

3. UNVEILING THE SHADOWS: Examining Depictions of Human Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation and its Causes in *Zura Maids*

**Ampumuza Daphne Sheilah
20/BSU/MALC/3170**

ampu.daphne@gmail.com

0773327198/ 0704571032

Tutor at Canon Apollo Core PTC

ABSTRACT

An ongoing problem in society and more specifically in Uganda, human trafficking for sexual exploitation takes advantage of helpless people and ruins countless lives. Eunice Atuko's moving book "Zura Maids," explores the sinister and unpleasant world of human trafficking. This abstract examines the novel's depictions of human trafficking for sexual exploitation in detail and looks into the root reasons of this horrible crime.

This study's main goal is to shed light on the complex aspects of human trafficking as they are represented in "Zura Maids." The analysis focuses on the complex web of traffickers and their allies participating in this criminal operation while also examining the psychological, emotional, and physical traumas suffered by the victims. I sought to obtain a greater understanding of the emotional impact these depictions have on readers and their potential to foster empathy and awareness by looking at the storytelling strategies used by Eunice Atuko.

This study also pinpoints and analyzes the underlying factors that contribute to the persistence of human trafficking for sexual exploitation in the novel's setting such as the role of socioeconomic circumstances, gender disparities, a lack of legal protection, and institutional shortcomings in sustaining this abhorrent trade as well as the cultural and historical factors that have shaped the characters' vulnerability, agency, and choices throughout the story are critically addressed.

A close reading and textual analysis of "Zura Maids" is used in this study's qualitative methodology to identify pertinent themes and insights. Secondary sources such as academic research, reports, and pertinent literature are also used to support and strengthen the results.

By offering "Zura Maids" the author intended to add to the corpus of information on the ugly vice, raise awareness and promote productive conversations aimed at ending human trafficking and defending the dignity and everyone's rights by comprehending the depictions and underlying reasons of this worldwide horror as depicted in the novel.

Key words: human trafficking, enforcement, sexual enslavement, victims, prostitution, exploitation

INTRODUCTION

Uganda is found in East Africa, rests on a central plateau and is covered by the rain forest. It is home to approximately 43 million people, and with a young population of an average age of 15 years. Uganda's prominent position and beautiful scenery in Africa is a main destination for international tourism and trade. With a large economic disparity and limited access to employment an opportunity, Uganda's population has grown economically vulnerable. This economic insecurity has led to high rates of human trafficking as black market traffickers exploit vulnerable populations.

According to Taneem Saeed (2015), there are various types of human trafficking and the majority of these take place in Africa. Njunwoha, L (2021) states that common forms of trafficking include forced labor, domestic servitude, slavery, child soldiers, debt bondage, forced marriage, organ trafficking, sex trafficking, and supply chain. He adds that girl children and women are also trafficked and sold as child brides, as well as workers. Men too do get trafficked for forced labor, while some children are trafficked to be used in ritual sacrifice or as child soldiers.

Human trafficking in Uganda is fuelled by arbitrators who make false promises of better lives through employment and a better life overseers. Believing these intermediaries, the unsuspecting parents and guardians. Often a time the children themselves agree to take offers and end up as victims of child trafficking. They are forced to work often with little or no remuneration as domestic workers, bar and restaurant attendants, and sex workers in brothels. Children are exposed to trafficking for sexual exploitation in the commercial sex industry, child sex tourism, child pornography and early child marriage.

Child trafficking happens both inside single states but it sometimes happens across borders to outside countries. For example, some children are taken from Uganda to nearby African countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya and Rwanda, while children from neighboring Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda, South Sudan, DRC and Kenya are also trafficked into Uganda for the purpose of forced labor and sexual exploitation. Sometimes, trafficking goes far countries such as Europe and Asia, among others.

This analysis explores the depictions of human trafficking for sexual exploitation and its main causes as depicted in *Zura Maids*, a novel set in Uganda, including the cases that resonate its existence and progress.

According to the United Nations, [“Trafficking in persons” means the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of apposition of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.] Louise Waite (2020), “Human trafficking is the movement of a person from one place to another (or the recruitment and harboring of a person) for the purposes of exploitation.” These agree with Diana M. Concannon (2013), who states that human trafficking is aptly referred to as "modern-day slavery."

According to the Palermo, Italy-adopted United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish, Human Trafficking in 2000:

"Trafficking in persons" refers to the act of obtaining a person's consent to be exploited by hiring, transporting, transferring, harboring, or receiving them through the threat of, or actual use of, force or other coercive measures, kidnapping, fraud, deception, abuse of power, exploiting vulnerability, or providing or receiving benefits in exchange for a person's cooperation. At the very least, the exploitation of another person's prostitution or other types of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or acts that resemble slavery, servitude, or organ harvesting are all considered to be forms of exploitation.

Human trafficking is the crime of using force, fraud or coercion on people with the aim of exploiting them for profit. The exploitation typically comes in the form of physical labor, acts of service or sexual favors. Traffickers use varied tactics to lure their victims, including violent force, manipulation, romance and promises of well-paying jobs.

Human trafficking has become a major problem in Uganda and Africa at large. According to the Trafficking in Persons Report from 2020, estimates determined that traffickers are currently exploiting 7,000 to 12,000 children through sex trafficking in Uganda. The report also outlines that human trafficking in Uganda primarily takes the form of forced physical labor and sexual exploitation. According to Jeffrey C. Price (2013), Millions of individuals are victims of human trafficking, which is the third-largest and fastest-growing criminal enterprise in the world, according to the Polaris Project, a website and organization dedicated to its prevention. Traffickers make billions of dollars from the crime.

In 2009, the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act became a law in Uganda. Under the law, which prohibits sex trafficking of any kind and protects the rights of sex trafficking survivors, prosecution and conviction of traffickers have escalated considerably. In 2009, only a single human trafficker received a conviction in Uganda out of three prosecutions. In contrast, 2017 saw 50 prosecutions and 24 convictions of human traffickers and their accomplices in Uganda. This increase is almost significant that maybe the country was better without the law on the vice.

Human trafficking saturates various communities and societies which have systems that operate in entwined activities. There are many forms of human trafficking and various people are victimized in this vice. In this discussion, I will focus primarily on child trafficking with the aim to lure them in involuntary prostitution. Bruckett and Parent in their article *Trafficking in Human beings and organized crime*, (2002:7), “there has been and is still a lack of uniformity regarding the theoretical framework for understanding human trafficking but for the description of the processes, practices, and routes of human trafficking.” There are various unified and symbiotic factors that facilitate the processes of human trafficking against children according to the articles. (Stop Violence against Women (SVAW), 2008:1; Truong, 2001:34-35; Van Impe, 2000:117-118).

There has been an increase in the smuggling and trafficking of children from Africa as well as within the continent over the past few years. Adepodju (2005: 75) states the reality that little had not been known about this evil until a few years ago and most especially in the sub-Saharan Africa up to the late 1990’s when human rights activists such human rights personnel, the media and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) stirred into the scene basing on the researches that had been conducted by few concerned people to endeavor to stop this vice.

In this study, I examine the depictions of human trafficking as well as the factors responsible for child trafficking in a Ugandan novel, *Zura Maids*, by Apio Eunice Otuko. I also intend to enable the audience understand the process of empowerment brought about by education and sensitization of communities through cultural and societal networks in reference to *Zura Maids* provides an illustration of this type of a crime of human trafficking and child prostitution.

About the author

Eunice Otuko Apio is a Ugandan, born and bred in the Northern part of Uganda, a point that informs her writing about a book in reference to it. She is a passionate scholar with a doctorate (PhD) in African studies and anthropology from the Department of History and Cultures, the

University of Birmingham (UK) in 2016. She joined the Law School at the University of Birmingham as a Postdoctoral Fellow in Gender and Transitional justice, and works on the subject of resilience in survivors of war-related sexual violence in 2017. She is also one of the founders of the charity Facilitation for Peace and Development (FAPAD) based in northern Uganda, and has worked in conflict and post conflict settings in northern Uganda since 2001.

Her doctoral thesis examined Children Born of War in northern Uganda: Kinship, Marriage, and the Politics of Post-conflict Reintegration in Lango society. She is married with five children. She has authored of *Zura Maids* which was published in 2018 by Femrite, a novel that explores the realities of human trafficking in today's African society and has many other unpublished manuscripts.

Book synopsis

Zura Maids is the name of the novel as well as a cover name for a secret dungeon under the Victoria Group of companies that deals in trafficking, preparation and exportation of young girls as human merchandise into sex slavery. It is owned by a group of experienced human traffickers. This story is intriguing and thus may not be called fictitious completely for it has features of a non-fiction piece as well.

The story starts in Luzira Prison, the largest of prisons in Uganda. With a protagonist, Lena Ayugi, prisoner no.UG50 who has been serving a two-year sentence for arson. Lena Ayugi is a graduate from Gulu University is one of the girls who have been lured into leaving her then “home” in an IGP camp in Acokara, Oyam District to earn a living in Kampala. She left her four siblings Okulu, Lilly, Okello and Odoch alone at camp since their parents had passed on as a result of the civil war in Northern Uganda. She and many other girls have been deceived by a woman only identified as Esther who has promised to get them housekeeping jobs that would help them to support their families back in the IDP camp in Acokara, Oyam District. Her assurance to help the young girls earn and have a better life convinced parents and guardians to enthusiastically let their girls go.

Lena finds herself in a brothel instead and is being forced to accept whatever treatment she encounters which she doesn't accept. She is physically battered and forced to comply with the regulations of her new assignment at the brothel but she finds a way to set ablaze the brothel which housed her and many other girls using a lighter that a client forgot in her room. She is on trial for six months and later sentenced to two years in prison. The story would have been different if she had accepted to change her story by looking at the different perspective as was advised by her lawyer Arthur Mubende. She chose to stand on the truth and serve her sentence to the end.

After serving her prison sentence in Luzira, Lena plans to return to Aokara her village. She passes by to extend her gratitude to Arthur Mubende who has been her lawyer and became her only friend during the case and court struggles. To her dismay, Lena didn't find her younger sister Lilly and a few many other girls when she reached the IDP camp. Disappointed and angry, she confides in two elderly women at the camp about what Esther does to the girls. Together, they tell Mzee Olum, the camp leader. The village concerned elders team up with Lena to look for Esther. Lena returns to Kampala to find and work with Arthur and search for Lilly, her sister.

Lena and Arthur reconnect with Apolot, the prison wardress and work out a plan to find out as much as they can about Martina Maa, a woman Lena had met and left in prison but owns a multi-million-dollar business and many employees. Martina owns Zura maids and on one of the visits to offers Lena a special kind of job in her company and encourage her to get in touch with Mr. Mukwano. Lena however has already known Mr. Mukwano and tricked him about Martina Maa.

Lena and Arthur ask for jobs at Zura Maids as new people. They disguised into a maid seeking better opportunities and a messenger respectively. Not long, they both discover what Zura Maids is about. Arthur manages to get out of the company easily in order to find a way to rescue Lena and the other girls.

Otuko employs narrative and descriptive styles in writing to bring out the story. She narrates the ordeals of a Lena a young assertive woman who finds herself in a situation she doesn't agree with and finds

a way to set herself free. She employs it to clarify the situations and scenes that Lena is caught into. Through the use of narrations, the reader gets to understand whether the story is real or imaginary. For instance, in *Zura Maids*, Eunice helps us know what characters do, and what happens each of them. The narrative helps us capture the prison life story and all the incidences that preceded it and everyone that gets involved.

There is also employment of descriptive style which helps a reader to visualize in detail each character, event, place, and all of these things involved. Eunice Otuko describes the scene and one can clearly imagine or have a mental picture of each.

Depictions of Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking in *Zura Maids*

Article 3 of the UN Palermo Protocol (2002:2) defines sexual exploitation at the minimum, as the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation such as forced marriages, sexual slavery or servitude and mail order brides. In the novel this paper, reference is only made to young women and girls sexually exploited by either coercion or luring into prostitution.

Eunice Otuko in her *Zura Maids* depicts this human trafficking for sexual exploitation in Uganda through characterization. She uses characters that she has made for instance Esther whose job is to convince and take young girls from an internally people's displaced camp (IDP) and other upcountry villages; from unsuspecting parents and guardians and take them to brothels or dungeons such as Victoria Group's *Zura Maids* house where men who are interested in prostitutes and those who deal in human exportation can find them. (*Zura Maids*, pg. 52). Eunice Atuko dresses up and uses the character of Esther to act like a middleman, an indirect dealer in sexual slavery who generally recruits and parades young girls as human merchandise.

More to that, we are introduced to Martina Maa, a 65-year-old prison inmate in Luzira Prison who is serving a fifteen-year sentence for alleged child abduction of a fifteen year old girl from Entebbe with

an aim of killing her. Martina Maa has been framed by potential competitors in business. She owns several brothels around Kampala as well as a company Zura Maids. In the story that later unfolds, a girl of about fifteen years has been drugged and brought to Martina Maa's residence for possible recruitment into the business but because she looks to be from a well to do family, Martina's rejects her. The two men take the girl from unsuspecting Martina and only drop her at the gate before heading their way and alerting the police only for Martina to be picked by police and taken straight to police and to Luzira later on. This character is used by Eunice to depict the existence of sexual slavery because later on, we discover that Zura Maids was not only a training ground for sex slaves but also an open market for girls for export.

More so, Eunice Atuko's uses the character of Lena Ayugi, a university Graduate living in Acokara; an IDP camp where some people who were displaced by Joseph Kony and his Lord's Resistance Army are living. She is one of the five children whose parents have died due to the war and its aftermath. Lena, the protagonist of the play is found in prison at the beginning of the novel where she has been serving a two-year sentence for Arson.

Hi, am Lena, two years on arson charges...whose house did you burn?" and she says "a place where I was being held hostage. A brothel. I burnt it so that I and my friends could escape."(Zura: pg.11)

Having been lured to go to Kampala in order to find a job with which to be able to take care of her siblings, Lena is dismayed to find herself in a brothel and all her attempts to resist being used earn her so much torture in form of beatings, harassment, starvation until she decides to comply against her will. That's where she finds a way to revenge against her tormentors, the brothel owners by burning down her new habitat with a left over piece of cigarette left in the room by one of the clients. This does not only earn her freedom from the brothel but also a ticket to prison where she has spent two years because she stands in the way for smooth sexual exploitation in the brothel.

The author of *Zura Maids* also portrays human trafficking through Mukwano, one of the managers of Victoria Group that includes Zura Maids and several brothels. He is cunning and murderous; he murders many people including Tony the company lawyer because he is loyal to Martina Maa and the company at large. His shrewdness and intensity in handling the business such as ensuring that the girls are trained to the standard make us see not only the seriousness of the trade but also the commitment in the child trafficking.

“This one is too fat, Warden, Mukwano said, pointing at one Amoding, the girl from Teso...and did you say you’re already on the second stage in week two?so no short-circuit yet? ...that explains the defiance. I don’t see smiles on their faces yet”

Back to the internally displaced people’s camp (IDPs), sexual exploitation is depicted by Eunice Otuko’s usage of Jeffrey and Afande commandant’s demands to the camp chairman Mr. Olum to send girls and women of their choices to their tents so that they sleep with them in exchange for their continuous provision of security services. We learn that Mzee Olum does this without thinking twice for these soldiers have had a rough way to deal with him. This fuels the vice of sexual exploitation and exposes the girl children to lots of effects that may come with early involvement in sex such as contraction of diseases like HIV/Aids, STI’s as well as teenage pregnancies for the young ones. For instance, when Lena returns to her village, her village mates come closer maybe to say hello. This attracts the attention of Jeffrey one of those soldiers who attempts to grab her hand and take her to his tent and put her to bed with him. His attempt however with a, *“come with me!”* earn him humiliation in front of everyone gathered and he attempts to use authority by trying to slap her; she dodges this and even warns him openly that she would rather die than go with him. The camp leader practically shakes in fear and moves forward to ask Lena to obey Afande Jeffrey so that they can live in peace.

“...you may have gone to the University, and now you are living and working in Kampala, and you might want it your way. Here we are peaceful people. We follow instructions. If Afande Jeffrey gives you an order, you you-obey.”

In addition to that, Mzee Olum, the camp leader acts so feeble and helpless in the presence and at the commander of the soldiers who guard the IDP's. He quickly corresponds with the soldiers in surrendering young girls and women in the camp to the soldiers to be used as sex objects (Zura, pg.49).

“Young woman” Muzee Olum walked forward. “You may have gone to the university and now you are living and working in Kampala, and you might want it your way. Here we are peaceful people, we follow instructions. If Afande Jaffrey gives you an order, you you-you follow”

From the above quotation and more of what follows, it's clear that Muzee Olum himself was conditioned to surrender his own people against his will to the hands of the exploitative soldiers because of fear and certain conditions.

In the novel Zura Maids, the young girls held hostage at Victoria Group of Companies are subjected to 'training' that is characterized by harsh treatment such as being given small rations of food, lining up naked, and subjected to drug taking in the dungeon to force them to submission. These girls are promised good jobs and treatment abroad in countries like Italy, New York, etc. For example, we see that after the meal, the girls took their positions against the wall again. And one of the wardens talks to them,

“You have been brought here because you are very special.” The Warden began. “As you know, and that must have been why you chose us, the Zura is very reputable global firm. We got strong networks across the globe....”

The girls are kept in a dimly lit dungeon, kept naked for some part of the day, given less food to avoid their adding on weight, drugged to sleep and electrocuted at a certain stage in training to improve them for their market abroad.

Human trafficking is a significant violation of human rights which often comes with physical violence and or psychological torture. This causes the victims to either end up in addictions or self-rejection due to perceived helplessness of the states that trafficking lands them into, and thus most of them cannot self-identify. In Zura Maids novel, the teenage girls are kept in the dungeon and subjected to very little food, queuing

up naked, very cold baths electrocution “*short-circuit*” to make them obedient as well as resilient.

Brothel owners are the other invisible characters that Eunice Otuko brings to our notice as a vivid picture of human trafficking for sexual exploitation. These buy victims that are availed by traffickers or agents as evidenced. A case in point is at the fact that there is a brothel in which Lena plus many girls who had been got from the camp and other places are kept until Lena Ayugi burns. More so, another group of girls including Lilly, Lena’s younger sister that get rescued from a brothel where some are paraded naked for customers to choose and satisfy their sexual desires.

Another of the victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation is Lilly, Lana’s sister. Lena is heart broken when on her return to Acokara in the camp to learn that her little sister has been taken by the same Esther, who took her to Kampala with promises of a housekeeping job only to end up in a brothel. Lena’s desperation to rescue her little sister causes the change of plan. All the searches seem to yield nothing until the last day she was found in a room with a man lying in a “foetal position under the bed” (Zura: pg.297)

More to that, the author employs irony to depict the evil vice of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. Whereas it is the desire of every parent or guardian to know their children’s whereabouts, we do not see any of the parents asking where their children are or least try to follow up. This could draw us to the carelessness of the guardians in the camp or else that these care takers actually know exactly what the children were taken for; which is a violation of their rights.

The author uses dialogue to depict human trafficking against girl children in the novel. Several conversations happen about human trafficking and or involvement and profitability of this trade, for example on (Zura: pg: 38); Arthur Mubende and Lena have a dialogue,

“Thank you..... Arthur, but you have done enough for me already. Besides, I can’t take another day without seeing my siblings. It’s such a miracle for me that I have seen you. I don’t even know how to thank you enough

“Would you like to press charges on the lady who took you from your village?”

“Lady? She is not a lady. She is a devil. A monster. That woman Esther? I would strangle her if she crossed my path again.”

Arthur laughed and added, “If you did that, you would lose your freedom again.”

“These past three years, I have been spent countless days and nights just thinking about her. Thinking about the gang she sold me to. Thinking about the filthy men who used me. The hurt. The incarceration. The humiliation.”

In this dialogue, the two characters reveal to the audience the reality, the pain of human trafficking as well as the humiliation and demoralization brought about by sexual exploitation.

Another way she uses dialogue between Lena and the two elderly women in the camp, namely Maria also known as grandmother and Mama Jen reveal that actually Lilly is among the many girls who have gone in pretext of escaping the poverty in the camp. Lena is too disheartened to take in this knowing what might be happening to the girls. When she runs off to her hut to cry, she is followed and later reveals what the elderly women didn't know about this alleged escape from poverty. She has no alternative but to bring to their realization the existence of this horrible evil against the girls thought to have escaped poverty with Esther's help.

“I have never seen my sister. I wasn't working on the same place with her. Mama Jen. Grandmother. My sister is in trouble. All the girls that Esther took are in trouble.”

“What are you saying, child? Mama Jen took Lena's hand. “Madam Esther took many girls, including my daughter Jen.” She turned to Maria. “She took your granddaughters too, grandmother. Not so? I mean the twins.”

When asked about the kind of trouble they are in, Lena states, “.....I know because when she took me, she handed me over to.....untold slavery. I am only still alive because I dared to escape. And when I escaped, they caught me and threw me in prison.”

“.....Jesus, child, what are you saying Ayugi? My 12-year old twin granddaughters Apio and Acen are my only children. I want them back this minute.”

“.....And to think that she was here only a fortnight ago, hmm!” Mama Jen said. “And, she took wither fifteen girls” (pg. 52-56)

Depictions of causes of trafficking and sexual exploitation in *Zura Maids*

Human traffickers are keen at observing rules and have collaborators within the internal security systems of the government being definitely a profitable area in which they harvest a lot of revenue. Therefore, one of the causes for the flourishing of this trade is that the perpetrators endeavor to handle this trade with utmost carefulness to avoid any cause to land in the hands of the law. This they do by ensuring they have collaborators within police and any other advisors in judicially thus keep informed. In *Zura Maids* too, Otuko portrays the economic relationship between Mukwano the manager of VG Company and the CID head Robert Kena who is paid to provide cover for the company as well as spy for any clues of having them nabbed. (Zura: pg. 259) Mr. Kena is however intercepted and put in the cell so that he doesn't reveal any more information before the operations to arrest brothel owners and *Zura Maids* house.

At the beginning of the novel, we are introduced to one Lena Ayugi, Prisoner no.50 in Luzira Maximum Security Prison. Lena we learn has been taken to Kampala along with other girls to be engaged in sex slavery disguised as housekeeping. She gets disgusted and as a way to escape, by committing arson; only way to get out of an 'inner'

prison of the brothel only to get herself into the ‘outer’ Luzira Maximum Prison. Lena is led into sexual exploitation because of disparity. As a University graduate, whose siblings’ education was sacrificed so that she completes her education, she feels obliged to stand surety and support her family.

The demand for prostitutes and sex slaves is one of the leading causes of the growth of this trade. This can be classified into three categories namely the users or purchasers of sex, profiteers from selling sex, and socio-cultural attitudes towards sex, (Hughes 2004). Users or purchasers refer to persons who pay prostitutes or prostitute owners to get a sexual services; brothel owners and profiteers who sell sex and academics and media reporting and writing about prostitutes form part of socio-cultural attitudes towards sex, Hughes (2004). For example from the novel *Zura Maids*, Otuko Eunice illustrates these with narrations of men who pay for sex and sleep with the girls at the brothels; the profiteers as people like Esther the woman who traffics children, Martina Maa, Mukwano, Tony, Nancy and others who get paid by the whole business that deals with people merchandise.

Victims for this nature of trade in Uganda have mostly been nationals, as seen in the novel *Zura Maids*. The main causes for this especially in Acokara is insecurity. Having been hit by the LRA internal civil war, which left most families desolate; some with only children, and others with adults due to the mass killings and trafficking or abductions of people by the LRA rebels, a home like Lena’s stands high chances of human or child trafficking by other traffickers because there isn’t security enough. Children in Uganda are trafficked for reasons such as exploitation through early and forced marriages, production of child sexual abuse material like child pornography, and sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism, child soldiers.

Trafficking is one of the largest profit makers for organized crime in companies like *Zura Maids* as clearly shown in the novel. It is evidenced that Victoria Group of companies which started from scratch is already worth 20 million dollars. This, put in mind of the perpetrators only encourages finding every possible way of boosting and protecting it. This is evidenced by the offers they make as salaries to workers. We

witness Martina's intention to employ and pay Lena a lot of money moreover for an office which has not been in existence.

"But don't you want to know the terms and conditions of your service, dearie, how much you will learn at least? Martina Maa asks Lena.

"Oh. As a matter of fact, how much?" and Martina tells her, "3,500,000 shillings per month for the start. Will you be okay with that?"

The author of *Zura Maids* novel uses Mukwano and his wardens who carry out training for the young girls to make them resilient enough thus are marketing his company. This resonates the young girls training and going thorough harsh training, given drugs to enable them be free spirited and willing to obey at any time. We see these drugs are given to the girls in the dungeon before bed time. This kind of investment is what we call added value in economics and is responsible for the stability and growth of the business.

The author lets us know one the causes of the growth of human trafficking as heavy investment. Companies like *Zura Maids* and their collaborators as profiteers of this vice generate lots of profits from young women and girls forced into prostitution. This resonates their continuous facilitation to this business. It could be a club, brothel owners, massage parlors or owners of rental rooms. (SALRC 2009: 43) Brothel owners and their counterparts increase their workforce by purchasing young women and girls from traffickers in different places thus making it a continuous flow. From the novel, we learn that the Victoria Group of Companies does not get young girls from Esther the trafficker that we are told gets young girls from the IDP but also from other places like Teso, Karamoja among others. This we see first and when the lady from the interview room asks the receptionist,

"A beautiful morning. How many girls do we have today? She replies, "A great morning, Madam Nancy, ...we have got thirty from Karamoja, fifteen from last week's headquarters admissions, and now this late comer makes

the sixteenth,” referring to Lena who had reported. (Zura: pg. 207)

It is pointed out by Pratt (2008:44) that individuals apply legal or illegal actions because of the expected utility from those acts and are influenced by the fact that the possibility of the expected gains from crime relative to earnings from legal work accentuates trafficking endeavors. Otuko Eunice demonstrates this through Mukwano’s seriousness and the importance he attaches to these assignments regarding safeguarding the company as well as greed, he has assigned two of his allies’ guns and instructs them to end whichever life he feels is standing in his way. For instance in reference to Omadi the gate and first hand man that finished all his messes for instance by burying the dead people he killed; a man who had just escaped from his premises, he says,

“He carries with him vital information. I want Omadi found at all costs.”

This is clear about how he will not stop at anything to safeguard his company as well as his self-image.

The commercial sexual exploitation of children is boosted by the demand for young women on the market. Thus, human trafficking remains the predominant form of exploitation due to its lucrativity. The growing demand for children for commercial sex can be traced, among other things, to the growth of the sex industry at the country and international levels. The demand for underage sex has given rise to practices like Lomé’s so-called *Marche du petit virgin*, which means the market of the small vagina as written in the human rights article (Human Rights Watch, 2003: 3). The growth of tourism also draws vulnerable children into high-risk situations in the hope of earning some money and a good living. So, the so called ‘sex-tourists’ are then also drawn to such destinations as word spreads that children can be bought cheaply for sex, and women and children may be trafficked into the resort to meet this increased demand.

One other causes of increased vulnerability of children thus leading them to be potential victims of trafficking, both voluntary and

coerced is poverty. This is evidenced by people's dependency on external forces to survive. The people in the IDP suffer the effects of war such as destruction of their homes, gardens and livelihood. From the novel *Zura Maids*, Otuko represents a lady trafficker Esther who is able to convince young girls and their parents or guardians and take the teenagers away because the level of poverty and the desire to earn a living or help support the family is visible. A decision which Lena Ayugi regrets taking due to what she has had to bear as a result of getting out to look for a job.

"I should never have left my siblings alone. I should never have left my brother with such a responsibility. He was only fourteen. I should never have believed Old Esther. What hurts me most is that hag, the beast, must still be getting more innocent girls from the villages. I wish I could stop her right now. Right right now." (Zura: pg. 11)

The above outburst is by Lena who has realized that she and many other girls have fallen play to the Esther's tricks and is assertive enough to denounce it; in fact she is more than ready to fight it.

More to that, lack of education and access to schools in times such as that when there is an insurgency led to all children to stay home, be redundant. Being in a camp means that the people living in there had to depend entirely on external sources for livelihood and basic needs. This can only mean dependency on other's generosity and mercy. This inadequacy of basic needs like clothes, enough food supplies, and medicine among others makes it easy for Esther to take advantage of deceiving the young girls and their families.

This is as reflected in Eunice Otuko's novel *Zura maids* where highly placed people in government are said to be fuelling the process of trafficking at a certain stage. We learn from Mr. Mukwano one of the managers of Victoria Group Company in which *Zura Maids* lies that he pays some money to the highly placed officers who in turn leave the company to continue with their dubious operations. The company for example has a lawyer, police collaborators among others.

More so, lack of appropriate means to earn a living in such insecure places contributes greatly to the growth of the vice of human trafficking. Lena Ayugi is used by Otuko to demonstrate this lack; even for a graduate from the university that she is.

Conflicts and in this case the war by the rebel leader Joseph Kony of the Lord's Resistance Army fuelled trafficking of young girls. Wars such as that devastate local economies, cause people to have no incomes. These cause disparity amongst some parents to willingly to surrender children to traffickers without an understanding of the consequences as we see in the novel *Zura Maids*.

Child trafficking occurs for many reasons, according to the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labor (ILO-IPEC, 2003: 23) it is overwhelmingly a demand-driven phenomenon. It occurs predominantly because there is a market for children in labor and in the sex trade, and this is matched by an abundant supply of children, mostly from poor families, who are easy prey for those who seek to make a profit by exploiting their vulnerability.

Conclusion

In a nutshell therefore, through *Zura Maids*; Eunice Otuko has vividly unearthed experiences of human trafficking and sex exploitation of young girls in Uganda with reference to Northern Uganda especially in the evenings of the Lord's Resistance War. Having witnessed the war, she creatively employs the narrative style which eases comprehension of the story aids the reader to view her it with objectivity. We further realize through the author that child or human trafficking itself has overwhelmingly shattered impresses on an individual victim but also impacts on the development and security of the families and countries involved by weakening the safety and security of the involved parties as well as the nations it touches.

Trade involving children has become a huge business for children traffickers and has turned out to earn the involved parties with billions of dollars as their annual gross revenue globally (IOM, 1997). This literary work "*Zura Maids*" explores the upsetting reality of trafficking

people for sexual exploitation, is compelling and thought-provoking. It unveils a lot about the complex facets of this worldwide crime by carefully analyzing the novel's descriptions and causes.

The horrific hardships that victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation go through are exposed in Atuko's story. Significant psychological, emotional, and physical traumas are experienced by the people in the book which exposes the brutal nature of this criminal operation. Readers are successfully drawn in by the author's skillful use of storytelling tactics, which elicits empathy and fosters a strong emotional connection to the characters' struggles. These evocative portrayals are an effective tool for bringing to light the atrocities of human trafficking and the immediate need for widespread action to stop it.

An intricate web of circumstances that contributes to the continuance of human trafficking are revealed when the novel is analyzed. With vulnerable people frequently being seduced by unrealized promises of improved prospects, socio-economic inequities emerge as a major driving force. Due to the continued predominance of this crime's exploitation of women and girls, gender disparities also play a critical role. The susceptibility of potential victims is further increased by a lack of legal protection and institutional shortcomings, which feeds the cycle of abuse and impunity.

In defining the characters' susceptibility and agency inside the story, cultural and historical factors are equally crucial. Deeply ingrained societal conventions and patriarchal systems might stifle victims' attempts to seek aid or fend off their traffickers. In addition, as the novel's representation of underprivileged groups shows, historical injustices can leave people open to exploitation.

A comprehensive strategy is essential to combat the serious problem of human trafficking for sexual exploitation. To better safeguard victims and impose tougher penalties on traffickers, laws and regulations must be reinforced. In addition, given that this crime is transnational in nature, international cooperation and collaboration are essential.

The core causes of human trafficking must be addressed in addition to judicial action. In order to make sure that disadvantaged people are less susceptible to manipulation by traffickers, governments and organizations must endeavor to reduce socioeconomic inequities and strengthen marginalized populations. By empowering people to identify and report instances of exploitation, education and awareness initiatives can help fight damaging cultural practices and advance gender equality.

"Zura Maids" is a vital contribution to the discussion on this important problem as academics and activists continue to research and spread awareness about human trafficking for sexual exploitation. The novel highlights the need of stopping human trafficking and defending everyone's rights and dignity by sympathetically describing the real experiences of victims and shedding light on the underlying factors that enable this crime.

More to that, Eunice Otuko a spot light and flashes onto the value of Education and or sensitization as a key instrument in the book to arrest a bad situation in Victoria Group of companies as well as all the other brothel's that were raided by the police or government to arrest the violators of children's rights. She uses Lena as a ring leader and an important instrument to rescue the rest of the girls who were not empower.

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