

STRATEGIES FOR COMBATING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME IN AFRICA

THE GHANAIAN EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

Crime has become a prominent issue in Africa and contributes in diverse ways to the underdevelopment of many countries in Africa. The researchers focused on the descriptions of the usefulness of the strategies used to combat crime in Africa, problems being encountered, and recommendations for improvement. Statistical data from 2009 to 2013 on transnational organized crimes from the Criminal Investigations Department of Ghana Police Service, document reviews and extracts from radio and television interviews with scheduled officers and other experts were used to gather data for the study. It was revealed from the study that major transnational crimes in Africa include drug and human trafficking. In dealing with the issues of transnational crime, Ghana Police Service (GPS) came out with an innovative crime combat strategy involving the support of the general public. It was revealed from the study that as other non-narcotic crimes were decreasing, narcotic related crimes were increasing by 6.7 percent from January to August 2013 to same period in 2014.

Keywords: Strategies, Crime, Ghana Police Service, Economic and Organized Crime Office

INTRODUCTION

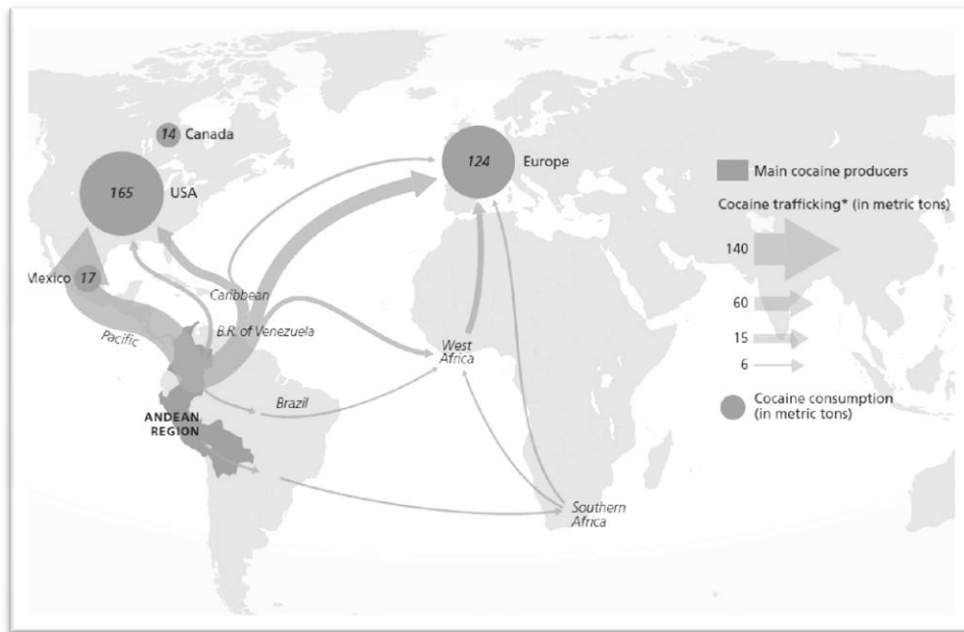
Historically, criminal enterprise has been deeply embedded in the society of man since the days of Adam. During the regime of Roman Emperor Tiberius (AD 14-37) it was indicated that the rich and the men in authority broke the laws to intimate and steal from the peasant and the general population. Criminal enterprise has expanded from one territory to another and now globalized to threaten the entire world in the form of transnational organized crimes (Natarajan, 2006). The threat of crime has prompted many academicians and crime officers to dialogue and device strategies, techniques, and weapons that are more effective to combat the threat posed by the criminals involved in transnational organized crime (Woodiwiss, 2003).

Transnational organized crime is a crime that involves criminals who operate within complex structures with rigidly enforced laws and intricate conspiracies that threaten many nations and infiltrate businesses that are legitimate (Edwards & Gill, 2003; Kenney, 2007). Transnational organized crimes have been perceived as crimes that threaten many African countries and even the developed world. Policing activities thwart the effort of the criminal groups and make them feel insecure in their lucrative business (Andreopoulous, 2013; William, 1998).

In our contemporary era the enterprise of transnational organized crime has infiltrated many legitimate business enterprises through conspiracies aimed at gaining control to amass huge sums of money (Yesilyurt, 2014). It has now corrupted many government officials in responsible positions, police officers, and even the criminal justice systems in Africa.

Among the transnational organized crimes identified, investigations have revealed that drug trafficking is “the most profitable organized crime activity” (President’s Commission on Organized Crime, 1983, Bartilow & Eom, 2009). Worldwide cocaine which primary source of production is from Colombia (45%), Peru (35-40%), and Bolivia (15-20%), as shown in Figure 1, is trafficked to over 174 countries worldwide (Bagley, 2013; Bartilow & Eom, 2009). According to UNODC (2011), from 1998 to 2006, over 440 metric tons of the cocaine was consumed worldwide.

Figure 1 Major Global Cocaine Flow Areas in 2008



Source: UNODC, 2010, p. 70 (Cited in Bagley, 2013, p. 101)

Many nations have taken steps to combat the menace of drug trafficking by instituting ruthless measures against drug trafficking organizations worldwide but the industry continues to grow with combative reactions involving the murder of innocent citizens (Yesilyurt, 2014; Bagley, 2013). For instance in Mexico the president took measures to declare war against the drug cartels in 2006 and interdicted many of the traffickers. Since the war was declared over 40,000 Mexicans have been murdered yet the industry continues to grow (Molloy & Bowden, 2011) with corpse messages (Stolberg, 2009; Kostelnik & Starbek, 2013).

It is perceived by the International Narcotics Control Board that there is massive increase in the use of drugs in many African countries. Cocaine users in Africa in 2009 ranged from 940,000 to 4.42 million (Bagley, 2013). For instance it was reported by a Narcotic expert on a radio program that it was alleged two secret laboratories that manufacture dangerous drugs were secretly dismantled in Nigeria in 2012 and there was a similar laboratory destroyed in Gambia. Narcotics expects also have the suspicion that there is a Methamphetamines laboratory in Ghana (Joy Online, 2013).

Brief Profile of Ghana

Ghana is a republican country in West Africa that shares borders with Burkina Faso (North), Cote D'Ivoire (West), Togo (East), and the Gulf of Guinea (South). Ghana's 2010 census indicated that the population of Ghana was 25 million. Ghana is the first black African country to

gain independence from colonial regime in 1957 and gained its republican status on July 1, 1960. The first post-independent President was overthrown by military juntas in 1966. Ghana went through series of military coups from 1966 to 1992 which resulted in economic decline and hardship to the Ghanaian populace. Since 1992 Ghana's political system has been stabilized without military intervention.

Major crimes in Ghana include murder, fraud, human trafficking, child stealing, robbery, smuggling, rape, counterfeiting, and illegal possession of firearms. There is the perception that, "Ghana lacks the requisite institutional capacity and framework for responding to organized crime" (Aning, Kwakye, & Pokoo, 2013, p. 99). Ghana Police Service (GPS) recently launched Police Information Hotline with support from Ghana mobile phone companies and other donors to aid in crime combat. Other strategies adopted include visibility policing, motor bike patrols and new ways of dealing with cyber-crimes.

Transnational Organized Crime-Ghana

Among the transnational organized criminal activities in Ghana, drug trafficking is the most significant. "Drug trafficking in particular has intensified over the last decade and Ghana has remained an important country for cocaine trafficked from Latin America and South Asia en route to Europe and the United States" (Aning, Kwakye, & Pokoo, 2013, p. 99). Other forms of transnational organized crimes in Ghana include human trafficking. Ghana News Agency (2014) reported that Ghana Police Anti-Human Trafficking Unit in collaboration with a non-governmental organization intercepted a group of 30 children being trafficked to other parts of Ghana. The traffickers were arrested and prosecuted.

Human Trafficking Menace in Ghana

Human trafficking is has become a transnational crime that Ghana is now contending with. Ghana has been described as a source, transit, and destination of children and women trafficked for child labor or prostitution. According to TV 3 (2013) news, Ghana has to put in more effort in dealing with human trafficking and that the criminal investigation unit in charge of human trafficking must be well equipped in undertaking its law enforcement duty on human trafficking. The major strategy that the traffickers use in their business is to convince their captives that there is a lucrative job abroad that the captors had arranged for them. The traffickers lure the innocent citizens on the pretense that they would offer them accommodation and even support them to meet all their travel expenses and visas. The countries where the victims are trafficked: Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar. As soon as they succeed in getting their victims to their destinations, the traffickers seize their passports and other travel documents and

force them to indulge in prostitution. The trafficked are forced to pay their traffickers from the proceeds of that business (Annan, 2005).

In dealing with transnational organized crime on human trafficking the CID office of GPS established nine anti-human trafficking units in different parts of Ghana and embarked on rescue and prosecution of cases in 2007. GPS also works in collaboration with other NGOs in Ghana to combat the menace of human trafficking. Based on the strategies embarked upon in dealing with this transnational crime, the head of human trafficking division of GPS was awarded by the US embassy in Accra in 2007 (Vibe Ghana, 2014).

Drug Menace in Ghana

Ghana has been observed as a transit point for drugs, including cocaine produced in Latin America and heroine from South East Asia, that are being trafficked to Europe, North America and other parts of the world (See Figure 1). In some parts of Ghana it is reported that marijuana is also produced. According to Anan, Kwakye, and Pokoo (2013), statistically, it was revealed that from 1991 to 1995 over 230 Ghanaians were arrested in other countries for drug trafficking of which 42 of the drug offenders were convicted in Thailand. The drugs are smuggled to and from Ghana through the borders with the neighboring countries, the main international airport, and the deep seas with connivance of the fisherman.

From 2012 to 2014 so many cases of drug trafficking have been reported in Ghana. For instance, it was reported in 2012 that some Ghanaians were arrested at Heathrow airport for exporting 7.5 kilograms of cocaine and 1.5 tons of cannabis (marijuana) into the United Kingdom. The substances were wrapped, compressed and hid among packaged vegetables in boxes (Ghana Nation, 2012).

In 2014, a Guyanese and a Ghanaian accomplice were sentenced for importing 21 bags of cocaine into Ghana in 2013 via a Guyanese ship "ATIYAH, George-Town." They were intercepted by Ghana Naval Ship under a tip off from international security partners (Joy Online, 2014). In 2012, through the collaborative effort of NACOB, four people that include Ghana Post officials and three Ghanaians were arrested for dealing with a posted parcel containing a quantity of cocaine from Trinidad and Tobago (National, 2012). In 2013, a Nigerian was arrested in Ghana for possessing 78 pellets of cocaine swallowed from Brazil to Ghana on board Egypt Air Flight MS 881 on December 9 (Anane, 2013). It was reported by Peace FM (2014) that a Ghanaian was jailed in the United Kingdom for a raid in his house that revealed two kilograms of heroin at his residence in Croydon, London. It has also been revealed that apart from Ghana being used a country for drug trafficking, the use of the drugs in Ghana is on the ascendancy (Anang, kwakye and Pokoo, 2013).

Combating the Drug Menace in Ghana-Strategies

In devising strategies to combat transnational crimes, Ghana has resorted to many strategies involving collaborative linkages and support from the general public. Resulting from a high rate of drug abuse in Ghana and the dangerous threat of illicit drug, in 1990 Ghana established Narcotics Control Board (NACOB), an agency under its ministry of Interior.

The Board was established under PNDC Law 236, s55 in 1990 with the responsibility of reducing narcotic drugs. The Board is in-charge of enforcement and control, and to implement the government policies to tackle the drug menace in Ghana with the aim of using multidisciplinary measures against cultivators, traffickers, peddlers, and users of narcotic drugs. The Board liaises with government and non-governmental organizations and has various forms of international cooperation to address the issue of illicit drug trafficking and other psychotropic substances. According to the Ministry of the Interior (2007), internationally, Ghana is a signatory to many UN conventions on drugs:

- The 1961 Convention and Protocols on Drugs
- The 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances
- The 1972 Protocol Amending the 1961 Single Convention
- The 1988 Convention Against Illicit Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances

NACOB has also received international cooperation from the international community in its quest to curb the drug menace. Notable among the cooperation and assistance are:

- Operation West bridge with Her Majesty Revenue and Customs of UK
- Bilateral cooperation with US, EU (Germany, France, Spain and others)
- International Cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
- International Narcotics Control Board
- United Nations Development Program and
- The World Customs Organization

Internally, NACOB plays coordinating roles with law enforcement and control agencies including: Ghana Police Service, Defense Intelligence, National Security Council, Ghana Airport Company Ltd, Bureau of National Investigation, and Ghana Immigration Service. All the agencies cooperate with NACOB in curbing the drug menace in Ghana.

Another strategy that Ghana embarked upon in dealing with organized crime is the establishment of Economic and Organized Crime Office (EOCO) under the Economic and

Organized Crime Office Act, 2010 (Act 804). The Act established EOCO as a specialized agency entrusted with the authority to detect, monitor, investigate and prevent organized crime prevent. It has the object of co-operating with international agencies in its dealing with transnational organized crimes. The Act empowers the officers to exercise powers of the police to request for information, search and remove documents, and obstruct officials in dealing with organized crimes.

It was reported by the West Africa Commission on Drugs (WACD), a brain child of Mr. Kofi Annan, a former UN Secretary General that West African leaders are to play a leading role in the fight against trading in Narcotic drugs in West Africa. At a meeting of WACD it was observed that, "West Africa is not only a transit point for drugs but is also becoming a destination" (Boadu, 2014, p. 48) and that the drug menace is a regional problem rather than country specific one and therefore requires a collaboration of all leaders to deal with it decisively.

METHODOLOGY

In line with ethical considerations guiding social research, the researchers obtained permission from the Director General of CID, Ghana to enable the researchers obtain secondary data for the study. Documents relating to transnational organized crimes from the Statistics and Information Technology Unit (SITU) of the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) headquarters of Ghana Police Service (GPS) spanning January 2009-August 2014 were reviewed by the researchers. Documents within the public purview were also reviewed. Findings were analyzed and presented in the study.

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

As indicated in Table 1, statistical analysis of the data gathered revealed that there were decreasing patterns in crime offences in relation to abduction, robbery and counterfeiting while some increasing patterns were seen in human trafficking, child stealing, murder, falsification, smuggling and rape.

Table 1: General Crime Statistics in Ghana (2009-2014)

OFFENCE	Year					Percentage Change	January-August		Percentage Change for Jan - Aug
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	(2009 & 2013)	2013	2014	(2013 & 2014)
Murder	427	422	423	560	551	29.0	374	375	0.3
Human Trafficking	0	18	10	47	190	*955.5	124	32	-74.2
Child Stealing	64	71	45	79	69	7.8	50	41	-18.0
Fraud	18906	18403	17461	19261	21188	12.1	14251	13234	-7.1
Kidnapping	0	2	48	57	80	*3900	41	66	61.0
Abduction	682	600	639	767	657	-3.7	489	393	-19.6
Falsification Of Accounts	1	7	14	1	9	800.0	8	3	-62.5
Robbery	1373	1260	1235	1126	1235	-10.1	787	758	-3.7
Smuggling	10	10	11	15	20	100.0	15	19	26.7
Rape	447	447	514	533	484	8.3	331	374	13.0
Counterfeiting	235	275	186	146	159	-32.3	109	109	0.0
Possessing Firearm Without Permit	0	0	104	145	167	*60.6	105	118	12.4
Total	22145	21515	20690	22737	24809	12.0	18697	17536	-6.2
Narcotics									
Possessing Cocaine	12	4	16	15	2	-83.3	2	7	250.0
Possessing Indian Hemp	666	469	505	474	653	-2.0	413	430	4.1
Possessing Heroin	1	0	4	2	3	200.0	3	9	200.0
Total	679	473	525	491	658	-3.1	418	446	6.7

Source: Adapted from Statistics and Information Technology Unit (SITU), CID Headquarters, Accra, 2014.

Overall change in crime offences between the year 2009 and 2013 was 12 percent. On the contrary possession of narcotics substances between the year 2009 and 2013 reported a decrease of - 3.1 percent. Overall changes in crime offences (other than narcotics) during the period of January-August 2013 and the same period in 2014 indicated a decrease of - 6.2% while possession of narcotics during the same period was elevated to 6.7%.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Generally, Ghana has experienced a minor change in crime offences since 2009 (12%). Changes in abduction, robbery, narcotics, and counterfeiting saw a downward trend. Changes in the rate of child stealing, murder, falsification, smuggling, human trafficking, and rape saw an upward trend as at the end of 2013. Statistics reveal that changes in narcotics from January to August, 2013 highly increased during the same period in 2014. Possession of cocaine rose by 250%, possession of Indian hemp rose by 4.1%, and possession of heroin also rose by 200%. Indian hemp that is produced in Ghana (Anan, Kwakye, & Pokoo, 2013) rose by 4.1% but drugs that are not produced in Ghana like cocaine rose by 250% and that of heroin, 200%. This is an indication of how effective the trafficking of drugs from the Andean nations through Africa is making progress in recent times (Begley, 2013; Bartilow & Eom, 2009).

Ghana serves as a transit point for drug trafficking but greater portion of the drugs is retained and used by Ghanaian (Anan, Kwakye, & Pokoo, 2013) and this accounts for the high increase in the possession of heroin and cocaine by Ghanaians. Strategically Ghana has instituted some bodies such as the Narcotic Control Board, EOCO, the CID that collaboratively work to curb the drug menace. the drug trafficking groups are able to deploy better strategies to outwit the Ghanaian law enforcement agencies in their drug trafficking business (Natarajan, 2006).

RECOMMENDATIONS

War against drugs has become sophisticated that the law enforcing agencies have to network and intensify their collaborative effort to deal with the drug trafficking groups (Yesilyurt, 2014). The law enforcement agencies must be equipped with the right tools that can disengage the drug trafficking groups and destroy their networks. Education on the effect of drug abuse should be intensified and non-governmental organizations that seek to fight the drug war should be highly supported. Poverty, which is a push factor for people in the third world countries to indulge in drug business should also be reduced with the help of the developed world. The whole world should help in the fight against corrupt practices that promote drug trafficking.

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