

SPCCMUN

SOCHUM Chair Report 2

Committee: Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM)

Topic 2: Child Trafficking

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Introduction

Child Trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Traffickers mainly lure children into forced labour, armed force and sex trafficking by exploiting their vulnerability. Most child victims believed that traffickers could provide them with better life or a better job, and some of them found that following traffickers was the only economically viable option.

Definition of Key Terms

■ Child labour

Although it is hard to measure precise figures, it is estimated that 98,000 to 1,225,000 children, including boys and girls, are in a forced labour situation as a result of trafficking (estimation from International Labour Organization in 2005). Child trafficking is strongly related to the demand for cheap and highly controllable labour forces. As children are vulnerable and malleable, it is easier for employers to force them to work in hazardous environments without proper treatment. Children have to suffer in working conditions that violate the human rights of children, and be constantly exposed to physical violence from employers.

■ Child sexual exploitation

It is known that about two million children are exploited every year in the global commercial sex trade. Children who are trafficked for sexual exploitation suffer from massive violations of human rights, including the right to be free from violence, the right of liberty and the right to be free from any inhumane treatment. Both the mental and physical health of child victims are greatly affected by sexual exploitation. Psychologically, children undergo depression, suicidal thoughts and attempts. Physically, injuries such as bruises and stab wounds are commonly found among child victims. Moreover, child victims have to face the increased risk of sexually transmitted disease such as HIV, and are often forced to conduct unsafe abortions which might cause further health problems.

■ Child in armed forces

UNICEF estimated that more than 300,000 children under 18 are being exploited in more than 30 armed conflicts worldwide. Child soldiers mainly range from 15 to 18, while some are only 7 or 8 years old. Child soldiers without any proper military training have to risk their own life in armed conflicts, and are often badly wounded or even killed. Both male and female child soldiers are commonly being sexually abused, which results in mental and physical suffering.

Important Bodies Involved

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

UNICEF is the world's leading advocate for children which aims to ensure the rights of every child.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

UNODC is established to fight against illicit drugs and international crime. It is mandated to assist Member States in their struggle against illicit drugs, crime and terrorism. Child trafficking is considered an international crime.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Also known as United Nations Refugee Agency, UNHCR is the main UN body working to protect and support refugees. They are mandated as the international coordinating body to target and resolve refugee problems.

The Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT)

ICAT is a policy forum mandated to improve coordination among UN agencies and other relevant international organizations to facilitate an integrated approach to preventing and combating trafficking in persons.

Issues to Consider

The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children was adopted by General Assembly resolution 55/25. It entered into force on 25 December 2003. This Protocol is the first global legally binding resolution with an agreed definition of trafficking in persons. With a mutually established definition, it is more efficient for individual nations to investigate and prosecute cases regarding trafficking in persons. The main purpose of the Protocol is to combat trafficking and ensure the basic human rights of victims of human trafficking.

However, a reason why human trafficking is still rampant is the lack of law enforcement and insufficient prosecution of human traffickers at trafficking hotspots. Poor communication and establishment of police, political instability and corruption lead to the impunity of human traffickers: according to a recent report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), over 40 percent of nations with human trafficking have zero traffickers convicted, and while trafficking activities are on the rise, cases prosecuted remain roughly the same. Effective enforcement and prosecution would be both a major goal and a serious challenge.

UNICEF together with UNODC launched the Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT) in March 2007. UN.GIFT cooperates with both governments and non-governmental organizations in order to strengthen government policies and laws, and thus increase legislative powers regarding human trafficking. It aims to prevent any possible child trafficking as well as to protect child rights.

Regions of Concern

Americas (North and Central America, the Caribbean, South America)

- Offenders: 80 per cent of the total number of convicted offenders in the Americas are people who hold citizenships of the Americas. About 17 per cent of the offenders are foreigners, 3 per cent are from countries in other regions.
- Victims: About 30 per cent of the total number of detected victims are children, 70 per cent of the total number are adults. Two out of three child victims are girls, and most adult victims are women. There is an increasing number of child victims in North and Central America, and the Caribbean.
- Trafficking Flow: Mainly domestic trafficking or sub-regional trafficking, but there is also a significant number of victims from East Asian countries, especially found in the United States and Canada.

Middle East & Africa (Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, the Middle East)

- Offenders: Most of the convicted offenders in Sub-Saharan Africa are citizens of the country where they were convicted. However, 80 per cent of convicted offenders in North Africa and the Middle East are foreigners, mainly Asians.
- Victims: Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest share of child trafficking detected in the world, while in North Africa, and the Middle East, most of the victims are adults.
- Trafficking Flow: Africa is primarily a destination of domestic trafficking, and the Middle East is a destination of transregional trafficking.

Asia & the Pacific (South and East Asia, the Pacific)

- Offenders: Almost all convicted offenders in south and east Asia are citizens convicted in their own countries
- Victims: South Asia has the record of the second highest share of child trafficking in the world, while about 30 per cent of victims detected are children in East Asia and the Pacific.
- Trafficking Flow: Victims from East Asia and the Pacific are most likely to be detected in North America and Middle East, and are less likely to be detected in Western Europe. Victims from South Asia have been detected in 37 different countries all around the world.

Possible Solutions

- Enhance legislative powers regarding child trafficking (e.g. prosecution of offenders)
- Provide essential protection and assistance to child victims (e.g. Victim identification, provision of safe living environment, health care, psychosocial support and reintegration with family)
- Identify trafficking routes, supply and demand for trafficking
- Establish effective monitoring system by UN member states on child trafficking

Questions for Debate

- What roles should NGOs and government forces play in addressing this issue?
- How should international bodies work together to combat human trafficking?
- How should we fully utilize existing UN bodies (e.g. UNICEF, UNODC)?
- How can we effectively monitor current situations regarding child trafficking?
- How should nations deal with both internal and external child trafficking?
- To what extent should UN intervene in child trafficking cases of individual nations?

Further Readings

United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime And The Protocols Thereto:

<http://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNTOC/Publications/TOC%20Convention/TOCebook-e.pdf>

UNODC website (human trafficking page):

<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/index.html?ref=menuside>

International Labour Organization (ILO) (page on child trafficking):

<http://ilo.org/ipec/areas/Traffickingofchildren/lang--en/index.htm>

UN.GIFT website (page on human trafficking):

<http://www.ungift.org/knowledgehub/en/about/human-trafficking.html>

References

<http://www.humantrafficking.org/updates/893>

<http://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNTOC/Publications/TOC%20Convention/TOCebook-e.pdf>

<http://www.osce.org/odihr/19223?download=true>

<http://ilo.org/ipec/areas/Traffickingofchildren/lang--en/index.htm>

<http://www.ungift.org/knowledgehub/en/about/human-trafficking.html>

<http://www.unicef.org/about/structure/>

https://www.michigan.gov/documents/dhs/HumanTraffickingProtocol_440356_7.pdf

<http://www.vineyardusa.org/site/task-forces/child-soldiers>