Child protection issue brief

- Child trafficking

*According to Article 3(c) of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered “trafficking in persons”. In line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Article 3 (d) identifies any person under the age of eighteen as a child.

INTRODUCTION

There are an estimated 1.2 million annual cases of child trafficking, according to an ILO 2005 report.

Child trafficking is noted to be more prevalent in West and Central Africa, the Mekong sub-region and some countries in Central and South America.¹

The proportion of children relative to the total number of victims that are reported increased from about 15% to about 22% between 2003 and 2006, according to the available age disaggregated information.²

 Trafficking deprives children of their childhood, exposes them to violence, abuse and exploitation including sexual abuse and exploitation, and violates their rights to be protected, grow up in a family environment, gain access to education and reach their full potential. The prevalence of child trafficking directly counteracts the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

 Trafficking in human beings continues to be one of the most lucrative and fastest growing transnational crimes. The estimated profits made from human trafficking are US$32 billion – with almost US$28 billion from commercial sexual exploitation and US$4 billion from other forms of exploitation.³

ISSUES

- **79%** of human trafficking continues to be for sexual exploitation, and **18%** for forced labour, according to the 2009 Global Report on Trafficking.⁴ *(It is important to note that this statistical break down may be reflective of the focus on and visibility of sex work, especially prostitution, compared to other sectors that uses trafficked laborers such as in the case of children trafficked into domestic work or on fishing boats)*.

- Child trafficking results from the failure of child protection systems at national and transnational levels. Negative social norms in the places of origin such as devaluation of the girl child as well as in destinations make children vulnerable to different forms of exploitation.

- Children and families are not always naïve about the dangers of trafficking. Both children and families often make independent and calculated decisions about moving away or engaging in certain types of work. These decisions are often driven by a lack of alternative options. Awareness-raising alone is therefore insufficient. It needs to be accompanied by information that provides them with the means to protect themselves as well as viable alternatives for them to realize their potential.

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² Ibid


PROGRESS

UNICEF’s efforts to protect children from trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation and other forms of abuse and exploitation focus on strengthening a functioning ‘protective environment’ for children where the laws, policies, regulations and services across all sectors are operational and where the social norms and practices conducive for the development of the child are also in place. Some 130 countries were noted to have worked towards strengthening national child protection systems with various entry points including trafficking, migration, birth registration, violence against children, alternative care while over 60 countries reported work specifically in preventing and responding to child trafficking issue.5

A number of in-country experiences exemplify this approach and progress made.

India (three districts of Anantapur, Chittoor and Kadapa). Anti-trafficking committees/community vigilance groups were established, comprising women's advocates, youth advocates and community elders. These teams assist in monitoring to prevent trafficking. At the same time, street theatres targeting community members and out of school children, and in-school awareness campaigns, teach young people how to protect themselves against exploitation. Police were also sensitized on relevant laws of India and the rights of the victims. Reports from the field indicate that police officers have become more responsive and sensitive to trafficking. One reason why this initiative is considered successful is because of the serious, long-term involvement of the state authorities in the initiative, which has led to the community to take trafficking risks more seriously.7

United Arab Emirates (UAE). UNICEF signed an agreement with the government on the repatriation and re-integration of former camel jockeys. Over one thousand children trafficked to the UAE to work as camel jockeys (mostly from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sudan and Mauritania), have been reunited with their families since 2005. The success of this collaboration is due to various initiatives and programmes, including the initial identification, repatriation, medical care, psychosocial counseling and education or vocation programmes that assist children with making a smooth transition into their new lives. In brief, the success of this intervention was premised on the effective collaboration and coordination of different actors, including government ministries with different mandates in both the sending and destination countries.

FUTURE

In order to progress in the eradication of child trafficking, UNICEF has developed some key strategies for the future. Protecting children from exposure to exploitative situations including trafficking begins with prevention, i.e., reducing vulnerabilities that make children susceptible to trafficking and ensuring the protective environment a child needs for survival and development. As in all issues related to child protection, UNICEF adopts a rights-based approach to combating trafficking.

- Recognized contributing factors to child trafficking include, among others: both absolute and relative poverty; lack of access to education or vocational training; lack of relevant legislative frameworks as it relates to trafficking and/or lack of its enforcement; prevalence of discriminatory and child and gender insensitive social and cultural attitudes in both source and destination communities.
- Vulnerable children and families need viable alternatives to reach their potential in places of origin rather than be forced into uninformed, irregular and risky migration. These include opportunities to participate in economic activities, greater access to social services, including information about how they can protect themselves from exploitation including trafficking and where to seek assistance. Discriminatory practices and values in communities may marginalise individuals and families because of race, nationality, caste, religion or social status, making them more susceptible to traffickers and this need to be systematically addressed. Systems of protection should be in place to minimize risky migration.
- Discriminatory attitudes and behavior and norms in places of transit and destination regarding child migrants need to be addressed. Legislation safe-guarding the rights of all children irrespective of the migratory status should be in place and enforced. The direct demand for certain services such as prostitution including children and indirect demands that fosters exploitative labour practices in countries of destination needs to be addressed.

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5 UNICEF, Thematic report - Child protection from violence, exploitation and abuse, 2010
6 UNICEF, Analysis of 2011 county office annual reports, 2011 (unpublished internal analysis)
In line with UNICEF 2008 Child protection strategy, prevention and protection are the major focus of the UNICEF strategy to combat child trafficking. Prevention strategies are not just confined to the source communities but throughout the transit and destination communities. We must ensure that systems are in place to prevent children from becoming victims of trafficking and to ensure a holistic assistance that are fully in alignment with the best interests of the child principle once they have been trafficked.

A shift to a systems approach to child protection means that child trafficking is addressed holistically and strategically through a child protection systems lens and not in an isolated manner. A case in point is that of a national referral mechanism, where the system enables responses not only to victims of child trafficking but children who have been exposed to other forms of violence, exploitation and abuse. This type of response creates for efficiency and effectiveness and maximum utilization of scarce resources.

In order to aid in the research and undertaking of strategies, UNICEF has a number of resources at its disposal.

**RESOURCES**

**UNICEF resources (Selected)**

  - Textbook 1: Understanding child trafficking
  - Textbook 2: Action against child trafficking at policy and outreach levels
  - Textbook 3: Matters of process
  - Exercise book
  - Facilitator's guide
- UNICEF, Reference guide on protecting the rights of victims of trafficking in Europe, 2006
- UNICEF's child trafficking website, Innocenti Research Centre *(Website includes publications on child trafficking.)*

**Other resources (Selected)**

- OHCHR, Recommended principles and guidelines on human rights and human trafficking, 2010
- US Department of State, Trafficking in Persons Report, 2011
- UNODC, Global report on trafficking in persons, 2009
- UNODC, Combating trafficking in persons, A handbook for Parliamentarians, 2009
- ILO, The cost of coercion, 2009
• IOM, Guidelines for the collection of data on trafficking in human beings, including comparable data, 2009
• IOM, Guiding principles on memoranda of understanding between key stakeholders and law enforcement agencies on counter-trafficking cooperation, 2009
• GAATW, Collateral damage: The impact of anti-trafficking measures on human rights around the world, Bangkok, 2007
• WHO, Ethical and safety recommendations for interviewing trafficked women, UK, 2003

**Legal framework**

• ILO Convention 182 on Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999
• The Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, 1993
• International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, 1990
• Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989
• Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979
• Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery, 1956

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