

# *LIFE-LINK*

## *FRIENDSHIP-SCHOOLS*

Preventing Human Trafficking  
for the Purpose of Sexual Exploitation



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# Information and Ideas for Schoolwork

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## Why work with trafficking prevention?

Life-Link joins the great number of national and international organisations that acknowledge the alarming spread and severe consequences of human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

As an organisation that focuses its work on school level and aims first and foremost to empower youth to influence their own futures, we think that long-term prevention work begins with learning at schools.

Life-Link groups at schools around the world carry out peace actions throughout the year, thereby contributing to both short and long-term learning effects in areas that are vital for our future. The Life-Link Friendship-Schools peace ethics involves *Care for Myself - Care for Others - Care for Nature*. We believe that students and teachers should take ownership of processes such as trafficking prevention to have a real impact in their schools and societies. *Inform yourselves, create opinion, and make a difference!*

## An International Trade in Human Beings

According to the women's organisation *Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation* (woman to woman), the international term "trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation" means slave trade. People are sold as commodities over national borders and forced into prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation. ECPAT International defines human trafficking as "all acts involved in the recruitment or transportation of persons within or across borders, involving deception, coercion or force, debt bondage or fraud, for the purpose of placing persons in situations of abuse or exploitation, such as forced prostitution, slavery-like practices, battering or extreme cruelty, sweatshop labour or exploitative domestic labour"<sup>1</sup>.

Trafficking in women and children often involves several countries - it is a *transnational* and highly lucrative trade in humans. The route that trafficking victims are made to travel is not necessarily only from poorer countries to wealthier ones, although that is the most common scenario. However, local conditions of supply and demand mean that trafficking victims may be transported between several countries. Cross-border trafficking can involve three or more countries: country of *origin* (where children and women are

trafficked from), country of *destination* (countries that receive the women and children) and countries of *transit* (entry points, or temporary destinations before victims are moved to another country).

It is important to remember that it benefits the traffickers to keep moving their victims to evade detection by the police. By keeping the victims in a foreign environment, their vulnerability is greater as they do not speak the language, have most likely entered the country illegally and are generally unfamiliar with the culture, social and legal systems of the country. (ECPAT International (2002) pp.14–17)

### **Human trafficking is a crime!**

Trafficking in human beings is a crime. Moreover, it is globally recognised as an illegal activity in several international conventions and treaties. The most widely ratified and well known is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Governments that have signed the CRC are legally responsible for combating all activities related to trafficking in human beings for the purposes of sexual exploitation within the borders of their countries. All governments in the world except two have signed the convention. *Ask your government what they are doing to help put and end to trafficking!*

The Convention on the Rights of the Child applies to children, as the name implies. A child is defined in the CRC as a person under the age of 18. In some countries, there are other provisions in terms of age of maturity that apply according to what laws and definitions have been established by the government.

Article 34 of the CRC calls on state parties (governments) to take all appropriate measures to prevent the inducement or coercion of a child to engage in unlawful sexual activity and to prevent the exploitative use of children in prostitution, pornography or other unlawful sexual activities.

Article 35 calls on state parties to take all appropriate measures to prevent the abduction, sale of or trafficking in children for any purpose or in any form.

There is also an optional protocol, an addition to the CRC, which specifically addresses commercial sexual exploitation of children. It entered into force in January 2002. *Did your government sign it?*

Other important international legal documents that prohibit human trafficking are:

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (article 7)
- European Convention on Human Rights (article 3)
- American Convention on Human Rights (article 5)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
- International Labour Organization's Convention 182 – Worst Forms of Child Labour.
- International Convention against Organised Crime

The international documents represent laws that are the same to all governments that sign and ratify them. In order to become part of the legal system in individual countries however, concrete, national laws have to be made by governments so that criminals can be brought to justice and tried in a court of law, as well as to be punished for their crimes.

## **Questions & Answers<sup>2</sup>**

### **1. WHO ARE THE VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING?**

An overwhelming majority of victims of trafficking in Europe are young women and girls. A big majority of the exposed women and children come from poor countries in Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and Asia. Many of those affected find it hard to make a living and to see a future in their own country. Their only hope is to find employment abroad. It also happens that young girls are kidnapped by traffickers or sold by their own families.

### **2. HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE SOLD AS SEX SLAVES?**

There are no reliable figures of how many people are exposed to trafficking in Europe today. Almost all the trade takes place in secret. However, Europol, the EU police force, estimates that approximately half a million people are taken into the EU to be sold as slaves each year. Most of them are women and many of them are sold more than once. It is estimated that one fifth of the victims are men, young boys and children.

### 3. TO WHICH COUNTRIES ARE THE VICTIMS SOLD?

Within Europe the victims are sold to all the countries in the EU. For example, the Swedish police estimate that between 200 and 500 women and children are trafficked to Sweden each year.

### 4. WHO ARE THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS?

The people behind the trafficking are above all connected to organised crime but there are also individual traffickers. Sometimes it concerns the same gangs that are involved in other types of trafficking, such as trade in weapons or narcotics. A woman can be sold several times, which makes her valuable to the traffickers who earn big money but risk only minor, if any, punishments if they get caught.

### 5. WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF TRAFFICKING?

- It counteracts a development toward gender equality and the respect for women's Human Rights since it contributes to the acceptance of the buying and selling of women's bodies.
- It destroys the life and the future of the affected individuals.
- It contributes to the spread and the growing power of organised crime.
- It drains the countries of origin of their young women.
- It makes it harder for poor countries and countries affected by conflict to develop strong democratic and judicial systems. This is the case in countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Kosovo where trafficking flourishes and many brothels have been opened.
- In the long run trafficking undermines stability and security in the whole of Europe and the rest of the world.

## 6. WHY DOES TRAFFICKING EXIST?

Trafficking would not exist if there were no buyers. Those who illegally buy sex create a demand for women and children. Where there is demand, traffickers can make a profit by supplying illegally trafficked women and children for exploitation. If there were no buyers, there would be no profits to be made.

## 7. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING ARE BROUGHT BACK HOME?

This is called the *repatriation process* and can also be a traumatising experience unless proper protection and care is offered to victims. Sometimes victims are treated as criminals, being accused of prostituting themselves or for travelling using false documents and passports. On top of being treated like criminals, there is a strong social stigma attached to having been sexually exploited – people in the home communities sometimes make returning women and children into outcasts, making it more difficult for them to get back to some level of normalcy. It is important that the authorities and people living in communities from which women and children have been trafficked treat the victims humanely, both in terms of applying immigration laws and in terms of sensitizing people to the trauma the victims have experienced.

## What can young people do?

To combat trafficking, all sectors of society have to become aware of the problem and take action. The police, schools, businesses, media and internet, churches, travel agents and citizens all have parts to play. As citizens, young people have a particularly important role as the decision makers of the future. Youth can become advocates in their own community, nationally and internationally by joining youth clubs or networks, lobbying their government and arranging activities at school to raise awareness. In many countries, the organisation ECPAT [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net) has either a local office or a partner organisation that can offer advice and give information about the situation in their country. Here is what you can do to help:

### **Raise public awareness**

- Inform yourself about the situation in your community, country and region. Compile information, statistics and publications that will be useful to monitor the situation and keep an eye out for media coverage of trafficking issues.
- Order and use information materials from organisations like ECPAT, Save the Children and UNICEF that are experts on human trafficking to raise awareness and inform fellow students, the local community, politicians etc.
- Make an exhibition or set up a play at your school and invite parents and members of the community.

### **Lobby governments**

- Contact your local politicians and ask them what they are doing to prevent human trafficking. Ask what laws exist and what is being planned to deal with the problem further.



## ECPAT contacts in Europe

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## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> ECPAT International, (2002) *Questions & Answers about the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children*, Bangkok. ECPAT stands for End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes and it has an international office in Thailand. There are also national organisations in many countries. For further information see [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)

<sup>2</sup> The information in section 1 comes from the Swedish Women's Organisation Kvinna till Kvinna (Woman to Woman) and from ECPAT International and ECPAT Sweden. For more information please see [www.iktk.org](http://www.iktk.org), [www.ecpat.se](http://www.ecpat.se) and [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)

Life-Link recently learnt about important actions taken by The Suzanne Mubaraks Women's International Peace Movement, producing information material "*Trafficking Women and Children - Overcoming the Illegal Sex Trade*" (2005), and campaigning with the Business Community: "*End Human Trafficking Now!*" (2006) [www.womenforpeaceinternational.org](http://www.womenforpeaceinternational.org), [info@womenforpeaceinternational.org](mailto:info@womenforpeaceinternational.org)

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