

Research report

Forum: UNICEF

Issue: Developing strategies to prevent child trafficking and child exploitation that may be facilitated by polarisation

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Introduction

Children take up almost one-third of all human trafficking victims worldwide, according to UNICEF. In a world that is getting increasingly polarised, child trafficking is a growing problem. Child traffickers make use of the chaos in the world to choose their targets. In areas of war, traffickers are active to move fleeing children. A great problem here is that parents would do anything for their children to be safe and the traffickers make it look like they are saving the children, only to have them used and exploited in their trafficking rings. Child trafficking is, however, not only a problem in war. In LEDC's (Less Economically Developed Countries), traffickers make use of the promise of better economical standards to persuade people to give up their children for better futures. More often than not, this could not be further from the truth.

Most child trafficking victims end up in child exploitation rings, where they are used for cheap labour, committing crimes, or even forced marriage, among other forms of exploitation. The forced labour is often the case for children of parents who had no money to pay the traffickers. The children are put in debt with the traffickers, who only brush the labour away as simple work. Sadly, child exploitation is not only a problem through trafficking. Sexual exploitation of children is often done by people who the children should be able to trust. In areas of conflict, a vast majority of aid workers do their jobs with professionalism and integrity. However, some use their position of power to do wrong on those who depend on them. This is not just the case in areas of conflict. Even outside of areas of conflict children are used for sexual exploitation by people who they trust or who they should be able to trust.

Both child trafficking and child exploitation have some roots in social polarisation. Social polarisation makes for more areas of conflict or economic displacement, and thus for more interesting areas of operation for human and child traffickers. The segregation of societies and the division of peoples around the world almost makes for a playground for traffickers and exploiters.

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Definitions of key terms

Child trafficking

Child trafficking refers to the act of tricking, forcing or otherwise manipulating children to leave their homes. These children are moved all over the world to be exploited. They may be forced to work or sold into other forms of exploitation.

Child exploitation

The exploitation of children for economic or sexual purposes. Children are used for all kinds of labour and are forced to work under circumstances which violate many of their basic rights. Child exploitation may be used for financial gain, sexual reasons, child labour or personal advantages.

Social polarisation

Social polarisation makes for the segregation of people in areas of conflict or socio-economical displacement. This segregation results in a differentiation in various social groups, from high-income to low-income, meaning that polarization is not just a problem in LEDC's. Polarisation does not care for borders; it provides problems all over the world.

Segregation

Segregation is the separation of people and peoples. The most well-known form of segregation is racial segregation, e.g., 'Apartheid' in South-Africa.

Child(ren)

Any person between the age of 0 and 18 is considered a child. Youth is a wider concept, taking into account anyone under the age of 25.

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General overview

Stories tell of parents selling their children for cash in ancient Rome. In late 17th and 18th century England, parents in poverty still sold the services their children could supply, and with that, their persons, for reasonable amounts of money. Sadly, in the ages that have passed since those times, the problem of child trafficking has not gone away. Child trafficking has grown into a supranational problem, with criminal organizations working inside and across country borders to move, sell and exploit children.

Causes

Child trafficking has multiple causes. The leading cause being poverty. Worldwide, parents are unable to provide for their children too often. A solution that these parents have is to exploit, sell or give away their children. When parents exploit their children, the children are forced to work. Often in circumstances that are riskier than any child should ever encounter. By doing these jobs, they have a way to help sustain their own families. Some parents do not have the option to have their kids work. These parents sell their kids to trafficking organizations or to orphanages. These orphanages take in the “orphans” to make sure that they gain an income through the government. These orphanages also take in children for whom the parents do not ask for payment.

Natural disasters and other humanitarian crises make for a growth in sex trafficking. After natural disasters, child trafficking increases by 20 to 30%, according to studies in post-earthquake Nepal. Studies also show that 33% of underaged girls in these areas are victimised. This is all caused by the increased vulnerability of the affected citizens and the financial instability of the inhabitants of the affected areas.

A lack of education serves further issues. Families are more vulnerable to traffickers promising education for their children, unaware of the negative consequences of sending their children away. Since children are often not aware of the rights that they, as young as they are, already have, they have no reason to suspect anything is wrong. A lack of education serves a problem here as well. Children have a need to be educated on their basic human rights. This so that they are less likely to be manipulated into exploitation or human trafficking rings.

The term ‘Child Trafficking’ is often misused with voluntary migration. According to the UN, youth migrants, ages 15-24 years old, made up for 12% of total migration in 2013. Young migrants choose to move away from their countries of birth to find jobs as migrants in countries that can offer more than their own. To make migration safer, the UN adopted "Addressing migration opportunities and challenges is central to achieving sustainable economic and social development" to their new development goals, which are to be released in 2030.

World impact

It is hard to get accurate numbers on children trafficked each year. The covert and criminal operation of trafficking children make it solely possible to make estimates. It takes years to compile data on human trafficking. Because of this, data is both inadequate and outdated. Statistics are therefore expected to underestimate the actual size of the problem.

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Trafficking of children has been recorded all around the world. The ILO (International Labour Organization) estimates about 1.2 million children to be trafficked each year. This number is a combination of cross-border and internal trafficking. Trafficking occurs most in Latin America and the Caribbean, according to the numbers of the ILO. Although trafficking occurs most in LEDC's and developing countries, it occurs in developed countries as well. The US Department of State publishes the "Trafficking in Persons" report yearly, which provides data that an estimate of 300,000 American youth is at risk of commercial sexual exploitation.

National impact

Nationwide, development of economics and society is hindered by the lack of education of trafficked children. With this, countries suffer great losses in possible future workers. When children are returned to their families, they often pose a financial burden, because they can no longer provide for themselves, putting extra costs on the family. The children may also make more of a burden to the families because of illnesses and injuries. The rehabilitation of these children makes for major costs on the communities.

Communities are not only affected when the children return. If multiple children in a community are trafficked, the community is corrupted, and with that broken. Any hope for growth of these communities is lost because the education of these children is not completed. When these children escape their traffickers, they are of lower education, and with that, they have a lower chance of securing a job. For girls, this problem stretches to more than only employment prospects. Their prospects of relationships and marriage are decreased if their community becomes aware of their history caused by sexual exploitation through trafficking.

The families of the children suffer greatly of the trafficking too. On the false pretence of their children bringing in income, the families allow their children to be relocated. In reality, many families never see their children again.

The children themselves are often hurt the most. Often, trafficking ends in the permanent injuring or death of the children. These children often do not have access to healthcare, of which they are in desperate need sometimes. They may be injured in their jobs, but this is not the only reason why the children are injured. Children are often beaten and denied food to ensure that they will work for their traffickers and exploiters. Another way to make the children reliant on their traffickers is through the administering of drugs. When the children get addicted, they start to rely on their traffickers to keep receiving the high, making for obedient workers. Physical impacts are not the only issues, however. Trafficked children suffer an incredible extent of mental effects as well, often having the children end up with depression, anxiety, and PTSD, among other mental conditions as a result of their past.

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Numbers

(According to the ILO)

Human Trafficking Statistics

- 24.9 million people are victims of forced labour. (ILO, 2017)
 - 16 million people are trafficked for forced labour in the private economy. (Private economy includes private individuals, groups, or companies in all sectors except the commercial sex industry). (ILO, 2017)
 - 4.8 million people are trafficked for forced sexual exploitation. (ILO, 2017)
 - 4.1 million people are trafficked for forced labour in state-imposed forced labour. It is estimated that 20.9 million people are trafficked worldwide. (ILO, 2017)
- Women and girls are disproportionately affected by human trafficking, accounting for 71% of all victims. (ILO, 2017)

Labour Trafficking Statistics

- Forced labour in the private economy generates an estimated \$150 billion in illegal profits per year. (ILO, 2012)
 - The largest share of labour trafficked adults are domestic workers (24%) followed by construction (18%), manufacturing (15%), and agriculture and fishing (11%) sectors. (ILO, 2017)
 - Migrant workers and indigenous people are particularly vulnerable to forced labour. (ILO, 2017)

Sex Trafficking Statistics

- 3.8 million adults are trafficked for forced sexual exploitation and 1.0 million children are trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation. (ILO, 2017)

Regional Statistics (Yearly Basis)

- Asia/Pacific: 250,000 children
- Latin America & the Caribbean: 550,000 children
- Africa: 200,000 children
- Transition economies: 200,000 children
- Developed/industrialized economies: unknown

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Major parties involved

Major countries in Human Trafficking (2023)

- North Korea
- Myanmar (Burma)
- Papua New Guinea
- Russia
- Syria

Major countries in Child Trafficking (2020)

- Nepal
- Italy
- Guatemala
- Philippines
- Peru

Worldwide

Child trafficking and exploitation is a problem that transcends borders. All countries are affected by child trafficking, and all countries should work together to dismantling criminal trafficking organisations.

Timeline of Key Events

1500-1866	Transatlantic slave trade During the 16 th century, Portugal started travelling overseas to take slaves back to Europe. Other European countries followed.
1525	The first slave voyage from Africa to the Americas Over the next 350 years, around 12,5 million slaves were shipped from Africa to all around the world.
1807	Britain first outlaws Slavery
1820	The United States follow Britain's example Sadly, the last transatlantic slave voyage in the Americas was around 1866
1900-1910	An international agreement for the suppression of “white slave traffic”

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White slavery was defined as “the procurement — by use of force, deceit, or drugs — of a white woman or girl against her will for prostitution.”

1919	The ILO is founded
1921	International convention for the suppression of traffic in women and children
1949	United nations convention for the suppression of the traffic in persons and of the prostitution of others
2000	United nations protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children
1980-Now	Internet and social media The world of human and child trafficking has changed with a great demand through online platforms
Present day	The fight against human and child trafficking Many Non-Governmental Organizations work, along with governments, to combat trafficking of persons

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Previous attempts to solve the issue

All around the world, organisations are trying to end human and child trafficking. Both NGO's, Government Organisations and governments are working on preventing trafficking. Laws and regulations are established, people are informed on the consequences and people are being prosecuted. In selected countries, those who have been trafficked are helped with rehabilitation and counselling. Many countries have their own policies illegalising trafficking. In many countries, however, laws to stop human trafficking are still not being followed or complied with, and the enforcing remains insufficient. Governmental and Non-Governmental organisations are working from these countries to help prevent trafficking.

Possible solutions

Possible solutions can be categorized to these four sections:

1. Broad protection
2. Protection
3. Prevention
4. Law enforcement

Broad protection is the prevention of children being trafficked or re-trafficked. This includes raising awareness of trafficking. Next to raising awareness, the prevention aims to improve the economical statuses of families that may otherwise be vulnerable to trafficking, offering employment possibilities for the adults in the families. Other forms of protections offer basic human resources and conveniently placed healthcare facilities in order to make families less dependent on traffickers. Community groups and police are organising days and weeks dedicated to raising awareness on the issue.

Protection might be the easiest concept yet the hardest to achieve. It starts with victim identification, making sure that laws have an adequate definition for what makes a 'trafficking victim'. After this, measures should be put in place to remove these victims from their potentially dangerous environments and return them to their families or put them into otherwise suitable surroundings. Next to their physical environments, the victims should be placed into safe mental environments. They should be provided with individualised physical and mental support in order to make sure that they are helped with the pain that they have endured in their times of exploitation.

Prevention is reasonably self-explanatory. Preventative actions are taking directly against child trafficking. These actions include implementing legal frameworks and setting labour standards.

The clearest way to let traffickers know that child trafficking is not and will not be tolerated is by the actual prosecution of these traffickers. Traffickers caught in any of the three steps – recruitment, movement, or exploitation – will be prosecuted and anti-trafficking and the breaking of child labour laws will be punished accordingly.

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Next to these sections, making sure that victims are not treated as criminals or victimised a second time is of utmost importance. For example, if a child is illegally trafficked into a country for sexual exploitation, they are not trialled for being an illegal immigrant after being set free of their traffickers.

The UNICEF has come up with ways to help children from child exploitation and the risk factors that need to be addressed. These include:

- Helping parents provide a living wage, so the children won't have to support the family
- Lobbying governments and others to develop laws and strengthen child protection systems to prevent violence and abuse
- Supporting the training of professionals working with children, and police and border officials to help stop trafficking.
- Working with communities and organisations to change societal norms that make children more vulnerable to exploitation

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Further reading

General overviews on child trafficking and slavery. As is stated on the Oxford Bibliographies website, no single text offers a full overview on the many approaches of studying child trafficking and slavery or exploitation. The website gives six texts, which together, according to the website, offer a solid general overview.

<https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780199791231/obo-9780199791231-0227.xml>

Fact vs. Myth on child trafficking

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