



PROJECT OVERVIEW

SRI LANKA

The Regional Project to Combat Trafficking in Children for Labour and Sexual Exploitation TICSA II operates in Sri Lanka as a part of ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO-IPEC).

Child trafficking in Sri Lanka

There are no official country-wide estimates on the number of child victims of trafficking, but the presence of children in various worst forms of child labour, including commercial sexual exploitation, and diverse reports of child trafficking indicates that trafficking of young people is a widespread problem. Sri Lanka has had a long-time reputation as a common destination for paedophiles. According to the United States Department of State in 1997, Sri Lanka was a principle source of child pornography for the US and Europe, and according to the National Child Protection Authority (NCPA), there are nearly 40,000 children in prostitution serving both sex tourists and local men. These situations typically are entry points for traffickers. Although the country's reputation as a destination for foreign paedophiles has declined significantly in recent years as a result of the improved focus on the problem and efforts to combat it, child trafficking still takes place.

The Government estimates that approximately 19,000 children are employed as housekeeping labours in homes and hotels around the country – some of them trafficked from the rural areas and forced to work in the capital and other urban areas.¹ Other children end up in shops, small factories (including fireworks production), organized street begging or in the fishing industry (the so-called vaadiyas, most of which are situated in remote areas where children are kept in conditions of virtual slavery). As well, many children have been forced into criminal activities, such as burglary and drug trafficking, and into armed



Child beggars, Sri Lanka (Photo: ILO/Crozet)

ILO-TICSA Regional Project overview

Development objective: To contribute to the reduction of trafficking in children for exploitive labour in south and south-east Asia

Coverage: Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Indonesia, Thailand.

Main areas of work:

- ▶ Prevention of child trafficking through direct assistance to children, families and communities;
- ▶ Protection of child survivors of trafficking through rehabilitation & reintegration assistance, including development of child-friendly guidelines for caregivers;
- ▶ Policy development and capacity building of within governments, employers' and workers' organizations and NGO partners;
- ▶ Improvement of the knowledge base on trafficking (research and documentation).

Duration: TICSA phase II (2003–2006)

Budget: US\$ 3.0 million (+1.5 million under the ILO Time-Bound Programme in Nepal)

Donor: US Department of Labour

¹ Department of Census and Statistics, 1999

conflict: the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) conscripts teenaged children to work as support staff, and during the civil war children were used in combat.

Vulnerable children are easy prey for “job placement agents” who pick them up on the streets in villages or even from refugee camps and then sell them to employers in the various worst forms of child labour. A heavy migration of women to jobs in the Middle East has left an increased demand for cheap labour, particularly in the informal sector, and thus spurring the supply of child labourers.

Child trafficking patterns

While Sri Lankan children have in a few sporadic cases been trafficked to the Middle East to be camel jockeys, by far most cases of trafficking are internal. From rural impoverished areas, such as plantations in central Sri Lanka and refugee camps (internally displacement areas) in the north, northwest and east, children are trafficked to city centres, tourist areas, to upper-middle class and other affluent households and manufacturing factories. Children are trafficked into prostitution in the western coastal belt from Negombo to Unawatuna, as well as for meeting a servicing demand in the Army transit camp areas in the north, close to the LTTE-dominated region. Major destinations points for child domestic workers are urban and semi-urban areas in the western, northwestern and central parts of Sri Lanka. Because no visa entry is required, the country is also used as a transit point for trafficking of humans into the South Asian region.

National responses and commitments

Subsequent to ratifying ILO Convention No. 182 on worst forms of child labour in March 2001, a National Plan of Action Against the Trafficking of Children for Sexual and Labour Exploitation was developed, with support from ILO-TICSA. The minimum age of employment (including domestic labour) was in 1999 raised to from 12 to 14 years following the ratification of ILO Convention No. 138 on minimum age for employment. The Penal Code (Amendment) Act No. 22 (1995) made cruelty to children an offence. Relevant international and regional instruments ratified by Sri Lanka include:

- UN CRC: UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
- ILO C. No. 182: Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999)
- ILO C. No. 29: Forced Labour Convention (1930)
- ILO C. No. 138: Minimum Age Convention (1973)
- ILO C. No. 105: Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (1957)
- SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating the Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution (2002)
- SAARC Convention on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia (2002)

In October 2002, the Ministry of Employments and Labour took the initiative to begin developing a national policy and plan of action to eliminate the worst forms of child labour. This National Plan of Action has been adopted by the Government through the National Steering Committee mechanism.

The National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) established in June 1999 in the office of the Executive President is the primary agency driving the anti-trafficking mission. It serves as the coordinating agency with relevant ministries, provincial councils, local authorities and private and public sector organizations. The basic goal of the NCPA is to eliminate child abuse in all its forms; the ILO TICSA project supports a range of anti-trafficking activities that work toward this goal.



The ILO TICSA Project Response

In 2000, ILO-IPEC began the TICSA regional project in Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. The project expanded in 2003 to include Indonesia, Pakistan and Thailand. The TICSA Phase II (2003–2006) strategy has been integrated into the Government of Sri Lanka's national development, education, anti-poverty and child protection policies. It also has links to the Yokohama Plan of Action for Sri Lanka, as it includes a component to address the commercial sex exploitation of children (CSEC).

Both TICSA Phases I and II have concentrated on expanding the knowledge base on the trafficking situation within the country; building the capacity of government, workers' and employers' organizations and NGOs in the design of anti-trafficking programmes, policy and programme advocacy, and providing direct services to vulnerable children and child victims of trafficking. More specifically, the ILO TICSA project in Sri Lanka entails the following:

Prevention of child trafficking

Prevention programmes are being implemented in plantation quarters of the central part of the country and in the armed conflict-affected portions of northcentral Sri Lanka, both of which are areas where many child trafficking victims originate. Prevention measures include:

- ▶ Awareness raising and establishment of child-friendly “community hearts” through trade unions in the plantation areas.
- ▶ Direct interventions that largely address the “push” factors, with special attention to prevention through community- and centre-based education and skills training, alternative live skills, employment placement and legal literacy courses.
- ▶ In the wake of the tsunami disaster and concerns for the increased vulnerability of children to trafficking and general abuse, TICSA activities responded rapidly by training para-psychosocial counsellors to provide support services and raise awareness among child survivors and local communities.



Vocational training, Sri Lanka (Photo: ILO/ Lisborg)

Partner organizations: Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC), Don Bosco, NCPA

Rehabilitation and reintegration

The TICSA rehabilitation and reintegration component works to improve the quality of care and services provided for child victims trafficking. The rehabilitation and reintegration activities include:

- ▶ Counselling, psychosocial care and support and social behavioural skills training to child care officers working in rehabilitation centres.
- ▶ Equipment for non-formal education and training of formal education teachers.
- ▶ Vocational skills courses for children living in rehabilitation centres and job placement for older girls.

Partner organizations: NCPA (The Mahasevena Centre in Moratuwa and the Nisala Diya Sevena in Negombo)

Policy development and capacity building of partners

Capacity building mainly of the National Child Protection Authority included:

- Support to the National Plan of Action Against the Trafficking of Children for Sexual and Labour Exploitation.
- Establishing an Anti-Trafficking Unit (within NCPA).
- Training of special law enforcement officers in surveillance of trafficking processes.
- Support to a cyber watch programme to monitor CSEC-related crimes on the Internet.
- Development of National Child-friendly Guidelines that incorporate minimum standards for the rehabilitation and reintegration of victims of trafficking.

Partner organizations: NCPA, Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Social Welfare, UNICEF

Improvement of the knowledge base on child trafficking (research)

Research has been undertaken to obtain a better understanding of the trafficking situation in the country and to use the results toward formulating action-oriented programmes. Specific research and documentaries include:

- Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: A Rapid Assessment (2002).
- Child trafficking and prostitution, (30 min documentary, 2002).
- Trafficking for exploitative employment (three tele-dramas, 2002).
- The Demand Side of Trafficking for Labour and Sexual Exploitation, as part of the regional research on demand for child labourers (2005).
- Review of the legal framework to combat child trafficking, as part of the regional research on the demand for child labourers (2005).

Partner organizations: University of Ruhuna, National Child Protection Authority (NCPA), Axis Lanka, B-Positive and Centre for Women's Research (CENWOR)

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