



**COMBATING TRAFFICKING
IN CHILDREN
FOR LABOUR EXPLOITATION
IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA**

SYNTHESIS REPORT

Based on studies of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon,
Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria and Togo



International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
International Labour Office (ILO)

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PREFACE

Ever since its creation the International Labour Organization has devoted a major part of its efforts to the elimination of child labour. It strives to achieve this objective, by influencing national legislation on child labour in member states, principally through the adoption of international labour standards in the form of conventions and recommendations. Two instruments applicable to trafficking, namely, Convention No. 29 (1930) on forced labour and Convention No. 105 (1957) on the abolition of forced labour have been ratified by all the countries covered by this report.

In June 1999, a global consensus was reached to take immediate action to eliminate the worst forms of child labour. A new human rights instrument, ILO Convention No 182, was unanimously adopted. The objective of this Convention is to reiterate the need for urgent action on the worst forms of child labour including "(...) *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*" (article 3a).

The International Labour Office (ILO) plays a leading role in assisting member countries in the application of these conventions. Since 1992, the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) has been providing direct technical assistance with a view to prevent and progressively eliminate child labour, giving priority to the worst forms. Without any doubt, trafficking in children is one of these. There is an urgent need to increase awareness and promote action against this particularly pernicious aspect of child labour.

It is only recently that the phenomenon of trafficking in children for labour is being studied and the number of reports on it has steadily increased. This has made cross-border trafficking in women, children and even families, in various parts of the world, more visible. The conditions under which children are lured and trafficked from their countries and the situations in which they end up are tantamount to forced labour. In Africa, the lack of information concerning statistics on trafficking over the years makes it impossible to ascertain whether trafficking in children is on the rise.

In October 1999, ILO/IPEC launched a sub-regional project entitled "*Combating trafficking in children for labour exploitation in West and Central Africa*", with the financial support of the Department of Labour, U.S.A. This synthesis report is part of the first phase of this project that comprised operational reviews on trafficking in children in nine African countries that were followed by national and sub-regional workshops to review their findings and to develop action plans. These will be executed in the second phase of the project. (See Appendix I)

This synthesis report has been prepared on the basis of eight of the nine country studies that were planned, because the study of Gabon was not finished in time. However, a preliminary document with information, mainly about legislation in Gabon, has been incorporated. The recommendations contained in the country studies have inspired the proposal for a sub-regional plan of action that was discussed at Cotonou, Benin in July 2000, the proceedings of which are described in a separate document.

SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

Trafficking in children being a particularly pernicious form of child labour, there is an urgent need to promote awareness about it and take immediate and effective action to combat it. Over the last few years the number of reports of children being trafficked across borders for labour exploitation has steadily increased.

The International Labour Organization has always taken a firm stand against all forms of forced labour. One of its ways of responding to the problem is through the adoption of international labour standards in the form of conventions and recommendations and the supervision of their application: Convention No. 29 on forced labour (1930) and Convention No. 105 on the abolition of forced labour (1957), have been ratified by all the nine countries under consideration. With the unanimous adoption of Convention No. 182 to eliminate the worst forms of child labour, a new instrument to combat trafficking in children is now available. The Convention calls for urgent action on the worst forms of child labour including "(...) *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*" (article 3a).

In October 1999, IPEC-ILO launched a sub-regional project entitled "*Combating the trafficking in children for labour exploitation in West and Central Africa*" with the financial support of the Department of Labour, U.S.A. In the first phase of this project, operational reviews were conducted in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria and Togo on the trafficking in children, both within the country and across borders. This synthesis report is based on the results of these studies.

The Introduction points to the need to eradicate the causes of child labour and to create viable alternatives for working children and their families. Trafficking is one of the most degrading forms of exploitation. Since children are often trafficked across borders there is a need for concerted action and international co-operation in combating it.

Chapter 1 recalls the definition proposed in 1998 at the ILO-UNICEF workshop in Benin that specifies three criteria that constitute trafficking:

- the conclusion of a transaction;
- the intervention of an intermediary;
- the motive to exploit.

Six types of trafficking are defined: abduction, placement as sale, bonded placement, temporary placement, placement as a service and placement as embezzlement.

Chapter 2 shows the influence of traditions and customs on trafficking. The transfer of children is facilitated by the African **tradition of migration** for labour, land or fodder. Migration from rural to urban areas, during the dry season, in order to find temporary jobs has always existed in many African communities. Besides, in this region, the upbringing of a child is considered the responsibility of the extended family. Therefore, children are often placed with family members living in better economic conditions, in order to offer them a better future. Today, more and more of these children, who are intended to be "placed" for their education, end up being exploited. The economic growth of some African countries may have contributed to the aggravation of trafficking in children. The disintegration of traditional

family structures is also seen as a contributing factor to the problem.

An overview of the economic profiles of the nine countries shows that poverty levels vary. Several countries have recently had economic recessions resulting in high rates of unemployment. The absence of social security and pension schemes has led to the use of child labour, including trafficking, as a support system for the aged. Although the density of the population is still relatively low, fertility rates are very high and a substantial proportion of children have no access to education. There is a striking imbalance between rural and urban areas as far as access to proper medical facilities, education, drinking water and electricity is concerned. Another disparity is that of gender that is reflected in lower enrolment rates for girls than boys in primary school, and higher rates of illiteracy among women.

The studies show that countries that have widespread poverty, low education levels and high fertility rates tend to be those from which children are trafficked, while those that are less populated and more developed are the countries to which children are sent. Gabon, for example, is a “receiving country”.

Chapter 3 describes the methods of enquiry used. Much of the data is first hand, collected from interviews of children, parents and, in the case of Cameroon and Burkina Faso, also from intermediaries. However, due to wide variations in the number of interviews, as well as whether they focussed on trafficking or on child labour in general, quantitative comparisons cannot be made accurately. An additional difficulty is that the definition of trafficking was agreed upon *a posteriori* at the workshop in Cotonou and not all the cases qualified as trafficking in the national reports fit the definition given in Chapter 1.

Chapter 4 gives an overview of the findings of the various national studies. The age of trafficked children varies from **as young as five years**, in Benin, to 20 years. In general, boys are mainly trafficked to work in plantations and girls as domestics. Both sexes are found in activities such as street trade, catering and prostitution. The education level of trafficked children as well as that of their parents is generally very low. In general, trafficked children come from poor families with more than 5 children, living in rural areas. The rivalry between spouses in polygamous families or the death of a parent can be a cause for placement or trafficking of a child. Certain ethnic groups like the Kotokoli from Togo are more susceptible to becoming victims of trafficking.

Intermediaries are often women and may be known or unknown to the family. They either sell the child or take a part or the whole of the child’s salary. Some offer a gift or a contribution to the child’s dowry after a certain period of time. In Cameroon and Burkina Faso, the researchers were able to interview intermediaries. The majority of them saw nothing wrong in placing children and some thought that they rendered a service that should be legalized!

Needy parents are easily lured into handing over their children against small sums of money or clothes and the promise of a job for their child. In some cases, the children themselves offer their services to the intermediary. The story of Akouênon from Benin shows exactly how the lure of the city attracts children into trafficking. Intermediaries of certain nationalities specialise in recruitment for certain sectors. In Burkina Faso, placement agencies, run mostly by women, send 20 to 50 girls each into the circuit every year. In Bamenda, Cameroon, bulletin boards advertised jobs for children from 6 to 14. In Kayes and Bamako, Mali, organised networks exist that assist children in going to France. Parents can pay up to FCFA

100,000 (US\$140) to so-called “matrimonial agencies” for sending a child abroad. Two testimonies from Cameroon revealed that recruiters operated under the cover of religious organisations or football clubs to send boys and girls to Europe for prostitution.

The reports give detailed information about **recruitment** centres, destinations and transit points that is summarised in Section 4.6. Both road and water transport are used to send children from one country to another. In Gabon, children also arrive by air. The **employers** abroad are often people who have emigrated from the supplier country. For example, in Côte d’Ivoire, children are trafficked from Mali to work on plantations owned by Malians. The price paid for a child varies between US\$ 42 – 280 and children sometimes have to work without salary for up to two years for the employer to recover these costs. The monthly salaries of the children in the sub-region vary a great deal: they are as low as US\$2.80 in Cameroon and as much as US\$63 in Gabon.

Chapter 5 analyses the causes and consequences of trafficking. The social context acts as a push. The destiny of women being marriage, domestic work is considered a means of procuring a **dowry** as well as a good preparation for house keeping. Besides, agricultural communities have remained patriarchal societies that restrict the freedom of women and youth. Enterprising young people therefore choose to leave their villages in order to gain more independence.

Poverty remains one of the main reasons why parents hand over their children. This however is sometimes combined with greed. The facilities with which urban areas are doted have a strong pull on deprived rural communities. Besides economic gains, parents believe that work will develop the child’s self-assurance and be an opportunity for education. They also think that unemployment and delinquency will diminish if children are sent out to work.

The **absence of legislation** on trafficking allows intermediaries and employers to operate with impunity. Although, in some countries it is possible to prosecute those involved in trafficking, charges are rarely pressed. Children can cross borders without the authorization of their parents or guardians. As a consequence, the transportation of children from one country to another is facilitated. The political stability of countries like Cameroon attracts traffic in children from the surrounding unstable countries such as Chad and the Congo.

Chapter 6 discusses the long-term consequences of trafficking. It describes the intolerable working conditions that trafficked children are confronted with. Long working hours, heavy loads, contact with dangerous tools and substances and violent punishment combine to permanently impair their health. They also run the risk of accidents during transport or while working on the streets. To add to this, they suffer from mental trauma. The separation from the family, the element of constraint inherent in trafficking, aggravated by sexual abuse of child domestics, street children and prostitutes makes them prone to depression. Several of them resort to drugs or delinquency as a result.

Trafficking has lasting effects on the communities that supply children. In most of them, knowledge is transmitted orally and hence cannot be communicated to children who leave. The proportion of the aged increases in communities that provide the children and those left behind are not able to shoulder the burden of agricultural work. Besides, since child labour and trafficking affects more girls than boys, an imbalance between the male and female population may result.

Chapter 7 reviews the steps being taken towards finding a solution to the problem. Nigeria, Mali and Togo began working on the problem a few years ago. Other governments have come to recognise it only recently at sub-regional conferences organised since 1998. The **political commitment** to combat trafficking has been made by all the nine governments at these conferences. They have all ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the two ILO Conventions on forced labour and Ghana, Mali and Togo have recently ratified the ILO Convention on the worst forms of child labour. Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Nigeria and Togo have **national commissions on child rights**. Specific legislation on trafficking has only been enacted in Mali. In the other countries, labour law fixes the minimum age for employment, prohibits forced labour and protects the rights of apprentices. Benin and Gabon have measures to control the transport of minors across borders.

There are several obstacles to the enforcement of national legislation and application of international conventions. The complexity and length of judicial procedures, as well as **fear of reprisal** by the accused, discourages quite a number of people from bringing charges against offenders. In some countries, government policies have been formulated to address the problem, either directly through national plans to combat trafficking as in Mali and Togo or indirectly through plans of action against child labour or for poverty alleviation as in Cameroon and Ghana. In order to facilitate the repatriation of children who have been trafficked across borders and the extradition of traffickers, there is collaboration between the different **Interpol** services. The Malian consular services and the Malian community established in Côte d'Ivoire play an exemplary role in repatriating children of Malian origin.

In this chapter, programmes undertaken by government and NGOs in the field of child rights and those specifically against trafficking are described. Social mobilisation in Nigeria, a free telephone line to denounce violations of child rights in Benin, help centres for girls in difficulty in Cameroon are a few examples. Specific programmes to combat the trafficking in children for labour exploitation have been undertaken in Benin, Mali and Togo. These include the creation of a data bank, the monitoring of court cases related to trafficking, the creation of crisis centres for children. With the help of UNICEF, initiatives have also been taken, in Benin, to mobilise the communities that supply children by creating local committees, promoting radio and TV broadcasts on trafficking, giving families access to credit and income generating activities, etc. NGO run centres that provide temporary shelter and psychological support for children in distress like the one run by *Terre des Hommes* in Togo have been able to reintegrate hundreds of child victims of trafficking back into their families.

ILO/IPEC has on-going programmes in three of the nine countries, Benin, Burkina Faso and Mali. It will be launching programmes in Ghana, Nigeria, and Togo. Two countries, Cameroon and Gabon, conducted child labour surveys in 1998-1999 and one is envisaged in Côte d'Ivoire soon.

The **conclusions** recall that poverty is one of the main reasons that force parents to send their children as young as 5 years away for work. Low education levels also increase susceptibility to trafficking. Legislation on trafficking is often non-existent and, where it exists, violators are rarely punished.

The report makes recommendations for a sub-regional plan of action that includes measures for research, awareness raising, training, strengthening of the juridical and institutional

frameworks, direct assistance to victims and interstate co-operation for repatriation and extradition of traffickers. Certain long term recommendations are also listed.

Through concerted action by the countries of the sub-region it is hoped that this particularly pernicious aspect of child labour will be eliminated in the near future.

INTRODUCTION

Poverty is as much a product as a cause of child labour. For development to be sustainable, all forms of child labour that are detrimental to the development of the child must be progressively eliminated. The international community has time and again committed itself to this. With the unanimous adoption of the *Convention for the prohibition and immediate elimination of the worst forms of child labour*, (No.182) by the International Labour Organisation in June 1999, further impetus has been given to combating child labour. The ILO is actively promoting the ratification and implementation of this convention. Through IPEC, it co-operates with member States, employers and workers organisations as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in undertaking programmes of action that aim to **eradicate the causes** of child labour and **create viable alternatives** for working children and their families.

Trafficking reduces children to mere commodities that are bought, sold, transported, resold according to market forces of supply and demand. The mental and physical trauma that it entails for the victims and their families makes it one of the most degrading forms of exploitation requiring immediate, effective and time-bound action. In some countries of Western and Central Africa, programmes to combat trafficking in children have already been developed. In others, the problem is only now gaining recognition.

Since it is often a cross-border phenomenon, concerted action at the sub-regional level is necessary to rescue and rehabilitate children who have been trafficked and to dismantle the network of intermediaries. The experience of other international organisations and NGOs in this field, the national studies synthesised in this report, and the conclusions of the workshop that was organised by IPEC in Cotonou, Benin in July 2000 form the basis for a sub-regional plan of action against trafficking in the nine countries of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria and Togo. The support given to this programme by the Department of Labour, USA, is an example of the international co-operation in eliminating the worst forms of child labour that Convention 182 calls for.

1 DEFINING TRAFFICKING

Given the African practice of migration and the placement of children with family members, it is necessary to distinguish between children at work placed within this custom, and children that are trafficked for labour exploitation.

For the transfer of children to be qualified as trafficking, there should be:¹:

1. the conclusion of a transaction;
2. the intervention of an intermediary;
3. the motive to exploit.

The term “transaction” refers to *"any institution or practice through which young people, below 18 years, are handed over by either or both parents, or by a guardian to a third person, whether for a fee or not, with the intention of exploiting the person or the work of the young person"*². There need not be any payment made in exchange for handing over the child. The very existence of an economic motive, i.e. cheap labour for one party and a token sum or periodic payments for the other (parents, or intermediaries), is sufficient to make it a transaction.

Types of trafficking

The following classification of trafficking was proposed at a sub-regional workshop organised by UNICEF in 1998:³

- **Abduction:** Although in most cases children are voluntarily handed over to, or themselves contact the third parties, cases of children being abducted from their homes for trafficking are on the increase. Cases of kidnapping of children have been reported, for instance, from Sokoto State, Nigeria, where the children are sold to businessmen for amounts ranging from 50,000 to 100,000 Naira (US\$500–1,000), to be used as labourers or as ritual or sex objects⁴;
- **Placement as sale:** The child is handed over by the parents to a third party for a set price. Parents are promised that the child will be treated well and will receive vocational training. Amounts paid vary between 10,000 and 100,000 FCFA (US\$ 14 – 140) depending on the country;
- **Bonded placement:** Although the practice of offering the labour of children as reimbursement for debt is more widespread in South Asia, some cases of this have been reported from Benin and Ghana;

According to UNICEF, *The issue of child domestic labour and trafficking in West and Central Africa*, 1998, cited in the Burkina Faso report, p. 6.

Article 1 (d) of the Supplementary Convention on the abolition of slavery, the slave trade and slavery-like institutions and practices, 1956.

UNICEF, *op cit*, 1998 pp. 32-33 and UNICEF, *Sub-regional workshop on trafficking in child domestics in West and Central Africa*, p 8.

Ebigbo, P.O. *Child trafficking in Nigeria, the state of the art*. ILO, April 2000, p 24.

- **Temporary placement:** The child is handed over to a third party for a set period of time, for a token sum paid in cash or kind. The amount depends on the duration agreed upon and the age of the child. The intermediary collects the wages paid by the employer, which he keeps for himself.

"(...) when she (the intermediary) came, she gave me 25,000 FCFA (US\$ 35) to take care of my children. She promised to find my son a job and said that I would receive some money every month. I thanked God, because I thought that I had at last found a way of taking care of my seven children. I had no idea what she really had in mind for my child!"

Extract from the Togo report

- **Placement as a service:** The agent places the child at the request of the parents, for a fee. The parents also have to bear "handling costs". The Cameroon report states that parents pay up to 100,000 FCFA (US\$ 140) for a child that is placed by a so-called "matrimonial agency";
- **Placement as embezzlement:** The child is handed over by his/her parents to a third party who may be a professional employment agent or an intermediary on the understanding that the child will be sent to school, receive vocational training and be taken care of by the host household. Instead, the child is put into paid work, which often offers no scope for skill development. The intermediary collects the wages directly from the employer and does not pay the parents anything. According to the Ghana study, women are operating in this way at Makola, Nima, Maamobi and Agbogloshie markets, in the suburbs of Accra.

4.2. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REGION

2.1 A tradition of migration

Historically, the people of Central and Western Africa have always migrated for economic reasons, either within their countries or from one country to another. Migration can be observed from rural to urban areas, with a peak during the dry season. Some ethnic groups like the Sénoufo and the Peulhs⁵ are constantly on the move, in search of cultivable land or fodder.

In addition, during the period of colonisation, people were forced from one place to another or from one country to another, to work on plantations, the construction of railways, etc.

Even after the abolition of forced labour in 1946, people from Burkina Faso for example, chose to work on plantations in Côte d'Ivoire or in mines in Ghana. In 1951, a union⁶ was created in order to regulate the flow of migrants to Côte d'Ivoire. From March to December 1951, 51,000 workers were sent to Côte d'Ivoire through this union, indicating that migration was on a large scale. Due to reports of cases of abuse, this union was banned in 1960, but migration continued. In order to protect Burkinabe workers abroad, Burkina Faso signed conventions with Gabon and Côte d'Ivoire, authorizing their recruitment by employers of these two countries. A convention between Burkina Faso and Mali was also signed guaranteeing the unrestricted movement of people between the two countries. The government tried to control emigration in order to ensure respect for the rights of its citizens in foreign countries. However, people preferred to arrange their own jobs without bureaucratic intervention. Migration involved children as well; they either went with their parents or migrated by themselves in order to find a job or an apprenticeship.

2.2 Family solidarity

Besides migration, there are other traditions that make child work socially acceptable in Western and Central Africa. Social values are transmitted through work, and from the age of four onwards children are expected to help in the household and in the fields⁷.

In the extended African family system, the upbringing of a child is everyone's responsibility. If there are relatives living in better circumstances, the child is entrusted to them for its education and social upbringing. Many children from rural areas are therefore placed with members of the family living in cities, where better opportunities exist for education and skill acquisition through vocational training. It is customary for members of the family, employed in another town or country, to visit their village in order to fetch the

These ethnic groups are found mainly in Mali and Burkina Faso and to some extent in Côte d'Ivoire
The SIAMO, Syndicat Interprofessionnel pour l'Acheminement de la Main d'Oeuvre.

According to the Mali report, the Sénoufo people start involving children in agricultural work from the age of four. A task commonly assigned to them is, for example, chasing away the birds.

children. **Unfortunately, the placement of children that was once within the extended family for educational purposes is now used to exploit their labour.**

2.3 The negative face of development

Development can be very disrupting, creating new highly mobile and migration-prone communities. There are reasons to believe that the economic growth of African countries like Gabon, Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria some years ago has contributed to the aggravation of trafficking in children for labour exploitation. The labour markets in these countries provide opportunities for work that attract adults as well as children from underdeveloped rural areas who are seeking to escape economic hardship. Moreover, development has, in many cases, resulted in the break down of traditional family and community systems.

With the absence of sufficient opportunities for education, apprenticeship or work in the villages and the existing ignorance about the phenomenon of trafficking in children for labour exploitation, parents still believe that placement is in the interest of their child.

2.4 Countries with varying economic profiles

Some of the countries that were studied are among the least developed countries in the world (Burkina Faso and Mali, for example) whereas three of them, Gabon, Ghana and Cameroon have been rated as "Medium" according to the latest ranking on the basis of UNDP's Human development index. Several of these countries suffered an economic recession in the nineteen eighties that threw people out of work in the formal sector and caused the informal sector to swell. In **Cameroon**, for example, in 1997, 85% of the active population worked in the informal sector and only 15% in the formal sector. With the exception of Côte d'Ivoire, whose economy was, until recently, growing fast⁸, others still suffer from high unemployment. To add to this, there is seasonal unemployment. The majority of the population of the region is dependent on rain-fed agriculture and must migrate in search of work during the dry season. Although the administrative sector employs only a small percentage of the population its contribution to the GNP is high, (4% of employment and 40% of GNP in Burkina Faso), reflecting the importance of the few working in this sector.

According to the **Ghana** report, about 86% of the income of an average poor household is derived from subsistence production, predominantly in agricultural activities. Many children are working in this sector, as their assistance is considered essential for the survival of the average household. They can therefore not afford education, since there is neither money nor time for school. The weakness in the social security scheme, in particular, the absence of efficient pension schemes, has led to the use of child labour as a support system for the aged.

The **Burkina Faso** report confirms that the economic situation of a country is generally reflected in its social situation. Poverty combined with its central location in West Africa, makes Burkina Faso a country of transit resulting in substantial rural exodus, growing delinquency among the youth and the phenomenon of trafficked children. Internal conflicts in

Annual economic growth rate of Côte d'Ivoire: 7% in 1996, 13.7% in 1997 and 14.5% in 1998.

Chad, Congo and the Republic of Central Africa have resulted in flows of refugees towards neighbouring countries like Cameroon.

An overview of the statistics contained in the country reports, (see Appendix II for details) supplemented with those available on Internet⁹, show that a third or more of the population in each country lives below the poverty line.

	Population (millions)	% Population growth rate	% <15 years	Fertility rate	% Literacy	% Below poverty line	Human Dev. Index Rank
Benin	6.3	3.3	48	6.4	37	33.6	155
Burkina Faso	11.6	2.7	48	6.56	19.2	45.3	171
Cameroon	15.5	2.79	46	5.8	63.4	40	134
Côte d'Ivoire	15.8 ¹⁰	2.35	47	5.89	48.5	36.8	154
Gabon	1.2	1.48	33	3.77	63.2	Not available	124
Ghana	18.9	2.05	42	4.11	64.5	31.4	133
Mali	10.4	3.01	47	6.96	31	Not available	166
Nigeria	113.8	2.92	45	6.02	57.1	34.1	146
Togo	5.1	3.51	48	6.53	51.7	32.3	143

Table 1: Statistical overview of the region¹¹

Demographic indicators show that there are variations in population density but, on the whole, the region is not densely populated. It is characterised however by the highest fertility rates in the world. This explains the high percentage of children and youth and contributes to the prevalence of child labour in the area. Literacy rates vary considerably from below 20% in Burkina Faso to nearly 65% in Ghana. Even in an oil rich country like Nigeria, 31% of children have no access to basic education.

The report from **Cameroon** mentions a striking imbalance between rural and urban areas as far as access to proper medical facilities, education, drinking water and electricity is concerned. Cities attract large numbers from the countryside where the majority of the population resides. Another disparity is that of gender that is reflected in lower enrolment rates for girls than boys in primary school, and higher rates of illiteracy among women.

The studies show that countries that have widespread poverty, low education levels and high fertility rates tend to be those from which children are trafficked, while those that are less populated and more developed are the countries to which children are sent. Gabon, for example, is a “receiving country”.

Based on information on web-site: www.emulateme.com/content/ .

Including about 3 million Burkinabes and Malians

Figures in italics from UNDP report 1998. All other data are 1999 figures from the above web site.

2 METHODS OF ENQUIRY

2.1 Treading new ground

Trafficking in children for labour exploitation is a sensitive subject. It constitutes a violation of the rights of the child and, in most countries, is considered a crime. It is shrouded in all the secrecy that characterises illicit activity. Intermediaries, conveyers or employers run a **risk when divulging information** about it. Even parents have a sense of guilt and are reluctant to talk about what happened. Special know-how is required to collect the testimonies of children. Collecting data on this phenomenon is like venturing into unknown territory: it is only recently that attempts are being made to assess the magnitude of the problem, to describe current practices and to analyse its causes and consequences. The eight national studies under consideration produced new insights into trafficking and laid the ground for action plans to combat it.

2.2 Information sources

A **wealth of first hand information** collected from numerous interviews, supplemented by literature reviews conducted in each country, has been used. Although a framework for the research was provided to the research teams, this being new ground, each team was given the liberty to develop its research methods depending on the past experience, ideas and capacity of its members, as well as the opportunities available in the country. This has led to important differences in approach that render comparisons difficult.

In all the countries, children were interviewed. The numbers varied from 22 in Côte d'Ivoire to 1,400 in Nigeria¹². In Côte d'Ivoire, only 12 girls working as domestic servants and 10 children working in mines were interviewed. This is a small beginning in mapping the phenomenon of trafficking and, contrary to what the report states, no conclusions as to the magnitude can be drawn as yet. In Benin, Mali and Togo, the children interviewed were exclusively victims of trafficking, whereas in others like Nigeria, school and street children were also approached. In Cameroon, those interviewed were mainly of foreign nationality, whereas in Nigeria and Burkina Faso they were all nationals. Given the variety of backgrounds of those interviewed, one cannot consider them a "sample", in the statistical sense, for the sub-region. Hence, the exploration of the phenomenon in these countries is **qualitative rather than quantitative**.

Attempts have been made to contact **all the stakeholders** in the process. Besides children, in most countries, parents, employers, policemen, border patrols, social workers, ministers, and NGO representatives were interviewed. In Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Nigeria and Togo questionnaires¹³ were used for interviewing children and parents; while the conversations with ministers, policemen, border patrols and NGO representatives were all semi-directive. In Cameroon, it is remarkable that detailed information was obtained from intermediaries. In other countries, unfortunately but understandably, they did not co-operate with the researchers.

See Table 2 in Chapter 4.

These are available as appendices to the country reports.

In some cases, the sources of information have not been adequately mentioned and where they have been, they are not always the most recent. For example, in the Ghana report, it is unclear as to whether the information is first-hand or comes from a review of literature. This makes it difficult to assess the value of the conclusions.

2.3 Interpretations of "trafficking"

The definition of trafficking, given in Chapter 1, was agreed upon *a posteriori* at the sub-regional workshop that was held to review the findings of the studies. Consequently, not all the cases of child labour categorised as cases of trafficking during the studies fit that definition. In Nigeria, the following definition was used:

"Child trafficking is a form of child abuse and neglect involving the migration of children from one place to another for the purpose of exploitative labour"

This report estimated that 19% of school going children interviewed were trafficked. However, it is likely that these were not really cases of trafficking¹⁴ but rather of traditional placement for education since 98% of these worked only after school hours and 2% did not work at all.

Besides, the studies did not all focus exclusively on trafficking in children for labour exploitation as defined earlier. Some widened the scope of the study to child labour in general. For example, the Cameroon report mentions that 55% of the children interviewed worked of their own free will, while 45% were forced. 67% of the latter had been handed over to the employer by a family member or another known person. Even if they did not give their consent, it is possible that they were placed there in the traditional way since there was no proof of a transaction.

It is uncertain whether all the cases of trafficking studied, pertained to victims under the age of 18. In Mali, all those interviewed were repatriated victims between 12 and 20 years old. They would come under the purview of this study if they were below 18 at the time they were trafficked. However, this information was not available.

In spite of all these limitations, the information contained in these studies is not only a valuable description of the phenomenon in the region but also a step towards the analysis of factors influencing it. Since a fair amount of trafficking takes place across borders, this synthesis report should provide the basis for developing programmes to combat the phenomenon in the sub-region.

¹⁴ They do not fit the definition, given in Chapter 1, as the "motive to exploit" is missing.

3 A MOSAIC OF INFORMATION

3.1 Quantitatively speaking

The statistics quoted in the country reports are not sufficient to give accurate national figures of the magnitude of the problem. They, however, report several incidents that indicate how widespread the problem is.

In **Benin**, studies on the phenomenon have been conducted, the trafficking in children is recognized and the government, NGOs and international organizations such as UNICEF have undertaken actions. The Brigade for the Protection of Minors is registering information on trafficked children. According to them, 117 children were trafficked in 1995; 413 children in 1996; 802 children in 1997; 1,059 children in 1998 and 670 children in 1999. The majority of these children were Beninese, but there were also children from Togo, Burkina Faso, Ghana and Nigeria. *Terre des Hommes*, Benin has provided assistance to about 100 children trafficked from Togo, Nigeria, Gabon and Côte d'Ivoire in the past years.

Burkina Faso is known as a sending, receiving and transiting country. It is known that Malian children are trafficked to Burkina Faso to work as domestics. Children from Burkina Faso that are trafficked to other countries are mainly engaged in agriculture and sometimes in prostitution. In 1996, the police in Bobo-Dioulasso, intercepted a group of 5 children being transported to Côte d'Ivoire. In 1999, the same police found 8 Burkinabe children in Divo (Côte d'Ivoire), 12 in Germany on their way to Italy and 2 children being taken to Ghana. 27 kidnappings were reported: 10 of those children were afterwards found in Nigeria and 17 in Côte d'Ivoire. In March 2000, a convoy of 22 young persons, aged between 14 and 20 years, headed for Côte d'Ivoire, was intercepted. The report states that about 80,000 children are placed, through intermediaries, in Ouagadougou and Bobo Dioulasso. It is not clear, however, if all these children are victims of trafficking.

In **Gabon**, according to the IPEC survey of 600 working children conducted in 1998-99, at least 59 of them had been trafficked from other countries into Gabon.

In 1991, it was reported that 30 **Malian** children in transit were lodged in a house in Korhogo, Côte d'Ivoire. After the investigation by police, the intermediary was identified and a trafficking network dismantled. Since 1995, more than 600 children have been transported to Côte d'Ivoire. In the Ivoirian newspaper, "IvoirSoir" of May 18, 1998, it is reported that two Burkinabes were implicated in transporting Malian children for trafficking. 1998 estimates of UNICEF indicate that 10,000 to 15,000 Malian children are working on Ivoirian plantations. The percentage that has been trafficked however, is unknown. According to official sources, in Sikasso, Mali, 155 Malian children have been repatriated from Côte d'Ivoire between January 1998 and December 1999.

Nigeria reports that in 1996, 4000 children were trafficked from Cross River State to various parts of Nigeria and to other countries. Information given by a policy maker in Abuja showed that the police recorded 157 cases of child trafficking in 1987, 240 cases in 1988; 95 cases in 1989; 204 in 1990 and 174 in 1991. The immigration service mentioned about 20 cases of trafficking per month. According to the information on trafficking provided by the Police Headquarters in Calabar, there have been 13 cases of child stealing and 8 cases of kidnapping

between 1997 and 1999. The traffickers involved were arrested and prosecuted. In a recent workshop held in Nigeria on the subject of trafficking in women and children, it was reported that 500 Nigerian girls were practising prostitution in Bamako, Mali, and more than 500 in Burkina Faso. The Nigeria study included 7 focus group discussions. The outcome was that, while in Kano and Lagos parents describe the magnitude of child trafficking as not too much, in other communities they declare it to be very high, serious, even disturbing.

3.2 Background of the victims

Table 2 gives an overview of the results and also shows the different types of children interviewed: In Benin, Mali and Togo repatriated victims of trafficking were interviewed; in Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire working children were contacted in order to identify the ones that were trafficked; and in Nigeria both school and street children were approached in order to get a wider view of the phenomenon.

Country report	Types of children interviewed	Total number interviewed	Boys/ Age group	Girls/ Age group	Country of Origin	%age of trafficked children	Jobs they were put into
Benin	Repatriated victims of trafficking	44	21 10-15	23 5 -15	Benin 40 Togo 4	80%	Girls: Domestics, vendors Boys: Plantation labour
Burkina Faso	Child labourers in the informal sector	116					Porters, street vendors, domestics, agricultural workers, prostitutes
Cameroon	Child labourers	329	194 <18	135 <18	Cameroon 214 Nigeria 47 Benin 21 Niger 14 Chad 11 Other 22	41%	Domestics: 33% Street traders 20%
Côte d'Ivoire	Domestics, mine workers	22 + plantation workers	10 9-15	12 7-15	C.d'Ivoire 10 Mali 7 Ghana 5		Mine and plantation workers, domestics
Ghana	Rescued victims or escapees, sending and receiving communities	Not specified	10-17	7-16			Girls: Street vendors and domestics Boys: Diamond mining
Mali	Repatriated victims of trafficking	155	152 12-20	3	Mali 155		Girls: Domestics Boys: Plantation labour
Nigeria	School children	1400	560 10-16	840 10-16	Nigeria 1,372	19%	
	Street children	700	10-16	10-16	Nigeria 693	40%	Street traders 67% Prostitutes 0.86%
Togo	Repatriated victims of trafficking	96	29 6-15+	67 6-15+	Togo 96	73%	Commerce 47% Agriculture 31%

Table 2: Overview of the results of the eight country studies

The Beninese children belonged mainly to the Fon ethnic group, 3 were Adja, 2 Dendi, 3 Somba and 1 Yoruba. 35 of them were between 10 and 15 years of age and as many as 6 children were only 5 to 10 years old. The Cameroon study confirms that trafficked **children from Benin are young**. Of the 21 Beninese interviewed in Cameroon, 9 were below 12 years and 10 were between 12 and 14 years old. Most of the girls from Benin work as domestics or in the commercial sector and the boys are made to work on cocoa plantations. 26 of these kids had been repatriated from Nigeria, 7 from Côte d'Ivoire, 4 from Gabon, 2 from Niger, 1 from Ghana and 4 did not identify the country they had been trafficked to. For all of them, **it was not the first time that they had been trafficked** to these countries.

In **Burkina Faso**, 116 children working in the informal sector (porters, street vendors, etc.) were interviewed¹⁵. Children are trafficked to work in the informal sector, as street vendors, as domestics, in agriculture or in prostitution. Most of them are girls, aged between 10 and 17 years old. The majority of the children originally come from the Sourou, Kossi, Mouhoun or Balé region or the South-East (Poni, Bougouriba, Ioba), belonging to the following ethnic groups: the Dafing, Dogons, Samos et Dagara. 45% are illiterate, 49% had received primary education and only 6% had reached secondary school.

The researchers in **Cameroon** interviewed 329 working children in Yaoundé, Douala and Bamenda. No distinction was made between working children that were trafficked and those that were not. The results are based on the answers of all 329 children. This implies that the Cameroon study investigated child labour in general rather than the phenomenon of trafficking. The majority were of Cameroonian nationality (65%), while 47 children came from Nigeria, 21 from Benin, 14 from Niger, 11 from Chad, 8 from Congo, 7 from Togo, 4 from the Central Republic of Africa and 4 from other countries (see table A in Appendix III). Of the 213 Cameroonian working children, 70% came from the Northwest. It should be noted that the children from Nigeria and Benin were strikingly young: 19 out of 21 Beninese and 19 out of 47 Nigerian children were younger than 14 years old. 60% of the children interviewed had finished primary school, whereas 20% declared themselves to be illiterate.

Children came to the cities for several reasons: 30% came to look for a job, while 24% already had arranged a job before coming; 24% had come to join a parent; 11% wanted an apprenticeship. The most important reason for migration to the city was work. 53 out of 69 children aged below 14, and 150 out of the total 329 children declared that they were **forced into work**. 67.3% of them had left their homes due to family pressure (see Appendix III for details). As stated above, these figures apply to child labour in general and not to the phenomenon of trafficking. A comparison of the results shown in Tables 1, 2 and 7 of the Cameroon report, shows that young Beninese and Nigerian children are often involuntarily moved from their country to Cameroon (see table B in Appendix III). For the Beninese children this finding seems to be confirmed by the national study conducted in Benin.

The main jobs of the children are, ranged in order of importance: domestics - 33%, street traders – 20%, labourers - 9%, servants in a bar/restaurant - 7%, prostitution - 7%, construction workers - 3%, night guards - 3%. The study showed that **male child prostitution**

All the interviews in Burkina Faso took place in the two main cities of the country: Ouagadougou and Bobo Dioulasso.

exists in Cameroon: 3 boys declared it to be their work. No children aged younger than 12 worked in prostitution. **Half the children had two jobs:** a child working as a street trader during the day, worked in the evening as a domestic servant.

In the **Côte d'Ivoire** study, 12 female domestics were interviewed in Abidjan. They were aged between 7 and 15 years. For financial reasons, these 12 girls never went to school. 5 of them came from Ghana, while the others were Ivoirians, (4 from Bondoukou and 3 from Bouaké). They were all **Christians**. In addition, 10 children working on mine sites were interviewed. They were **Moslems**, aged between 9 and 15 years, without education, and only spoke their local language. Three of them were Ivoirians, while the other 7 came from Mali. Children working on plantations were also interviewed, unfortunately the researchers did not mention how many. It is however reported that most of them came from Mali or Burkina Faso. They were aged between 9 and 15 years, and were illiterate.

In **Gabon**, during an IPEC survey conducted in 1998/1999, of the 600 working children that were interviewed, only 17 were from Gabon. These were privileged as compared to the others since they were almost all independent. Among the other 583 children, 10.8% were trafficked. Of these 600 children, 300 were aware of the fact that they were exploited and 40% wished to go back to their countries. Since the national study of Gabon was not completed in time, no further information is available.

In **Ghana**, it is reported that the majority of trafficked girls are aged between 7 and 16 years, while boys, who are trafficked to work in diamond mines, are mainly between 10 and 17 years. The majority of the trafficked children came from the Northern part of Ghana, which has the **highest incidence of poverty**.

Mali is known as a sending country for destinations in Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana and Nigeria. Ethnic groups such as the Bambara, Dogon and Sénoufo are the most affected. According to the report, of the 155 victims of trafficking repatriated from Côte d'Ivoire to Mali between 1998 and 1999, 152 were boys and 3 were girls. They were aged between 12 and 20 years. The boys worked on plantations, the girls as domestics. Originally, 75 of them came from the Sikasso region, 36 from the Mopti region, 26 from the Ségou region and 18 from the Koulikoro region. The communities of Bougouni, Bankass and Sikasso seem to be particularly affected by the phenomenon of trafficking. Information obtained from the regional authorities and several other documents confirm that the zone of Ouassoulou in the third region and the Dogon Plateau in the fifth region are **focal points** from where children emigrate to Côte d'Ivoire. The communities of Dioïa and Bla of the second and fourth regions also seem to be involved in supplying children.

In **Nigeria**, interviews were held with 1400 school children and 700 street children¹⁶ in seven towns¹⁷. An analysis of the results shows that 265 out of 1400 (19%) schoolchildren were trafficked and that 98% of them had Nigerian nationality. This indicated that most trafficking in Nigeria is internal. The large majority was aged between 10 and 16 years (92%) and the sex ratio was 40% male to 60% female. After school hours, 71% of the children declared that they worked for outsiders, mainly as street traders (54%). It should be noted that 4 children declared that they did not work after school and hence cannot be said to be victims of trafficking.

The term 'street children' is used for children found on the street. They do not necessarily live there. Porthacourt, Owerri, Calabar, Lagos, Sokoto, Maiduguri and Kano.

It is thought that, in order to sustain their business, **intermediaries move children from one home to another** since this increases their income. 29% of the trafficked school children mentioned they have stayed in more than one household. 49 children had been sexually abused: 33% by their relatives, 67% by others. It is reported that as much as 229 (83%) children declared that they were happy whereas only 46 (17%) said they were unhappy.

Out of the 700 *street children* interviewed, 279 (40%) were trafficked and 277 of these were Nigerian. 94% were aged between 10 and 16 years. The number of trafficked boys and girls was equal. 95% of the trafficked children were interviewed in the urban areas while only 5% were found in the rural areas. Most of them worked as street traders (67%), while 6 children worked as prostitutes. Furthermore, **31% mentioned that they had been sexually molested** before: 14% by relatives and 79% by people outside the family. Only 5 out of 279 children indicated that they stayed permanently on the street. Among those trafficked street children, 145 (52%) said they went to school as well. To the question "would you like to go back to your parents at home?", 69% of the responses were positive. The others did not wish to go because they **wanted to finish school**.

For the **Togo** study, the researchers interviewed 96 victims of trafficking who had been repatriated to Togo. 70 children (73%) were aged between 6 and 14 years old and the majority of the children were girls (70%). It should be noted that girls were trafficked at a younger age than boys: 88% of the girls were younger than 15, whereas 62% of the boys were over 15. The report explains the high percentage of girls as being due to the traditional views of parents in the central region of Togo. **Parents prefer to invest in their sons instead of their daughters**, as the daughters will get married and leave the house to go to their in-laws. The sons however, will stay with the family, contribute to its development and will also perpetuate the family name. Therefore, parents are less concerned about their daughters, and are willing to let them leave the village to find a job. 74% of the 96 children interviewed had quit school at primary level. This **high rate of dropout** is due to the cost of schooling on the one hand, and unsatisfactory performance of the students on the other.

Mainly three ethnic groups are affected by trafficking: 46% of the interviewed children were Kotokoli, 19% Bassar and 18% Eweh. The fact that the Kotokoli were highly represented, confirmed earlier findings: 50% of 268 Togolese children, victims of trafficking and working in Gabon, were Kotokoli as well. Moreover, the 4 Togolese children interviewed in the Benin study were also Kotokoli.

One third of the 96 children were animist and one third Moslem. 46% of the children worked in the commercial sector and 31% in agriculture. However, girls trafficked to Burkina Faso or Niger were all employed as servants in small restaurants, whereas in Gabon they were set to work as street traders, servants in restaurants or as domestics.

3.3 Background of the families of the children being trafficked

Poor peasants

In general, it can be said that trafficked children come from poor families living in rural areas. The majority of parents are engaged in agriculture:

- in Benin, 78% according to the children, 90% according to the parents;
- in Burkina Faso, 65% of the fathers work in the agricultural sector or are without work;

- in Cameroon, 44% of the mothers and 34% of the fathers work in the agricultural sector as well,
- the parents of Ivoirian domestic servants interviewed earn their living through agricultural activities;
- in Togo 87% of parents work in the agricultural sector.
- the Nigeria study shows that 88% of the street children have fathers who are self employed. It does not specify how many of them are in agriculture.

Large families

As for the size of the families, it can be said that children are more at risk when they are members of a family with 5 or more children:

- in Benin 32 (73%) of the 44 children interviewed came from families with more than 5 children, 40% of a group of other parents declared that they had 5 or more children;
- according to the Cameroon study, most of the victims were members of families with 6 to 9 children¹⁸;
- in Côte d'Ivoire, the 12 domestics interviewed came from polygamous families with about 15 children and 5 spouses per family;
- in the Mali report, it is mentioned that the majority of the 155 children interviewed came from families with an average of 7 to 8 children;
- 80% of the street children in Nigeria declared that they came from families with 5 or more children. It is also mentioned that communities in Nigeria that provide children for trafficking are known to have high fertility rates with an average of about 10 children per family;
- in Togo, from the 45 parents interviewed, 82% had more than 5 children¹⁹.

Rivalry between spouses

Children being trafficked come from monogamous as well as polygamous families:

- in Benin, of the 44 children interviewed, 13 (30%) came from monogamous families, 13 (30%) from polygamous, 1 from a separated family (2%) and 4 children reported that their parents were widowed (9%). Of the 20 parents of trafficked children interviewed, 13 (65%) declared themselves to be monogamous whereas 4 (20%) declared they were polygamous;
- 8 out of 10 Ivoirian girls interviewed in Côte d'Ivoire came from polygamous families;
- while the 4 Ghanaian girls came from mono parental families;
- in the Mali report it is stated that the majority of 155 children came from polygamous families;
- in Nigeria, 60% of both the trafficked schoolchildren and street children came from monogamous homes, while 40% came from polygamous ones;
- in Togo 74% of the 45 parents interviewed were polygamous.

In the Mali report, a possible explanation of polygamy as a push factor is given. Rivalry between spouses can encourage mothers who believe that placement is in the interest of the child, to send away their children (“the son of a co-spouse has left, so it is better that my own son leaves as well”).

See table 28 in the Cameroon report.

71% had between 5 and 8 children, 11% more than 8.

Death of a parent

In Cameroon, 60% of the 329 children belonged to single parent families in which one parent had died. **25 children said they did not know if their parents were still alive.**

In Togo, 28 out of 96 children did not have both parents at home, their parents were either divorced, or one or both of the parents were dead.

According to the Nigeria report, 16% of the school children and 12% of the street children interviewed had lost at least one of their parents.

In Burkina Faso, 19% of the children interviewed were orphaned, having lost their fathers.

Low education levels of parents

The education level of parents of trafficked children is generally low. According to the children interviewed in Benin, 66% of their parents did not have any education at all and according to the parents, this was 80%. In Cameroon 20% of the fathers and 32% of the mothers were illiterate, whereas 26% of the fathers and 28% of the mothers had only completed primary school. It should be noted however, that 35% of the children who provided these answers said that they did not know.²⁰

One of the consequences of lack of education is, of course, unemployment. In Burkina Faso, 98.6% of the mothers of trafficked children were jobless.

The child has no say

In Benin, 18 (90%) of the 20 parents interviewed answered that it was their own child that they had given away to an intermediary. One mentioned that it was a niece/nephew and one that it was a cousin. The Togo report indicates that for 29% of the 96 children interviewed, the decision to hand them over was made by the mother and for 36% by the grandparents. In only 15% of cases, the fathers took the decision. **The child is informed about his/her departure only a couple of days before leaving.**

The Côte d'Ivoire report stated that the employers of the mines and the plantations prohibited the interviewers from talking to the children about their parents, so no information could be obtained.

3.4 The intermediaries

Known or unknown "tantes"

All the reports confirm that intermediaries are very often people known to the families or persons with roots in the town where they are recruiting.

There are cases, however, where the intermediary is a complete stranger and sometimes even a foreigner. For example, in the Côte d'Ivoire study, intermediaries who recruited domestics were of Ivoirian or Ghanaian nationality, whereas recruitment for mine sites was done only by Burkinabe and Malian middlemen residing in Côte d'Ivoire. Those covered by the study were

See table 24 and 25 in the Cameroon report.

all uneducated and aged between 40 and 50 years old. They pick up the children at the border from intermediaries working in Mali or Burkina Faso. Employers pay the intermediaries prices varying from 50,000 to 75,000 FCFA (US\$70 – 105) per child.

In the preliminary findings for Gabon, it is mentioned that foreign female recruiters supply domestics to employers in Gabon who are their compatriots. Some of the employers are immigrants, who have now obtained Gabonese nationality. According to the Togo study, Nigerian recruiters were active in the village of Agodjolo

In Burkina Faso, 15 intermediaries were contacted: 4 women and 4 men were interviewed in Ouagadougou and 7 organizations for placement of children in Bobo-Dioulasso. 4 out of the 7 were managed by women. One of these women admitted placing 150 children each year. The annual average **number of placements per agent is between 20 and 50 children**. This means that the 15 agents identified send at least 300 children, essentially girls, into the circuit each year.

Making ends meet.....

Adjoba originally comes from Bondoukou, but has lived in Abidjan since the fifties. She is a widow and has 4 adult children. She lives alone in the Divo area in Koumassi. She has no fixed job, and in order to pay her rent of 17,500 FCFA (US\$ 24.50) each month, she tries to sell a few products at the district market. It is just a small business and does not provide enough to live on, especially with the present economic recession. So, how does this lady manage?

She recruits young girls aged between 7 and 15 years from her own village, promising to help them prepare for their marriage by learning the skills of a housewife. As soon as they arrive in town, Adjoba gives the girls a product to sell (water or medicine) so that they are able to earn money to buy food. In the meanwhile, she tries to find someone who is looking for a domestic. She wanders around and as soon as she meets somebody who needs help in the house, she offers the services of one of her girls. The salary agreed upon depends on her relationship with the future employer.

It is Adjoba who picks up the salary every month. When the girl reaches puberty, she returns to her village. Adjoba contributes to the girl's dowry by giving her and her parents some money.

- Extract from the Côte d'Ivoire report

In Cameroon, where 25 intermediaries were interviewed, there are far more male (88%) than female (12%) intermediaries. Most of them are above 30 years old (88%). Only one of them was illiterate, 7 had completed primary school, 12 secondary and 5 had even continued their studies after college. They operate in the Northwest, Southwest and the extreme North of the country. As expected, the majority of them were active in the commercial sector, besides

being intermediaries. It is noteworthy that 9 to 10 of the Cameroonian intermediaries believed they were doing a good job and felt that their work should be legalized!

A lucrative business

Concerning the profits earned by intermediaries, in Nigeria, 64 out of 265 (24%) trafficked school children declared that the agent who placed them received money, while 34% said the agent did not receive any money. In Benin, it is very often the intermediary who collects the salary of the child and, at the end of the working period, gives the child a bike or a radio. However, when a contract exists between the employer and the child, the intermediary deducts one or two month's salary every year. In the Burkina Faso and Ghana reports, it is mentioned that some girls hand over their "salaries" to their 'tannies' for safekeeping. Since it is the custom for intermediaries to take the child's salary, it is unlikely that the 'tannies' will reimburse the money.

3.5 The recruitment process

Lured by promises

Many different ways to recruit children exist. In Benin, for instance, the intermediary wins the parents trust by offering a small amount of money or some pagnes²¹, and convinces them to entrust their child to him. He describes it as a way of improving the living conditions of the whole family, and promises to find him/her a job and to take care of him/her. This way of recruiting is described in all the country reports with small variants. For example, in Nigeria, they sometimes promise that, after a specified number of years of service, the child will be given a shop and the necessary residence permit. In Ghana, domestics are given a sewing machine after some years of service, whereas, in Togo, a bike or radio is offered as compensation.

"I'm not going from door to door"

Akouênon is a hero in his village: he knows how to manage in life. For the past 20 years he has been working as a smith in Nigeria and although he has no identity card, manages to cross the Nigeria-Benin border easily.

Every year, he returns to the village with all the children he took with him the previous year. He hires a bus in Nigeria to bring them back all together. To celebrate the fruits of eleven months of work, they return carrying "pagnes" and pans on their heads. The whole village turns out to watch them, applauding with admiration as they pass.

At last the group reaches his house. In front of everybody, he opens his bag and gives each child the money due to him/her after deducting the cost of its purchases. The villagers observe this with curiosity. They admire this young and dynamic man who displays bundles of bank notes, rarely seen in a poor village like theirs. The young persons that stayed behind in the village compare

West African cloth, used for clothing.

this with what they have left after a year; this same year could have been fruitful.

Very soon, the crowd presses around from all sides, congratulating Akouênon. He doesn't even have to move to find the next lot of children. "On your next trip, your brother Abattan will follow you!" says the first one. And another says: "Your sister Jackie as well" and so on.

Akouênon doesn't know what to do; he has too many offers. No, he cannot take all of them. He already has enough candidates to fulfil the demand from the receiving country. Just a few places are available. Finally, he decides to take with him the children who have the strongest kinship ties with him. Is it out of fear that the family may put a spell on him? No! It is a question of business!

Suddenly, the moment of triumph is over. Akouênon is arrested. The police are in a quandary because all the intercepted children are crying for their uncle, held in custody at the police station. "He has been arrested by mistake", everyone shouts, "He just wanted to help us!"

Haja uses a different method. She does not know the parents at all, since she is a foreigner. She has her own middlemen who prepare the ground. When she arrives at a house, she gives a small amount of money "to cope with the little problems of the week". It is not more than 10,000 FCFA (US\$ 14), after the middleman has taken his share. One by one, the children are taken away on motorcycles and left along the road to be transported to a foreign country.

Extract from the Benin report

Customs officials turn a blind eye

It is known that there are intermediaries from Cameroon going to Nigeria in search of children. At the border, recruiters escape scrutiny because customs officers concentrate on inspecting merchandise being transported and are not concerned with the children crossing the border. In some villages in the Northwest and Southwest of Cameroon, intermediaries obtain the help of traditional chiefs in the task of contacting families for the purpose of recruiting children.

Jobs for children advertised

The Burkina Faso report mentions that parents are not always involved in the deal. Sometimes the intermediary contacts children directly and there are cases where the child takes the initiative of contacting the intermediary and negotiating a salary with the employer. The salary depends on the age of the minor and varies from 3,500 FCFA (US\$5) per month for someone of 12 or 13 years to 5.000 FCFA (US\$7) for someone who is 17 or 18 years old.

Besides informal recruiters, there are professional agencies. Bamenda, Cameroon, is well known for trafficking in children. There, the researchers discovered that job offers for children, specifying age required and the place of work, were put up on **bulletin boards** placed on the sidewalk. Demands for children aged between 6 and 14 years old were

publicised in this manner. The researchers tried to talk to some children who had been waiting there for a job for a couple of days, but the children were instructed not to talk to strangers. Information from other sources in Yaoundé, Douala and Bamenda show that 80% of the internally trafficked children were paid a monthly salary of 10,000 FCFA (US\$14). Cross-border trafficked children were either paid in kind or not at all.

In Côte d'Ivoire, placement agencies were identified in Abidjan. Two out of the seven agencies visited were active in trafficking: an intermediary gets information about the demand for children in Abidjan and tries to cater to it by recruiting girls either from families known to him/her or from families to which he/she pays another person to be introduced. The same method is used for recruitment of children for mine owners. The majority of children recruited for work on mine sites are known to come from Mali.

In Kayes and Bamako, Mali, **organised networks exist**, that assist children in going to France. The intermediary, very often an ex-emigrant, usually takes charge of all the costs and sometimes even pays a small fee to the parents as advance on the child's first salary. The child is then sent to an associate in France, who lends his/her residence permit to the child so that the child can work to repay the cost of transport. The child's salary is deposited in the bank account of the associate. In Kayes, this practice dates back to the sixties. The same recruiting method has come to light recently in Sikasso for arranging entry into Côte d'Ivoire.

The Mali report describes how intermediaries in Mali recruit children for jobs in Côte d'Ivoire. They contact either the parents or the child and offer a job for the child in Côte d'Ivoire with a monthly salary of 6,000 to 7,000 FCFA (US\$8.40 – 9.80), and sometimes pay a month's salary in advance. According to the Côte d'Ivoire report, domestic servants there are paid between 7,000 and 17,000 FCFA (US\$9.80 – 23.80) monthly, in cash or in kind. This indicates that Malian domestics are exploited even more than the Ivoirians either by the employer or the intermediary.

Surprisingly enough, there are cases reported from Cameroon where the parents pay the intermediary for his/her services. So-called "matrimonial agencies" are paid about 100,000 FCFA (US\$ 140) by the parents for sending children abroad. If there is an intermediary between the parents and the agency, they pay an additional 6,000 FCFA (US\$ 8.40) to him/her. In Nigeria, 33% of the children reported that the recruiting agent had given them some money, while 46% declared that their parents had received money from the agent. According to a parent: *"If the child is going to work for the person, I receive money from the person. If the person helps to send the child out, I pay money for the job"*.

Escorted by a relative

In the Cameroon study, 105 out of 329 (32%) children said they travelled individually, whereas 60% said they had been accompanied by a parent, somebody from their village or another known person. This shows the implication of the family and the community in trafficking. All the children coming from Benin declared they had been accompanied by a family member or another known person; 34 out of 47 Nigerian children (interviewed in Cameroon) had the same experience. According to the Togo report, children are often accompanied by a family member to facilitate the departure of the child. This indicates that the placement of a child is considered normal as a means of ensuring a proper education for the child. The Ivoirian girls however, are reported to arrive in groups accompanied by

intermediaries posing as their parents.

In Benin, it is reported that cross-border trafficking is sometimes arranged "officially" with a permit to leave the country: the intermediary has a false permit at his/her disposal or gets one on the basis of a false declaration that the child or children are his/her own. This is possible due to the lack of knowledge on the part of the officials concerned with such administrative matters.

Uprooted...

I lost my mother when I was 7 years old. My godmother came to take me away from the village. She accompanied me to the market place of Kano, where I was put to work, washing cars. Every evening, she picked me up to take me home.

One day, a man, I have even forgotten his name, came to pick me up at night after he had talked to my godmother. That same night, I travelled with him and 9 other children that I didn't know. We travelled by car and the next morning we walked through the forest until we reached the border of a river. With a pirogue we arrived at Molyko (in the South-East of Cameroon).

There were people waiting for us. They gave me to one of them and he took me to his place at Tiko, where I worked as a domestic. He was Nigerian. I only received one meal a day. Whenever I made a mistake, I was badly beaten. If they needed me while I was asleep, and if I did not react immediately, it was the whip that made me get up from my mat. Tired of all the work and the bad treatment I experienced every day, I escaped, hoping to find another compatriot in Douala.

At present, I'm working in a garage, as a guard at night and washing cars during the day. It's my compatriot that they are paying not me. I eat thanks to the tips I get from car washing.

I'm 15 years old now and it has been 8 years that I have been suffering. I have no idea how to return to my village since I've even forgotten the name of it. I don't even know if my father is still alive. I was my mother's only son when she died.

Extract from the Cameroon report

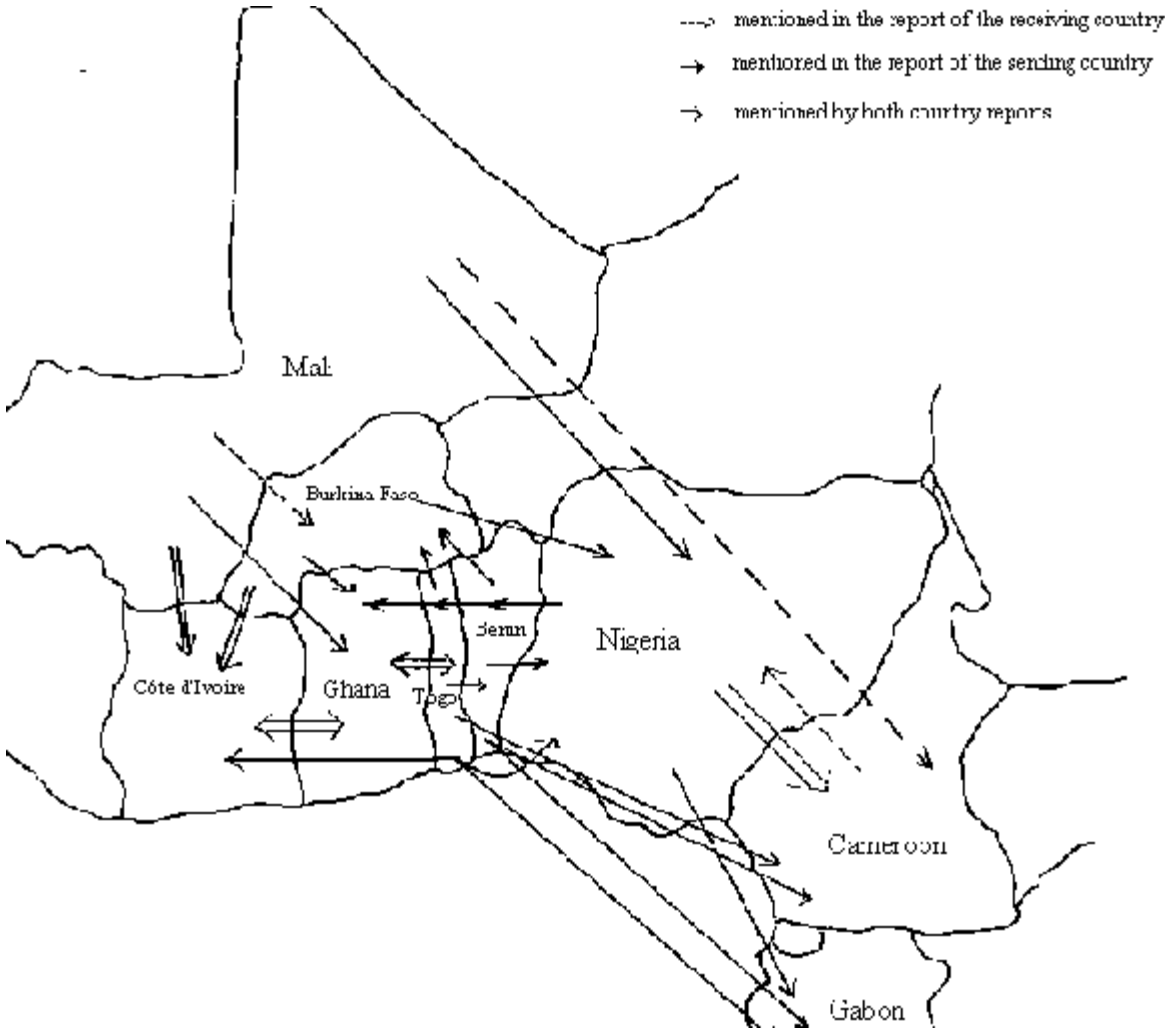
Sex trade with Europe

There were two testimonies indicating that children were also transported out of Cameroon to Europe: a girl to become a prostitute and a boy to be exploited by paedophiles. The recruiters operated under cover of being a religious organization or a football club.

3.6 Cross-border trafficking routes

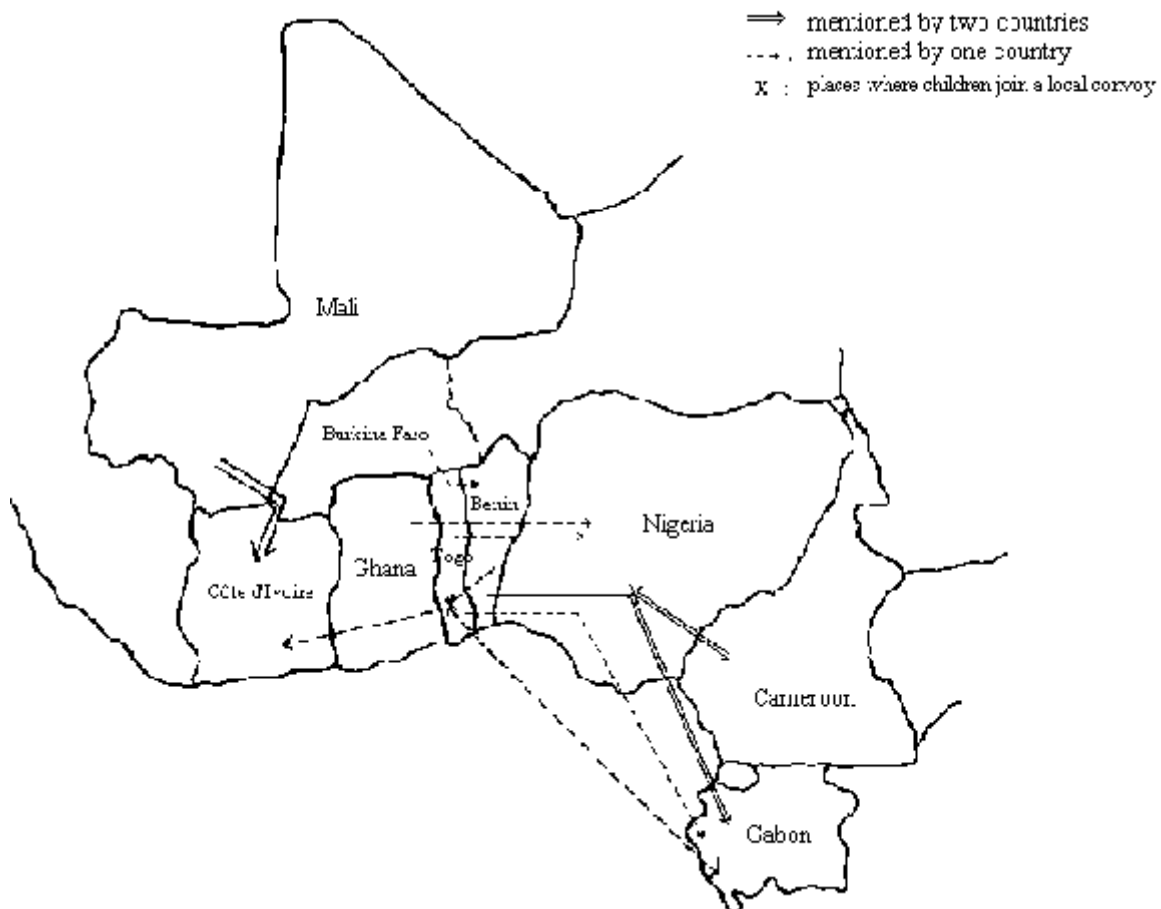
Within the sub-region, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire and Gabon are typical destinations for trafficking, whereas Mali is a supplier country. Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo are both suppliers and receivers. Trafficked children transit through Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Nigeria and Togo.

Map showing the directions in which children are trafficked



The reports give detailed information about recruitment centres, destinations and transit points.

Cross-border trafficking routes



The studies reveal that the most common routes are as follows:

- children from Togo are taken through Benin and Nigeria to Gabon;
- children from Benin are taken through Nigeria or through Togo to Gabon, Burkina Faso and Cameroon;
- children from Mali are taken through Burkina Faso to Côte d'Ivoire and the most important transit points in Burkina Faso are Faramana, Bobo Dioulasso, Koloko and Banfora;
- children from Nigeria and Benin are taken through Cameroon to Gabon;
- children from Burkina Faso are sent to Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria through Togo and Benin.

The Northwest (Mézam) and the Southwest regions of **Cameroon** supply children trafficked to Nigeria. Two cases were found of children from Cameroon being trafficked to Denmark, Europe.

There are cases of trafficking reported from **Ghana** to Togo, Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria and vice versa. Unfortunately, the report does not specify which border crossings/towns are used.

For the trafficking in children from **Mali** to Côte d'Ivoire, the main road between Sikasso, Mali and Korhogo, Côte d'Ivoire is used. Less frequently, the road via Ferkessedougou is

taken. It is common knowledge that Sikasso is the door to Côte d'Ivoire. Some intermediaries in Sikasso take the children to Misséni, a village at the border with Côte d'Ivoire inhabited by the Kaiolo community. From the Northern part of Mali, children are trafficked to Ghana and Nigeria. The routes used are not indicated. According to the Mali report, children from the Kayes region are trafficked to Central Africa, Australia and Europe. Unfortunately, no detailed information was provided.

In **Nigeria**, Calabar is a transit port for children to be sent to Gabon or Cameroon and also for children trafficked from Cameroon entering Nigeria. Information obtained at the Calabar border indicates that Akwa-Ibom, Abia, Rivers and Cross River State have become the targets of modern child trafficking syndicates. Lagos, being the largest city in Nigeria is noted for children coming in from and going out to neighbouring countries like Benin, Togo, Ghana. One of the research officers posted himself at the Seme border and observed at least five child labourers leaving or entering the country every day. The Nigerian report considers these movements to be cases of trafficking, but it is unclear how they can distinguish them from ordinary migration. There is a record of 20 cases of child trafficking across borders from Sokoto monthly. Areas of location that are mostly affected by child trafficking in Sokoto are Cinema, Todun Wada and Shehu Kangiwa Square. The Nigerian report stated that Nigerian girls are sent to Italy to become prostitutes²².

From the Togolese Northern regions (Kabou, Bafilo and Sokodé) girls are trafficked to Burkina and Niger; boys are trafficked from Agodjolo (prefecture Ogou) and Alédjo (prefecture Assoli) to Nigeria. It is mentioned that boys are also trafficked to Côte d'Ivoire and girls to Gabon. This is confirmed by the results of the study: 67 girls interviewed had been trafficked to Gabon, Burkina Faso and Niger, while 29 boys were trafficked to Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria.

Means of transport

Most of the trafficking is done over land, using **public transport** (buses, minibuses and bush taxis), although other forms of transport are reported as well. **Motorcycles** are used for crossing borders on roads unfit for cars between Mali and Côte d'Ivoire and for trafficking within Cameroon.

Boats and pirogues²³ are used to transport children from Togo and Nigeria to Gabon and Cameroon. The Cameroon study found that 30 out of 47 Nigerian children arrived in Cameroon by pirogue.

Three Malian girls were intercepted on the **train** to Côte d'Ivoire. They had transited through Ouahigouya, Burkina Faso, where they were put on the train to Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

In Cameroon, 14 out of 213 Cameroonian children that were interviewed said that they had **walked** from their villages to Bamenda, the neighbouring city where they were now employed.

60% of the prostitutes in Italy are estimated to be of Nigerian origin. Source: *Federal Government of Nigeria and UNICEF Master Plan of Operations: Country Programme of Co-operation 1997-2001*.

A long, narrow canoe made from a single tree trunk

Gabon reports that women ('tantes'²⁴) accompany children into a country by **aeroplane**, using false passports that make the children appear to be their own.

From Togo to Gabon – a four month ordeal.....

We left from Pagala on a Saturday and arrived at Lomé the same day. The next morning we left for Nigeria where we arrived the day after. From there, we travelled the whole night to get to a village near the coast named Ibano.

When we arrived at Ibano, my auntie returned and left me with the other children. She assured me that within a couple of days a boat would come to pick us up. That was not the case: we have been waiting for more than three months. With the other children, I've been asking to return to Togo. But the man who guards us does not care at all. After a couple of days, all our food (manioc flour) was finished. So we started begging for food. This was really hard, since people were often not nice to us. I've tried to sell my clothes in order to earn some money and I offered my services to some inhabitants of the village, so that they would give me something to eat. Most of the time I help the fishermen.

Interview of S.A., a young Togolese girl

3.7 Internal trafficking routes

In all countries, there are migration flows from rural to urban areas, that peak during the dry season. In addition to the normal migration flow, there is evidence that certain places or communities are known for the sending, transiting or receiving trafficked children.

Within **Benin** children are trafficked to places such as Cotonou, Porto-Novo, Bohicon, Abomey, Tanguiéta, Djougou, Natitingou, Nikki, etc. (See Appendices IV and V).

In Ouagadougou, **Burkina Faso**, most working children belong to three communities: the Dafing (West Burkina Faso), the Samos (North-West) and the Dogon (North). A few children found in Bobo-Dioulasso came from the Dagara (South-West).

Ivoirian girls recruited to work as domestic servants in **Côte d'Ivoire** are reported to come from Bondoukou and Bouaké.

Children are transported by bus, from the city of Kousséri in the Northern part of **Cameroon** to Yaoundé. From the Extreme-North they come by train, from Ngaoundéré to Yaoundé or Douala.

In **Ghana**, it is noted that children are mostly trafficked from the Northern region, inhabited by the fishing communities of the Volta, the eastern part of Greater Accra and from poor peripheral and urban slum areas towards Accra, Kumasi and the relatively viable fishing

Tantie is the African expression used for an elderly woman; 'tonton' is used for men. It is a way of expressing one's respect for the person and is used both for acquaintances as well as for strangers.

zones along the banks of Lake Volta. Sekondi-Takoradi, the Western Region capital, is a major recruiting centre, transit point and departure node. The fishing communities of Half Assini, Mpataba, Jewi Wharf and Agona Nkwanta in the Western region use these small commercial centres for trafficking. Female recruiters are active at Makola, Nima, Maamobi and Agbogloshie markets, in the suburbs of Accra.

In **Nigeria**, there is evidence that Akwa-Ibom State is the biggest supplier of children, followed by Cross-River and Imo State. There are reports of kidnapping, sale and homosexual abuse of children in the Sokoto State.

In **Togo**, the regions that supply children are Vo, Yoto, Afangna, Lacs (Maritime region), Tchaoudjo, Tchamba (Central region), Wawa, Est-Mono (West Plateau region); Bassar and Assoli (Kara region). The destinations are Lomé, Kara, Atakparné and Sokodé. The bus stations of Kara, Bassar and Sokodé, in particular, are known to be assembly points for children coming from the Central region, as well as those of Anié and Bagou for children from Agodjolo and its surroundings.

3.8 The employers

In **Benin**, most of the employers are families that live in cities or their suburbs and have a modest income, but one high enough to pay for the trafficking transaction. Children are placed in families of their nationality or of the nationality of the host country. In Gabon, the employers are immigrants, some of whom have obtained Gabonese nationality.

In **Togo**, of the 96 children interviewed, 84 said their employer was authoritarian and mean, while the remaining 12 said that the employer considered them as one of his/her own children. There seems to be a difference between families from different African countries: children placed with Malian, Nigerian and Burkinabe families were better treated, than those placed with Gabonese and Togolese families. In Nigeria, 174 out of 279 (62%) children working on the streets said they were well treated by those they worked for, while 37% said they were treated badly.

The **Mali** report mentions that the transaction between the intermediary and the employer is not always a financial transaction. However, when it is, the amount paid for a child varies between 30,000 to 200,000 FCFA (US\$42 – 280). The child, of course, is not informed about the price paid, nor about the time it will take him/her to repay these costs. Very often a child can be forced to work for a period of two years without any salary, in order to reimburse the employer for what he/she had paid the intermediary.

Many adults (more than 500,000 according to the Malian consulate in Bouaké, Côte d'Ivoire), belonging to various ethnic groups like the Sénoufo, Dogon, Mininanka etc., have immigrated to Côte d'Ivoire. Some of them use child labour on their plantations. There were instances of this in the region of Marahoué.

According to the **Togo** report, children working in Gabon earn 35,000 to 45,000 FCFA (US\$49 – 63) a month, while those in sub-Saharan countries receive 15,000 to 25,000 FCFA (US\$21 – 35). Children in Cameroon are paid a monthly salary varying between 2,000 and 25,000 FCFA (US\$2.80 – 35), in cash or kind: 45% of the sample was paid in cash, 21% in

kind, and 29% partly in cash and partly in kind. According to the Côte d'Ivoire report, domestic servants earn between 7,000 and 17,000 FCFA (US\$9.80 – 23.80) per month in cash or kind.

60% of the children in **Cameroon** are given accommodation by their employers. Surprisingly, this was the case for all the children interviewed in Benin. This maybe due to their young age; almost all were younger than 14 years. For children from Togo or the Republic of Central Africa 86% and 75% of children respectively are housed by their employers.

The **Ghana** report stated that a woman agent could keep as many as 5 to 10 girls at a time. As part of the exchange deal between the 'contractor' and the potential host or hostess, the latter pays the transport cost, pocket money, 2 bars of laundry soap, a cutlass and clothes. The salary paid for a child is between 20,000 to 30,000 Cedis (US\$3.20 – 4.75) and is collected by the agent.²⁵

In **Côte d'Ivoire**, plantation owners are said to pay 50,000 FCFA (US\$70) per child (half as reimbursement of the transport costs and half for the child), whereas the Ivoirian owner of a mine site pays 75,000 FCFA (US\$105) per child (25,000 FCFA to reimburse the transport costs and 50,000 FCFA for the child). The report points out that the price paid for children working on mine sites is probably more because, due to their innocence, they are believed capable of appeasing the spirits that are said to protect the minerals. This is thought to make it easier for children to gather the minerals.

Employers pay between US\$42 to 280 to the intermediary for the child. Monthly salaries earned by the children vary a great deal: they are as low as US\$2.80 in Cameroon to as much as US\$63 in Gabon.

See paragraph 4.5.4 of the Ghana report for the recruitment process.

4 FACILITATING FACTORS

4.1 Socio-cultural factors

Social acceptance

Putting children to work is socially accepted. It is customary in all these countries to assign tasks to children as young as 4 years. Besides, children are considered an investment and hence, some return is expected from them in cash or kind. This encourages child labour and, consequently, trafficking in children.

The tradition of migration facilitates the work of intermediaries. As mentioned in Chapter 2, since the extended family is considered responsible for the education and upbringing of a child, the placement of a child in another village or town with a family member is seen as normal and often, even necessary. This is mentioned specifically in the Benin report and is also true for other countries. Parents being accustomed to their children living with a family member elsewhere, find it easier to give them away to unknown people.

Low education levels

This is one of the causes of trafficking mentioned in all country reports. Most victims of trafficking have never been to school or were dropouts²⁶, the majority of parents were reported to be illiterate or to have had only some primary schooling. The illiteracy and the lack of education may imply that parents and children are unaware of the phenomenon of trafficking. Besides, what other option besides work is available, when a child is no longer going to school? Thus, dropout increases child labour and the risk of being trafficked.

Preparation for marriage

As a consequence of the status of women in Togo, more girls than boys are trafficked: girls are placed as domestics in order to earn their dowry. Domestic work is also considered a preparation for married life. The Côte d'Ivoire report indicates the same about girls from Abron-Koulango.

School for marriage

"One day, she has to get married, that I know. To me, it seems normal to prepare her for marriage. As you see, I'm an old lady and I can no longer arrange it. I already had to arrange her sisters' marriages. That is why, since that lady asked me to send her so she could earn some money, I accepted it. I thought that it would offer her the opportunity of a dignified marriage."

Extract from the Togo report

In Togo 84 children out of 96 (81%) declared they stopped going to school, in 61% of the cases for economical reasons.

Decision making by men

The Mali report indicates that the communities hit by trafficking are mainly 'gerontocratic'²⁷ societies, in which decisions on important subjects are made by the chief sometimes in consultation with other men. This means that children and women are dependent on men and are not allowed to decide for themselves. This lack of freedom is also believed to push young persons into leaving their villages to seek adventure in another town or country.

In the farming communities of Togo, the fields are owned by the head of the family, very often the father. It is this person who decides what to cultivate and how much to give as remuneration for work. Whenever an older child needs something for himself, he has to work for someone else, outside the family, in order to earn the money to buy it.

4.2 Economic factors

Escape from poverty

Poverty is one of the main reasons for parents sending their children away for work or for children themselves migrating to urban areas or abroad. It is also one of the main causes of children becoming victims of trafficking, since recruiters offer jobs that promise good salaries and better living conditions. Besides the economic aspect, parents also think that work provides education and makes the child more self-assured. It is however striking that 3 parents in Benin out of 20 (15%) declared that work or placement offers no advantage at all to the child, while 3 other parents mentioned they did not know what advantages it brings. Similarly, 8 out of 20 parents (40%) cannot see any advantage for society when children work.²⁸ Nevertheless, they have sent their child out to work, probably because it means at least one less mouth to feed. Others mentioned that there would be less robberies, less unemployment and more ready cash in circulation.

Greed for gains

For the Nigeria study, seven focus group discussions were held. 35 participating parents stated that, besides poverty, illiteracy and unfavourable economic conditions, greed was also a cause of child trafficking. The Ghana report²⁹ states: "mothers not only give away their children as a response to poverty but also out of greed, covetousness and self-fulfillment. They try to achieve, through their children, what they have not been able to do themselves."

Moreover, trafficking brings substantial profits to those who organise it. It provides an extra income to recruiters and transport operators. Employers benefit from a cheap labour force. This makes it difficult to mobilise the whole of society against trafficking.

Society ruled by wise old men of the village.

See table 4-32 and 33 of the Benin report.

paragraph 4.5.4. of the Ghana report

Rural-urban imbalance

The attraction of urban areas or supposedly wealthy countries with their facilities and promise of comfort are definitely attracting children. These ideas are reinforced by visits of former inhabitants of a village who return, loaded with presents and who tell tempting stories about city life. This appeals to children who are searching for adventure.

4.3 Juridical and political factors

Impunity reigns

The absence of legislation on trafficking allows intermediaries and employers to operate with impunity. Although, in some countries it is possible to prosecute those involved in trafficking, charges are rarely pressed. Articles 187, 188 and 189 of the Penal code of Mali penalise trafficking in children. However, these provisions are rarely applied, because, in many villages, the authority lies with the chief (or the elder men) who disregard the national law. It is customary that only parents are held responsible for the child until the age of 21 years. Hence, in cases of trafficking, no juridical proceedings can be started against an intermediary or employer.

The ignorance of parents about the legal provisions and the mistrust of the juridical system probably discourage them from taking action. In addition, the Togo report mentions that although conventions to protect the rights of children are signed, these international instruments are yet unknown to the majority of professionals working with and for children and no advantage has been taken of them.

The legislative and judicial protection of working children is insufficient and not adapted to the phenomenon of trafficking. In 1994, a national plan of action in favour of children was launched, but no strategies or judicial measures to tackle the problem of child labour were included. As a consequence, intermediaries and employers are not punished.

Open borders

Children can cross borders without the authorization of their parents or guardians. As a consequence, the transportation of children from one country to another is facilitated.

"Several times, these children are caught by the police and not one of them can hand in either a residence permit nor a consular card. A couple of days later, they will be liberated and the whole show starts again. The people who transport these children to Gabon do not permit us to make even a consular card for them"

The Togolese Embassy in Gabon

The Cameroon report mentioned that the relatively stable political situation in Cameroon attracts people, including children, from the surrounding unstable countries such as Chad and the Congo.

5 LONG LASTING CONSEQUENCES

5.1 Health hazards

Conditions unfit for adults

The working conditions of children are described as follows³⁰:

- Daily working hours range from 10 to 20 hours;
- Breaks are either non-existent or insufficient, leading to exhaustion and increasing the risk of accidents;
- absence of or meagre salaries (in Burkina Faso for instance monthly salaries paid vary between 3,000 and 15,000 FCFA (US\$4.20 – 21), which is at best 50% of the official salary³¹. In Gabon, of 600 children showed that 21% of them received no salary, while 12% received a salary below the minimum standard;
- heavy physical loads (an ILO/IPEC study in Burkina Faso, conducted in 1997/1998, showed that 50% of children had to carry loads of over 10 kilos);
- work with dangerous tools such as welding equipment or chainsaws;
- work with dangerous chemicals such as herbicides, insecticides or solvents;
- work in an unhealthy environment (for example dusty areas at the mines sites);
- working without enough food³² or drink, leading to weakness and increased risk of accidents;
- no social security, no medical protection (for instance, in Gabon, the study of 600 children revealed that 96% of them had no social security. In Cameroon, 23% of the children had to pay for treatment and medicines themselves);
- derogatory treatment.

The Nigeria report states that 20% of child victims of traffic lose their lives due to illness at sea or in boat mishaps. 27 out of 35 Nigerian teachers³³ pointed out that using children for rituals and the risk of being knocked down by vehicles were two of the negative effects of child trafficking.

Where there is no doctor

As a consequence of bad working conditions, children are at a high risk of getting illnesses. According to the country reports, these are some of the diseases they suffer from:

- on the plantations: sunstroke, increased heart rhythm, poisoning due to chemicals used, particularly insecticides, eczema, and injuries caused by the animals used at work;
- at the sawmill: inhalation of dust and accidents with machines such as the circular saw;

According to the Cameroon research, 53% of the children judged their work as hard or risky, 17% thought it monotonous and 23% found it acceptable. 20% of the working children reported having had an accident as a consequence of their work.

The official minimum salary in Burkina Faso is now 30,000 FCFA (US\$42) a month.

In Togo it is noted that child street vendors get 50 to 150 FCFA per day to buy food. The size of the evening meal depends on the day's earnings.

As mentioned before, seven focus group discussions were organized and 35 teachers in total participated in them.

- as domestics: burns while cooking, exposure to sexual abuse with the risk of getting sexually transmitted diseases including AIDS;
- as a street vendor: injuries as a result of road accidents, risk of being forced into criminal activities;
- as carriers of luggage: deformation of the vertebral column, stagnation of growth;
- general fatigue, that makes them less resistant to diseases like malaria and diarrhoea.

The Mali report also mentions that children working on plantations in Côte d'Ivoire had very **limited washing facilities** and therefore got skin diseases easily. Furthermore, the **heat** is intolerable: during the day they work outside in the full sun, and at night they are **housed with 15 to 20 kids in only 3 to 4 square metres!** According to the IPEC/ILO survey on child labour in Burkina Faso conducted in 1997/1998, among the 2000 children interviewed, 81% of those working in the agricultural sector endured difficult climatic conditions.

According to the Burkina Faso report, children working in gold mines have to take **drugs to cope with the hazardous work** they do. Unfortunately, no details of the tasks they are put to or the drugs they take are given.

Family ties severed

When trafficked children are separated from their families and environment, they are deprived of parental affection, influence and control.

It should be noted that with placements in general, families and their children risk losing contact with each other because of the following reasons:

- the family is unaware of the whereabouts of the child from the start;
- the family with whom the child is placed can, at any moment, move to another place;
- the child is moved from one family to another³⁴;
- the child can get lost in transit or while walking around in a strange town.

There is no data available in the different country reports about the number of families losing contact with their children. In the Cameroon study, it is noted that the majority of the children who have been recruited via their parents, still manage to remain in contact with their family, and the majority of these parents know where to find their children. The following cases, presented in the Togo report, prove the contrary.

No trace....

Ablavi (15 years):

"The two of us, my little sister and I, were taken to Gabon. I was placed with one family and my sister with another, that I never met. During the three years that I worked over there, I never saw her again. Every time I asked the lady that took us about her, she told me she was doing fine and that I need not worry. She always gave me the same answer until I had to be repatriated. Today, I still do not know where my little sister can be found."

In Nigeria children are very often transferred from one household to another, so that the intermediary can earn a higher profit per child.

Mr. Nabodja (55 years) has not seen his 6 children since 1989. He heard that they were recruited and transported to Nigeria and Gabon. He tried everything to find them again, but did not succeed. "I'm an old man and there is nothing left that I can do for my children. If I cannot retrace them, my life has been useless", Mr. Nabodja said in tears to the team of interviewers in Kabou.

The lady who arranged their departure, left with 15 children and not one of them has returned. The families of the victims are blaming the family of that lady. She herself, when she heard this, never came back to the village.

Extracts from the Togo report

Mental trauma

In almost all cases, the child had no say in the decision to start work, in the choice of the type of work, the place, or the employer. Being constrained is obviously damaging to the mental health of the child. In addition, cross-border trafficked children find themselves without residence permits, in strange countries with different customs and sometimes with a different language. These factors put the child in a very dependent and delicate situation that has serious psychological consequences.

As described earlier, in the North of Togo it is quite common to send girls to other sub-Saharan countries in order to prepare them for married life. However, when these girls return to their villages they are labelled as promiscuous and are considered to have HIV/AIDS. This social rejection jeopardises the mental health of these girls.

Too young for the load

She is only 8 years old and she has been brought to Accra from Yendi (North Ghana) 5 months ago. She thought that she would be placed as a domestic servant, but instead she is assisting a meat chop vendor on the market. She lives with her employer and her tasks include carrying all the purchases, collecting water, washing the plates and cooking pots. She and her employer leave the house at 4:00 a.m. to be able to reach the market early. Because of the heavy load she has to carry, she falls several times. (This was how she was identified).

Twice a day she is given a couple of chops with hardly any meat. She is to be paid ₵2,000 (30 US cents) a day. However, from her salary the employer deducts the price of the second hand clothing she buys for her, and the rest is collected at the end of each month by the relative that placed her. She did not talk about her parents when asked. She did say that, despite the burdensome nature of her work, she prefers life in Accra to that in the village.

Extract from the Ghana report

In the national reports the following psychological problems were indicated:

- feelings of frustration and revolt;
- behavioural troubles and/or social maladjustment, which can lead to delinquency or consumption of drugs;
- development of serious mental traumas as a consequence of physical, psychological and/or sexual violence, leading to depression.

5.2 Consequences for the communities

The departure of children from the villages as a consequence of trafficking may have negative cultural, economic or demographic effects on the community.

Most of the victims come from rural communities where cultural values are orally transmitted from parent to child, from generation to generation. The rupture of family ties, occurring when a child is trafficked, puts an abrupt end to this process of knowledge transmission.

At the same time, children returning to their villages have a different frame of reference than their community members. This can cause problems during the process of reintegration of the child. Besides, it is not always easy for the family to accept the child back. Since the child had left at the insistence of the parents, the community often blames them if the child shows traces of maltreatment.

In the middle and long term, the departure of children to other countries causes a loss of human resources. The ones that do not return will not contribute to the development of their own countries. The proportion of the aged increases in communities that provide the children and those left behind are not able to shoulder the burden of agricultural work. Besides, since child labour and trafficking affects girls more than boys, an imbalance between the male and female population may result.

6 MEETING THE CHALLENGE

6.1 Recognising the problem

Each of the country reports affirms that trafficking exists both within national boundaries and as a cross-border phenomenon. However, the extent to which it is recognised as a problem differs from country to country.

The **Nigeria** report quotes newspaper articles dating back to 1983 and studies from 1986 on the phenomenon of trafficking.

In **Mali**, a seminar on child trafficking took place in August 1996, in Sikasso, as a response to unprecedented reports of trafficking of Malian children to plantations in Côte d'Ivoire for labour exploitation. A few days later a ministerial meeting on the subject took place in Bamako.

The government of **Togo** has been active in combating the problem of trafficking in children for the past three years.

In **Benin**, a study on trafficking was conducted by Antislavery International in 1998/1999.

According to the **Côte d'Ivoire** study, in 1998, the Parliament brought the phenomenon of child trafficking for labour exploitation to the notice of the government, but no action had been undertaken until recently. A workshop on child trafficking organized by UNICEF in April 2000, has resulted in governmental programmes being planned.

Furthermore, in the sub-regional workshop on child domestic service, organized by UNICEF, in July 1998, in Cotonou, Benin, trafficking in children was also discussed. In December 1999, a seminar on the problem was organized in Douala, Cameroon, with participants from Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Central Africa. This was followed by a ILO-UNICEF sub-regional workshop held at Libreville, Gabon in February 2000 that brought together high-ranking government officials, representatives of workers' and employers' organisations and regional and national NGOs.

6.2 Creating the necessary structures

In several countries committees in favour of children have been established:

- In **Benin**, a national programme in favour of women and children was elaborated in 1993. A National Commission for the Rights of the Child was created in October 1999 to co-ordinate activities in favour of the child. A special group has been created that addresses problems of children in difficult circumstances. Besides, the Ministry of Social welfare and family protection has a special unit for child welfare and the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights has created a unit for juridical protection of children
- In 1993, a Committee for Children was established in **Togo** to inform and sensitise the population about the Rights of the Child and encourage their defence.

- In **Burkina Faso** a National Committee has been established for monitoring the application of the Rights of the Child and a national plan of action for the protection of children has been adopted in 1991. Unfortunately, the report did not contain information on the implementation of this plan.
- The government of **Nigeria** set up a National Child Rights Implementation Committee charged with the responsibility at the Federal level to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Since then state level committees have been set up as well and similar ones should soon be operative at local government and community levels.
- In **Mali**, a new Ministry for Women, Children and the Family has been created and a National Committee on trafficking established in 1998. A National Plan of Action on the development and protection of the child has also been established, and a parliament of children created to closely follow governmental action in this regard.

6.3 The juridical arsenal

Ratification of relevant international Conventions:

All the nine countries of the region have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the two ILO Conventions on forced labour and Ghana, Mali and Togo have recently ratified the ILO Convention on the worst forms of child labour:

International Instruments	Benin	Burkina Faso	Cameroon	Côte d'Ivoire	Gabon	Ghana	Mali	Nigeria	Togo
UN Convention on slavery, 1926	S 1962		S 1962	S 1961		S 1963	S 1973		S 1962
UN Convention for the suppression of traffic in persons and of the exploitation of the prostitution of others, 1950		A 1962	A 1982	A 1999			A 1964		A 1990
Suppl. Convention on abolition of slavery, 1956			A 1984	A 1970		A 1963	A 1973	S 1961	A 1980
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989	R 1990	R 1990	R 1993	R 1991	R 1994	R 1990	R 1990	R 1991	R 1990
African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child	R 1997	R 1992					R 1998		R 1998
ILO Convention no. 29, 1930	R 1960	R 1960	R 1960	R 1960	R 1960	R 1957	R 1969	R 1960	R 1960
ILO Convention no. 105, 1957	R 1961	R 1997	R 1962	R 1961	R 1961	R 1958	R 1962	R 1960	R 1999
ILO Convention no. 138, 1973	C	R 1999	C		C		C		R 1984
ILO Convention no. 182, 1999	C	C			C	R 2000	R 2000	C	R 2000

Registered with the UN as R: Ratified, A: Accession, S: Succession C: ratification being considered

In addition, Burkina Faso reports that they ratified the Convention of The Hague on international kidnapping of children in 1980. Benin reports that they ratified the Convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading punishments or treatments, 1984 and the Convention to abolish all forms of discrimination against women, 1979 as well.

National legislation related to trafficking

There is an absence of specific legislation on trafficking in children for labour exploitation in most of the countries studied. Mali has adopted such legislation and Togo is in the process of enacting it. However, legislation on subjects linked to trafficking, such as working conditions for children or even illicit displacement of children to foreign countries exists. The following overview of the situation mentions the most relevant juridical instruments cited in the country reports and should provide the basis for action at the sub-regional level.

In **Benin**, rules for issuing authorizations for minors (aged below 18) to leave the country is fixed by decree no 95-191 (1995). Accordingly, every adult who wishes to leave the country with a minor has to request permission in writing from the regional authority, on the basis of a recommendation by the chief of the village or the mayor of the community. It is necessary to indicate the motive of the journey, the identity of the person accompanying the minor, as well as the identity of the tutor in the country of destination. A security deposit, on a special bank account of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is also required. This is reimbursed as soon as the child returns to Benin. Otherwise, it can be used for the repatriation of the child. In addition, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Health and Social Protection are drafting legislation on internal as well as cross-border displacement of children.

Article 2 of **Burkina Faso's** Constitution states that slave trade and practices related to slavery, inhuman, cruel and derogatory treatment, physical and moral torture, as well as the maltreatment of children is prohibited and punishable. Penal sanctions are prescribed in case of physical and moral violence against children, kidnapping and prostitution of children. Article 7 of the Social Security Act provides for the right of apprentices to protection against occupational hazards.

The **Cameroon** report lists several instruments concerning child labour:

- decree no 68/DF/253 (1968) stipulates conditions of work for domestics;
- in accordance with ILO Convention No. 138, the minimum age for admission to employment is 14 in general, and 18 for hazardous work³⁵;
- prohibition for women and children to work during the night³⁶;
- decree no 69/DF/287 (1969) on the contract of apprenticeship, declaring that the minimum age for entering apprenticeship is 14 years, and forbidding a tutor, when he/she is single, to lodge an apprentice in his/her house.

Burkina Faso has similar legislation that specifies that a male tutor who is single may not lodge female apprentices in his house. In addition, a tutor who has been condemned to more

Art. 86, Labour Act of Cameroon

Art. 81, *ibid*

than three months in prison is prohibited from lodging apprentices who are minors in his house³⁷.

The application of these legislative measures in **Cameroon** is controlled through labour inspection.³⁸ Employers are obliged to inform the inspector of employment of a child, even if it is only for a trial period or an apprenticeship, and the declaration must be accompanied by a medical certificate of the child. The Labour Act³⁹ stipulates sanctions to be applied in case of violation of this provision or whenever working conditions of children are below standard. Besides, the legislation in Cameroon is based on the principle of **equal pay for equal work** without discrimination on the basis of age. This makes the employment of children less attractive.

The preliminary report of **Gabon** states that the Constitution of Gabon guarantees the protection of children against exploitation and moral, intellectual or physical neglect⁴⁰. Forced labour is prohibited. The minimum age for admission to employment in factories is fixed at 16 years. Exceptions to this rule can only be made by decree, on the basis of a common proposal from three Ministries. Article 178 of the Labour Act provides for medical examination of employees younger than 18 years and, in case of hazardous work, 21 years. Punishments such as penalties or imprisonment are stipulated in the same Act. Legislation concerning child trafficking is not yet well established, but sanctions can be imposed for providing assistance for fraudulent entry into the national territory, by making false declarations or falsifying documents. According to Penal law, prostitution and the debauchery of children is punishable with imprisonment⁴¹.

According to the **Mali** report, it is possible to punish traffickers as well as people exploiting child labour on the basis of articles 187, 188 and 189 of the Penal Code.

In **Togo** a bill was introduced in Parliament that aims at fixing a minimum age for the placement of children and repressive measures against traffickers of children.

Obstacles to enforcement

Ignorance of the legislation is prevalent. This is revealed by the study carried out in **Nigeria**: 22 policy makers that were interviewed declared that legislation on child trafficking did not exist, while 12 declared it did, confirming what police officers and officials from the Federal Ministry of Employment, Labour and Productivity that were interviewed, reported. However, the problem is that although these laws exist, they remain unimplemented.

The complexity and length of judicial procedures, as well as **fear of reprisal** by the accused, discourages quite a number of people from bringing charges against offenders. Besides, many people are ignorant of their rights, whereas others simply do not have the financial means to file a complaint or to go to court. For example, in **Mali**, it is possible, on the basis of articles 187, 188 and 189 of the Penal Code of Mali, to obtain sentences against those who are

Articles 15, 47 and 48, Burkina Faso Labour Act,
Articles 104 – 109, Labour Act of Cameroon,
Articles 82, 86, 90 as far as the conditions of work are concerned, article 167, 168, 190 on punishment of offenders, *ibid*
Article 1, para 17 and 18, Constitution of Gabon
Articles 250-251, 256 and 263 respectively, Penal Code of Gabon

trafficking or exploiting child labour. However, the average time required for such a case is 5 to 7 years.

Some specific lacunae have been pointed out concerning the situation in **Benin**. According to the Constitution of Benin, education is free and compulsory for children aged between 6 and 11 (this has not yet been applied). However, the minimum age for admission to employment is 14 years, which means that there is a gap between the ages of 11 and 14. Furthermore, legislation only applies to children of Beninese nationality, while the problem of trafficking also concerns foreign children trafficked into Benin. Another limitation is that one must be 18 years old to file a case. Since the legal age of admission to employment is 14 years, those between 14 and 18 who are subjected to exploitation or other labour rights violations are unable to denounce them officially.

Moreover, according to the **Cameroon** report, labour legislation pertains to all workers and employers without specification of age or status. There are no specialists on child labour: neither labour inspectors nor juvenile court judges. The same problem occurs in Burkina Faso.

6.4 Political commitments to change

All governments of the sub-region have expressed their willingness to combat the trafficking in children for labour exploitation. Some have adopted national plans of action against trafficking, others have issued directives to the concerned departments.

In **Cameroon**, the following strategies for the protection of the child are part of the solution to the problem of child trafficking for labour exploitation as well:

- declaration of the strategy to combat poverty, adopted in December 1998;
- strategy to reform the social security system, adopted in October 1999;
- the President's commitment made in February 2000 to provide free primary education.

Furthermore, the report recalls the government's commitment to:

- the application of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and
- the national plan of action to combat child labour.

Concerning the application of the Convention on the Rights of the Child however, the report indicates that financial difficulties and the absence of an appropriate structure are obstacles to starting the process. The main objectives of the national plan of action to combat child labour are awareness raising and mobilization of the community; reform and application of the legislation on child labour; development and enforcement of the well-being and protection of children at work; provision of education and vocational training to child labourers.

According to the **Benin** report, directives have been sent to concerned ministerial departments inciting them to combat trafficking in children and government officials have undertaken missions to receiving countries.

In **Mali**, the Ministry for Children and the Family created, in 1998, a National Commission of Reflection on the problem of trafficking in children for labour exploitation. This Commission has made the following recommendations:

- to carry out research on the phenomenon;
- to elaborate a plan of communication;

- to enforce legislation;
- to improve migration control at the borders;
- to repatriate the Malian children working on plantations.

In 1999, the Ministry together with IPEC made an evaluation. The three pronged programme of action now envisaged includes prevention of trafficking; promotion and protection of children; and the reintegration of victims of child trafficking.

In **Togo**, the Minister of Social Affairs issued a directive, in January 1998, to the regional directors of social services and those in charge of security recommending action against trafficking in children in collaboration with communities, associations and NGOs. A National Plan of Action against trafficking in children was formulated in March 1999 by this Ministry. It focuses primarily on:

- gathering information about the phenomenon of child labour and trafficking;
- reinforcing collaborative structures and mechanisms concerned with the combat against trafficking in children and child labour;
- reducing risk factors at community level by sensitising the sending communities and introducing micro-finance programmes.

Apart from some awareness raising activities, the plan of action is not yet operational, mainly because of scarcity of funds.

Agreements between States

In 1961, a Convention was adopted in Antananarivo (Madagascar) on co-operation in juridical matters between, Benin, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Gabon and Côte d'Ivoire, with the intention to strengthen ties in the judicial and legal field, particularly by regular exchange of information concerning juridical institutions, legislation and jurisprudence (article 1).

Benin reports that there is collaboration between the different Interpol services. The **Togo** report mentions that, since October 1984, there is an agreement between Ghana, Benin, Nigeria and Togo, to facilitate the return of children being trafficked and the extradition of traffickers. According to this agreement, if, for example, the Beninese police intercept a convoy of Togolese children being trafficked through Benin to Nigeria or Gabon, the Togolese police should be informed and the children returned. Unfortunately, no further details are provided by the Togo study and the reports of other countries concerned do not make any reference to this agreement.

For the other countries, it seems that no formal interstate collaboration exists as yet. However, as a follow-up to the sub-regional workshop organized in Libreville, Gabon, in February 2000 by the government of Gabon, ILO, and UNICEF, **Nigeria** expressed its willingness to collaborate with other countries in the region. **Cameroon** reported collaboration between sending and receiving countries to follow-up on the repatriation of victims. Moreover, the consular services of Mali in **Côte d'Ivoire** are in constant communication with the ministerial and municipal authorities of certain regions, resulting in several children being repatriated. Besides, associations of Malians residing in Côte d'Ivoire are more and more involved in combating trafficking.

6.5 Programmes for the protection of children

Initiatives taken by governments

In **Nigeria**, a Child Rights Information Bureau has been established by the Ministry of Information, in order to collect and disseminate information on children. A National Social Mobilisation Technical Committee⁴² also disseminates this information and **mobilises citizens** in the defence of children's rights. At present, social mobilisation technical committees, with mobilisation officers of the Ministry of Information at the core, are established at state and local government levels.

In **Benin**, the Brigade for the Protection of Minors is active since 1983 in:

- the prevention of social maladjustment of the young, and
- in the study of offences committed by minors.

Unfortunately, the service suffers due to certain lacunae such as insufficient funding, a lack of staff and inappropriate infrastructure. There are demands to decentralise the Brigade, to make it more visible, to equip it with telephones, computers, vehicles etc. and to provide more personnel. This Brigade has installed a **free telephone line** for denouncing violations of the rights of the child. However, at present, this line covers a range of only 50 km. and should be extended.

In **Cameroon**, there are 318 youth centres that give children an opportunity to develop their creativity and provide vocational training. The report states that besides these, there are Help centres that facilitate the reintegration of young girls who are socially maladjusted. These would be interesting partners for the implementation of the national plan of action against trafficking.

NGO action for child rights

In **Ghana**, the following NGOs work in the field of development and for the rehabilitation of street children, thus contributing to prevention of child trafficking. Since they are potential partners in the national plan of action for combating child trafficking, some of them will be mentioned here⁴³:

- *World Vision International* aims at curbing rural-urban immigration. They believe that the main reasons for youth drifting to the cities is poverty and broken homes;
- The *Ghanian-Danish Community Programme* carries out a wide variety of projects to reduce poverty and to stimulate community development;
- *Catholic Action for Street Children* tries to improve the lives of street children and to protect their rights. It offers sponsorship to children who wish to acquire a trade or to continue their formal education.

6.6 Combating trafficking

Measures taken by the States

Created in collaboration with the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Women's Affairs and UNICEF.

Others mentioned in the Ghana report are: Action aid, Ghana, Street Children's Home, Street Girls' Aid.

Specific programmes to combat the trafficking in children for labour exploitation have been undertaken in **Benin, Mali** and **Togo**.

Missions of members of the Government of **Benin** to receiving countries have been undertaken. In January 1997, the Ministry of Justice created a unit for the juridical protection of the child. This unit monitors juvenile justice cases and carries out research with a view to drafting appropriate legislation. Their efforts to combat trafficking in children include:

- the creation of a **data bank** on trafficking in children;
- **monitoring law suits** of trafficking in children from arrest to judgement;
- the **revision of legislation** on trafficking.

The efficiency of this unit is affected by problems such as: insufficient funding, a deficiency of qualified personnel and the lack of adequate infrastructure.

In December 1999, the Ministry of Social Protection and Family established a unit for Family and Childhood. Its action to combat displacement and trafficking in children is partly funded by UNICEF, within the framework of the programme of social development aid. They plan, in the near future, to create **crisis centres for children** in every department of Benin.

In addition, UNICEF is associated with the following programmes that combat trafficking:

- establishing **local committees** in the rural areas that are known to supply children;
- sensitising the population through **radio and television broadcasts** on trafficking and collecting newspaper cuttings on trafficking in children;
- making women, living in rural or semi-urban areas, aware of their rights and giving them **access to credit** so that they can earn enough to raise their children;
- financially supporting NGOs that facilitate the reintegration of children;
- assisting in the preparation of intergovernmental meetings between the concerned ministries of the governments of Benin and Gabon.

ILO/IPEC has on-going programmes in three of the nine countries, Benin, Burkina Faso and Mali. It will be launching programmes in Ghana, Nigeria, and Togo. Two countries, Cameroon and Gabon, conducted **child labour surveys** in 1998-1999. Côte d'Ivoire has officially requested IPEC for assistance, and a child labour survey is envisaged in the 2000-2001 biennium. The main objectives of the IPEC programme are to:

- support national efforts to combat child labour and to build up capacity to tackle the problem independently;
- give priority to the eradication of the most hazardous and exploitative types of child labour;
- take preventive measures so that new children do not enter into child labour.

Programmes run by NGOs

The Benin report gives examples of programmes run by the following child rights NGOs: *DEI*, *ABAEF*, *CEO*, *Terre des Hommes*, *PIED*, *ESAM* and *GES*⁴⁴. Some of their activities are:

- organization of debates on trafficking in children (*ABAEF*);

DEI: Défense des Enfants-International, ABAEF: Association Béninoise d'Assistance à l'Enfant et à la Famille; CEO: le Carrefour d'Ecoute et d'Orientation de l'Archevêché de Cotonou; Programme Insertion des Enfants Déshérités; ESAM: Enfants Solidaires d'Afrique et du Monde; GES: Groupement Entente et Solidaire.

- elaboration of **training material for teachers** on child trafficking and on awareness raising methods they can use in the community;
- follow-up of children arrested by the police;
- **reintegration** and monitoring of victims of trafficking (*Terre des Hommes, PIED*);
- whenever a child is reintegrated, sensitising parents about trafficking (*PIED*).

Terre des Hommes is an NGO that is active in assisting children in distress in **Togo**. The OASIS Centre, created in 1986 provides temporary shelter to runaway or abandoned children under the age of 15 and strives to reunite them with their families. The centre assists about 650 children per year. In 1996, the first 2 victims of trafficking were identified and assisted. In 1997, 17 repatriated children were received; in 1998, 147 and in 1999, 337 children. During their stay of about two weeks in the centre, victims of trafficking receive medical treatment and counselling. Each of them is accompanied back to his/her family by a social worker who takes this opportunity to sensitise the family and the whole village to the phenomenon of trafficking. The social worker helps the family to plan the reintegration of the child. This generally means admitting him/her to an apprenticeship or an education programme. About a hundred children have been successfully reintegrated. The OASIS centre is the only rehabilitation centre in Togo at present. It is supported by the Ministry of Internal affairs, the Ministry of Social Affairs and BICE⁴⁵, Côte d'Ivoire.

⁴⁵'Bureau International Catholique de l'Enfance'.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The existence of trafficking in children for labour exploitation is now recognised in all nine countries of the sub-region. In some countries, however, the national study was the first one conducted on the theme, while in other countries concrete actions to address the problem have already been undertaken. The governments of the nine countries have expressed their willingness to combat trafficking in children for labour exploitation. They proved their commitment by lending support to the teams that conducted the national studies, by facilitating the organization of a national workshop in each country, by preparing national plans of action to combat the phenomenon that were presented at the sub-regional workshop in Cotonou.

The country reports show the complexity of the phenomenon of trafficking in children with its different causes, mechanisms and consequences. The analysis of the results demonstrates the difficulty of collecting data that relate specifically to trafficking and not to child labour in general. It would be very useful to develop and to train researchers in specific methods to identify the problem more precisely. It is very important to continue the process of information gathering within the countries and to centralize the information for the sub-region. This would make it possible for receiving countries to supply additional information about trafficking routes, about the backgrounds of trafficked children to their countries of origin. Such exchange would also facilitate repatriation. The importance of bilateral collaboration in the repatriation of victims and extradition of traffickers is now recognized. A beginning has already been made through agreements between Côte d'Ivoire and Mali; Benin and Gabon; Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria.

In all the countries studied, poverty is recognized as the main factor that forces parents to send their child with an intermediary. The decision is taken without considering the consequences, or counting the price they will pay in future, for they simply do not have a choice. The country studies showed that children are trafficked from as young as 5 years. The majority of trafficked children come from large, poorly educated families of more than 5 children, living in rural areas. Both monogamous as well as polygamous families are susceptible to trafficking. In general, girls are placed as domestics or street traders while boys are put to work on plantations, in construction or mine sites. **Both girls and boys work in prostitution.**

The intermediary can in some cases be a relative or a person known to the family, and in other cases a stranger or even a foreigner. He/she promises to find the child a paid job and sometimes offers a small amount to the parents as an advance. In Côte D'Ivoire and Cameroon, "official matrimonial agencies" were found, where it is the parents that pay for the placement. The intermediaries identified in the studies were mostly above 30 years old. While Cameroon reported that they were literate, in Côte d'Ivoire, "all the Burkinabe and Malian intermediaries were illiterate". The profit of the intermediary comes either from the sale of the child or from collecting the whole or a part of the child's salary.

Employers can be found in several sectors like bars or restaurants, garages, plantations and private households. In some countries, like Gabon and Côte d'Ivoire, it was found that employers who have themselves emigrated, attract children of their own nationality e.g. Malian children are trafficked to Côte d'Ivoire to work on plantations owned by Malians. Children are sometimes paid a salary that is often collected by the intermediary, and

sometimes work for nothing because they have to repay the costs incurred by the employer. In these cases, the child is never informed about the amount due or the time it will take to repay the costs and children can end up working two years or more without any income.

Children separated from their families lose all protection and are completely dependent on their intermediary or employer. In addition, cross-border trafficking takes the child to an unknown country, in which, sometimes, another language is spoken and where the child is without a residence permit. Employers take advantage of the precariousness of the child's situation to use him/her for whatever they want. It has been shown that working conditions are generally miserable, e.g. long working days with insufficient pauses, working with dangerous tools or substances in an unhealthy environment.

The phenomenon of trafficking makes children lose their human dignity. They are traumatised by abominable working conditions, ill treatment and disease and develop a feeling of being outcasts of society. This can lead to delinquency, consumption of drugs or long term mental disorders. It is therefore thought that victims of trafficking should be given psychological support to help them overcome their trauma immediately upon release as well as after repatriation and reintegration into their family. The experience of rehabilitation centres, such as the *OASIS* centre in Togo, is worth replicating.

At present, preventive measures against trafficking in children are still at a preliminary stage although the problem is serious and widespread. Adult literacy courses can make people aware of their rights and about the means to defend them through the legal system. Schooling can reduce the number of children being trafficked if pupils are informed of the dangers and damage that results from trafficking.

There is an absence of legislation in almost all the countries on this theme and national policies for the application of ratified conventions or other international instruments are just being formulated. Besides, procedures for prosecuting those who organize trafficking are complicated and out of reach of the victims. Children aged below eighteen years are not entitled to file cases; not only parents but also professionals working for children are either ignorant or mistrustful of the juridical system. Besides, juridical procedures can take a long time and can be expensive. In some countries, like Cameroon for example, there are no juvenile courts. Furthermore, despite the minimum age for employment being laid down by law, child labour is still prevalent. The institutional framework and labour inspection capacity is insufficient to fine employers when they are in breach of law. Moreover, the fact that in most countries except Benin and Togo, no special authorisation is required for minors to cross borders facilitates trafficking. If the situation remains thus, trafficking will flourish.

Towards a sub-regional plan of action

This synthesis report is part of the first phase of the project entitled "*Combating the trafficking in children for labour exploitation in West and Central Africa*", described in Appendix I. Its purpose is to formulate, on the basis of the country reports, recommendations that will be incorporated into a sub-regional plan of action that was discussed at Cotonou and that will be implemented in the second phase of the project.

Research

The country studies contributed towards mapping the phenomenon of trafficking in the sub-region. However, more detailed research is required as a basis for action. This requires:

- Better organization of files and follow-up of cases concerning child trafficking;
- The creation of a data bank on child trafficking at the Ministry of Justice of each country;
- Identification of regions and places within each country that supply children for trafficking in order to be able to carry out surprise checks and identify networks of traffickers;
- The creation of free telephone lines to facilitate the denunciation of instances of trafficking or of child labour;
- Development and design of special research methods and techniques to conduct further research on child trafficking.

Awareness raising

In order to spread information on trafficking as widely as possible, governments and social partners can:

- Identify popular television and radio programmes which can broadcast information on trafficking in children for labour exploitation, (the television programme in Côte d'Ivoire "*Faut pas fâcher*" is an example);
- Publish results of studies and cases of victims of trafficking in the press;
- Encourage NGOs working with victims of trafficking to send articles to newspapers, ask policemen to inform journalists whenever victims of trafficking are found, get state institutions to publish background information about ratified human rights conventions;
- Sensitize the population through street shows, preferably in the local language, or by feature and documentary films in which victims could tell their stories;
- Inform through personal contacts, e.g. conversations with parents or meetings in the village whenever a child is reinserted;
- Make information on relevant international instruments like the Conventions on the Rights of the Child and the ILO Conventions (138, 182) accessible to the public in easily understandable and attractive forms;
- Organize meetings about working conditions in the target rural areas with participants of the following groups: female and youth associations, village communities, trade unions, religious leaders, teachers, social workers, police officers, representative of the NGOs, etc., in order to construct local plans of action.

Training

This comprises:

- Training on research methods;
- Specific training programmes on trafficking for teachers, police personnel, customs officials, judges, social workers. Efforts should be made to mainstream education on trafficking into training institutes of these cadres;
- Training through visits to existing rehabilitation centres that assist victims of trafficking in order to learn from their experiences.

Strengthening the juridical framework

This can be done by:

- Adapting the juridical framework to the child trafficking issue;
- Adapting national legislation to international standards and accelerating the ratification process of relevant instruments;
- Monitoring the application of ratified conventions and producing regular reports on their implementation;
- NGOs should contribute by formulating propositions for additions or changes in legislation;
- Training of special social workers and magistrates for child trafficking cases;
- Facilitating the access of children to the juridical system.

Strengthening of the institutional framework

This implies:

- Reinforcing the capacity of the customs, police, labour inspection and the courts;
- Improving collaboration between the customs on both sides of the border;
- Improving inter-ministerial collaboration between Ministries of Labour, Justice, Social affairs, Foreign affairs and Internal affairs;
- Reinforcing trade unions and promoting inspections at places known for child labour and trafficking in children.

Assistance to the victims

There is an urgent need for the:

- Creation of temporary shelters at places identified as transit points for trafficked children, particularly at borders;
- Creation of rehabilitation centres in the sending regions of countries that can follow-up on children released;
- Reinforcement of existing centres;
- Supporting and replicating Child rights monitoring centres, such as those of ANPCCAN in Nigeria, that play a watch dog role.

Sub-regional and bilateral actions

Governments can actively combat trafficking by:

- Setting up a sub-regional commission that will collect and compare data from the different countries and co-ordinate action;
- Encouraging ministerial collaboration between countries with the help of international organizations;
- Proposing that sub-regional institutions such as the CEDEAO create a special fund for sub-regional and national programmes to combat trafficking in children;
- Organizing negotiations between sending and receiving countries;
- Promoting collaboration between consulates/embassies of sending countries and the national authorities in receiving countries, in order to facilitate the repatriation of trafficked children to their home countries, e.g. Malian and Burkinabe consulate in Côte d'Ivoire;
- Reinforcing collaboration between police through Interpol;
- Elaborating and applying rules on the circulation of minors for both, children leaving a country, as well as for foreign children entering a country;

- Harmonizing juridical provisions and procedures of the countries of the sub-region;
- Developing linkages between the different national TV and radio stations so that programmes on child trafficking can be broadcast in several countries at the same time.

Long term recommendations

Country reports contained recommendations that go beyond the next phase of the project and are hence not included in the above sub-regional plan of action.

The measures recommended include:

- The creation of family planning centres, since large families increase the risk of children becoming victims of trafficking;
- Improvements in the registration of births and the issue of birth certificates so that minors are easily identified;
- Free and obligatory schooling for children between 6 and 14 years old with introduction of student identity cards;
- Access to drinking water and free primary healthcare for all in the whole country;
- Poverty alleviation through access to agricultural inputs, improvement of productivity and availability of micro-finance in the rural areas;
- The obligation for minors to have an authorization for travelling outside the country, as is now done in Benin. This should be standard for all the countries of the sub-region.
- For transit countries, the creation of an alarm system between border check points;

As far as institutions are concerned, the following recommendations were made:

- The creation of Ministry of Children;
- Establishing of a juvenile court with a specialized magistrate;
- The creation of Brigades for minors.

It is through concerted action of the governments and social partners of the region that these countries can rid themselves of this contemporary form of slavery. Although poverty and lack of education are the root causes of the phenomenon, the elimination of child trafficking cannot be postponed until these problems are resolved. Ending the exploitation of children and particularly, trafficking is a matter of urgency, for, in the words of Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations:

“A child in danger is a child that cannot wait”.

BI BLI OGRAPHY

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Appendix I ILO/IPEC sub-regional project

"Combating trafficking in children for labour exploitation in West and Central Africa"

This project, launched in October 1999 covers the following nine countries of Western and Central Africa: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria and Togo. It is funded by the Department of Labour of the United States of America.

Phase 1:

The following activities were planned for the first ten months of the project:

- (i) operational reviews in nine African countries which provide an analysis of the problem, the scope and current trends of trafficking (within or across borders) in children for the purpose of exploitative work;
- (ii) workshops at the national level to review the findings;
- (iii) compilation of a sub-regional synthesis report summarising the main findings of the nine operational reviews and setting out of strategies for action at the national and sub-regional level;
- (iv) the organization of a sub-regional consultation to discuss the findings of the synthesis report and adopt a strategy for action. The strategy should mobilise key actors, the government and non-governmental organizations to jointly prevent the problem. It should complement ongoing initiatives to rehabilitate child victims;
- (v) wide dissemination of the strategy in French and English among policy-makers, practitioners, target groups at risk and the public in general, through the print media, radio and meetings in order to prepare for phase 2.

Phase 2:

In the implementation phase, demonstration projects will be set up to:

- (i) carry out intensive awareness-raising campaigns among the groups at risks, their communities and society at large focusing on areas of law enforcement, legislation and policy-making; enforcement mechanisms, including the establishment of community 'watch-dog' systems;
- (ii) mobilise the participation and strengthen the capacity of various social partners to implement successful interventions;
- (iii) provide multi-disciplinary preventive and rehabilitation programmes (health care, counselling, education and training, social integration, provision of alternatives for children at risk and their parents).

All individual action programmes will be carried out by existing and new ILO-IPEC partner organizations, as part of ongoing IPEC country programmes.

The intended beneficiaries of the project are children under the age of 18, priority being given to the most vulnerable children, i.e. those under 12 years of age and girls.

Appendix II

COUNTRY PROFILES

Benin

The population is composed of about 42 ethnic groups that speak approximately 50 dialects. The main groups are the Fon, Adja, Yoruba, Dendi and Batonou. Several religions are practised in Benin: animism (35%), Christianity (35%), Islam (21%), other religions (2%). The country is divided into 8 zones: the West Atacora is the poorest whereas the extreme North is the richest. 70% of the population is concentrated in the South of the country, which has a population density of about 250 inhabitants per km² compared to 13 per km² in the North. The population is young: 49% is younger than 15 years and only 6% is older than 60 years. The life expectancy is 54.2 years: 56.8 for women and 51.8 for men. Far more people live in rural (64%) than in urban areas (36%) and the agricultural sector (including fishing) employs almost 62% of the population.

In 1992, 52.7% of the population aged between 10 and 19 years worked, most of them in the agricultural sector, assisting in family businesses. Education levels are low: in 1996⁴⁶, 56% of children went to school, 68.4% were boys and 42.7% were girls. Of the population over 15 years old, 65% was illiterate in 1994.

Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso is one of the poorest countries in the world: According to the UNDP Human Development Index, 1999 it ranks 171st out of 174 countries. Almost 91% of the population is engaged in cattle rearing or agriculture. In 1996, the contribution of agriculture to the Gross National Product (GNP) was 40%, the industrial sector contributed only 18% while that of the administrative sector was 40%, although it employed only 4% of the population. The informal sector (e.g. street trade) plays a very important role in day-to-day life.

Cameroon

Cameroon is situated in Central Africa, with Chad, Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Republic of Central Africa and Nigeria as neighbouring countries. Three of those countries, i.e. Chad, Congo and the Republic of Central Africa, are involved in internal conflicts, resulting in migration towards Cameroon. Consequently Cameroon has a high proportion of immigrants, about 4 million in 1996 from the neighbouring countries as well as some of Western and Asian origin.

There are 230 ethnic groups belonging to three major cultural groups: the Bantous mainly living in the West, Central, Southwest and coastal part of the country; the Bantoïdes in the West and Northwest; and the Sudanese and neo-Sudanese in the North, the extreme-North and the Adamaoua province. In 1997, 53% of the population lived in rural areas. Life expectancy is 59 years: 61.3 for women and 56.7 for men.

According to UNICEF.

Cameroon went through an economic crisis from 1985 to 1995 that caused many workers to be dismissed. The estimated unemployment rate is 17%, while in Douala it is 35% and in Yaounde 25%. Half of the population lives below the poverty line.

Côte d'Ivoire

Côte d'Ivoire has 60 ethnic groups that can be divided into 6 major groups: Sénoufo, Lobi, Dan, Krou, Mandé and Akan. It is characterised by the large proportion of youth: 48% of the population is below 15 years.

Agriculture is the most important sector. Out of a total area of 322,462 sq. km, 167,100 sq. km is used for agriculture. It contributed 33% of the GNP in 1998 and employed almost 50% of the population. The industrial sector contributes 25.7% of the GNP, while the civil service represents 41.3%, and employs 25% of the population. During the eighties, there was an economic recession, from which the country has recovered. This is reflected in an exceptionally high annual growth rate in the three years preceding the coup d'état: 7% in 1996, 13.7% in 1997 and 14.5% in 1998!

Ghana

In a developing country like Ghana, the fast rate of urban growth in recent times is the combined result of population growth, poor resource distribution and a decline in production in the rural areas. People are stimulated to migrate from rural to urban areas looking for jobs. Still about 71% of the population resides in the rural areas.

Mali

Mali is an under-populated country with only 10 million inhabitants living on 1,241,000km². About 80% of the population lives in the rural areas. Very many ethnic groups live there. They can be grouped into three occupational categories: the cultivators made up of the Bambara, Malinké, Dogon and Sénoufo; the cattle-raisers and therefore nomads such as the Peulh, Tamasheq and Arabic Moor; the fishermen such as the Bozo, Somono and Sorko.

There are only two seasons, with the rainy season lasting 2 to 4 months between June and September. The harvest takes place at the end of the rainy season. In the dry season, young people migrate from rural to urban areas, in search of temporary work. Agriculture is the most important occupation in which 80% of the population is engaged followed by cattle rearing (11% of the GNP) and fishing.

The principle religion in Mali is Islam, but animists, Catholics and Protestants are also found. 67% of the population is younger than 25 years. Only 20% of the population is literate. In the early nineties, less than a quarter of the children aged between 8 and 14 years attended school.

Nigeria

Nigeria is the most densely populated country in Africa with over 113 million inhabitants. There are three major ethnic groups: the Hausa-Fulani, the Igbos and the Yorubas. The population under the age of 5 is estimated at 17.1 million, 19.3 million children are aged between 6 and 11.

The Nigeria report states that Nigerians are known for their great propensity for trade and travel, particularly those of the North who have long been associated with the Arab world. The civil war caused many Nigerians to flee to neighbouring countries like Gabon, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, etc.

After the civil war, crude oil became the main export commodity bringing in 90% of the foreign exchange. Unfortunately the so-called "oil doom" set in and an economic recession followed. The down surge of prices of petrol and the continuing military rule in Nigeria, which resulted in several sanctions, had a devastating impact on the economy. This resulted in a low rate of employment. The growth rate is now 6.2% and the average annual income is US\$ 270. About 31% of Nigerian children have no access to basic education. 58% of boys and 44% of girls are chronically undernourished. 35% of these children are aged between 3 and 4 years and 12% of them are less than 6 months old.

Togo

Togo is a small country (surface of 56,600 sq. km) in which 65% of the population lives in the rural areas. The economy is heavily dependent on agriculture, providing employment to 50% of the labour force. It is mentioned however, that the contribution of the agriculture to the GNP is only 40%.

In the South of Togo there are two dry seasons, from November to March and from July to August, while in the North there is only one dry season from November to April. Farmers migrate towards the urban areas in large numbers during the dry seasons.

The Togo report states that the economic difficulties faced by the country are reflected in the low rates of education: in 1998, 33% of the male and 63% of the female population was illiterate. The informal sector (street traders, porters, etc.) is flourishing and can be seen as one of the strategies for survival. According to the ILO, 25% of children in Togo are working.

Appendix III

Results of the Cameroon study

Country of origin	Male	Female	< than 12	12-13 years	14-16 years	17-18 years	Total	%
Cameroon	121	92	5	11	91	106	213	64,7
Nigeria	37	10	6	13	18	10	47	14,3
Togo	3	4	1	2	3	1	7	2,1
Congo	3	5	0	2	5	1	8	2,4
RCA	4	0	0	1	1	2	4	1,2
Chad	9	2	0	4	5	2	11	3,3
Niger	11	3	3	1	7	3	14	4,3
Benin	3	18	9	10	2	0	21	6,4
Others	3	1	0	1	3	0	4	1,3
Total	194	135	24	45	135	125	329	100,0

Table A: Ages and nationalities of the 329 working children interviewed in Cameroon

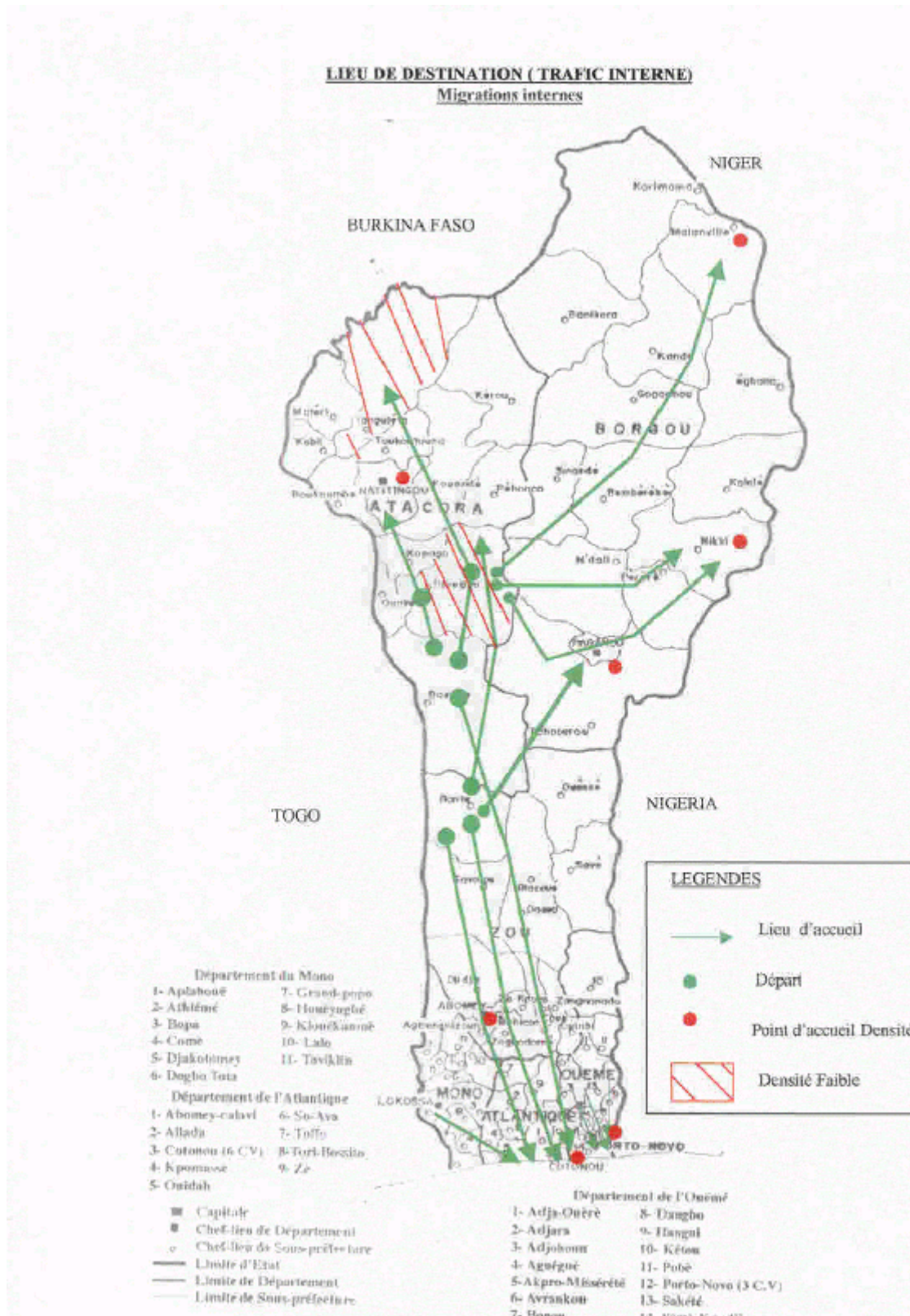
Age group	Yes, voluntary	No, involuntary	No answer	Total
< 12 years	3	20	1	24
12 - 13 years	9	33	3	45
14 - 16 years	73	59	3	135
17 - 18 years	85	38	2	125
Total	170	150	9	329

Table B: Results regarding the freedom to choose their work

Reasons given	< 12 years	12 - 13 years	14 - 16 years	17 - 18 years	Total	%
Pressure of parents	19	24	42	16	101	67.3
Survival of the family	0	2	3	1	6	4
Improvement of living conditions	1	3	9	17	30	20
No answer	0	4	5	4	10	6.7
Total	20	33	59	38	150	100

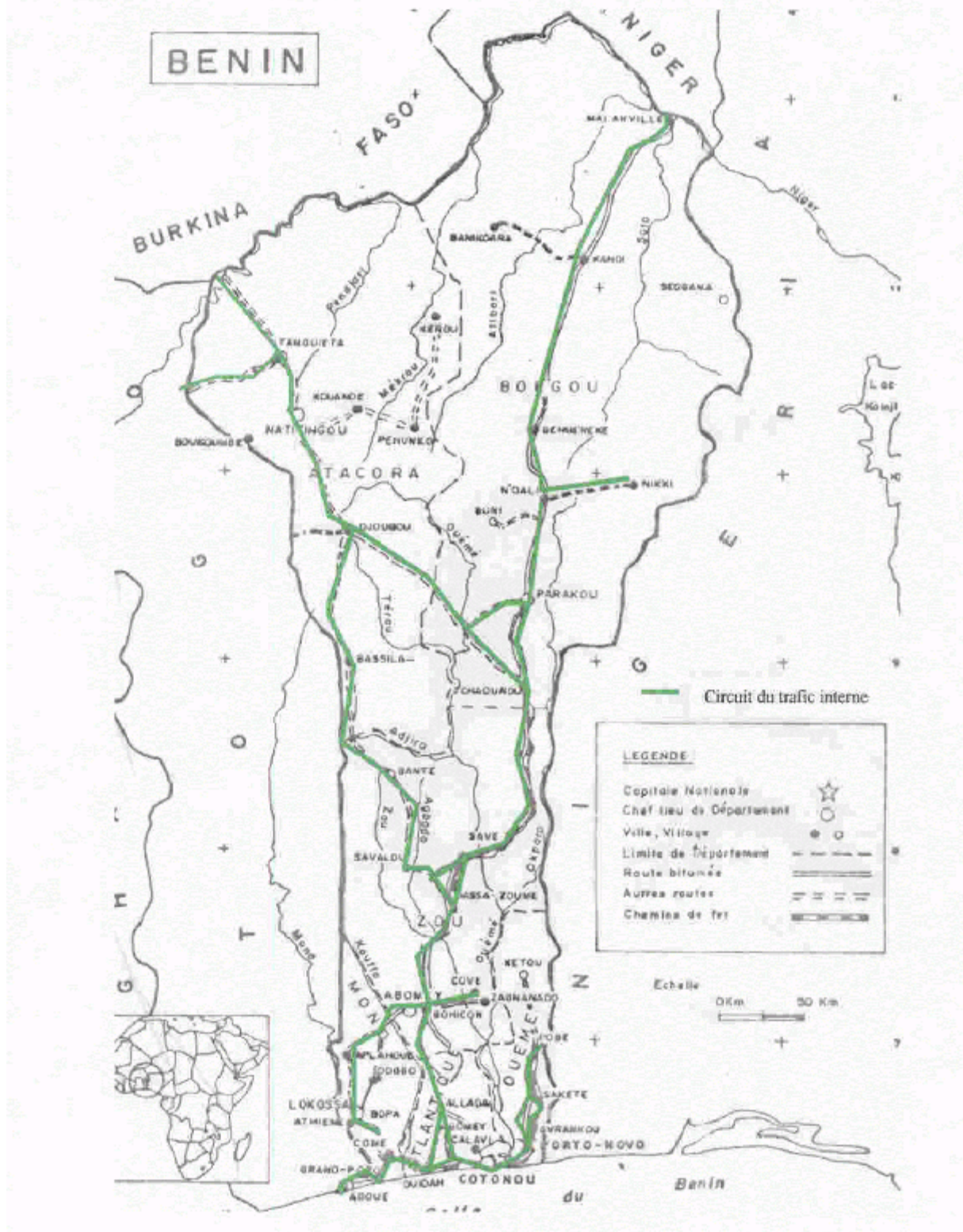
Table C: Reasons that forced them to work

Appendix IV Benin: Map of places of destination



Appendix V Map of trafficking routes in Benin

Itinéraires : Trafic des enfants à l'intérieur du Bénin



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