



Combat

The Trafficking of Children

International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)



International Labour Office



WESTERN EUROPE & THE BALTICS

Trafficking into Western Europe is a variant of the push and pull-driven pattern, with the demand for commercial sex, creating a large market for children and young people following promises of income and economic independence. In Northern Europe, there is a clear pattern of trafficking between the poorer Baltic States and the affluent cities of Scandinavia, reflecting historical as well as geographical links, following sea trade and exchange routes and traditional patterns of movement. Children are trafficked into begging, street hawking, unskilled labour and commercial sex.

MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA

Trafficking in these adjoining regions is for both labour and commercial sex, with the same gender discrimination-driven supply but different sources of demand. Children are trafficked to work in domestic service and commercial sex. Boys are trafficked into the region as 'camel kids' and children also work in general unskilled labour.

AMERICAS & THE CARIBBEAN

Patterns of trafficking in the Americas and the Caribbean are only now beginning to emerge. Much of the trafficking is tourism-driven, pulling children to resort areas to work in tourism-related labour. Criminal operations organized around drugs and contraband are also reported to be getting involved in human trafficking. Children are trafficked as seasonal labour, in service sector jobs, as domestic help, as drug couriers and for commercial sex.

EASTERN EUROPE

Trafficking from Eastern Europe combines a number of push- and pull-patterns. Dysfunctional societies, severe and increasing poverty and unemployment, conflict and expectations of greater opportunities, push children, young people and adults into the clutches of traffickers. Open borders and functioning criminal routes and networks come into play alongside regular migration. Children are trafficked for unskilled labour, work in the entertainment sector and for commercial sex. Some are used for petty crime.

CENTRAL ASIA & THE CIS

Trafficking through and out of the countries of this region is characterized by the push of dysfunctional societies in the wake of economic depression and societal dislocation, and the involvement of small-scale crime. Children and especially adolescents are trafficked into service industries and the entertainment sector, for the sex trade and for pornography and as mail-order brides.

SOUTH ASIA

In South Asia, trafficking is an extension of the very serious child labour problem, with poverty, families and ignorance determinant in the vulnerability of children to exploitation. These also characterize the nature of trafficking, which revolves around deception, debt bondage and economic imbalance. Children are trafficked into commercial sex, into carpet and garment factories, for street hawking and begging, on construction projects, tea plantations, in manufacturing or in brick kilns. Young boys are trafficked to work as camel jockeys. In some countries, children are exploited by militia members as servants or combatants.

AFRICA

Central to the phenomenon of trafficking in Africa is abuse of the tradition of placing children with extended families or other care-takers when they cannot be cared for by their parents. Conflict has also contributed to the trafficking of children, not only by increasing their vulnerability but also through militia-initiated abduction and exploitation. Children are trafficked for domestic service, in family businesses, commercial sex, on plantations and mine sites and general labour. Children are also trafficked to work with militias in conflict zones.

SOUTH-EAST ASIA

Trafficking in South-East Asia is predominantly from rural to urban areas, from poor to wealthier countries. It reflects both the growth in the sex industry and the commoditization of children and women. Children are trafficked into the sex sector but also for a wide range of services, industrial and agricultural work, as well as to beg and hawk on the streets. Young women are also recruited as mail-order brides and for domestic service.

AUSTRALASIA, FAR EAST & PACIFIC

The countries of this region are in general affluent countries with poor neighbours, and trafficking in both adults and children into the region is characterized by pull-driven migration into labour and in particular commercial sex. Parallel to this, semi-commercial transactions such as mail-order bride schemes and the activities of organized crime syndicates also result from the juxtaposition of affluent and impoverished lifestyles. Children are trafficked for unskilled work, into commercial sex, as mail-order brides or 'sons'.

ILO-IPEC REGIONAL PROGRAMMES

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AFRICA

In October 1999 ILO-IPEC launched a major subregional programme in West/Central Africa. Phase I comprised a mapping of the problem and responses in the region, the development of national plans of action and a regional strategy. Phase II, which began in May 2001, sees the implementation of this strategy through awareness-raising campaigns among at-risk groups, community-level protection projects, law-enforcement capacity building, networking among social actors, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes and the provision of alternatives for children at risk and their parents. Support is also given to multi- and bilateral cross-border agreements between countries in the region.

CENTRAL AMERICA

In February 2002, ILO-IPEC launched a three-year programme to combat commercial sexual exploitation of children in seven countries of Central America: Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and the Dominican Republic. The programme aims to create synergies among the national initiatives in the region, to establish and facilitate cross-sectoral cooperation among the countries and to strengthen the capacities of major actors through training, technical support and the sharing of good practice and pilot models for action.

EUROPE

In early 2002, ILO-IPEC in collaboration with the Infocus Programme on promoting the Declaration and the ILO International Migration programme developed a programme to combat trafficking of children and young people for labour and sexual exploitation in the Balkans (Albania, Romania, Moldova) and Ukraine. The first phase of this programme seeks to identify a strategy for concerted action against trafficking through situation analysis and appraisal of existing responses in the region. This will include further adaptation of the rapid assessment methodology, training for national partners in using these research tools, operational reviews, workshops and analysis. On the basis of the lessons drawn from this, a comprehensive action programme will be developed, focusing on prevention and reintegration.

SOUTH AMERICA

In Brazil and Paraguay, ILO-IPEC has been active since January 2001 in mapping the incidence of exploitation in the border areas of the two countries, and in programmes to build institutional capacity, raise awareness and mobilize community-based protection mechanisms, rescue and care for exploited children.

SOUTH ASIA

The subregional programme to Combat Trafficking in Children in South Asia began in 1998 with research, consultation and analysis, leading to a two-year project, covering Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. The project supported local implementing partners in the areas of research, capacity building, policy development and legislation, prevention, recovery and reintegration of trafficked children. Anti-trafficking units have been supported within government structures and surveillance units have been set up with computerized monitoring of rescued victims. Youth groups have been mobilized and supported and a strategy for effective rehabilitation has been developed.

SOUTH-EAST ASIA

ILO-IPEC's Mekong subregional programme to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women began in 1998 with research, consultation and analysis, leading to a three-year pilot intervention phase, covering Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, China (Yunnan Province). In collaboration with the ILO Gender Promotion Bureau, the project worked with local partners in implementing projects in education and skills training, alternative livelihood promotion, legal literacy and awareness raising. A regional strategic framework added capacity building, advocacy and cross-border consultation to these national actions.

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THE WORLD OF TRAFFICKING



The trafficking of children is not new; it has existed for many years and continues to grow across all continents and all cultures. Today, however, there is a new, strong will to take action to combat trafficking and to bring it to a speedy end. Child trafficking is emerging as a global issue; nearly all countries are affected by this criminal violation of children's rights.

Under international law, trafficking is a crime involving the movement of children and their exploitation. The movement may be voluntary or coerced; the relocation may be across borders or within a country; and the exploitation can take several different forms: labour, prostitution and in some cases for use in armed conflicts. Exploitation occurs at the beginning, middle or end of the trafficking process (or indeed at several points), but none of this changes the fact that, where there is movement and exploitation, then trafficking has occurred. And those who have contributed to it – recruiters, middlemen, document providers, transporters, corrupt officials, employers and exploiters, service-providers – are traffickers.

Child victims of trafficking are mostly separated from their families and communities and coerced into prostitution and other exploitative forms of work such as agriculture, mining, manufacturing, fishing, begging and work in the entertainment sector and domestic service. They are vulnerable to abuse and further exploitation, often being moved from one form of exploitation to another, and are most often traumatized by this accumulation of denied rights. Child trafficking is a highly complex phenomenon with no simple solution. While more is known about the problem today, there remains a knowledge gap both in the analysis of the problem and in finding effective responses to the many challenges that trafficking poses, from prevention of the problem; interception, withdrawal and protection of victims; to dealing with those who profit from and exploit children's vulnerability.



A call to action

The problem is huge in scope, multi-faceted and sensitive, both culturally and politically. Tackling this kind of complex issue is possible, however, when countries are committed to addressing the problem as a matter of urgency and when the international community is willing to join them and support them in:

- strengthening multi-sectoral alliances to combat child trafficking within countries and across borders and to support victims;
- developing time-bound measures, programmes and plans – that is, setting specific goals and deadlines – to combat child trafficking and other worst forms of child labour, and linking this with the national development effort, particularly a poverty reduction strategy and the provision of quality education, skills training and job creation;
- broadening collaboration at bilateral, regional and international levels, including in fundamental areas such as data collection, planning, evaluation, capacity building and information sharing; and
- mobilizing international support for action to combat trafficking in children and maintaining children's rights on the international agenda.

Read more in : Boonpala, P and Kane, J: *Unbearable to the human heart: child trafficking and action to eliminate it*, ILO-IPEC 2002

CHILD TRAFFICKING AND THE ILO

The ILO policy framework

The International Labour Organization (ILO) was created to promote social justice as the foundation of international peace, specifically by articulating and supervising fundamental human rights in the world of work. Throughout its standards-related work, the ILO has dealt with the issue of human trafficking in relation to forced labour, the abuse of migrant workers, discrimination at work (particularly where certain sections of society, such as women or indigenous peoples, are affected), and as one of the worst forms of child labour.

The ILO has for a long time addressed child trafficking through its Forced Labour Convention (No. 29) that aims to eradicate “all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily”. Since 1999, the combat against trafficking has been reinforced by the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No.182). This powerful instrument confirms child trafficking as a practice similar to slavery and calls for countries to take immediate action to secure the prohibition and elimination of all worst forms of child labour. By the end of March 2002, 117 member countries had ratified Convention No. 182. In the framework of Conventions No. 29 and 182, States Parties will report on measures taken to combat child trafficking and other worst forms of child labour, allowing the organization to monitor progress made by member states and facilitating the sharing of information worldwide.

Convention 182 (Art.1) specifies that “Each Member which ratifies this Convention shall take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour as a matter of urgency”.

It defines the trafficking of children as a practice similar to slavery (Art.3) and requires ratifying states to design and implement programmes of action to eliminate it as a priority, “in consultation with government institutions and employers’ and workers’ organizations, taking into consideration the views of other concerned groups as appropriate”.



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Technical cooperation

Within the ILO, action against the trafficking of children has been undertaken since 1992 primarily through the International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). Guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and ILO Convention 182, IPEC works towards the effective elimination of trafficking of children by addressing its root causes. In collaboration with other international organizations, IPEC conducts action research on child trafficking; supports the efforts of governments, workers’ and employers’ organizations and civil society in the prevention of trafficking, in the rescue, repatriation and restoration of the rights of victims and in strengthening the judiciary and police in prosecuting offenders. The in-country programmes are reinforced by action at the subregional level, because it is recognized that concerted action is needed in both sending and receiving countries to stop child trafficking that occurs across borders. IPEC strives to mobilize public opinion against trafficking so that society as a whole is mobilized to support and sustain action.