

PROject of Technical assistance against the Labour  
and Sexual Exploitation of Children, including Trafficking,  
in countries of Central and Eastern Europe



International  
Labour  
Office

## PROTECT CEE



# Rapid Assessment of Trafficking in Children for Labour and Sexual Exploitation in Moldova

2003

IPEC  
International  
Programme on  
the Elimination  
of Child Labour

# Rapid Assessment of Trafficking in Children for Labour and Sexual Exploitation in Moldova

Prepared by the Institute for Public Policy, Moldova

Under technical supervision of FAFO Institute for Applied International Studies, Norway

for the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)  
of the International Labour Organization (ILO)

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## Foreword

Unacceptable forms of child labour persist and affect the lives of many millions of children. Some of those practices are particularly difficult to research due to their hidden, sometimes illegal or even criminal nature. Slavery-like conditions, debt bondage, trafficking, sexual exploitation, the use of children in the drug trade and in armed conflict, as well as hazardous work are defined as worst forms of child labour.

Promoting the Convention (No. 182) concerning the prohibition and immediate action for the elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999, is a high priority for the International Labour Organization (ILO). Recommendation (No. 190, paragraph 5) accompanying the Convention states that “detailed information and statistical data on the nature and extent of child labour should be compiled and kept up to date to serve as a basis for determining priorities for national action for the abolition of child labour, in particular for the prohibition and elimination of its worst forms as a matter of urgency.” Although there is a body of knowledge, data and documentation on child labour, there are also still considerable gaps in understanding the variety of forms and conditions in which children work. This is especially true for some of the worst forms of child labour such as trafficking of children, which by their very nature often are hidden from public view and scrutiny.

Against this background, the ILO through its International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) launched a process in 2002 to investigate the trafficking of children for labour and sexual purposes in four selected countries of Eastern Europe: Albania, Moldova, Romania and Ukraine. In collaboration with the FAFO Institute for Applied Social Sciences, Norway, a research methodology manual was developed and research institutions in each of the concerned countries contracted and trained. Through the collection and analysis of primary data as well as secondary data in each country, substantive information was compiled on the specific features of the trafficking dynamics and the consequences for the lives of many girls and boys.

To the partners and IPEC colleagues who contributed through their individual and collective efforts to the realisation of this report, I should like to express our gratitude. The responsibility for opinions expressed in this publication rests solely with the authors and does not imply endorsement by the ILO.

The wealth of information contained in these reports on the situation of the girls and boys trafficked for labour or sexual exploitation within the countries concerned and across their borders will surely contribute to a deeper understanding and a sharper focus on the challenges that lie ahead. Most importantly, we hope that the studies will guide policy makers, community leaders, and practitioners to address the problem of child trafficking with determination. And help them put an end to this grave injustice that shatters children’s lives.



**Frans Röselaers**

Director

International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)

International Labour Office

Geneva, 2004



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the results of a Rapid Assessment survey into child trafficking from Moldova to other countries for labour or sexual exploitation. It was undertaken in the framework of the subregional prevention and reintegration programme to combat trafficking of children for labour and sexual exploitation in the Balkans and Ukraine, of the International Labour Organization's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO-IPEC). The countries participating in the programme are Moldova, Romania, Albania and Ukraine.

The report describes the socio-economic context, types and processes of trafficking in children from Moldova, as well as factors favouring this phenomenon. It explores also the situation of children released from trafficking. The study includes boys and girls under 18 who have been trafficked or exposed to trafficking both abroad and within Moldova. It attempts to throw light on the socio-economic environment of trafficked children, those at risk and their families and to describe how and where they are recruited, how they are encouraged or persuaded to relocate, and what happens to them during trafficking and afterwards.

Trafficking in children seems to have increased in the second half of the 1990s with the deepening economic crisis in Moldova, and by 1997 had become common in Moldova and widespread. Children are recruited from the entire territory of Moldova: from rural areas and from large cities (Chisinau, Balti, Orhei) and small towns (Straseni, Ungheni, Hincesti, Cahul). Despite this, trafficking in children is still generally approached as part of the wider phenomenon of trafficking in human beings.

Unofficial data provided by law enforcement bodies suggest that every year approximately 5,000 minors are transported to Russia and forced to provide sexual services. In general, trafficked children end up in sexual exploitation and forced labour, including begging. An analysis of the survey results shows that most often it is boys and girls between the ages of 12 and 18 years who are trafficked, the greatest number of victims being 15-18 years old. Boys are recruited mostly by members of the Roma ethnic group who exploit them in agricultural labour, begging, selling fake gold etc. Girls are also often recruited for these jobs and may also be sexually exploited.

Children are recruited through individuals (strangers or known to the children) and, although child trafficking overall is beginning to receive attention from law enforcement bodies and other groups, individual children seem to get little support. This report describes the methods of recruitment for different types of exploitation and looks at the role of parents in trafficking their own children.

The report suggests that one factors contributing to a growth in child trafficking in Moldova is corruption, especially corruption of police officers, border guards and public notaries. The lack of provisions in the national Criminal to incriminate pimps and corrupt police, border guards and public notaries has also contributed to an increase in child trafficking.

Data collected during the Rapid Assessment survey provide a basis on which profiles of trafficked children and at-risk groups can be formulated. The at-risk child comes either from a socially vulnerable or dysfunctional family (often single-parent), is in the custody of relatives, acquaintances, neighbours (for example because parents are abroad), or is living in one of the specialized institutions. As a rule, the children have not completed secondary education and some are illiterate. Some are children who dropped out of school to begin begging or working to support their families. As a result, they are open to the influence of 'the street' and are exposed to social vices such as drugs, alcohol and petty crime. They are easy prey for the traffickers.

This profile emphasizes the relationship between the family environment and the lack of work places for children (teenagers) on the one side and the child's motivation to go abroad on the other. Therefore, preventive measures must be focused on improving the economic situation of socially vulnerable families and on the creation of centres designed to promote the interests of children, where they could spend their free time. There is also a need for preferential conditions for children from rural areas so that they can continue their studies and acquire a profession.

Children withdrawn from a trafficking situation regularly arrive home physically ill and mentally unbalanced, without financial means to seek treatment. All children who have been victims of trafficking need medical support and measures to help them reintegrate and rebuild. However, the survey shows that most of the trafficked children hide from people and isolate themselves, do not make use of information on organizations that might offer refuge, legal or medical and psychological services. All trafficking victims have access to social assistance from NGOs supporting and rehabilitating victims of trafficking (although services for women are most common).

In general, Moldovan society is sceptical and intolerant, especially towards girls trafficked for forced prostitution. They are marginalized and are not offered the chance to reintegrate into society. As a result, rehabilitation of these children is particularly challenging.

At the same time, the community acts with indifference towards children before trafficking occurs. Often something could have been done to prevent children from leaving. As a result, children who have exited trafficking figure among children at risk. They may enter prostitution or other high-risk activities such as petty crime in order to survive. Around half of them are lured by traffickers and may be recruited again.

There are no state institutions or national strategies to deal exclusively with the issue of trafficking in children. All actions of prevention, assistance and release of victims of child trafficking are performed within programmes oriented towards combating trafficking in women. These programmes generally cover trafficking for sexual exploitation. Less attention is paid to those who have been trafficked into begging or other forms of forced labour. The response of state bodies is limited in this area to police registration of minor delinquents and to placing street children in boarding schools.

Trafficking in children is a complex phenomenon that cannot be eradicated only with sporadic efforts of the state bodies and NGO activities. This report suggests that coordinated, complementary multi-sectoral action is needed in four areas: institutional frameworks; legal frameworks; specialized social services for potential victims of trafficking (at-risk groups), as well as for victims of trafficking; and training of specialized personnel.

## **1. CONTEXT TO THE TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN IN MOLDOVA**

### ***1.1 The emergence of trafficking in Moldova***

The process of transition towards a market economy that all former soviet countries including Moldova have undertaken has generated a phenomenon that is both widespread and dangerous for the national security of these countries: trafficking in human beings, in particular in women and children.

The preconditions for the emergence of this phenomenon appeared in 1991/1992. Then citizens began to be able to travel freely beyond the national borders and to look beyond their own country to find sources of income that might assure them of a decent living within the country. By 1994/1995, this outward-looking impulse had greatly increased and, by 1997/1998, had become well organized and consolidated.

Discussions on the issue human trafficking, however, only began in 1999, when Moldova was faced with a flux of trafficking victims that could no longer be ignored. The economic crisis and falls in production, severe unemployment, a reduction of expenditures in the social sphere, the collapse of the education system and the lack of a national strategy on migration all contributed to the development of illegal migration in Moldova. Migration to neighbouring countries or to Western Europe to work in unskilled labour and services has become a typical way for people to supplement their family income. The trafficking in human beings that often accompanies illegal migration has become a common and even tolerated activity, considered by some as an acceptable solution to poverty.

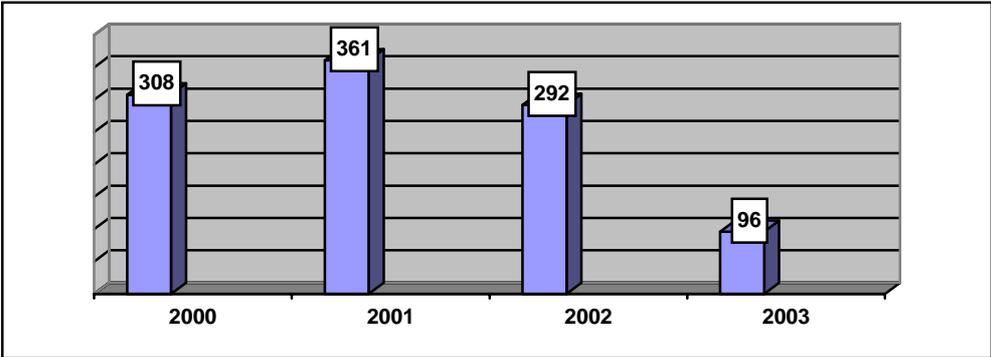
Recent data provided by the Department of Statistics indicate that some 400,000 Moldovan citizens are working abroad. However, this figure is contested by many experts in the field who suggest that the official information underestimates the magnitude of this phenomenon and that the actual number of Moldovan citizens who have left the country is somewhere between 600,000 and one million people. Many of these people are living abroad illegally and thus become easy prey for criminal networks, including those involved in trafficking. It is clear that Moldova has become one of the largest exporters of human cargo to Western Europe.

Human trafficking today is a global phenomenon that includes all ages and sexes, although a large number of the victims of trafficking in human beings are women and children. They are trafficked for abusive and exploitative purposes, primarily of a sexual nature, through numerous methods of coercion and deceit.

Thousands of women become a simple object of bargain and sale in different countries of Central, Western, Eastern and South-eastern Europe, and even in more distant countries. Moldova has become one of the main suppliers of the sex trade in Europe. This statement is supported by many studies by diverse international organizations. For example, the US State Department calculated the number of women trafficked from Eastern Europe to Western countries in 2000 to be between 700,000 and 2 million. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) says that approximately 64 per cent of young women originating from East European countries and repatriated from Kosovo (where trafficking in women has reached high levels) are of Moldovan origin. The impoverishment of society has changed national perceptions of Moldovan women to the point where prostitution has become an occupation regarded with less and less prejudice. Many women who return to Moldova make conscious decisions to return to their old activities because they cannot find other sources of income; others remain abroad through financial necessity, coercion from pimps or owners of brothels, bars and night clubs, or because they simply do not want to return to the living conditions of Moldova, which are in some cases worse than the conditions of brothels in Greece, Turkey or Macedonia. In some cases trafficked women themselves turn into traffickers of other women.

Poorly demarcated borders and a lack of rigorous control over illegal or irregular migration, including those who cross borders as the victims of traffickers, does not provide for precise data on trafficking victims. None of the state structures in Moldova or the most common destination countries collects data on numbers of illegal or irregular migrants or trafficking victims. Some indication of the size of the problem, however, is clear from the chart below, which illustrates the number of trafficked women brought back to Moldova between 2000 and 2003 by the IOM. It does not of course include victims repatriated by other organizations, deported to Moldova or returning under their own steam, and so inevitably understates the size of the phenomenon.

**Chart 1**      **Number of victims of trafficking victims released between 2000 and 2003**



*Source: IOM, March 2003. Note that figures for 2003 include the first quarter only.*

The ‘women’ who become victims of the traffic are young. According to data provided by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the age of trafficked women ranges from 16 to 35 years and thus includes children under the age of 18. Additionally, there are cases where the trafficking victims are under 14. The brothels of Russia, France, Germany, Japan, the Baltic countries and Turkey are full of Moldovan girls from age 14 upwards.

**1.2      *Trafficking in children in Moldova***

Trafficking in children is often discussed in relation to trafficking in women. This is because similar mechanisms are often used in both cases, but also because trafficking in women is not clearly defined by the age of the victim. For example, many reports regarding traffic in women say that the majority of women who were forced to practise prostitution were between 16 and 24. However, girls of the ages of 16 and 17 are considered children in international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, (1999), No.182.

Although Convention No.182 defines the trafficking of children as a worst form of child labour, “an assault on human dignity, a denial of a person’s opportunity make the most of his or her resources and to contribute to the economic development of his or her nation”, in Moldova until very recently, special attention had not been paid to child trafficking as an issue separate the general phenomenon of trafficking in human beings.

It is known, however, that children are trafficked mostly for sexual exploitation and into labour, including begging.<sup>1</sup>

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1      Some trafficking victims interviewed during the survey said that in Italy and Macedonia girls from 14 to 22 sometimes were abducted by some doctors and were subject to removal of organs. In Moldova, police

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In the recent past the police reported cases of trafficking of children abroad for illegal adoption. Additionally, a key informant from the Department for Youth Affairs of Balti city recounted a case of selling of a newborn baby. The mother and the buyers were arrested. The method used by the traffickers is the same in all cases. The traffickers look for a young pregnant woman who does not want to keep the child and arrange to buy her unborn baby. When the baby is born, the mother and traffickers sign the documents of adoption. Then the traffickers take the baby abroad to people with whom they have already made arrangements. There the foreign parents 're-adopt' the baby. It is impossible to monitor what happens to children adopted into a third country, and it is almost impossible to return them to their native country.

### **Sexual exploitation**

It is usually girls between the age of 13 and 18 who are recruited into sexual exploitation.

The methods of recruitment are practically the same as for adults: through acquaintances, friends and relatives. Recruiting and manipulating minors is facilitated because young women are easily influenced and lack life experience. This makes them a preferred target of traffickers. In most cases, minors may be trafficked by more than one trafficker.

In recent years, NGOs working in the field of trafficking prevention have engaged in public awareness raising and information campaigns targeting potential victims of trafficking (at-risk groups). They warn of the potential dangers trafficking could have on their lives. However, an opinion poll carried out by the Centre for the Combat and Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings in Balti, surveying a sample of 800 respondents (girls and boys) below the age of 20, showed that some 80 per cent of respondents want to find work abroad. When asked if they knew what kind of work might be available for young people of their age abroad, many responded: "I don't care. Anything is fine for me. I just want to earn money". This despite the fact that they were aware of the notion of trafficking.

This poll only confirms the fact that many minors are trafficked with their 'consent';<sup>2</sup> In some cases the young women are aware of the type of services they are to provide abroad; however, in most cases, minors leave having been convinced that they will be given a decent job (salesperson, housekeeper, waitress).

Usually, young women from socially vulnerable, poor families, with no permanent occupation and who want to find a job abroad are recruited. Sometimes representatives of town councils, having little knowledge of trafficking, offer recruiters information about children from poor and vulnerable families. Recruiters are mostly men between 20 and 30, but also women between 18 and 40, and even sometimes entire families. There have been cases where minors were abducted in the open street, and nobody came forward to help them.

The IOM reports that the most vulnerable subjects of human trafficking are minors living in poor regions (rural areas or urban suburbs), children living in institutions or from dysfunctional families who have a low level of education and want to earn money at any price. Travel abroad is seen as the easiest way to earn.

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have recorded only a few cases of trade of organs by adults. They either sold their organs or had organs been removed by force after being kidnapped.

2 Note that the notion of 'consent' or 'voluntary' relocation/exploitation is not recognized in international law. The United Nations *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children* (2000), also known as the Palermo Protocol, specifically provides that all those under the age of 18 will be considered to have been trafficked even if coercion, deception or force have not been used.

It is difficult to specify a specific region in Moldova that is not affected by child trafficking. Girls are trafficked from the whole territory of Moldova, from large towns in rural areas (Chisinau, Balti, Orhei) and small towns (Straseni, Ungheni, Hincesti, Cahul).

The method of recruitment is the following: Pimps show up at bars and get to know the respective girls, preparing the ground for acceptance of an eventual trip abroad for work. It may take a few days to 'prime' the girls, weeks or months. Usually, they promise the girl a job in Moscow as a salesperson, housekeeper, waitress or similar. The example of Chisinau was cited during the research. There, the girls are typically organized into small groups of 5-15 and subsequently sold to people who arrange transport and take them to a destination where they are once again sold to the owners of saunas, bars or brothels.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs reports that both women and girls under the age of 18 are trafficked in five primary directions, the traffickers preferring the first three in the case of children:

- Russia, Ukraine
- Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro
- Turkey, Greece, Cyprus, Lebanon, Israel, Arab Emirates
- Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland
- Italy, France, Portugal, Germany, United Kingdom

According to unofficial data provided by law enforcement bodies, approximately 5,000 girls (including minors) are transported to Russia and forced to provide sexual services every year. In the summer of 1999, the Moscow militia discovered two brothels where they also found minors of 15 years of age from Moldova. They had been sold for US\$400 each, plus the price of their virginity, set at \$150.

The amount offered for the victims depends on the stages of trafficking.

- In rural areas (where recruitment usually begins) the price for young women is between \$50 and \$100;
- In Chisinau, the young women are sold to traffickers for \$100 - \$250;
- In Romania, the price for young women ranges between \$300 and \$400;
- In Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Albania, countries of transit and destination, prices range between \$2,000 and \$4,500.

The pimps themselves take care of the documents needed to minors out of the country, a process that usually lasts no more than three days. It is more difficult to take a minor across a border because the consent of both parents is needed. For this reason, traffickers will counterfeit the documents (false names or legal visa but with age shown as 18+). To do this, the traffickers benefit from the services of some state officials who will be well remunerated for this 'favour'.

After crossing the border, the process is much the same as for adults. Under different pretexts, the girls are deprived of their documents, which are returned only in rare case, for example when the girls are no longer capable of working. As victims of sexual exploitation, the children are subjected to ongoing physical and psychological abuse. Working conditions, sometimes imposed by traffickers with alcohol and drugs, significantly affect the health of the children. As a rule, minors who have been trafficked return home infected with sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, or pregnant and in a severely damaged psychological state.

The experiences they have lived, usually over two to three years, have lasting negative effects on their behaviour. Some of them become more aggressive, dependent on sex or addicted to alcohol and drugs, and this can prompt anti-social behaviour.

## Trafficking into labour

Insignificant in the first half of the 1990s, trafficking for labour exploitation increased with the deepening of the economic crisis in Moldova and, by 1997, had become common.

Children trafficked into labour are exploited in a number of occupations, usually unpaid, for the benefit of the traffickers. Physical exploitation is accompanied by physical and psychological abuse and malnutrition. Children exploited in labour are preponderantly boys; however, girls are also recruited and subsequently risk ending up in sexual exploitation. Boys sell fake gold in Russia and perform seasonal work (farming) in Ukraine; girls work as travelling salespeople (abroad) or housekeepers in Roma families (in Moldova or abroad). The destination countries for the trafficked children are most commonly Russia and Ukraine.

Six of 20 key informants asserted that it is usually people of Roma ethnicity who recruit the children for labour<sup>3</sup>. The children are either kidnapped or lured to go abroad to look for work. The research seems to support to some extent this view: eight of the 60 children interviewed indicated that they had been trafficked by Roma; four out of 10 parents said the same.

The children are often recruited with the support and consent of relatives and family members who perceive this as an additional source of income. The children themselves may comply. In the case of homeless children, the promise of food, clothing and shelter must seem too good to refuse.

It is symptomatic that this type of traffic does not evoke negative reactions among parents and relatives of the children subjected to forced labour. People, particularly from rural areas, see putting children to work as a normal way of helping the family. This is because there is a tradition in Moldova of involving children in income-generating activities from a very young age (from the age of 10/11.) The children are included in the daily activities of the family, working side-by-side with adults. A growth in the general level of poverty has served only to reinforce this practice.<sup>4</sup>

The children are taken across national borders with authentic documents (birth certificates), with legal or counterfeit consent forms from their parents, or with counterfeit documents, bought or hired from vulnerable families, or arranged for a fee by a well-known notary or other person. The lack of a photograph on the birth certificate makes identifying the true owner of the documents practically impossible. The identity of the child can only be determined after the child has been rescued and repatriated.

## Begging

Begging represents another form of child exploitation, widely controlled in Moldova by representatives of the Roma community, although there are also representatives of other ethnic groups profiting with this kind of 'business'. For the purposes of begging, exploiters recruit children whose parents have gone in search of work abroad and who are left in the care of acquaintances, relatives and neighbours. These children are virtually deprived of resources, undernourished,

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3 Respondents from the Department of Protection of Children's Rights from Calarasi district, the Department of Protection of Children's Rights from Ungheni district, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Department for Fighting Organized Crime in the Republic of Moldova, the Correction Centre of Chisinau, two informants from Orhei district and town.

4 It should be noted that there is a significant difference between children helping out with family tasks and children considered to be in a situation of 'child labour'. The age of the child, hours worked, nature of work and access to education are important factors to take into account. For more on this, see ILO-IPEC: Helping hands or shackled lives?, (ILO-IPEC, Geneva, 2004).

sometimes uneducated or even thrown onto the streets. They form a particular risk group for trafficking, and are quite easily recruited to commit crimes, for alcohol consumption and physical and sexual abuse. Some of the children are manipulated by Roma families, who might persuade them to come live in their houses and then force them to beg for their keep.

Children with physical handicaps are also very attractive for those who wish to exploit children in begging, and they constitute another high-risk group. Children with physical handicaps are usually recruited with the help of a parent, who thus rid themselves of the burden of care for handicapped children. Children are trafficked for begging both within the country (mostly Chisinau, Balti, Orhei), and abroad to Russia and Ukraine. They are also taken out of the country in the same ways as children trafficked into other forms of labour.

The average daily earning of children who beg ranges from 300 to 500 lei (US\$20-35) depending on the area or street where they are begging. The people who 'handle' them only rarely give pocket money to the children, and take most of the earnings 'pay' for the shelter, food and clothing provided to the children. And yet it is the children who are punished. Law enforcement bodies take drastic measures with regard to street begging: the children are institutionalized in temporary placement centres or closed-type boarding schools.

### **1.3 Factors contributing to child trafficking**

Experts from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, state administration and local NGOs advise that the general factors that create a context in which trafficking in human beings, including trafficking in children, thrive are:

#### **Economic factors**

Poverty, unemployment, the lack of opportunities for the younger generation, consumerism and sharp divisions between rich and poor all contribute to trafficking by increasing the vulnerability of certain sectors of the population.

Poverty is one of the main factors that contribute to sustaining and increasing trafficking in children in the Republic of Moldova. Practically all the parents and relatives of trafficked children and of children from the at-risk group who were interviewed complained of the difficult economic situation that they face. Poverty emerged in Moldova as a result of the difficult transition from a centralized to a market economy. The 2002 National Human Development Report indicated that in 2002 some 53.4 per cent of the population had incomes of less than half the minimum cost of living, (207 lei).<sup>5</sup> Analysis of Moldovan family consumption reveals that the majority of families spent the greatest part of income to satisfy basic needs. Between 1998 and 2001, expenditure on food products and non-alcoholic beverages amounted to more than 60 per cent of income, followed by improvement of living conditions. Medical expenses amounted to 3-4 per cent, and family expenditure on education did not exceed 1 per cent.<sup>6</sup>

Among the poorest sectors of the population are people with a low level of education, unskilled workers, large families or families with one parent, farmers who do not own farmland and the unemployed. Poverty in Moldova is most pronounced in rural areas and agricultural workers are extremely vulnerable.

Surveys of household budgets in 2002 indicate that about 88 per cent of households have a disposable income lower than the monthly minimum standard of living (431.1 lei, about \$30) *per capita*. For rural families, 7.65 per cent of income is in the form of food products obtained from their

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5 *National Human Development Report 2002*, (Moldova, UNDP, 2003).

6 *Idem*.

7 *Official Monitor of Moldova*, 18 May 2002

own farms. The lack of liquid assets means that they are unable to cover additional expenses related to education and healthcare.

Rural poverty resulted from a reduction of agricultural activity during the transition years. The agricultural sector was affected by loss of competitiveness of Moldovan agricultural products on international markets and the low degree of agricultural sector restructuring.

### **Child labour**

The ease with which parents send their children to work abroad in the company of strangers may be partially explained by the tradition, especially in rural areas, of involving children when young in the family's activities, including economic activities.<sup>8</sup> It is considered normal for a child of 12-13 years to be involved in agricultural work alongside adults. Difficult economic conditions facing about 80 per cent of the Moldovan population have only exacerbated this trend. Involving children in different remunerated work (in agriculture, for example, or as street/market (bazaar) vendors) is seen as a solution to overcoming poverty. By putting the oldest child to work instead of in education, parents sacrifice the future of that child for the survival of the rest.

Children are also used in illegal activities. These include robbery and begging.

### **Migration**

Moldova's lengthy economic transition also underpinned a dramatic growth in unemployment. The ILO estimates that, in 2002, the average rate of unemployment in Moldova was 7.3 per cent. This also contributes to people looking for employment in other countries.

In the absence of a strategy to regulate or control labour migration, and given poor legal and institutional structures to allow regular access to European, Russian or Ukrainian job markets, recruiters and traffickers are able to lure the unemployed by offers of help in finding jobs abroad and securing passage.

The lack of employment opportunities in Moldova is the main reason why young people and even children seek to migrate to Europe for employment in domestic work, care of children and the elderly, the hotel sector and catering, in construction and allied trades.<sup>9</sup>

The current rate of migration is unprecedented in the country's history, with more than 25 per cent of the population in search of employment abroad. Although at first it was people from urban areas that left, now most migrants come from rural areas and are mostly women. In almost every village, 60 per cent of the able-bodied women have left the country, so that the villages are populated by the elderly and children. A survey of schools in the north of the country, undertaken by the Centre for Youth Development in 2000, revealed that, even in this area traditionally considered relatively wealthy, half the children from rural schools had at least one parent who had left to find a job abroad.

The absence of opportunities to earn enough to survive also contributes to the migratory push. It is accepted that the better-off children in rural areas, most affected by the trafficking, are from families where one or both parents are abroad. As a result, children from poor families come to believe that migration, even if it is done illegally, is the only way to improve their life. People dream about opportunities of working abroad because they see numerous examples of Moldavians finding work, sending money home and managing to survive at least day-to-day, even if not for the future.

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8 See footnote 4.

9 S. Scanlan: *Report on trafficking from Moldova: Irregular labour markets and restrictive migration policies in Western Europe*, (ILO, May 2002)

Although in many cases money sent by parents represents the only means for the child to continue their education, the situation of a child whose parents have left is extremely vulnerable. Left without adult supervision and without any regular means of existence, the children often do not in fact go to school, may leave school and not enter any form of training. As a result, many of them find themselves on the street and then institutionalized. In short, their vulnerability increases even more.

The growth of crime among minors represents another alarming phenomenon: about 55-60 per cent of minors committing crimes are known to have been left in the care of grandparents or distant relatives. As a measure of preventing criminal activity among minors, the authorities invoke tutorship for children whose parents are declared gone from the country, or in some cases institutionalize the children, sometimes even withdrawing parental rights.

## **Social factors**

A number of social factors contribute to increasing the vulnerability of children and young people to persuasion, to inappropriate decisions and thus to those who wish to exploit or traffic them. These include low education levels, a lack of social support for the younger generation, their lack of life experience and the diminished socializing influence of the family. The changing role of the family is exacerbated by a general decline in values in society and an influx of information in the media about the 'better' life to be had in the West. On the other hand, there is insufficient information and understanding of the perils of trafficking, and a poor legal culture among young people.

## **Education**

Although Moldovan law guarantees free compulsory education for children from age five to 16, the number of unschooled children is growing. Experts estimate that children from this group represent 11 per cent of all five to 16 year-olds. The enrolment rate in post-compulsory education is also low, amounting to just 43 per cent of the population aged 16-22. The rate of enrolment is decreasing. At the beginning of the 2001/2002 academic year, the total number of pupils/students enrolled at all levels of education in Moldova fell by almost 10 per cent over the previous academic year.<sup>10</sup>

Of the children who go to school, only 80 per cent attend regularly; the remaining 20 per cent attend occasionally because they do not have suitable clothing or shoes, or because they are not interested in school content. The United Nations estimates that at least 11 per cent of Moldovan children of school age are not enrolled because of the low income of their families.<sup>11</sup>

Some children are encouraged by their own parents to drop out of school in order to take up income-generating activities to support the family. Even if in theory general education is free of charge, in practice pupils have to pay several fees: for school renovation and heating, for books, and to supplement teachers' salaries. Moreover, the secondary education institutions (lyceums) are located in county towns; this involves more cost because the children at these schools require transportation and accommodation. Many families cannot afford such luxury.

The education system itself is facing a number of challenges. Many schools, especially in rural areas, face many difficulties because of poor physical conditions (lack of heating, books) and an ongoing fall in the number of teachers.

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10 *National Human Development Report 2002*, (Moldova, UNDP, 2003)

11 United Nations: *Common Country Assessment*, (Chisinau, 2000)

While children are increasingly not receiving formal education, they are exposed to other sources of information. The media in Moldova advertise broadly life in the West as better, and this easily wins over young minds. The children are lured by the prospect of a wealthy life that their parents cannot offer them. As a result, the parents lose their authority and the children try to get the things they want by themselves. Such pressure can lead them into criminal activities and thus increase their risk of being recruited by traffickers.

### **The role of alcohol**

Children may also decide to move abroad to find work because of family violence provoked by alcoholic parents. The use and abuse of alcohol have deep roots in Moldovan society. Practically all state and private commercial units sell fake alcoholic beverages in enormous quantities without any restrictions. Alcohol is a cheap and accessible product, undermining the health of the population and eroding the institution of family. The National Drug Centre reports that 55,449 people suffering from alcohol abuse (45,579 men, 9,870 women) were registered at the Centre in 2003. Each year some 140,000 people are arrested for excessive consumption of alcohol.

### **Political factors**

The absence of a state strategy on migration, a lack of regional strategies for combating trafficking, inadequate national legislation relating to trafficking, the inertia of countries of origin and destination and a paucity of strategies for fighting unemployment all contribute to a context in which trafficking thrives.

Children list the following as motivating them to consider leaving the country (and thus rendering them easy prey for traffickers):

- Desire to earn money
- Assurance of a decent living
- Family conflict
- Need to support their family
- Trust in attractive promises
- Miserable living conditions
- Lack of money
- Hope for a better future
- Improper (provocative) behaviour of some girls.
- Desire to become free and independent.<sup>12</sup>

### **Profile of a child at risk**

These underlying vulnerability factors and the range of motivations to move abroad combine to provide a clear profile of the child at risk of trafficking. In many cases the child comes from either a socially vulnerable, dysfunctional, abusive or one-parent family. The child may be in the custody of relatives, acquaintances, neighbours or others because the parents are abroad. The child may be

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12 Some children are also abducted.

living in a specialized institution. There are cases, however, when the child comes from a middle class family.

In almost all cases, a child from the risk group has not completed secondary education. S/he may be illiterate, or have dropped out of school to go begging or working to support the family. Such children are easily influenced by the street, where they become exposed to social vices such as drugs, alcohol, and petty crime.

The Temporary Placement Centre in Chisinau reported that, in 2002, 1,090 children were brought in by police officers, including 243 girls and 717 boys. Pushed by poverty in the family, 258 children had become beggars, and 439 dropped out of school.

The educational profile of these children is interesting: 62 of them were of pre-school age; 275 were in general school; and 734 were from abandoned children homes or from orphanages. The same data show that 355 of these children were from a single-parent family, 24 were orphans, but the majority were from two-parent families, usually in a difficult economic situation.

## 2. THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND NATIONAL POLICIES ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING

### 2.1 *International instruments*

Since the late 1990s, a number of international instruments have been created to combat human trafficking. These recognize that, although the contributing factors and mechanisms of trafficking vary from country to country and region to region, and although trafficking is constantly shifting and changing, there are basic common elements that allow concerted international and regional action.

This consensus gave rise to the development of an international instrument to combat trafficking, based on agreed notions and approaches: the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime (2000) and its supplementary *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children*, also known as the Palermo Protocol after the city in which it was first signed.

Moldova has been a member of the United Nations since 1992 and has ratified most UN conventions. Since 1995, Moldova has also been a Member State of the Council of Europe and has similarly adopted Council of Europe Recommendations and Conventions.

#### ***International and regional instruments to which Moldova is a Party***

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and its Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (2000)
- ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No.182)
- ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)
- ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No.29)
- UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children” Supplementing the UN Convention on Fighting Transnational Organized Crime
- ILO Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No.105)
- The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Inter-country Adoption
- The European Convention on the Exercise of Children’s Rights, Council of Europe
- Council of Europe Recommendation (2000) 11 against trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation
- Council of Europe Recommendation (2001) 16 concerning the protection of children against sexual exploitation

The UN conventions play an important role in defining the crimes related to human trafficking and outlining actions that countries should take to fight them. Article 3 of the Palermo Protocol states:

- (a) ‘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 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;

- (a) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used;
- (b) 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;
- (c) 'Child' shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.

As a compulsory provision stipulated in Article 5.1 of the Protocol, States Party to the Protocol are obliged to sanction trafficking in adults and children in accordance with the definitions of the Protocol. Thus, these definitions form the necessary minimum for the penal provisions of the parties. In addition, it requires the sanctioning of the attempt, participation as an accomplice and organizing or directing other people to commit an offence (Art.5.1).

Annex II of the Protocol refers specifically to trafficking in children:

Art.1 (A) The parties shall prohibit the sale of children, as well as their use in prostitution and pornography

Art.2 (A) The sale of children means any action or transaction through which a child is transferred by any person or group of people in the exchange for remuneration or for any other consideration.

Art.2 (B) Prostituting children means the use of a child in sexual acts in exchange for remuneration or for any other consideration.

The ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No.182) reiterates that trafficking in children is unacceptable in all countries, regardless of the level of development and must be eliminated as soon as possible. Article 3 of the Convention defines as worst forms of child labour to be prohibited and eliminated as a matter of urgency:

- (a) 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;
- (b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;
- (c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties;
- (d) work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

Trafficking in children is also a serious violation of children's rights, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is relevant and universally applied. Although the CRC

does not define trafficking, it provides clear guidelines for the protection of children. Article 32 of the CRC specifies:

the right of child to be protected from economic exploitation or from any work that could be dangerous to the child or which interferes with the educational process, or creates physical, psychological, spiritual or moral discomfort, or which could impede the child's social inclusion.

Articles 9, 10 and 11 prohibit the illegal transportation of children. Article 34 guarantees the right of children to be protected sexual abuse or exploitation..."

The United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime also contains norms for provisions of the national penal process, such as compensation for victims, protection and assistance to victims, measures for protecting victims from intimidation, and protection of the identity of the victim by offering confidentiality in the course of criminal trial. Although most of these norms are discretionary, they provide a normative base for the improvement of Moldovan legislation in this field. As Party to the Convention, Moldova has committed itself to reviewing and revising its national legislation in accordance with mandatory provisions.

## **2.2 National legislation**

### **The Moldovan Constitution states that:**

the exploitation of minors, their involvement in activities harmful for their health, morality or which are dangerous for their lives and normal development are prohibited (Art.50).

It also recognises the right of children to protection from violence, the right to be helped socially.

The new **Penal Code** and Procedure that came into force in June 2003 is in accordance with the Palermo Protocol. It provides for legal assistance to victims and guarantees the anonymity of witnesses. The Penal Code lays down that the human trafficking is a criminal offence. There are 10 criminal provisions to address trafficking in human beings, including child trafficking:

- Article 165 Concerning trafficking in human beings
- Article 166 Concerning illegal freedom privation
- Article 167 Concerning slavery and slavery-like status
- Article 168 Concerning forced labour
- Article 172 Concerning violent sexual activities
- Article 173 Concerning the constraint to sexual activities
- Article 174 Concerning sexual relations with a minor under 14 years
- Article 206 Concerning trafficking in children
- Article 207 Concerning illegal transportation of children across the borders of Moldova
- Article 208 Concerning the involvement of minors in criminal activities or forcing them to act immorally.

Articles 206-208 were introduced in the new Penal Code as a result of pressure from civil society and the international community. The issues raised by these actors encouraged public authorities to recognize not only the existence of human trafficking in the Republic of Moldova, but also the phenomenon of child trafficking, and to take issue against it.

According to Article 206, *Trafficking in children* is:

- (1) Recruitment, transportation, transfer, sheltering or reception of a child, offering or reception of payments or benefits for the obtaining the consent of a person who has the tutorship over the child for the purpose of:
  - a) Commercial and non-commercial sexual exploitation, prostitution or use in pornographic industry;
  - b) exploitation via labour and forced services;
  - c) exploitation in conditions of slavery or similar to slavery, including in the case of illegal adoptions;
  - d) use in armed conflicts;
  - e) use for criminal activities;
  - f) extraction of organs or tissues for transplantation;
  - g) Abandonment abroad is punished with imprisonment for a period of 10 to 15 years.
- (2) Same acts accompanied by:
  - a) the use of physical or psychological violence on the child;
  - b) sexual abuse of the child, commercial and non-commercial sexual exploitation;
  - c) the use of torture, inhuman or degrading treatments in order to assure the subordination of a child or accompanied by rape, profiting from the physical dependence of the child, use of arms, threats with the exposure of confidential information to the child's family or other persons;
  - d) exploitation in slavery conditions or in conditions similar to slavery;
  - e) the use of children in armed conflicts;
  - f) Extraction of organs or tissues for transplantation is punished with imprisonment for a period of 15 to 20 years.
- (3) Actions provided in paragraph 1 or 2:
  - a) repeatedly committed;
  - b) committed on two or more children;
  - c) committed by an organized group or criminal organization;
  - d) Resulting in the severe harming of corporal integrity, in a mental sickness of the child or in his death, is punished with imprisonment for a period from 20 to 25 years or life imprisonment.

Moreover, the Penal Code (Art.207) provides that for actions such as taking a child out of the country based on false documents or using other illegal means, as well as abandoning children abroad for reasons other than those indicated in Art.206, the offenders shall be punished with imprisonment for a period of seven to 12 years.

These three articles concerning child trafficking establish a significant legal framework for combating trafficking, and provide the investigator with an effective basis for successful accomplishment of the investigation.

As of 2003, on the basis on the new provisions in the Penal Code, some 150 cases of trafficking in human beings had been filed and 36 people convicted.

The Government of Moldova has also attempted to address the situation in which a child is forced by economic or family issues to go abroad, through a Law on Protection of Children in Difficult

Circumstances. This law is still under discussion in the Parliament. On passing of the law, local authorities will have a social welfare officer who dedicated to helping survivors of trafficking.

Taking into account the present knowledge on the increasing scale and gravity of trafficking in children in Moldova, additional clauses within articles regarding victims, cause of death, damage, and affiliation to a criminal organization offer feasible opportunities for the long-term elimination of traffickers.

The legal system of Moldova provides certain measures and norms for protecting victims' rights to dignity, security and private life. However, these regulations are not broad enough. Victims are sometimes threatened or bribed into changing their testimonies. In particular, there is a need for a more sophisticated system of consecutive and efficient protection measures at different stages of the process, in order to ensure the right of the accused to a full defence and to a fair trial on one hand, and the rights of the victim on the other hand.

Existing legislation in the Republic of Moldova is not sufficiently comprehensive to address the whole range of problems related to human trafficking. It does not contain provisions on preventive actions, nor standards of services rendered to victims in order to assure their social reintegration.

Another very important problem is that of legal protection of witnesses and of the victim in trafficking cases. Although witnesses enjoy certain rights, it is a complex undertaking to ensure that such rights are not violated, because of the situational peculiarities of such a witness. These range from individual psychological and social characteristics, as well as from certain overarching social factors such as lack of security of the witness to trafficking. To overcome this, additional legal protection for witnesses to trafficking is necessary, and actions must be taken to guarantee the conditions that would motivate the witness to collaborate with the legal process.

According to the Centre for Prevention of Trafficking in Women, "at this stage, the most serious violations of the rights of victims of traffic occur, because of lack of staff specialized in such cases in legal institutions and lack of specialized knowledge in law enforcement." For this reason, victims often refuse to collaborate with the legal institutions".<sup>13</sup>

### ***2.3 Government structures responsible for combating trafficking in children***

There is no specialized institution responsible solely for fighting trafficking in children. Rather child trafficking is dealt with by structures concerned with the fight against human trafficking in general.

The first government structure in this area, the Section for fighting human trafficking and offences committed by foreign citizens (with a staff of six people), was created within the Ministry of the Interior in May 2000. In 2002, as a result of the growth of the phenomenon, the section was transformed into a Specialized Directorate for Fighting Human Trafficking with three sections: south, north and centre, aimed at operational coverage of the entire territory of the Republic of Moldova.

In November 2001, in response to the obligations assumed within the Stability Pact for South-eastern Europe, the Government of the Republic of Moldova approved the nominal composition of a National Committee for fighting against trafficking in persons.<sup>14</sup> The National Committee comprises: the Ministry of the Interior, the State Service for Migration, the Office of Prosecutor

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13 Centre for the Prevention of Trafficking in Women: *Women trafficking in Moldova: Reality or Myth*, (Moldova, May 2002).

14 As a member of the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe, the Republic of Moldova signed the Palermo Anti-trafficking Declaration of December 2000, recognizing the importance of the problem in the region, and agreed to participate in common anti-trafficking activities.

General, the General Directorate for Fighting against Organized Crime, the Customs Department, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection.

The National Committee was to implement the National Plan of Action for fighting trafficking in humans. that contained as objectives:

- assessment of the scale of problem;
- finding the causes and vulnerability of certain social groups, the methods of people's recruitment;
- building awareness in society on the dangers associated with human trafficking;
- educating people belonging to groups with a high level of risk;
- reduction of activities likely to devolve into human trafficking;
- assurance of protection of victims of trafficking;
- harmonizing national legislation with community legislation in the field;
- preparation of personnel authorized to enforce new legislative instruments.<sup>15</sup>

A number of international organizations are partners to the implementation of National Plan of Action for fighting human trafficking, including UNICEF, UNDP, IOM, OSCE, ILO, the Council of Europe, the European Union, the SECI Centre, as well as Moldovan NGOs active in the field of fighting human trafficking.

A review of relevant reports and materials indicates that legislation for fighting and preventing human trafficking in Moldova is not adequately enforced inadequately. There are a number of factors contributing to this:

- the insufficient activity of police bodies in identifying trafficking cases and traffickers, explained by lack of experience in the field and lack of specialized structures of police bodies in the territory;
- unsatisfactory delivery by central public administration bodies and local public authorities of economic and social measures that would contribute to removing the causes and conditions that favour human trafficking.

Many elements of the National Plan have still not been accomplished:

- failure to enforce accurately legislation on assistance and protection of trafficking victims;
- lack of efficient collaboration between legal institutions, state bodies and non-governmental structures.

The Government of the Republic of Moldova created the State Service for Migration in October 2001 in order to establish evidence on illegal migration over national borders, and to attempt to control and diminish the flow of trafficked people.

The basic duties of the service are:

- promotion of state migration policy including regulation of immigration and repatriation processes of the population, of workforce migration and control over application and observance of legislation in the field;

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15 *Official Monitor of Moldova*, 15 November 2001

- elaboration and presentation for approval of proposals regarding immigration share and control over the implementation of the appropriate normative acts;
- coordination of processes of provisional employment integration of migrant workers and assuring their social protection;
- elaboration of inter-governmental agreement projects between the Government of the Republic of Moldova and governments of other countries regarding provisional employment and social protection of the migrant workers of the contracting parties

Since its establishment to the present, the actions of the State Service for Migration have been focused on elaborating a number of inter-governmental agreements on the employment of Moldovan workers abroad. None of these have addressed in any way the issue of child trafficking, especially of trafficking for labour.

**3. PROFILES OF TRAFFICKED CHILDREN AND CHILDREN AT RISK**

**3.1 Families of trafficked children**

**Living conditions of children at the time of recruitment**

Interviews with the parents of trafficked children revealed that most of them had not had stable employment for six to seven years, and this had a negative impact on the standard of living of the family. The children often lack basic things like quality meals and appropriate clothes and shoes.

In answering the question of whether, during the year before departure, they had been hungry, only 11 (18.6 per cent) of the trafficked children said no. Twenty-eight children (47.4 per cent) said that they had sometimes been hungry; and 20 (34 per cent) of the 60 children surveyed said that they had often been hungry.

The children were also asked whether, during the year before their trafficking, they had appropriate clothes and shoes. Thirty of them (50.8 per cent) answered that they had often not had these; 25 children (42.4 per cent) said that they had lacked these sometimes, and only four children (6.8 per cent) stated that they had always had these things.

The survey found that the main person who took care of the child before trafficking was a parent or grandparent.

*Table 3. Who took care of the child before trafficking?*

Child her/himself	7
Friend/friends	1
Father	20
Mother	18
Stepfather	1
Brother(s)/sister(s)	3
Grandparents	6
Specialized institution	1
Did not answer	3
Total children surveyed	60

*Note: multiple answers possible*

The main income of the person who took care of the child was, in the majority of cases, salary (49 per cent); 17 per cent of respondents lived by working their own plot of arable land; 15 per cent from occasional work or from money sent by a parent who works abroad; 15 per cent from pension and 2 per cent each from social assistance and odd jobs.

The difficult economic situation of some of the families was linked to regular alcohol abuse by one of the parents or both. Because of this, they were unable to find a stable revenue-generating activity, and all money earned from occasional work was used to buy alcohol. As a result, these families lived in miserable conditions, without light, heat, and gas, because they could not pay utilities. Sometimes

the parents had chased their children from the family home because they saw them as an additional burden. In group discussions with the parents of trafficked children, some of them did not react in any way when they found out that their children had been prostituted abroad. When representatives of law enforcement bodies tried to tell one alcoholic mother what her small daughter had been forced to do abroad, she only asked if her daughter had earned any money. Nothing else interested her.

Only 11 of the 60 trafficked children had a general secondary education. Moreover, the majority of the children stated that they had been periodically subject to violence in the family (even in those with a better standard of living). Some of the girls had been sexually abused by their natural or stepfather. Living in such an environment and considering the untenable conditions at home, children saw no alternative but to leave home.

### ***Case study 1: Alexandru's story***

*Alexandru comes from a family of farmers that works several acres of arable land. In the year before his abduction, Alexandru had always had enough food. The only thing the family was short of occasionally was money, so the family was not able to provide him with nice clothes. They lived in a good house; had a beautiful and rather rich household. There were five boys in the family; the oldest was 24 years old and the youngest just five. Alexandru is the middle brother. He left school at the age of 12, after 6th grade, having not done very well at school.*

*Alexandru was abused by his father. At the age of 12, he was kidnapped by a Roma family and taken to their house. They forced him to work with a number of other boys and girls aged between 12 and 15. Alexandru managed to escape from the Roma family, but continued to leave home occasionally because of the physical abuse his father inflicted upon him but also because of frequent family disputes. Alexandru's father told interviewers that his son was a 'bandit', 'criminal' and 'bad child'. Alexandru said he would like to go to work anywhere, even abroad, rather than stay at home.*

Among the children surveyed there were also children who had been trafficked but who came from a background of sound family relationships. Other reasons motivated these children to look for opportunities to help the family. These reasons included one member of the family being handicapped or ill, or the family being large. In these cases the parents accepted the possibility of the child working abroad in order to contribute to family income.

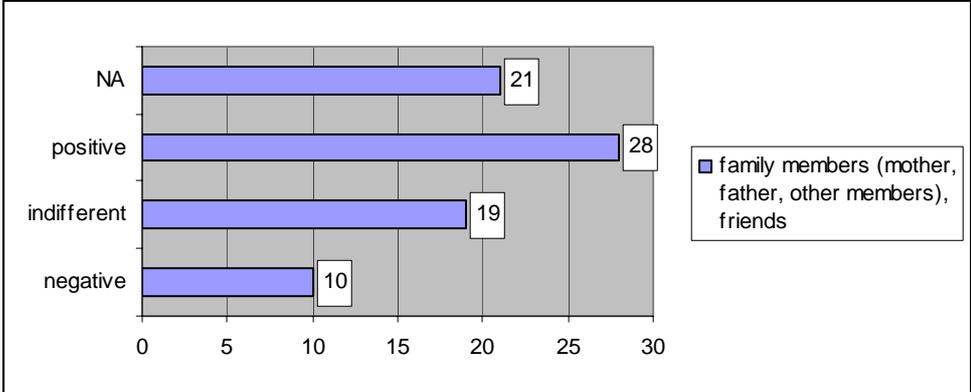
One sister of a trafficked girl told us that their parents had died a long time before. Her sister, who studied in a boarding school, had first been trafficked in 2001, at the age of 13. She was repatriated in summer of the same year but in 2002 she left again, without saying where she was going. The sister said that they had always had financial difficulties and that they had come to see prostitution as a viable way of earning money to live on. The sister had herself been trafficked four years earlier; she had a child and said that she was ready to go abroad again to escape from the difficult circumstances in which she lived.

What was clear from the interviews with parents was that most of them were not aware of the danger of trafficking, seeing it as one way for some people to find a job. Few of them were informed of the dangers of trafficking or the risks to the lives of the trafficked children. That is why many parents, who knew that their children intended to work abroad without specifying where and in what activity, did not do anything to stop them.

Of 58 trafficked children surveyed (the remaining two children in the sample had been kidnapped) 48 children were not stopped by any of the members of their families from going abroad. Four of the children did not answer and only six said that someone tried to stop them going abroad. It is

interesting to note that 27 of the children told us that members of their families knew that they were to go abroad to work. The attitude of relatives (father, mother, other members of the family) was in most cases positive (28 cases), or indifferent (19 cases). Only 10 trafficked and released children from 60 interviewed said that their family members did not accept their decision to leave home and look for a well-paid job.

**Chart 2. The attitude of the family member who knew of the child's intention to leave home**



**3.2 Families of children in the at-risk group**

The living conditions of the children from the at-risk group were much the same as those of the trafficked children. The children came from families in financial distress, families with alcoholic parents, divorced or single-parent families, from specialized institutions, or from families where violence was used.

The main income sources of the people supporting the children were the grandparents' pension, occasional work and salary. A few of them received money from a private farmstead, entrepreneurship or social assistance.

The children said that relations between them and their tutors were satisfactory, even if in some cases these were very tense, and included regular physical abuse from the grown-ups. The tense relationship between children and their parents can push children into taking the decision to leave home. This is proved to some extent by semi-structured interviews with children from the at-risk group: five of the 10 at-risk children mentioned that they were often beaten and abused verbally by their parents (mother or father).

**Case study 2: Ion, 14 year-old boy, Chisinau**

*Ion is part of a family with average income. From a material point of view he does not lack anything and is a student at a prestigious high school. His parents are divorced but they live in the same apartment. Because of this, there are frequent arguments. The parents often use physical violence as a form of punishment. The difficulties at home meant that Ion missed classes and spent his time mostly on the street. Sometimes he even slept in different basements. There he learned about drugs, cigarettes and alcohol. Ion's parents lost all control over him and no longer have any way of influencing his behaviour.*

When 20 children from the at-risk group were asked who they were living with, only five said they lived in two-parent families. Two of these five said a stepfather lived with them, and one child had two step-parents. Nine children lived in a single-parent family (one with a step-father). The other five children lived with either with friends, sisters/brothers or alone.

Some parents said that they do everything they can to give their children a decent living, that they avoid using violence in their relationship with children, but that, despite this, the children leave home, drop out of school and go away. The parents acknowledged that they have no way of influencing their children’s behaviour, and they blamed the environment in which the children spent their free time and ‘unsuitable friends. In turn, the children blamed their parents for not being able to give them a better life and said they preferred to go abroad, where they thought people lived a better life and “earn a lot of money”.

When asked whether they had adequate food and appropriate clothes and shoes in the year before the interview, the children from the at-risk group gave the following answers:

<b>Had no food</b>	<b>Had no appropriate clothes or shoes</b>
5 children – never (38.5%)	3 children – never (23%)
3 children – sometimes (38.5%)	6 children – sometimes (46%)
5 children – often (23%)	4 children – often (31%)

Some children did not answer.

These results suggest that children from the at-risk group are not necessarily in difficult economic circumstances in their families. More trafficked children at-risk children lacked food in the year before departure (34 per cent compared to 23 per cent); more trafficked children than children from the group at risk lacked appropriate clothes and shoes in the year before departure (50.8 per cent compared to 31 per cent)

The general similarities in profile between the trafficked children and those at risk suggests that the at-risk children are extremely vulnerable to trafficking. Indeed, most of them had already received proposals to go work abroad (12 of 20 interviewed children). Four children had contacted the recruiter through acquaintances; in five cases the traffickers themselves had approached the child; and in three cases the children had been introduced to the traffickers through family members.

The children were generally tempted to accept such offers, but as a result of recent information campaigns on the dangers of human trafficking, the children hesitated. Nevertheless, six of 12 children approached by traffickers did agree to go abroad for work, but for a number reasons (parents forbade them, they were stopped at the border, did not have the necessary means) they could not.

Surprisingly, although four of the 20 children (20 per cent) from the at-risk group lived on the streets, they were better informed about the dangers of trafficking than an equivalent 5 per cent of trafficked children. It seems that this may be because they had friends who had experienced trafficking. A less important role in informing the children on the risk of trafficking in human beings is played by the family and mass media (especially in rural areas, where access to information is limited). Educational and religious institutions, the last having a higher credibility in the rural areas, have avoided dealing with the issue and so do not play a significant role in prevention and reduction of trafficking in children.

As in the case of trafficked children, the majority of children from the risk group did not attend school. Only two of the 20 children reported that they had attended school regularly in the three months before the survey, compared to 12 children who did not attend school at all. All this time the children had to work to support themselves or their families, or simply played truant. Their

income came from begging and unskilled work in agriculture, sales, housekeeping and portering. Some children said that their alcoholic parents had forced them to work to buy alcohol.

**Case study 3: Gheorghe, 10 years old, Chisinau district**

*Gheorghe’s mother died in 2000 of cancer; his father drinks heavily. His father does casual works in people’s houses but he spends almost all the money on drink. Gheorghe’s father often beats and verbally abuses him.*

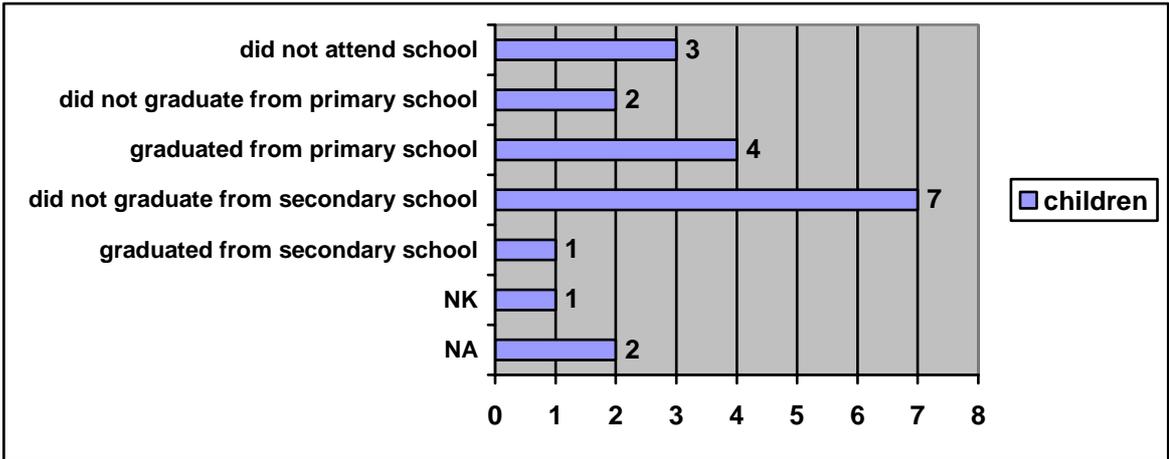
*Gheorghe has two older sisters, one of them is 19, and the other one is 16 years old. He is studying at a boarding school in the second class. He has been repeatedly offered by his oldest sister to go to Moscom) to work.*

*He has not done this yet because the family does not have enough money to pay for travel. From time to time he works for different people both in his native village and in a nearby town. He has been doing different jobs such as sweeping courtyards, cleaning, and agricultural work. From time to time he gets small sums of money for this, but sometimes he is forced to do the work for nothing.*

*Gheorghe has heard about the consequences of trafficking in human beings. His teacher told them about it. He also heard about it on the radio.*

At the time the survey was conducted the children’s education level varied widely: from the total absence of any idea what education was like (one child) to secondary-school graduation level (one child). Most of the children (seven respondents) did not graduate from secondary school. Four children had graduated from primary school and did not continue to secondary school. The most distressing fact and most significant for the social assistance system was that three children had never attended school while three of the respondents did not even complete primary school.

**Chart 3. The children’s educational level at the time of the survey**



Even if compelled to abandon school, seven children said they would like to continue studying and five said they would like to learn a profession that might assure them a stable source of revenue and bring them financial freedom. However, five children thought that they could improve their living conditions only by going to work abroad, accepting any type of activity.

### **3.3 Categories of trafficked children**

Follow-up research with trafficked children and with key informants points to some of the main distinguishing features of child trafficking in the Republic of Moldova.

#### **Age and sex**

Children of any age can become victims of trafficking. According to key informants, it is mostly boys and girls between the ages of 12 and 18 who are subject to child trafficking, with most of the victims being 15-18 years old. Trafficking in children of this age implies, on the one hand, the lowest risks for traffickers because documents can more easily be forged by changing the age to 18+, and on the other hand, the highest gains because the majority of victims are girls trafficked into sexual exploitation.

Internal and cross-border trafficking of children under 12 years of age potentially carries a higher risk to traffickers for a number of reasons:

First, because the children are not sufficiently physically developed to do hard labour in the fields and so are recruited mostly for begging. During police raids to apprehend children begging, those under 12 years of age are the first to be taken in by the police for transfer to Correction Centres or boarding schools.

Second, taking a minor under 12 years of age out of the country requires a document signed by both parents and certified by a notary giving the third party the right to accompany the child abroad. This document is not difficult to obtain; there are many corrupt notaries who will prepare the documents against payment. In recent times police and border guards have been increasingly vigilant and, taking into account what is known about child trafficking, have been particularly wary of ethnic Roma crossing national borders in the company of children from a different ethnic group.

#### ***Case study 4: Alexander, 3 years old***

*A social assistant responsible for Alexander told his story. He was born to a single young woman who immediately sold him to a friend for \$40. The friend took care of the child for a year and a half, and then decided to sell him to a Roma family for 300 lei (about \$19) because she was going to get married.*

*The Roma family who bought Alexander used him to beg for money on the streets of the town. This carried on for six months, until he was taken by some children to the police. When Alexander arrived at the police station, he was around two and a half years old and could barely talk. He was taken in by an NGO which is looking for a suitable family for him.*

*When she was contacted by the police, Alexander's mother and the woman who raised him refused to discuss it, saying they had given up on him forever.*

Most of the trafficked children, both girls (26) and boys (nine), said that they had left home when they were between 15 and 18 years of age. Eleven girls and eight boys had left home before the age of 15; two girls and four boys had been under 12.

This data show that traffickers are frequently looking for girls under 18 and boys aged between 12 and 18 years. As a result, this social stratum is the most subject to the risk to be trafficked.

Almost all the key informants whose work is in some way related to the phenomenon of trafficking in children, said that most trafficked children are girls. They are primarily trafficked for sexual exploitation. There has hitherto been no concrete information on trafficking of boys for sexual exploitation in the Republic of Moldova.

Minors are more suggestible, easier to influence and manipulate than adults in prostitution. Furthermore, the profit pimps make from recruiting minors into sexual exploitation is immediate. After bringing the recruited minors to Chisinau, and preparing all the documents necessary to take them out of the country, the pimps often sell them to transporters who take them to their final destination. Pimps may also obtain more money for a minor because the price of a virgin is higher than the regular price for a trafficked girl.

A representative of the Direction on Fighting Organized Crime of the Ministry of the Interior advised that the price for a virgin girl varies between \$300 in Moldova and \$10,000 - \$12,000 and even \$20,000 at the final destination (usually the Arab Emirates).

Some key informants reported that boys are mostly recruited by members of the Roma ethnic group, who exploit them in agricultural work, begging, and selling fake gold. Girls may also be recruited for these jobs and may also be exploited sexually.

### **Geographical area/locality**

The child victims of trafficking do not come from any specific geographical area; they are recruited from all localities of the Republic of Moldova, rural as well as urban, where socially vulnerable families live. Key informants and experts explain the marginally higher rate of children trafficked from rural localities as related to:

- The economic status of families from the villages. Recent research<sup>16</sup> found that 92 per cent of rural inhabitants live below the average standard of living and 82 per cent of them have no possibilities for employment.<sup>17</sup>
- Massive migration of people from rural areas in search of work. This leads to the *de facto* break-up of families, with the children being left under the supervision of grandparents, relatives or neighbours who do not have any influence on their behaviour.
- Lack of information for young people in the villages on the dangers of trafficking. Most campaigns aimed at prevention of human trafficking organized by NGOs have taken place in towns like Chisinau and Bălți.

Of the 60 trafficked children interviewed, 22 out of 39 girls and 17 of 21 boys were from villages. Other children come from towns or cities but in rural areas.

### **Level of education and activity before leaving**

The majority of the trafficked children had dropped out of school before they were recruited and trafficked abroad. Thirty-two of 39 girls and 12 of 21 boys were not in school before they left home.

At the time of departure, the trafficked children's education level varied:

- 3 children (2 girls and 1 boy) had never attended school;

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16 CIVIS (Centre for Analysis and Sociological, Political and Psychological Investigations) and the International Centre on Protection and Promotion of Women's Rights, La Strada: *Trafficking in human beings from Moldova for sexual and labour exploitation*, (ILO, Chisinau, 2003).

17 *Idem.*

- 9 children (4 girls and 5 boys) had not completed primary school;
- 3 children (1 girl and 2 boys) had completed primary school;
- 5 children (3 girls and 2 boys) had not graduated from secondary school;
- 25 children (20 girls and 5 boys) had not completed secondary school;
- 11 children (7 girls and 4 boys) had graduated from secondary school;

The reasons for this were given as:

- parents lack influence over their children;
- poor economic conditions of the family, which did not allow the child to continue studies and obliged him/her to look for a job to contribute to family support;
- mental disabilities and poor school performance;
- lack of desire of children to go to school;
- lack of motivation of children from secondary schools with good school performance to continue their studies, because it implies additional expenses.

Only six girls who did not go to school worked before leaving: in agricultural labour; collecting money for church restorations, at a dairy farm for five hours a day, seven days a week, earning only 65 lei (\$5) a month. They also worked in cattle grazing; prostitution; waitressing in school and as nannies in a kindergarten. The rest of the children did not have any occupation and spent most of their time on the streets, where they became exposed to alcohol, smoking, drugs and petty theft.

Key informants pointed to the fact that the high number of out-of-school children leads to an increase in juvenile delinquency and facilitates the development of child trafficking. The reasons for this are seen as the decay of the institution of the family in general, and the crisis within the educational system. The family is torn by alcohol abuse, physical abuse, and external pressures such as the difficult living conditions that compel parents to seek jobs abroad in order to provide a better future for their child.

### **Trafficking duration**

The duration of the child's trafficking experience varies from case to case. Key informants told us that girls trafficked for sexual exploitation usually return home after one, two or even three years.<sup>18</sup> Among the trafficked children, this group of victims stayed abroad the longest period of time. Children exploited for agricultural work were trafficked for three to four months, the length of the agricultural season. The interviews, however, revealed a slightly different picture. Among the 12 interviewed girls who had been in sexual exploitation, only one had stayed abroad for 15 months; the others had been away between two and 11 months. Four of 11 children trafficked into agricultural labour had worked abroad for more than four months (ranging from five to 18 months).

Children who are trafficked into begging may be abroad for weeks or years. The 12 children surveyed who had been exploited for begging were away from two to 14 months.

Many trafficked children, moreover, end up being exploited in several different ways, moving from one exploitative occupation to another, so there are no clear links between nature of exploitation and duration.

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<sup>18</sup> the key informants mentioned some cases when these girls had never return home.

## 4. RECRUITMENT PROCESSES AND TRAFFICKING ROUTES

### 4.1 *Recruitment methods*

In the case of trafficking in minors, recruitment is generally by individuals known or unknown to the children. Most often, the traffickers establish the connection with children through third parties (friends, acquaintances, neighbours, relatives) or approach the child directly, although there are cases where the children themselves or family members approach the traffickers. Generally no-one outside this contact knows about it.

The trafficked children reported that, to persuade minors to leave to work abroad, traffickers offered their support in organizing transport and ensuring a job (70 per cent); preparing travel documents, arranging contacts at the destination point, providing money in advance for their parents or guardians, offering credits or loans to the child (6.6 per cent). The methods used by traffickers are effectively the same for all forms of exploitation.

### **Departure motivation**

When asked why and how they left home, the majority of the trafficked children (32 children) said they had been neither forced to leave nor lured into it. Another 17 children were lured. Six children had been forced to leave. What, then, led the children to take up the offers of the traffickers? The children said that the following factors were behind their decision:

- Family disputes,
- Poverty,
- Impossibility to continue studies,
- Lack of jobs,
- Family debts,
- Illness or required surgery in the family.

More than two-thirds of the children (41 of 60) said that they left home to find a well paid job; five children said that they left home for no particular reason; two children had been kidnapped and one child left hoping to find asylum.

There were a number of determining factors that influenced them to go abroad. The trafficked children said that the opportunity to earn money and the lack of resources at home were the primary motivating factors. They also rated the lack of future plans in the country, family relations and the offer of an interesting job as important. Other factors that influenced the children's decision to leave and to accept a proposal to work abroad were:

- guaranteed employment,
- offer of transport,
- promises that the trafficker would take care of all departure arrangements,
- having contacts in the place of destination,
- offers of credit/loans,
- offers of advanced payment by the traffickers.

However, the 'decision' to work abroad was not always made by the child. Often the people who looked after the child made the decision.

The parents of the trafficked children admitted that often the proposals to go abroad were made to the minors by acquaintances and relatives. In 37 cases in the sample, the child had taken the decision to leave; in two cases the person providing for the child had decided to allow the child to go abroad; and in seven cases someone else had made the decision. Twenty-four children declined to answer this question.

### **Recruitment for sexual exploitation**

In the case of girls recruited for sexual exploitation, the pimps choose minors in public places (discos, bars) and establish contacts that appear accidental. In fact, the girls have been carefully chosen in advance, after multiple discussions with people living in the village, sometimes even with the local administration. This helps the pimps to get information on poor and dysfunctional families, on girls who would accept to go abroad for work and on girls who would be easily persuaded.

The pimp tries to persuade the girl with promises of large and stable revenue abroad performing a decent job, for example as a shop assistant, care worker or waitress. The girl has no idea of what she will really be obliged to do when she arrives at the destination. Sometimes, in order not to be accused of having deceived the girl, the trafficker may suggest that they will be working as ‘companions’ or ‘escorts’, that is working in restaurants and bars where they approach men and make them buy drinks. The recruiters explain that these activities do not include sexual relations with clients, and that sex services depend on the girl’s own discretion, and will then be paid separately.

In the case of girls who are already in prostitution, the traffickers promise that more money can be earned abroad. Where the girl remains hesitant, the pimp may use force. The persuasion period lasts from one day to one month.

The pimps provide all the documents necessary and ask for immediate reimbursement in cash or through work. If they refuse, the girls are threatened with physical harm, or are told that their relatives or close friends will be harmed.

Cases have been reported of girls under 18 being abducted in daylight from public places (on the street, on their way to school). In these cases no-one intervened to stop the crime. There are also reports of cases mothers, often dependent on alcohol, sold their own daughters for two or three hundred lei (\$20-\$25).

Although in the majority of cases the girls may accept to go abroad in order to work, they have still been trafficked according to international law.<sup>19</sup> This recognizes the difficult context in which children may have to make decisions and their right to protection. As such, there is no concept of ‘voluntary’ relocation into exploitation for people below the age of 18.

The people who recruit the girls are often young men between the ages of 20 and 30. They may just be recruiters or they may have wider ‘managerial’ functions within a network or group. They may, for example, be responsible for establishing and using personal contacts with corrupt officers of the Passport and Visa Service, law enforcement bodies or even the Ministry of the Interior, so that they can then acquire the documents necessary to take the girls out of the country. They may be ‘delivery men’, responsible for transporting the victims to their destination, ‘supplying’ them to buyers and then bringing money back to Moldova. The most dangerous pimps are the ones who work alone and broker deals between overseas clients and victims. Many of them are foreign citizens and do not have a residents’ visa in Moldova. They may have fake passports and names, which makes it practically impossible for them to be caught. These people rent apartments for two or three days and the girls are brought there.

Some of the traffickers are women who were once trafficking victims themselves. Despite knowing the psychological damage that trafficking can wreak on the girls, they effectively ‘advertise’ by

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19 See footnote 2.

wearing expensive clothes, jewellery, and driving luxury cars the myth of the beautiful life in the West, and the ease of obtaining a highly paid job. Often, they do not hide the fact that their ‘good fortune’ was obtained through prostitution and on favourable terms. They perpetuate the fiction of well prepared places, a normal day of work, a stable income and medical assistance.<sup>20</sup> There is no mention of physical and psychological mistreatment, loss of human/personal rights and the indignity of being treated as an object of bargain and sale.

Lured by these promises, and impressed by movies that depict the fantasy of a life in the West in which poor servants turn into rich women, young girls accept the offers of the traffickers, sometimes even without telling their parents.

The girls surveyed said that when they decided to leave, nobody stopped them. They all hoped to have a decent, well-paid job. None of them considered that their reality might not be the same as the promise, and none thought of the dangers they might face.

### ***Case study 5: A former active pimp***

*This man is 28 years old, single and lives and works in Chisinau. He completed higher education. Having been convicted of pimping and serving his time, he is now again free. He said:*

*‘I have been trafficking girls since 1997, in collaboration with a tourist firm in Chisinau. For one girl I earn about \$250. If she is a minor, I arrange her documents through a well-known notary in Chisinau. If she is from the village; I pay less for the documents. I do not have too much trouble with the visas because I have acquaintances in the embassies. They need to eat too. If all the documents are fine, there is no problem crossing the border. I call the border guard I know and at the indicated time he waits at the border checkpoint.*

*I chose the girls with no problems. In each village there are naive and careless girls from difficult families. So, for example, in these places I go to discos and the boys show me who from the village had sex for an ice-cream – such a girl will give sex at any time. Then I get to meet these girls, take them to the bar, take them for a ride in the car and often have sex with them.*

*I work each piece of ‘merchandise: I analyse her and prime her until she trusts me. Then I make her an offer to work as a prostitute. Most of them are ready to accept this for money abroad instead of doing it for free in the village. I set a time when I shall meet her and take her to my apartment.*

*I also work through MACLER<sup>21</sup>. I place a simple ad: ‘Girls, job’ (Russian) and my mobile number. When they call I tell them up front that I send prostitutes to work, and I start to prepare those who accept ready for their departure.*

*I also have acquaintances in villages and towns who help me. They find the ‘merchandise; I come with the documents and take her. I can also sell her on the way to Chisinau even without documents, but if I see that she is ‘skilled’ I take care of her personally and sell her at a better price.*

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20 A representative of the Department for Fighting Trafficking in Human Beings in the Ministry of the Interior explained that some educated women who become ‘company ladies’ and have contact with influential clients may work in favourable conditions. This is unlikely to be the case, therefore, for poor girls from rural areas.

21 MACLER is the leading Moldovan classified ads publication, known for dubious ads for jobs in Europe and as a medium for the recruitment of women for prostitution or trafficking.

It is clear that girls trafficked for sexual exploitation entrust their lives to suspicious people who do not have any license for employment abroad, and who often cannot tell for sure what the girl will do or where she will live. They are effective because of the naivety and ignorance of the girls, and the desperation that makes them vulnerable to promises of a better life abroad. The mass media and social pressures that paint pictures of a better life 'elsewhere' could be mobilized to provide, instead, information and education to these children so that they are better informed.

The desperation, on the other hand, can only be reduced by action to improve the economic and social situation.

#### ***Case study 6: Olesea, 20 years old***

*Olesea comes from a poor family. She lived alone with her mother, who was sick. When she left secondary school without finishing her studies, Olesea looked for work to earn money for her mother's treatment.*

*In 2000, a young man, a stranger, approached Olesea and, during their conversation, he asked what kind of work she would be interested in. He suggested she might work as a 'company lady' in a bar in Bosnia, and said she could \$50. Because she did not like that kind of work, Olesea rejected the offer. A week later, the stranger made another offer: this time he said she could play the trombone in the same bar. When he asked her if she knew how to play the trombone, Olesea said no. He persuaded her that she could just 'imitate the sound', for the same salary plus a free place to live. Olesea accepted.*

#### **Recruitment for begging and other work**

Recruitment of children for begging and for other work (agriculture, selling, theft, domestic service etc.) is usually done in on the streets or at home.

On the streets, abandoned children (parents having left home to work abroad), those who have fled from specialized institutions or from home, delinquent children and those who have nothing to do because they neither work nor attend school are all vulnerable to the approach of recruiters. Traffickers lure the child to work for them in exchange for food, clothing, a place to live and a share of the money they earn. The children accept this offer, some even knowing the kind of work they will perform in exchange for shelter or because they want to see the world. Sometimes, the children are simply abducted and sold to child traffickers.

Traffickers gain access to the homes of children by striking up acquaintance with the children or their parents (relatives, brothers, sisters, grandparents). Both the children and the parents are persuaded with promises of a good income abroad that will improve the economic state of the family. To support the stories they tell, the traffickers will bring along successful examples of people who have returned from abroad with money. Such people are not scarce; they can be found practically in every rural settlement. In this way, the locals can see for themselves the benefits of working abroad, attested to in new and well equipped houses, nice clothing and other goods. This is the most convincing argument of all. Moreover, the offers made by traffickers are generally limited to the kinds of work that are common in Moldova: day labourer at a building site, vendor, day labourer in agriculture, elderly care worker and similar. In recent times the Moldovan ethnic population most affected by the economic crisis has been ready to accept begging abroad as decent work, something that not long ago was stigmatized and considered as the exclusive domain of the Roma ethnic group.

One key informant narrated a case where a 'representative' (real or impostor) of a factory from Russia came to Bălți to recruit teams of unqualified workers, including minors, to work at these factories. A well developed child was promised a salary of \$300 a month; a less well developed child

was offered \$100. In just one day a team of 15 boys had been put together, with the approval of their parents. In time, the boys returned home with no money at all and having been physically mistreated. It was impossible to identify anyone involved in the scam to be held responsible.

#### ***Case study 7: Maria, the mother of Sergiu who was released from trafficking***

*Maria has four children. Her husband returned handicapped from fighting in Afghanistan. A neighbour, a Roma woman who herself had a boy working in Moscow, came to see Maria with another Roma woman and asked her to send Sergiu, her 14 year-old son, to work with the woman.*

*At first Maria did not agree, arguing that she had never seen the Roma woman before, but the poor economic situation of the family convinced her that her child could help her if he went to Moscow and brought home money. She made a deal for him to go for three months.*

*Although Maria did not know exactly where her son would be working, she and the Roma woman went to the notary (who had business relations with Roma woman), and Maria signed a mandate that allowed the woman to take her son.*

*Sergiu was brought home by the police nine months later and never told his mother what kind of job he had done in Russia nor how he ran away from the gypsies.*

Although some parents unknowingly contribute to trafficking their own child, there are cases in Moldova where parents or the person taking care of the child at the moment – relatives, grand parents, sisters, brothers -- actively want to get rid of the children, especially if the children are handicapped. A representative of the Department of Protection of Children's Rights from Ungheni district told the story of a teenager from Ungheni who had been trafficked by Roma people several times. The boy, an orphan, lived with his grandmother, but she did not want him to live with because she did not like it when her grandson stopped her from drinking. The boy had very poor eyesight. He would go off with Roma people to different places in Moldova and Ukraine, and beg. The boy dropped out of school and so was practically illiterate. The boy eventually went to live in the sewerage tunnels and basements of blocks of flats.

#### **4.2 *Transporting victims of child trafficking***

##### **Who organizes travel?**

The trafficked children said that, most often, (48 per cent of the cases) travel had been organized by acquaintances. Friends organized the travel for 13 per cent of the children. The same percentage had their travel organized by Roma people; 11 per cent by strangers, 5 per cent by relatives, 3 per cent by pimps and 3 per cent by neighbours, 2 per cent by an employment agency and 2 per cent organized travel themselves.

Almost half (25) of the 60 children agreed to pay their traffickers the total amount for the trip; 14 of them agreed to pay part of the costs for the trip, and 17 agreed to pay the amount later, after they had worked. Only six of the children made an advance payment for their trip and eight made a partial payment. Twenty-two of the children borrowed the money for their trip. This suggests that they had no idea that they would be trafficked and hoped to find a decent, well-paid job abroad.

Departure is organized within one day to a month from the time of the agreement. Usually, during that month, the traffickers gather more children so that they can arrange a group departure. Most of the children, however, said that they had been ready to leave with the trafficker within a week.

Although generally the traffickers ask for payment for travel documents on arrival at the destination, some traffickers, depending on the situation and the method of recruitment, ask for money (some or all) when the documents are ready and the travel is arranged. Since most of the children who decide to leave home do so because money is short, the money for travel is usually borrowed from relatives, friends or neighbours and interest is payable on it. Sometimes, in order to persuade the victims of his good intentions, the trafficker may offer the money on condition that it is repaid from the first pay packet.

### **Ways and methods of transportation of the victims of trafficking in children**

When choosing the transportation route for victims of trafficking in children, traffickers consider multiple factors: risks to be detected, immigration policies of different countries, the existence of contacts with customs/border guard officials or with “buyers” from destination countries, the cost of transportation etc.

The open or permeable borders of Moldova make border crossing relatively easy. Moldovan citizens are able to travel without a visa to Romania and the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (Ukraine in particular), and this makes it practically impossible to control migration, including minors, across Moldova’s borders.

However, trafficking in children also supposes crossing other borders. In many cases Romania and Ukraine are just transit countries.

Some border crossing is done with legal identity papers, passports and visas, some with forged papers, some by bribing the border services, and some by avoiding border inspection all together.

Of the 58 trafficked children who had crossed the border (two had remained in Moldova):

- 33 children had a passport or other identification documents when crossing the border, 24 did not have any document and one did not answer;
- Only eight children with passports or other identification documents handled the documents themselves; others said the person accompanying them kept their documents;
- 52 children said that they crossed the border at an official checkpoint, with 50 children saying that they saw a police or a border guard;
- Despite the presence of guards, 21 children said that nobody checked their passports or travel documents; the other 31 said a policeman or border guard checked their documents;
- 35 children answered that their ‘chaperone’ paid someone to let them cross the Moldovan border; 14 of the 58 did not see anything and said they did not know; five of the 58 said that there were no bribes.

### **Legal border crossing**

The most certain and simple method of taking a child out of Moldova is with an authentic birth certificate, passport and visa. In these cases, the victim generally hands the documents over to the trafficker at the moment of recruitment so that s/he can arrange, if necessary (ie when the destination is not Romania or the CIS countries) the passport and visas. This is arranged through

corrupt officials of the Passport Service and of foreign embassies resident in Chisinau. A legal passport and visa will then be issued to the minor in two to three days. If the child is not yet 16 years old the trafficker will use the services of a notary to validate a document (usually forged), to certify parental agreement for taking the child out of the country or that the child is under the supervision of social assistance.<sup>22</sup>

Once in the country of destination, or even during the trip, the documents are taken away from the victims under different pretexts and will never be returned.

As a result of a number of information campaigns aimed at border guard officers from Moldova and Romania, it is becoming more difficult to cross the Moldovan-Romanian border with minors, even with valid reasons and documents, because increasingly the child is questioned on the purpose of the trip and is advised of the dangers that might face her/him abroad.

Olesea (see case study 6) crossed the border with valid documents and, when questioned on the purpose of the trip, said she was going to a friend's wedding. Elena, a 17 year-old girl trafficked to Romania for sexual exploitation, said that she passed the Moldovan-Romanian border in a bus with her 'chaperones'. At the border checkpoint, she presented her passport saying and said that she was going to Iași to buy oil. To be more convincing she presented some empty bottles. One of the border guards warned her that many unpleasant things might happen to her in Romania and that it would be better that she returned from Iași that evening, or he would put her on general pursuit.

### **Illegal border crossing with forged or no documents**

When the traffickers cannot legally take the children across the border, they use forged documents or bribe corrupt border guards with whom they have already established personal contacts. This method is reserved for traffickers who make up part of the network.

The survey uncovered the story of a border guard at a Turkish border checkpoint who let girls cross into Turkey even though he knew they were being trafficked. The bus driver who transported the girls and kept their documents told the guard that he was taking prostitutes to Turkey (even if some of the girls did not know yet that they would be forced into prostitution) and offered the money requested by the border guard in order to avoid control.

The Ministry of the Internal Affairs reports that the cost (bribe) for illegal crossing of the Romanian-Yugoslav border varies between \$500 and 1,000 per person.

Documents are also forged or procured by: modifying the birth certificate by changing the age to 18, after which an international passport is issued based on the fake certificate; by using passports stolen from earlier victims, stolen or foreign passports, usually Russian and then either using one with a photo resembling the child or gluing another in its place; or by buying birth certificates from alcoholic parents.

Despite their efforts, sometimes traffickers are detained at the border and the children are returned home or placed in Temporary Placement Centres. A representative of the Direction of Fighting against Organized Crime cited a specific case which took place at the Cahul border checkpoint, when a pimp tried to cross with a group of teenagers (13 girls and four boys) under the age of 18, all carrying Russian passports. The border guards noticed something suspicious about one girl and a rigorous check of the documents showed that they were fake.

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22 "Borders are barriers only for the policemen, because their competency ends at the border. They are not obstacles for the traffickers, because traffickers and their victims cross these borders using the classic method of corruption and other very clever methods". Interview with Alexandru Ionaș, SECI Centre, *16-25 export* TV Show, 9th edition, produced by CPTF in collaboration with the OWH TV Studio

## **Avoidance of border inspection**

To keep costs down and obviate risk, some traffickers avoid crossing the frontier at border checkpoints and use the 'green border'. This means walking (on routes known only to guides) through rivers, mountains and swamps in all weathers.

The Moldavian-Romanian border, for example, may be crossed by boat over the Prut River at night. The Romanian-Bulgarian border can be crossed over the Danube. These routes were described by two key informants, representatives of state structures fighting the organized crime. None of the children surveyed had been trafficked along these routes. Only one of them had crossed a 'green border' with Ukraine.

## **Methods of transportation**

Most children are transported into exploitation by car, minibus, bus or train. Generally public transport is used. In some cases, the traffickers rented or used their own minibus for transporting children to the destination.

The interviews with children trafficked abroad (58 out of 60 trafficked children) show that 36 of them crossed the border by train, 11 crossed by bus or microbus, nine went by car and only one child travelled on foot (one child did not answer).

Usually the children are transported in groups of five to 15. This was confirmed by 82 per cent of the trafficked children. They said that the groups comprised between two and 25 people, of children as well as women who were trafficked for prostitution.

Since most of the documents are prepared in Chisinau, and tickets for all international routes can be bought there, Chisinau has become the starting point for most child trafficking routes. From here, for children trafficked to Russia and Ukraine, the main route out of the country is by rail along the Chisinau-Moscow and Chisinau-Kiev routes. Moscow and Kiev are not always the points of destination of the traffickers, but points of transit from where the victims will be transported further to different Russian and Ukrainian towns.

Girls who are trafficked into South-eastern Europe (Turkey, Macedonia, Serbia, Albania, Greece, Cyprus, for example.) and the Middle East are usually transported by bus. The first country of transit on this route is Romania. In Romania girls may go through any of the many border checkpoints, but usually Cahul and Vulcanesti, where the girls may be resold. From Romania the victims either travel on to Bulgaria (another transit country) or are taken to Timisoara, the most important marketplace for girls, and from there girls are taken to Turkey, Italy, Cyprus, Greece, Serbia and other countries.

### **4.3 *Destination countries***

The Ministry of Internal Affairs advises that children from the Republic of Moldova are mostly trafficked to Russia and Ukraine. However, there are cases of girls being recruited into the sex trade in Albania, Macedonia, Turkey, Serbia and other states.

Of the 58 children trafficked across the border, 29 children went to Russia; 11 went to Ukraine; six children ended up in Turkey; three children went to Poland; two children were trafficked to Albania; one to Macedonia; one to Romania and one to Serbia. Four children did not answer. To date, only Russia and Ukraine are known to be destination countries for children trafficked into labour, including begging.

The trafficked children themselves said that they had intended to go to the following countries: Russia (31 children), Ukraine (12 children), Turkey (six children), Italy (one child), Poland (one child), Romania (one child), Serbia (one child), Moldova (one child). Two girls said they wanted to go anywhere other than home. Neither of these girls went to school at the time of trafficking. One

of the girls explained that she had been short of food, did not have proper clothes and shoes and that she agreed to leave home even though the pimp who recruited her told her that she would be sold and would be prostituted.

Thirty-six of the 55 children who agreed to go abroad told us that they did go to the country they wanted to go to, while 19 said that they were lied to by the recruiter and ended up in a different country from the one they had been promised.

## 5. WORKING CONDITIONS AND OTHER EXPLOITATIVE OUTCOMES OF TRAFFICKING

### 5.1 *Activities the children engaged in and conditions of work*

Most girls are trafficked for sexual exploitation. To date there have been no cases of trafficking in boys for this purpose, although the children who were released from trafficking said that there were boys under 18 in places where they were prostituted too.

Girls are also trafficked to work as waitresses, dancers, masseuses, but all these activities involve, in the majority of cases, rendering sexual services. Boys as well as girls under 16 are trafficked for begging, agricultural labour, hawking or housekeeping.

The trafficked children (60) said that they had agreed to the following work: agricultural labour – 11 children; prostitution – 10 children; dancing – seven children; waitressing - six children; begging -six children; domestic work – four children; street vending – three children; personal care– two children; masseuse – one child; and other activities (construction, dishwashing, sewing etc.) – five children.

On arrival, usually this agreement was broken and the trafficked children found themselves in: agricultural labour – eight children; prostitution – 12 children; dancing – three children; waitressing – one child; begging - 11 children; domestic work – three children; street vending – one child; masseuse – one child; other activities (drug, jewellery and newspaper selling.) – two children.

Twenty-three of the trafficked children said they were forced to do this work and around half of them acknowledged that they had then accepted the kind of activity that they then did.

Usually the children did not work alone. The prostituted children were exploited in bars, saunas and brothels alongside adult women. The children trafficked for begging were always supervised by older people who begged as well. The minors trafficked into agriculture worked in larger groups with other minors, not necessarily trafficked from Moldova.

Girls in prostitution always worked with other girls under or over 18 years of age. These groups can vary from four to 20 girls. Working in groups is also characteristic of children exploited for labour, including begging. After he had been trafficked, Sergiu (see case study 7, above) sold fake jewellery on the street. In the house he stayed in, there were 40 children and five adult Romas. This is an exceptional case; usually between five and 20 children will be in the groups.

The girls usually worked 12 hours a day, day and night, for the whole week without any weekends off. Some girls worked at night as prostitutes and as waitresses and dancers in a bar during the day. One girl said that her employer did not allow her to sleep more than three hours a day. The girls who worked as prostitutes had three or four clients a night. Another girl recalled how, every evening at around six o'clock, the girls were taken to a street where they were supposed to solicit clients. They worked until seven or eight in the morning. There were cases when clients kept the girls until ten or eleven o'clock in the morning.

Most of the children worked without breaks. Thirty of the 60 children had no breaks and 15 children were allowed to take breaks but only if accompanied.

Children trafficked for begging worked on average eight to 12 hours a day/night, and slept for seven to eight hours. Forty-four of the children surveyed worked seven days a week and 21 of them worked seven nights per week. This means that at least five of these children worked the whole week, days and nights. Even an adult could not support such conditions for a long time, let alone a child.

This inhuman working schedule is exacerbated by the fact that the children are also poorly nourished. They are mostly kept hungry. Often the bosses do not feed their employees for days, as

a penalty for 'bad' work or disobedience. A girl trafficked in Romania recounted how her employer did not feed her at all, and the only solution for victims of this pimp was to ask clients to feed them or to have sexual relations with the owner of a shop in exchange for food.

## **5.2 Debt and remuneration**

All trafficked children get into financial complexity even before they leave their country. It is usual that they have debts to the traffickers incurred when travel and documents are provided for them. In more than half the cases, children said that they had debts to their employers who provided transportation. In such cases, the employers forced the children to work to repay the debt. The bosses constantly increased the amount to be repaid and, as a result, the children rarely received the money they earned during the whole trafficking period. Moreover, employers who offered the children different goods (most often food, clothes, cigarettes, alcohol, jewellery, cosmetics, drugs) while they were being exploited, forced them to reimburse the value of the goods through work, in some cases specifying the necessary work period, in others not. The trafficked children explained that the time they had to work in order to repay debts lasted for less than a month up to two years. In most cases the children did not receive money for their work, only food, clothes, cosmetics, cigarettes, alcohol, drugs and in-kind.

On remuneration: generally the children working in prostitution are the most likely to receive some money. The girls might earn \$50 to \$200 in a night. The price for sexual services varied from \$15 to \$100 depending on the client and the service rendered. But usually the girls do not get to keep this money, because the pimps take it. Sometimes employers who did not think the girls brought them enough money beat them and locked them in houses or in a room with a large guard dog.

Often, to avoid paying the girls, the pimps, or employers hired people who pretended to be policemen and who threatened the girls with expulsion from the country, beating and/or imprisonment in the local prison. The girls considered this even worse than staying with the employer. After this deception, the pimp would appear and pretend to bribe the policemen, and the girls then had to work to pay off this new debt.

In one case, described by girls trafficked in Turkey and Kosovo, police officers arrested a group of girls without prompting from the employer. One of the pimps then wrote to the family and told the parents that their daughters had been arrested for burglary, or for begging. He asked for money and permission to bring them home. The unsuspecting parents sent the documents he needed and the pimp went to the police, took the girls, and forced them to work again.

Only three of the 60 trafficked children said that their employers gave them some of the money they earned, while the remaining 57 said they did not receive anything for their work.

### ***Case study 8: Veronica, 16 years old***

*Veronica was trafficked by a Roma family to Russia. They promised her work in agriculture but she was forced to beg. She had to sit in an invalid chair. To make her foot numb, the traffickers injected her. They forced her to take drugs and drink alcohol. Veronica was exploited for three months and returned home when the Roma family decided to return. In Moldova she ran away. All Veronica earned for these three months of exploitation was a tracksuit that cost 300 lei (\$23).*

### **5.3 The use of force and degrees of freedom**

In almost all cases, the children were often physically abused and poorly nourished. The girls, including those trafficked for begging, were raped and subjected to other forms of sexual abuse.

Most of the girls trafficked for sexual exploitation initially refused to become prostitutes. These acts of disobedience were punished by beating, raping and starvation as 'educational' demonstrations for other victims.

#### ***Case study 9: Nadejda, 23 year-old, trafficked for the first time when she was 16***

*Nadejda said that when she was trafficked for the first time she was forced to beg. Then, however, she was forced to provide sex and to take drugs. For a while she was held together with girls who had been trafficked into prostitution. The girls were from the ex-soviet republics. One of the girls refused to do as she was told and the traffickers cut her face in front of Nadejda and the other girls, threatening them with the same punishment if they disobeyed.*

Often the pimps persuade the girls to take drugs, alcohol and to smoke. The girls then become used to using these substances as a means of relieving the stress that they experience, but once they are dependent on them, they have to work to be able to get them. The same methods were used to keep boys in begging.

To keep the victims subservient, sometimes the employers would appeal to real police officers, who arrested and imprisoned the children. In the prison, they were subjected to physical mistreatment: beatings, starvation and rape, so that in a couple of days they implored their employer to take them out of there. The police officers were remunerated for their cooperation. The cost was added to the victims' debts.

The children were forbidden to talk to people or walk freely through the town. If they disobeyed, they were punished. In a few cases, children were allowed to contact parents or relatives. Of the 60 trafficked children interviewed, only half of those allowed to contact relatives did so. The children who contacted their relatives did not tell them what kind of work they did or where they were.

In order to discourage the children from fleeing, the traffickers kept hold of their documentation. Of the 60 children surveyed, 42 did not have their documents.

Even when the children did occasionally have a chance to ask for help, 53 of the 60 children said that they did not contact the police or other local bodies. They gave the following reasons:

- Fear of being beaten or deprived of food (eight children);
- No need (seven children);
- Under constant supervision (three children);
- Under the supervision of the employer and convinced the policemen were traffickers themselves (one child);
- Fear and mistrust of the police (four children);
- Not convenient (three children);
- No police station in the village (two children);

- Not aware that this was possible (three children);
- No opportunity and too afraid (seven children);
- Need to earn money and fear of being sent home (two children);
- Fear of the police and good relationship with the employer (three children).

Only 14 of the 60 children had been contacted by the police; the remaining 43 had no contact with law enforcement bodies.

## 6. THE PROCESS AND CONDITIONS OF WITHDRAWAL AND REINTEGRATION

### 6.1 *Ways and circumstances of releasing trafficked children*

The factors that allowed return of the child depend on the type of activity the child has been engaged in during trafficking. Children recruited for agricultural work returned home at the end of the agricultural season. Children in begging returned home after 3-9 months. Sometimes, the employer sent them home because they were sick or did not earn enough money, but most often the children came home after they were able to escape from their employers. When they did escape, far from home, law enforcement bodies took them home. In the majority of cases, however, the children came home accompanied by their employers, representatives of the Roma ethnic group, who returned home for a vacation or to sort out family matters. Traditionally, Roma activity abroad has a seasonal character. In Moldova, the children's chances of escaping from traffickers were greater, because sometimes they were helped by other people.

It was the girls in sexual exploitation who were away for the longest time. On average they may not return, if they return at all, for two or three years. Most often, minor girls return only after they are arrested and sent home by the enforcement bodies. Some girls return home with the employer's approval, because they could no longer work through illness or because they were pregnant. As a result of frequent intimidation and threats, the girls rarely tried to run away from their employer and, even when they did, they often fell back into trafficking and did not make it home.

The trafficked children gave the following answers relating to the circumstances of their return:

- Arrested and sent home (15 children);
- Boss wanted them to leave<sup>23</sup> (nine children);
- Escaped with someone's help (nine children);
- Escaped without help (nine children);
- Left after a police raid (eight children);
- Repaid debts (two children)
- Ran away (one child)

Seven children did not answer. Sometimes the girls escaped with the help of clients, who also paid for their travel home.

Only 19 of the 60 trafficked children attempted to leave before the time of release. They were motivated to leave not being paid for services rendered; all money being confiscated by the employer; inhuman living conditions; verbal and physical aggression, repeated rape; dissatisfied with the work they had to do; no work; longing for friends and family.

More than half of the children (33 children) said they would not go home if they could find another job. This number is comparable to that of the children who never attempted to return home (38 children). They explained this by the fact that: the job allowed them to earn some money and they thought they could maybe find a better paid job (20 children); they did not want to return to the parents with whom they had a bad relationship (two children); they did not want to return home pregnant and leave friends they had made (six children). However, 19 children said they would not like to continue work. Surprisingly, 11 of the 38 children said they wanted to stay and continue their work even in the existing conditions.

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23 The bosses accepted the children's leaving for different reasons: the children were ill or unable to work (pregnant), the bosses were afraid of police/local authorities, there was no work, the bosses also returned home etc.

## 6.2 *The situation of children released after trafficking*

### **The consequences of trafficking in children**

Trafficked children are constantly subjected to physical and psychological abuse. Alcohol and drug consumption affects their health. Almost all the girls forced into prostitution become ill as a result of being trafficked, traumatized and often almost impossible to reintegrate into the community. Most of them return home with an unwanted baby or with STD infections, including HIV/AIDS. Some of the babies may also be sick because of the difficult situation in which their mothers have given birth.

Trafficking victims suffer psycho-emotional disequilibrium, depression. The girls in particular suffer post-traumatic stress. The symptoms of this are acute anxiety, insomnia, irritability, flashbacks, emotional numbness and a state of emotional and physical hyper-alert. They are tortured by repeated nightmares and memories, often for years. A psychologist from the Centre of Rehabilitation of Trafficking in Women said that: “trafficked girls who have some mental disability or who experienced high levels of violence at home may actually return in a better psychological state, because at home they had similar experiences. Those who come from poor families with a positive emotional climate, who have not been subjected to violence or mistreatment come back with great suffering, serious mental and health problems. Many of these victims are suicidal although they may not act on this. In detention, the minors are strictly guarded; when they are released to different organizations, the victims are always supervised by psychologists. There are no records of the suicide rate among trafficked girls, because only a few of those released independently go to rehabilitation centres or inform police about their detention abroad.”

The experience through which the children have lived has a negative impact on their behaviour. Often they become naughty, vulgar, aggressive and dependent on sex and alcohol. They become very easy to manipulate, and may try to manipulate those around them.

The victims of human trafficking need medical treatment and rehabilitation measures. But the majority prefer to hide from people and isolate themselves. They may not have information on the organizations that would offer refuge, a qualified legal consultation or medical and psychological services.

### **The socio-economic state**

Most of the children who escaped from trafficking came back to the place where they had lived (58 children) and to the people (44 children) with whom they lived before being trafficked. Where dysfunctional and aggressive behaviour of the parents was the main reason for them to leave home, the children refused to return to the family home and moved into the homes of relatives or to a specialized institution, including rehabilitation centres for victims of trafficking in women.

**Table 4: Who do you live with now?** (Note that multiple answers were possible.)

Father	24
Mother	37
Stepmother	4
Brother/sister	18
Grandparents	4
Husband/wife	1
Total children interviewed	60

Thirty-four of the released children were taken care of by parents, 10 children by other members of the family, and 21 were taking care of themselves. The main sources of revenue for the children taking care of themselves were: salary (17 children), occasional and seasonal work (6 children), social assistance (three children), private farmstead (five children).

In order to support themselves, the children often find work:

- Agricultural work (five children);
- Newspaper delivery, stealing, producing food (four children);
- Begging (seven children);
- Domestic work (three children);
- Prostitution (seven children);
- Taking care of the elderly or pets (two children).

Asked whether, in the year since they had returned, they had been hungry, 16 of the children said it had never happened to them (compared to 10 children who had said this was the case before they were trafficked); 21 children said that they were sometimes hungry (compared to 28 children before trafficking) and 17 children said they were often hungry (compared to 19 children before trafficking).

Asked whether, in the year since they had returned they had not been able to afford appropriate clothes and shoes, seven children said they had not had this problem (compared to four children before trafficking); 24 children said this had sometimes been the case (compared to 25 children before trafficking) and 24 children acknowledged it often happened to them (compared to 30 children before trafficking).

It seems clear that the situation of the released children had not improved much after returning home. Some children had received help from an NGO (usually one working on issues relating to trafficking in women). Nevertheless this was not enough, and indeed seven of the children interviewed were selling sex in order to survive.

The poor economic situation means that many trafficked consider going abroad again.

After returning home some trafficked children decide, with their parents' support, to continue studying and to complete secondary education. This makes it more likely that they will be able to enter vocational training. However, only 10 of the 60 trafficked children surveyed returned to studies and attended classes regularly. Since only 22 of the 60 children worked to survive (10 children regularly and 12 casually), 32 children were entirely without occupation.

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### **Perceptions and stigmatization of trafficked and released children**

Most trafficked children return home with low self-respect and sometimes guilt for what they have done (been forced to do) while abroad. As a result, some of them refuse to talk about their experiences, fearing that they will be blamed and maybe even punished.

The children said that telling their parents the kind of work they had done would worsen the relationship with parents, which in some cases would make life insufferable at home.

In fact, in most cases the relationship with stepparents (mother or father) did deteriorate after trafficking, regardless if whether the child told them about her/his activity or not. The children were subjected to verbal abuse and criticized for having been trafficked. Relationships with other people remained stable or even improved. This is explained by the fact that some parents feel guilty for having accepted that their children leave home to work abroad and of what the children experienced. They therefore try to minimize the consequences of the trafficking in front of their

children. Even when children might blame their parents for what happened to them, almost half of the released children (26 children) are happy to live with the people they live with now and 26 children say that these people feel the same way.

The children did not tell everyone about what had happened to them. The children in the survey had most trust in their mother, father, brothers/sisters, their friends, and people from rehabilitation centres. However, there were children who said they did not trust anyone and told no-one about their experience.

**Table 5. Did you tell any of the following about your job?**

	Mother	Father	Guardian	Brother/sister	Grand-parents	Friends	People from rehab. centre	Other
Yes	29	15	0	15	6	13	14	7
No	9	7	1	6	6	7	2	0
NA	8	16	31	13	22	15	19	7

The reaction of the community towards children released from trafficking is influenced by many factors, including the child’s age, level of information on the trafficking phenomenon, the child’s lifestyle before trafficking. If before being trafficked the children were badly behaved, abused alcohol or were wanderers, then when they returned home they were blamed by the community for what had happened to them, as if being trafficked was just a consequence of their lifestyle. Twenty-three of the trafficked children said were blamed for what had happened to them.

Conversely, children who were compelled to leave because of poverty or alcoholic parents were usually shown compassion. In general, however, Moldovan society is very sceptical and intolerant, especially of girls trafficked for prostitution. They are marginalized and are not offered any chance of re-entering society. As a consequence, rehabilitation of these children is a real challenge.

At the same time, the community seems not indifferent towards children before trafficking, when they could have done something to stop the children from leaving, and after trafficking, when the children need support and understanding from those around them.

**The risk of being trafficked again**

People who have been trafficked are at significant risk of being trafficked again. Often the girls forced into prostitution are deported before have repaid their debt to the trafficker and so are in danger of being trafficked again. Often the deported girls are afraid to return home because the traffickers know where they live.

Half of the trafficked children said that they fell into trafficking twice or more times. Poverty and need make the children accept offers to leave again, even if they are aware of what will happen to them.

Some children go into prostitution and then decide to continue this abroad, but this time alone, without intermediaries, convinced that they will avoid the danger of trafficking. In reality, on the way or at the destination the majority of them fall into the trap of traffickers.

In Moldova, support services for the girls are limited. There is some government support, while support from NGOs is limited. The IOM runs one shelter where the girls receive first-aid only for

the first ten days of their return. For victims who need long-term rehabilitation, there is no specialized service.

There are similarly few training centres for children who want to learn a profession and prefer to find a job in Moldova. Thirteen of the 60 trafficked children wanted to learn a profession on their release. There is a need for support services, also, to help the children find work when they are trained, and also to follow up their progress for a time.

Forty-two of the 60 trafficked children were ready to leave again and go abroad, and said they would like to perform the following activities:

- Care-taker of children, sick people, elderly (two children)
- Seller (two children)
- Construction worker (three children)
- Begging, domestic work, modelling, telephone operator, driver (one child each)
- Any well-paid job (16 children)
- Dancer in a club or masseuse (six girls)
- Worker in a business (two children)
- Cook or waitress (three children)
- Prostitution (three children).

With these thoughts in their heads, is it clear that the children are at risk of being trafficked again.

## **7. PROGRAMMES TO PREVENT TRAFFICKING, RELEASE AND SUPPORT VICTIMS**

There are no state institutions or national strategies dedicated exclusively to combating child trafficking. The work done in prevention, support and release of trafficking victims is generally carried out in the context of programmes aimed at eliminating trafficking in women, and is aimed mostly at socio-medical support for girls who have been sexually exploited.

Little support is available for children who have been trafficked into various forms of labour. The response of state bodies is limited to police registration of minor delinquents and to placing street children in boarding schools. Socially vulnerable and dysfunctional families receive some help from local social services; however this mostly consists in monitoring and logistical help for the families.

To move towards eradication of trafficking in human beings, it is necessary to work with socially vulnerable families, and vulnerable children in general (for example those in boarding schools, or schools for mentally disabled children) but also trafficked children who have returned home and are at risk of being re-trafficked.

### **7.1 *Prevention programmes***

#### **Actions of the state**

Within the framework of implementation actions of the Strategy of labour force employment in the Republic of Moldova (approved through Government Decree No. 611 of 15 May 2002), the following actions are foreseen for 2002-2008:

- Facilitation of women's integration into active life;
- Combating discrimination between men and women, between young people and adults;
- Prevention of gender discrimination in the labour market;
- Equal opportunity policy strengthening.

Since many trafficking victims are girls on the threshold of womanhood, these actions may have some impact on their ability to find work.

In accordance with the implementation mechanism of the Strategy on labour force employment in the Republic of Moldova, the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection approved a 2003 Action Plan on labour force employment, according to which measures to increase the participation of women, youth, disabled people in entrepreneurship and crafting activities were foreseen.

Under the National Programme on poverty reduction and the Strategy on labour force employment in the Republic of Moldova, the Ministry of the Economy developed a National Programme of public works for 2003 (Government Decree No. 1537 of 27 November 2002), which was to allow employment of a large number of people, including young people, and other groups, mostly from rural areas.

The effect of these initiatives, however, is likely to be small. Unemployment continues to affect young people in particular and they represent the most likely group to migrate in search of work.

## **UNICEF activity**

The Moldova office of UNICEF is focusing on public childcare system reform, aimed at transforming institutional care into a community-based system. Special attention is placed on family reintegration, education and development of community-based alternatives to ensure appropriate protection and development of the child.

UNICEF also supports the development of social work through the provision of training for professionals working in the field, as well as university teaching staff. Social Work Resource centres have been established within each of the universities involved in social work education.

UNICEF's work aims to foster greater respect for children's rights in society, communities, schools, kindergartens and families. In 2002, the 'Education for All' National Strategy was developed and approved for the following five years. This is the result of joint UN advocacy and technical assistance through an inter-sectoral working group led by the Ministry of Education. The Strategy addresses four main priority areas: early childhood development, quality and access to primary education, inclusive education, and non-formal education.

## **Actions of NGOs**

Many victims of child trafficking are vulnerable because they lack information on trafficking, on the risks related to leaving the country, on methods of recruitment, on ways and possibilities of travelling abroad legally. There are no attempts to integrate prevention initiatives into school curricula.

In the absence of a state strategy for this work, a number of NGOs undertake prevention activities: the Information Centre on women's issues, Gender Centre, Information and Documentation Centre on child rights, Save the Children, the International Centre for Protection and Promotion of Women's Rights La Strada, the Centre for Prevention of Trafficking in Women (CPTW) are all involved in media and education campaigns, as is the IOM.

CPTW focuses on prevention of trafficking in women from rural areas, as the majority of victims come from the villages. In 2002 CPTW opened its first branch with a telephone helpline in Ungheni county, identified as a cross-border zone with a population at high risk; it is a region of origin and transit for victims of trafficking in children. In 2003 CPTW planned to open two more branches (in Balti and Cahul counties).

CPTW campaigns on prevention of trafficking in women through the mass media: it produces a monthly information bulletin, a quarterly review *Anti-traffic*, cycles of thematic broadcasts broadcast by three radio stations including advertising for the CPTW helpline, cycles of monthly thematic broadcasts shown on TVM called *16-25 Export*. In partnership with the Information and Documentation Centre on women's issues, CPTW produced a booklet, *Trafficking in women. What you should know*, aimed at potential victims of trafficking.

CPTW also runs an educational campaign called *Anti-traffic* which comprises seminars and roundtables for people at risk of trafficking, pupils, students, social specialists. Seminars on trafficking in women have been organized in schools and lyceums of Chisinau municipality and counties of the republic. There was also an emphasis on training trainers, who in turn will provide information on trafficking to rural schools (about 400 seminars). The main partners in these activities are the Department for Youth and Sports and the Information and Documentation Centre on child rights. As a result of these efforts, some 25,000 children from 14 to 18, mostly from rural areas, were informed on the dangers of trafficking.

From 2001, the IOM has also been active in raising awareness of the dangers of human trafficking. This is done through the mass media. The IOM produced two television spots on trafficking in women that were broadcast on two television stations covering the whole republic at peak audience

hours; 12 editions of *Counter-Traffic*, a programme on national television; weekly radio programmes on national radio and Antenna C, the most popular radio stations in Moldova.

A publicity campaign *You are not merchandise* covered the republic and had the number of the CPTW helpline integrated in it. It was run in many newspapers, including MACLER, on calendars, posters, in minibuses and elsewhere.

IOM published a leaflet in cartoon form as well, with a typical story of trafficking in women, from recruitment to sexual exploitation in the country of destination. The leaflet was disseminated in urban and rural areas of Moldova, in national and local employment offices. In partnership with the International Centre La Strada, IOM also runs an education campaign with seminars, lessons and forums for at-risk groups, professional groups and implementing partners.

Through the two helplines maintained by the IOM and CPTW, people can obtain information free of charge on trafficking in women and the outcomes of such phenomenon, advice on avoiding trafficking, legal avenues of employment abroad, ways to escape trafficking return, assistance to families trying to trace trafficked relatives and rehabilitation services for victims of trafficking in women. It is important to remember that many of these programmes target trafficking in women, and in particular trafficking for prostitution and are therefore only very indirectly of relevance to child trafficking.

With the support of UNICEF, the Neovita Medical Centre for Young People was opened in Chisinau, aimed at teenagers and designed to provide medical services to young people, provide information, education and communication activities for young people on health, healthy lifestyle, prevention of STDs and HIV/AIDS in the family, legal and psychological consultations.

The issue of trafficking in human beings is approached through pre-university education courses in law, education for family life, and education for health, and during class form hours in gymnasia and lyceums. The National Council of Curriculum and Evaluation recently approved a methodological guide for pre-university teachers called *Prevention of trafficking in women*, developed by La Strada to support these initiatives.

## **7.2 Release, assistance and rehabilitation of victims of trafficking**

NGOs are less involved in release and rehabilitation of victims of trafficking in human beings, as these actions require solid resources. The IOM, the International Centre on Protection and Promotion of Women's Rights La Strada and Save the Children. are involved in victim repatriation, assistance and rehabilitation.

Since January 2000, IOM has provided assistance to NGOs, law enforcement and other bodies in repatriating some 1,000 girls, most of them of aged 18-24 and approximately 70 children under 18. Of these, 263 victims (25 minors) were repatriated through Save the Children, 70 from Kosovo, 30 from Bosnia, 67 from Albania, 11 from Italy, 67 from Macedonia, three from Cambodia and several from Greece, Turkey and Belgium. Some of these girls were helped by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (11 girls from the Balkans), International Social Services and the Sacerdotal Church from Italy.

In parallel with the repatriation of victims, IOM intends to work on rehabilitation and reintegration of women in society, by providing psychological and medical assistance. With this in mind, IOM established a Centre for Rehabilitation of Trafficked Women, the only shelter for trafficked women to date. Trafficked women (pregnant or with children born while in traffic) from Chisinau as well as from rural areas can benefit from the services of the Centre. The team of doctors, psychologists and social assistants of the Centre offer shelter for a maximum of 10 days; medical assistance (gynaecological consultation and tests for STDs); diagnosis, psychological support and consulting; group therapy; legal consultations; professional orientation, and accommodation and food during

the stay. IOM also provides financial support to each victim, between \$50 and \$150. However, the Centre can accommodate only 16 people.

Legal, medical and psychological assistance are also provided by other organizations, but these are not long-term as they are funded through short-term projects. Such is the case of the temporary centre for rehabilitation of victims of trafficking in human beings founded by the National Office for Defending Patients' Rights. The main objective of this centre, which functioned during 2002, was to provide medical assistance to victims of human traffic. Only 19 women benefited from the services of the centre, including one girl under 18.

## **8. RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTION, RELEASE AND REHABILITATION**

Trafficking in children is a complex phenomenon, and cannot be eradicated with only sporadic efforts from state bodies and NGOs. Much more is needed, particularly in relation to strengthened institutional frameworks, legal frameworks, specialized social services for potential victims and victims of trafficking, and training of specialized personnel

### **8.1 Institutional framework**

- development of international and national anti-trafficking networks
- development of international networks to find and repatriate victims of child trafficking
- adoption of long-term measures as well as guaranteed instruments to ensure a level of economic and social growth that would reduce risk
- establishment of social policies and programmes to prevent child trafficking, including economic and legal measures
- appointing in town halls focal points responsible for activities to combat trafficking in women and children (including allocation of additional functions)
- establishment of legal networks to improve coordination between different governmental institutions and ministries for development and implementation of national strategies and anti-trafficking action plans
- enforcing of systems to check people transporting minors based on accompanying documents at border checkpoints; and modern equipment at the posts which would allow identification of traffickers
- increased effectiveness and surveillance, especially over intermediaries who offer employment abroad, and line institutions that perform rigorous control over procedures to issue permits for such work
- creation of commissions for child rights in town halls where these do not operate
- training (or professional re-training) courses in child trafficking for teachers
- involvement of local public administration and responsible bodies on assuring children's rights in solving minors' problems.
- establishment within educational institutions of committees for surveillance of minors with behavioural problems, minors from dysfunctional families and school drop-outs
- collection and data analysis on children from the risk group
- development of social assistance' infrastructure, so that local social services support and mediate in disadvantaged families to prevent children's behavioural problems and potential institutionalization
- creation of a specialized body authorized with supervision, tracing, sanctioning and reestablishment of children's rights violated through their involvement in child labour.

### **8.2 Legal framework**

- improve national legislation, clarifying the concept of trafficking in all forms, with subsequent development of implementation methods of these norms.
- review national legislation in view of prevention, fighting trafficking in children, calling to account child traffickers and protecting the rights of children who have been trafficked

- recognition that obstacles to a child's returning home after trafficking are a violation of the child's rights
- stipulation in national legislation of certain provisions regarding penal responsibility of parents for child abuse
- adoption of the Law on Protection of Child in Difficult Situations
- introduction into the Law on Child Rights of provisions regarding creation of equal opportunities for all children to benefit from the right to free time, recreation and cultural activities, as well as working out a concrete mechanism of realization of these rights
- working out normative acts that would regulate in detail child work, amendment of relevant normative acts regarding responsibility of people responsible for exploitative work performed by children, institution of severe sanctions for such cases
- introduction in national legislation of additional measures for protection of witnesses in trafficking cases, as well as legal responsibility for people who knew about child trafficking but failed to report it to relevant bodies
- adoption of provisions regarding additional responsibility (even penal) of state notaries who authorize children's leaving the county based on the wishes of the parents and not the child
- adoption of provisions through which forced begging is considered as a form of child exploitation, with relevant penal responsibility
- adoption of an adequate legal framework for the activity of social employers, with elaboration of a mechanism for rehabilitation and social reintegration of children whose rights have been violated or who have been abused
- introduction of special stipulations in penal legislation regarding all forms of child abuse, with provisions to apply penal sanctions to the guilty person who may be the parents, the tutor, adoptive parents, teachers, personnel of state residential institutions.
- adoption of measures to preserve confidentiality for victims of trafficking after their reintegration
- adoption of mechanisms to protect trafficking victims and to facilitate and improve the situation of the victim during testimony.

### ***8.3 Development of specialized social services***

#### **Prevention services**

- introduction of life skills education in schools
- information for children, especially from rural areas, on the dangers of trafficking
- additional and extracurricular activities to strengthen the self-confidence of children and to improve their participation in the society
- school courses that would describe the process of trafficking in children, the risks of trafficking etc.
- creation of extracurricular centres based on the interests of the children, where they could spend their free time
- support to family institution to provide assistance to young families in building their own homes
- preferential conditions for children in rural areas to continue studies and acquire a profession
- implementation of a programme of real financial assistance for families with numerous children and with disabled children

- creation of centres to help parents in difficult economic circumstances in order to guarantee an appropriate lifestyle for the children
- creation of centres for provisional placement and re-socialization of children living apart from the family, under the tutorship of local public administrations who will contribute to the expenses
- spreading information on positive examples of young people succeeding in life
- revisions of birth certificates and identity documents and issue procedures.

### **Information dissemination on trafficking**

- involvement of relevant actors (police, social workers, medical staff, employment agencies, teachers, church, local authorities, local NGOs , and young people themselves);
- development of a network of local NGOs and of helplines in all counties of the republic
- use of available mass media resources, of new information technology etc.;
- development of the school curriculum through interactive training methods and introduction in the programme of relevant topics for fighting trafficking.

### **Rehabilitation services**

- Creation of a network of rehabilitation centres based on victim assistance programmes designed for each victim after assessment and identification of needs
- development of special programmes of rehabilitation for trafficked children, orphans, and pregnant girls or those with children
- creation of social integration centres for trafficked minors with opportunities for vocational training.

## ***8.4 Development of human capacities***

- development of an action plan to assure, implement and correctly apply legislation, common training of all participants in anti-trafficking actions in order to promote a multi-disciplinary approach to the problem
- specific training on anti-trafficking actions based on modules of instruction for each sector, for example for public prosecutors, police officers, judges, social workers, private lawyers and NGOs. Components should include information on national, regional, and international legislation and standards, and bi- and multilateral agreements
- training of NGOs active in the field to implement and coordinate actions in an international environment.

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## ANNEX: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED

The content of this report is based on discussions, surveys with trafficked children and children from at-risk groups, semi-structured interviews with parents of children who have been trafficked or are at risk, semi-structured interviews with independent local experts and one interview with a pimp, which took place between December 2002 and February 2003 in rural and urban areas.

The database includes 60 surveys with trafficked children and 20 surveys with children from the risk group.

	Questionnaires	Semi-structured interviews	Group discussions
Children who have exited trafficking	60	20	2
Children who have never been trafficked	20	10	4
Parents of trafficked/exited children		10	2
Parents of trafficked children		5	
Parents of never-trafficked children		10	4
Key informants		20	
Total	80	75	12

The label 'children from the risk group' or 'children at risk' specifies the category of children who live in incomplete, dysfunctional, socially vulnerable families, on the streets or in specialized institutions, and who have already attempted to go abroad or have been offered this opportunity.

In order to cover the entire territory of Moldova, the survey of children, both trafficked and non-trafficked, was accomplished in 34 rural and urban localities (towns and cities). The following regions were covered by the survey: Anenii Noi, Balti, Chisinau, Criuleni, Glodeni, Ialoveni, Lapusna, Orhei, Singerei, Straseni, Telenesti, Tighina, Tiraspol, Ungheni.

Children below and above 18 years of age, but who had become victims of trafficking when they were minors were chosen for the survey.

**Table 1: Data collection: Children who have exited trafficking**

	Sex		Age			Job/activity										Destinatio n		Locality	
	Girls	Boys	<12	12-15	>15	Sexual services	Begging	Agricultural work	Dancing	Street vendors	Waitress	HOUSE WORK	Massuse	Drug, jewellery newspaper selling	No answer	Internal	External	City / town	Village
No. of Quest.	39	21	6	19	35	12	11	8	3	1	1	3	1	3	17	2	58	21	39
% of Quest.	65	35	1	31.7	58.3	20	18.3	13.3	5	1.7	1.7	5	1.7	5	28.3	3.3	96.7	35	65

**Table 2: Data collection: Children who have never been trafficked**

	Sex		Age			Locality		Living with parents				
	Girls	Boys	< 12	12 - 15	> 15	City/ town	Village	Living with			Not living with	
								Both parents				One parent
							Father, mother	One step-parent	Both step-parents			
No. Quest.	7	13	4	14	2	14	6	2	2	1	9	6
% Quest.	35	65	20	70	10	70	30	10	10	5	45	30

The Rapid Assessment Survey was intended to provide background information to facilitate the development of strategies for action, to prevent trafficking of children and help them when returning home.

The survey focused on:

- The causes and context in which children are exposed to trafficking;
- The recruitment process;
- The various forms of labour and sexual exploitation children are confronted with;
- The everyday life of trafficked children;
- The way out of trafficking;
- The conditions for returning to former community;
- The life after return (reintegration/new life, stigma).

To get a broader overview of child trafficking, 10 more parents of trafficked children and 10 parents of children from the risk group were also interviewed. Moreover, 20 key informants: experts, people who work with the problem of trafficking on a daily basis, representatives of police bodies, of the Ministry of the Interior, of different NGOs, social assistants, and psychologists were interviewed

All discussions were held in an informal manner, allowing the interviewer to manage children's feelings and to bypass any stress that might have been caused by memories of the trafficking experience. Discussions were held individually; interviewers visited the children where they lived and were thus able to become familiar with the children's living environment. There were also group discussions, which allowed the development of topics that had a very structured character or that were not covered in the survey questionnaire.

Semi-structured interviews with children and parents of both categories (trafficked and non-trafficked) provided detailed information on the survey topics and on more personal issues such as the trafficking conditions, attitudes towards trafficking, ways to get children out of the country etc. Although all children told of their experience during exploitation, few were totally honest. There are a number of reasons for this: guilt, depressing memories, fear of persecution from traffickers, lack of confidence in people, unwillingness to reveal future plans (if the person talks, s/he will not be able to go abroad again because s/he may be subject to registration) etc.

Not all the parents were totally sincere during the semi-structured interviews. In some instances the cynicism of the parent seemed to result from total indifference towards the fate of the child. Some parents of trafficked children feel guilty for the role they played in what happened to their child. Some parents unknowingly trafficked their own children; others did not do anything to stop their children from going abroad, even though they neither knew anything about the character of their work, nor where and with whom their child was going. In some cases, parents of trafficked children are afraid to reveal too much because they fear possible repercussions from the traffickers, and being the focus of attention of the police.

[www.ilo.org/childlabour](http://www.ilo.org/childlabour)

International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)  
International Labour Office  
4, Route des Morillons  
CH 1211 Geneva 22  
Switzerland

E-mail: [ipecc@ilo.org](mailto:ipecc@ilo.org)  
Tel: (+41 22) 799 81 81  
Fax: (+41 22) 799 87 71

ILO-IPEC PROTECT CEE ROMANIA  
intr. Cristian popisteanu nr. 1-3,  
Intrarea D, et. 5, cam. 574, Sector 1,  
010024-Bucharest, ROMANIA  
[patrick@protectcee.ro](mailto:patrick@protectcee.ro)  
Tel: +40 21 313 29 65  
Fax: +40 21 312 52 72

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