



**STOP**

**SEX TRAFFICKING  
OF CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE**



# SEX TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN IN SWEDEN

## 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.

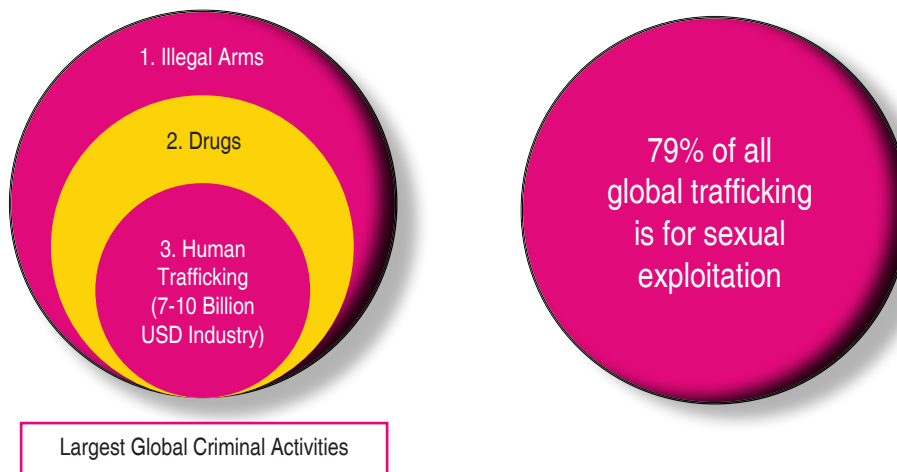
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

## 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>



### SEX TRAFFICKING IN SWEDEN

The statistics on minors involved in human trafficking in Sweden are highly unreliable and there is no differentiation between adult and child victims in official reports. A research paper on human trafficking published in 2008 revealed that half of the cases analysed in Sweden (30 in total) involved girls under 18, with one case also concerning a girl under 15.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the knowledge that the real numbers of trafficked children is higher, several sources have stressed that trafficking in children is still a limited problem in Sweden.<sup>4</sup> The majority of trafficked people are estimated to be in their twenties, which may be due to the harsher punishments given for trafficking offences when victims are minors.<sup>5</sup>

## Who gets trafficked?

The majority of girls recruited into the sex industry in Sweden come from nearby countries, such as Russia and the Baltic countries (mainly Estonia).<sup>6</sup> In 2003 and 2004, cases of adolescents trafficked from Poland, Moldova and Vietnam were also reported.<sup>7</sup> According to research published in 2008, many girls trafficked to Sweden were already involved in the sex market in their home countries. Trafficking routes from the Balkan countries and Eastern Europe to Sweden have also been reported. Whilst there is no distinction on the age of the victims, it is likely that some minors may also be involved in this trafficking pattern.<sup>8</sup>

According to the National Criminal Investigation Department's annual report, in 2006 there were no reports of men or boys identified as victims of trafficking, or cases of children under 12 years. This report confirms that the majority of children trafficked in Sweden are girls between 15 and 17 years of age.

The Swedish police also reported that minors from Eastern Europe are being trafficked for the purpose of begging or stealing, which also makes them vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

In Sweden, there has been extensive news coverage of Chinese children who arrive in the country, apply for asylum and then disappear after a couple of days. The purposes for which these children have been trafficked are unclear.<sup>9</sup> Reports of individuals who sexually exploit child refugees staying in special units for unaccompanied children have also emerged, posing new challenges to child protection agencies.<sup>10</sup> Children arriving in Sweden on someone else's passport - so called 'look-a-like passports' or on their supposed parents' passport - and children who arrive in the country after their custodians, are also vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Although these are examples of children in high-risk situations, there are almost no measures taken to protect them and no data collection to clearly identify trends and risks.

As in other countries around the world, children are being trafficked to Sweden because they often lack life opportunities, are poorly educated, easy to overpower and easy to manipulate and control. They are also in a position where they believe they must help to support the family and may even be sold or sent abroad by family members to do so. Street children, children from ethnic minorities or who have experienced child sexual abuse within the domestic setting or gender discrimination, 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:

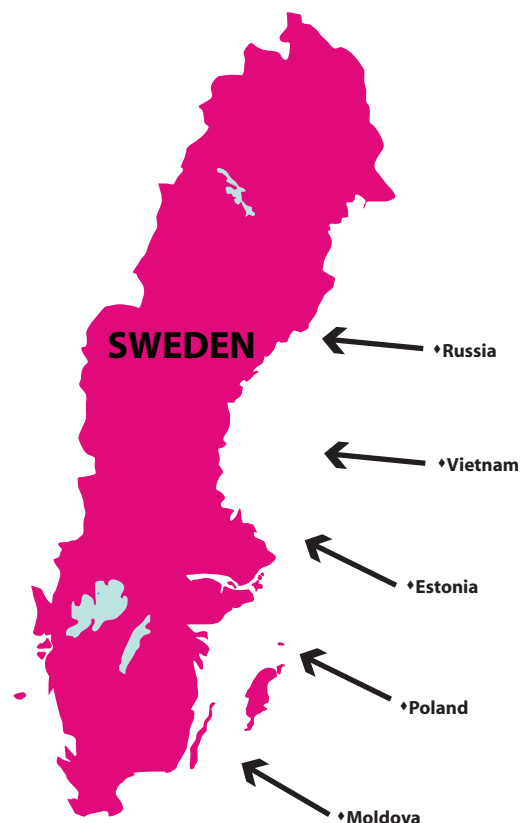
- 'Sending' or 'origin' - from where children are sent;

- '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. Sweden is considered primarily as a destination for child trafficking. There are in fact only a few reports of Sweden being used as a transit country (for example for trafficking to Norway), as in most cases the trips are arranged directly from source to destination, without passing through another country.<sup>11</sup> However, some experts recognise that traffickers frequently move their victims around to avoid detection, either within Sweden or across Europe. According to ECPAT Sweden, there are suspicions that Sweden may also be a transit country, but there is only limited evidence of this.

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

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



## Who creates demand?

Traffickers prey on children and young people to meet the sexual demands of paedophiles and people who pay for sex. Any person who patronises the commercial sex market may end up sexually exploiting a child. There is no common profile of perpetrators who sexually exploit children – they may be young, old, married, single; they come from all types of socio-economic backgrounds and work in all kinds of professions. Research published in 2008 confirms that people who buy sex in Sweden are a mix of people from various social backgrounds and ages.<sup>12</sup>

A recent study on purchasers of sexual services showed that knowledge of trafficking was generally very low among those who buy sex. All interviewees stated that they would never buy sexual services from a woman they knew had been trafficked. Men who had bought sex from foreign women believed that they all were independent - only a few later suspected that the women had a pimp or were otherwise controlled. However, in some cases, they stated that they had proceeded with the purchase even though they suspected the woman might have been a victim of trafficking.<sup>13</sup>

Sweden is also a source country for tourists seeking sex with children, traveling to destinations such as Thailand, Cambodia and Brazil<sup>14</sup> and neighbouring countries, including Estonia.<sup>15</sup> It has been reported that men travel from some cities in northern Sweden and cross the border as “sex tourists” to Finland, Norway and Russia to buy sexual services in those countries. As buying sexual services is legal in Denmark, Swedish clients from the southern regions of Sweden travel to Denmark or buy Danish escorts who visit them in southern Sweden. There is however, no information on whether this phenomenon also involves sexually exploited children.<sup>16</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. They may also pose as boyfriends or girlfriends in order to convince children to leave for a new life.

According to the National Criminal Investigation Department, there are several criminal networks from the former Soviet Union in Sweden involved in various crimes, including operating brothels, smuggling of drugs, extortion etc. However, research has found that the majority of the trafficking operations involve small or medium-scale criminal networks. In most cases, only one person is involved as the main perpetrator; he or she recruits the girls and takes them to Sweden. Victims are often recruited after becoming an acquaintance of the perpetrator and in many cases, they are known to the victim or their family. Small to medium scale operations are often organised by people already residing in the country who are familiar with the culture and language (in many cases Swedish citizens) but who originally belong to the same ethnic and national groups as the girls they recruit.<sup>17</sup> Despite traffickers being mainly men, there is evidence of women being involved as recruiters, mainly as peers or co-workers in brothels. According to the National Council for Crime Prevention, there were 11 convictions for human trafficking in 2006, 3 of which involved women traffickers.<sup>18</sup> Women acting as traffickers are usually former victims of sexual exploitation and/or trafficking. In some cases, they are both former victims of sexual exploitation and wives or girlfriends of the main organiser.

## CASE STUDIES

### Trafficked from Estonia

A 17-year-old girl from Estonia was trafficked to Sweden. The two traffickers in Estonia blackmailed the girl’s boyfriend and demanded SEK 15,000 (approx. EUR 1500) from him. The girl was kept in an apartment in Stockholm against her will. The traffickers locked her in a room and took away her mobile phone. Only when the phone was returned did she manage to contact her boyfriend in Estonia, escape and contact the police.<sup>19</sup>

### Swedish men charged with sexually exploiting refugee children

In 2002, the Swedish Court of Appeal heard a criminal case where six men had been charged with exploiting at least four young male refugees for several years. One of the men had come into contact with the boys when he worked at a special unit for refugees. He then procured the boys for the other men. The lead procurer was sentenced to five year's imprisonment, while the other five men were given jail sentences ranging from 2 months to 4 years.<sup>20</sup>

### Lilya 4-Ever

Lilya 4-Ever, a film which largely contributed to raising public awareness on trafficking issues in Sweden, was conceptualised from the true story of a Lithuanian teenager, 16, who was trafficked to Sweden by a man posing as her boyfriend, who offered her the promise of a better life. When she arrived in Kristianstad, she was locked up in an apartment, and brutally abused physically and sexually. Her passport was taken away from her and she was told that she must reimburse her employer 20,000 Euros for expenses incurred for her travel, before she would be freed. She was coerced into prostitution and feared being arrested by the Swedish police. She ended her life a few months later by jumping off a bridge. Her traffickers could not be prosecuted at the time, in part due to a lack of adequate legislation on trafficking.<sup>21</sup>

## How can we stop the trafficking of children?

### LAW AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

- Systematic collection of data and information on trafficking of children for sexual purposes, followed by appropriate strategies to combat the issue, are needed if it is to be addressed effectively.
- Training for police, prosecutors, judges, law assessors and other people in contact with the victims of cases concerning child physical and sexual abuse, should also include the sexual exploitation of children and child trafficking - this also applies to prosecutors in the international public prosecution office investigating crimes against children. Capacity building should include modules on the identification of child victims and child-friendly procedures during investigation, prosecution and the entire recovery process.
- Work at the borders must be improved. For instance, border control personnel should be trained to be more receptive to signals of child trafficking and new risk situations. Police and border guards should initiate strategies for preventing presumed victims from entering the country, and if they do enter, improve follow-up of suspected cases.
- Sweden should identify ways to improve and sustain the (geographical) distribution of resources dedicated to combating trafficking, allocate resources to ensure that police trafficking and procuring units are permanent, and allocate resources to the social services units and others involved.
- It is necessary to review current legislation and clarify conduct that is criminalised as trafficking in human beings in line with international definitions, and to support a more effective implementation of the law.

International Conventions/Laws	Date of Ratification by Sweden	Date of Reports Submitted	UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Recommendations for Sweden
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	1990	Initial Report – 1992 1997 2002 2007	In response to the 2007 report, the UN Committee made the following recommendation in terms of child trafficking: (a) fully implement the national actions plans for sexual exploitation of children and against prostitution and trafficking in people for sexual purposes, in order to protect children against trafficking; (b) strengthen measures to monitor and foresee new and emerging risk situations of sexual exploitation of children; (c) strengthen measures to protect children who are victims of sexual exploitation, including trafficking and prostitution, and bring perpetrators of sexual abuse and exploitation to justice, and provide data on the extent and patterns of such offences in the next periodic report; (d) train law-enforcement officials, judges and prosecutors on how to receive, monitor and investigate complaints in a child-sensitive manner that respects confidentiality; (e) implement appropriate policies and programmes for the prevention, recovery and social reintegration of child victims, in accordance with the outcome documents adopted at the first, second and third World Congresses against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in 1996, 2001 and 2008; (f) ensure that education and training, as well as psychological assistance and counselling, are provided to child victims of trafficking; and (g) negotiate bilateral agreements and multilateral agreements with countries concerned, including neighbouring countries, to prevent the sale, trafficking and abduction of children, and develop joint plans of action between and among the countries involved.
Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography	2007	February 2009	N/A
The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress & Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women & Children	2004	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

- Action must be taken towards addressing the demand for sexual services from young girls and changing people's attitudes about travelling to other countries for activities that are not socially and legally acceptable at home. Punishments for purchase of sex with a trafficked minor must be more severe, reflecting the grave nature of the crime committed against the child victim.
- Efforts to shape attitudes and opinions about child trafficking for sexual purposes should be made and continuously improved. This could be achieved through information campaigns that raise the issues of trafficking and procuring of minors.
- High quality special services for children trafficked for sexual purposes must be established and include the competence of professionals working with the victims to ensure they appropriately meet the specific needs of the victims.
- Specific guidelines on how to deal with cases of sexual exploitation of children and child trafficking should be implemented by the National Police Board.
- Improved cooperation is needed among advocacy actors for victims, such as social services, NGOs and women shelters working with victims in destination and source countries - with specific attention towards minors and their needs - so that victims can be monitored after return, helping to prevent their re-trafficking.
- Trafficked children should be granted stay permits for humanitarian reasons regardless of their collaboration with law enforcement, while identifying a durable solution that considers the best interests of the child.
- Cooperation between police, border guard personnel and ferry lines, airlines and other transport companies should be improved through specialised training for these groups and the development of joint preventative initiatives. Informational materials can be developed and spread on these modes of transport (as was done for example by ECPAT Sweden in collaboration with STENA Line ferry company). The material should include information for victims of trafficking on who they can approach for help in destination countries. Brochures should also include brief information in the languages of potential victims about laws and related matters.
- Campaigns to raise awareness should be arranged to inform the public and at-risk minors about how recruitment to the sex industry occurs. Furthermore, minors who are knowingly recruited should be informed about what the situation in destination countries may be like, with regard to aspects such as deception and debt bondage systems.

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

**ECPAT Sweden** runs a web-based hotline ([www.ecpathotline.se](http://www.ecpathotline.se)) where the general public can anonymously submit information on suspected cases of sexual exploitation of children, including child trafficking for sexual exploitation.

## MORE INFORMATION

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



## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> UNICEF. 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> Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention. *The Organisation of Human Trafficking. A study of Criminal Involvement in Sexual Exploitation in Sweden, Finland and Estonia*. 2008. Available at: <http://www.jure.se/ie/default.asp?url=visatitel.asp?tuid=12681>
- <sup>4</sup> ECPAT International. *Global Monitoring report on the status of action against commercial sexual exploitation- Sweden*. 2005. Accessed at: [http://www.ecpat.net/eng/A4A\\_2005/europe.html](http://www.ecpat.net/eng/A4A_2005/europe.html); Weyler, S. *The Frail Chain – Support for Child Victims of Trafficking in the Baltic Sea Region*. 2008.
- <sup>5</sup> Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention. *The Organisation of Human Trafficking. A study of Criminal Involvement in Sexual Exploitation in Sweden, Finland and Estonia*. 2008. Available at: <http://www.jure.se/ie/default.asp?url=visatitel.asp?tuid=12681>
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup> ECPAT International. *Global Monitoring report on the status of action against commercial sexual exploitation- Sweden*. Accessible at [http://www.ecpat.net/eng/A4A\\_2005/europe.html](http://www.ecpat.net/eng/A4A_2005/europe.html)
- <sup>8</sup> Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention. *The Organisation of Human Trafficking. A study of Criminal Involvement in Sexual Exploitation in Sweden, Finland and Estonia*. 2008. Available at: <http://www.jure.se/ie/default.asp?url=visatitel.asp?tuid=12681>
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> ECPAT International. *Global Monitoring report on the status of action against commercial sexual exploitation- Sweden*. Accessible at [http://www.ecpat.net/eng/A4A\\_2005/europe.html](http://www.ecpat.net/eng/A4A_2005/europe.html)
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>14</sup> The Protection Project. *International Child-Sex Tourism*. January 2007. Accessed at: [www.protectionproject.org/docs/Child%20Sex%20Tourism%20Speech%20U.S.%20Border%20Officials%20Sept%202008.pdf](http://www.protectionproject.org/docs/Child%20Sex%20Tourism%20Speech%20U.S.%20Border%20Officials%20Sept%202008.pdf)
- <sup>15</sup> ECPAT International. *Global Monitoring report on the status of action against commercial sexual exploitation- Sweden*. Accessible at [http://www.ecpat.net/eng/A4A\\_2005/europe.html](http://www.ecpat.net/eng/A4A_2005/europe.html)
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- <sup>17</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>18</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>19</sup> Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention. *The Organisation of Human Trafficking. A study of Criminal Involvement in Sexual Exploitation in Sweden, Finland and Estonia*. 2008. Available at: <http://www.jure.se/ie/default.asp?url=visatitel.asp?tuid=12681>
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- <sup>21</sup> Moodysson, Lukas. (Director) *Lilya 4-Ever* [Film]. Memphis Film, Sweden, 23 August 2002



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