

# fact sheet

today's fight for tomorrow's freedom

## Trafficking in People

right: When 'Shelia' was nine years old she was trafficked from Uganda to the UK

### What is trafficking?

Trafficking involves transporting people away from the communities in which they live and forcing them to work against their will using violence, deception or coercion. When children are trafficked, no violence, deception or coercion needs to be involved: simply transporting them into exploitative conditions constitutes trafficking. People are trafficked both between countries and within the borders of a state.

Trafficking affects countries and families on every continent. Because of its hidden nature, it is difficult to get accurate statistics on the numbers affected, but the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that at any one time there are some 2.5 million people who have been trafficked and are being subjected to sexual or labour exploitation.

Most coverage of the trafficking issue has focussed on trafficking for sexual exploitation, but around a third of all trafficked people are used exclusively for labour exploitation (e.g. domestic work, agricultural work, catering, packing and processing, etc.).

Trafficking for sexual exploitation almost exclusively affects women and girls (98 per cent), but trafficking for labour exploitation also affects women more than men (56 per cent being women and girls).



Karen Robinson/Panos Pictures

### Smuggling or trafficking?

**People smuggling is the illegal movement of people across a border for a fee. It can be dangerous and expensive, but on arrival in the country of destination the smuggled person is free.**

**People trafficking is fundamentally different as the trafficker is facilitating the movement of that person for the purpose of labour or sexual exploitation. This begins when they arrive at the destination and always involves violence, deception or coercion.**

### How does trafficking work?

The vast majority of people who are trafficked are migrant workers. They are seeking to escape poverty and discrimination, improve their lives and send money back to their families. They hear about well-paying jobs abroad through family, friends or "recruitment agencies". But when they arrive in the country of destination they find that the work they were promised does not exist and they are forced instead to work in jobs or conditions to which they did not agree.

Traffickers can coerce people to work through a variety of mechanisms. Trafficked migrants usually have their passports taken away on arrival. Without their documents they cannot prove they have a right to be in the country and therefore cannot go to the authorities for assistance.

Most migrants have borrowed money from family, friends or loan sharks in order to travel abroad and when they find out they have been deceived they still have a debt to pay back of several thousand pounds. This debt can be inflated through charges for food, accommodation and interest on the loan.

If the debt, their irregular immigration status and their social isolation are not sufficient to make the migrant submit to the trafficker's demands they can also be subjected to intimidation, violence, torture and rape. Threats of violence can also be extended to family in the migrant's country of origin to ensure that victims do not try to escape.

## How do we stop trafficking?

States need to pass legislation which prohibits and punishes all forms of trafficking as defined and set out in the *UN Trafficking Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*.

Governments also need to recognise that all trafficked people are victims of a human rights violation and provide them with minimum standards of protection and support. This should include appropriate shelter, financial and legal assistance, counselling, health services and temporary and permanent residence status.

States must also recognise that these initiatives alone will not be sufficient to counter the problem of trafficking and that their policies must also address the root causes of this problem, which are closely linked to migration issues.

Growing inequalities of wealth between and within countries and an increasing, and often unacknowledged, demand for migrant workers in both developed and developing countries are fuelling migration. Many governments have reacted to this by mounting campaigns which seek to evoke fear in potential migrants and dissuade them from travelling abroad, and by implementing more restrictive immigration policies. This response is unlikely to deter migrants who are seeking work abroad as a means of survival and has increased the profitability of both trafficking and smuggling by reducing regular routes for migration.

The promotion of regular and managed migration, in line with the *UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families* (1990), has the potential to reduce trafficking by offering migrants a mechanism by which they can take up jobs abroad which is safer, cheaper and guarantees their human and labour rights in the country of destination.

## Stories of people trafficked to the UK

Two Vietnamese men in their twenties were recruited in Vietnam to work in a hotel in the UK. They paid the agent £18,000 to arrange the job and came to the UK under the work permit scheme with a promise to receive £4.95 per hour for their work. On arrival in the UK an agent met them at the airport and took their passports away. The men worked in a major hotel chain for two months without receiving any pay. All they were given was food. They attempted to organise a strike at the hotel, but shortly after this their families in Vietnam received threats. The men were too frightened to approach the Vietnamese Embassy or the police, but eventually approached a Citizens Advice Bureau office via a Vietnamese speaking person they met on the street.

A migrant domestic worker recounted her friend's experience of trying to escape from a situation of forced labour: "She managed to escape through a window, from the family that treated her like a slave. She was terrified and had bruises on her body. Her passport was locked in the house. The policeman at the station asked her for her documents. She of course did not have them and wanted to tell him what had happened, but he insisted on her documents first and said he must first know who she was."

## The UN definition of trafficking

Article 3 of the *United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the Convention on Transnational Organized Crime* (2000), defines trafficking 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 or servitude or the removal of organs."**