UNICEF WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA REGIONAL OFFICE

CHILD TRAFFICKING IN THE GAMBIA :
A SITUATION ANALYSIS

Mission of technical support of the Regional Office for West and Central Africa
to UNICEF of The Gambia

December 2004
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Justification of the mission and objectives
This report is the result of a mission of technical support of Angelo Miramonti\(^1\) to UNICEF of The Gambia in December 2004.
This mission was justified by the lack of baseline information on the situation of Child trafficking (CT) in The Gambia and by some cases of CT identified in February 2004 - that for the first time - raised the issue of CT in The Gambia.

The objectives of the mission were to:
- Conduct a situation analysis of CT in The Gambia in terms of modalities, networks and main roads, and also in terms of response to the phenomenon (actors and interventions).
- Assess the existing institutional protective environment around trafficked children, or at-risk of trafficking, and identify what are the existing gaps; analyse the consequences of the identified gaps, underlying causes and connections among them.
- Asses the existing community protective environment around trafficked children, or at-risk of trafficking, focusing on the child’s perception and his/her reference points.
- Provide recommendations on the improvement of the current activities of UNICEF and to participate in the definition/development of a plan of action against child trafficking in The Gambia.

1.2 Methodology
The methodology of the situation analysis included:
1. Collection of research and other documents on CT and related issues such as child labour, sexual exploitation and street children in The Gambia and in the sub-region. Elaboration of a synthesis of the existing knowledge on CT in The Gambia.
2. Draft list of institutions and persons concerned with CT in The Gambia.
3. Review of the legislation concerning CT in The Gambia and of the international engagements taken by the government at the international and regional levels.
4. Interviews with the institutions and persons identified. The interviews were based on general information about CT in The Gambia, about the reported cases of CT and about the procedures of prevention, protection, repatriation and coordination. The interview focused also on the perception of CT by different actors (police, NGOs, etc.).
5. Field visits in the border areas to interview immigration police, traditional and youth leaders and women's groups.
7. Finalization of the present report.

1.3 List of interviewed Institutions and Persons
The information baseline of this situation analysis is composed by 33 interviews involving 46 persons. The interviews in the Banjul area concerned the following 17 organisations:

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Institutions

Government
1. Department of Social Welfare
2. Inspector General of Police
3. Director of Immigration
4. Officer Commanding Police Prosecution
5. Department of State for Justice

NGOs
1. Child Protection Alliance
2. African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies
3. Shelter for Children
4. Raid The Gambia

Diplomatic representations
1. The Embassy of the USA
2. British High Commission
3. Honorary Consul of Ghana
4. High Commission of Senegal
5. French Embassy

International Organizations
1. IOM
2. UNHCR
3. UNICEF

Some field visits were carried on to interview security forces, traditional and youth leaders and women's groups in border areas.

There were 16 field interviews conducted, involving 29 persons:
10 Police officers
4 Immigration officers
5 Traditional leaders
5 Youth leader
3 Women's groups
1 Custom officer
1 Education officer

The interviews with the security forces were carried out at the following border posts:
1. Fatoto
2. Basse
3. Farafenni
4. Dimbaya-Darsilami
5. Amdalaye

The aim of these interviews was to gather information about the trans-border movement of children, to assess the awareness of trafficking among the border police, to assess the kind of training they may need and to sensitise them on the issue.

The Interviews with traditional chiefs, Imams and youth leaders for the following border villages:
1. Kerr Pateh
2. Amadlaye
The aim of these interviews was to gather information about the trans-border movement of children, to assess the level of awareness of trafficking among the border communities and to assess what potential role they could play in prevention or protection interventions.

2. CHILD TRAFFICKING IN THE GAMBIA

2.1 Trafficking in Persons: the international definition

Trafficking in persons is defined in Article 3 (a) of the protocol to the Convention on Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Protocol) as “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.”

When a child is involved in trafficking, the subparagraph (c) of the same article considers a larger definition, and states that it is not necessary that fraudulent methods be used to qualify a situation as child trafficking: “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) of this article.”

The subparagraph (d) of this article makes precise that “Child” shall mean any person less than eighteen years of age.

This definition that combines the organized displacement of a child and the purpose of exploitation is of major importance in the West and Central Africa context, where CT is often organized with the consent of parents and sometimes even of children. In this region child trafficking is based on a tradition of migration to work, which is a strategy adopted by families and communities, in particular in rural areas.

2.2 Existing researches on CT in The Gambia

Three studies on CT and related issues in The Gambia were identified and analysed.

2.2.1 The Trafficking in Persons Report 2004 of the US State Department

According to The Trafficking in Persons Report 2004 of the US State Department, The Gambia is a source, transit, and destination country for women and children trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced domestic and commercial labour. Sex tourists from the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Norway, Germany, and Belgium exploit Gambian children and, in some cases, traffic them to Europe for prostitution and pornography. Children are internally trafficked from rural to urban areas for forced work, including begging, street vending, and domestic servitude. The Gambia is a transit point for West African women being trafficked to Europe, the Middle East, and the United States for sexual exploitation. It is also a destination country for West African children exploited as domestics, farm labourers, beggars, street vendors, and in the sex trade. Child prostitutes typically have “leaders” or pimps and operate from bars, hotels, and brothels with the approval of proprietors and managers.

The report places The Gambia at tier 2 and justifies the choice saying that the Government of The Gambia does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. During 2003, the government made tremendous efforts to confront trafficking, including the passage of the Tourism Offences Act, the drafting of a trafficking bill, and the formation of a trafficking task force. The government should discontinue the practice of returning trafficking victims to their captors and take immediate steps to protect future victims. The government should also enact and
implement comprehensive trafficking legislation to ensure that the legal mechanisms are in place to enable the prosecution of traffickers.

2.2.2 Study on Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children

The Study on the Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children in The Gambia was carried out by the government and UNICEF in 2002-2003 and published in December 2003. The study involved hundreds of child and adult prostitutes, schoolchildren, middle persons, security personnel, community and religious leaders, members of civil society, government, tourism officials and NGOs. Three main field sites were selected: Greater Banjul area, Farafenni-Soma and Basse.

The study identifies several causal factors of sexual exploitation of children including: poverty, the changing face of youth culture, the crisis of the system of collective watch and responsibility provided by the extended family, the rural-urban migration, the increase of school drop outs, the increase of sex tourism related to children and the influx of refugees and economic migrants from Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, Senegal (Casamance) and Cote d'Ivoire.

The main findings of the research are that children involved in prostitution do not consider themselves as "children" and do not understand that they require special protection because of their age. On the issue of incest most children were unusually quiet, and it was difficult to discern if the silence was an indication that incest is too much a taboo for children to talk about or that the practice was not so prevalent in their communities. The study reveals that the most prevalent form of sexual exploitation of children in The Gambia is the "cross-generational sex" which means that an adolescent (usually female) engages in covert sexual relationship with adults in exchange of for money, gifts or service. A child's perception of prostitution is often influenced by the glamorisation of the phenomenon. Child prostitutes consider their activity as a way to earn vast sums of money and to live a seemingly free and modern lifestyle. The gains of this lifestyle, in the child's perception, override the concerns about the hazards associated with prostitution.

Most adults complained that children's ideas about western values, as well as increasing clamour over children's rights, were making it difficult for them to have control over their children. Police officers were uncertain about their role in responding to child abuse and exploitation cases. Society's perception of what constitutes sexual harassment remains controversial and it remains highly delicate to define what is considered to be sexual harassment in The Gambia. The study establishes that children engaged in prostitution in the Senegambia Tourist Area near Banjul are predominantly underage, and that 60 to 70% of tourists go to this area for the sun, relaxation and cheap sex. However, there is no overt coercion of children into prostitution, i.e. most prostitutes across all the age groups gave clear and apparently rational explanations for what they do.

The study stresses that there is no nationally agreed upon definition of sexual abuse and exploitation and child trafficking; these terms mean different things to different people.

2.2.3 Assessment of Shelter for Children

The Ghanaian NGO Shelter for Children (SfC) carried out the assessment Trafficking and the Use of Children in All Forms of Economic Exploitation during 2003-2004. The Objectives of this research was to assess the situation of CT and the use of children in all forms of economic exploitation by the business community.

A team of officials from the Shelter carried out the assessment. The team was comprised of two child protection officers, the National Coordinator, businesspersons, a group of children selling in the streets, and other children deprived of education and/or parents. The assessment took one and half years to complete.

The methodology used to collect data was based on multiple methods, including a questionnaire, in order to involve the population of targeted communities. Participants in the assessment included 50 businesspersons,
10 parents, 10-parent substitutes and 20 under-age sales persons. Furthermore, SfC collected evidence in the markets of the targeted fishermen community of Ghana Town, 15 km south of Banjul.

The results of the assessment were that there exist in The Gambia different categories of child maltreatment and economic exploitation that involve the business community to some extent. One of the widely known activities involving trafficking in Ghanaian children for use as sales persons and in the fishing industry hit the headlines in early February 2004. The main culprits were businesswomen engaged in export of fish and fish products to the ECOWAS member states.

The SfC presented, on request, a written report on this issue to the Director of Social Welfare and copied to Ghana Consul on the trafficking in Ghanaian children. SfC had counted 65 girls, used as sales persons — selling gari (Ghanaian food) among other things - for a remuneration of about D100 per every 100 kilos of gari sold. The children worked over 16 hours a day and had little sleep. In addition, there were a number of young boys, as well as girls, engaged in the processing of shark fins for export. Most of these young children were relocated from time to time depending on the fishing season between Conakry and Ghana Town (Brufut). A group of businesspersons (boat owners) and fish sellers supervise their activities.

According to the assessment, the other groups used in exploitative commercial activities are young Guinean, Senegalese, and Gambian children. They are seen selling their wares at Serrekunda, Albert Market in Banjul, and Brikama markets and along the highways and streets. The business community, of the same above-mentioned origin countries of the children, control their activities across The Gambia.

Over 200 children, of all nationalities between the ages of 10 to 16, operate canteens at the markets and street corners on behalf of businesspersons in nearly all communities in The Gambia. Other children are forced by caregivers (businesspersons) to shine shoes and repair shoes either by the way side or as roving shoe doctors (shoe repair boys). Furthermore, caregivers engage the children in the selling of consumer products such as mint (all sorts), cigarettes, chewing gum, cola nuts, etc. displayed in small trays in the streets and market places.

Another group of children exposed to extreme neglect, abuse and depravation are child beggars also known as "almodus" or "talibes". They number over 2000 in the Senegambia region alone. Most of them come from Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. These children come from families usually comprised of twenty or more persons. Most of them are given away by their parents to parent substitutes or spiritual fathers to provide them with formal or Koranic education. However, these children are transferred from their native environment and deployed against their will to beg in the streets. The child beggars ask for “fisibidillah”. Fisibidillah can be anything from food leftovers, to candles and money.

Another group of exploited children are the children of Sarahula origin and their family businesses. The assessment identifies some Sarahula sales girls selling textiles (tie and dye) at the market places in Banjul, Serrekunda, Brikama and beyond. Most of these tie and dye sales girls are under 15 without formal education. To some extent, most of their caregivers (businesspersons) interviewed during the assessment did not consider education as the best way to overcome poverty.

The above-mentioned cases of child involvement in commercial activities are not the only cases of neglect, abuse, and deprivation. According to the estimates of SfC, the number of children trafficked annually and deployed in the labor market either by parents or by parent substitutes, as sales persons or in other economic activities, has increased dramatically over the last years.

The conclusion of this assessment was that the issue of child maltreatment, economic exploitation, and child abuse prevention is definitely an issue that concerns and requires involvement of the business community. The SfC's activities to identify cases of economic exploitation and trafficking in children had lead to the discovery that some people are hiding behind the traditional system, where it was normal for children to grow up with a parent substitute, but who in some cases abuse the children and exploit them for economical gain.

The assessment revealed that the exploitation of children is a result of neglect and negligent treatment by parents and parent substitutes and that the main causes of child abuse are the depressed economic situation,
the increasing importance of economic gains in people's perception of success, the rural/urban migration and
the weakening family structures. All of these factors have contributed to the increase of the exploitation of
children.

The assessment also outlined the method of physical transport of trafficking, i.e. some of the routes used by
child traffickers to transport children. These routes include entrance into The Gambia from Sabe,
Gabissarra, Numyel and Farafenni, among others. The assessment concluded that the businesspersons are
directly responsible for the cost of transporting these children to The Gambia. Once they are in the country,
the children are engaged in hazardous economic activities likely to cause injuries to them. The child is
expected to, and made to, pay the cost of their upkeep before he or she is allowed to take charge of his or her
own destiny.

Overall, the assessment stressed that CT and the use of children in all forms of economic exploitation are
preventable. It is not a product of human condition but human attitude. According to the assessment, the
legal efforts in preventing CT and the use of children in all forms of economic exploitation have missed the
mark by focusing largely on the prosecution of perpetrators and the treatment and repatriation of the victims
instead of on prevention. The notion is to help businesspersons/parents relinquish an abusive pattern of child
upbringing, and replace it with a method that is more rewarding to the business/parenting, and at the
same time conducive to the optimal development of the child.

3. JURIDICIAL ENVIRONMENT OF CHILD TRAFFICKING IN THE GAMBIA

The government took some engagements to fight CT at three levels: international, regional and national.

3.1 International engagements

   Prostitution and Child Pornography, was signed in December 2000, not yet ratified.
3. The ILO Convention 138 on the Minimum Age of Admission to Work, ratified in September
5. The Optional Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women
   and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime,
   was signed in December 2000, ratified in May 2003.

3.2 Regional engagements

7. In 2001, the 15 governments of the ECOWAS plus Mauritania signed a Plan of Action against
   Trafficking in Persons. The implementation of the Plan started in June 2003.

3.3 National legislation concerning CT in The Gambia

Section 29(2) of The Gambian Constitution seeks to protect children from economic exploitation and work
that is detrimental to their health and mental well being:

Children under the age of 16 are entitled to be protected from economic exploitation and shall not be
employed in or required to perform work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with their education or
to be harmful to their health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

No legal framework is in place to enforce the above provision. The Department of Labour was in the process
of formulating policies to guide and regulate the sector in general, and in particular to conform to its
commitments to protect children under the ILO Conventions 182 and 138, both of which The Gambia has
ratified. With respect to the issue of domestic workers, the National Policy for the Advancement of Gambian Women calls for the registration of domestic workers in existing labour unions and advocates for the amendment of the 1990 Labour Act to include domestic labour. An age limit law to protect very young girls who leave their homes to work as maids still needs to be established.

The Provisions in The Gambian criminal code deal with kidnapping, abduction, buying, selling, and trafficking in persons for the purpose of exploitation. The penalty for trafficking is 10 years of imprisonment.

In response to the growing phenomenon of child sex tourism, the Government enacted new legislation. A new Children Bill was drafted in 2003. The Bill gathers all the laws relating to children scattered throughout the laws of The Gambia and seeks to harmonize these with the CRC, The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and other relevant international Conventions. A Draft National policy on Children has also been prepared. The next step for the government will be the implementation of these new laws.

The Tourism Offences Act of 2003 criminalizes child prostitution and pornography engaged in by tourists, and carries severe punishments for these offences. Article 13 deals with CT:

Art. 13. A tourist or any other person who buys, sells, procures or traffics in or brings into or takes out of The Gambia for the purpose of trafficking a child, commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine of not less than one hundred thousand Dalasi and imprisonment for a term not less than five years.

The Tourism Offences Act defines a child as persons aged less than 18 years of age but it does not define what trafficking means. This lack of definition is leaving a certain ambiguity in the interpretation of Art. 13.

No cases of CT have been prosecuted in The Gambian court system and nobody has been convicted for this offence up until the present.

4. THE FINDINGS OF THE SITUATION ANALYSIS

This section presents the findings of the assessment, focusing on main roads, modalities and networks of CT in The Gambia.

4.1 Main roads

1. Gambian children are trafficked to Senegal for Koranic education
2. Senegalese children are trafficked to The Gambia for Koranic education and child labour in petty trade and carpentry in the workshops of the Banjul-Serekunda area.
3. Guinean children are trafficked to The Gambia through Casamance
4. Children from Guinea Bissau are trafficked to The Gambia through Casamance.
5. Ghanaian children are trafficked by boat to Ghana Town to work in fishing, fish preparation and petty trade
6. Senegalese girls from Casamance of the Diola Ethnic group are trafficked to The Gambia for domestic work
7. Ghanaian children are trafficked to Guinea, especially in Conakry, after transiting through The Gambia
8. Children from several African countries are trafficked through The Gambia to take them to Northern Europe for sexual exploitation.
9. Ghanaian children reach Dakar or Banjul by land and they are forced into child labour. They transit through Bobo Diulasso (Burkina Faso), Bamako and Kayes (Mali) and Tambacunda (Senegal) to reach Dakar or Banjul.
10. Guinean children are trafficked through the Futajallo Mountains in Guinea and they approach The Gambia through the border towns of Sabe, Gambisara, Numial, Farafenni, Andallahie and Kartong.
11. Gambian children from rural areas are internally trafficked to the Banjul-Serakunda area for domestic work and petty trade, in particular it has been reported that some girls from the rural areas of Basse and Gambisara are trafficked to Albert market in Banjul to sell textiles.

4.2 Modalities of CT
Two basic patterns of CT have been identified in The Gambia

1. The traditional placement of children to richer members of the family for education or apprenticeship is disguised by the tutors who force the child to work and do not fulfill the promise to provide education to the child.

2. Children are sent to study in a Koranic school where they are forced to beg. When a Marabout (religious leader of Islamic brotherhoods) moves from Senegal to The Gambia or vice versa, he takes his students with him and sends them to beg in the towns where he transit. Some of these children run away along the itinerary and start leaving in the streets where they are exposed to several forms of exploitation and abuse.

4.3 Networks
Four networks of CT have been identified, the first two are probably organized criminal syndicates, the third is a religious network and the forth is a traditional family network and is more informal.

1. There is some Ghanaian organized network is trafficking Ghanaian children to The Gambia and to Guinea for labour exploitation.

2. There are some criminal organized syndicates trafficking Gambian children to Northern Europe for sexual exploitation.

3. The Marabouts of different brotherhoods are trafficking children from one Koranic school to the other across Senegal and The Gambia to force the children into begging.

4. There are some family networks are trafficking children from Senegal Guinea and Guinea Bissau to The Gambia to employ them in domestic work or petty trade.

4.4 Cases of CT in The Gambia: the Ghana Town case
Before 2004, The Gambia was believed to be free from CT, because no case had been identified. The first reported case of CT in The Gambia was the "Ghana Town" Case. In 2003, the NGO Shelter for Children, managed by a Ghanaian citizen living in The Gambia, noticed the presence of Ghanaian children in the streets of Ghana Town, a community of fishermen 15 km south of Banjul. The children, mainly girls, were selling Ghanaian food, called gari, in the streets and helping in the fish preparation for export.

SfC planned to carry out an assessment on the situation. A headmaster of a school who was living in Ghana town accepted to collaborate with SfC to gather information on the issue in Ghana town. SfC was able to identify at least 65 child victims of CT living in Ghana Town and contacted the Consul of Ghana to discuss the situation. SfC and the consul agreed to keep confidential about this discovery in order to protect the victims and facilitate the intervention, but somebody contacted the newspaper The Point to report the news.

Notwithstanding the request of confidentiality made to the journalists, on February 4th 2004, The Point published the article "Ghanaian Children Used as Slaves in Gambia". According to the article, some Ghanaian girls, aged between 12 and 17 years of age were kept in slavery and forced to work in fish preparation and in the sale of gari in the streets on Ghana Town. The government reacted to the publication of this news summoning an emergency meeting involving all the stakeholders, including the Police and Immigration Association, the Committee of Elders of the Ghanaian and the consul of Ghana to discuss the situation and draw a strategy of intervention. It was agreed that Ghana Town be instantly visited by the Immigration offices and all children suspected of being victims of CT and their tutors were apprehended for interview.

On February 13th, 20 children suspected to be victims of CT were apprehended in Ghana Town. A team composed by the Department of Social Welfare, the Police, the Immigration and the Child Protection
Alliance (a network of NGOs) embarked on the investigation and interviews of the suspected victims and their carers. The investigation was carried out using separate interviews with two distinct questionnaires (one for the children and one for the carers). The interviews showed that 8 out of the 20 apprehended children were actually staying with their parents. They were eventually reunited with their parents who were advised not to involve their children in hazardous work. The reminder 12 children were identified as victims or at risk of CT.

The main results of the investigation were:

- 50% of the children were living with their parents, while the other 50% with no relative
- 75% knows the ones who brought them in the country from Ghana
- 75% come by land and only 25% come with authentic travel documents
- 75% come to the country to work and 4% to join their biological parents
- 80% are engaged both in fish processing and selling, especially Gari, in the streets of the urban towns such as Serekunda, Brikama and Ghana Town
- 15% are currently engaged in what they were told since in Ghana
- 55% have their parents in Ghana, 10% are orphans
- 20% are cared for by their biological parents and the rest by no relative
- 35% are in touch with their biological parents who are outside the country
- 85% wants to stay in The Gambia
- 40% of the guardians remit money to Ghana either to support their parents or relatives
- 5% of the guardians acknowledged that their wards had travelled outside the country in the past two years
- 50% of the guardians have received children from Ghana in the course of the past two years
- 55% of the guardians consented to their wards being working in the fish preparation or selling Gari in the streets of urban towns
- 50% of the guardians agreed that their wards not attending school presently

During the interrogation the children refused to speak any Gambian language or English. They just spoke one Ghanaian language. The Task Force had to ask for the translation by a woman from the Ghanaian community. Some suspect has been raised that translation was biased and hid some information. It was reported that the children might have been threatened not to speak in Gambian language, if apprehended. The children could probably speak some Gambian language because they were selling in the street not only to Ghanaian people. The government in Ghana was contacted and some officers of the Ghanaian ministry of Social Affairs went to Banjul to interview the children and discuss the situation.

In June 2004, the government of Ghana asked the government of The Gambia to repatriate the 12 children. The repatriation was managed by the government, UNICEF and the Ghanaian Embassy. Little information was found about the repatriation. The children were taken back to their parents in Ghana. It has been reported that they had given theirs children to the tutors in The Gambia for a specific purpose and now they did not know what to do. No support was provided to the parents to assure the reinsertion of these children. The 41 children that were living with their family in Ghana Town were taken back to Ghana Town. After this episode, all of the Ghana Town community stopped communicating with Shelter for Children and with any other person external to the community, because they felt humiliated and decided not to trust anybody anymore.

Until this incident, child trafficking was not considered an issue in The Gambia. After this experience of repatriation, UNICEF of The Gambia and of Ghana tried to find lessons learned on repatriation procedure. It was realized that neither UNICEF, the government, nor the local NGOs had technical expertise in management of protection and repatriation of CT victims. In particular, it was reported that when the article was published, the children identified by SfC disappeared from the streets and the traffickers left The Gambia with their victims and are now operating in Conakry.
5. CHILD TRAFFICKING RESPONSE: MAPPING ACTORS AND INTERVENTIONS

This section presents the findings of the situation analysis concerning the response to CT in The Gambia, mapping the actors and analysing the interventions.

5.1 The government

During the March 2004 opening of the National Assembly, the government publicly acknowledged the existence of child trafficking and the Head of State publicly condemned child trafficking and vowed to take action to prevent it.

Also in March 2004, during the process of repatriation of Ghanaian children from Ghana Town the government appointed a Task Force against CT that was charged to coordinate the activities against CT at the national level. The Task Force met twice since its establishment and no meeting is scheduled for the future. No work plan was established and no activity is in place. It has been reported that the Task force is not operational because its members are already engaged in many other activities in the public sector and have very limited time.

The Gambia does not have a Plan of Action against CT and the government is not implementing any activities against child trafficking after the repatriation of 12 Ghanaian children in May 2004.

5.2 International organizations

IOM
The office of IOM in Banjul has no activity against CT. They were informed of the Ghana Town case and they wanted to be involved in the repatriation, but at that point in time it was too late. They are currently assisting in interviewing some refugees from Sierra Leone to assess their eligibility to be resettled to Belgium, Canada, Australia and the USA.

UNHCR
The UNHCR Office in Banjul is managing a program of resettlement of refugees coming from Senegal, Sierra Leone and Liberia. They established some guidelines on the international adoption of refugee children that include some provisions to prevent CT. No specific activity to combat CT is in place or is envisaged for the future.

UNICEF
Child trafficking was never considered as a Child Protection issue in The Gambia. The MPO 2002-2006 does not include the problem of trafficking and the study of the Innocenti Research Center Child Trafficking in West Africa Policy Responses did not include The Gambia because it was believed that CT was not a concern in this area.

The PPA 2004 does not include any activity on CT. UNICEF collaborated with the government in managing the Ghana Town case by providing first assistance to the victims and supporting the Task Force in its investigation work. After the repatriation of the 12 Ghanaian children, no other activity against CT was implemented by UNICEF.

5.3 NGOs

Child Protection Alliance
The Child Protection Alliance is an umbrella association of organizations working or interested in the prevention of child abuse and exploitation or the protection of children from abuse and exploitation. It was formed after the participation of The Gambia in the 1996 Stockholm Congress on Commercial Sexual
Exploitation of Children. The CPA was formed in 2001 and it developed very rapidly, attracting local and international funding. It is now an affiliated ECPAT organisation and a partner of Terre des Hommes Netherlands.

The twin objectives of the CPA are to raise awareness on child abuse and exploitation - thereby breaking the culture of silence surrounding it - and to build national/institutional capacity in the prevention of child abuse and exploitation and protection of victims. In 2001, the CPA carried out some sensitisation and capacity-building activities for children as well as professionals on such issues as child abandonment, early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation, sexual harassment and exploitation of children, corporal punishment and teenage pregnancy. The CPA is encouraging children to report incidents of abuse to them, which are investigated and appropriate advise and support is given. The CPA is composed by 73 organisations, including government departments, UN Agencies, women and youth organisations. The CPA was involved in the identification of the victims of CT in the Ghana Town case. The CPA has no specific activity on CT, even though its awareness-raising activities address other related CP issues.

Shelter for Children
Shelter for Children (SfC) is a Gambian NGO founded in 1996 by a Ghanaian citizen living in Banjul. This NGO is currently working in literacy programs and in sensitisation activities using books in local languages and books in pictures for illiterate people. SfC carried out the assessment that uncovered the existence of CT in Ghana town. It is not currently implementing any activity on CT.

African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights studies
The African Charter is a NGO helping to ensure human and people’s rights through promoting democratic principles throughout Africa. The centre was established in 1989 in The Gambia by an act of the parliament. In 1995, the centre became an autonomous and independent pan-African NGO. It promotes human rights and democracy through training, action-oriented research, publications and documentations and it maintains networks of communication, training and research amongst NGOs.

The objective of the centre is to undertake action-oriented research and publication of human rights in Africa, to undertake education and training for promotional activities, to maintain a documentation centre for research and training and to collect documentation relating to democracy and human rights and to build the capacity of other African organizations to monitor and protect human rights in Africa.

The Centre has four units:
1. Training
2. Information
3. Legal
4. Research and management

No activity concerning CT or children specifically is in place.

5.4 Diplomatic representations

Senegalese High Commission (HC)
The Senegalese HC managed some cases of Senegalese unaccompanied children identified in The Gambia and repatriated. In most of the cases, the children come from the regions close to the borders of The Gambia, in particular from the Sine Saloum Delta. The ambassador of Senegal contacts the family and organises the repatriation. In 2004, the embassy repatriated 6 children. No cases of abuse or paedophilia were reported. The children are taken back to their family but no reinsertion measure was implemented and the government of Senegal has not followed-up on the reinsertion of these children.
Embassy of the USA
The embassy of the USA is not funding programs against CT. They encouraged the Task Force against CT to tell them what they are planning to do in the future but they had no answer up until the present. The USA embassy is interested in funding the establishment of an office for the Task force. The USA embassy is also encouraging the government to take some additional actions in order to be ranked in tier 1 in the Trafficking in Persons Report 2005. They also declared their interest in funding the trainings of security forces and law enforcement officers on CT. They have been supporting the CPA for the last 3 years providing them two grants, one of 18,000 USD for 2002-03 and one of 8400 USD for 2004.

Embassy of France
France opened an embassy in Banjul in the second half of 2004 (before 2004, the embassy of France in Dakar was also covering The Gambia). No activity against CT is in place or is envisaged for the future.

British High Commission (HC)
The British HC has no activity in place against CT. They reported that a new law has been approved in 2004 by the UK to prosecute UK citizens committing sexual exploitation of children anywhere in the world. No UK citizen has been condemned for offences committed in The Gambia up until the present.

6. UNICEF'S REGIONAL RESPONSE TO CHILD TRAFFICKING IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

6.1 An ideal strategy against child trafficking

UNICEF CP Section of WCARO has developed an ideal scheme of response against CT organized in five axes of intervention:

1. Prevention
2. Protection
3. Repatriation
4. Reintegration
5. Coordination

In this model strategy, the five axes are organised according to the following scheme:

Protection

Prevention ➔ Repatriation ➔ Reinsertion

Coordination

This scheme is chronologically organized from the left to the right. Prevention, repatriation and reinsertion are interventions that follow the itinerary of the child victim. Protection measures should be present throughout the entire process, from prevention to reinsertion. All of the phases of intervention also need to coordinate the actors involved, inside each country and among the countries of the region.
7. THE NATIONAL RESPONSE TO CT IN THE GAMBIA

This section presents the findings of the assessment concerning strengths and weaknesses of the national response to CT in The Gambia. Both strengths and opportunities are broken down into the five intervention axes of the ideal response to CT.

7.1 Opportunities:

Prevention
1. Increasing awareness in issues related to CT such as sexual exploitation of children, children in begging, street children etc.
2. The existence of studies on related issues (sexual exploitation, street children) provides an information baseline for program planning

Protection, Repatriation and Reinsertion
3. The government acknowledges the existence of the problem and is willing to take action
4. A legal framework on child protection issues is being put in place
5. The existence of a CP network of NGOs working on related issues (sexual exploitation, street children, awareness raising activities) is an opportunity to start a partnership with the civil society and to establish a procedure of repatriation and reinsertion
6. UNICEF in The Gambia has capacity and human resources dealing with child protection issues that are better than in other countries of the region affected by CT

Coordination
7. Existence of a Task Force on CT established by the government

7.2 Constraints

Prevention
1. Lack of knowledge about what trafficking is at the levels of police and law enforcement officers, and at the level of the people in urban and rural areas, especially traditional leaders; denial of the existence of internal trafficking. The prevailing view is that CT is an imported practice that is not involving Gambians, neither as victims or perpetrators.
2. The Ghana Town case was perceived as an isolated incident, i.e. after the repatriation of the victims, the government felt that the issue of CT was finished.
3. Links between migration, placement of children, porous borders and child labor as a form of child socialization; there is a cultural gap between the perspective of international organizations and the local culture about what exploitation is (for example, it was reported that in some families caring for entrusted children, it is becoming normal to ask a placed child to work after school, even though the agreement with the original parents was different)

Protection
4. Lack of a coordinated national response (Action Plan)
5. Weak law enforcement on CT
6. Lack of shelters for children in difficult situations. There is a drop-in center for children in Banjul, it is funded by the Standard Chartered Bank and managed by the Department of Social Welfare. It has been reported that this center is not serving the purpose of sheltering children in difficult situations. No other shelter for children has been identified
7. Few services for almodus and street working children
Repatriation and Reinsertion
8. Lack of repatriation procedure, repatriation is automatic and not always voluntary (without an individual project of reinsertion)

Reinsertion
9. There is no nationally agreed upon procedure of protection, repatriation and reinsertion of children victims of CT in The Gambia. In the identified cases of CT, the victims have been deported in their county of origin without asking for their views about what they thought was better for them, and without an individual project of reinsertion agreed with the county of origin and coordinated with the authorities of the country of origin. No follow-up of the reinsertion in the countries of origin of the victims was reported. When the children are taken back to their families, the state considers itself to have accomplished its duties and disregards any follow-up activity

Coordination
10. No other international organization, except for UNICEF, is involved in fighting CT
11. Necessity to build a more systematic coordination with UNICEF offices in the countries of origin, especially Guinea, Senegal and Ghana, in the framework of a regional response to CT
8. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNICEF

After considering the findings of this situation analysis and the reported opportunities and constrains, and after reviewing the model of intervention against CT, the following recommendations are made:

Prevention

1. Raise the awareness of the government, parents and children on CT; launch a sensitizing campaign using posters, t-shirts spots in radio and TV on CT. Some targeted activities may be planned in the most at-risk communities. In particular, it is important to work with religious and traditional leaders (Alkalos, Imams), youth leaders and women's groups in at-risk areas. There needs to be inclusion of the topic in sermons and teaching. Awareness should be raised especially in rural areas using youth leaders and women’s groups.
2. Conduct a research about CT, child labor and child migration; starting points include the study on sexual exploitation, a study on sex tourism (carried out by Terre des Hommes of the Netherlands), a study on trafficking in persons in Senegal (carried out by U.S.A.I.D., 2004), assessment of Shelter for Children in Ghana Town, a study on street children (carried out by the Department of Social Welfare, 1995), and the UNICEF regional strategy for Child Protection in West and Central Africa.

Protection

3. To develop advocacy for the publication of the law and its enforcement. The contents of the law need to be transmitted to the population, security forces and judges.
4. Training: security forces on child protection issues using the UNICEF module. The training should stress the knowledge of the laws concerning CP, investigation procedures for suspect cases of CT and the fight against corruption. To build the capacity of the Department of social affairs on how to manage cases of CT. To train journalists and media professionals on how to deal with news concerning CP (to avoid the repetition of the Ghana Town case).
5. To start a program for almodus and working street children with a focus on beggars and domestic work. The provision of services should include informal education and apprenticeship. A part-time schedule may help the children to continue working and studying. Collaboration with the CPA capacity-building of NGOs on child protection issues (training and provision of materials, institutional support to work with the government).
6. Establishment of a shelter for children in difficult situation, including street children and almodus in collaboration with NGOs.

Reinsertion

8. To establish a procedure of protection, repatriation and reinsertion of child victims of CT with the diplomatic representations (especially in Ghana and Senegal), and the concerned ministries, to make sure that the best interest of the child is the priority and that her/his point of view is taken into account. Avoid repatriations without an individual reinsertion project, coordinated with country of origin. Repatriation should be voluntary, prepared and secure. Organization of a workshop of discussion on Guidelines on protection, repatriation and reintegrating of child victims of CT.
**Coordination**

9. Capacity-building of the Task Force on CT, (see funding from the American Embassy for providing an office to the Task Force) and advocacy for drafting a plan of action against child trafficking, linking it to the sexual exploitation plan of action.

10. Reinforce the cooperation with the UNICEF offices of Ghana, Senegal and Guinea to organize the reinsertion of repatriated children and harmonize the protection procedure in The Gambia and in the country of origin.
9 BIBLIOGRAPHIE

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