

## Chapter 3 Preventing Child Trafficking

This Reference Guide focuses primarily on the action necessary to protect and assist children who have already been trafficked. Alongside this action to enable children whose rights have been violated to recover, States are also under an obligation to take steps to prevent child trafficking from occurring in the first place. However, while there is a high degree of consensus among specialists involved in protecting and assisting trafficked children about what constitutes 'good practice', the same is not yet true about methods to prevent child trafficking.

Efforts to prevent child trafficking, both in Europe and other regions, have concentrated on two main strategies:

- deterring traffickers and their associates by prosecuting and punishing them and changing national laws to enable such actions, and
- distributing information to children and their parents about the abuse inflicted on children who are trafficked and the risk that children who migrate or are sent away from home to work or earn money for others will be trafficked.

It is not clear, however, that either of these strategies has been effective in preventing children from being trafficked. Alternatives are available but they tend to be overlooked.

This chapter examines how to identify which prevention tactics are likely to be most effective in particular circumstances.

### 3.1 Opportunities to prevent child trafficking

At its simplest 'prevention' means taking action to stop something that is otherwise likely to happen. 'Action to prevent child trafficking' consequently refers to a wide range of efforts to address the causes of trafficking, both to influence the actions of individuals and to tackle underlying and root causes.

Chapter 2 described the four phases of child trafficking: recruitment and transportation; exploitation; withdrawal; and recovery/reintegration. Each phase offers different opportunities to intervene, either to influence individuals directly involved in trafficking or exploiting children or to protect the children themselves. These opportunities are summarized in Figure 6 which shows that prevention strategies can be deployed to influence individuals involved on both the 'supply' and 'demand' sides of trafficking.

This model for understanding child trafficking reveals that different types of prevention are appropriate at different phases of the trafficking cycle. It identifies a series of individuals and some of their reasons for involvement in the trafficking process, which can potentially be influenced to change the course of action.

Once the process of trafficking starts there are various opportunities to intervene and protect a child who is being transported from one place to another (by intercepting the child) or is already being exploited (by withdrawing the child from the control of whoever is making money out of her or him). Interception is viewed in some countries as an effective form of prevention in that a child may be intercepted before the phase of exploitation (and serious abuse) starts. However, distinguishing between children who are being trafficked and other children who are on the move for legitimate reasons is notoriously difficult. Unless a significant proportion of the children who are intercepted are genuinely being trafficked, this practice is likely to substantially offend the rights of at least some and perhaps many children. In this case, the strategy is difficult to justify.

Overall, intervening during the trafficking process however, may be a case of 'too little, too late' unless the factors that determine the behaviour of crucial actors are also addressed. This means that different causes of child trafficking need to be investigated and their interdependence analysed.

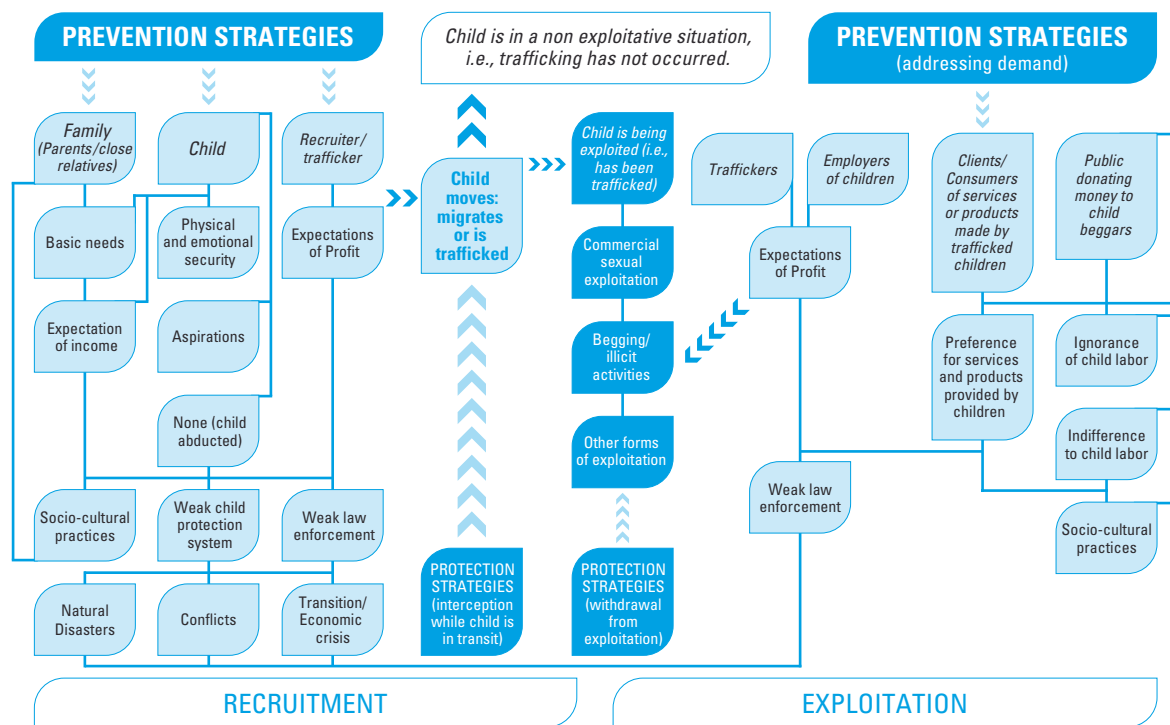


Figure 6: Trafficking process: individuals involved and causes of trafficking

### 3.2 The role of measures to protect children in preventing trafficking

Preventing child trafficking also involves taking measures to strengthen the forms of protection available to children. This includes protection against other types of abuse which, evidence shows, trafficked children are more likely to have experienced than other children *before* ever being trafficked. Indeed, such abuse is a contributing factor or even a direct cause of the child being trafficked. Analysis finds that the factors that heighten vulnerability to trafficking are the same as those that increase vulnerability to other forms of violence, abuse and exploitation. It is, therefore, important to improve the effectiveness of child protection services and related institutions *in general* as well as those specifically and directly involved in combating trafficking. This requires government and government agencies to ensure that children are protected against *all* forms of discrimination, violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect.

The recognition of a child’s right to special protection measures was accepted by Member States of the Council of Europe in the new European Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (2005).<sup>37</sup> Article 5 in the chapter on “prevention, cooperation and other measures” obliges all countries which ratify the Convention to promote a human rights-based and child-sensitive approach in the development, implementation and assessment of all policies and programmes designed to prevent trafficking in human beings.

The same article states: “Each Party will take specific measures to reduce children’s vulnerability to trafficking, notably by creating a protective environment for them.” The term ‘protective environment’ is used by UNICEF and other organizations to refer to the different elements around the child that act to fulfil the rights of the child to protection from discrimination, violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect. These elements act individually and collectively to protect children. The protective environment is comprised of individuals in the family, community and society who surround the child as well as of policies, legislative and regulatory frameworks, services, structures, institutions, and decision-making mechanisms that make up the system to protect children.

<sup>37</sup> The Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings is found at: <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/EN/Treaties/Html/197.htm>

### 3.3 The steps to take to design prevention initiatives

In countries where children are already being trafficked (into or out of an area), it is important to put the children concerned at centre stage and to make use of the information and advice they can give. This involves a number of steps, as follows:

1. Collect information from children (and young people who have been trafficked as children) to understand the circumstances in which they were trafficked and how/why traffickers were able to gain and keep control of them.
2. Analyze the information both to understand the traffickers' methods and to identify opportunities to increase the ability of children to avoid falling under the control of traffickers.
3. Analyze the various causes of child trafficking and identify opportunities to intervene in order to have a preventive effect. Different analytical models may be used for this purpose, including the dialectical model of causal hierarchy, the economic model of "supply and demand" dynamic, the "push and pull" factors model and the individual behavioural model.
4. Find out whether children who have been trafficked have any common characteristics which made them more vulnerable to traffickers than other children.
5. Identify the remedial actions necessary to reduce vulnerability.
6. Consult children who have already been trafficked about the impact on them of any previous initiatives to prevent trafficking. Did the initiative have any effect on them? Why did it fail to prevent them from being trafficked? What might have been more effective?

Once a preventive action is being implemented, it is always necessary to assess its impact. This should include talking to the children targeted as well as others affected. Since many prevention efforts rely predominantly on information campaigns to try to influence children and adults, simply confirming that they have acquired new knowledge is not enough. It is necessary to establish whether they are likely to behave or have behaved in a different way as a result of the new knowledge.

### 3.4 Examples of strategies to prevent child trafficking

One possible way of analyzing the strategies to prevent child trafficking is to divide them into strategies pursued in areas where children are recruited, i.e., the supply side, and those used in the areas where trafficked children are exploited, i.e., the demand side.

#### 3.4.1 Examples of strategies to prevent child trafficking on the 'supply side'

Prevention strategies on the supply side of trafficking are closely related to the circumstances in which children or their parents decide to leave home or go abroad. They should stem from a good understanding of the causes that lead to trafficking and their interaction. These causes occur at different levels and include, for example, children's perceptions of their circumstances but also the failure of individuals and systems to protect children when it is their duty to do so. The latter include parents, family members, friends as well as systems of social protection, education, health and law enforcement.

##### 3.4.1.1 Efforts to influence children directly

Different ways of influencing children have been tried, each with different objectives.

- Giving children information about trafficking (stressing the risks of abuse once a child leaves home or leaves her or his country to earn a living elsewhere and explaining what behaviour might precipitate children into the control of traffickers);
- educating children and developing skills that will help them avoid being trafficked (e.g., life skills);
- urging children not to drop out of school before completing their compulsory schooling, not to leave home prematurely, or not to migrate abroad;

- giving adolescents advice on how to migrate safely, e.g., sensible precautions to take when considering work abroad or actually working abroad; working abroad and how to check whether offers of jobs abroad are genuine (and safe to accept).
- promoting employment for school leavers near home by providing vocational training and better job opportunities; and
- providing protection against domestic violence and discrimination to adolescents who are likely to leave home if no action is taken to protect them; and
- creating safe alternatives, such as semi-independent living projects, for adolescents who cannot be adequately protected while remaining in their own families.

The most extensively used of these strategies is the first one. This involves disseminating information in various media: books, leaflets, posters, school classes, radio programmes and films. However, the key message contained in information about trafficking varies. In some cases children are made aware of the risks associated with leaving home and migrating to earn a living elsewhere (whether in their own country or abroad) and given some idea of what precautions they ought to take. In other cases they are given information simply to deter them from leaving home or migrating without being offered any alternatives. Evidently the intentions behind these two messages are different, but the information they deliver (stressing the abuse to which trafficking victims are subjected) may look substantially the same.<sup>38</sup>

There is a risk that any information of this sort can produce inaccurate stereotypes (about what sort of people are most likely to be trafficked, what sort of people are traffickers, which countries are associated with trafficking and so on). For example, in the Republic of Moldova a girl who was trafficked into commercial sexual exploitation in the Russian Federation reported that before she left Moldova she had learned that adolescent girls were in danger of being trafficked in Turkey, but not in Russia. Consequently it did not cross her mind that she should take precautions in Russia to avoid being held captive in a brothel.<sup>39</sup>

Box 9

**Influencing young people with a film**

A high-profile information campaign accompanied the 2003 release of the film *Lilya-4-ever* in Central and Eastern Europe. The campaign message warned adolescents and young adults of the risks involved in accepting money in return for acts of sex. The film tells the story of a teenage girl in an anonymous Russian city whose single mother emigrates, leaving her behind. Lilya is trafficked to Sweden by a young man pretending to be her boyfriend. She is kept locked up in an apartment there and obliged to have sex with men who pay her captors. The film has a tragic ending. In the Republic of Moldova, a cinema chain agreed to show the film for free in its cinemas during the 2003-2004 winter holidays. More than 30,000 Moldovans are believed to have seen the film. A number of efforts ran in parallel with the film: organizations handed out leaflets in cinema lobbies and cinemagoers were asked what they had learned from the film. These additional actions helped prevent creation of stereotypes about profile of trafficked victims, ways of recruitment and main destinations.

Secondly, if lack of information did not play a big role for children who ended up being trafficked, then these campaigns are failing to address the real causes of trafficking. Other causes such as exposure to domestic violence, lack of employment opportunities or extreme poverty may be more relevant – and impossible to address through information campaigns alone.

<sup>38</sup> For a more detailed assessment of the messages in information campaigns that are designed to prevent trafficking (in adults as well as children), see R. Rosenberg, S. Lazaroiu and E. Tyuryukanova, "Best Practices for Programming to Prevent Trafficking in Human Beings in Europe and Eurasia," Development Alternatives Inc for USAID, 2004.

<sup>39</sup> M. Dottridge, "Action to Prevent Child Trafficking in South Eastern Europe: A Preliminary Assessment," UNICEF and Terre des hommes Foundation (forthcoming).

## Box 10

**IOFA advice to young people thinking of migrating abroad**

In Latvia the International Organization for Adolescents ran an anti-trafficking campaign targeted at adolescents and young adults. Here is its checklist of things to do to protect against false job promises abroad:

1. Verify whether a job agency or opportunity was legitimate;
2. Ask for an employment contract;
3. Have someone review a contract and comment on it;
4. Review and signing a contract for employment;
5. Leave a copy of the contract with relatives or friends;
6. Leave a copy of a passport with relatives or friends;
7. Leave contact information with relatives or friends;
8. Leave employers contact information with relatives/friends;
9. Create a password/code language to let people know, "I'm in trouble";
10. Attend to a career counselling session at a youth centre.

Boak, A. Boldosser and O. Biu, Smooth Flight: A Guide to Preventing Youth Trafficking. International Organization of Adolescents [IOFA], 2003, page 95).

### 3.4.1.2 Identifying children who are at 'high risk' and focusing protection efforts on them

One distinct strategy involves identifying children who are at particularly high risk of being trafficked and focusing protection efforts on them. This strategy is sometimes coupled with efforts to influence the behaviour of the children concerned, while sometimes the emphasis is on changing the behaviour of their parents or other key actors.

This approach is based on initial research that identifies the characteristics of children who have already been trafficked and finds out what distinguishes them from other children. In some cases the distinctive characteristic is their social identity. For example, children from particular ethnic groups or geographical areas are trafficked in disproportionately high numbers. In other cases, the distinctive characteristic concerns their family and household (such as extremely poor and/or one-parent households) or a particular experience from earlier in their childhood (such as domestic abuse or a period spent in a boarding school or a residential institution).

The type of preventive action that is appropriate must be adapted to tackle the characteristics which are considered to put some children at greater risk than others of being trafficked. For example, NGOs in southern Albania trying to prevent children from the Roma and Egyptian minorities from being trafficked to Greece focused their efforts on keeping high-risk children from dropping out of school, while also providing their households with in-kind income supplements.

The analysis of existing data about children who have been trafficked in Europe shows that the nature of the characteristics which they share in common varies. Only in the case of children who share a common ethnic identity (such as those belonging to Roma-related minorities) do they have an objective characteristic which makes it feasible for a child protection agency to identify such children with relative ease. (However, child protection agencies run the risk of being accused of discrimination if they assume that Roma children are at greater risk of being trafficked than non-Roma children without having adequate evidence).

When a particular geographic region, such as the province of Moldova in northeast Romania, is reported to have a disproportionately high number of trafficked children, it is obvious that preventive efforts should be concentrated there. It is not clear, however, which particular children require spe-

cial protection measures or what the measures should be. Further investigation is required to get a better picture. When the characteristic which trafficked children share in common concerns their experience at home – e.g., a higher than average incidence of domestic abuse – it would be possible to focus on them if the domestic abuse was noticed and reported, but not otherwise. This is an extra reason for trying to improve rates of detection and protection measures in such cases.

### 3.4.1.3 Efforts to influence parents and other adults

Since parents and other adults sometimes play a key role in sending their children away or allowing school age adolescents to migrate, they too can be a key target group to influence. This may be done through:

- disseminating information about trafficking to parents and other adults in communities where children are being trafficked (describing the harm suffered by children who are trafficked);
- educating parents on the benefits of school education and the harm caused when children drop out of school to start work prematurely;
- reducing parents' dependency on their children's earnings (and their vulnerability to pressure from traffickers to accept a loan or advance on their child's future earnings) by reducing household income poverty, e.g., by giving households an income supplement or other material assistance or enabling parents or other members of the household to generate an income;
- reducing domestic violence (both violence against children and violence against other members of the household, particularly a child's mother), which encourages children to leave home.

Evidently the first option here can influence a variety of other people in a community who might be able to play a role in identifying children who are at risk of being trafficked. Informing adult members of a community that children within the community are being trafficked may be a first step towards establishing a community-based protection network in which professionals who are in regular contact with children share information about children assessed as being at risk (of being trafficked) and agree on a common strategy for protecting each child who is at risk.

### 3.4.1.4 Efforts to address weaknesses in child protection systems

A further strategy to prevent trafficking is to identify and address the weaknesses and shortcomings in child protection systems.<sup>40</sup> On numerous occasions both national child protection agencies and systems designed to protect children from abuse perform ineffectively or fail to function altogether. For example, weaknesses in the system may be linked to lack of adequate procedures and capacities in schools, health and social service institutions for the early identification of vulnerability to trafficking due to violence, abuse, lack of parental care, lack of referral mechanisms to get children to appropriate support services and lack of such services altogether. Another example is the ineffective implementation of laws against child trafficking or against the exploitation of children. Law enforcement officials and social workers may also fail to identify children who have been trafficked and then fail to intervene in a way that results in the child leaving the control of the trafficker or exploiter.

Identifying these short-comings and remedying them is a strategy to prevent trafficking, as well as other sorts of child abuse. Thus, strengthening the child protection system is a priority for both preventing child trafficking and protecting the rights of child victims of trafficking. Ensuring protection systems are effective means having adequate laws and procedures in place, having structures, organizations and professionals with a relevant mandate and resources to implement these measures, and making sure there is adequate coordination (and exchange of information) among private and public agencies and organizations from different sectors.

<sup>40</sup> The child protection system does not exist as distinct, easily identifiable 'entity', however, it can be envisioned and mapped out by identifying all the obligations for child protection within the social sectors, justice and law enforcement systems. The 'map' that emerges is actually a network of provisions, measures, structures and services that reveal the intersectoral and cross-sectoral nature of the child protection system.

### 3.4.2 Examples of strategies to prevent child trafficking on the ‘demand side’

Many recent international agreements urge that the ‘demand’ for the services of trafficking victims should be tackled more systematically.<sup>41</sup> It is often assumed that ‘demand’ refers primarily, or solely, to demand for commercial sex from men and boys. However, the main ‘demand’ for adults and children who are trafficked comes from those who can potentially make a profit out of them, either in the course of recruiting and moving them or once they are earning money and being paid little or none of the proceeds.

This potential, together with the shortcomings of migration and protection laws and failures of law enforcement officials, prompts traffickers, employers (pimps, the owners of brothels or sweat shops and even householders who employ child domestic workers) and various third parties (recruiters, agents, transporters, corrupted law and migration officials and others) to make a deliberate decision to profit from trafficking in children.

Some actors participate knowingly in human trafficking, others may be ignorant of the way they help traffickers. For example, bus drivers who accept fares and transport children knowing that this is unlawful or members of the public who, thinking they are helping children, donate money to child beggars who have been trafficked for just that purpose.

A common narrow understanding of the term demand, means that activities tackling causes which relate to the demand commonly place an accent on the behaviour of clients in the sex industry although this type of demand has very distinct characteristics.<sup>42</sup> As such they overlook the wide range of other aspects of demand for services including for forced labour and begging. Understanding the different reasons that cause people to donate money which goes to traffickers or to use services provided by trafficked children (deliberately or not), as well as to procure children or profit by participating in the trafficking process, is important in order to design sensible strategies to reduce demand for trafficked children.

Strategies to address ‘demand’ for trafficked children include the following:

- prosecuting traffickers and their associates in order to deter others from engaging in trafficking;
- making the purchase of sexual services from certain categories of individuals a crime (e.g., from children below the age of consent for sexual relations; or from any child under age 18; or from anyone, adult or child, whom the person paying for sexual services knows to have been trafficked or thinks might have been; or from anyone who has been trafficked (whether or not the purchaser was aware of their status);
- prohibiting the ‘exploitation of the prostitution of others’ (whether the ‘others’ are children or adults);
- influencing men and boys who pay for sex in non-punitive ways (e.g., through public information programmes);
- influencing members of the public who donate money to child beggars who have been trafficked;
- influencing members of minority communities in which adolescents are commonly employed as domestic workers (particularly school-age children who are working full-time and failing to attend school).

<sup>41</sup> The Council of Europe’s Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (2005) requires State Parties “To discourage the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation of persons, especially women and children that leads to trafficking, each Party shall adopt or strengthen legislative, administrative, educational, social, cultural or other measures...” (article 6) and to consider adopting “such legislative and other measures as may be necessary to establish as criminal offences under its internal law, the use of services which are the object of exploitation” when the person using these services is aware that the person is a victim of trafficking (article 19).

<sup>42</sup> See “‘Demand for sexual services deriving from exploitation’ in “Report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography,” by Juan Miguel Petit’, Report to the 62nd session of the UN Commission on Human Rights, UN document E/CN.4/2006/68, 12 January 2006.

Box 11

**Reducing donations to trafficked beggars**

When Albanian children first appeared on the streets of Thessalonica and other Greek cities in the late 1990s, washing car windscreens to earn money, a Greek NGO, ARSIS (Association for the Social Support of Youth), responded by setting up a drop-in centre for the street children and began collecting information about their predicament. Once ARSIS realized that the children were victims of trafficking, the NGO set about influencing policy makers and city officials. It was some years before ARSIS concluded that it would be in the children's best interests to cut the supply of money on which the traffickers depended - the money which the Greek public donated to children who washed their windscreens (and later begged outside churches, played music and sold flowers and other articles to people in restaurants). This meant reaching the public, initially in Thessalonica and later in other cities, to tell them that the children were being exploited and to suggest that the children would be better off without their charitable donations.

ARSIS did not want to reduce the public's inclination to be charitable, so it made sure that the campaign messages, "Don't give money to children in the streets" and "You don't help children in the streets by giving them money", were accompanied by an explanation that the children were being abused by others, not simply collecting money to survive. ARSIS enlisted the support of journalists in getting the message across, particularly once members of the public expressed concern that the children might be punished by their controllers if they failed to earn as much as they used to. The number of Albanian children begging in Thessalonica and other Greek cities has fallen considerably. This is for several reasons; the campaign to reduce donations is just one of them.

From: ARSIS newsletter, December 2004, and Terre des hommes, *The Trafficking of Albanian Children in Greece*, 2003.

**3.4.2.1 Improving systems to protect children in areas through which children are trafficked and where they are exploited**

Just as there are some elements of the child protection system that act to protect children in the areas where they are recruited to be trafficked, so other elements of child protection or other systems, e.g., law enforcement, border control, are intended to protect children who are in transit or once they are being exploited. The latter are also meant to address the demand for trafficking. Once again, these systems or their elements often fail to perform adequately, thus strengthening them is another route to prevention. Five strategies are particularly relevant:

- setting procedures and mechanisms to enable immigration and law enforcement officials to identify trafficked children while they are in transit, notably at border crossings;
- imposing special requirements for children crossing borders including standardization of identity documents such as passports, requirements that children crossing a border without either parent should in certain circumstances be required to show that one or both parents has agreed to their leaving their own country and visiting another country;
- regulating employment in the informal sector including employment sectors that specially involve young people and those that attract both adolescent and adult migrants. For example, regulation of au pair employment can fix a minimum age for adolescents from abroad to come and work as part-time nannies and domestic helpers. Authorities can regulate the activities of employment agencies which supply manual labour to farms and other businesses, with reports in some EU countries of forced labour or unsatisfactory working conditions;
- setting systems to identify children earning money in the informal sector in exploitative circumstances, including children who have been trafficked and others involved in 'worst forms of child labour'; and
- ensuring adequate cooperation between agencies involved in child protection in different countries.

Of course, it is important that systems to identify trafficked children in transit or provide protection to children who are on the move (such as unaccompanied or separated children) should not prevent children from exercising their rights to freedom of movement or to seek a better future for themselves. Several countries have imposed blanket bans on certain categories of young people leaving the country, ostensibly to prevent them being trafficked. These strategies have been widely regarded as inappropriate. On one side, they push traffickers to find other ways of trafficking that are more difficult to uncover. On the other, they lead to abuse of a child's right to free movement.

### 3.5 Key lessons about efforts to prevent children from being trafficked

A recent study of efforts to prevent children from being trafficked in four SEE countries noted that extra efforts were needed both by the governments of the countries concerned and the authorities of the numerous countries to which their children were being trafficked (countries in the EU, along with the Russian Federation and Turkey). The study ends with eight recommendations about the steps needed to make prevention more effective.<sup>43</sup>

1. Improve the collection and analysis of data about children who have already been trafficked, so that prevention actions can take advantage of this data. The type of evidence needed about the reasons why a particular child was trafficked is different to the evidence routinely collected when assessing the needs of an abused (trafficked) child or when investigating what crimes have been committed against the child.
2. Be ahead of traffickers – go where children are. This means that anti-trafficking organizations should try and work in parallel to traffickers in a strategic way, accepting no geographical limit on their area of operation (and therefore getting involved in initiatives in areas of both recruitment and exploitation and, if necessary, in between), working in a network with others (just as traffickers work in networks), securing the trust of children's parents and demonstrating to them that there is a material benefit to cooperating with an anti-trafficking organization, rather than only with traffickers.
3. Ensure better strategic planning for information campaigns. Such campaigns should have a strategy which matches the situation in the country or area where they are being implemented, rather than being an 'off the shelf' campaign designed for use anywhere.
4. Ensure life skills education is part of the mainstream school curriculum.
5. Develop child protection systems and the infrastructure necessary to protect children (both in their countries of origin and in the countries to which children are trafficked).
6. Provide clear information to the general public about what constitutes child abuse in general and child trafficking in particular and how to respond.
7. Target efforts to reduce demand more strategically.
8. Ensure that all efforts to prevent child trafficking respect child rights principles and provisions, and are rooted in good quality data and analysis, programme logic, monitoring and evaluating practices and measuring progress towards the expected results.

<sup>43</sup> M. Dottridge, op. cit.

