



FACTS ON *Trafficking of children*

Under international law, child trafficking is a crime involving the movement of children and their exploitation. It is a practice similar to slavery that occurs across all continents. It is also a pernicious violation of children's rights that reduces child victims to commodities to be bought, sold, transported and resold for sexual exploitation, domestic service, street begging or other forms of child labour on plantations, on construction sites, in mines, in sweat shops or in other informal or entertainment work. In some areas of the world, children are also trafficked for use in armed conflicts.

Trafficking is not a discrete act; it is a combination or series of events that takes place in the child's home community, at transit points and at final destinations. The movement may be voluntary or coerced and the relocation may be across borders or within a country. Exploitation may occur at the beginning, middle or end of the trafficking process (or indeed at several points). In other words, whenever a child is relocated and exploited, it is trafficking. And those who contribute to it – recruiters, middlemen, document providers, transporters, corrupt officials, employers and service providers – are traffickers.

According to recent IPEC global estimates for 2000, some 1.2 million child labourers were probably victims of trafficking.

IPEC regional programmes to combat child trafficking

Africa: In October 1999 IPEC launched a major sub-regional programme in West/Central Africa. Phase I comprised a mapping of the problem and a regional strategy. Currently under Phase II, the regional strategy is being implemented through awareness-raising campaigns among at-risk groups, community-level protection projects, law-enforcement capacity building, networking among social actors, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes and the provision of alternatives for children at risk and their parents. Support is also given to multi- and bilateral cross-border agreements between countries in the region.

Central America: A three-year programme has been operational since February 2002 to combat commercial sexual exploitation of children in seven countries of Central America: the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, El Salvador,

Key factors that increase a child's vulnerability to trafficking

Supply factors:

- poverty and the need to earn a living or to support the family
- the desire for a better life
- ignorance or lack of understanding of the children, parents or other caregivers of the negative consequences that may be associated with children leaving their homes to work
- lack of schools or means to pay for education
- lack of appreciation on the part of parents or children on the value of education
- family violence or other dysfunction
- political conflict or natural disasters that devastate local economies
- traditions of migration for labour, land or fodder
- traditions of placement of rural children with urban-based relatives (particularly in Africa)
- gender discrimination
- being a member of a marginalized ethnic group or subservient caste

Demand factors:

- demand for cheap migrant labour
- the size of the tourism industry in the child's home or neighbouring country
- the growth in the sex industry at the country and international levels
- lax or poorly enforced laws and regulations concerning trafficking



Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama. The Programme aims to create synergies among the national initiatives in the region, to establish and facilitate cross-sectoral cooperation among the countries and to strengthen the capacities of major actors through training, technical support and the sharing of good practice and pilot models for action.

Europe: In early 2002, IPEC, the ILO's InFocus Programme on Promoting the Declaration and the ILO's Programme on International Migration jointly developed a programme to combat trafficking of children and young people for labour and sexual exploitation in the Balkans (Albania, Romania, Moldova) and Ukraine. The first phase of this programme seeks to identify a strategy for coordinated action against trafficking through situation analysis and appraisal of existing responses in the region. This will include further adaptation of the Rapid Assessment Methodology, training for national partners in using these research tools, operational reviews, workshops and analysis. On the basis of the lessons drawn from this, a comprehensive action programme will be developed, focusing on prevention and reintegration.

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

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

South-East Asia: A sub-regional programme to combat trafficking in children and women was begun in 1998 covering Cambodia, China (Yunnan Province), Laos, Thailand Vietnam. In cooperation with the ILO's Gender Promotion Bureau, a three-year pilot intervention has focused on working with local partners in implementing projects in education and skills training, alternative livelihood promotion, legal literacy and awareness raising. A region strategic framework added capacity building, advocacy and cross-border consultation to these national actions.

Around the world, children are typically recruited from poor, rural communities. The parents or other caregivers of trafficked children are often illiterate or have a very low level of education achievement. The

consequences of trafficking for these children are appalling. Trafficked children are vulnerable to severe physical and psychological abuse and further exploitation, often being moved from one form of exploitation to another.

Role of the ILO

For many years the ILO addressed child trafficking through its Forced Labour Convention (No. 29). Since 1999, this combat has been reinforced by the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182). The latter confirms child trafficking as a practice similar to slavery that must be eliminated without delay.

Within the ILO, action against trafficking of children has been undertaken primarily through IPEC. Guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Convention No. 182, IPEC works towards the effective elimination of trafficking of children by addressing its root causes. In collaboration with other international organizations, IPEC conducts action research on child trafficking, supports the efforts of governments, workers' and employers' organizations and civil society in the prevention of trafficking, in the rescue, repatriation and restoration of the rights of victims and in strengthening the judiciary and police in prosecuting offenders. The in-country programmes are reinforced by action at the sub-regional level, because it is recognized that concerted action is needed in sending, transit and receiving countries to stop cross-border trafficking.

Relevant ILO Conventions

Convention No. 29 (1930) on forced labour

Convention No. 138 (1973) on the minimum age for admission to employment and associated Recommendation No. 146

Convention No. 182 (1999) on the worst forms of child labour and associated Recommendation No. 190