



NEWSLETTER

Child trafficking in emergencies and disasters

Child trafficking is a human rights abuse that involves the movement of children within and across borders for exploitation, including sexual exploitation. This year a number of reports from the disaster-hit Asian region have highlighted it as an issue of international concern. The concerns are legitimate given the fact that trafficking children, both girls and boys, is widespread in much of Asia. This vulnerability increases substantially in chaotic situations following a disaster when children are often separated from their families. Although there is little verifiable evidence that children are being trafficked globally post tsunami and the south Asia earthquake, ECPAT UK's network affiliates in the region are continuing to monitor the situation. The responsibility to monitor and document child trafficking is not region specific, but international because of its global dimensions. ECPAT UK has been at the forefront in raising awareness of child trafficking as a growing concern in the UK and internationally. Our research has found that children are being trafficked into and through the UK from West and Central Africa, Eastern and Central Europe and South East and East Asia. Many of the countries in these regions are characterised by political and economic instability or have suffered from severe natural disasters. ECPAT UK has campaigned for policy and legislative change in the UK – we were involved in consultations on the *Sexual Offences Act 2003*, *Home Office Toolkit on Trafficking* and the *National Framework for Safeguarding Children from Commercial Sexual Exploitation*. However, a lot more needs to be done. In particular, there is a clear need for leadership and co-ordination by the UK Government that mandates a commitment, with the resources, to provide services to address the care and protection needs of child victims of trafficking. As a first step this would involve setting up a national multi-agency framework responsible for co-ordinating a child protection response and to ensuring that children's rights are fully respected and at the heart of all initiatives.

Christine Beddoe, Director, ECPAT UK

Thank you to *The Bromley Trust* for its recent contribution to support our work on child trafficking!

Trafficking updates

In May, ECPAT UK wrote a letter to the Minister of State for Children, Beverly Hughes. The letter highlighted the recommendations from our 2004 child trafficking report. The Minister informed us that a review was under way on the inter-agency guide *Working Together to Safeguard Children 1999*, which will include information on child trafficking. The guide will be released before Christmas this year.

The Home Office is soon to launch the *UK National Plan on Trafficking*. ECPAT UK will be monitoring all actions to ensure that child protection is at the centre of the UK Government's response to child trafficking.

ECPAT UK will be submitting evidence of child trafficking to the UK Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights, which is carrying out an inquiry into trafficking into the UK and requesting submissions by 13th January 2006.

The *Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings* opened for signature this summer with 16 member States having signed as of November 2005. This convention provides the minimum protection standards for trafficking victims. However, the UK has not signed the convention and ECPAT UK, amongst others, is calling on the Government to do so.

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Child Trafficking Q & A

What is child trafficking?

Child trafficking is the movement of children within and/or across borders using force, coercion or deception for the purpose of exploitation.

What are children trafficked for?

Children are trafficked for all kinds of economic and sexual exploitation. In the UK they have been trafficked for domestic servitude, prostitution, illegal adoption, benefit fraud and as cheap labour on building sites, in restaurants and drug manufacturing facilities.

How many children are trafficked?

- 1.2 million children trafficked annually. (UN & ILO)
- 35 cases in 17 London boroughs, but 32 out of 33 London boroughs were concerned about other potential cases. (ECPAT UK 2003)

However, statistics are difficult to gather because trafficking is a covert activity. In addition, most countries do not monitor or document this human rights abuse.

What makes child trafficking possible?

A myriad of complex factors make children particularly vulnerable to trafficking and these include:

Absence of parental care; drug or alcohol abuse; poverty; gender inequality; growth of technology and child sex tourism; political instability and emergencies; discrimination; child labour; abduction and corruption.

Why are children especially at risk in emergencies?

Children are easily displaced and separated from their parents in conflict and natural disasters. In the chaos it is often difficult to find children and easier for abusers to target them.

Who are the children trafficked to the UK?

The UK is a destination and transit country for trafficking. To avoid detection, traffickers constantly vary their routes and methods. Most of the children are from countries in Africa, Eastern Europe and South East Asia.

Why do the children not seek help or escape?

Traffickers control their victims through coercive tactics, deception, removal of identity documents, confinement, threats, physical or sexual violence, creating distrust and fear of authorities, instilling fear through voodoo rituals and demanding the payment of ever increasing 'debts'.

Who are the traffickers?

All the people involved in the process of trafficking children within a country, across borders and exploiting children at the final destination are traffickers. They may be part of a well-organised criminal network, or individuals helping out in only one of the various stages.

What are the consequences for children?

Child victims of trafficking can suffer physical, sexual and emotional abuse; health problems; pregnancy and abortions; post-traumatic stress disorders; loss of trust and often exhibit anti-social and fearful behaviour.

Does the UK have laws against trafficking?

Sexual Offences Act 2003: criminalises trafficking for sexual exploitation and makes it an offence to traffic into, within and out of the UK. The maximum sentence is 14 years.

Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants etc.) Act 2004: makes it an offence to traffic in all forms of labour exploitation and carries a maximum penalty of 14 years.

The Children Act 1989: mandates the provision of services and accommodation for children in need.

What is ECPAT UK doing to prevent child trafficking?

ECPAT UK is at the forefront in providing research, training and policy advice on the trafficking of children into the UK and is an active member of several multi-sectoral working groups.

We also add an international perspective on children's rights because we belong to an international network of ECPAT groups spanning over 60 countries.

ECPAT UK is campaigning for:

- UK Government to ratify the *Council of Europe Convention on Action against the Trafficking of Human Beings* and thereby ensure that trafficking victims are protected.
- A lead co-ordinating agency on child trafficking that has the leadership and resources to develop and ensure the implementation of policies, including co-ordinating information sharing across agencies and sectors.
- A national multi-agency framework on child trafficking that takes responsibility for data collection and documentation on trafficking.
- Partnerships with trafficking 'source' countries to safeguard and prevent children being re-trafficked.
- Implementation of the recommendations of the Metropolitan Police Operation Paladin Child, including formulating risk indicators to help identify children being trafficked or at risk.

Asian tsunami and earthquake – impact on children

Millions of children in Asia have been affected by the two major disasters of the December 2004 tsunami and the October 2005 earthquake. Tragically, many children died and of those surviving, millions are now homeless, orphaned or separated from their families. Surviving children face many threats to their safety and wellbeing and child protection agencies are facing challenges in caring for them. In particular, international reports of children being trafficked and illegally adopted following the two disasters galvanised agencies and authorities to implement protection measures. The region is well known for the trafficking of children and women into all forms of exploitation. The Indonesian Government has reacted by placing travel restrictions on children in Aceh – the worst hit area in the country. Similarly, the Pakistani authorities – the worst hit country of the south Asia earthquake – have banned all adoptions for the next six months. In addition, relief and medical agencies are registering children to help in reuniting them with surviving family members. ECPAT International's network affiliates **Centre for Study and Child Protection (PKPA)** in Indonesia and **Pakistan Paediatric Association (PPA)** in Pakistan are working hard to protect children in the aftermath of these disasters. They report on the current challenges facing children:

Lack of shelter and housing

PKPA – reports that thousands of children still live in temporary camps and tents. 500,000 homes are needed, not including schools. PKPA has assisted many areas in Aceh that have experienced fatalities and the extensive destruction of properties and infrastructure. PKPA hopes to find suitable housing and shelter for children still living in tents in these areas.

PPA – some 300,000 children are homeless following the earthquake that mainly devastated the Kashmir region. With tents in short supply, most of them remain exposed to the severe winter that is expected soon.

Ill health and disabilities

PKPA – children are prone to diseases and infections due to a lack of aid. Many are anxious and have psychological problems.

PPA – is involved in the medical relief effort, which remains dire. Many children have severe injuries, some of them resulting in amputations because medical aid did not reach them in time.

Lack of schooling and teachers

PKPA – schooling is crucial for a child's recovery and sense of normality, but in Aceh, this recovery is slow because of a lack of teachers, school buildings and equipment. PKPA is building on their existing work by providing educational programs for children.

PPA – UNICEF estimates that 10,000 schools are damaged or destroyed. Tragically, many of the children died when their school buildings collapsed on top of them. Some agencies are offering schooling to children in makeshift tents.

Vulnerability of separated and orphan children

PKPA – is monitoring the situation of separated and orphan children. They remain concerned about and alert to the vulnerability of children to illegal adoption by foreigners and locals alike.

PPA – thousands of injured and unaccompanied children have been flown across the country to major hospitals. In response to reports of attempted abductions and coercion of children by unidentified persons, hospitals have set up security procedures to carry out identity checks before allowing anyone to remove a child from their authority.

Media reports

Vietnamese children in drug slavery

Vietnamese children are being trafficked to the UK and their labour exploited by organised criminal networks - especially in the production of cannabis in private houses. Police have carried out some 2,000 raids on such properties. Chris Beddoe, Director of ECPAT, said, "This is obviously something that is highly organised. We're only going to see more of this". Beddoe added: "The problem is 'better-life syndrome', a dream that anything else must be better than at home. That dream is exploited by traffickers to manipulate children and their families. Children are deprived of their liberty and an education and are often abused." (Source: The Big Issue, 14/11/05)

Trafficking rising in south eastern Europe

A UNICEF report has found that young people in south eastern Europe do not know how to protect themselves from traffickers. Girls are vulnerable to sexual exploitation, whereas children under 13 years are trafficked for forced labour or begging. UNICEF recommends a long-term child-focused anti-trafficking approach, rather than one focused on illegal migration and organised crime. Similarly, an ILO report has found that every year over a 1,000 victims of trafficking are identified and assisted in south eastern Europe. New trafficking methods and routes are emerging and the victims are predominantly young, poor and vulnerable. (Source: BBC News, 31/03/05. Website: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4397497.stm> and BBC News, 16/09/05. Website: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4253252.stm>)

UK convicts Albanian child traffickers

Three Albanian men have been jailed for 18, 15 and seven years respectively at Sheffield Crown Court for trafficking and sexually exploiting a 15 year-old Lithuania girl. The girl was sold seven times in three months, physically and sexually abused by her traffickers and forced into prostitution. Two other men who were accomplices are facing trial in Lithuania, while police in the UK are still tracking down another man. (Source: Telegraph, 9/05/05.)

Woman arrested for trafficking children into UK

A woman has been arrested at Entebbe Airport, Uganda, for attempting to traffic two girls to Britain, claiming that they were her daughters. Sarah Kakonge was using forged passports for the girls and it is suspected that she is part of a trafficking ring that takes girls to Dubai for sexual exploitation. (Source: BBC

News, 2/10/05.)

Thank you!

ECPAT UK wishes to thank all its supporters and donors. With your support and generous donations we are able to continue our campaigning against the exploitation of children.

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ECPAT (End Child Prostitution, Pornography and Trafficking) UK:

- researches, campaigns and raises awareness on the commercial sexual exploitation of children in the UK and on its international aspects.
- is a coalition of UK based children's rights organisations and the UK representative of ECPAT International, a network of over 70 groups in 65 countries.

ECPAT UK coalition members:

Anti-Slavery International, Save the Children UK, Barnardo's, NSPCC, The Children's Society, The Body Shop Foundation, Jubilee Campaign, World Vision UK and UNICEF UK.

Continue your support

Become a supporter and receive our quarterly newsletter and campaigning updates. Make regular donations by requesting a bankers order form.

Read our reports on child trafficking in the UK

- Crossing Borders: The Trafficking of Children into the UK, 2005, Free
- Cause for Concern? London Social Services and Child Trafficking, 2004 - £ 3.50
- What the Professionals Know: The Trafficking of Children into and through the UK for Sexual Purposes, 2001 - £3.00

Our minimum supporter fee is: £5.00.

Please donate more to help us make a difference.

Request a Giftaid form to help us claim 28 pence on every pound you donate. Please make cheques payable to ECPAT UK and mail to our postal address.

Help Disaster Affected Children

Please contact us for more information and on the ways you can support our partners.

Centre for Study for Child Protection (PKPA)

Indonesia

- seeking funds to help with their education and shelter/housing programs for children.

Pakistan Paediatric Association

Pakistan

- seeking funds for medical and relief aid for children affected by the earthquake.