



**STOP**

**SEX TRAFFICKING  
OF CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE**



# SEX TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN IN IRELAND

## What is child trafficking?

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation.

UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

A child is anyone under the age of 18 years.

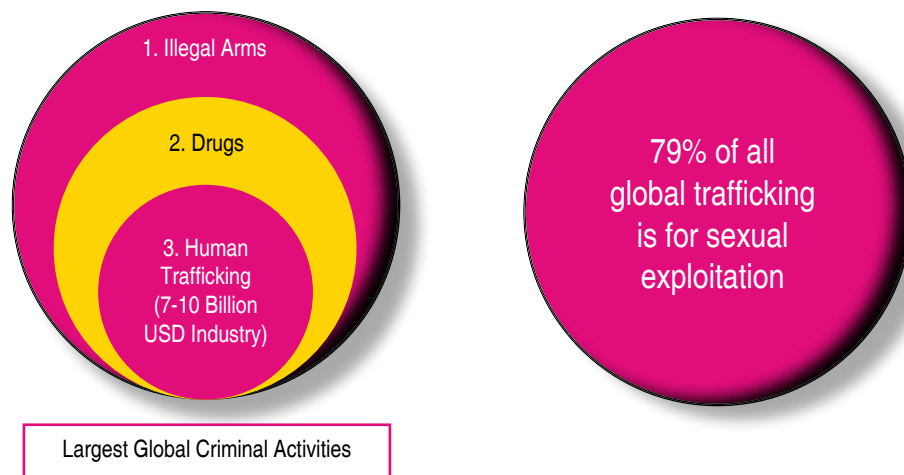
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

## What's the problem?

### GLOBAL SEX TRAFFICKING

Human trafficking is a complex phenomenon fueled by the tremendous growth in the global sex market. Exploitation is driven by poverty, uneven development, official corruption, gender discrimination, harmful traditional and cultural practices, civil unrest, natural disasters and lack of political will to end it.

The number of child victims trafficked worldwide for sexual exploitation or cheap labour on an annual basis is 1.2 million.<sup>1</sup> Human trafficking, the third largest criminal activity in the world, following the international trade in illegal drugs and arms trafficking, is believed to be worth billions of dollars each year. Driving the trade is the demand for commercial sexual exploitation. Seventy-nine percent of all global trafficking is for sexual exploitation.<sup>2</sup>



### CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING IN IRELAND

It is not possible to provide reliable estimates of the number of children trafficked through and to Ireland for sexual exploitation. While Governmental institutions, such as the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, refer to trafficking in persons generally as “a potential problem” and state that there are “only a small number of cases”,<sup>3</sup> experiences of agencies working with victims of trafficking on the ground suggests that this is a growing problem<sup>4</sup> involving a significant number of people, including children.

According to a 2003 report by the IOM, as many as 40 children a year are being trafficked to Ireland for either economic or sexual exploitation.<sup>5</sup> However, the Government of Ireland did not report any prosecutions for trafficking offences or convictions of trafficking offenders in 2007.<sup>6</sup>

## Who gets trafficked?

According to a study by IOM, children between 3 and 17 years of age are trafficked to Ireland for a variety of reasons, including for suspected adoption, the sex industry, as child brides, or as workers in the underground economy. Children trafficked for labour exploitation are also vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse.

Research from IOM from late 2005 noted that “The Dublin unit of the Health Service Executive (HSE) for separated children seeking asylum estimate that approximately 20 children in their care in 2005 were trafficked, the majority of these for the purpose of sexual exploitation.”<sup>7</sup>

This trend has been corroborated by recent reports appearing in the Irish media. According to a senior Garda source, human trafficking gangs are increasingly organising the trafficking of separated children<sup>8</sup> who are taken into the care of the HSE on arrival in Ireland, from where they often go missing since they are most often placed in large, privately contracted hostels lacking supervision and care.<sup>9</sup> Child protection agencies believe that most of the 441 separated migrant children who have gone missing from care since 2000 end up in the sex trade in Ireland and abroad.<sup>10</sup>

Child-trafficking in Ireland affects mainly children from Eastern European countries such as Romania and Albania, and the coastal countries of West Africa.<sup>11</sup> Nigerian children are also reportedly brought into Ireland to work in the sex industry.<sup>12</sup> Rather than being visible, prostitution usually occurs within apartments and the Internet is used by traffickers to advertise sex services.<sup>13</sup>

As in other countries of the world, children are being trafficked to Ireland because they often lack life opportunities, are uneducated, easy to overpower and easy to manipulate and control. They are also in a position where they believe they must help to support their family and may even be sold or sent abroad by family members. Street children, children in refugee camps, children whose family and community life has been disrupted and who do not have someone to look out for them are all especially vulnerable to human trafficking.

Children may be at greater risk of trafficking from places where they are less protected. This may be because the law is weak or not properly enforced, or because children are less aware of the risks of trafficking and are more easily deceived. Countries are considered:

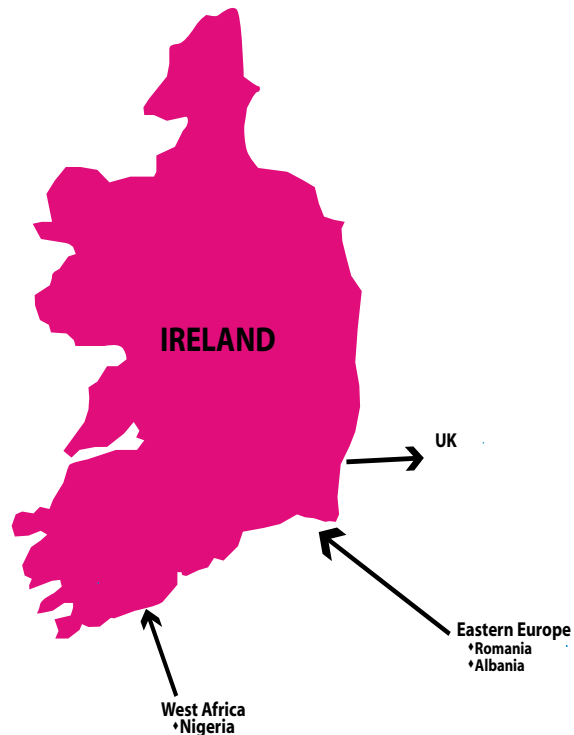
- ‘Sending’ or ‘origin’ - from where children are sent;
- ‘Transit’ - where the children might be moved through and temporarily kept on the way to their final destination; and
- ‘Receiving’ or ‘destination’ - where the children finally end up.

Depending on the reason for trafficking, some countries might only be sending, while others might be both sending and transit. Some countries can be all three. Ireland is considered primarily as a destination for child trafficking, while a recent report has

identified the country as a transit point for children trafficked to the UK. Traffickers are finding the “classic” routes into Britain - ferries from France or through the larger London airports - increasingly difficult to get through due to heightened security, so they are now looking to other points of entry, with the Ireland-Wales ferry links being a major alternative.<sup>14</sup>

For child trafficking, **Ireland** is primarily considered as a:

- origin country
- ✓ transit country
- ✓ destination country
- internal/domestic country



## Who creates demand?

Traffickers prey on children and young people to meet the sexual demands of paedophiles and people who pay for sex. Any person who patronizes the commercial sex market may end up sexually exploiting a child. There is actually no common profile of perpetrators who sexually exploit children – they may be young, old, married, single; they come from all kinds of socio-economic backgrounds and work in all kinds of professions. Ireland is also a source country for tourists seeking sex with children, traveling to destinations such as the Philippines<sup>15</sup> and Thailand.<sup>16</sup>

## Who are the traffickers?

A trafficker can be a stranger or someone the child knows, such as a relative or a friend. Traffickers are often part of an organized criminal network that ‘recruits’ children and supplies them with fake identification. They may also pose as boyfriends or girlfriends in order to convince children to leave for a new life. A 2006 human trafficking report of the Working Group for the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform revealed that Garda operations had uncovered a small number of trafficking cases. These indicated the involvement of Eastern European nationals, in particular nationals of Bulgaria, Romania and Lithuania, in trafficking and attempted trafficking activity.<sup>17</sup> However, NGO and press accounts of the experiences of trafficking victims also identified Irish nationals among the traffickers.<sup>18</sup>

## CASE STUDIES

### Operation Pentameter

In 2006, a four-month police crackdown to identify women and girls trafficked into the sex industry had rescued 84 people, including a girl of 14. The so called Operation Pentameter involved all 55 police forces in the UK, Ireland and the Channel Islands. It led to 232 arrests. In all, 12 children aged 14-17 were rescued. Officers executed warrants in 515 brothels, massage parlours, private homes and other premises across the UK and Ireland. About half of the rescued women and girls came from a range of Eastern European countries, with the other half from the Far East, Africa and South America. A Pentameter spokeswoman said there was an “emerging trend” of child victims from Africa and South America.<sup>19</sup>

### Teen missing from care forced to work in the sex industry

In 2007, a missing teenage asylum-seeker who had disappeared from the care of health services was found enslaved and forced to work in the sex industry in Sligo. The Nigerian girl, aged 17, was arrested when detectives raided a brothel in the town. She had been placed into the care of the HSE after arriving in Ireland unaccompanied six months before. She ran away shortly afterwards. Gardai found the girl after they raided a premise in Sligo town that they suspected was a brothel being run by foreign nationals.

The girl was the second underage girl to be found involved in the sex industry in Sligo. In 2006, detectives highlighted the case of another 17-year-old African girl who was being exploited in prostitution.<sup>20</sup>

### Trafficked from Romania

C. is a 16 year old Romanian girl, who was raised by her mother and lived with her and 2 siblings. When the mother remarried, her stepfather abused her sexually. The girl decided to leave, persuaded by a girlfriend who was working as a prostitute. She thought that prostituting herself abroad was a chance to raise money. She was taken to France and Italy, and ended up in Ireland. There she was caught by a group of traffickers who locked her in a flat, together with other girls. She was forced to prostitute herself from 12 pm until 4 am. After a police raid she was repatriated to Romania, where she has been supported by Save the Children, and has returned to the education system, successfully passing her exams.<sup>21</sup>

## How can we stop the trafficking of children?

### LAW AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

- To strengthen protection of children from trafficking and sexual exploitation, Ireland needs to urgently ratify and implement the *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography*, and the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children* as well as the *Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings*.
- The Irish Government should acknowledge the dimension and seriousness of the phenomenon of human trafficking, especially when children are involved, and allocate more resources to the detection and prosecution of this crime.
- Border police and law enforcement officials must be given training to identify and provide support to trafficking victims, taking into account the special needs and rights of children trafficked for sexual exploitation.

- Given the success obtained so far, Ireland should continue to develop and strengthen its cooperation efforts with police forces from other countries, especially with the countries of origin of victims and traffickers.

International Convention/Law	Date of Ratification by Ireland	Date of Reports Submitted	UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Recommendations for Ireland
Convention on the Rights of the Child	1990	Initial Report – 1996 2005	In response to the 2005 report, the UN Committee made the following recommendation in terms of child trafficking: adopt and implement a comprehensive strategy to combat trafficking, as well as measures for the physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of victims of trafficking, including the provision of shelter, counselling and medical care.
Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography	Signed in 2000 but not yet ratified.	N/A	N/A
Protocol to Prevent, Suppress & Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women & Children	Signed in 2000 but not yet ratified.	N/A	N/A
ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour	1999	N/A	N/A
Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings	Signed in 2007 but not yet ratified.	N/A	N/A

## PREVENTION OF CHILD TRAFFICKING AND VICTIM PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE

- Ireland should establish formal policies and procedures as well as a National Referral Mechanism<sup>22</sup> to ensure child victims are provided with access to protection and assistance in coordination with anti-trafficking NGOs.
- Safe shelters for victims, residence permits, rehabilitation supports and financial assistance must be provided to all child victims of trafficking. The Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill 2008, which is under consideration in the Dail, addresses some of these issues (namely, the issue of reflection and recovery period and the granting of a temporary residency permission for victims who collaborate with authorities). However, there is currently no mention of specific protection measures for suspected child victims of trafficking in the Bill and for instance the possibility to be granted temporary residency is only given if the victim is in a position to assist the authorities. It is therefore necessary

to amend the Bill in order to ensure that the special needs and rights of children are taken into consideration. In this framework, the principle of “best interest of the child” should be the primary consideration in all matters and decisions affecting the child, including with regard to the reflection and recovery period, temporary residency and the possibility to apply to stay in Ireland on humanitarian grounds.<sup>23</sup>

- Measures should be put in place to improve the protection for separated children, namely their identification, age assessment, registration, family tracing, guardianship, best interests’ determination, treatment and care. In this framework, it would be necessary to develop and implement codes of conduct establishing minimum standards for care staff, to ensure that children in the care of the social services receive adequate assistance and are not exposed to the risk of being trafficked.
- Ireland should promote any effort that avoids children suspected to be victims of trafficking being deported or detained, and that would verify their identity and any unlawful acts committed against them as a result of their being trafficked.
- In order to raise awareness on child trafficking, it is necessary to have more information about the phenomenon in Ireland and to monitor trends and developments. This could be achieved through the development of a data collection strategy in order to coordinate information from the Garda, HSE, the Office of Refugee Applications Commissioner and selected service providers.
- The National Action to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings which the High Level Group on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings has been tasked to draft, should adopt a human rights approach and, in the area of prevention, should prioritise work with vulnerable groups while providing equal treatment and care for separated children.
- A helpline for trafficking victims, including children, and an awareness campaign directed at victims to encourage them to seek assistance must be developed.
- A permanent multi-agency team comprising immigration officials, police, and social services should be established at Dublin airport, with the aim of identifying trafficked children or suspected cases of child trafficking on arrival in the country.

### TO REPORT A SUSPECTED INCIDENT OF CHILD TRAFFICKING, CONTACT:

As part of the “Blue Blindfold” awareness raising campaign being run in Ireland and five other European countries, a 24-hour impartial and anonymous telephone hot-line for the confidential reporting of suspicions of trafficking is available at 1800 25 00 25.

Crimestoppers welcomes calls from possible victims of sex trafficking or anyone else who has any information about possible sex trafficking cases. Calls to 1800 25 0025 are free of charge and anonymous.

The Internet hotline (<http://www.hotline.ie/>) service provides an anonymous facility for the public to report suspected illegal content encountered on the Internet, in a secure and confidential way. Even though the primary focus of the Hotline is to combat child pornography, other forms of illegal activities, such as child trafficking may be reported using this service.<sup>24</sup>

### MORE INFORMATION

- ECPAT International: [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)
- The Body Shop and ECPAT Stop Trafficking of Children and Young People Campaign : [www.thebodyshop.com/stop](http://www.thebodyshop.com/stop)

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> UNICEF. *UNICEF calls for increased efforts to prevent trafficking of children*. 16 June 2007. [http://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_40002.html](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_40002.html)
- <sup>2</sup> UNODC, 2009. <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/global-report-on-trafficking-in-persons.html>
- <sup>3</sup> “Halt human trafficking”. *Irish Independent*. 21 June 2007. <http://www.independent.ie/opinion/letters/halt-human-trafficking-714572.html>
- <sup>4</sup> Mano Candappa. *Prevention and Fight against Trafficking: Institutional Developments in Europe—Overview Reports on Finland, Ireland, and Sweden*. Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, University of Warwick, Coventry, U.K., 2003.
- <sup>5</sup> “Up to 40 Children Being Trafficked Annually”. *Irish Times*. 23 June 2004. <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2004/0623/1086274504717.html>
- <sup>6</sup> US State Department. *Trafficking in Persons Report 2008*. 2008.
- <sup>7</sup> Jyothi Kanics. *Child trafficking and Ireland* “Studies. An Irish Quarterly Review”. Issue 388, vol. 97, Winter 2008.
- <sup>8</sup> Separated children are children under 18 years of age who are outside their country of origin and separated from both parents, or their legal/customary primary caregiver.
- <sup>9</sup> “One fifth of foreign children in care go missing”. *Irish Independent*, 21 April 2008. <http://www.independent.ie/national-news/one-fifth-of-foreign-children-in-care-go-missing-1353867.html>
- <sup>10</sup> ECRAN Weekly Update. 15 September 2008. <http://www.ecran.org/files/ECRAN%20Weekly%20Update%2015th%20September.pdf>
- <sup>11</sup> Conroy, Pauline. *Trafficking in Unaccompanied Minor in the European Union Member States—Ireland: Research Summary*. IOM. 2003.
- <sup>12</sup> “Children of 6 Sold as Sex Slaves in Ireland: Exclusive. Gardai Probe Nigerian Link in Sickening Refugee Trade Too”. *Mirror*. 12 May 2003. And “Teen missing from care working as a prostitute”. *Irish Independent*. 1st April 2007. <http://www.independent.ie/national-news/teen-missing-from-care-working-as-a-prostitute-123826.html>
- <sup>13</sup> US State Department. *Country Report on Human Rights Practices in Ireland*. 2008.
- <sup>14</sup> “Ireland named as major route for child trafficking”. *Irish Independent*. 4 September 2007. <http://www.independent.ie/national-news/ireland-named-as-major-route-for-child-trafficking-1070794.html>
- <sup>15</sup> “Irish Paedophiles Attacking The Philippines For Child Prostitution”. 2007. <http://odisky.blogspot.com/2007/04/irish-paedophiles-attacking-philippines.html>
- <sup>16</sup> “Asia hunts sex tourists”. *Asian Pacific Post*. 7 September 2005. <http://www.asianpacificpost.com/portal2/402881910674ebab010674f5aaf11ef9.do.html>
- <sup>17</sup> “Ireland seen as ‘risk destination’ for sex trafficking.” *Irish Independent*. 7 May 2006. <http://www.independent.ie/national-news/ireland-seen-as-risk-destination-for-sex-trafficking-129918.html>
- <sup>18</sup> US State Department. *Country Report on Human Rights Practices in Ireland*. 2008.
- <sup>19</sup> “84 rescued in Anglo-Irish sex trafficking police operation”. *Ireland On-Line*. 21 June 2006. <http://breakingnews.iol.ie/news/?c=ireland&jp=cwgbeycwidql>
- <sup>20</sup> “Teen missing from care working as a prostitute”. *Irish Independent*. 1 April 2007. <http://www.independent.ie/national-news/teen-missing-from-care-working-as-a-prostitute-123826.html>

<sup>21</sup> This case study is included in Naline Mooten, *Making Separated Children Visible*. Irish Refugee Council. 2006.

<sup>22</sup> OSCE ODIHR Handbook

<sup>23</sup> Irish Refugee Council. *Irish Refugee Council Submission on Section 124 of the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill and other provisions related to the protection for suspected victims of trafficking*. 13 March 2008. This document was kindly provided by Ms. Jyothi Kanics from the Irish Refugee Council.

<sup>24</sup> Irish Internet hotline. Available at: <http://www.hotline.ie/whatyoucanreport.php>



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