

# PREVENTING CHILD TRAFFICKING IN THE GULF COUNTRIES, YEMEN AND AFGHANISTAN: POLICY OPTIONS

WORKING PAPER



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OPTIONS**

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POLICY OPTIONS**

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## List of Acronyms

CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CTOC	Convention against Transnational Organized Crime
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
ECPAT	End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IRC	Innocenti Research Center
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
INGOs	International Non Governmental Organizations
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
MOSLA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
NGOs	Non Governmental Organizations
NPA	National Plan of Action
NPACAR	National Plan of Action for Children at Risk
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations Refugee Agency
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
US	United States



## Executive Summary

Child trafficking is a global phenomenon exposing tens of thousands of children to increased vulnerability, exploitation and abuse. In the Middle East, every year, tens of thousands of children are trafficked from around 20 countries including Yemen and Afghanistan to the Gulf sub-region where they are exploited as street sellers, beggars and, formerly, camel jockeys.

This paper examines the phenomenon and causes of child trafficking from Yemen and Afghanistan to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in the Gulf countries. It shows that child trafficking is organized in phases starting in the source countries, and ending in the destination countries where children are exploited. Rescuing children can take place at any phase; however there are many examples where children are rescued to fall again in the trap of trafficking. Unless the causes leading to trafficking in both origin and destination countries are understood, this chain of trafficking is difficult to break.

Poverty, low status of children, low education levels and war among the key push factors identified. The main pull factors include the lack of respect for children's rights, children's dependency on parents and adults, use of children as cheap working force, and the weak enforcement of legislation.

A comprehensive approach to combating child trafficking is proposed which takes account of, and builds on, some recent successes within the countries covered and elsewhere combined with some innovative interventions which respond to specific contexts:

*Enactment and enforcement of national legislation.* It is essential that all countries where trafficking is a problem pass anti-trafficking legislation and set up proper enforcement mechanisms

*Inter-country (regional, sub-regional) collaboration.* Inter-country collaboration and treaties in harmonising national legislations and cross-border aspects, joint training to police and immigration officials, and proper care and treatment of the victims are critical.

*Targeted income support/transfer schemes.* Targeted income support measures comprise sustainable solution to the child trafficking problem especially in areas that face chronic poverty and livelihood possibilities are meagre.

*Provision of viable alternative to the exploitation of children in destination countries.* Turning the begging industry in Saudi Arabia into a properly organized and monitored activity, based on economic principles would seem a viable option.

*Comprehensive prevention strategies in source countries.* Given the link between child begging and religious pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia in particular, anti-trafficking policies could establish a system of incentives or 'rewards' to source countries to prevent trafficking.

## Resumen Ejecutivo

La trata de menores de edad es un fenómeno mundial que expone a decenas de miles de niños a un aumento de su vulnerabilidad y de la explotación y el abuso que sufren. En el Oriente Medio, decenas de miles de niños son víctimas todos los años de la trata, dentro de una corriente que los lleva desde 20 países aproximadamente, entre ellos el Yemen y el Afganistán, hasta la subregión del Golfo, donde se les explota como vendedores callejeros, mendigos y, hasta hace poco, como jinetes de camellos. Este documento examina el fenómeno y las causas de la trata de menores de edad desde el Yemen y el Afganistán hasta Arabia Saudita y los Emiratos Árabes Unidos, en los países del Golfo. Muestra que la trata de menores de edad está organizada en fases que comienzan en los países de origen, y terminan en los países de destino donde los niños son explotados. El rescate de los niños puede realizarse en cualquiera de las fases; sin embargo, hay muchos ejemplos que muestran que los niños rescatados vuelven a caer en la trampa de la trata. A menos que se comprendan las causas que llevan a la trata tanto en los países de origen como de destino, será difícil romper la cadena de la trata.

La pobreza, la escasa categoría social de los niños, los bajos niveles de educación y la guerra son algunos de los factores de expulsión más importantes. Los principales factores de atracción incluyen la falta de respeto por los derechos de la infancia, la dependencia de los niños de sus progenitores y de los adultos, la utilización de los niños como una fuerza barata de trabajo y las deficiencias en la aplicación de la legislación. Para luchar contra la trata de menores de edad se propone un enfoque amplio que tenga en cuenta, y aproveche, algunos de los éxitos recientes tanto en los países analizados como en otras partes, en combinación con algunas intervenciones innovadoras que son eficaces en contextos específicos:

Promulgación y aplicación de una legislación nacional. Es esencial que todos los países donde la trata sea un problema promulguen legislación contra la trata y establezcan mecanismos adecuados de ejecución.

Colaboración entre países (regional, subregional). Es fundamental impulsar la colaboración entre países y la redacción de tratados para armonizar las legislaciones nacionales y los aspectos interfronterizos, la formación conjunta de oficiales de policía e inmigración y la atención y el tratamiento apropiados de las víctimas.

Mecanismos de protección y transferencias de ingresos basados en la selección de los beneficiarios. Las medidas de protección de ingresos basadas en la selección de los beneficiarios son una solución al problema de la trata de menores de edad, especialmente en las zonas que hacen frente a una pobreza crónica y donde las posibilidades de subsistencia son escasas.

Provisión de una alternativa viable a la explotación de los niños en los países de destino. Una opción viable podría ser convertir la industria de la mendicidad de Arabia Saudita en una actividad organizada y supervisada apropiadamente.

Estrategias amplias de prevención en los países de origen. Dado el vínculo entre la mendicidad infantil y la peregrinación religiosa, las políticas contra la trata podrían establecer un sistema de incentivos o “premios” para que los países de origen eviten la trata.

## Résumé Analytique

La traite des enfants est un phénomène mondial qui aggrave la vulnérabilité de dizaines de milliers d'enfants et le risque qu'ils se fassent exploiter et maltraiter. Au Moyen-Orient, des dizaines de milliers d'enfants sont chaque année au centre d'un trafic dans une vingtaine de pays, dont le Yémen et l'Afghanistan, en direction de la sous-région du Golfe persique où on les exploite comme colporteurs et mendiants, et où on leur faisait monter jusqu'à récemment dans des courses de chameaux.

Ce document examine le phénomène et les causes de la traite des enfants du Yémen et l'Afghanistan à l'Arabie saoudite et aux Emirats arabes unis entre autres pays du Golfe. Il montre que la traite des enfants est organisée par phases, des pays d'origine aux pays destinataires où les enfants sont exploités. On peut porter secours aux enfants à toutes les phases; toutefois, il y a de nombreux exemples d'enfants qui sont secourus mais qui retombent dans le même piège. Tant qu'on n'aura pas bien compris les causes de la traite, tant dans les pays d'origine que dans les pays destinataires, il sera difficile de briser cette chaîne de la traite.

La pauvreté, la condition inférieure des enfants dans la société, le faible niveau d'éducation et la guerre comptent parmi les principaux facteurs d'expulsion. Les facteurs d'attraction principaux comprennent le manque de respect des droits de l'enfant, la dépendance des enfants envers les parents et les adultes, l'utilisation des enfants comme main-d'œuvre bon marché et le laxisme dans l'application des lois. Il est proposé une approche globale pour lutter contre la traite des enfants qui tient compte et s'inspire de certains succès au sein des pays étudiés et ailleurs, combinés à certaines interventions innovatrices qui répondent à des contextes spécifiques :

Adoption et application de lois nationales. Il est essentiel que tous les pays qui connaissent un problème de traite des enfants votent des lois pour l'empêcher et mettent en place les mécanismes d'application qui s'imposent.

Collaboration inter-pays (régionale, sous-régionale). La collaboration et les traités inter-pays sont essentiels pour harmoniser les législations nationales et les questions transfrontalières, la formation commune des fonctionnaires de la police et de l'immigration, et le soin et le traitement approprié des victimes. Plans ciblés de soutien aux revenus et de transferts de fonds. Les mesures ciblées de soutien aux revenus comprennent des solutions durables au problème de la traite des enfants, surtout dans les secteurs exposés à la pauvreté chronique et dans ceux où les possibilités de trouver des moyens d'existence sont faibles.

Fourniture d'alternatives viables à l'exploitation des enfants dans les pays destinataires. Une option viable consisterait sans doute à changer l'industrie saoudienne de la mendicité en activité organisée et surveillée comme il convient, et fondée sur des principes économiques.

Stratégies globales de prévention dans les pays d'origine. Compte tenu des liens qui existent entre la mendicité des enfants et le pèlerinage religieux en Arabie saoudite en particulier, des politiques anti-traite pourraient instaurer un système de mesures incitatives ou de «récompenses» pour que les pays d'origine bloquent la traite à sa source.



# 1. Introduction

This paper examines the problem of child trafficking in the Gulf region countries,<sup>1</sup> Yemen and Afghanistan with focus on policy needs and recommendations. Child trafficking is emerging as a serious problem in these countries exposing tens of thousands of children to increased vulnerability, exploitation and abuse. In recent years there has been greater awareness of the problem in these countries but only limited success achieved in mobilising systematic action to tackle it.

The complexities related to child trafficking problem involve cross-border as well as national dimensions. Consequently, there is a need to examine policy issues and options within a country and those related to inter-country and regional cooperation. Despite the ongoing increase in initiatives and actions to address the problems, the information-base regarding trafficking in these countries is still weak. Most information is largely based on anecdotal evidence from government reports, community leaders, NGOs, UN agencies and media.

Child trafficking is a violation of child rights which in some cases results in the worst forms of exploitation. Policy and programmatic responses to combat child trafficking are related to all the Millennium Development Goals and they contribute to the fulfilment of the commitments made in the Millennium Declaration to protect vulnerable groups and to take action against human trafficking.

This paper, based on desk review of secondary data and information and the experience gained from recent programmes in the region will:

- examine the phenomenon and causes of child trafficking in the Gulf region countries, Yemen, and Afghanistan;
- analyse policy framework and strategies in light of recent progress achieved at the sub-regional and national levels;
- recommend policy options for mobilising regional and national-level actions to address the problem.

## 2. Definition of child trafficking

Different definitions of child trafficking are used by various actors. This paper will refer to the definitions provided by the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (2000), also known as the “Palermo Protocol” and the Optional Protocol on the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (2000).

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper, “Gulf countries” refers to the six members of the Gulf Co-operative Council (GCC)—Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates

*“‘Trafficking in persons’ shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs” (the Palermo Protocol, Article (3)).*

The Palermo Protocol includes a specific definition of trafficking in children, defined as persons under eighteen years of age: *The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered “trafficking in persons” even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) (as detailed in the above quote).*

Article 2 (a) of the CRC Optional Protocol defines the sale of children as any action or transaction that transfers a child from one person or group of persons to another for remuneration or any other benefit. Article 3 subparagraph 1 (a) calls on States Parties to make it a criminal offence to offer, deliver or accept, by whatever means, a child for the purpose of sexual exploitation, transfer of organs of the child for profit, or engagement of the child in forced labour.

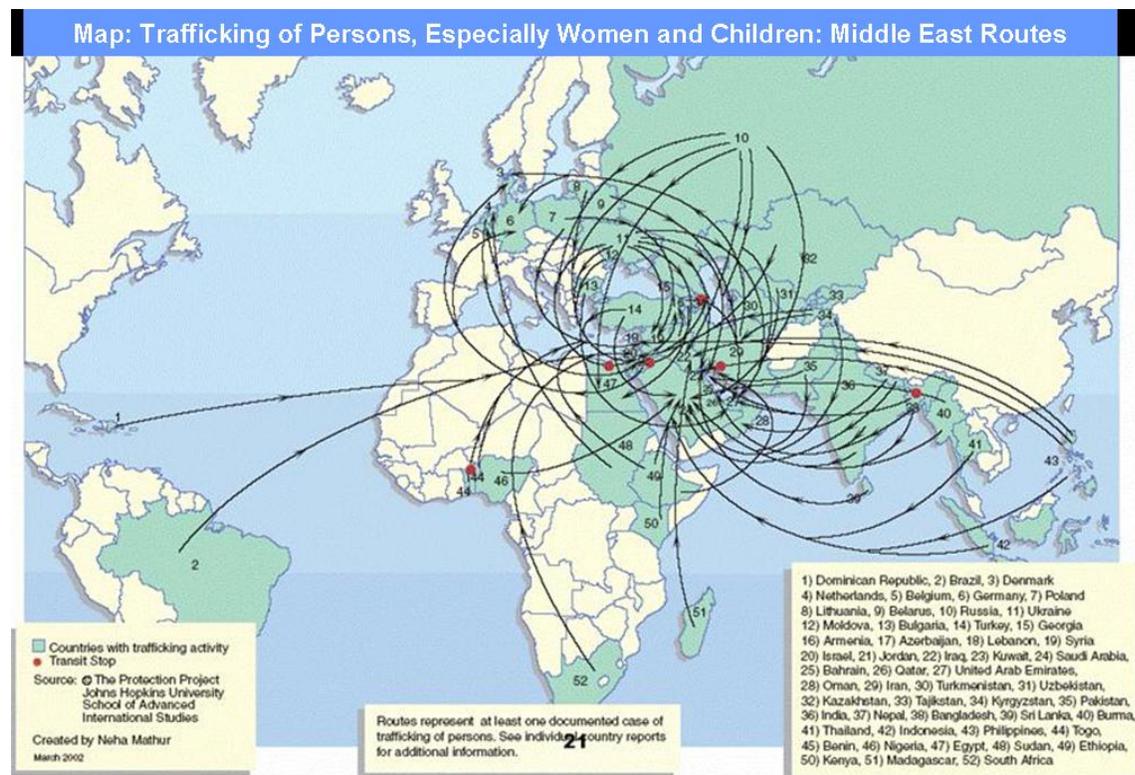
The exploitation of children in the form of trafficking results in a threat to their right to survival and development and to education and health. Their right to live and grow up within a family and to protection from exploitation and abuse are denied<sup>2</sup>.

Key issues and concepts related to the child trafficking problem focus on source countries; transit countries, destination countries; trafficking route and treatment; affected persons/victims; networks of traffickers; type of exploitation; and experience of children who are trafficked.

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PT<sup>2</sup> TPUNICEF Innocenti Research Center, Trafficking in Human Beings, Especially Women and Children, in Africa, IRC Insight, Florence, 2000

### 3. Problem analysis



Source: The Protection Project, Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, March 2002

The limited information available on trafficking indicates that each year, tens of thousands of children from Yemen and Afghanistan and many other countries (including Nigeria, Niger, Sudan, Pakistan, Morocco) are trafficked to the oil-rich Gulf countries. Although the exact scale of the problem is unknown, there is significant evidence which suggests that trafficked children are exploited as workers (including camel jockeys in the past), street beggars and sex workers. The problem analysis in this paper focuses on Yemen and Afghanistan as the two countries of origin, from where children are trafficked into the Gulf countries. Among the Gulf (destination) countries, the main focus is on Saudi Arabia and on United Arab Emirates (UAE).

As per the emphasis in the recent literature on child trafficking, the analysis uses the concept of pull factors (demand-side) and push factors (supply-side) which contribute to child trafficking.

The paper uses a conceptual framework for the identification and analysis of the causes of child trafficking drawing on recent work in South Eastern Europe<sup>3</sup>. Trafficking is a process organized in phases starting with the recruitment of children, followed by movement, then arrival to destination where the child is exploited. Breaking of this process and rescuing of children can

<sup>3</sup> "Action to Prevent Child Trafficking in South Eastern Europe", UNICEF and Terre des Hommes Foundation, 2006

take place at any point in the process. The framework calls for interventions to break the process in its early phase or to identify the child being exploited, rescue him/her from trafficking, repatriating the child to their country of origin followed by recovery and reintegration.

Experiences from the countries covered in this paper, and in the literature reviewed, show that targeted interventions tackling the various stages and processes related to trafficking can be successfully combined to have an overall effect of reducing and ultimately preventing the phenomenon. However, the situations and contexts in which children are being trafficked are undeniably complex: many children have been trafficked and recovered more than one time.

The figure below<sup>4</sup> presents the key actors and the causes underlying their involvement in the trafficking process, which once identified and understood, can be influenced through targeted interventions supported by policies to prevent children from being trafficked, to break the chain, and/or to extract the child from being trafficked.

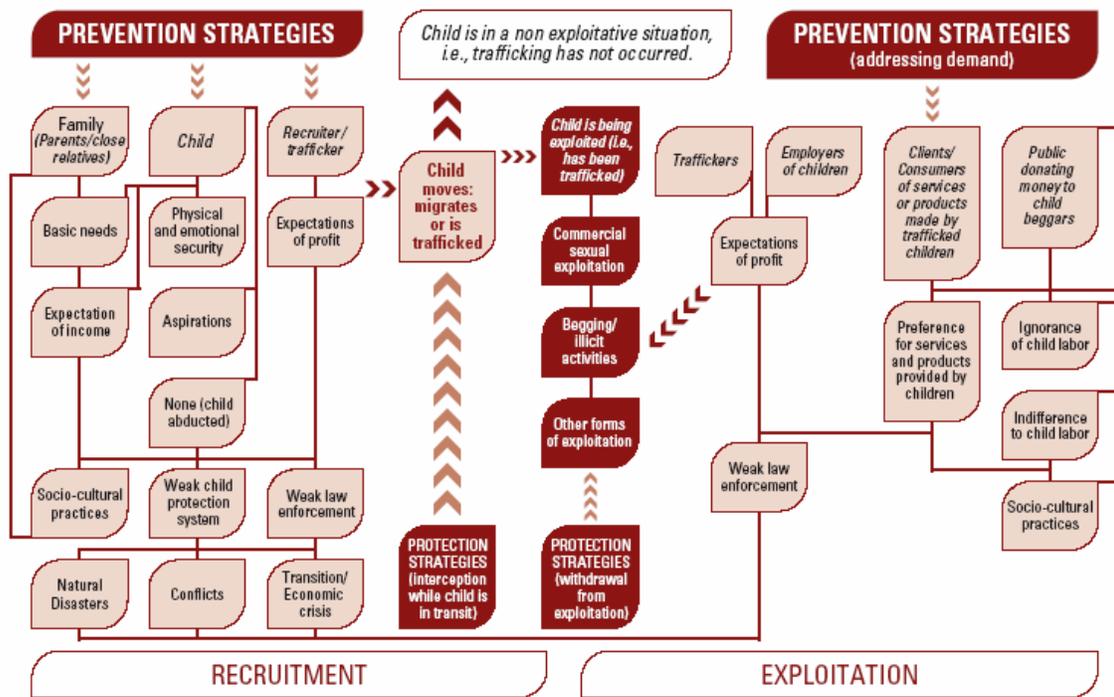


Figure 1: Trafficking process: individuals involved and causes of trafficking

### A causality analysis of child trafficking

The following section will examine the causes of child trafficking in the origin countries of Yemen and Afghanistan, and the destination countries of the Gulf.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 21

### **3.1. Origin countries: Yemen & Afghanistan**

Owing to the underground nature of trafficking, reliable statistics are difficult, if not impossible, to obtain on the scope of the problem. Reviewing different studies and reports in Yemen and Afghanistan, it seems that the numbers reported vary, often mixing cases of trafficking, smuggling and illegal migration into one category. Although there is an increased awareness of the scale of the phenomenon of child trafficking from Yemen and Afghanistan to Saudi Arabia, the exact magnitude of this problem is still unknown. Trafficking remains a largely misunderstood phenomenon and imprecisely defined. Confusion about what constitutes trafficking is the rule rather than the exception.

More than 10,000 children are estimated to be trafficked or smuggled annually outside of Yemen. Although the problem is not new, only recently it started drawing national and international concerns following a rapid assessment<sup>5</sup> on trafficking in children. In the first quarter of 2004, approximately 50,000 Yemenis were crossing the border to Saudi Arabia every month, of which about 7% were children, mostly boys. Even with the data available, the scale of trafficked children for sexual exploitation is not known. There is no data on whether children are exploited for drug trafficking. More research is needed to explore whether Yemen is a transit country for drug trafficking to Saudi Arabia, and whether children are exploited in such crimes.

Child trafficking phenomenon in Afghanistan is among the most complex since it is a country which is characterised as origin, destination and transit country together with the problem of internal trafficking<sup>6</sup>. Afghanistan is a country of origin for women and children trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation and labour. Children are trafficked to Iran, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia for forced begging, labour, and sexual exploitation. Girls were reported to have been purchased in Afghanistan and trafficked for forced marriage and prostitution through Pakistan to Gulf countries. There are cases of Afghani children being deported from Saudi Arabia - believed to be a major destination for trafficked children; the estimated number of children deported between late 2003 and early 2004 was 700 children.

#### **Root causes**

Several economic, legal, educational and social factors promote child labour and affect trafficking patterns in the source countries.

The practice of smuggling children from Yemen to Saudi Arabia increased following the Gulf Crisis of 1990-1991 when Saudi Arabia repatriated migrant Yemeni workers. Faced with difficulties to obtain legal jobs, the latter opted to sending children, who are legally considered minors, to work in Saudi Arabia. A major push factors is that 40% of the Yemeni population live below the poverty line and the GDP growth (moving down from 4% in 2001 to 3.4% in 2004) continues to decline. Legal aspects are equally unfavourable. For instance, children in Yemen

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PT<sup>5</sup> TPMinistry of Labour & Social Affairs, Yemen: A Rapid Assessment of Child Trafficking in Yemen: Case Study of Hajja and AlMahweet Governorates, 2004. Assessment commissioned to the Yemen Center for Studies & Labour, with support of UNICEF Yemen

<sup>6</sup> Draft Reference Note on Afghanistan, Innocenti Resource Center, February 2006

legally reach maturity at the age of 10 for boys and 9 for girls, putting premature social and economic responsibility on children.

Over two decades of war and political conflict brought fundamental changes in the Afghan family structures<sup>7</sup>, many households lost men during the conflict forcing new social structures, for instance female-headed households. In this new environment, children have had to play new roles and often become the new breadwinners of the family. Much responsibility is placed on these young “men” to provide for the family and go to whatever extreme is necessary to fulfil their new function. Series of droughts have also left large part of the Afghan rural population in extreme cases of vulnerability, especially for labourers dependent on the land for their subsistence. Many of the parents of the children sent away came from rural areas where the drought was most severe.

Cultural norms and practices in conjunction with poverty in origin countries enforce the need for children to contribute to their household’s income from an early age. They enforce upon every family member a sense of duty towards financially contributing to the household’s welfare. Children are no exception: particularly boys are more prone to economic exploitation outside home, since girls’ economic activities are rather restricted within domestic sphere. And it is easier for boys to migrate illegally than adult men, since the smuggler can disguise the children as his own. Girls are more prone though to be trafficked for domestic work or early marriage, however data on this phenomenon is lacking.

### **Underlying causes**

The family income and educational levels of parents and children affect the vulnerability of children to trafficking.

Families of Yemeni children victims of trafficking have typically low incomes where parents are predominantly employed in agriculture and unskilled labour. Educational levels of parents as well as that of children themselves are low. Illiteracy and financial difficulties among parents or guardians often lead to children dropping out of schools. This is coupled with poor quality education and lack or remoteness of schools.

Trafficked Afghani children included mostly boys, between 8 and 17 years old, from rural poor communities, with low or no education, from large size households and/or with no breadwinner. Very few girl-trafficking cases were encountered, but this does not necessarily imply that they do not exist. Silence surrounding this matter should not lead one to assume that Afghan girls are not trafficked, but rather that perhaps Afghan society prefers to deny than accept that trafficking of girls occurs.

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<sup>7</sup> Study of the Ministry of Social and Labour Affairs in Afghanistan, 2004

## **Immediate causes**

There is tacit, and at many times, explicit family support to trafficking of children. Yemeni and Afghani children are often lured by family members or trusted adults with promises of well-paying jobs in Saudi Arabia<sup>8</sup>. In some cases, children may go voluntarily, with parental consent.

For families to accept the trafficking in their children meant that traffickers expect to be paid a proportion of whatever the child earned and they specifically look for children suitable for begging. Some Yemeni parents even pay traffickers to smuggle their children to Saudi Arabia<sup>9</sup>. Some parents in Afghanistan pay smugglers to take their children into Iran and Saudi Arabia, hoping they will find work and send remittances; once there, the children become subject to coercive arrangements that constitute involuntary servitude.

In Afghanistan, children are also “loaned” by their parents to perform agricultural and domestic work within Afghanistan in return for wages paid to the parents; these arrangements often develop into involuntary servitude. Afghani women and girls are kidnapped, lured by fraudulent marriage proposals, or sold into forced marriage and commercial sexual exploitation in Pakistan.

## **Traffickers as mediators**

In Yemen, traffickers originate from areas other than the most vulnerable governorates to trafficking. Movement is achieved by truck, donkey or on foot after sunset and increases during the month of Ramadan. Although local authorities and security forces report large movement of people across the borders, with high percentage of children, there is no clear distinction between trafficked children and illegal immigrants. The type and level of involvement of government officials on both sides of the borders is unknown. However, some guards on the Yemeni borders collide with trafficking networks and are involved in corrupt actions to facilitate the smuggling of children.

There is also evidence<sup>10</sup> in Afghanistan that traffickers target vulnerable groups, such as returnees, IDPs, communities affected by natural disasters, indebted people and their families, young people seeking better lives and jobs abroad, and rural women. Much of the population movement- legitimate or trafficked- in Afghanistan is economically based and due to the combination of declining economic opportunity in Afghanistan, particularly in rural areas (supply-push factor) and better opportunity in urban areas and neighbouring countries (demand-pull factor).

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PT<sup>8</sup> TPUS Department of State: *Trafficking in Persons Report*, 2006, p. 260

PT<sup>9</sup> TPUNICEF Yemen: *Combating Child Trafficking and Creating a Protective Environment in Alfah Al-Shma*, Hajja, Yemen, a consultancy report, 2005

<sup>10</sup> Study of Ministry of Social and Labour Affairs, Afghanistan 2004

## 3.2. Destination countries

### The push – pull factor dynamics

The child trafficking problem in the Gulf originates from three main and interlinked causes. The first is the long history and large scale of movement and migration to the Gulf, which for centuries has been the nexus of trade and exchange among African, Asian, and Middle Eastern peoples, and, in the case of Saudi Arabia, the site of pilgrimage for at least two million Muslims every year. Children traditionally have accompanied their families in supporting trade, earning a living and even seeking alms/*zakat* during pilgrimage.

The second comes from the abundant oil wealth over the last three decades which fuelled demand for expatriate workers, who swelled the numbers of non-national residents in the Gulf to over 12 million<sup>11</sup>, turning national populations into minority ones in half of the countries, and fostering to a certain extent a culture whereby menial, hazardous and difficult occupations are relegated to non-nationals, especially those who are poor, vulnerable, or have little negotiating power, including children in certain limited and specific cases. Driven by poverty and a perceived lack of other options, many adults but also children are trafficked into the region every year from a large number of countries (*see map below*).

The third cause stems from perceptions and attitudes towards children which can be found in varying forms in all regions and societies of the world, whereby children's needs and rights often come secondary to those of the family and parents. In fact, it is considered a duty for children to help support their family—such as in the case of boys from Yemen and Afghanistan selling small items at traffic lights in Saudi cities; boys from the Sudan and Pakistan working as camel jockeys; and girls from Central and West Africa begging in the streets of Mecca and Medina.

### Systemic Issues

The overall problem of child trafficking in the Gulf (destination) countries is highly complex and compounded by the paucity and poor quality of information and data. Governments do not yet have in place a concrete mechanism for information gathering and monitoring. However, rapid assessments, limited studies, and anecdotal evidence point to tens of thousands of children being involved. In Saudi Arabia, where the problem is most visible, it is officially estimated that there are over 83,000 children selling small goods and begging on the streets of major cities.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> “Migration in the Middle East and Mediterranean—A Regional Study prepared for the Global Commission on International Migration”, Martin Baldwin-Edwards, Mediterranean Migration Observatory, University Research Institute for Urban Environment and Human Resources, Panteion University, Greece, January 2005

<sup>12</sup> Figure from 2005 periodical published by the Ministry of Interior, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

### BOX 1: CHILD EXPLOITATION AND BEGGING IN SAUDI ARABIA

Sometimes known as “The Kingdom of Humanity” in the Arab world, Saudi Arabia, by dint of its oil wealth, its historical and geopolitical importance, as well as its centrality in the Muslim world, has also become a target for child trafficking. Communities and families across Africa, Asia, and parts of the Middle East are sending children in large numbers to the Kingdom, largely through informal but well organized networks. A situation assessment and analysis conducted by the UNICEF Gulf Area Office in 2004 found the situation to be “grave”, complex, and involving children in the “tens of thousands”.<sup>1</sup>

The assessment found that the Kingdom wanted to tackle the problem “systematically, professionally, and with transparency”, but that trafficking in children is a particularly sensitive issue given “critical local and international linkages with: the religious rites of *hajj* and *umra*; organized crime; migration policy; human rights; exploitation and violence against foreign children; law enforcement and criminal justice; security; poverty in the heart of abundance; and the image of the Kingdom abroad.”

The major and most visible manifestation of the problem can be seen in the large numbers of children involved in begging, particularly in association with the *hajj* and *umra* pilgrimage, as there is a strong religious association with the act of giving in this context, particularly to the needy and to children. It has been estimated that during the three key months, including that of Ramadan, proceeds from begging are “worth around \$140 million a year”<sup>1</sup>.

No wonder then, that begging is now seen in Saudi Arabia as having developed into a “profession” and an “industry”. It is also clear why many economically disadvantaged families, having entered the Kingdom on a pilgrimage visa, decide to illegally overstay, or resort to leaving behind their children, even ‘renting’ them as accessories to adult beggars, so that they can continue earning and sending remittances.

With such numbers and incentives, children are being exploited in other spheres, particularly during the leaner seasons, and resort to or find themselves ensnared in selling small items such as boxes of tissue, newspapers, etc. at traffic lights; forced labour; smuggling and trafficking of goods and/or illicit substances; domestic work; and sexual exploitation.

The increased vulnerability of these children in these situations predictably results in many cases in irreparable physical and psychosocial harm. In some cases, actual physical violence was inflicted on children, so that they would have a disability, increasing the returns they would get from begging.

In a very telling moment, a young Nigerian girl with a disability caused by childhood polio had been factually recounting her experiences begging on the street to visitors at an NGO shelter in Jeddah. When asked where her parents were, she replied that her mother had brought her to Saudi Arabia, and then left her. She then fell silent—no words, no ideas on what she thought of her impending return home, whether or not she would have trust again in the parent who had abandoned her.

Gulf countries have been assessed by international and bilateral partners to have a considerable challenge with respect to trafficking in persons, and that much needs to be done to effectively address it. According to most recent reports<sup>13</sup>, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have a ‘high’ incidence of reporting of trafficking; Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar are ranked as ‘medium’, and Oman ‘low’. Other reports<sup>14</sup> have also indicated that while efforts are being made in the Gulf to meet the standards set by their Trafficking Victims Protection Act, more needs to be done in all six countries.

<sup>13</sup> Trafficking in Persons: Global Patterns”, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), April 2006

<sup>14</sup> Trafficking in Persons Report, Department of State, U.S.A., 2005 and 2006

## **BOX 2: RESCUING CHILDREN FORMERLY INVOLVED IN CAMEL RACING: A NEW MODEL FOR MULTI-COUNTRY PARTNERSHIP**

It is estimated that in recent years, roughly 3,000 children had been recruited and trafficked to the UAE and used as jockeys in the UAE. From the origin countries, parents who were poor and desperate were lured to send their children with the promise that they would be employed as companions for children of wealthy families or would take part in ceremonial events. But to the contrary, these children experienced violations of their right to education, to health and care to development, protection and participation. Once they reached the destination country, children were handed over to the racing clubs where they worked and faced a life which robbed them of their childhood.

Though this problem had existed for many years, it is only in the past few years that it received sufficient attention by the media, human rights activists and UN agencies. Strong advocacy efforts by UNICEF and others led to an announcement by the UAE in March 2005 of new legislation banning the use of children as jockeys. Some form of legislation against trafficking of children already existed in most of the origin countries though enforcement was weak.

Organised action to address the problem in a systematic manner began in May 2005 with the commitment by the UAE Government to provide \$2.7 million to support children who had been involved in camel racing in the UAE, from the time of their rescue to a period two years after their return to their home country. The initiative was launched at a meeting organised by UNICEF's Gulf Area Office which brought together Government and UNICEF officials from the UAE and identified origin countries to develop ideas and proposals for family reunification, reintegration and rehabilitation of some 3,000 children which at the time were estimated to be involved in camel racing in the UAE. Action plans were developed in the origin countries as well and with the involvement of Governments, NGOs, the implementation of the plans resulted in the repatriation of all the children who had been found to have been involved in camel racing in the UAE, who numbered 1,075 children by mid-2006.

The second phase of providing family- and community-based recovery, rehabilitation, and reintegration support and services to the children is still ongoing, but already the project has yielded some models for inter-country co-operation as well as in the provision of services to children victims of trafficking.

A formative review of the project was conducted in mid-2006, and findings suggest that the project has been highly successful in identifying, repatriating and rehabilitating children that were trafficked to the UAE for use as camel jockeys. The project is considered as one of the rare success stories in addressing trafficking of children in a systematic manner. While it is a unique project it does offer a number of lessons and conclusions that have relevance for other child trafficking problems and situations:

- Legislation and action to prevent children from trafficking are critical but there are already a number of children that are victims of child trafficking in many destination countries. Legislation is not enough. There is a need to plan and gather organised action with the provision of adequate resources to tackle the problem. The experience gained from the project provides a valuable basis to formulate policies and programmes to identify and repatriate children that have been trafficked and those who are trafficked in the future to the destination countries.
- Policies will be needed both in the destination as well as source countries. For destination countries, policies need to address identification, protection, temporary care and shelter (if required), repatriation (transport logistics, safety ...) and care and support through the in-transit process. For source countries, policies will need to focus on prevention, family tracing, rehabilitation/reintegration and care and support, education, counselling, monitoring.

The review also identified a number of best practices that can be applicable for similar projects. There is thus now considerable evidence on what type of response works and how action can be organised but considerable effort is still required to mobilise political will to formulate detailed policies and procedures for other types of child victims of trafficking and more importantly to gather resources to implement them taking account of the successes and lessons from the camel jockey project.

The example provided by the United Arab Emirates illustrates how a multi-country initiative with technical support from UNICEF developed a child-centred modality of co-operation that is providing support and care to children removed from

### **Child Begging in Saudi Arabia**

The trafficking of the largest number of children to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is due to a unique historical and socio-cultural position the country occupies in the Islamic world. Saudi Arabia is the destination of over one million Muslims, including children, who visit the Kingdom every year for the *hajj* pilgrimage, and with millions more coming throughout the year for *umra* visits to holy sites. These religious rites are associated with a tradition of giving to the poor. Some low-income families (thus from “source” countries) undertaking the pilgrimage use their children to earn money during this period; there are also reportedly organized networks of traffickers using children, sometimes separated from their parents, for selling goods and begging in the streets.

Due to the location of the holy mosques in Mecca and Medinah, and with Jeddah being the main communication point and travel hub for both of them, the concentration of children engaged in this practice has primarily been within the triangle of these three cities. However, there are also increasing numbers of children seen on the streets of Riyadh selling small items as well as asking for money. Large numbers of trafficked children also come from the neighbouring country of Yemen<sup>15</sup>, mainly to engage in the trade of small goods.

### **Camel Racing in the UAE**

Another form of child trafficking in some Gulf countries has been associated with camel racing, a traditional practice in the Gulf countries regarded as a cultural heritage, associated with festive occasions. However in recent years, as awards gained in monetary value (into the millions of dollars) and camel owners started sending camels and jockeys to compete in other countries, the practice became more competitive and commercial, and younger and lighter jockeys started to be used. In certain countries (United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait), owners started using children from other countries, mainly from South Asia (Pakistan, Bangladesh), and Africa (the Sudan, Mauritania, Somalia).

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<sup>15</sup> Ministry of Labour & Social Affairs, Yemen 2004

### 3.3. Key conclusions from problem analysis

According to the conceptual framework applied in understanding the phenomenon of trafficking of children from Yemen and Afghanistan to Saudi Arabia, key push and pull factors are summarized in the table below.

Push (Supply-side) Factors	Pull (Demand-side) Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• War and political conflict resulting in the breakdown of families and support networks (Afghanistan)</li> <li>• Lack of /limited economic/ employment opportunities</li> <li>• Limited educational opportunities</li> <li>• Migration flows; young people’s aspirations for a better life</li> <li>• Traditional family ties</li> <li>• Domestic abuse and parental neglect</li> <li>• Weak position of children in societies</li> <li>• Societal and cultural pressure on boys to assume household responsibility at an early age</li> <li>• Low status of girls</li> <li>• Traffickers’ expectations of income</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weak position of children in societies</li> <li>• Child’s dependency and helplessness</li> <li>• Use of children as cheap child labour (including domestic work) and sex objects</li> <li>• Social networks and relatives living abroad who in some cases facilitate trafficking</li> <li>• Clients’ needs for services</li> <li>• The practice of temporary marriage</li> <li>• International trafficking networks</li> <li>• Family and traffickers’ profit</li> <li>• Weak rule of law and Inaction by the police and other authorities, corruption, involvement of government officials</li> </ul>

The following are some key observations from the problem analysis:

- There is considerable lack of data on trafficking of children; most information available is based on anecdotal evidence. There is no data available on whether children are trafficked for drug smuggling and little data is available on children trafficked for sexual exploitation which is a growing phenomenon in some areas/countries.
- The gender pattern of trafficking in both Yemen and Afghanistan requires further investigation. Available data relate mainly to trafficking of boys. Are girls more protected from trafficking because of their low status in society, or are they involved in more invisible forms of trafficking (for instance, through temporary marriage or travelling with families as their children) that are not yet detected?
- Child trafficking is conducted by a variety of methods making it difficult to pin it down; there is no distinction between patterns of trafficking in children and illegal migration.
- There seems to exist a family/community tacit and implicit support to trafficking in children. Children are lured by their families who sometimes pay traffickers to smuggle their children.

- There exist collusion between traffickers and government officials, though the nature and level is not well known. Governments lack political commitments and use of a systemic approach to address the problem of trafficking including situation monitoring.

## 4. Policy Options

The policy options we propose in this section seek to develop and apply a comprehensive approach to tackling and ultimately preventing the phenomenon of child trafficking with targeted interventions focused on the characteristic stages and processes including the recruitment of children, their exploitation, withdrawal, recovery and reintegration.

They also take account of and build on the recent success in addressing the trafficking of children for use as camel jockeys in the Gulf countries (see box) and the particular problem of use of children for begging in Saudi Arabia. We propose the following as the key policy options that are complementary:

- Enactment of national legislations against child trafficking and setting up enforcement mechanism in origin and destination countries;
- Inter-country (regional, sub-regional) collaboration involving the origin, transit and destination countries;
- Economic incentives targeting desperate families and communities that are high-risk and vulnerable to child trafficking;
- Provision of a viable alternative to the exploitation of trafficked children in destination countries, i.e. addressing the “demand” side;
- Comprehensive preventive systems and strategies in source countries, i.e. addressing the “supply” side.

### 4.1. Enactment and enforcement of national legislation

Over the past decade, there has been tremendous progress in consolidating international legal instruments related to the prevention of child trafficking and to protecting children who are victims of trafficking. There are 3 main legal pillars that form the basis for this work<sup>16</sup>:

1. “The 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), its general principles and its specific provisions, particularly Article 35 which calls on States Parties to *“take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent the abduction of, the sale of or traffic in children for any purpose or in any form”* – and Article 32, which recognizes the child’s right *“to be protected from economic exploitation”*. The Optional Protocol to the CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography of 25 May 2000 reaffirms the values of the CRC and addresses policy measures to prevent and combat this phenomenon”.

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PT<sup>16</sup> TPUNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, Child Trafficking in West Africa. Policy Responses. Innocenti Insight, Florence, 2002.

2. “Convention No. 182 of the ILO on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999), which in article 3 (a) recognizes child trafficking as one of the worst forms of child labour: “*all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict*”, and calls for action by Member States to eliminate them”.

3. “The UN Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, particularly women and children (The Palermo Protocol), supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (CTOC) of 15 November 2000”.

National legislations to combat trafficking are essential both as a confirmation of political commitment to protect the rights of children and to base enforcement mechanism aimed at preventing the problem. In the countries (origin and destination) covered in this paper, considerable amount of dialogue and consultation has taken place regarding the need to legislate but the progress has been limited.

The **Yemeni** government does not fully comply with the minimum international standards for the elimination of trafficking<sup>17</sup>. Although the government has signed the CRC and its two optional protocols, it has not yet signed the Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and its two optional protocols, especially the Palermo Protocol for that purpose. The Higher Council of Motherhood and Childhood is lobbying the government to sign the Convention.

The Yemeni Law does not specifically address the issues of the sale of children, child prostitution and child trafficking and the phenomenon of child trafficking has not been fully explored although it has been extensively debated in the parliament. In the absence of an anti trafficking law, the government refers to the criminal code to prosecute and punish traffickers<sup>18</sup>.

Similarly, **Afghanistan** does not have a law against human trafficking although crimes related to trafficking may be indicted under other laws. Traffickers may be charged under a number of statutes prohibiting kidnapping, rape, forced labor, transportation of minors, and child endangerment. The Penal Code (Articles 420 and 421) deals mostly with inter-country abduction and kidnapping of children. It is not enough to protect children against the new threat of national and international organized crime involving intra and inter country sale of children under different pretexts such as marriage or promises of jobs for boys and girls. Without a comprehensive legal definition of trafficking (in line with the international definition), the criminal justice system is not too effective in framing the crime of child trafficking.

In Afghanistan, taking a person in hostage is crime under the Penal Code and is punished by long-term imprisonment<sup>19</sup>. The punishment is higher if the victim is injured or killed as a consequence of being taken hostage. If the criminal has acquired money or any other goods as a result of the commission of the crime, he is sentenced to return them or an equivalent (The Protection Project 2005). In addition the President (Karzai) issued a decree mandating the death penalty for child traffickers convicted of murder, and lengthened prison terms. Both in Yemen

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PT<sup>17</sup> TPUS Department of State: *Trafficking in Persons Report*, 2005, p. 227

PT<sup>18</sup> TPIbid

<sup>19</sup> Draft Reference Note on Afghanistan, Innocenti Resource Center, February 2006

and Afghanistan (origin countries) legislation are needed to focus on all aspects of trafficking (prevention, protection, prosecution), learning from other countries especially in Central and Eastern Europe comprehensive legislation are central to combating child trafficking.

The most significant body of laws, legislation and royal decrees passed in the Gulf countries that relate to child trafficking so far has been in connection with camel racing through the combined efforts by Gulf country governments taking steps to adhere to international conventions they had ratified such as ILO 182, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child among others; advocacy by international NGOs, UN agencies including ILO and UNICEF; as well as that by bilateral partners.

Efforts are now required to establish comprehensive anti-trafficking laws; Bahrain and Qatar have draft laws in process; the UAE adopted new legislation in 2006. National anti-trafficking plans, regional and international co-operation and networking would also help ensure the implementation and realization of these laws, as called for by country delegations at the first Arab Regional Workshop on Combating Child Trafficking, jointly organized in Riyadh by the Naif Arab University for Security Sciences and UNICEF in February 2006.

More needs to be done to increase adoption, awareness, and understanding of international standards and principles countering trafficking - notably the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime which has been so far only ratified by Bahrain, Kuwait, and Oman, and signed by Saudi Arabia.

In addition, more action is also required to protect victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. While Gulf countries have strict rules setting the age of migrant workers well into adulthood, supported by similar laws in some countries of origin such as Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines, both commercial sex workers as well as child victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation can be brought in quite easily to Gulf countries through tourist visas. Flows from Central and Eastern European countries, North and East Africa and East and Southeast Asia in particular have been noted<sup>20</sup>.

There are also a number of legislative ‘gaps’ and inconsistencies which run counter to the best interests of children and child rights principles, and even contribute to further victimization in some cases. For example, in Bahrain, provisions protecting juveniles under labour laws sometimes do not apply to specific areas, such as domestic work, and the Bahraini Penal Code criminalizes prostitution, even if done by victims of trafficking, and minors aged under 18 years can be imprisoned up to 5 years.

## **4.2. Inter-country and sub-regional cooperation**

In view of the complexity of the trafficking problem the international dimension of which involves more than one country, inter-country collaboration and treaties have a critical role to play. Collaboration in harmonising national legislations and cross-border aspects, joint training

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<sup>20</sup> Information sourced from media reports, the US Trafficking in Persons reports, and reports by international NGOs including Human Rights Watch, and ECPAT among others

to police and immigration officials, and proper care and treatment of the victims are among the key areas where inter-country cooperation is critical. Although there are some concrete initiatives for sub-regional collaboration especially to tackle the use of children as camel jockeys, a systematic approach to such collaboration is still lacking.

The Government of **Yemen** has increased the monitoring of borders with Saudi Arabia and agreed with the latter to establish a bilateral committee to combat child trafficking<sup>21</sup>, the committee is yet to be established. It has also trained security forces on anti trafficking. With support from UNICEF and IOM, the government of Yemen trained police officers on techniques to recognize and properly handle trafficking cases<sup>22</sup>. Forty two security officials working in the border at Harad, Saada, Al Maharah, Hadramout and international airports in Sana'a and Aden acquired skills on victim identification, registration and monitoring of child trafficking<sup>23</sup>.

There are reports of some child victims arrested and possibly abused while in the government's custody<sup>24</sup>. In 2005, fifty one government officials were trained on shelter management and assistance to trafficked victims<sup>25</sup>. In addition, with UNICEF support, the government has established a database to collect information on child trafficking at border crossings, resulting in monthly reports from the Ministry of Interior<sup>26</sup>. These are some promising initiatives that need to be taken to scale and institutionalized to strengthen inter country collaboration.

**Afghanistan** is a signatory to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution but there is no bilateral or multi-lateral agreement between Afghanistan and other countries on the prevention of trafficking in human beings.

Due to lack of bilateral agreements, there is no specific protection for trafficked children detained and deported from other countries. In terms of protection procedures for deported children, in major border check points where UNHCR is operational, deported children usually receive immediate support from UNHCR and its partner agencies. Negotiations with the Saudi authorities with regards to deportation of Afghan children from the Kingdom have started. As a result, a considerable decrease was observed in the number of deported children in the second half of 2004.

In cooperation with IOM, the Ministries of the Interior and Women's Affairs participated in training on counter-trafficking and law enforcement in Almaty, Kazakhstan in April 2003. The training was part of regional initiative on migration management for Central Asian states. Afghan officials liaised with counterparts from the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Russia. They were provided tools for prevention, protection and prosecution efforts<sup>27</sup>.

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PT<sup>21</sup> TPUS Department of State: *Trafficking in Persons Report*, 2005, p. 228

PT<sup>22</sup> TPUS Department of State: *Trafficking in Persons Report*, 2005, p. 227

PT<sup>23</sup> TPUNICEF Yemen: Annual Report, 2005. p. 23

PT<sup>24</sup> TPIbid, p. 228

PT<sup>25</sup> TPUS Department of State: *Trafficking in Persons Report*, 2006, p. 260

PT<sup>26</sup> TPUS Department of State: *Trafficking in Persons Report*, 2006, p. 261

<sup>27</sup> International Organisation for Migration: *Trafficking in Persons. An Analysis of Afghanistan*, 2004, p. 63.

In the **Gulf countries**, following the formative review of the joint UAE-UNICEF initiative to provide support to children formerly involved in camel racing, a further \$8.3 million has been committed by the UAE Government for the extension of the project, with focus on community-based interventions that would both support the former victims of child trafficking and exploitation, as well as contribute to the prevention efforts. The experience of multi country collaboration on the children exploited in camel racing project has the potential for application to address other forms of child trafficking.

Efforts have also been initiated to develop inter-country modalities of co-operation between Saudi Arabia and countries from which children are coming for street selling and begging. For example, two rounds of negotiations have been held between Saudi Arabia and Yemen with resulting commitments to establish coordinating committees on both sides as well as develop a common strategy and plan of action. These are important preliminary steps that need to be strengthened using experiences within the region and elsewhere. The successful experience of the camel racing project is a particularly valuable contribution on how countries can initiate, plan and implement collaborative agreements to address trafficking in children in a systematic manner.

### **4.3. Targeted income support/transfer schemes**

The causality analysis of the trafficking problem carried out in this paper and the evidence from most countries suggests that economic hardship and deprivation are among the key push factors for a majority of the cases of child trafficking. While the provision of legislation is critical, the experience of many countries suggests that enforcement is either weak or non-existent. This has opened a broader dialogue on the role of targeted income support measures aimed at families living in high-risk and vulnerable areas.

In **Afghanistan**, the National Plan of Action for Children at-Risk (NPACAR) endorsed by the parliament in May 2006 addresses a wide range of child protection concerns including trafficking and advocates for the reform of social protection systems and services for children at risk and enhancement of technical capacity within concerned ministries. A key focus of the plan is to establish targeted services for vulnerable families, including job placement, income-generation, and counseling services for families.

A few projects supported by INGO and international agencies have assisted MOLSA to implement various social protection measures especially targeting most vulnerable families and children such as out-of-school working children and street-based children. Non-formal education and skills training were provided for the 242 children and 160 other vulnerable children who were at risk of trafficking. Yet, no systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of those interventions has been done and the monitoring evaluation activities rest primarily at the agency level.

The high level of donor funding and the ground work already completed constitute a solid base on which income support measures in Afghanistan can be developed. However, in **Yemen**, there are no income support measures in place so far but the finding that a vast majority of child trafficking originates from a small number of districts/communities suggests that such measures

are practically easy to organize. There is a clear need to link targeted schemes to address child trafficking with the broader poverty alleviation and social protection measures in the source countries. This will require broadening of partnerships involving NGOs and civil society organisations including their capacity development.

#### **4.4. Provision of a viable alternative to the exploitation of children in destination countries**

Given the large volume of money being given to beggars in Saudi Arabia during the pilgrimage season, estimated at \$140 million, one practical option would be to turn it into a properly organized and monitored activity, based on economic principles, whereby the demand—based on religious precepts—by the public to have opportunities for charitable giving could continue the paying of alms during the Ramadan and hajji season, but then have the funds channeled and collected either by registered CSOs and/or other officially sanctioned and monitored bodies, who would then be responsible to use the funds to support vulnerable groups and families either domestically or internationally, or both.

An initiative to stop Albanian children from begging on the streets of Greek cities was successful through effective messaging and a communication campaign that reduced donations by the public to them and highlighted the abuse and exploitation of such children; 28, 29 this model from South Eastern Europe could potentially be adapted and applied in other contexts. There is a need to learn from other similar successful models in developing a full-fledged policy and programme package to address child begging in Saudi Arabia.

#### **4.5. Comprehensive prevention strategies in source countries**

Policies to prevent the trafficking and exploitation of children from source countries to the Gulf could include the following strategic elements among others:

- Given the link between child begging and religious pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia in particular, anti-trafficking policies could establish a system of incentives or ‘rewards’ to source countries which take action to reduce the numbers of their children found begging in Saudi Arabia—notably through proportionally increasing or reducing the existing quotas for *hajj* and *umra* visas given to each country;
- Gulf countries could consider factoring in the issue of child begging and exploitation in their immigration, labour, and development assistance policies—providing incentives through favouring source countries which take action against child trafficking and the exploitation of their children;
- Gulf countries have a long tradition of supporting education programmes in developing countries, particularly Muslim countries, and could thus consider through their development assistance policies and programmes targeting educational support schemes in countries from which children are being trafficked to the Gulf, but make the

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<sup>28</sup> Reference Guide on Protecting the Rights of Child Victims of Trafficking in Europe, UNICEF, 2006

<sup>29</sup> Transnational Protection of Children - The Case of Albania and Greece 2000-2006, Terre des Hommes and ARSIS, 2006

educational support, subsidies or scholarships partially or fully conditional upon completion of primary or even secondary education, thus providing an incentive for parents to keep their children at home;

- External and development assistance support could also target the enabling of all source countries to make basic education free, accessible, and compulsory, and to strengthen monitoring and reporting systems to ensure that children are kept in schools and communities;
- Source countries should prioritize and ensure adequate national budget allocations towards the development of comprehensive child protection systems and the necessary infrastructure to protect children—with effective co-ordination among social welfare, health, education, policy and judiciary systems; and protocols to identify children at-risk of exploitation and trafficking, as well as provide the necessary support and care to counter the identified risks.

## **5. Key conclusions and recommendations**

The problem analysis and policy options presented in the paper lead to the following main conclusions and recommendations:

1. National plans of actions (NPAs) are being used as the key instrument for combating trafficking in Yemen and Afghanistan but there is very limited progress in their implementation. The NPAs are seen as key instruments for addressing trafficking problem but they are yet to be fully adopted and integrated in the Government system. The experience from other regions such as West Africa can be of importance in strengthening the implementation of national plans of action.
2. The experience gained from various programme initiatives (the Camel Jockey Project in particular) is extremely valuable. The project provides documented experience on how countries can collaborate to address child victims of trafficking. The sub-regional cooperation which has evolved is an important component of the model and has relevance for wider application. The project also provides evidence on what works for identification, repatriation, care and support, compensation which need to be translated into policies as part of the national plans of action being developed to address child trafficking.
3. As demonstrated by the camel jockey project, it is possible to address the problem (especially the pull/demand side) with appropriate political will, legislation, and inter-country partnership. However, the situation is more challenging and complex where a large number of families are influenced by push factor for large scale trafficking such as trafficked children working as beggars in Saudi Arabia. In such situations dominated by "supply-push", more systematic preventive measures are required. These would include legislation and their enforcement through massive training and mapping/monitoring measures in both destination as well as origin countries.
4. One option which we propose as practical is to turn the begging industry in Saudi Arabia into a properly organized and monitored activity, based on economic principles, whereby the

donations from public who pay the alms during the Ramadan and *hajji* season are pooled and sent to Yemen and other at-risk and needy countries to support vulnerable groups and families. This could be organized in the form of a collaborative project implemented through the involvement of well-established and credible NGOs/CSOs.

5. In source countries (Afghanistan and Yemen), policies are needed to target areas and groups that are most vulnerable to child trafficking, together with improved awareness of child trafficking problem through the media. Income transfer schemes, education and vocational training opportunities for communities/families that are vulnerable to trafficking are useful options to consider. These could be integrated as part of the larger poverty reduction and educational development initiatives.

6. There is a need to follow a more systematic and harmonised approach to legislation against trafficking in the origin, destination and transit countries. While the progress in enacting legislation is impressive, governments need to establish measures to reinforce legislation as part of the government system (involving judiciary, police and immigration departments). This will require integration of child trafficking prevention, protection and prosecution measures into the larger child protection systems and capacity development.

7. Strengthening of regional and sub-regional collaboration particularly to examine immigration policies to eliminate gaps and possible leakages that are conducive to child trafficking is an area which has considerable potential to address child trafficking. In addition, there is also need to break the networks that are engaged in child trafficking.

8. Improved systems for collecting and analyzing data and information to map trafficking levels and routes, and establish benchmark for monitoring progress in addressing child trafficking. More research needs to be carried out on both supply and demand sides of trafficking, to explore:

- Particular needs and expectations that made victims more vulnerable to trafficking operations
- The role of formal and informal information (i.e. contacts in destination, nature and conditions of work) in fostering trafficking operations
- Identification and mapping of most affected origin communities/sites to understand supply-push factors as well as the nature of information flows that prompted the trafficking
- Identification of major categories and conditions of work that trafficked victims are engaged in destination communities
- Identification of viable alternatives to the exploitation of children, in partnership with governments, civil society, the private sector, and communities

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