



**STOP**

**SEX TRAFFICKING  
OF CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE**



# SEX TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN IN SOUTH KOREA

## What is child trafficking?

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

UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime

A child is anyone under the age of 18 years.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

## What's the problem?

### GLOBAL SEX TRAFFICKING

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

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



Largest Global Criminal Activities



## CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING IN SOUTH KOREA

Child trafficking in South Korea is primarily seen as an internal problem. However, there is very little information on the scale of child trafficking in the country, as most human trafficking reports refer to trafficking victims as “women” or “women and girls” without providing specific, disaggregated details such as the age of victims. In 2006, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade provided information pertaining only to traffickers and not the number of child victims; there were 43 people convicted and 30 arrested for trafficking in persons in South Korea compared to 48 convictions and 28 arrests in 2005.<sup>3</sup>

## Who gets trafficked?

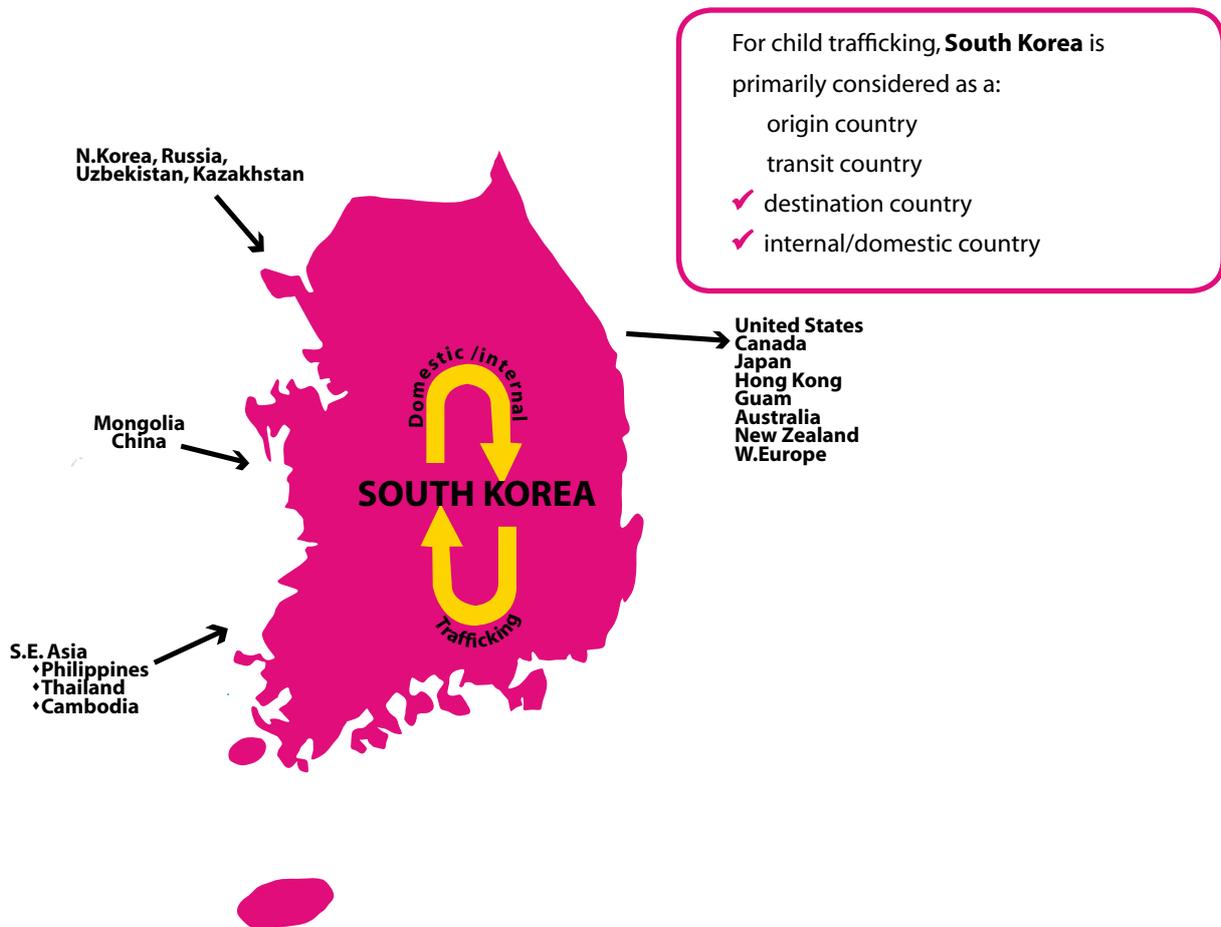
Young females trafficked to South Korea come from Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, China, North Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia and other Southeast Asian countries.<sup>4</sup> For example, Russian victims enter the country using forged documents, in particular the Arts & Entertainment visa, but often end up working in nightclubs, bars or karaoke bars.<sup>5</sup> In addition, some trafficking victims enter the country with false passports displaying an older age and become “mail-order brides.”<sup>6</sup> South Korean women and girls are also internally trafficked or are trafficked to the United States (via Canada or Mexico), Japan, Hong Kong, Guam, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Western Europe.<sup>7</sup> Some South Korean children are trafficked to work in ordinary teahouses during the day and then forced to engage in “ticket tea house” activities at night.<sup>8</sup>

The demand for sex drives child sex trafficking globally, while poverty, domestic violence and abuse, discrimination and the desire for a better life make children vulnerable. Children are especially vulnerable to being trafficked because they are often poorly educated, easy to overpower and easy to convince that they must do what an adult tells them to do. Children may also be in a position where they believe they must help to support their families and may be sold or sent abroad by family members to do so. Street children, children in refugee camps, children whose family and community life has been disrupted and do not have someone to look out for them are all especially vulnerable to human trafficking.

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

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

Depending on the reason for trafficking, some countries might be only sending, while others might be both sending and transit. Some countries can be all three. South Korea is mainly a destination country for trafficking in persons.



## Who creates demand?

Traffickers prey on children and young people to meet the sexual demands of paedophiles and people who pay for sex. Any person who patronises the commercial sex market may end up sexually exploiting a child. There is actually no common profile of perpetrators who sexually exploit children – they may be young, old, married, single; they come from all kinds of socio-economic backgrounds and work in all kinds of professions. South Korea has been identified as a source country for child sex tourists, where Korean tourists seek sexual contact with children abroad, especially in Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands.

## CASE STUDIES

- In February 2007, after lifting a ban on Korean fishing ships in Kiribati (which aimed to prevent Korean men from purchasing sex when they dock), local NGOs and the country UNICEF office noted an increase in prostitution. The National Youth Commission has also discovered underage girls in cases involving Korean nationals. Prostitutes in Kiribati are often called “korakorea” after the largest client group.<sup>9</sup>
- In 2003, a South Korean doctor was convicted in Cebu, the Philippines, for having sexual relations with 6 girls, all under the age of 15.<sup>10</sup>

## Who are the traffickers?

Traffickers can be a stranger or someone the child knows, such as a relative or a friend. Traffickers are often part of an organised criminal network that 'recruits' children and supplies them with fake identification and transportation arrangements. They may also pose as boyfriends or girlfriends in order to convince children to leave for a new life.

### CASE STUDY

- In early 2006, the FBI arrested 31 Korean nationals on charges of human trafficking in the East Coast cities of New York, Washington DC and Baltimore, in the United States. All 31 Korean nationals were involved in trafficking of young Korean women to the United States and took the roles of brothel owners, brothel managers, or middlemen arranging transportation or funds. From the interviews, the FBI discovered that the ring would recruit young women in Korea who wanted to work and live in the United States in order to financially support their family. Once they arrived in the United States, they were informed about their debt and forced into prostitution.<sup>11</sup>

## How can we stop the trafficking of children?

### LAW AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

- South Korea must ratify the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress & Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women & Children (Trafficking Protocol)* and review Korean law to ensure that all acts that constitute child trafficking are criminalised and in agreement with the *Trafficking Protocol*.
- Implement enforcement to continue to improve efforts against human trafficking, especially to strengthen their ability to identify child victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation and ensure investigation and prosecution of traffickers.
- Provide training to law enforcement, prosecutors and judges on the issue of commercial sexual exploitation and child-friendly approaches to creating a common understanding that child victims are victims in need of protection and not criminals.
- Need to conduct research on trafficking in children for sexual purposes to identify the scope of the problem, current trends and provide information on traffickers and at-risk groups or victims - this information will strengthen prevention and awareness raising. In addition, data collected should be disaggregated between children and adults and must include information on the child's age, nationality and possible background information.

International Conventions/Laws	Date of Ratification by South Korea	Date of Reports Submitted	UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Recommendations for South Korea
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	1991	Initial Report – 1994 Second Report – 2000 Third & Fourth Combined Report due 2008 but not yet	In response to the 2000 report, the Committee made the following recommendations: (a) Develop a National Plan of Action on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, which includes measures for effective data collection, as agreed at the First and Second World Congresses against

International Conventions/Laws	Date of Ratification by South Korea	Date of Reports Submitted	UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Recommendations for South Korea
		submitted	<p>Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in 1996 and 2001, respectively;</p> <p>(b) Train law enforcement officials, social workers and prosecutors on how to receive, monitor, investigate and prosecute complaints in a child-sensitive manner;</p> <p>(c) Ensure that all victims of sexual abuse and exploitation have access to appropriate recovery and reintegration programmes and services;</p> <p>(d) Develop preventative measures that target those soliciting and providing sexual services, such as materials on relevant legislation on the sexual abuse and exploitation of minors and education programmes, including programmes in schools on healthy lifestyles.</p>
Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography	2004	Initial Report - 2007	Ratify the <i>Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children</i> , supplementing the <i>United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime</i> , and take the necessary steps to adequately define and criminalise the sale of and trafficking of children in accordance with the <i>Optional Protocol</i> .
The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress & Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women & Children	Signed in 2000 but not yet ratified.	N/A	N/A
ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour	2001	N/A	N/A

## PREVENTION OF CHILD TRAFFICKING AND VICTIM PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE

- Shelters and rehabilitation facilities must have specialised care for child victims of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation and translators for foreign victims (since many shelters are currently set up for foreign women who have been trafficked for false marriages).<sup>12</sup>
- In addition, a separate rehabilitation programme should be provided for children who have families so that they do not need to be institutionalised unless their families are unable to provide suitable care.
- The government must conduct further awareness raising campaigns to educate the general public on commercial sexual exploitation, gender issues and the demand for sexual services with children. Moreover, there should be collaborative campaigns to prevent the trafficking of women and children in countries of origin such as Russia, China and Southeast Asia.

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

- Korean National Police Agency (KNPA) runs a Help Centre for victims of sex trafficking. The telephone number is: 117.
- The Ministry of Gender and Equality has an emergency hotline. The telephone number is: 1366.
- Tacteen Naeil (originally known as Naeil Women's Center for Youth) has a hotline number for children. The telephone number is: 1388

## MORE INFORMATION

- Tacteen Naeil – ECPAT Affiliate Group in South Korea: [http://www.tacteen.net/center/eng\\_center\\_main\\_01.asp](http://www.tacteen.net/center/eng_center_main_01.asp)
- ECPAT International: [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)
- The Body Shop and ECPAT Stop Trafficking of Children and Young People Campaign : [www.thebodyshop.com/stop](http://www.thebodyshop.com/stop)

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> UNICEF. UNICEF calls for increased efforts to prevent trafficking of children. 16 June 2007. [http://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_40002.html](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_40002.html)
- <sup>2</sup> UNODC. *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*. 2009. <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/global-report-on-trafficking-in-persons.html>
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>4</sup> US State Department. *Trafficking in Persons Report 2008*. Accessed from: [www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2008/](http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2008/)
- <sup>5</sup> ECPAT International. *ECPAT International Global Monitoring Report on the Status of Action against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in South Korea*. ECPAT International. Bangkok 2006. <http://www.ecpat.net>
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup> US State Department. *Trafficking in Persons Report 2008*. Accessed from: [www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2008/](http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2008/)
- <sup>8</sup> ECPAT International. *ECPAT International Global Monitoring Report on the Status of Action against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Korea*. ECPAT International. Bangkok 2006. <http://www.ecpat.net>
- <sup>9</sup> The Hankyoreh Media Company. "Prostitution on Kiribati on rise again after end of ban on Korean boats." February 2007.
- <sup>10</sup> John Hopkins University & The Protection Project. "International Child Sex Tourism" January 2007.
- <sup>11</sup> Langel, Allan. "31 Arrested in Reputed Korean Sex Slave Trafficking Along the East Coast" August 17, 2006. Accessed at: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/10117120/31-Arrested-in-Reputed-Korean-SexSlave-Trafficking-Along-East-Coast>
- <sup>12</sup> US State Department. *Trafficking in Persons Report 2008*. Accessed from: [www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2008/](http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2008/)

## NOTES



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