

UNICEF Côte d'Ivoire  
2007  
**FACT SHEET**

## Child Trafficking



UNICEF Côte d'Ivoire/2006/Bruno Brioni  
NOTE : Children in photo above have not been subject to child trafficking

## CHILD TRAFFICKING

*A 'child victim of trafficking' is any person under 18 who is recruited, transported, transferred, harbored or received for the purpose of exploitation, either within or outside a country (Palermo Protocol 15/11/2000).*

**Child trafficking is one of the gravest violations of human rights in the world today.**

Every year, children and their families are ensnared by the empty promises of traffickers – promises of a better life, of an escape route from poverty – and hundreds of thousands of children are smuggled across borders and sold as mere commodities. They are subjected to prostitution, forced into marriage or illegally adopted; they provide cheap or unpaid labor, they are exploited as house servants, beggars, farmers, mine workers, and workers in the informal sector or are recruited into armed groups. Their survival and development are threatened, and their rights to education, to health, to grow up within a family, to protection from exploitation and abuse, are denied.

Child trafficking is lucrative and often linked with criminal activity and corruption. Because of its illegal and hidden nature, it is an activity hard to address.

## CHILD TRAFFICKING IN COTE D'IVOIRE

Côte d'Ivoire is at the same time a country of departure for Ivorian children and a country of destination for children trafficked from neighboring countries. Both internal and cross-border trafficking occur in Côte d'Ivoire.

The invisible and clandestine nature of trafficking and the lack of strong data collection systems make it difficult to determine the number of children trafficked from, to and within the country.

Because of internal inequalities, important internal migration movements exist from rural to urban areas and from northern to southern regions. Due to its fairly healthier economy compared to other countries in West Africa, Côte d'Ivoire is one of the main destinations of children trafficked in the sub region. Experience tells us that children from Burkina Faso, Mali, Togo, Benin, Niger and Ghana are smuggled into Côte d'Ivoire to be exploited. According to the latest findings, the vast majority of the approximately 200.000 children who are working on Ivorian cocoa farms, originate from Mali, Burkina Faso, Togo and the central and northern regions of Côte d'Ivoire.

Children trafficked to Côte d'Ivoire are mostly forced into working in the domestic, informal and mining sectors, which are the worst forms of child labor. In addition, they can be found in cocoa and agricultural production. Their rights are not respected and children are exposed to all sorts of exploitation and abuse.

Child trafficking in Côte d'Ivoire, like so many other West African countries, is characterized by the use of community and family networks for the recruitment of children by traffickers. This allows traffickers to hide and mask their illicit activity and to present their "products" in a "softer" and more accepted way. The recruitment of children at the community level is in this way often perceived by the collectivity as a service that the traffickers offer to children and parents and not as a threat to children's rights.

## CAUSES OF TRAFFICKING IN COTE D'IVOIRE

- **Lack of documents and birth registration:** A child who has not been registered has no nationality; no legal identity and is not able to prove his minor age in order to be protected. He has no access to social services such as education and healthcare and is therefore more vulnerable to trafficking.
- **Widespread poverty sparking the push-and-pull factors and socio-economic inequalities** between the North and the South of Côte d'Ivoire, rural and urban areas and between Côte d'Ivoire and neighboring countries, which cause migrations from poorer to richer territories of adults but also of accompanied and non-accompanied children. Children who do not live in their family environment are more vulnerable to trafficking, exploitation and abuse.
- **Insufficient legal frameworks and weak policy implementation and law enforcement.**
- **Corruption in West Africa** allows traffickers to obtain fake documents for their victims and to elude police controls.
- **Abuse of the common practice of placement and fostering, along with weakened extended family safety nets:** Placement is very common in West Africa and especially in larger families, where children are given to a relative, or friend to receive an education and contribute to the economic activities of his host family, a form of mutual assistance, based on solidarity and affection. However, changes in the African society are such that exploitation tends to worsen. The contribution to the economic activity sometimes becomes the unique goal of the placement, at the expense of the overall development process of the child.
- **Illiteracy, insufficient availability and access to education and unemployment,** especially in rural areas, causes despair and desire to emigrate and parents and children to the luring promises of traffickers. Parents often ignore the harmful impact of precocious exodus and of worst forms of child labor on children.
- **Degeneration of the traditional role of child work into economic exploitation and child labor.**

## UNICEF ACTIONS AGAINST CHILD TRAFFICKING

### MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS and the fight against child trafficking

Achieving MDG 1 – to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger – will eliminate the conditions that are a root cause of trafficking. Because this dangerous human rights violation prevents a child from going to school and can lead to sexual exploitation, lack of protective environment and infection with sexually transmitted diseases, protecting children from trafficking will support universal primary education (MDG 2) and help halt and reverse the spread of Aids (MDG 6).

Trafficking is a global and transnational issue. Fighting such a phenomenon requires cooperation at national, regional and international levels. UNICEF works at national, regional and international level to promote and support agreements, standards and mechanisms that allow countries to better cooperate to combat trafficking. UNICEF Côte d'Ivoire coordinates with other West African country offices, partner NGOs, UNICEF and IOM West and Central Africa Regional Offices and with Embassies and Governments to organize the safe return of victims to their country of origin.

UNICEF's fight against child trafficking in Côte d'Ivoire focuses on the following intervention axes:

#### 1. Strengthening of legislation and law enforcement

UNICEF encourages the strengthening of existing laws and the implementation and monitoring of international conventions. UNICEF has supported the development of a bilateral agreement between Côte d'Ivoire and Mali and of the multilateral agreement against child trafficking with 9 West African countries. UNICEF Côte d'Ivoire is also providing technical support and undertaking advocacy for the adoption of a national law against child trafficking and the worst forms of child labor.

#### 2. Assistance to victims

UNICEF technically and financially supports Ivorian institutions and civil society organizations in order to guarantee psycho-social, nutritional, and health assistance to victims from the moment of their identification to their reintegration in society.

#### 3. Recovery and reintegration of trafficked children

Helping children who have been trafficked and exploited re-enter society is a key area of UNICEF's work. UNICEF works with national institutions, NGOs and partner organizations, to guarantee that trafficked children are listened to, and that a solution for their future is found, in accordance with their best interest. Sometimes this results into ensuring return to their country of origin and family, but at other times, into providing social and economic integration in the destination country.

#### 4. Strengthening of coordination mechanisms and harmonizing procedures

UNICEF Côte d'Ivoire works closely with the Ivorian Government and other partners involved in the fight against child trafficking, in particular: IOM, WFP, ILO, the German Technical Cooperation, BICE, Save the Children, the Red Cross, children and youth movements, the National Committee to Fight against Child Trafficking in Côte d'Ivoire,

the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Employment and regional organizations such as ECOWAS.

UNICEF supports principles that have been elaborated in consultation with partners involved in the fight against child trafficking in West and Central Africa. The Recommended Guidelines and Principles are intended as a framework and reference point for all efforts to prevent trafficking and to protect the rights of trafficked persons. With the support of UNICEF they have been incorporated in a manual of guidelines that will soon be finalized and diffused among actors involved in the protection of trafficked children.

## **5. Capacity building**

UNICEF contributes to the strengthening of capacities of actors involved in child trafficking prevention, identification and in the protection of victims by raising awareness and by technically and financially supporting the organization of training workshops for transporters, security forces and labor inspectors on child trafficking and child labor.

UNICEF Côte d'Ivoire also intervenes against child trafficking by promoting and strengthening birth registration, fighting against children's exploitation and abuse, empowering children and youth movements and promoting children's rights.

## **SOME RESULTS**

- From October 2006 to April 2007, around 100 trafficked children were intercepted and reintegrated in society, and/or united with their families. They benefited from a comprehensive assistance including provisional papers provided through their embassy, temporary shelter, alimentary and psychosocial assistance, and a medical check up with yellow fever and meningitis vaccinations.
- A multilateral agreement on child trafficking in 9 countries of the sub-region has been signed.
- A technical committee for the monitoring of the multilateral agreement has been established.
- A bilateral agreement on child trafficking between Côte d'Ivoire and Mali has been signed.
- Reactivation of the youth parliament and involvement of children and youth movements in consultations and meetings concerning child trafficking at the national and regional level.
- Police officers have been trained on child trafficking issues.
- Registration of 3,774 children with civil registry that were not declared within the legal timeframe.
- Pre-registration of 22,497 children.
- Capacities of the national committee on child trafficking have been strengthened.
- Collaboration and coordination with IOM and GTZ for the interception, assistance and reintegration of children trafficked have been strengthened.

**UNICEF PERSPECTIVES/FUTURE CHALLENGES  
in the FIGHT AGAINST CHILD TRAFFICKING in COTE d'IVOIRE**

- **Strengthening monitoring and reporting systems on child trafficking trends in Côte d'Ivoire,**
- **Strengthening capacities of families and communities to prevent child trafficking**
- **Supporting the national referral system on child trafficking and protection and reintegration responses to victims of child trafficking at community, national and trans-national level**
- **Advocacy for national laws and bilateral agreements on child trafficking and worst forms of child labor**
- **Supporting the revitalization of the birth registration system**
- **Strengthening inter-agency partnerships**

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