



What is trafficking?

'Child trafficking' means recruiting, transporting, transferring, harbouring or receiving children in order to exploit them in some way. Commonly children are trafficked for:

- sexual exploitation, including pornography, prostitution and sex tourism
- armed conflict, as child soldiers, porters, landmine clearers or sex slaves for combatants
- labour, including domestic service, working in mines, factories, hotels or restaurants
- adoption or marriage.

Under international agreements on child rights like the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), a 'child' includes anyone up to age 18. This includes teenagers who might be living independently or consider themselves 'almost adults'. They are still vulnerable and need proper protection from traffickers.

How are children trafficked?

Children can get involved in trafficking in many ways:

- being sold or given away to pay a debt
- being sold to traffickers by their parents, another adult or a friend
- being tricked by traffickers - for example, being told they are going to work in a garment factory, but being taken to a brothel instead
- being passed onto traffickers by parents in the belief that their children will find a better life with well paid employment
- migrating to another area or country for work and being exploited along the way or at their destination.

It doesn't matter what their situation is – any child who is trafficked is being abused. Under international agreements a child's 'agreement' to go with a trafficker is



Girls trafficked from Vietnam to Cambodia working in a brothel.
Photo: Mikel Flamm.

not considered to be consent. This is because children are more vulnerable to coercion and abuse, and no child would choose to be exploited if they had a better option.

Why are children at risk of trafficking?

Both children and adults can be trafficked and exploited. However children are particularly vulnerable and have a special need for protection.

- Children are more able to be tricked or deceived because they have less experience than adults
- They are less able to demand their rights and can be exploited more easily – for example, children will more readily work long hours for very low or no pay
- Some countries don't properly protect children's rights, meaning they can be trafficked with little risk of the authorities intervening
- In some industries there is a particular demand for children. In the sex industry there is a high demand for young girls, partly because it is believed they are less likely to have HIV/AIDS.

Supply and demand

Child trafficking operates under the twin principles of supply and demand. For example, the Gulf States provide the demand for boys to work as camel jockeys, which are supplied by countries like Pakistan. Poor countries in

particular are a source of children that are trafficked, while many richer countries are destinations for trafficked children. Other countries are transit countries, through which children are trafficked to reach their destination country. Some countries are all three. Internal trafficking also occurs - usually children are transported from rural to urban areas and are forced to work under terrible conditions for little or no pay.

Where is trafficking a problem?

Child trafficking occurs in every region of the world. The Asia-Pacific is a major centre for child trafficking. Trafficking routes include from Myanmar (Burma) and Cambodia to Thailand, between Cambodia and Vietnam, from Nepal to India and from India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka to the Middle East.

Western countries are not immune. Child trafficking also occurs in Europe, the United States of America (USA) and Australia.

We might think that trafficking doesn't happen in New Zealand. Trafficking is an underground, hidden activity so it can be hard to find proof. Some cases of children working in the sex industry have been reported, however. A recent survey by ECPAT (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes) New Zealand indicates that primary school children as young as ten have been involved in commercial sexual activity in New Zealand (1).

Some women have been trafficked from Thailand to work in New Zealand brothels. The New Zealand Police estimate there are over 500 Thai women involved in the sex industry in Auckland alone. However it is impossible to tell how many of them are under 18, and therefore may be considered to be child victims of trafficking. In 1999 the Human Rights Commission set up a 'safe house' programme to assist Thai sex workers to escape prostitution in New Zealand. (2).

New Zealanders also contribute to child trafficking through child sex tourism. Some New Zealanders, particularly men, travel to Asia and other places to have sex with children. Governments around the world are starting to legislate against child sex tourism and work with police to identify offenders. New Zealand men have been charged with child sex abuse in India and Fiji (3). Recently a New Zealander was jailed for 20 years for sex crimes in Cambodia (4).

What causes child trafficking?

The underlying cause of most child trafficking is **poverty**. Children are often trafficked because they or their families need to earn money, and because they have few or no other opportunities to do so. They may migrate to find better work, but find they cannot get a job or earn enough money. They may have paid someone to take them across a border to find work and need to pay back a huge, inflated debt.



A former street child (left) now runs her own business selling soy milk. This young woman was 13 when she left her small country village to live alone on the streets in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. When she started selling cigarettes in the bus station, an old woman warned her she was in danger of being sold into prostitution. She decided to enter the World Vision Bamboo Shoots Street Children Centre. The centre gave her regular meals, a place to sleep, an education and even a foster family. After she graduated from school, World Vision loaned her money to start her soy milk business. The centre has helped more than 500 street children since it opened in 1992. Photo: Philip Maher.

For traffickers, trafficking is very lucrative. They can earn a lot more money through their activities than they would through legal work, providing an incentive to traffic children.

Other risk factors for trafficking include:

- gender discrimination, where girls have a lower status than boys and are considered less valuable by their community
- low levels of education
- war and conflict
- community dislocation
- a child being abandoned by a parent or family
- domestic violence
- lack of legislation to prevent trafficking
- little control over border crossings
- mobile populations, for example, where people migrate to find work.

It is estimated that 1.2 million children are trafficked each year (5).

What are the consequences for children?

Trafficking has serious physical and psychological effects on children.



Physical effects can be due to:

- being kept in a confined space while being trafficked, such as a truck
- damage from hazardous working practices, such as having to sit in one position all day, working in poor light or breathing in dust or fibres
- sexually transmitted infections for children in the sex industry.

Psychological effects are often due to:

- being separated from their families and taken from their homes
- severe isolation and domination while living in another country or region
- trauma from the type of work they have had to do and the abuse they have suffered
- being sold or given away by their families or others whom they trusted
- not speaking the local language in the destination country, making them feel isolated.

The '3 P+R' approach – Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, Reintegration and Rehabilitation

The '3 P+R' approach is the most effective method to stop child trafficking because it covers all stages of the trafficking cycle.

The international community has developed agreements to try and combat child trafficking. Some national governments have started to implement them in their countries, making trafficking a specific crime and developing national plans of action. But *all* countries need to do so to effectively protect children from trafficking.

In New Zealand the Crimes Amendment Act 1995 makes it illegal to engage in any sexual conduct with children overseas that would be considered an offence in New Zealand. It also makes it an offence to assist or encourage anyone to travel overseas for the purpose of having sex with children. This includes booking or arranging travel or accommodation and promoting child sex tours.

Education as prevention:

“Attitudes and practices need to change: getting and keeping all children in school, especially girls, would dramatically improve their protection, but 120 million children still do not go to school, the majority of them

girls. Awareness campaigns need to empower communities, families and children themselves to prevent trafficking.”
(UNICEF, The State of the World's Children 2003)

How is World Vision involved in stopping child trafficking?

Around the world, World Vision has a number of projects to help protect, rehabilitate and reintegrate children who have been trafficked. For example, a World Vision centre in Cambodia gives girls as young as six the opportunity to heal and learn new skills, such as hairdressing and weaving. All girls receive intensive counselling, while those with HIV/AIDS also receive medical care.

After one year, the girls are re-integrated with their families and communities or enter safe foster care families. World Vision also has projects to help prevent child trafficking by educating potential victims and their families.

Children's clubs use fun activities to teach children about the risk of being deceived by traffickers. Bicycle mobile libraries distribute posters and literature to rural areas.

One of the greatest risks for trafficking is countries which do not register births. With no birth certificate, there is no record that a person existed and therefore no way of proving a disappearance. World Vision is involved in advocating for the need for birth registration in all countries to assist in combating this.



Children learn about the dangers of trafficking at a World Vision children's club. World Vision has rescued girls as young as six years old. Photo: Bernard Gomes.

Case study: Vanthy*

Vanthy lived with her father and stepmother in Cambodia. Her home life was difficult as her stepmother bullied her and would deprive her of food if she didn't do her chores well enough. Because of this Vanthy wanted to find a job in the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh.

When she was thirteen, a neighbour convinced Vanthy to go to Phnom Penh with her, promising she would find her a job. Without telling her family she went with the woman, who took her to a house in the city and left her there with the owner. Vanthy became frightened and cried, and the owner of the house at first consoled her, then hit her and threatened to sell her. Vanthy realised the neighbour had sold her to a brothel.

At first Vanthy had to do the laundry for the girls living in the brothel. However after three months, the owner forced her to go to a hotel with a man, where the man raped her. From then on she had to work as a sex worker, receiving only clothes and food in return. After three years she managed to run away and tried to find a better job, but had to return to sex work and as a 'beer girl' in order to support herself.

A year later Vanthy began to get ill with high fevers and swelling and she lost her job. She discovered the illness was because she had HIV. She began to despair and was too afraid to return to her parents, who she thought would reject her. She met a World Vision rehabilitation centre staff member who encouraged her to come to the centre. There Vanthy received medical treatment and counselling to deal with the trauma she had been through. The centre also helped her to learn new skills such as weaving and animal husbandry to support herself.

*Name has been changed

World Vision also engages in advocacy to influence governments and institutions to improve laws and services for trafficked children. Through advocacy, World Vision seeks to achieve justice for children who have been trafficked by addressing the root causes of child trafficking.

Action you can take:

Read World Vision's resource *Children at Risk* at www.worldvision.org.nz/resources/A-Z_topic_sheets/Children_at_Risk

Sign up for World Vision's Rampant e-News and use your voice for change on child rights-related issues. <http://www.worldvision.org.nz/rampant/About/AbouteNews>

Support organisations which defend the rights of children and help families to nurture them.

Help prevent child trafficking by assisting a community out of poverty through World Vision child sponsorship. Give to the Children in Crisis programme or do the 40 Hour Famine. Both fund prevention and rehabilitation programmes for vulnerable and exploited children.

Learn more about child trafficking and campaigns against it at:

www.ecpat.org.nz (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography, Child Sex Tourism and Trafficking



Girls in a classroom in a World Vision rehabilitation centre. Photo: Lisa Tremewan

in Children for sexual purposes)

www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/onlinecampaign/home.htm

(International Labour Organization)

www.unicef.org/protection/trafficking.pdf (trafficking fact sheet)

www.unicef.com.au/donateHome.asp

For more on child labour and child soldiers see our *Child Labour* and *Children of War* topic sheets on our website at http://www.worldvision.org.nz/resources/a-z_mainpage.asp

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- (3) <http://www.courts.govt.nz/pubs/reports/2002/protect-innocence/chapter-3.html> Ministry of Justice Accessed 28.1.05 NZ
- (4) <http://www.ecpat.org.nz/news.htm#Nzer>. Accessed 28.1.05
- (5) UNICEF. *Child Protection, Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation*. Retrieved 20 March 2004 from www.endchildexploitation.org.uk.

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