions as well as ongoing educational support and life skills training. In the process of child survivors' reintegration to communities, WHI social workers assess the safety and suitability for child survivors to return to their families and communities followed by continued support during reintegration, which is marked by a handover ceremony in the community. Based on assessments of child survivors and their families' needs, WHI also provides reintegration packages and income generating activities to help families become empowered and self-reliant in caring for their children.

To build the capacity and support the sustainability of community-based survivor protective services, WHI provides training on trauma-informed care and survivor reintegration to district-level social workers, TIP¹ Task Force members, and FSU² officers. Under this grant, WHI also provides its Recovery Centre staff with therapeutic support, individual counseling, and a group retreat to care for staff members' well-being and support the sustainability of the Recovery Centre's services for survivors of trafficking.

PROSECUTION

WHI provides legal assistance for child survivors by supporting the investigation of their trafficking cases and advocating for the successful prosecution of the child traffickers. Community members and key community leaders of each hotspot are trained and sensitized to identify and report on crimes against children, including child labor, human trafficking, and indecent work. In addition, FSUs receive logistical support to fully investigate reported child trafficking cases. By the end of the project, 45 investigations of child trafficking will be initiated and 10 convictions will be reached as evidence of timely and appropriate prosecution of perpetrators.

¹ *Trafficking in Persons*

² *Family Support Unit (FSU) is the police branch that deals with sexual violence and abuse, especially cases involving children, as well as child abuse and domestic issues.*

Community Awareness and Policy Implementation (Community Project)

AGENCY: World Hope International (WHI)

INTERVENTION: Prosecution, Protection, Prevention

LOCATIONS: Kailahun, Kambia, Kenema, Kono, Freetown

TIMELINE: October 2021-March 2024

IDENTIFIED GAPS: Collaboration with law enforcement, policy makers, and local communities to increase understanding of The Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act, 2022 and best practices to counter child trafficking

TARGET POPULATION: Local authorities, community members, shelter staff, upper primary and junior

The WHI Community Project aims to strengthen the harmonization and enforcement of local policies to protect children and implement community sensitization (awareness) efforts to prevent child trafficking. The target populations are local authorities (Paramount Chiefs, Inter-Religious Council Heads, Chiefdom Administrative Clerks, District Councils, City Councils, Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, and Ministry of Justice), community groups (Village Parent Groups and Child Welfare Committees), and upper primary (Class 4-6) to junior school-level (JSS 1-3) students in the districts of Kailahun, Kambia, Kenema, and Kono. The project activities are implemented with the goal of changing attitudes, knowledge, practices, and abusive behavior linked to *menpikin*³ and other forms of child

PROSECUTION

Replicating the activities conducted under a previous PEMS grant in Kenema, WHI collaborates with local government and community leaders in Kailahun, Kambia, and Kono to establish bylaws that are harmonized with the National Anti-Human Trafficking Act, the Child Rights Act, adoption laws, the three Gender Acts, the Sexual Offenses Act, and other relevant legislation. The process begins with advocacy meetings to identify gaps in local government awareness and bylaws. Based on this, training is designed to address gaps in awareness and harmonize existing bylaws to include protection against child trafficking. Local leaders then prepare and cascade information to members of their respective chiefdoms. Similar training is provided to the District and City Councils in Kambia.

PROTECTION

WHI supports collaboration to strengthen and streamline the existing referral process for survivors of child trafficking. WHI also facilitates the establishment of a committee with the Ministry of Social Welfare and Ministry of Justice to advocate for funding of anti-TIP programming and policies in the 2025 budget. In collaboration with the Ministry of Social Welfare and Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, the national TIP trust fund for TIP survivors, as provided by The Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act, 2022, will be set up by the end of the project.

PREVENTION

WHI strengthens partnerships with local authorities and community groups to identify and prevent *menpikin* practices linked to child trafficking. Meetings with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, and community members inform processes for documenting *menpikin* cases and preventing child trafficking. WHI also creates material to make The Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act, 2022 accessible to community members and incorporates the material in training local leaders, school clubs, and community groups on The Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act, 2022. Additionally, WHI conducts training with the "I Am Special" curriculum for school clubs and local shelters and partners with the Children's Forum Network to facilitate activities through school clubs to raise awareness of child trafficking among upper primary and junior school-level

³ *Menpikin* refers to the informal fostering or kinship care practice that is common in Sierra Leone.

Counter Child Trafficking for Labor Exploitation in Sierra Leone

AGENCY: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

INTERVENTION: Prosecution

LOCATIONS: Kailahun, Kambia, Kenema, Kono, Freetown

TIMELINE: April 2022-March 2024

IDENTIFIED GAPS: Training materials and capacity building of judicial system actors on victim identification and treatment, special investigative techniques, and international cooperation in anti-TIP efforts

TARGET POPULATION: Law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and judges

The UNODC Project aims to enhance the capacity of law enforcement officers and criminal justice practitioners to investigate cases and prosecute perpetrators of child trafficking, resulting in an increase in the number of cases detected and victims protected. The target populations are law enforcement officers, including officers from the Transnational Organized Crime Unit, the Family Support Unit, and the Police Training Academy; prosecutors; and judges, including from the High Courts. The project personnel include staff members with strong substantive knowledge on the subject matter, including on law matters and criminal justice, and extensive experience organizing and delivering training to criminal justice practitioners.

The project begins with an in-depth needs assessment to identify the gaps and needs in the criminal justice response to TIP in Sierra Leone, focusing on the hotspot districts of Kailahun, Kambia, Kenema, and Kono. Based on the gaps identified by the needs assessment, training manuals are developed in consultation with the Sierra Leone Police and Judicial Training Institutes. The manuals are used to develop and deliver two intensive Training of Trainers to 15 heads of selected law enforcement entities and 15 judges of targeted hotspots. The objective of this activity is to train a pool of trainers who will be ready and able to train 150 of their peers in the use of the manuals by the end of the project. In addition, the trainers are mentored as they conduct three implementation workshops: one workshop for 25 law enforcement officers and prosecutors, one workshop for 25 judges, and one joint workshop for 25 participants from the first and second trainings. As a result of criminal justice practitioners' increased understanding of TIP, 6 investigations and 6 prosecutions of child trafficking cases will be initiated by the end of the project.



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