

## **Trafficking**

Though trafficking is a relatively new word, the meaning of the word is not. Trafficking of human beings is easiest described as a contemporary form of slavery. UNICEF estimates that around 1, 2 million children are victims of trafficking each year.<sup>1</sup> Not only is the extent of the problem huge, but it is growing. Hundreds of children are lured or forced into trade or exploitation every day.

The concept of trafficking includes recruitment, transport and accommodation of children, by force, threat, fraud or other kinds of pressure, with the purpose of exploiting them. The trade with children occurs both within and between countries. It is wrong to think that trafficking only happens between countries. Three type of countries/places are often discussed: The country of origin, the transit country and the destination country.<sup>2</sup>

### **What happens to victims of trafficking?**

What awaits the children after the displacement, is abuse and exploitation in various ways; they are exploited sexually, put into labour or crime, trained as child soldiers, or put to illegal adoption, etc. Other destinies that awaits victims of child trafficking may be involuntary marriages and the use of the children as organ donors.

Girls are generally used for sexual purposes, but also for household work and other occupations. Both girls and boys are sold as cheap workforce, and exploited e.g. at restaurants, factories, farming. Not seldom, the victims are bereaved their passports and may be deprived of any access to health care. The latter may be a result of the fact that their freedom of movement is limited, for example they may have been threatened to not communicate with the outside world. Also, they may not know the language in the area they have been taken to. If it is outside of their native domiciles, they cannot ask for help.

### **How can it happen?**

Adult driven demand is what drives the trafficking, regardless of the purpose of the exploitation. If the purpose of trafficking is sex, the demand for sex with children is what drives the traffic. If the purpose of the exploitation is labour, it is the demand for cheap labour that drives it.

Poverty is sometimes held as one of the main reasons to why child trafficking continues to exist. Poverty is one factor that makes children more vulnerable in society, and prone to fall victim to cynical traffickers that abuse this vulnerability.

Powerlessness in the communities from where the children are taken, also plays its part. The victims of child trafficking often comes from poor and exposed circumstances, in areas that have a lot of unemployment and social misery. More often than not, the children lack basic education.

Some of the victims are kidnapped into the trade, others are lured with promises of well paid jobs, and therefore come with false premises. Sometimes the parents of the victims are convinced by the perpetrators that their children will be better off in another part of the world,

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/protection/index\\_exploitation.html](http://www.unicef.org/protection/index_exploitation.html)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.uncjin.org/Documents/Conventions/dcatoc/final\\_documents\\_2/convention\\_%20traff\\_eng.pdf](http://www.uncjin.org/Documents/Conventions/dcatoc/final_documents_2/convention_%20traff_eng.pdf)

where they will get a good education or a good career. Unknowingly or confused about the terms, they then sell their offspring to crime, and to what in the end turns out to be brothels or similar establishments.

It is important to bear in mind, that the main problem of trafficking is the demand. If it wasn't for the demand, the business of child trafficking wouldn't be as lucrative as it is. If there weren't people who considered themselves to be in the rights of abusing children, and willing to pay for it, trafficking wouldn't exist.

### **Severe mental and social consequences**

Victims of human trafficking suffer threats, beatings, abuse, rape, torture, physical injuries, humiliation and degradation. The children, who are the most vulnerable of trafficking victims, are particularly susceptible to violence and abuse. In addition to the physical damage, they may also suffer very severe mental impairments, with the result of trauma and depression. It can be very easy to break down a child, and few recover. Several commit suicide.<sup>3</sup>

Even after having escaped the world of trafficking, the social consequences can be very serious. For example, girls that have been sold for sexual exploitation, face a very tough reality where they have difficulty re-entering, when they return home. Because of the shame and social stigma, they are not always accepted back by their families, and may become social outcasts. If they are not properly rehabilitated and don't get to return to their society in a normal, healthy way, they risk falling back into prostitution or other exploitation.

### **What does the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child say about trafficking?**

Several of the United Nations Children Convention's 54 articles can be related to trafficking.

#### **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.

#### **Article 35:**

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

#### **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

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking/about/fact\\_sex.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking/about/fact_sex.pdf)

armed conflicts. Such recovery and reintegration shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.

## **Commercial sexual exploitation of children**

Commercial sexual exploitation of children includes child prostitution, child sex tourism, child pornography and trafficking for sexual purposes. UNICEF estimates that about a million children are drawn into the sex industry each year.<sup>4</sup>

The main reason for the commercial sexual exploitation of children is the demand. Without the demand from adults, children wouldn't be exploited sexually.

The sexual exploitation of children also has a correlation with poverty and economic stagnation. Children in vulnerable situations, lacking opportunities, are exploited by adults that prey on their vulnerability and draw advantages of the most innocent and depending part of the population: the children.

Parents can also be tricked into selling their children to the agents or brothels, in the belief that the children will get work or training.

Another common example of how children are abused, are the girls who are hired as domestic servants. This might seem harmless to the parents allowing it, but the risk that the children are sexually abused by their "employer" is considerable.

## **The damages of commercial sexual exploitation of children**

Sexual abuse is always a serious danger to a child's health and wellbeing. Many children who are sexually abused suffer from these traumas for the rest of their lives - if they at all survive the physical and psychological mistreatment.

Many of the abused children are living in prison like brothels, and many of them are constantly exposed to various forms of abuse. To survive, many develop an emotional confinement, often with the aid of drugs.

Sexually transmitted diseases, where HIV is by far the worst, malnutrition, drug abuse and particularly emotional disorders are consequences that many sexually abused children suffer. In the case of HIV, many adults wrongfully believe that the risk of infection is reduced by having sex with a child. Yet, among children working in brothels many are HIV-positive without knowing it.

It is not just the health of the child that is affected by the sexual abuse. The child is commonly also denied a secure childhood as well as schooling, which has lifelong consequences.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.unicef.org/earlychildhood/9482.html>

## **Child labour**

About 70% of all child workers have occupations that are harmful to them, an estimation made by the UNICEF<sup>5</sup>. The majority of them are performing repetitive work on farms, fields, in factories, in homes and on streets.

Sometimes the children are sold to factory owners of their own parents for a sum of money or the granting of a loan. Often, children are initially promised good working conditions and good wages, but are instead eventually used in different ways, while living in appalling conditions.

What cannot be stressed enough, is the fact that demand is the main reason to the exploitation of children.

As is the case in many forms of exploitation of children, the reason to its existence is also economical. A horrible combination of poverty and greed allows the child labour to continue. Because of the poverty, many of the children that end up as victims, lack the education that is needed to get a real job. A child that isn't a student is at much higher risk of exploitation.

The ILO estimates that there are 215 million children involved in child labour. Since the children involved are too young and should be in school, that number is unacceptable. Sometimes the children have attained the minimum age for employment, but the work that they do is still unsuitable for a minor.<sup>6</sup>

### **Forms of child labour<sup>7</sup>**

#### In the family:

The most common form of child labour are minors who work in their family, such as in agriculture. They can also help with the cooking, take care of their younger siblings and perform other chores in the household. This doesn't in itself have to be harmful, but an overly burdensome and time-consuming work can prevent the child from attending school and have time to play. Furthermore, the children that are working in agriculture - even if it is just at home on the family farm - are often exposed to dangerous machinery and toxic pesticides.

#### In the household:

Many children, mostly girls, work as domestic servants. This group is perhaps one of the most vulnerable, because no one sees it happening from the outside. Children are also vulnerable to various abuses of their employers.

#### In factories: Sweat shops

Another kind of child labour occurs in factories. This form of work is sometimes referred to as pure slavery, as the conditions can be inhuman, dirty and dangerous.

#### On the street:

The form of child labour that is increasing most rapidly occurs on the street, where children may be polishing shoes, washing cars or selling newspapers, flowers, watches etc. This type of street work is common in i.e Russia and Central Asia, among many parts of the world.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.unicef.se/stoppa-exploateringen-av-barn-nu/fakta-om-exploateringen-av-barn/barnarbete>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.ilo.org/global/Themes/Child\\_Labour/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/Themes/Child_Labour/lang--en/index.htm)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.unicef.se/stoppa-exploateringen-av-barn-nu/fakta-om-exploateringen-av-barn/barnarbete>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.unicef.se/stoppa-exploateringen-av-barn-nu/fakta-om-exploateringen-av-barn/barnarbete>

## **Consequences of child labour**

A child that is forced to work is deprived of its childhood and is disturbed in its development into an independent being. They are also in great risks, both physically and mentally. Heavy lifting, unnatural postures, lack of work safety, accidents and short days rest provides lifelong damage and leads to many deaths. Mental trauma or depression can also affect children that are forced to work, since their surroundings generally aren't at all suited for a child.

Children who work up to 14 hours a day will be prevented from exercising their right to education; they will have neither the time nor energy to go to school. As the work prevents children from attending school, illiteracy and poverty are transferred to new generations.

## **What does the Children's Convention say about child labour?**

Article 32 from the Children's Convention states that:

1. States Parties recognize 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.
2. States Parties shall take legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to ensure the implementation of the present article. To this end, and having regard to the relevant provisions of other international instruments, States Parties shall in particular:
  - (a) Provide for a minimum age or minimum ages for admission to employment;
  - (b) Provide for appropriate regulation of the hours and conditions of employment;
  - (c) Provide for appropriate penalties or other sanctions to ensure the effective enforcement of the present article.

Article 24 states the child's right to health care and article 28 states the child's right to education. Furthermore, article 31 states the child's right to rest and leisure and article 34 states the child's right to be protected from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

The Children's convention calls on all states that has signed the convention, to establish a minimum age for working children, regulate working hours and working conditions, and establish penalties or sanctions for those who violate these rules. Many countries have already listened to the calls and passed new laws and taken some of the necessary measures for these laws to be kept.

## **Children in war**

UNICEF<sup>9</sup> and Save the Children<sup>10</sup> estimates that 250 000 children are exposed to the dangers of war every day. Most of the children are civilians, but thousands of the children who die or are injured each year have been used as child soldiers, helpers or sexually exploited through e.g. forced prostitution in war.

Just over the past 10 years, UNHCR estimates that two million children have died in armed conflicts around the world<sup>11</sup>, and one million children have lost their parents. 15 million

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.unicef.se/stoppa-exploateringen-av-barn-nu/fakta-om-exploateringen-av-barn-i-krig>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.startts.org.au/default.aspx?id=152&PrintPage=true>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.cdi.org/dm/1997/issue4/>

children have become homeless and 6 million children have been seriously injured or become disabled. These circumstances results in greater risks for the, then already exposed, children:

A child without parents is at higher risk for exploitation, abuse or forced recruitment to become a child soldier. Girls are extra vulnerable in times of war, since they are at great risk of being sexually exploited. It is not unusual for troops to rape girls from villages that they pass by, and sometimes they take girls with them to use as sex slaves.

According to UNICEF, there are around 300 000 child soldiers in the world today. A child soldier is someone, younger than eighteen, who indirectly or directly participates in an armed conflict. Some of them aren't older than six years.

All continents have child soldiers. In recent decades, the use of child soldiers has increased. This is partly a result of the development of cheap automatic weapons that are easy for kids to use.

The children are recruited with various kinds of force; they are "drafted" or kidnapped by the guerrillas and the military units that pass their home villages. In order to prevent the children from returning home, it happens that the soldiers force children to kill their parents, siblings or neighbors before they are being taken away.

The use of children in war is unfortunately not a new phenomenon. Children have always been used as accomplices, spies and soldiers in armed conflicts. They are cheap to use and easier to manipulate than adults. Therefore they are used mostly for special missions that adults do not want or can carry. One example is that children, at great risk to their own life, are sent to clear minefields and to pave the way for the armed forces.

### **The consequences of using a child as a soldier**

To use children as soldiers in war have disastrous consequences for children's mental and physical health. The children are exposed to great risks, they are shot, maimed, tortured and raped. The risks of children suffering from sexually transmitted diseases or becoming drug addicts are also big.

Children die or are injured more often than adults in the war because they have less education, training and experience than the adult soldiers.

For a child soldier to be able to return to a life without violence, a major effort with education, reconciliation and trauma healing is needed - both for the child soldier and the society that the child will return to.

### **What does the Children's Convention say about using children in war?**

Many of the conventions articles prohibit the use of children in war. For example, article 3 states that the best interest of the child should always be a primary consideration. Article 6 states that every child has the right to survival and development. Article 9 says that every child has the right to be protected from physical and mental violence. Article 38 says that no child under the age of 15 should be used for direct participation in armed conflicts. Article 39

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<sup>12</sup><http://ochaonline.un.org/HumanitarianIssues/ProtectionofCiviliansinArmedConflict/Whataretheissues/ChildrenandWar/tabid/1131/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

states that a child that has been the victim of neglect, abuse, torture, armed conflicts or other inhuman treatment has the right to rehabilitation and reversion.

In 1994, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights appointed a working group to develop a proposal for raising of the Children's Convention's age limit for soldiers from 15 to 18 years. The result was an additional protocol which claims that the age limit for participation in combat or drafting into rebel armies must be 18 years, while a voluntary recruitment into national armed forces shall continue to be permitted from the age of 16.

To summarize, all kinds of trafficking violates articles in the Children's Convention and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Trafficking with children is inhuman and needs to be prevented in every way possible, to ensure safety and health for the world's children.

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