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Launch of the Innocenti Insight:
Trafficking in Human Beings,
especially Women and Children, in Africa
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Trafficking in Human Beings, especially Women and Children in Africa

Trafficking in human beings is increasingly understood as a major and worldwide human rights violation and development issue. UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre new *Insight Trafficking in Human Beings, Especially Women and Children in Africa* shows the growing acknowledgement of the problem in Africa. The study, covering 53 African countries, provides an analysis of the patterns, root causes, and existing national and regional normative frameworks and policy responses to it.

Patterns

- In Africa at least 49% countries acknowledge the existence of the problem that requires effective action, targeted programs and strategies, and cooperation between African Countries
- Child trafficking is perceived to hit twice the times than trafficking in women
- 89% of African countries are affected by trafficking flows to and from other countries within Africa, in 34% of African countries trafficking is also to Europe, and in 26% flows are directed to Middle East.
- In Africa there is no clear cut distinction between countries of origin and destination and in 58% of countries flows are in both directions.
- Within Africa trafficking has mainly a sub regional dimension, occurring between countries of the same sub-region in 91% of cases.
- Trafficking is a dynamic process and context can rapidly change the pattern of flows.

Root Causes

- Poverty is not the only pushing factor. Root causes of trafficking are complex and often interrelated. Armed conflict, pattern of instability, oppression and discrimination place women and children at great risk. Traditional practices, early marriage and lack of birth registration may exacerbate the problem.

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- The demand plays a fundamental role. Sexual and economic exploitation are the most important 'pull factors'. The demand for young girls for prostitution or early marriage and the conflict related demand for child soldiers are important. The links between trafficking and demand for adoption must also be investigated further. There is anecdotal information on trafficking of organs. Still little research exists on the traditional practices of 'mutti killings' for child organs to be used in rituals of witchcraft and magic.

Policies Responses and Legal Framework in Africa

- In Africa positive government initiatives at a regional and national level have been directed against trafficking in human beings. At the continental level the African Charter of Human Rights (1981), the African Charter of the Rights and Welfare of the Child (African Union), and at the regional level the Libreville Common Platform for Action 2000 and the ECOWAS Declaration and Plan of Action against Trafficking in Human Beings 2001 (both regarding exclusively West Africa) are the most important initiatives that, together with the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), directly address the problem of trafficking in Africa. The adoption of the *Action Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings* developed in the framework of the EU/Africa Summit will be an important step.
- Still too few African countries have ratified the main International instruments against trafficking in human beings.
- Some African countries have started the process of harmonization of their national legislation and have recognized the importance of a human rights approach to the problem of trafficking and acknowledged its repercussions on the development of the child and consequently on the national and regional development.
- African countries need to increase the efforts and to work in close cooperation with one another in order to build a protective environment for children and to prevent and protect from trafficking.

Main International Legal Instruments against Trafficking in Human Beings

- *Optional Protocol to Prevent, Punish and Suppress Trafficking in Persons* (in force since 25th December 2003)
- *Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography* (in force since 18th January 2002)

UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre calls for:

- The adoption of the *Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings* developed in the framework of the planned EU/Africa Summit.

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- The formulation in Africa of comprehensive, integrated counter-trafficking measures targeted at multiple levels within society, taking into consideration that each country presents specific factors and patterns and also the rapidly changing environment that can alter trafficking patterns at local and international level.
- Stronger commitments of African governments to the promotion and protection of the human rights of actual and potential trafficking victims, in a gender-based approach and in respect of the best interest of the child.
- Further research and collaboration among stakeholders.

Embargoed media materials in English, French, Spanish and Italian and downloadable copies of the report in English are available from the IRC Newsroom:

<http://www.unicef-icdc.org/presscentre/indexNewsroom.html>

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