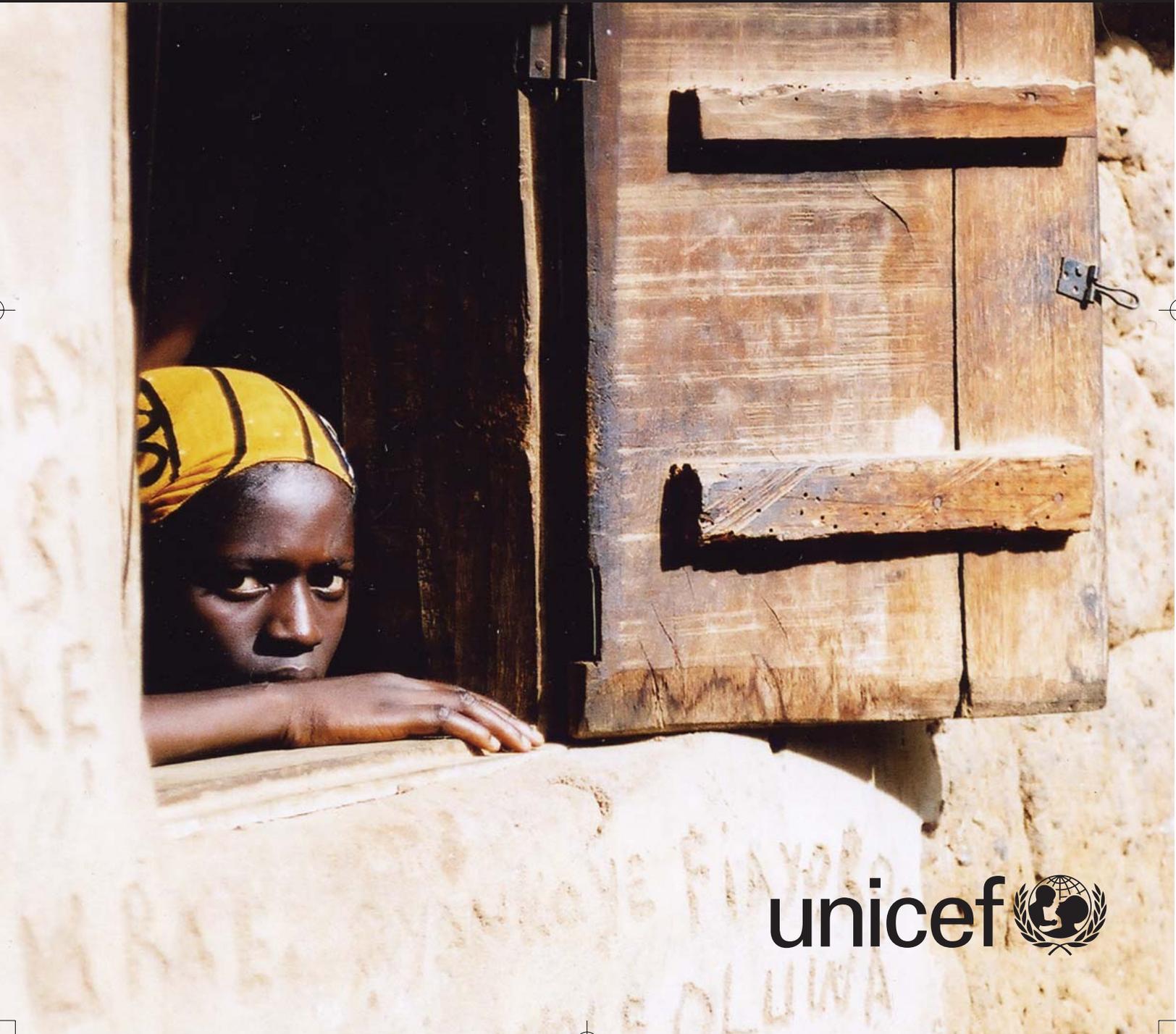


**e~~x~~ End child
ploitation**

Stop the traffic!



unicef 

About End Child Exploitation

End Child Exploitation is a UNICEF UK campaign to raise awareness about the grim realities of child exploitation.

This report, the second in the series, focuses on child trafficking. It begins by dispelling confusion over the term itself by clearly explaining what is meant by 'trafficking', particularly in regard to children. It then goes on to explore some aspects of the murky means by which the trade operates, involving, amongst others, recruiters, corrupt officials, truck drivers and brothel 'madams'. Key factors that make particular children vulnerable to being trafficked are then examined, alongside some sobering statistics that give an idea of the sheer scale of the abuse.

Trafficking is a truly global problem, affecting all countries everywhere. That is clearly borne out in the next section which looks at trafficking here 'in our own backyard'. It includes cases of children brought into the UK from as far afield as Albania, Nigeria and China to work in the sex industry, in domestic labour and in sweatshops. This section also includes details of the level of care that UNICEF considers to be appropriate for victims of child trafficking.

This is followed by an overview of trafficking patterns in other regions of the world, including Europe, West and Central Africa and Southeast Asia. The report concludes with a number of recommended actions in the fight to stop the traffic – at the international level to ensure global consensus, in regions and countries known to be key sources for the traffickers, and in destination countries such as our own, where strong legislative measures are vital to protect all children from what is effectively a modern day form of slavery.

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Printed on 80% recycled paper, July 2003

ISBN: 1 871440 28 9

Cover photograph

A girl, 16, looks on to the house of her neighbour in the village of Illikimou, Benin. Her neighbour 'Paulette', also 16, was a victim of child trafficking and has only recently returned to her family after being severely exploited for domestic labour and work in the markets. Many girls in this village still stay at home and don't receive an education. This increases their vulnerability to trafficking. UNICEF believes that providing an education, especially for girls, is a major step towards building a safe future for these children and tackling the issue of trafficking in the region.

UNICEF UK/2003/Gerrit Beger

Contents

Stop the traffic!	3
What is trafficking?	4
How does it happen?	5
Internal trafficking	5
Cross-border and international trafficking	6
The victims of trafficking and their work	6
Progressive exploitation	7
The consequences of trafficking	8
Why does it happen?	9
The scale of the problem – selected statistics	10
In our own backyard: a detailed look at child trafficking in the United Kingdom	12
Regional patterns	
Europe	18
Africa	22
Southeast Asia	23
South Asia	24
The Americas	26
Stopping the traffic	28
The international legal framework	28
Combating child exploitation: fortifying the protective environment for children	29
Fighting the traffickers – seven key UNICEF interventions	30
UNICEF UK Agenda for Action	33
References	35



Children riding a bicycle in Togo, West Africa. In this poverty-stricken region, even the promise of a bicycle or a radio can lure children – boys in particular – into the clutches of traffickers. They are then sent off to be ruthlessly exploited in places such as rural Nigeria.

Stop the traffic!

At the age of four, 'Anila'* was sold by her father to a neighbour and taken from her home in Albania to work as a beggar on the streets of Greece. Ten-year-old 'Deeba' from Bangladesh found herself working in Calcutta's (Kolkata's) sex trade after her poor, widowed mother handed her over to someone who promised to find the girl a good job. And 16-year-old 'Joseph' moved to Togo for a 'better life', only to suffer a nightmare of beatings and brutality at the hands of his employers.

Three tragic stories, all centred around one of the gravest violations of human rights today – child trafficking. It happens to over a million children all over the world, although, as with any illegal activity, accurate information and data that conveys the true scale of the problem is still proving elusive. Typically, these children are taken from their family home – either forcibly or through deception – and trafficked to distant places, sometimes within their own country, sometimes to foreign lands. There, they are exposed to unscrupulous employers who ruthlessly exploit them, putting them to work as beggars, in markets, in factories, in domestic work and on plantations. They may even join the millions of children already caught up in the commercial sex industry.

The trafficking of people, particularly that of children, has become a global phenomenon, and is of growing concern for the international community as a whole – governments, international agencies, non-governmental organisations and the media. The links between trafficking and the worst forms of exploitation of children are very apparent – in the Southeast Asia region, for example, the number of younger children who are being trafficked is rising alongside a clear increase in the number of child prostitutes.

Children are undoubtedly the most vulnerable of all trafficking victims. Their survival and development are threatened, and their rights to education, to health, and to grow up within a protective environment free from exploitation and abuse are denied.

The issue of trafficking is undoubtedly highly complex and combating it requires intense, collective effort from families, communities, society and the state, all working together to protect children from violence, neglect, exploitation and discrimination. UNICEF UK's campaign to End Child Exploitation aims to contribute to the building and fortifying of such a protective environment around every child by funding practical projects to reduce the risk of trafficking and exploitation, advocating for both national and international laws and policies that support that protective environment, and rehabilitating exploited children to set them on a healthy path to adulthood. Specifically in the UK, our principal objectives are: central funding for safe house accommodation for victims; an automatic 6-month period of reflection for victims to allow for proper assessment of each case; and the criminalising of trafficking for all purposes.

* Names have been changed throughout this report to protect the identities of the persons concerned.

What is trafficking?

'...to deal or trade in something illegal.' (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 10th edition)

Human trafficking is a relatively simple term for an undoubtedly complex reality. This is partly because of the nature of the offence itself – rather than being a clearly definable, discrete act, it is in fact “a combination or series of events that occur at places of origin, transit points and destinations, involving potentially both legal and illegal acts.”¹

The complexity is not helped by the fact that the two most common terms for the illegal movement of people – ‘trafficking’ and ‘smuggling’ – are often used indiscriminately by the media in their coverage of the issue, when they are, in fact, very different. Human smuggling is the process whereby immigrants and asylum seekers pay people to help them enter a country illegally. Many pay large amounts for the services of the people who help them evade border controls but, fundamentally, this is the extent of the relationship; the smuggler is paid to bring the client into a country and, once this is complete and they have arrived at their destination, the smuggled person is free. Trafficking, on the other hand, involves something far worse. It is the relationship between the trafficker and the victim and also the situation on arrival in another country that marks the difference between smuggling and trafficking. Trafficked victims are coerced or deceived by the person arranging their relocation. On arrival in the country of destination, the trafficked victim will be denied their basic human rights and will be forced into exploitation by the trafficker. They will not be paid for their services, nor will they have any control over their lives.

This is evident in the most widely accepted definition of trafficking, which is included within the Palermo Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (see box, right). This definition also establishes children as a special case. Any child transported for exploitative work is considered to be a trafficking victim – whether or not they have been deceived. This is partly because, in these circumstances, it is considered impossible for children to give informed consent. They may, for example, simply be submitting to the authority of their parents who, in desperation, are handing over their sons or daughters to traffickers. In the southern provinces of Viet Nam, for example, parents may accept a payment from traffickers who then transport their children to work in Cambodia. The work is almost certain to be in the sex trade.

Even when the children understand what has happened, they may still appear to submit willingly. Sometimes a brothel-owner will simply tempt a girl with around £160 (US\$250) or more for her virginity – probably more than her parents earn in a whole year. Confused, frightened and far from home, a dutiful daughter may feel she is being disloyal to her parents if she refuses².

The Palermo Protocol – a common definition of trafficking

The most widely accepted definition of trafficking has been incorporated in a supplement to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. In November 2000, the General Assembly adopted a 'Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children' and it is expected that it will enter into force before the end of 2003. The Protocol says:

- a. *'Trafficking in persons' shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring 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 a position 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. Exploitation shall include, at the minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;*
- b. *The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used;*
- c. *The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered 'trafficking in persons' even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article;*
- d. *'Child' shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.*

"The parents send the kids to Greece because they see it as a chance to earn money. And this is a contagious disease. Because you see your neighbour, who has sent his kid to Greece and you ask yourself, 'Why shouldn't I send mine?'"

*Namik, NGO worker
(‘For Sale, the trafficking of Albania’s children’,
UNICEF video)*

How does it happen?

Traffickers are known to recruit their victims using a variety of methods. ‘Coercion’ could take the form of abduction or kidnapping. In Uganda, for example, from June 2002 to June 2003, more than 8,000 Ugandan, Congolese and Sudanese children were abducted by the rebel Lord’s Resistance Army, taken to Southern Sudan and forced to become soldiers, labourers and sex slaves. An estimated 20,000 children have been abducted since the conflict began.

But the vast majority of trafficking victims are trapped in more subversive ways. Typically the traffickers promise their victims, usually girls and young women, that they will have respectable work as waitresses, perhaps, or domestic servants in another place or country. Traffickers may also persuade parents that their children will have a better life elsewhere: a secure job and the chance of a better education. In fact, they are often selling them to brothels. Some of these parents or girls may even know, or suspect, that they will be sex workers, but desperate poverty and lack of both education and awareness can lead to their willingness to accept any offer. What they do not know, however, is the extent of the abuse and degradation they will suffer, and the likelihood that they will be ensnared in debt bondage.

It could be that people returning home from faraway places with tales of a better life and higher pay encourage children and young people to knowingly seek out recruiters and put themselves forward for relocation. So they may be willing and active participants at the outset of the migratory process – it is only when they reach their destination that they find out that they have been deceived.

Trafficking can involve many different people. The recruiters, men and women, may be people who specialise in identifying likely victims in their own village. Or they may be a relative or friend³. Others work in a more formal way, as placement agencies. Recruiters in the city of Bamenda in Cameroon, for example, operate ‘child labour exchanges’ – pavement bulletin boards where they specify the age of the child required and the place of work⁴. But many different people may also be implicated in trafficking – train guards, ships’ captains, and taxi, bus and truck drivers⁵. Then there are the traffickers in the destination countries – for example, the ‘madams’ of brothels and the middlemen involved in the provision of labour.

Internal trafficking

Children who are trafficked internally are usually moved from rural to urban areas, where the demand for both cheap labour and commercial sex is greater. That demand is likely to be even higher if the target urban area is also a tourist destination. For example, of the 20,000-30,000 boys involved in the sex trade in Sri Lanka, it is estimated that about a

third of those are lured from inland rural regions by promises of work. Internal trafficking may also follow traditional patterns of people movement according to the availability of seasonal work. A good example of this is in Brazil, where both adults and children affected by seasonal unemployment are trafficked to work in areas where cheap labour is required in, for example, mining, forest clearance and agricultural activity. They are recruited by local contractors known as *gatos*, and ferried in trucks or buses to worksites that may be thousands of kilometres from their homes⁶.

In many African countries, much of the internal trafficking is as a result of the extended family system. African parents have traditionally sent their children to work in other households – sometimes entrusting them to better-off relatives in the cities. Increasingly, however, many people are abusing this tradition to get cheap labour. In the cities of Porto-Novo and Cotonou in Benin, up to 100,000 children between 6 and 14 – 85 per cent of them girls – live with host families who exploit them for domestic or commercial work.⁷

Cross-border and international trafficking

The phenomenon of cross-border trafficking has become more widespread alongside increased people movement in general as transport and communication methods have improved all over the world. This has been facilitated further in regions with open borders e.g. Europe, where there have been massive people movements from east to west in recent years.

Cross-border, inter-regional and international trafficking patterns are generally based on the same kind of economic differentials as internal trafficking, where children from poor countries are moved to wealthier neighbouring countries or even further afield to meet the demands of the labour market and the commercial sex industry.

Long distance international trafficking is usually highly organised, often involving criminal gangs. It would appear that, to some extent, fashion dictates flow patterns, with certain source and destination countries becoming more or less popular at different times.

The victims of trafficking and their work

The most likely victims of trafficking are the same as those vulnerable to exploitative child labour in general – children from the poorest families that have had little education. In the case of girls who are being sought for the sex trade, another factor may be tensions within the family. In Cambodia, for example, it has been reported that recruiters look for girls who have quarrelled with their parents, or even those who have just broken up with their boyfriends.

While sex work is probably the most likely purpose of trafficking, it is

A journey of horrors – Padou's story

'Padou' is a welder from the Cotonou region in Benin. He wanted to try his luck in Gabon, knowing that the country is richer and work better paid. Since he did not have the money to travel by aeroplane, he decided to go by boat – a journey he would never forget.

The boat he took already had a lot of children on board when it left Benin, but it was definitely overcrowded after two further stops at Nigerian towns. At least 70 children were now on the boat, victims of trafficking on their way to rich families in Gabon.

The traffickers and crew on board were violent and beat the children when they started crying. The drinking water ran out after several days and the children were thirsty. Padou remembers children and passengers drinking salt water to survive. Many children were sick and two children died on the journey and were thrown overboard.

The small boat had two levels, and the children had to squeeze in the lower level of the 'pirogue' to hide from police and other boats. Faeces and urine of passengers on the upper level kept dropping on the children through the gaps between the boards. When children started crying, the crew stopped them from doing so by beating them with lashes.

The boat stopped for two weeks in Cameroon close to the Gabonese border to organise individual handovers of children to families in Gabon. During his time in Gabon, Padou recognised some of the children he had met on the boat working in the streets and markets.

"They're not even property: they're commodities... You've bought them and they have to do what you tell them."
Pimp interviewed in London in 2000, talking about two 13-year-old girls he had 'ordered' from a deprived area of South Africa.⁸

certainly not the only one. In West Africa, many girls are trafficked for domestic service. In Benin, it has been reported that more than 49,000 rural children have been trafficked, mainly to Côte d'Ivoire, of whom 60 per cent were boys, mostly to work on plantations and 40 per cent were girls, mostly to work as domestic servants.⁹

Boys and girls can also be put to work in small shops or factories. Boys from Bangladesh, for example, are often sent to work in manufacturing industries and sweatshops in India and Pakistan. Others, including the disabled, are used for organised begging. About 500 Cambodian children, mostly boys, are thought to work in begging gangs in Thailand but there are also children from Myanmar and Bangladesh. In 1996, Thailand was thought to have close to 200,000 foreign child labourers, 70 per cent of whom were boys, mainly from Myanmar, Lao PDR and Cambodia. In areas of armed conflict, particularly in Africa, children may be used in combat as child soldiers or as soldiers' 'wives' or messengers.

Some girls are taken for forced marriage. In 2002, the UK Government reported that, in the previous 18 months, it had dealt with more than 240 cases of forced marriage and helped with the repatriation of 60 young people. Not all victims were female; in about 15 per cent of cases, the unwilling partner was the husband¹⁰. Forced marriage is a huge problem in many African countries, including Ethiopia, Gambia and Nigeria. One particularly horrific case was that of a 12-year old Nigerian girl whose parents married her to a man to whom they owed money. She ran away several times, but her family returned her. Finally, her husband chopped off her legs to stop her absconding again and she died soon after.¹¹

Progressive exploitation – Natasha's route



There is emerging evidence to suggest that the exploitation of trafficked children is often progressive – once they are caught up in the situation, they are vulnerable to repeated violation. For example, 'Natasha', a Romanian girl, was 12 when her mother died and her father turned to drinking and abusing her. She asked a family friend for assistance and he helped her to go to Serbia and Montenegro, where he sold her. Natasha was prostituted there, then resold and taken to The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, where she was resold again and taken to Albania for prostitution. From Albania she was resold to traffickers who took her to Italy and prostituted her on the streets. In Italy she was bought by a trafficker and brought, via Belgium, to the UK. The trafficker had promised Natasha she wouldn't have to work in prostitution again, but that proved to be a lie. For six months, Natasha was prostituted and repeatedly raped and beaten by her trafficker. She finally escaped and is being supported by Social Services. At the end of 2002, her trafficker was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

The consequences of trafficking

Once in place, trafficked children suffer the abuses common to many forms of exploited labour. First there is the physical impact. As well as being exposed to various hazards through their work, they are almost certainly not fed properly, they have little rest, and they have limited if any access to health care. They are also vulnerable to physical abuse from their employers. Children working within the sex industry are at considerable risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS. For girls working in commercial sex, there is the added risk of early pregnancy and possible damage to their reproductive health.

Then there is the psychological impact. Many trafficked children find themselves isolated in a strange environment. If they cannot speak the language, they are effectively silenced. Often, traffickers will take away identification papers, leaving their victims wary of seeking help from outside for fear of the discovery of their illegal immigrant status. In fact, this fear may well be fed by traffickers. Children trafficked from Albania to Greece to beg on the streets, for example, are told to beware of Social Services or persons who appear to be there to help them – they are seen as the enemy, as the people that are threatening their existence.¹² It is also common for traffickers to threaten violence to family members back in the child's home country if he or she does not comply with their wishes.

Some trafficked children are also subdued with drugs on which they become dependent. They are then effectively trapped within the cycle of exploitation, because continuing with the work is seen as the only way to obtain their supplies.

In relocating children outside of their traditional support network, trafficking can also fundamentally undermine the pivotal role of the family and local community in protecting and nurturing its children. Trafficked children are not only deprived of their rights to health and to freedom from exploitation and abuse – they are also denied their right to an education, which in turn leads to loss of future opportunity, thus serving to perpetuate vulnerability to exploitation.

Trafficked children who eventually return home may also suffer discrimination from the community – particularly girls who have been involved in the sex trade. Even after being rescued, they can feel permanently marked. Interviews with victims in Viet Nam, for example, found that victims return with very low self-esteem and believe that the experience has 'ruined' them for life, psychologically and socially.¹³

"They used to say to me 'make more money'. They used to burn me on the legs."

Albanian boy trafficked to Greece, ('For Sale, the trafficking of Albania's children', UNICEF video)

"What could I do? I was forced. I was... conquered, had no other choice. They tortured me. They beat me a lot. I cried with every single client, I prayed to God, 'Please take me back to Albania to stay with my parents.'"

'Edlira', Albanian child trafficked into commercial sexual exploitation, ('For Sale, the trafficking of Albania's children', UNICEF video)

Why does it happen?

Child trafficking occurs first and foremost because of demand, both for cheap labour in growing economies and in the commercial sex industry. Trafficking generally has been facilitated by the rapid globalisation of markets, the revolution in transport and communications and increasingly open borders.

The reasons why children are in such ready supply to meet this demand are many and varied, and all contribute to the undermining of the protective environment around children. They include:-

- **Poverty** – this is the root cause of vulnerability to exploitation in general. The recruiters' promises of work and therefore income are seen by children and/or their families as a possible escape route from impoverished circumstances. Families may hope to benefit from a proportion of their child's earnings – at the very least, there is the prospect of reducing household running costs with one less mouth to feed. The need may well be particularly pressing in families affected by HIV/AIDS, where contraction of the disease has meant that parents can no longer provide for their families.
- **Dysfunctional families** – children themselves may choose to leave home as a result of domestic abuse and neglect. They may be taking up a recruiter's offer at this stage – or it may be that they fall into the clutches of the traffickers during their journey, where they are more vulnerable to approach, far away from family and friends.
- **Lack of education** – education is a crucial tool in preventing all child exploitation, including trafficking. Attendance at school protects children, in part at least, from being targeted by traffickers. One NGO operating in Albania has found that the key to identifying children who are at risk of being trafficked is to scour the streets at the beginning of each school year, since children who are not in school face the greatest danger¹⁴. Then there are, of course, the learning benefits themselves – as well as laying the basis for the acquisition of employable skills needed for gainful employment, school is also a place where children can be made aware of some of the risks inherent in their interaction with unscrupulous adults. But many children are deprived of an education, for all kinds of reasons – limited access to schools, inability to pay school fees, low regard by the family for the value of education, and even disenchantment and drop-out due to the poor quality of educational facilities. These children are more vulnerable to exploitation, including trafficking, as a result.
- **Cultural attitudes** – traditional cultural attitudes in some places can lead to different types of exploitation. In India, for example, the combination of the caste system and a history of bonded labour means that tribal and low-caste children are more likely to be trafficked than others.
- **Discrimination** – discrimination based on both gender and ethnicity can increase a child's vulnerability to trafficking. In some cultures, girls are seen as expendable. They may be expected to sacrifice education and security to take on responsibilities towards parents and siblings. They may also be sent away to work because they are seen as a relatively poor investment for the family – after all, one day they will marry and leave, bringing little

or no money to the parental home.¹⁵ In fact, marriage itself may well entail crippling expense for the family in the form of a dowry. Research has also shown that many trafficking victims are from minorities and disadvantaged groups whose vulnerability can be directly linked to discrimination and social exclusion. For example, a recent UNICEF report notes that the increasing number of children begging on the streets in the countries of Southeastern Europe are mostly Roma¹⁶.

- Political conflict and economic transition – conflict almost inevitably leads to massive people movement as well as the erosion of social protection mechanisms, leaving children and young people very vulnerable. Again in Southeastern Europe, a lack of the rule of law because of political conflict along with the difficult economic situation has allowed black market economies to flourish. Smuggling of goods, arms and people, corruption of state employees, organised crime groups and acceptance of illegal ways to earn money, as well as unregulated migration, have become the norm.¹⁷
- Inadequate local laws and regulations – trafficking is a complex issue involving many different events and processes and legislation has been slow to keep pace. Most countries do have laws against exploitative child labour, but it is important that they also have legislation specifically against trafficking, otherwise the victims will be punished along with the criminals; victims are unlikely to give evidence if they know they will immediately be deported. Even where there is appropriate legislation, enforcement is usually hampered by general ignorance of the law. Nigeria, for example, has laws against child trafficking but of a sample of 34 policy makers interviewed in one study, two-thirds claimed the legislation did not exist.¹⁸ Weakness and corruption in the police, border patrol services and judiciary also hamper enforcement of anti-trafficking laws in many countries.

The scale of the problem – selected statistics

Since this is a clandestine activity, there is little hard statistical information. Most countries have no specific legislation against trafficking and, as mentioned above, victims are reluctant to report their experiences for fear of being deported as illegal immigrants. Also, since trafficking involves a complex series of events over an extended period of time and in different places – from the home to the border to the workplace, some legal and some illegal – it can be difficult to identify a single case of trafficking.

It is especially difficult to gather statistical information on children: many reports refer, for example, to ‘women aged 16-24’, when 16- and 17- year-olds are actually children. The most commonly cited global statistic comes from the US State Department which recently estimated that between 800,000 and 900,000 persons, mainly women and children, are trafficked annually across national borders.¹⁹ This figure does not include internal trafficking. The UN believes that the number of children trafficked annually, internally and externally, is around 1.2 million.²⁰

Begging for a better life – Michael’s story

On a warm spring evening in Thessaloniki, Greece’s second largest city, tourists walk along the waterfront promenade and wander into the shops that circle one of the city’s famous squares. In front of a corner café, a young boy with black hair and an infectious smile plays his guitar as people toss him a few coins for his efforts. The boy is ‘Michael’. He is a street child from neighbouring Albania. He is 11 years old and one of the approximately 3,000 Albanian children who have been trafficked to Greece and Italy to beg for money.

“I must bring 5,000 drachmas (£10) to my owner each day”, says Michael. “I must work to make money for my mother”. If he does not make his daily quota, he says, he will be beaten by the man who ‘owns’ him.

Michael is Roma, the ethnic minority often referred to as ‘gypsy’, and his family is poor. He attended school for only two years and is illiterate. His mother gave permission to a neighbour to take Michael to Greece so that the boy could earn money for the family. The trafficker promised to send back around £40 each month. Michael is trapped between two violent worlds. He is abused on the streets of Greece and is not safe at home.

“If I go home, my mother will beat me”, he explains. Asked about marks on his neck, he says, “A dog scratched me”. His arm, however, is marked by cigarette burns.

(UNICEF, *Profiting from Abuse*, 2001, p18)



UNICEF UK/
02/P Durbin

Ever-moving populations...

According to the UN, almost 13 million people, 0.2 per cent of the world's population, are on the move at any given time.

Profitability...

UN estimates indicate that trafficking in persons generates \$7 to \$10 billion annually for traffickers.

Human trafficking has become the third biggest criminal business worldwide, after drug trafficking and trafficking of weapons.²¹

Worldwide...

One million children enter the sex trade each year.²²

In Europe...

An estimated 500,000 women from all over the world are trafficked each year into Western Europe alone. A large proportion of these come from former Soviet Union countries.²³

Approximately 3,000 Albanian children have been trafficked to Greece and Italy to beg for money.²⁴

Up to 80 per cent of all trafficked persons from Albania are teenage girls under 18.²⁵

The price of one woman on the market in Timisoara, Romania, is approximately £30-£120. Her price in the destination country will be ten times higher.²⁶

In West Africa...

Approximately 200,000 children are trafficked each year in the West African region.

Nearly 90 per cent of trafficked domestic workers in West and Central Africa are girls.

The working hours of these children, regardless of age and sex, range from 10 to 20 hours per day, up to seven days a week, without any time for rest, recreation or education.

In Southeast Asia....

Around one third of the global trafficking of women and children takes place within and from Southeast Asia – 230,000 women and children.²⁷

Around 30 per cent of commercial sex workers in Southeast Asia are under 18 years of age. Some are as young as 10.²⁸

Around 60 per cent of child prostitutes in Cambodia are forced or tricked into the trade.²⁹

There are an estimated 250,000 women and child victims of trafficking in China.³⁰

The last three years have seen a 20 per cent increase in the number of child prostitutes in Thailand.³¹

More than 15 per cent of the 3,000 females trafficked from south Viet Nam are reported to be below 15 years of age.³²

10,000 girls from Myanmar are recruited into Thai brothels each year.³³

In our own backyard: a detailed look at child trafficking in the United Kingdom Carron Somerset

The issue of child trafficking into and through the UK first came to the attention of a small number of authorities and services in the southwest of England, in and around Gatwick airport, in the mid-1990s. The first recognised case was in 1995 when a Nigerian girl in the care of West Sussex Social Services went missing. In 1996 another Nigerian girl went missing and a police investigation was launched in response to the concerns of Social Services regarding their mysterious disappearances. 'Operation Newbridge' centred around the first recognised cases of trafficking in the UK and continued for a number of years, during which time further children went missing.

Based on the children's testimonies, it is known that they were destined for Italy and were to be used in prostitution. Operation Newbridge particularly focused on children of West African origin who fitted a given 'profile'. This profile was drawn up to enable Immigration officers to identify children who were vulnerable to being trafficked, in order that the children could be taken into care. However, the children had been told to memorise telephone numbers or had numbers sewn into their clothes so that they could contact their trafficker once in care. They would then be collected, or sometimes abducted, by the trafficker for the next stage of their route. To combat the traffickers and to try and win the trust of the children in the first few days, West Sussex Social Services set up a safe house, with high levels of monitoring and security to try to ensure the safety of the children³⁴. Many of these children were girls aged between 14 and 18, but girls as young as 12 also went missing.

By the end of the 1990s another trafficking route had started to be identified, which has subsequently led to growing concern. Children from the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have increasingly been brought to the UK for prostitution. Unlike the trafficking of the West African children, Eastern European children tend not to come to the attention of the authorities until after they have been exploited. Children are brought into the UK clandestinely, such as in the backs of lorries, on a student visa, or with a man purporting to be a boyfriend. Typically, the man has promised the girl a better life or even marriage, but on arrival in the UK, he forces her into prostitution. The ages of the children vary, but in known cases they are 15 to 17 years old and can often pass as over 18. This enables them to work in more mainstream sex establishments, such as saunas, without attracting too much attention.

Information regarding the trafficking of these children is still largely based on the fact that large numbers of adult Eastern European women are working as prostitutes in the UK, and the assumption that child trafficking often mirrors adult trafficking. In parts of London, police estimate that at least 75 per cent of the women in prostitution are Eastern European.³⁵



Children are known to be trafficked into the UK from the African countries shown above, although this is almost certainly not the complete picture.

Victoria Climbié in the arms of her great aunt, Marie Therese Kouao. This is the woman who was later jailed for Victoria's murder following a horrific catalogue of neglect, malnutrition and physical abuse.

The Press Association



Although West African and Eastern European girls are known to be trafficked for prostitution, it is also known that West African children are trafficked for domestic service, and Chinese and Vietnamese children are thought to be trafficked for prostitution and cheap labour.³⁶ There are also concerns regarding Southeast Asian and Jamaican children being trafficked for exploitation.

Who are these children and why are they trafficked?

Over the last five years, the face of trafficking in the UK has changed. The biggest noticeable difference is the wide range of African nationalities being trafficked. As well as Nigeria and other West African countries such as Sierra Leone, children are now trafficked from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Angola, Burundi, Malawi, South Africa, Somalia, Kenya and Uganda. In the majority of these countries, recent or ongoing conflicts have resulted in children becoming vulnerable to traffickers. Many trafficked children have come "from poor families in developing countries where poverty is widespread, or from former communist countries where poverty is growing".³⁷ Furthermore, as already noted, certain cultural practices can result in female children being less valued than male children. This can make a girl more vulnerable to being sold by her parents, or being 'given' to a stranger offering to take her overseas.

However, families do not sell their children with a full understanding of their fate. As already mentioned, in much of West Africa it is culturally acceptable for children to live with extended family or friends away from the family home, to either be educated or to work³⁸. This cultural practice is now being used to mask trafficking, as parents are duped into believing that their child will be given an education or work and will be able to better themselves, whilst sending money home to support the family. This example is clearly illustrated by the case of Victoria Climbié, who was allowed to travel with her great aunt, first to France and then to the UK. Her parents believed that she would get an education. Sadly, she was trafficked for benefit fraud and died from severe abuse in 2001. Victoria was privately fostered, as are between 8,000 and 10,000 other children in the UK, many of whom are from West Africa.³⁹ There are concerns that many of these children could be being abused or exploited, without anyone even knowing that they are in the country.⁴⁰ One investigation identified a London-based child trading network involving 13 adults and a woman who had acquired 12 children to enable her to claim their benefits.⁴¹

From the available evidence it appears that more girls than boys are being trafficked to the UK. This may be due to the fact that the ways children are exploited appear to vary according to gender, and because children trafficked for prostitution are more likely to be girls and more likely to be identified. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that boys are being trafficked for other forms of exploitation. According to reports of children missing from certain Social Services, more boys aged between 16 and 17 go missing than girls, but more girls under 16 go missing than boys.⁴² It is unclear whether these boys are being exploited. Interestingly, many of them reappear later, either claiming asylum elsewhere or returning to their original accommodation.⁴³

How are children brought into the UK?

Children enter the UK in two key ways, as accompanied minors or unaccompanied minors, although there are variations on whether they enter with the knowledge of the authorities or clandestinely. Many travel on false documents and are often made to appear older than they really are, to prevent them being stopped by Immigration Control. However, in some cases, where the trafficker wants Immigration Control to refer the child to Social Services, the child's documented age may be lowered to ensure the referral.

Very little is known about trafficked accompanied minors, as many come in with adults either purporting to be their parents, or stating they have the permission of the parents to bring in the child. In the majority of these cases, the child and adults are allowed to enter the UK. In a number of these cases, Immigration officers make extra checks regarding their relationship. If it is found that the child is not related to the adults, or the adults are not considered suitable to look after the child, the child is either taken into Social Services or returned to their parents in their home country.⁴⁴ In one case, when a man from Central Africa was questioned about the 12-year old girl accompanying him, also from Central Africa, he said that, as a favour for a friend, he was bringing the girl into the UK for a holiday. On further investigation, it was discovered that the man had recently been found guilty of child abuse in the UK, and had travelled to bring the girl to the UK before sentence was passed.⁴⁵

Children who are accompanied into the UK are brought here for many reasons, the majority of which are for the child's benefit, such as education, re-unification with family, or fleeing a war-torn country. However, in a small number of cases, they are brought here to be exploited. In a number of cases in Kenya, South Africa and Nigeria, passengers have not been allowed to board their flight because of passport or identification paper irregularities with the children that are accompanying them. There have been cases where the adult then continues to fly, leaving the child or children abandoned at the airport. In one case, a Kenyan woman was prevented from boarding an aeroplane along with her two-year-old 'daughter' and her 'domestic servant' because of concerns about the children's identities. Unfortunately, the group were given permission to take the next flight to the UK. The original suspicions about the woman were eventually confirmed when she returned to Africa soon afterwards without the children.⁴⁶

Most information available on child trafficking in the UK relates to children who enter as unaccompanied minors. More is known about these children because they come to the attention of the authorities if and when they claim asylum. What happens next seems to depend on the nationality of the children and their traffickers. For example, Chinese and Vietnamese children enter the UK and their asylum claim is passed on to the Refugee Council's Panel of Advisers. However, this panel rarely gets to see the child.⁴⁷ Most Chinese children do not seek help from authorities such as Social Services, and disappear into Chinese communities in the UK. "It is known that some of these children are working in sweatshops or restaurants, paying off large debts to traffickers".⁴⁸ In one case,

From Congo to the UK – Pamela's story

'Pamela', a Congolese girl, was looked after by her aunt when her mother died. She never knew her father. When Pamela was 15 years old, her aunt could no longer support her and sent her to work for a family in Gabon. The family in Gabon said that if she worked hard in the house, they would send her for an education in Europe. When she was 16, they sent her to France on false documents. Once in France, she lived with a Congolese family and the man began to prostitute her. Men would come to the house to have sex with Pamela. The man and some of her abusers took pictures of her. After five months, she was given new documents and told to go to the UK and then to the United States. Pamela arrived in the UK and stayed with friends of one of her abusers. She was taken to the airport for her onward flight to the US, but her false documents were recognised as such by Immigration Control and she was referred to Social Services. Pamela is now 17, and although still traumatised, she is attending school for the first time, and is proving to be an excellent student.

(Based on an interview with 'Pamela', April 2003)

Domestic slavery at 13 – Lucy's story

'Lucy', a Nigerian girl, was 13 years old when she was brought to the UK by a Nigerian woman, who passed her on to a Nigerian family. She was made to work hard for the family day and night, looking after the children and taking them to school. She was never allowed out for any free time and was beaten and physically abused by her boss. A member of the public contacted a voluntary organisation to report the abuse she thought Lucy was suffering. Only after many meetings with a worker from this organisation did Lucy report her abuse and decide to leave. She is now being supported and is going to school.

UNICEF and the new Sexual Offences Bill

UNICEF UK has been lobbying on the new Sexual Offences Bill to increase protection for children, focusing specifically on two groups: children at risk of abuse by UK sex tourists; and children being trafficked into, within, or through, the UK. Progress so far has been positive.

Achievements:

- Closed the loophole so that sex offenders on the register must notify the police when leaving the UK for 3 days or more – previously, this was 8 days.
- 'For gain' has been removed from the relevant clause in the Bill. This means that prosecutions against traffickers can be made whether or not the police have been able to prove that the offence was committed 'for, or in the expectation of gain'.
- Judges now have the powers to confiscate the passports of convicted sex offenders to prevent travel overseas.
- The Government has introduced Foreign Travel Orders to restrict freedom of movement of convicted sex offenders in order to protect children abroad.

Changes we are still calling for:

- Make it an aggravating factor where the victim of trafficking is a child under 18 years with stiffer penalties incurred. As the trafficking clause currently stands, offences involving children could attract the lower sentence given in a magistrate's court of 6 months maximum and/or a fine.
- Improve care for victims of trafficking with the provision of safe houses, counselling and a period of reflection that are not dependent on participation in a prosecution.
- Care for victims to be centrally funded.
- Provide training for Immigration officials in identifying trafficking victims when they arrive in the UK.
- Make it illegal to traffic a child for any purpose, not just sexual exploitation.

an adviser had seen only 2 of the 50 Chinese children referred to her.⁴⁹

Many African children are referred to Social Services after applying for asylum either at the port of entry or at refugee projects in the UK. According to these Social Services, it appears that they are either taken away to be prostituted overseas or are prostituted in the UK.

Children of Eastern European origin usually enter on their own, and are met by the trafficker or a third party. Once met, they are forced into prostitution and often only come to the attention of the authorities when they either escape or are found by police in a raid. For many children of various nationalities, the first that the authorities know of their exploitation is after the abuse has occurred and the child has been discarded or has escaped.⁵⁰ For those children that do come to the authorities' attention, it is therefore crucial that they receive an appropriate level of care to protect them from the risk of further trafficking and exploitation.

What happens when they get here?

Children who arrive in the UK alone are protected under the Children Act 1989 and are referred to Social Services. The Government believes that child victims of trafficking can receive appropriate care under the Children Act 1989. This is not the case. Under the current scheme, trafficked children do not receive the level of care and supervision that is appropriate to their vulnerable position. As a result, many of them flee to meet their trafficker. Their reasons for doing so are complex.

Even before the children travel, they are often subjected to various forms of abuse and exploitation to ensure control. In the case of Eastern European children, rape and beatings are commonly used to make them more submissive. Albanian traffickers, who appear to control much of the London trafficking scene with regards to the prostitution of Eastern European females, are known to be particularly violent and abusive⁵¹, and use the threat of violence against girls' families at home. In the case of West African children, voodoo is used to terrify the girls into thinking that if they tell anyone about the traffickers, they and their families will die. They are told that the only way to 'lift the curse' is to pay back the money they owe the traffickers, usually about £25,000.⁵² In most cases the children are told that they owe large amounts of money for their air fares, accommodation, food etc., and they must work to pay this back. In reality, they are never able to earn enough to pay back the ever-increasing amount, due to daily interest. Additionally, documents are taken from them, which adds to the fear that if they escape, they may be picked up by the authorities and sent home, where the traffickers will find them again.

The traffickers use these methods to control the children and this control does not stop when the child is in care. When a child is placed in ordinary Social Services accommodation, they find it easy to flee and return to their trafficker as instructed, or they are abducted. Trafficked children are driven by fear and will

run away to meet their trafficker if they see the chance. This is a major child protection issue.

Normal Social Services care is not appropriate for trafficked children as they do not just require care: fundamentally, they need protection and rehabilitation. To ensure their safety, these children should be placed in safe house accommodation and receive specialist care, such as that given by the West Sussex Safe House. Without this, there is no chance that trafficking can be tackled effectively. Children will escape to meet their traffickers and will subsequently be exploited. A trafficked child's time in care with Social Services is crucial to breaking the trafficking chain and to prevent the child from suffering further exploitation. It is vital that safe house accommodation is available to make this possible.

Forms of exploitation

Once in the UK, trafficking victims are exploited in many ways. As stated above, the most documented form of exploitation is prostitution. Children (often aged between 15 and 18 years) will be prostituted in off-street premises, such as flats, saunas and massage parlours. Although most evidence relates to girls, one organisation in Scotland has worked with two Nigerian boys who were involved in prostitution. Additionally, evidence also points to children being either 'ordered', or brought to the UK and then offered for sexual abuse. It has been reported that British holidaymakers are abusing children in Malawi and that "it's a big problem with tourists from Germany and the UK who come for holidays. They like to mix with the local women and children. The young people make lovers for the tourists, and sometimes travel with them".⁵³ The report goes on to say that, unlike many neighbouring countries, Malawians do not need visas to enter the UK and that the "tourist-trafficker may have little difficulty in securing the required parental signature on the child's passport application".⁵⁴

Other children are forced into virtual slavery as domestic servants, working many hours a day, looking after the family's children and doing housework – often not being allowed to go to school, even though they themselves are usually young children.⁵⁵ Children are also used as drug mules or decoys for adult drug traffickers. In one case, a 13-year-old girl was used to traffic £1 million worth of heroine into the UK from Pakistan. Presumably, traffickers calculated that, because of her age, she would be less likely to be picked up by Customs officers⁵⁶. In another case, a 12-year-old boy was found bringing in heroine worth £10,000 from the US⁵⁷. It has been reported that trafficking of drugs by drug swallowing, often by teenage girls, has become one of the most used methods of smuggling cocaine into Britain.⁵⁸ On a smaller scale, it is suspected that children of other nationalities are being used to bring in cigarettes and alcohol in order to avoid Customs officers.⁵⁹

It is also apparent that children are being used for begging and pickpocketing in the UK. For example, cases of Eastern European children aged between six and seven years being used for begging in Northern Ireland have been

West Sussex Safe House – a model of good practice

West Sussex Social Services Department runs the only safe house in the UK for child victims of trafficking. It was established in response to a situation where young girls were disappearing from Social Services accommodation. Since then, the safe house has been a beacon of good practice and has developed a system of care that protects the child from their trafficker and helps them to recover from their experiences. Under this arrangement, children are housed in specialist accommodation where they receive 24-hour supervision, monitored telephone access so they cannot contact their trafficker, counselling and education.

Hidden abuse – Yusuf's story

'Yusuf', a boy from the Horn of Africa, was abandoned by his parents when he was 7 years old. He was adopted by another family, but he could not work hard enough to please his new 'mother' and he was thrown out of the house after she accused him of stealing her belongings. He became a street child when he was 10 years old and lived on the streets. When he was 14, he was approached by a man who said he would take Yusuf to the capital city, where he would look after him and send him to school. Yusuf agreed, and went and stayed with the man in the city. Soon the man said he had found a family for Yusuf in the UK and they travelled there together. They were met at the airport by a white, middle-aged man, who took Yusuf home with him. Gradually the man started to abuse Yusuf. After nearly two months of sexual abuse, Yusuf ran away, and although he spoke no English, he found someone to help him. Yusuf is now living with foster parents and has been given exceptional leave to remain in the UK.

Threats against her family – Kanya’s story

‘Kanya’, a Southeast Asian girl, was 16 or 17 years old when her father allowed her to be taken by a stranger, for a fee, to get a job as a domestic servant. She was sent to the UK and instructed to telephone someone, a Southeast Asian woman who turned out to be a trafficker. Soon Kanya was forced into prostitution, despite her protests, and she and her family back home were threatened with violence if she didn’t comply. Kanya was resold for £5,000 to another Southeast Asian trafficker and made to work as a domestic servant. Kanya was eventually found in a police raid, and she asked to go home to her family. She was sent back and is now being supported by a non-governmental organisation and local Social Services. At the end of 2002, her trafficker was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

“The children do not trust us. They think we are weak and can’t protect them. They can’t believe we are trying to help them. They are used to corruption in their countries. They think that we and the police must be the same here.”
Lynne Chitty, West Sussex Social Services, in an interview with the Nottingham Post

“The gangs are highly organised networks. They are global operations. And the response to them has got to be a global one as well.”
Detective Inspector Winton, in an interview with the Nottingham Post

reported.⁶⁰ There is also anecdotal evidence of this occurring in larger cities, such as London. Additionally, there are concerns regarding sweatshop and restaurant work, drug dealing, and credit card fraud. In one case, a 16-year-old Chinese boy went missing from Social Services having said that he had been brought to the UK by the ‘Snakeheads’, a Chinese gang, and that he had to pay back the £1,000 he owed them, plus daily interest.⁶¹ He turned up sometime later terrified, as the Snakeheads had threatened his family in China, and he could not find a job to pay back the money. He soon left Social Services again in the hope of finding work. Following the case of ‘Adam’, the Nigerian boy who’s torso was found in the River Thames, there are also concerns regarding the trafficking of children for ritual killing.⁶²

Where in the UK are these children being exploited?

Children are being trafficked to and exploited in counties and cities all over the UK, from West Sussex to Newcastle, and Kent to Glasgow. Although it is often only single cases that come to light in each location, it is unlikely that this shows the full picture since, due to the nature of trafficking, it is kept hidden and underground. In some cities, such as Nottingham and Newcastle, cases have only started coming to light since late 2002, indicating that the traffickers are widening their operations and trying new places where authorities are not aware of the issue.

Statistics – what do we really know?

The nature of the crime means that it is rarely reported and children rarely admit to being trafficked. Furthermore, as there has been no trafficking legislation until very recently, no figures have been kept by police on trafficking crimes. Cases have been recorded as other offences, such as facilitation of entry, or living off immoral earnings. However, based on reports from a small number of Social Services, non-governmental organisations, police and Immigration Control, it is known that at least 250 children have been trafficked into the UK in the last five years. These figures are based on known cases. What they have been trafficked for is not always certain, but in each of these cases, the organisation concerned is confident that the child has indeed been trafficked.

The real figure, though, is likely to be far higher. Many authorities and bodies have only just started recording cases of trafficking. There are no records of the large number of Chinese and Vietnamese children who arrive in the UK without making contact with the authorities. The statistics also do not include cases that have been reported in newspapers, but could not be verified by an independent source. Finally, they exclude many of the children missing from Social Services around the country, children that have entered the UK with adults. Therefore, the figure 250 is only the tip of the iceberg. There may well be literally hundreds, if not thousands, of children in the UK who have been brought here for exploitation. We won’t know the true extent of the problem until the necessary monitoring mechanisms are in place.

Regional patterns

Europe *Frederica Donati*

Trafficking in human beings is one of the most pressing and complex human rights issues in Europe today, and one that is being paid increasing attention by the media, governments, and non-government organisations across the region. Although children and women are trafficked to European countries from all regions of the world, the focus here is on trafficking within Europe itself.

Trafficking and migration

As we have already seen, there are a wide variety of factors which contribute to the phenomenon of trafficking. Within the context of restrictive migration regimes, as is the case in some European countries, these factors may also include the lack of financial resources to use safe, even if illegal, channels for migration – to buy passports and visas and to pay for transportation – the lack of contacts and support abroad, unrealistic expectations and false information about work opportunities. These factors may be combined with a low level of education and lack of skills and willingness to depend on intermediaries who promise to arrange safe passage and a job in exchange for part of the future wages.⁶³

Forms of exploitation

Although there is still very little actual documentation, some basic facts about child trafficking in Europe have emerged. As with the UK specifically, children may be trafficked for a variety of purposes, including commercial sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, domestic work and illegal adoption. In Southeast Europe, for example, the trafficking of children falls into two main categories – the first is the trafficking of teenage girls for commercial sexual exploitation; and the second is the trafficking of young boys and girls under the age of 13 for begging. There has been no evidence so far of a special market for the sexual services of young children within the region or for virgins, as is the case in other parts of the world due to the fear of HIV/AIDS.⁶⁴

It is difficult to assess what proportion of all trafficked people within Europe are children. Again in Southeast Europe, available evidence suggests that persons under 18 may comprise between 10 per cent and 30 per cent of all sex workers, which gives some indication of numbers. In Albania in particular, however, the proportion of children among trafficked people appears to be particularly high. Trafficking of Albanian children, both girls and boys, is reported to be mainly for forced labour including begging, drug dealing and small economic activities such as car washing in, for example, Greece and Italy. There is some information from Moldova that trafficking of children for illegal adoption is widespread, where children coming from big families from the countryside and abandoned children are offered for adoption. Furthermore, there is

“Striptease was most dreadful. I was awfully ashamed to dance in front of those big groups of men who were looking like wolves. I always prayed for a short song for my turn, at least no longer than four minutes.”
‘Dorina’, 16-year-old Moldovan girl trafficked into bar work and sexual exploitation in Bosnia

some anecdotal, but not confirmed, information about trafficking in children for organs.⁶⁵

To date, child trafficking in Europe has been considered very much in the context of girls. This remains valid on the basis of the evidence at present. However, the growth in trafficking of boys for labour exploitation in particular has been reported to be on the increase.

Statistics

No substantial study on the trafficking of children in Europe based on empirical research has yet emerged. The lack of specific studies on child trafficking may be explained in part by the fact that girl children trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation are often included in studies of trafficking in women, as previously noted⁶⁶.

At the same time, the potential scale of the problem was indicated by a study conducted for the European Commission and published in May 2001. This study, conducted with the co-operation of four member states, established that during the period 1999-2000, a total of 33,402 unaccompanied minors came to notice, consisting of a mixture of child asylum seekers, minors found to be present as irregular entrants within a state territory, and a number who were within the protection system of one of the member states. This figure needs to be analysed with some caution, because not all of these children would have been trafficked in the first instance and not all of them would have ended up as exploited trafficked victims in any event.⁶⁷

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) states that, in 1997, an estimated 175,000 women and girls were trafficked out of Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Other figures show that 500,000 women from all over the world are trafficked each year into Western Europe, with a large proportion coming from the former Soviet Union countries. However, it is hard to verify these figures. It is particularly difficult to find reliable information regarding children, since the data that does exist is rarely gender- or age- desegregated.

One worrying dimension of this problem is the large number of children that disappear altogether from any form of official contact or scrutiny after they have arrived in the European Union. It is simply not possible to estimate the numbers involved because there are no reliable statistics. This in itself serves to highlight the deficit in the monitoring mechanisms that are currently in place within many European countries. Clearly, a very large part of this number may be attributed to children being absorbed within their own ethnic groups that often exist in major cities and the existence of which is a contributory ‘pull’ factor in both child trafficking and economic migration. They are not necessarily trafficking victims. However, it is evident that in many cases, the official agencies do not

know what happens to the children that disappear from official view or worse, official agencies are not even aware in the first place that these children have actually disappeared and may therefore be at great risk.⁶⁸

Trafficking routes within Europe

Evidence suggests that traffickers increasingly determine the choice of migrants' destination countries and the routes taken. In addition, sources, destinations and routes for trafficking are constantly evolving in the face of global changes in supply, demand and the regulatory environment. Almost all countries in Western Europe are final destinations or transit countries and a similar fate is now befalling those in Central and Eastern Europe.⁶⁹

Knowledge of trafficking routes is sparse and largely anecdotal, although general overviews do exist which summarise routes and identify the main destinations in Western Europe. Although trafficking has been increasing in Central and Eastern Europe since the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Balkans and neighbouring countries appear to have only become a region of source, transit and destination for trafficked persons in the mid-1990s in the wake of the humanitarian crises and wars in the former Yugoslavia. Each country/territory in the Balkan region assumes a combination of roles as source, transit and destination for trafficked women and children. Distinguishing transit from destination countries may be problematic as the exploitation which occurs during the trafficking process is a continuum. As a result, women and children may be exploited while in transit as well as at their destination.⁷⁰

Albania, Bulgaria, the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Ukraine seem to be major source countries for trafficked children and women. Girls from Eastern Europe are first brought to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo or Albania where they are sold to local gangs to be trafficked to Western Europe for commercial sexual exploitation. Other countries in economic transition, such as Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia, have also become targets of gangs that channel girls through the Russian Federation to Western Europe. Albanian women and girls seem to be trafficked primarily to Italy, but also to Belgium, where they constitute the second largest group of trafficked persons after Nigerians, to Greece and, to a lesser extent, the Netherlands and the UK. From Bulgaria, it seems that women and girls are trafficked to Greece, Italy and Austria. Moldovan women and girls are primarily trafficked to Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, but within Western Europe are trafficked to Italy, Belgium and Greece. Romanian women and girls seem to make up the largest group of trafficked persons in Austria and Greece and are trafficked to Italy as well.⁷¹

The Adriatic Sea crossing from Albania to Italy appears to be the primary means of transit from the Balkans to Western Europe whereas the main

Prostituted by her husband – Sylvia's story

"My sister-in-law convinced me to marry Robert. She said he was handsome and had money. After we were married, Robert said we should go to Italy because there were more opportunities there. We went at night in a speedboat. After one week in Italy, Robert asked me to work on the streets. I said no. Then he tortured me. He left me in a bath with cold water. Then he tied me naked to a bed with belts and beat me. He did not give me any food. I was a slave for him. I do not consider him my husband. I was forced to work in the streets. I did not want to do it. He would not permit me to sleep even. Sometimes I worked for 24 hours straight. He gained a lot from me and I gained nothing".
(UNICEF, *Profiting from Abuse*, 2001 p19)

Routes through Europe – although data is both sparse and incomplete, some general trafficking patterns have emerged from what we do know.

land route to Italy goes through Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia. There are also reports that Albania is often bypassed for the more direct Montenegro-Italy route because of the worsening economic situation in Montenegro. Reasons for trafficking along these routes include the existence of established systems for smuggling, as well as the accessibility of Italy.

In terms of international trafficking into the European Union, evidence has shown that the majority of trafficked children enter by overt means and have contacts with official agencies. Depending on the region of the world from which children have originated, they may or may not have some form of identity or travel documents and may or may not be accompanied. Children from West Africa, for example, are known to destroy or be deprived of both identity and travel documents during their journey. Other children seem to enter the territory of a European country as accompanied entrants on tourist and/or student visas or as accompanied asylum seekers. There are some children, though, who are transported secretly along the same routes, through the same clandestine networks, as those employed to both traffic and smuggle adults.⁷²

Some of the known trafficking routes in Europe



Africa

There is a long history of child trafficking between neighbouring African countries. In West Africa, children from Benin, Togo and Nigeria are sent by ship to Gabon to work as domestic servants. Children from Mali and Burkina Faso are trafficked to Côte d'Ivoire to work, mainly as domestic servants and on plantations. The routes are complex and a number of countries, such as Nigeria, are both source and destination countries. Some of the main trafficking routes in West and Central Africa are indicated on the map below. From Central, Western, and Eastern Africa, there is also trafficking to the Middle East and the Gulf States. There is also considerable internal trafficking, particularly for domestic service.

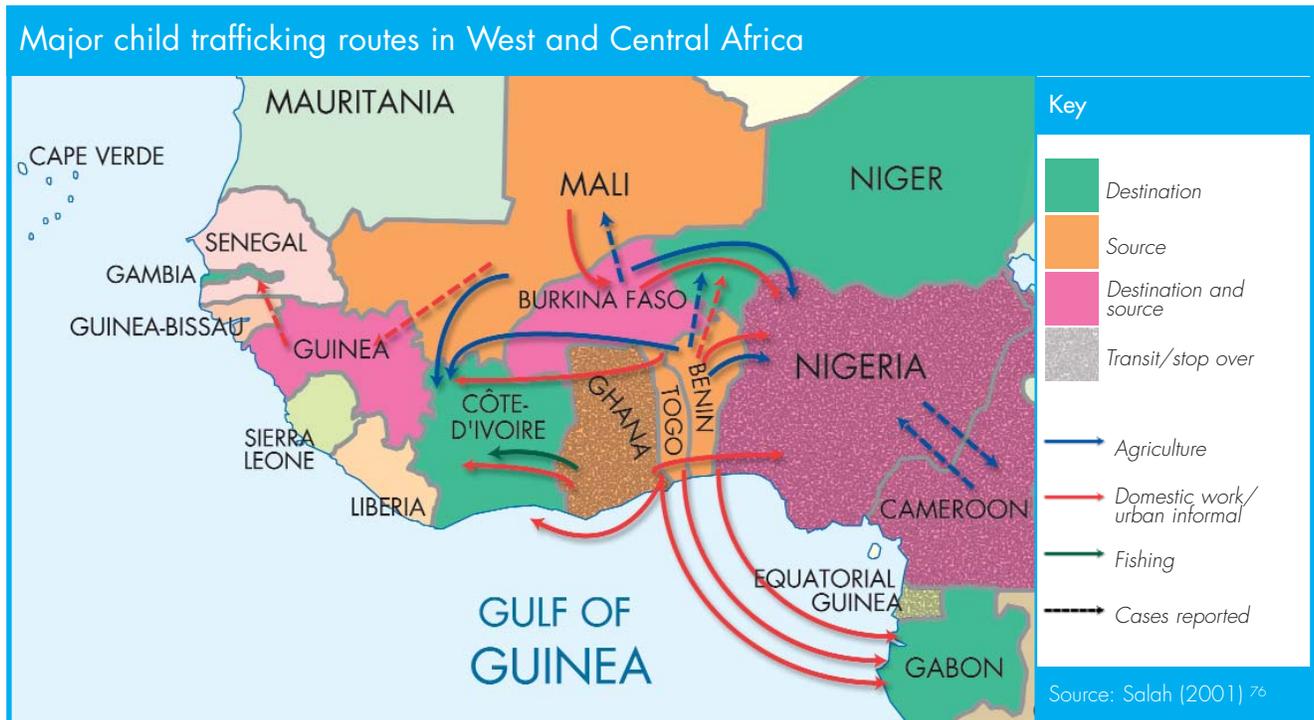
Studies in this region point to a clear link between the vulnerability of children to trafficking and the spread of HIV/AIDS. According to latest estimates, the total number of children under the age of 15 whose mother, father or both parents have died of AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa is 11 million.⁷³ According to interviews with NGO workers in a recent report on child trafficking in Togo, children with families affected by the pandemic may find themselves abandoned to fend for themselves following the death of one or both parents; they may be forced to earn money to care for a sick or dying parent; or they may be pressured to leave their village as a result of the stigma associated with having AIDS in the family.⁷⁴ These AIDS orphans are one of four groups most vulnerable to child trafficking in Togo; the others being rural children, street children and young girls.⁷⁵

Beaten with a belt – Joseph’s story

“I was so happy to see my little brother again when I returned home to Benin,” said ‘Joseph’, 16, after having been exploited for domestic labour in another country for over three years. A stranger had arranged with his parents to send Joseph to Lomé in Togo for a better life, but what he found there was hell. His back, which is shown in the picture on the right, tells part of his story: he was regularly beaten with a belt by the father of the family for “doing everything wrong”.

Joseph worked every day from 5am to 11pm in the house and in the markets. Mostly, he had to sweep the house, fetch water, prepare food and sell goods in the markets. Joseph was given only minimal food, mainly leftovers, and had to eat on the floor with his hands. He was not allowed soap to wash himself and hated the clothes he had to wear. The three children of the family in Lomé treated him badly and made fun of him because he did not go to school and did not have any friends.

Whenever Joseph could find a few coins, he saved them so that he would eventually be able to make a telephone call to his family – it took him three years to save enough. Once he had managed to call for help, his uncle picked him up straight away and took him home. He is now reunited with his family and back at school. Geography and biology are his favourite subjects.





Evidence of beatings – the scars on Joseph’s back bear witness to his ordeal as a domestic servant in Togo (see case study, left).

UNICEF UK/2003/Gerrit Beger

Southeast Asia

Trafficking has been reported throughout Southeast Asia. One estimate based on work by the United States State Department suggests that around one-third of cross-border trafficking of women and children takes place within and from Southeast Asia, involving around 230,000 women and children⁷⁷. Of these, around 60 per cent are thought to go to major cities in the region and around 40 per cent to the rest of the world.

Internal trafficking

In some countries, the majority of child trafficking is internal. In Cambodia, Myanmar and Viet Nam, children are trafficked from rural areas mainly for sex work in the cities, but also for forced labour.

In Indonesia, some children are trafficked for sex work but most go to work in industries such as garment manufacture, electronics, glass and food production.

In China, many women and girls are trafficked internally for forced marriage to men in towns and villages where partners are in short supply and dowries are expensive. One report estimates that, in some Chinese counties and villages, 30-90 per cent of marriages are the result of trafficking⁷⁸. Chinese boys, on the other hand, particularly those under 7, are usually trafficked domestically for illegal adoption.

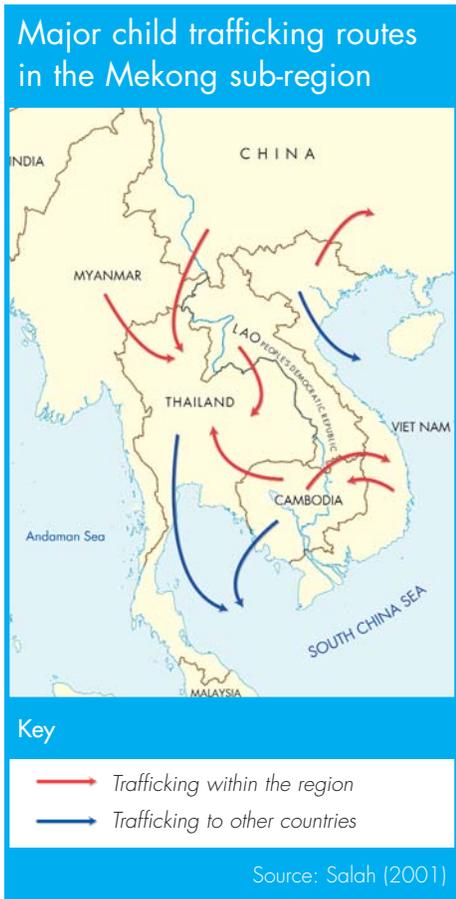
In Thailand, 12- to 16-year-old girls from ethnic minorities in the poorer northern and northeastern provinces are particularly vulnerable to being trafficked into the country’s commercial sex industry, which is mainly in Bangkok and the south of the country.⁷⁹

Cross-border trafficking

In Southeast Asia, there is much international trafficking. Traffickers can take advantage of the fact that many of the borders between countries in the region are long and porous, and the tracks through mountainous areas or jungles often cross from one country to another. However, they can also move their victims through official entry points in collusion with corrupt officials⁸⁰.

One underlying factor is that this region has a number of relatively affluent countries and territories, such as Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Taiwan (China), with much poorer countries nearby. There is also, currently, a clear economic disparity between Thailand and its neighbours. This tends to encourage illegal migration of all kinds, of which child trafficking is just one element⁸¹.

One of the main focuses of cross-border trafficking is the Mekong sub-region. The major routes are indicated on the map on the left. Many girls, again particularly from ethnic minorities, are lured into Thailand’s sex



industry from Myanmar, Lao PDR, Cambodia and the southern provinces of China. This is partly because of its central location but also because parts of Thailand itself have become richer, so many of its own children are less likely to be forced into sex work⁸². Cambodian children are also trafficked into both Thailand and Vietnam for begging.

Thailand also functions as a regional hub through which children can be diverted to Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan. Other countries are also key transit points for certain routes – trafficking victims from China, for example, are known to transit through Vietnam en route to Australia, Europe and North America.

Outside the Mekong sub-region, Indonesia is also a major source of trafficked children, particularly to Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Brunei, Persian Gulf countries and Australia.⁸³ Girls and women are also trafficked from the Philippines to Hong Kong and Japan as well as to the USA.

South Asia

All South Asian countries are to some extent source and destination countries and there is also trafficking within each country. However the largest destination country is India, while one of the largest source countries is Nepal. Around 5,000 to 7,000 girls are trafficked annually from Nepal to India.⁸⁴

One of the main purposes is sex work. Others include forced marriage, domestic work, agricultural labour, construction work, work in carpet and garment factories, street hawking and begging, work on tea plantations and in manufacturing.

South Asian children are also trafficked beyond the region. Many Nepali girls go to Hong Kong. Thousands of boys as young as five years old are being trafficked from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan to Dubai and the United Arab Emirates to work as camel jockeys. It is estimated that 13,000 children have been trafficked out of Bangladesh in the last five years, and that 300,000 Bangladeshi minors work in the red light areas of India.⁸⁵ However, most trafficking in India is internal, as children are moved from poorer states like Karnataka, Maharashtra, West Bengal, and Tamil Nadu to cities like Calcutta (Kolkata), Delhi and Mumbai.

Trafficked at the age of 10 – Deeba’s story

‘Deeba’ comes from a poor family in Bangladesh. Her father died when she was very young. She has five sisters and one brother. Her mother did any kind of work to support the family, from picking up rubbish and selling it, to domestic work. Deeba had no education.

“I didn’t want to come to Manila, but my parents wanted me to. I told them I still look young. They said it would not be noticeable. I could pass for 18. But the recruiter already gave my parents 500 pesos (£6). I told them to return the money to the recruiter. But they had already spent it because we really needed it.”
‘Elena’, 15, trafficked into domestic service, The Philippines (UNICEF Philippines website)



Deeba, now 20 years old.

© Georgina Cranston

A contractor came to their house and said she would find Deeba a job in Calcutta (Kolkata), India. The family's circumstances were so desperate that Deeba's mother let her daughter go. Deeba was only 10 years old. She was taken to Khidirpur, a red light area in Calcutta.

"I was terrified and was crying a lot. It took us two days to reach Kolkata. The lady who bought me here sold me in Khidirpur – she said the madam of the house was her sister."

"The madam told me that I had to entertain people, take off my clothes and let them to do whatever they wanted. I protested, I said I have come here to work as a domestic, I don't want to do all these things. They beat me up. They used to put on a tape recorder really loud so that people didn't hear my screams. Another madam who was a neighbour said to the madam of my house, 'You have bought in a very young girl, be a bit careful – the neighbours may hear and police may come. She is from Bangladesh, better you wait a bit.' So I was put to work as a domestic."

"Once I turned 12 years old, I was forced into sex work. It was very difficult. I was sexually and physically immature, so I couldn't entertain too many but even then I had two to three clients each day. If I had a fever they would bring me medicine, but never take me to a doctor. Each client would pay between Rs150-500 (£2-£7) – I saw none of it. I would just get Rs5 for tiffin. They used to beat me and say, 'We have spent money on you, you must entertain customers'. I continued to protest. This was even before I had reached puberty."

"We weren't given condoms to use. I got pregnant once and had a girl. She only survived 7 days – she had chest problems. I was made to have sex right up to the ninth month of pregnancy. I had to entertain even when I had my period and even when my genitals were swollen."

"I ran away once but was caught. Then I got so desperate, I didn't want to continue living. I went down to the bridge to commit suicide."

But at the bridge, Deeba met another sex worker, who took pity on her and introduced her to someone who helped Deeba turn her life around – a lady working towards the prevention of trafficking and prostitution with the support of a local NGO. Deeba was offered a room in a different red light area, where she could live and earn independently, away from the slavery she was subjected to in Khidirpur. She had little option but to continue as a sex worker though, since she had no family to support her and no education.

It was soon after this that Deeba met her husband. He was one of her clients and heard about her story. He fell in love with her and refused to let her go back into sex work. They now have a four-year-old boy and three-year-old daughter.

"I am happy now – I fear what would have happened to me if I had not come here. I would have been sold and resold to other red light areas, where I would have been tortured as before. Here I have security, freedom and stability to be on my own. I am happy and love my children very much."

The Americas

Paula Plaza

Trafficking of women and children is a widespread and visible phenomenon in this region, affecting an estimated 700,000 to 2 million people every year⁸⁶. Of these, at least 100,000 women and children are trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation⁸⁷.

Whilst many children are trafficked for commercial sex, others are forced to work as domestic servants, in mines or agriculture. For example, in Haiti, an estimated 300,000 children from rural areas are placed as 'restaveks', or servants, in the homes of richer families in major cities⁸⁸. Similarly, in Suriname and Brazil, women and girls are trafficked to work in gold mining regions in the Amazon. It has been reported that young women are trafficked from Bolivia to Brazil to work in agriculture.

There are also reports of children from Honduras, El Salvador and Venezuela who have been trafficked for adoption in the US. Intercountry adoption is of particular concern in Guatemala where it is estimated that US\$20million enters the Guatemalan economy through this trade⁸⁹.

As in many other parts of the world, the most common strategy for entrapping victims is through deception and false promises of employment. Women and children who are trafficked for commercial sexual activities are often recruited by people (both known to the victim and unknown) offering them attractive jobs as waitresses, domestic workers or as models. However, as they are recruited, they incur a debt for travel documents and transport, are often sexually abused and are then forced into prostitution to pay off the debt.

Debt bondage has also been reported amongst Honduran women and girls, forced into prostitution to repay a transportation fee. Amounts are increased for the cost of clothing, makeup, housing, food, drugs, condoms and health testing. Time spent not working is often charged and added to the debt. In a large number of cases the traffickers are connected with organised crime such as drug-trafficking rings and child prostitution networks operating with total impunity.

The main factors involved in the trafficking of women and children in the region include poverty and the lack of educational or employment opportunities. Another factor which has fuelled the trade is the growth of the tourist industry in the region, with many countries becoming popular destinations for sex tourism. Honduras and Costa Rica have emerged as desired destination countries. It is reported that 5,000 to 10,000 sex tourists visited Costa Rica in 1998.⁹¹

On the other hand, sexual and physical abuse, homelessness,



A girl stands talking to a potential customer in the streets of a town in Central America. She is one of thousands of girls who are drawn into the sex trade every year in the region.

Credit: Casa Alianza

"Bar owners decide what they will do with the girls. There is a network of traffickers who sell them and, if they are sent here, they can't go anywhere else. There are procurers who get them into debt and they have to buy their freedom because their debt goes on growing and growing... it's a system of indebtedness."

Testimony from a nun describing the trafficking of children in Tecun Uman at the Guatemalan-Mexican border ⁹⁰

Dangerous sea crossing – Alexia’s story

“I was trafficked to Trinidad and Tobago. I got into this through a man who used to go to different places where the women were in prostitution, and ask, ‘Would you like to go to Trinidad and Tobago? Who wants to go?’ On one occasion, I said, ‘I want to go.’ The man who arranged all this charged each girl around 6,000 Bolivares (approximately £2.30). After a week’s work, we were expected to pay him this amount. Around ten of us from the Dominican Republic, Colombia and Venezuela gathered in Carupano, a port city in Venezuela. We were transported by sea in a little boat to Trinidad in very dangerous conditions. There was always the risk that the boat would capsize. We went without legal documents. We were allowed to take only our handbags. If we were caught by Immigration, we would have been taken to prison for five, six months. When we arrived, we were taken to an apartment, which belonged to the man who did the negotiation. We were forced to work every day, whether we were ill or not. I was trying to save money to buy an apartment, but when I returned to Venezuela, the Customs officials took all the money in foreign currencies – US dollars and Caribbean dollars – leaving me with only a few Bolivares.”⁹²

abandonment and drug use combined with economic need, make women and children particularly vulnerable to trafficking for sexual purposes. In Honduras, for example, a survey of 100 sexually exploited children showed that 42 per cent had their first sexual relations between 12 and 13 and 50 per cent of the children in the study were victims of sexual violence between 10 and 13 years of age⁹³.

Trafficking routes

Trafficking in the Americas occurs within countries, between states in the region and internationally. International destination countries include Spain, Japan, Germany, the Netherlands, the UK and the USA.

Underlying economic differential is an important factor determining movement between areas. To illustrate this, source countries (Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua) suffer from far lower levels of gross national product, have higher illiteracy rates and lower primary school enrolment of girls than the destination countries in the region (Costa Rica, Panama and Belize)⁹⁴.

Known trafficking routes amongst some of the countries of Central America



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Stopping the traffic

Because of the nature of trafficking, the fight against it has to happen on many levels and encompass a whole range of strategies in order to be truly effective. First, we need to move towards strong international consensus. UNICEF advocates for the signing and ratification of all of the major international instruments that deal with trafficking as a precursor to the development of appropriate national legislation. Then, there is the need to fortify the protective environment around all children, everywhere, so that they are less vulnerable to all abuse and exploitation. Next, there are the key areas of intervention at both regional and country level – including awareness raising, education and rehabilitation – that UNICEF and its partners have implemented in order to combat the phenomenon. And finally, there are actions that need to be taken in the UK in order to deal with a problem that affects the lives and well-being of children both here and elsewhere.

The international legal framework

There are three major international instruments that are of relevance to the fight against trafficking.

- The 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Articles 9 and 10 of the CRC state that a child must not be separated from his or her parents against their will, except where it is in the best interests of the child. Article 11 commits States to combat the illicit transfer of children abroad. Article 35 asks States to adopt appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent the abduction, sale or trafficking of children for any purpose or in any form. For children who do not live with their parents, Articles 20 and 21 declare the best interests of the child to be paramount, and notes the desirability of continuity in the child's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background. Article 21 provides that international adoption must not involve "improper financial gain". Articles 32, 34, 35, 36 and 39 which provide for protection against economic, sexual and all other forms of exploitation, and the child's right to physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration, are also relevant to the protection of child victims of trafficking.

The Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography of 25 May 2000, which entered into force on 18 January 2002, reaffirms the values of the CRC and addresses policy measures to prevent and combat this phenomenon.

- Convention No 182 of the ILO (International Labour Organization) on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999). Article 3(a) recognises child trafficking as one of the worst forms of child labour: "all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that:-

Child labour (Article 32):

States Parties recognise the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

Commercial sexual exploitation of children (Article 34):

States Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, States Parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent:

- (a) The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity;*
- (b) The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices;*
- (c) The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.*

Child trafficking (Article 35):

States Parties shall take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent the abduction, the sale of or traffic in children for any purpose or in any form.

Article 36:

States Parties shall protect the child against all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child's welfare.

Article 39:

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of: any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or armed conflicts. Such recovery and reintegration shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.



Khushboo is 7. Her name means 'having a sweet scent'. She is in second grade at the Ghulam Haider School in Kabul, Afghanistan. She likes being in school, and says she wants to be a teacher some day.

UNICEF provided Khushboo's school with learning materials and paid for teacher training. The school was one of thousands that benefited from UNICEF assistance after years of conflict and extreme poverty had nearly destroyed the country's education system. The previous regime had banned all girls, including Khushboo's sister, from attending school.

UNICEF believes that when children who have had the benefits of an education – particularly girls – grow up, they are more likely to make the choice of education for their children, thus helping them to improve their prospects and therefore be less vulnerable to exploitation. Educated girls also marry later, have fewer unwanted pregnancies, and their children have lower infant mortality rates because of better health practices – all of which contribute to the building of a sustainable protective environment.

UNICEF/HQ03-0098/Noorani

of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict", and calls for action by member states to eliminate them.

- The UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (The Palermo Protocol, within which is enshrined the most widely used definition of trafficking, as discussed), supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (CTOC), and adopted in December 2000. Designed as a tool for combating cross-border trafficking through judicial and law enforcement means, it emphasises the criminalising of traffickers, not victims; the protection of victims from revictimisation; the sanctioning of individuals and organisations involved in the fight against trafficking; and the promotion of child-friendly procedures for securing testimony.

Combating child exploitation: fortifying the protective environment for children

Child labour, child trafficking, and particularly child sexual exploitation are among the worst experiences that adults can inflict on children. Such abuses are human rights violations that constitute massive barriers to child survival and development. Protecting children from these violations requires the strengthening of the protective environment around children in systemic and durable ways. It also requires recovery and reintegration of children who have endured exploitation. This protective environment is one in which basic services are available to all children without discrimination because the government is truly committed to child protection. It is an environment within which:-

- Exploitation, abuse and violence are openly confronted by the media and civil society groups;
- Attitudes, prejudices and beliefs which facilitate or lead to abuses are challenged and changed, and where everyone accepts their responsibility to ensure that children are protected;
- Laws are in place and reliably enforced;
- Children are given the vital information they need to protect themselves from abuse and exploitation;
- All those who interact with children – teachers, parents, religious leaders alike – know how to recognise and respond to exploitation;
- Monitoring systems are designed to identify children who are victims of abuse and exploitation;
- Services for victims of abuse are available to adequately deal with children who have suffered abuse.

Some elements of the protective environment will overlap. For example, government commitment may dictate whether services for victims of abuse are provided, or whether investment is made in monitoring mechanisms.

Similarly, media attention can be a key factor in influencing attitudes.

In its work with partners, UNICEF seeks to strengthen the elements of the protective environment for children. Prevention is a priority. We also support and advocate for mitigating the effects of abuse.

Fighting the traffickers – seven key UNICEF interventions

- *Governments need to show a strong political commitment to combat child trafficking. This includes ensuring that the necessary legislation is in place to outlaw trafficking and punish traffickers. The necessary resources should be made available to ensure effective action is always guided by the best interests of the child. Laws need to be rigorously and reliably enforced, including international agreements to help prevent trafficking and facilitate the safe return of trafficked children.*

To help achieve this in West and Central Africa, for example, UNICEF has been working with governments on the issue of child trafficking since 1998. It has promoted advocacy at the highest international and regional levels by supporting high-level meetings that have helped to put child trafficking firmly on the agenda. In 2000, with the ILO, UNICEF organised a regional consultation in Libreville, Gabon, on the worst forms of child labour and child trafficking. Twenty-one countries participated and adopted the Libreville Common Platform for Action, pledging to act against child trafficking. At country level, UNICEF supports the integration of trafficking into current policy areas and the development of National Plans of Actions against this phenomenon.

- *Attitudes and practices need to change. Getting and keeping all children in school – especially girls – would dramatically improve their protection, but 120 million children still never go to school, the majority of them girls.*

The UNICEF-supported Foyer Maurice Sixto Centre in Haiti, for example, offers some of the island's 300,000 'restaveks' (live-in child domestic servants, trafficked from poor rural areas into urban centres) some respite from the harsh routine of their daily lives. The centre offers a daily two-hour programme of psychological counselling and basic education. UNICEF sees the latter as a key tool in the fight against the kind of gender discrimination and persistent poverty that underpins this traditional practice.

Around the world, UNICEF is also advocating for the adoption of life skills-based education as a means to empower young people in challenging situations.

- *Awareness campaigns need to empower communities, families and children themselves to prevent trafficking.*



Education for the exploited – a woman kisses her daughter goodbye after visiting her at the Foyer Maurice Sixto Centre, a UNICEF-assisted centre for 5- to 18-year-old 'restaveks' (live-in child domestic servants) in the town of Carrefour, near Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

UNICEF/HQ95-0662/Nicole Toutounji

"These kids grow up with no identity, no love, no respect; they are children to be re-made."

Father Miguel Jean Baptiste at the Foyer Maurice Sixto Centre in Haiti

Raising awareness – a windscreen sticker advertising the 'Ligne Verte' call centre, a free-phone helpline for victims of trafficking in Gabon. This project is funded by UNICEF, and run in collaboration with the Gabonese Ministry of Labour.

UNICEF UK/2003/Gerrit Beger



*"We learn, we read...
More than anything, I like
the school for the vocational
classes because I get a skill
for myself. I'm not doing it
to please this person or that
person – it's mine."
'Anila', 15, Albanian child
trafficked from the age of 4,
now educated by a local NGO
(*'For Sale, the trafficking of
Albania's children'*,
UNICEF video)*

One innovative awareness-raising project in Gabon involved people from a local, UNICEF-supported NGO producing and distributing windscreen stickers for local taxis. The stickers were designed to raise awareness about child trafficking and exploitation in the region amongst the taxi drivers themselves and their customers.

- *Children need to be aware of the dangers of trafficking so that they can protect themselves. Children are often lured with promises of money and a 'better life'. To counter this, at-risk children need to be given practical skills that allow them to avoid being ensnared. This could include vocational training or income-generating activities at the community level to keep them from falling prey to false offers from traffickers.*

At the Straseni Boarding School in Moldova, for example, UNICEF is supporting a life skills project working with 15- to 17-year-olds from seven boarding institutions across the country. Around 1 in 100 children in Moldova are brought up in institutions and are at high risk of trafficking and exploitation when they leave. There is also a huge problem with discrimination against girls in Moldovan boarding institutions, which affects their self esteem and increases the chance of them being exploited when they leave.

The students at Straseni have 10 sessions with their teacher during the school term on communication, money management, how to get a job, hygiene, STI (sexually transmitted infection) and HIV protection and how to protect themselves from trafficking. Further sessions on the same issues take place during the holidays, but with other young people, rather than teachers, as trainers. These young people continue their role as mentors when the children return to school.

So far, the scheme has been extremely popular. It has made a considerable impact on the self esteem of the young people involved, and given them a support system that was previously lacking. There has also been a visible difference in the relationships between girls and boys in the school as a result.

- *All those who interact and spend time with children need to be able to recognise the risks of trafficking and respond accordingly. Teachers need to recognise the warning signs of a troubled home. Police raiding brothels need to know to search for girls who have come from other countries and avoid stigmatising and victimising them further. A border guard with limited awareness of trafficking, for example, may not react when seeing young children crossing a border without their parents.*

For example, an NGO based in the Philippines called 'Visayan Forum' has been conducting UNICEF-assisted research into children arriving unaccompanied at Manila Port. In the course of their research and activity in the port, Visayan Forum has built strong links with the captains of the ships on which the children travel, with the crews of the ships and with the shipping lines. Some captains provide free passage for children to return immediately to their homes if they are not met by the family members they were expecting to meet. Beyond the direct assistance that this offers, this action by groups directly involved in the movement of children helps to effectively interrupt the trafficking flow.⁹⁵

- *Media attention is a crucial advocacy and awareness element in the fight against trafficking and in calling for the effective and systematic protection of the child victim.*

Film in particular is a powerful means of getting a message across, and Swedish film-maker Lukas Moodysson's *Lilya 4-Ever* is no exception. The film follows the story of Lilya, a 15-year-old girl abandoned by her mother and left to grow up alone in a dreary suburb in the former Soviet Union. Lilya drops out of school, concentrating instead on the much more pressing issue of sheer survival. She is eventually picked up by a trafficker, who sends her to Sweden and a life of horrific abuse in the sex industry.

UNICEF UK teamed up with the film's promoters in order to raise public awareness about the grim realities and abuse faced by girls like Lilya every day of their young lives.

- *There needs to be provision for the reintegration and rehabilitation of victims of trafficking. Children who have been trafficked need services to help them escape their situation, and to return home to a safe environment. Services for child victims of trafficking need to be guided by the best interests of the child, including the child's return to a safe environment.*

UNICEF supports many reintegration and rehabilitation projects all over the world. In Sierra Leone, for example, UNICEF has been supporting interim care centres for ex-child soldiers. The centres provide counselling while attempting to contact the children's families. They also offer mediation to the families to prepare them for their child's return. In Sikasso in Mali, UNICEF has established a transit centre to give repatriated children appropriate services and psychological care before they return home. Another UNICEF-supported programme, the Rose Warm Shelter in Ho Chi Minh City in Viet Nam, offers support to girls who have been rescued after having been trafficked to brothels in neighbouring Cambodia. During the girls' stay at the shelter, which lasts an average of six months, they receive counselling, medical care, educational instruction and vocational training – as well as opportunities to relax and play.



A scene from Lukas Moodysson's film Lilya 4-Ever, a moving and powerful portrayal of the plight of children trafficked into the sex trade.

Credit: Lilya 4-Ever, courtesy of Metrodome Distribution

UNICEF UK Agenda for Action

UNICEF UK is calling for the following action in the UK:-

- **Provision for trafficked victims to be centrally funded by UK Government**

The Government should provide central funding for safe houses and the care provided in them, as well as training and sensitisation for officials. Without this, safe houses will only be set up in certain areas, causing displacement of the problem to different parts of the country. This is already occurring as a result of the success of the safe house in West Sussex: now, cases of trafficked children are being recorded by Social Services around the UK. With the new Minister for Children overseeing the work of Social Services, education and health for children, there is a good opportunity to co-ordinate services for trafficked children and provide central funding.

- **6-month period of reflection that is not dependent on the victim's willingness to testify against the trafficker**

A period of reflection is needed to assess the needs of the child and make sure their best interests are paramount in any decision made. They should be given an automatic reflection period in the UK for 6 months to enable them to be assessed, receive counselling and decide whether or not they will give evidence during a trial and also to enable the police to gather intelligence on their case and consider prosecution. The UK Government has signed the Palermo Protocol (an international agreement against trafficking, see page 29), which demonstrates their commitment to do this⁹⁶, although no measures have been put in place so far. A period of reflection also provides time for family tracing and to prepare the child for their return. UNICEF believes it is in the best interest of the child to live with their family wherever possible. Family tracing and re-integration is an important part of a child's rehabilitation.

- **Introduction of legislation on trafficking for all purposes**

As well as sexual exploitation, children are also trafficked for benefit fraud, forced or early marriage, adoption and exploitative labour. Currently these are not specific crimes in the UK. It is essential that the Government closes this loophole as soon as possible.

- **Training of Immigration officers**

This would include working with Social Services to draw up profiles of victims of trafficking; the training of officers in identifying victims; closer working between Immigration and Social Services; specific child protection officers at UK ports of entry; sensitisation of officers of the trauma involved with child victims of trafficking.

- **Safe house accommodation for trafficked victims**

Children should be placed in safe house accommodation with the following facilities: 24-hour supervision, medical care, supervised

telephone access so they cannot contact their trafficker, counselling, education and training opportunities, legal support, awareness-raising about trafficking and social reintegration.

- **Awareness-raising for officials – Social Services/police/nurses/teachers**

This would include training in identifying victims; raising awareness of the causes of trafficking, methods of control used by traffickers, the results of exploitation and the reasons for the exploitation.

- **Registration and monitoring of unaccompanied children entering the UK**

Unaccompanied children entering the UK should be registered upon entry with their address in the UK logged. This should include those being met at the airport, even if they say they are being met by relatives.

- **Monitoring of accompanied children entering the UK**

It is not practical or appropriate to register every child arriving in the UK, but the current visa system should be used more effectively to monitor children arriving from known trafficking source countries to enable improved tracking and monitoring of children once they are in the UK.

- **Introduction of trafficking hotline**

A freephone hotline should be set up and be highly publicised to enable trafficking victims, members of the public and clients of trafficking victims to report their concerns. Cases would then be referred to the appropriate authorities.

- **Repatriation versus deportation**

Victims of trafficking, when leaving the UK, should be repatriated to their country of origin, rather than deported. This would ensure that the authorities are informed of their return and they can be cared for on arrival. If victims are deported, they often do not reach their country of origin and are much more likely to be re-trafficked and further exploited.

- **Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and the Palermo Protocol**

These optional protocols set out basic measures for the prevention and eradication of these crimes, including care for victims, legal measures to be introduced and international co-operation. The UK Government must ratify these as soon as possible.

- **Use of UN definition in legislation on trafficking**

Despite agreeing that the UN definition of trafficking be the basis of the EU Framework Decision on Trafficking, the UK Government has not used this definition in its own legislation. The UK should adopt the UN definition, which makes a clear distinction between the trafficking of children and adults and ensures children receive additional protection.

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End Child Exploitation: Stop the traffic!

Exploitation is a reality for at least 246 million children worldwide. Far from being a time of happiness, carefree play and healthy development, the early years for these children are dark and difficult because of direct exploitation by adults who abuse their innocence and vulnerability.

The most familiar example of adults exploiting children is hazardous child labour. Adults often make children work long hours in homes, factories, in fields or on the streets, rather than sending them to school – denying them their fundamental rights to education and protection. But adults can further compound the damage. They can also wrench children from the family home, trafficking them to work in distant places – typically foreign countries – and exposing them to unscrupulous employers. In the worst cases, they seize not just children's labour but also their bodies – trapping them in brothels and bars for adult sexual gratification.

UNICEF UK's campaign to End Child Exploitation aims to heighten public awareness of these issues, raise funds for practical programmes to end child exploitation and advocate for changes in UK law and public policy. *End Child Exploitation: Stop the Traffic!*, the second of the campaign reports, focuses on the horrific issue of child trafficking. It begins with an introduction to the problem itself – why it happens, how it happens, and the kinds of work that trafficked children are forced into. The report then goes on to examine known patterns of child trafficking in various areas around the world, including in the UK. It concludes with a call to stop the traffic – through international and regional initiatives, through targeted intervention in countries that are key sources for the traffickers, and through the formulation of strong legislative measures in destination countries such as our own.



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