

**Common Platform for Action
of the Sub-Regional Consultation on the Development of Strategies to fight
Child trafficking for exploitative labour purposes in
West and Central Africa
22 - 24 February 2000, Libreville, Gabon**

I. CONTEXT AND PROCESS

The organisation of this consultation is a long process which began in July 1998, at a technical workshop held in Cotonou on trafficking of child domestic workers in West and Central Africa, organised by the UNICEF Regional Office for West and Central Africa, in collaboration with the ILO Regional Office for Africa. Since this first workshop was held, several activities have been carried out at the national level to better understand and inform the public on the situation of child trafficking in the sub-region and to seek solutions aimed at ending this phenomenon. Reflecting a real preoccupation of the governments, of the civil society and of development partners in the countries of the region, discussions and consultations have been held at the national and regional levels, while studies were carried out or are presently under way at the national and sub-regional levels, with the assistance of UNICEF within the framework of the global programme on child trafficking on the one hand, and on the other hand, of the ILO within the scope of its IPEC project on child trafficking in the sub-region.

The Libreville Consultation is the result of a long process of collaboration and continuous exchange between UNICEF, ILO and the government of Gabon, which has facilitated the participation of 21 countries of the region of West and Central Africa. The Consultation brought together high-ranking government officials, representatives of international organisations including the International Organisation for Migration, and regional governmental organisations, and representatives of employers' and employees' associations, representatives of regional, national and international NGOs as well as the media, and representatives of UNICEF and ILO from the headquarters, the region and the countries. The objectives of the consultation were to review follow-up activities of the recommendations of the Cotonou workshop, to improve knowledge around issues of the problem of the worst forms of child labour, especially child trafficking for exploitative labour purposes in the region, and to arrive at the adoption of a common platform for action in this area.

II. CHARACTERISTIC TRAITS AND MAIN CAUSES OF CHILD TRAFFICKING

Child trafficking in West and Central Africa encompasses many realities which render the perception and recognition thereof difficult. It is aimed at the exploitation of children as a labour force in many sectors of the urban and rural informal economy, as well as in the domestic setting. Trafficking is based on the multiplication of informal actors at the internal level and on the organisation of powerful networks at the cross-border level.

Child trafficking in West and Central Africa is favoured by:

- the high level of poverty in the region;
- cultural values and practices;
- unawareness of the risks involved;
- insufficient training and educational opportunities;
- the desire of children to migrate in search of economic and social wellbeing;
- high demand for cheap and submissive child labour;
- traditional migration of adults within the framework of economic activities;
- inadequate or non-existent national legislation on child trafficking;

- inadequate border control;
- weak institutional mechanisms;
- preponderance of informal economy.

III. ACTIONS

In light of the foregoing, the delegates to the Consultation **propose** the following actions.

3.1 To increase advocacy and sensitisation for strengthening mechanisms of social regulation within communities and institutions

1. To strengthen sensitisation campaigns, based on:
 - local advocacy: to develop the setting up of local committees in charge of vigilance and surveillance, in collaboration with village development committees, and to train the members of such committees in communication techniques;
 - television and radio of proximity, laying emphasis on the maltreatment and testimonies of children, the education of parents on the rights of the child;
 - the associations and NGOs on the rights of the child;
 - women associations and groups operating in this area;
 - associations of citizens from the countries concerned;
 - advocacy with the legislative bodies.
2. Encourage the participation of children in sensitisation campaign through children's parliament, and any other form of children's organisation.
3. To further integrate articles 11, 18, 34 and 35 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in sensitisation activities on the rights of the child.
4. To improve the quality and the management of the information by the media through :
 - seminars for sensitising journalists on the techniques of investigating trafficking;
 - enforcement of the code of conduct by journalists on the rights of the child.

At a more global level:

5. To develop periodic exchange of information (programmes, reports, etc.) among regional, national and local radio stations.

3.2 To put in place an appropriate legal and institutional framework

1. To review the Penal Codes: creation of the infraction of child trafficking (definition of the constituent acts, definition of perpetrators and their collaborators as well as aggravating conditions and fix adequate and severe penalties) and the reinforcement of the repressive disposals:
 - advocacy with legislative bodies and the bar;
 - constitution of a working group (composed by legal experts, representatives of governmental and non-governmental structures operating in the are of child trafficking...);
 - contribute to the harmonisation of legal provisions within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic and Monetary Community of Central African States, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM);
 - elaborate, within a reasonable delay, an international legal instrument on child trafficking taking into consideration existing relevant conventions and charters.

2. To adopt a regulation relating to the movement of children out of the territory, favouring prior control in the locality of origin of the children and making it possible for teenagers to obtain identification papers;
3. To train personnel in charge of implementing new laws and regulations, especially laws and regulations on the rights of the child;
4. To strengthen the capacities of structures of control and intervention units, in terms of personnel and equipment.
5. To favour the creation and the strengthening of Brigades of Minors;
6. To ratify without delay the ILO Convention N° 182 on the worst forms of child labour and ensure its wide dissemination and vulgarisation;
7. To ensure the implementation, the follow-up and the evaluation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the ILO Convention N° 182 and the Recommendation N° 190 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour;
8. In the case of the examination of the country report on the CRC, to implement the recommendations of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

3.3 Improving care for children who are victims of trafficking

1. Set up or strengthen reception and transit centres for children who are victims of trafficking.
2. Put in place human resources necessary for the medical and psycho-social assistance of children, and any other form of support, while waiting to reunite them with their families, in structures that are deemed appropriate.
3. Define a procedural manual for the public and private services which handle cases of children who are victims of child trafficking. This tool should clarify the roles and define the responsibilities and measures to be taken.
4. Seek, through concerted efforts, solutions for bearing the cost of repatriating children to their locality of origin (internal traffic) and the cost of repatriating children to their country of origin (cross-border traffic).
5. To empower NGOs operating in the area of protection of children in need of special protection measures and strengthen their capacities to receive and care for children victims of trafficking.
6. Strengthen the competencies and capacities of management and monitoring of social services at decentralised level.
7. Ensure attendant measures for families of children who are victims of trafficking at the moment of their return (empower the parents to care for them).
8. Develop a participatory approach that involves children in the resolution of the problem.

3.4 To improve the knowledge and monitoring of trafficking on the basis of decentralised, flexible and indirect mechanisms

1. To strengthen the capacity of community surveillance committees:

- organise the committees into national and regional networks;
 - train the members in information gathering and transmission techniques.
2. To sensitise and train NGOs in identifying and recording cases of children who are victims of trafficking, within the framework of their traditional support activities.
 3. To centralise the data collected on trafficking:
 - designate or set up an ad-hoc structure (equipped) and charged with setting up a data base;
 - define a procedural manual allowing the transmission of all information on child trafficking (drawn from the care of maltreated children or children in difficulty, interception or repatriation of victims of child trafficking, by public or private services) within this structure.
 4. To systematically integrate trafficking-related concerns in studies on child labour.
 5. To establish partnerships with research institutes to further investigate the relations between child trafficking and poverty, the context of globalisation, cultural values.
 6. To broaden the field of research to include:
 - the various forms of child trafficking in the sub-region, in the rest of the African continent and the other regions of the world;
 - international adoptions.
 7. To use flexible research methods, such as the techniques of Participatory Action-Research, or statistical rapid methods such as the “Rapid Assessment Surveys”.
 8. To develop and integrate indicators to monitor trafficking in the national system of social statistics.
 9. To create a sub-region observatory on child trafficking.
 10. To strengthen reciprocal sharing of information by periodic and systematic transfer of data and information, among the ministries, the NGOs, UNICEF and ILO.

3.5 To strengthen inter-ministerial co-operation

1. To extend the partnership to sovereign ministries.
2. To designate a focal point in each of the ministries concerned.
3. To set up a working group (or co-ordination mechanism) at the governmental level.
4. At the level of States, to clarify the institutional leadership and the areas of competence of the technical Ministries in drawing up and implementing a government policy on the eradication of child trafficking, especially the Ministry of Family Affairs or Social Affairs and the Ministry of Labour.

3.6 To reinforce inter-governmental co-operation

1. To adopt a procedure for repatriating children, based on cost sharing.

2. To adopt bilateral and regional police co-operation agreements, specifically on child trafficking.
3. To reinforce the role of Interpol bureaux in combating trafficking by:
 - training at the regional level;
 - systematic involvement of country offices in exchange and discussion forums at national and regional level.
4. To include the issue of child trafficking on the agenda of the OAU, of the ECOWAS, of the Economic Community of Central Africa and of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central African States, abiding by the procedures related thereto.
5. At the level of UN agencies and international organisations:
 - determine the comparative advantages of each organisation for efficient distribution of resources and efforts (prevention, protection, rehabilitation);
 - co-ordinate the approaches, especially in bilateral dialogue with the government;
 - avoid duplication and capitalise on past efforts, guaranteeing the integration of plans of action, projects and activities within the framework of the pre-existing national strategies and plans of action.
6. At the global level, to include the fight against child trafficking within the framework of:
 - the strategy to alleviate poverty;
 - greater integration of policies and programmes in favour of children in the State budget;
 - advocacy for cancellation of the debts of the poorest countries.

3.7 To guarantee the implementation and follow-up of the platform for action

1. The delegates of countries participating in the consultation undertake to report on the results of the works as soon as they return to competent authorities.
2. They also undertake to carry out necessary actions at national level to ensure wide restitution of the common platform for action.
3. Set up a standing sub-regional monitoring and evaluation committee comprising representatives of governments, of employers and employees, and the civil society, with the participation of UNICEF and ILO.
4. Periodically organise a sub-regional technical consultation for follow-up and evaluation.

Done at Libreville, on 24 February 2000

The Participants