



INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION (ILO)
INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM FOR THE ELIMINATION OF CHILD LABOUR (IPEC)

ALBANIA:
CHILD TRAFFICKING IN TIRANA, VLORA, KORCA AND ELBASAN
A RAPID ASSESSMENT SURVEY

COMPILED BY
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GENERAL OVERVIEW

1. GENERAL STUDY DESCRIPTION

Human trafficking is an especially pernicious form of criminal activity which has increased alarmingly in Europe over the past decade. The trafficking of human beings is unacceptable; child trafficking is intolerable.

Trafficking of children is linked to the worst forms of child labour, as defined in the The International Labour Organization (ILO) Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No.182). The ILO views trafficking as an assault on human dignity, a denial of a person's opportunity to make the most of his or her resources and to contribute to the economic development of his or her nation. The exploitation suffered by victims of trafficking is contrary to "full, productive and freely chosen employment" – even more so for trafficked children, who often suffer the loss of their potential to become productive adults.

As in most Eastern European Countries, child trafficking in Albania emerged in the early '90s and today follows the logic of a market economy with supply and demand profits and constraints. Since 1990, Albania has undergone significant political and social change. Major internal and international migration flows developed in the country, encompassing all social strata of the population. One of the main driving factors behind the current high emigration rate is the increasing difficulty to find suitable stable employment at home. Many Albanians responded to rising domestic unemployment by seeking work abroad; the number of emigrant workers increased from 110,000 in 1991 to 428,000 in 1996, while the domestic labour force declined from 1.57 million to 1.27 million over the same period.

These factors have contributed to Albania's becoming a major source and transit country for the trafficking of women and children since the collapse of communism in 1990. In this context, trafficking of women and children in and through Albania remains a major problem, and as a lucrative activity it is unlikely to decrease on its own or be defeated without enhanced international and intra-national cooperation.

In this context, ILO through the International Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC), in collaboration with other relevant ILO departments (DECL and MIGRANT), launched a sub-regional programme entitled "Prevention and Reintegration Programme to Combat Trafficking of Children for Labour and Sexual Exploitation in the Balkans and Ukraine". The countries participating in the project are: Albania, Romania, Moldova and Ukraine.

Due to the complexity of the phenomenon and the lack of data available, it was decided that the programme would be divided into two phases:

- The first aims to identify a strategy for concerted action through a situation analysis and appraisal of existing responses in the four participating countries through Rapid Assessment Surveys (RAS);

- The second consists of the implementation of a comprehensive programme for prevention and reintegration of child trafficking victims in the Balkans and Ukraine.

In the framework of this study, definitions of the main operational terms: “human trafficking”; “child labour”; and “worst forms of child labour” are as follows:

*“Human trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, harbouring or receipt of persons either by means of threat or use of kidnapping, force, fraud, deception or coercion or by the giving or receiving of unlawful payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purposes of sexual exploitation or forced labour”.*¹

The UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons points out that, as far as children are concerned, “recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered ‘trafficking in persons’ even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in the definition”.

“Child labour refers to work that:

- is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and
- interferes with their schooling:
 - by depriving them of the opportunity to attend school;
 - by obliging them to leave school prematurely; or
 - by requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work”²

“Worst forms of child labor include:

- (a) All forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom, as well as forced or compulsory labor, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;
- (b) The use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;
- (c) The use, procurement or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in relevant international treaties; and
- (d) Work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children, such harmful work to be determined by national authorities”.³

¹ “ UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially women and Children – Article 3, December 2000. It represents a direct attempt at comprehensively defining trafficking in international law”

² “Eliminating the worst forms of child labour – Handbook for Parliamentarians, 2002”

³ “ ILO Convention N0.182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour

1.1 Objectives

The main objective is to provide a rapid assessment of the current situation concerning child trafficking from Albania to other countries for labor or sexual exploitation by means of qualitative techniques.

The study focuses on the following:

- Determination of push and pull factors influencing child trafficking,
- Sketching of profiles for different categories of children who have been trafficked or risk being trafficked,
- Clarification of the trafficking process - recruitment, transaction, agents, transport
- Various ways of exploiting children through the depiction of the daily life of trafficked children, work done, control exerted by traffickers,
- Ways of escaping the trafficking net and the process of rehabilitation and social reintegration of children redeemed from trafficking.

In addition the study provides:

1. an overview of Albanian legislation on trafficking with a focus on children,
2. current government and non-government policies addressing child trafficking;
3. related institutions concerned with implementation of anti-trafficking policies,
4. the strata of children most vulnerable to trafficking,
5. experiences of trafficked children;

1.2 Methodology

The study is guided by the methodology of the Manual for Rapid Assessment on Trafficking in Children for Labour and Sexual Exploitation in the Balkans and Ukraine, prepared by the FAFO Institute for Applied International Studies.

The methodology developed for the present rapid evaluation survey did not allow production of representative data, in a statistical sense, as samples were chosen by non-probability protocol. The objective of the present survey is to produce significant data concerning the trafficking of children.

Research methodology and tools were designed in these stages:

- 1) Tools were modified based on results from the pilot-test; with the new set submitted to researchers before the training for comment and review;
- 2) Tools were modified according to researchers' suggestions;
- 3) Questionnaires and interview guidelines were reviewed during the training workshop for researchers in Budapest.

Various categories of respondents

Trafficked released children were the core, but not the only group, of respondents. Three main groups were interviewed - children, parents or caretakers, and key informants.

Children

Respondents were boys and girls under 18 years old and/or boys or girls over 18 who fell into trafficking when they were under 18.

In addition to trafficked released children, never trafficked children were interviewed. Among those never trafficked, children were targeted with similar backgrounds to those who were trafficked, i.e. experiencing conditions that presumably exposed them to trafficking. The objective of interviewing never trafficked children was to understand:

- to what extent they had been exposed to trafficking or approached by traffickers or coerced;
- reasons determining why these particular children had not been trafficked;
- their knowledge and awareness of trafficking; and
- their attitudes towards children who were trafficked.

Parents

Parents were included due to the presumed key role they do or do not play in terms of prevention and reintegration, and their possible implication, voluntarily or not, in the trafficking of their children.

Three categories of parents were interviewed:

- a) Parents of trafficked released children;
- b) Parents of currently trafficked children;
- c) Parents of never trafficked children.

Among parents of never trafficked children, those with similar socio-economic status to those with trafficked children were targeted. Interviewing parents in this category aimed at:

- exploring whether they had attempted to find a job for their children (a scenario that may lead to trafficking),
- assessing to what extent their children have been exposed to traffickers and
- assessing their knowledge about and perception of trafficked children.

Key informants

These included people, professionals or otherwise, who were either directly involved in the lives of children trafficked or at risk of being trafficked, or who had particular knowledge of trafficking. They were representatives of political and administrative authorities, assistance organization staff, health, education and other social services personnel, local community leaders, academics, or anyone with specific relevant knowledge of trafficking.

Through interviewing key informants, the aims were to:

- a) get feedback and discuss preliminary findings,
- b) expose various scenarios, situations, arguments,

- c) gather information about what is done to prevent, release and reintegrate trafficked children,
- d) find out what works, what does not work, what could work under which conditions, and
- e) explore the limitations and challenges.

Key informants, including social workers, government representatives, NPO leaders, teachers, medical doctors and senior police officials were selected by researchers according to their level of knowledge concerning the problem of trafficking.

Including varied research tools

The description and analysis of trafficking of children is based on:

- Standardised information from questionnaires;
- Qualitative information from semi-structured interviews (with both individuals and groups);
- Existing information, especially the reviewing of programmes for prevention of trafficking and reintegration of trafficked children.

Standardised information: the questionnaires

83 (62+21) questionnaires provided standardized information designed to reveal the relationship between important variables, allowing presentation of analysis and comparison of different locations through data and tables.

	Gender:					
	Male	Female	Elbasan	Korce	Tirane	Vlore
Age:						
10	1	.	.	.	1	.
11	3	.	.	1	1	1
12	4	2	1	3	1	1
13	5	2	4	2	1	.
15	2	2	1	.	1	2
16	.	1	.	.	.	1

Table: Age by gender by district for Never Trafficked children.

	Gender:					
	Male	Female	Elbasan	Korce	Tirane	Vlore
Age:						
9	1	.	.	.	1	.
10	2	.	.	1	1	.
11	3	1	1	2	1	.
12	5	1	2	3	1	.
13	5	1	1	2	3	.
14	5	1	1	3	1	1
15	6	1	4	2	1	.
16	4	3	2	2	3	.
17	2	4	2	.	2	2
18	4	2	2	.	1	3
19	2	2	1	.	.	3
20	2	1	.	.	1	2
21	1	1	.	.	.	2
22	.	1	.	.	.	1

Table: Age by gender by district for Trafficked released children.

Qualitative information: the semi-structured interviews

The main objective of semi-structured interviews was to delve deeper into information provided by the questionnaires. Semi-structured interviews enabled researchers to take into account specific details, i.e. of the respondent or the scenario of recruitment. This instrument also allowed discussion of topics not addressed in questionnaires, particularly sensitive issues that might be avoided by the respondent if they appeared in a questionnaire.

Interviews were conducted in four Albanian cities: Tirana, Elbasan, Vlora and Korça. The selection was based on the following criteria:

- geographic,
- demographic,
- living standard,
- level of unemployment,
- internal migration and emigration,
- presence of Roma and Egyptian communities,
- the spread of the trafficking phenomenon and street children, and
- the presence of NPOs involved in combating trafficking of children.



Availability sampling was mainly used for the interviewees. Among those interviewed were children who live in rehabilitation centers, children working in the streets or who have been redeemed from trafficking and work in the streets, and children's parents who agreed to collaborate (living mainly in the suburban areas).

Qualitative information: group discussions

Compared with other the methods of gathering information, group discussions had three advantages:

- 1) Opinions and rationalizations were more informative and intelligible;
- 2) Opportunity to test preliminary findings and hypotheses and receive feedback;
- 3) Topics of relevance that were not included in questionnaires and interview guidelines came out since the group dynamic makes discussion less structured than interviewing an individual.

A total of twelve focus group discussions were organized, the majority in Tirana. Group discussions were conducted with several categories of respondents: trafficked released children, parents of still-trafficked children, parents of never trafficked children, and never trafficked children.

Case studies. Three case studies were developed. One focused on a child who was trafficked, the second on the relations between parents and the trafficking phenomenon and the third on the Roma and Egyptian population - the most vulnerable strata for child trafficking.

Tools and respondents

Questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and group discussions were combined as follows:

	Questionnaires	Semi-structured interviews	Group discussions
Trafficked Released Children	61	20	2
Never Trafficked Children	22	10	4
Parents of Trafficked Released Children		10	2
Parents of Trafficked Children		5	
Parents of Never Trafficked Children		10	4
Key Informants		8	
Total	83	63	12

The choice of tools and corresponding categories of respondents was based on information gleaned from the pilot-test work done in Moldova, relevant fieldwork, and on the training workshop for researchers that took place in Budapest (28th October-1st November 2002).

Preparatory phase of the research

Training

One representative of the National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) and one representative of Terre des Hommes received a 5-day training course in Budapest, Hungary. This course covered various aspects of the survey:

- Objectives - final output and rules for doing research with children;
- Tools - review of questionnaires and interview guidelines;
- Respondents - selection criteria;

- Reporting information - interview notes, résumés, case studies.

Questionnaires and interview guidelines were made available to the national team one week before the training for comments and suggestions. The training also allowed for continuing discussions, so that the tools could be finalised after the course.

Training of interviewers

Interviewers received a one-day training from representatives of the NGOs selected as implementers of the project in the field: “Enfants du Monde” -Tiranë, “Help for Children” - Korçë and Elbasan, and “Hearth” - Vlorë.

Researchers made sure that the interviewers were given proper training and instructions for the use of the tools prior to doing fieldwork, and special weight was given to the ethical aspects involved in a survey of this kind.

Background information

The consultants of the national team initially collected background information to gain deeper insight into details of trafficking in Albania. This included both written sources and information obtained through discussions with experts, local NGOs, UN agencies together with semi-structured interviews with key informants.

The written, or secondary, data material included:

- Published work on trafficking;
- Reports and documents available at NGOs and other institutions;
- Newspaper clippings and articles in newspapers;
- National laws and regulations on trafficking human beings in general and on children in particular.

Numerous documents were used to complement the information such as: reports and publications of local and international NPOs, conference materials, studies conducted by the Ministry of Public Order, information from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, various articles regarding relevant legislation as well as data from the Albanian daily press.

Field interviewing

Fieldwork was based on the questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and group discussions. Trafficked released children and never trafficked children at risk of trafficking completed 83 questionnaires. In addition, 63 semi-structured interviews were done with trafficked released children, never trafficked children, parents of trafficked and never trafficked children, and key informants. Twelve group discussions were held in Tirana, Vlora, Elbasan and Korca.

Data analysis and report writing

Statistical information was processed crossing different variables in order to ensure a more profound analysis. Data collected from interviews was qualitatively interpreted.

The results of the questionnaires reflect various mechanisms involved in the trafficking of children, rather than the situation in the country as a whole. In a survey with a representative sample of respondents, the percentages derived from data files make sense to the extent that presumptions can be made about the sample population.

1.3 Problems and limitations

The procedure used for the selection of interviewees was that of non-probable sampling, due to the fact that accurate data on trafficking is lacking; the population of children redeemed from trafficking cannot be fully identified, and girls exploited for prostitution have been especially difficult to reach. The level of difficulty increased during the identification process due to mobility - part of this category is often re-trafficked or crosses borders illegally.

The researchers had difficulty with publicized data not always corresponding to the reality of the situation or varying from one institution to another. There is also a disparity between the data gathered from official government sources and that of NPOs. Additionally, there is a lack of accurate data on internal migration and emigration. Incomplete information at the local level leaves gaps with regard to living standard, level of unemployment and housing situation of the populace of the chosen cities.

There were difficulties in conducting interviews, especially with the 61 children returned from trafficking, because the questionnaire was lengthy and often tiresome; interruptions did not guarantee resumption the next day. Another hindrance was the lack of familiarity with the interviewing technique and the low education and cultural level of those interviewed, especially the parents. This was a handicap to obtaining useful results from group discussions.

Oftentimes, the interviewers noted tension and fear “to speak out”, mostly because of the presence of participants. This was particularly true when talking about trafficking for prostitution; for this reason data is scarcer on this aspect of exploitation.

Some shortcomings were also the result of limitations in the methodology itself. The subjectivity of the interviewer in selecting individuals is high and the possibility to generalize outcomes is limited.

1. 4. Research team

Ms. Saemira Gjipali (Pino), Dr. of Social Sciences, with 25 years of teaching and research experience at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tirana. She is a specialist in family and gender problems and the author and co-author of several publications of a sociological nature. She has been the diploma thesis advisor for sociology students and the advisor of candidates for the doctoral science degree. She participated in several research projects on poverty, social needs and gender equality.

Ms. Eglantina Gjermeni, has a Masters in Social Work from Grand Valley State University, Michigan, USA. Since 1995, she has been a lecturer in the Social Work department of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Tirana University. She has abundant experience as a trainer on gender and development issues, and has participated in

various research and program evaluations. She is executive director of the Women's Center in Tirana, which deals with women and gender issues in Albanian society.

Ms. Lindita Xhillari, Dr. of Economic Sciences (1996), Master of Arts in Economics (1993). Professor at the Faculty of Economy, University of Tirana since 1988. She is an author, co-author or contributor to publications in Albania and abroad and Executive Director of the Human Development Promotion Centre, an independent NGO focused on human development issues in Albania.

Fatjon Lungu, INSTAT

Anila Hazizi, Terre des Hommes

List of social workers (IN THE FILED) for the RAS – ILO-IPEC

No	Name	City	NGO
1	Rudina Lako	KORCA	NPF (Help for Children)
2	Entela Fejzo	KORCA	NPF (Help for Children)
3	Namik Shehaj	ELBASAN	NPF (Help for Children)
4	Angelina Gega	ELBASAN	NPF (Help for Children)
5	Nerenxa Beqiri	ELBASAN	NPF (Help for Children)
6	Ardiola Lipo	VLORA	Vatra Centre
7	Esmeralda Gorishova	VLORA	Vatra Centre
8	Irma Loka	TIRANA	EMDH (Enfants du Monde-Droits de l'Homme)
9	Leonard Guni	TRANA	EMDH (Enfants du Monde-Droits de l'Homme)

2. OVERALL CONTEXT

Albania emerged from seclusion in the early 1990s and during the last decade has experienced huge political, economic and social transformations. Throughout its transition, Albania faced a number of phenomena never experienced before, such as extreme unemployment and lack of job opportunities, decreased access to basic social services including education and health, and massive migration and emigration with accompanying consequences. Under the pressure of such developments households, particularly in the rural and less developed areas, have experienced many tribulations.

One that deserves special attention is child trafficking, nonexistent until 1990 since extreme isolation made impossible any international involvement. Evidence shows that after 1990 many girls and children were trafficked in European countries for exploitation - from 1992 to 2002, an estimated 4,000 children⁴. In 2001, The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs reported at least six thousand Albanian children in Italian orphanages and between one and two thousand in Greek orphanages.⁵ Child trafficking in Albania appears to be mainly for the purposes of forced labour although there are reports of children being re-sold for prostitution and organ donation.⁶

It is important to emphasize that, apart from the difficulties of the transition phase, the Albanian family continues to maintain traditional values. Historically, Albanians have been distinguished for having stronger family relations than other neighboring or European countries. This fact is noted in various studies and documents, notably a distinguished Austrian researcher, Noptza, who visited Albania in the beginning of 20th century and wrote, "Albanians love their children very much being almost their slaves"⁷. Parents are dedicated to their children's future. In almost every case the parents' decision to migrate or emigrate is motivated by the desire to improve their child's prospects.

Emigration and migration. A comparison of data for the periods 1979-1989 and 1989-2001 indicates a population decline of 3% (HDR – UNDP, 2000) caused by intensive emigration especially to Greece and Italy. The population density map has also changed significantly since 1989 when 45% lived in the northern and southern regions; a large internal migration increased concentration of population in the central part of the country close to the coast, with a notably lower concentration in the north and south. The high level of migration during the last decade is characterized as huge, spontaneous, and uncontrolled, causing serious economic and social problems. This sometimes overwhelming movement of population has damaged the urban and environmental equilibrium and stretched public services beyond their limits. The prime motivation for such migration has been poverty, limited work opportunities, and difficult living conditions. There is clear evidence that the life of many migrants and emigrants has not been improved, but justification remains that it is better to be poor in the big cities than poor in a remote location because chances to benefit from

⁴ Ministry of Public Order

⁵ Governmental Conference on Trafficking "All Together Against Child Trafficking", Presentation of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Tirana, November 2001.

⁶ Trafficking of human beings in Southeastern Europe, Albania

⁷ Aleks Luarasi, Family relations, Tirane, 2001

health and education facilities are greater.

Poverty and living standard. In Albania, significant disparities are obvious in economic development of geographical areas. There is a high poverty profile in the country accompanied by significant regional disparities, which reveal a strong correlation between level of unemployment and poverty.⁸

In 2001, 77.3% of the labor force was employed and 50.5% of the employed population was still working in agriculture⁹. There is a high poverty profile in the country accompanied by significant regional disparities which reveal a strong correlation between level of unemployment and poverty.¹⁰ An unemployment level of 22.7% is one of the highest in the region and the situation is even worse in some districts¹¹ where unemployment reaches more than 40%.

The extent of poverty is also reflected in the number of families that receive social assistance. Currently there are 148,000 families under the social assistance scheme. High poverty levels also effect the social exclusion of individuals, families and various population groups. It is difficult to measure social exclusion, but evidence shows that poor communities tend to be at risk.

The statistical data on housing and dwelling conditions of households shows that only 15% in the rural areas are equipped with indoor running water, while 20% have no water supply at all¹². There are wide disparities in regional basic services reflected in living conditions.

Such economic inequalities, especially in rural areas, added to limited opportunities to improve quality of life, lead to trafficking and child abuse.

Health and Social Services. In the last decade, the healthcare system has been characterized by poor quality of care and low infrastructure standards. Many health service buildings are in need of rehabilitation and new equipment while other areas are without access to any basic services. There are many disparities in the distribution of health facilities among districts and there is a lack of qualified staff even in existing centres. Additionally, an enlarged population in urban areas due to migration is having an impact on access to health services; the movement to urban areas has increased demand for services, while the decrease in population in the areas of origin has caused a reduction in services there.

Education. Despite positive efforts made by the government to enact legislation, improve quality of teaching and teachers, and decrease the dropout level the education system is facing many challenges. Many schools, especially in rural areas, are in poor physical condition with shortages of heating, lighting and other facilities. In many cases there is a lack of teachers with basic qualification and an increasing disparity between urban and rural education.

⁸ HDPC, Albanian Response to the MDGs, 2002

⁹ INSTAT, The population of Albania in 2001, 2002

¹⁰ HDPC, Albanian Response to the MDGs, 2002

¹¹ HDPC, Human Development Report-2002

¹² INSTAT, The population of Albania in 2001, 2002

Education indicators are low and there is a tendency for the levels to steadily decline. During the last decade there was a substantial drop in enrollment; gross rate of enrollment for primary schools in 1990 was 102.3 while in 2000 it was 90%. "Hidden" dropouts are an important related issue - children who attend school but do not progress in their studies. According to a report¹³, the number of children who leave school is significantly less than the number of "hidden" dropout students - in some regions estimated to be one-third of the total number attending primary school. The most vulnerable children to dropout are

- children from the rural areas with social-economic difficulties in their families,
- children from suburban areas who do not regularly attend school,
- girls from remote areas, kept at home due to early arranged marriages or for blood feud,
- children who have emigrated with their families and returned, unable to re-enter school.

Student Dropouts 1990/1991 – 1998-1999¹⁴

	1990/91	1991/92	1992/93	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99
Total No.	21710	34232	21532	20939	17134	17162	18300	19610	
% of pupils	3.9	6.31	4.09	4	3.11	3	3.2	3.5	3.01

Child Labour: The transformation to a market economy in Albania spawned a large shadow economy in which child labour has been widely used. General social disorder rendered children unprotected, particularly in relation to their employer; children become an object of manipulation and exploitation where legal and administrative control and regulations are nonexistent. The trend has been toward the worst forms of child labour: working street children, working children in agriculture, and child trafficking.

There are several explanations for this tendency. First, the situation has been exacerbated by the effects of the economic and political transition's negative impact on the ability of adult family members to support the household. Second, work is traditionally considered to be educational rather than harmful to children. As a result, because material well-being does not depend on education but on the ability to perform income-generating work, education is seen as less important than employment.

Much of the child labour in Albania is found in the informal sector. Petty commerce appears to be the most common occupation for street children. The number of children living or working in the streets of the main cities is on the rise. They are mostly selling food or other small items, washing cars or shining shoes. Approximately one third of those working are estimated to be engaged in street or market-based (bazaar) activities¹⁵.

¹³ Study on Hidden Dropout, "Education for All" Association, Tirana, December 2001.

¹⁴ Drop-out Phenomenon for Elementary Education. April 2000. MoES

¹⁵ Although, the ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour does not spell out street work as one of the worst forms of child labour, with reference to the tendency of street workers to become involved in much more abusive activities and the fact that prostitution, drugs and child trafficking are street base activities, there is a strong case for considering street work as one of the worst forms of child labour.

In addition, children are engaged in a number of clearly illegal activities referred to in the new ILO Convention No.182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour - working in forced labour situations (begging, prostitution, robbery, drug selling) and being sold themselves.

Over the last few years, the reported number of children being trafficked across borders for labour and sex exploitation has steadily increased in Albania. Although reliable data is not available and difficult to collect, observers generally report that these forms of child labour are not only common, but on the rise. At the same time, although some cases of trafficking of children outside Albania for commercial sexual exploitation have been reported, these are far outweighed by the numbers reportedly trafficked across the borders for other forms of work, mainly domestic labour, begging and agricultural work. According to interviews with local authorities and representatives of relevant ministries, the most common form of child labour on the rise is child prostitution.

Families of working children: An ILO-IPEC Rapid Assessment Survey (RAS)¹⁶ on street working children took place in three Albanian cities: Tirana, Shkodra and Vlora. It indicated that the Albanian family is poor; only one in five families has sufficient income for a decent living. About 20% of the total number of families interviewed (45) earns 5% of the national income. While families estimate that the minimum income required to cover necessary living expenses is about 31.000 lek (\$223) per month, the average level of declared income is about 17.000 lek (\$122) per month. In Albania, about 146,000 families live below the officially declared poverty line.¹⁷ The number of family members varies according to regions and districts; in general, rural families are larger than urban ones.

The result of the IPEC RAS on street working children in Albania carried out by the Institute for Contemporary Studies provided the following information about families of street working children: 47.1% of the interviewed children (298) came from families that moved to more urbanized areas for reasons closely connected to harsh living conditions, poor level of medical and social services, limited employment and housing in their region of origin, as well as the hope for a better life and better educational opportunities for their children. Of the street working children, 64% came from rural areas. Working children living with both parents comprise 74%, while 22% live with only one parent and 4% live with one original parent and a step-parent.

¹⁶“ Street Working Children in Albania: A rapid Assessment Survey in Tirana, Vlora and Shkodra – IPEC and ISB”

¹⁷ UNDP, Human Development Report, 2000

3. Legal and institutional framework related to child trafficking

3.1 Legal framework

Albania, as a member of the United Nations since 1955, has ratified the majority of its conventions and since 1995 those of the Council of Europe. Several conventions and covenants are in agreement when calling for action against child trafficking, most notably:

International instruments for child protection

- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) which lays down a full range of children's rights and its Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (May 2000). Several of its key provisions are closely related to those of the ILO's child labour standards (Article 34, requiring protection against sexual exploitation; Article 35, requiring prevention of abduction, sale and trafficking of children for any purpose; Article 36, requiring protection against all forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child's welfare);
- The ILO Convention No. 138 on the Minimum Age of Employment;
- The ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor;
- Convention on the Protection of All Migrants and their Families (1990);
- The Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Inter-country Adoption (1993);
- The UN Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (1949) and the supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery (1956);
- Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (1996);
- The Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court (1998);
- Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (2000);
- The Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Air and Sea (2000);
- Yokohama Global Commitment (2001);
- The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2000) supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

Regional instruments

- The European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights, Council of Europe
- Recommendation 11 of the Council of Europe adopted against trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation (2000)
- Recommendation 16 of the Council of Europe concerning the protection of children against sexual exploitation adopted on 31 October 2001
- Commitment and Plan of Action adopted by the participants from Europe and Central Asia at the Budapest Conference on 'Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation' (21 November 2001)

The Albanian Constitution provides an overarching legal framework for dealing with issues raised by the CRC and contains explicit and enforceable provisions for special child protection by the state in article 54.¹⁸ It recognizes the right to non-discrimination, the right to protection from violence, maltreatment, exploitation and use for labor which could harm health or morals or endanger life or normal development.

The Constitution of 1998 marked a significant moment in the country's democratic development and a qualitative leap for legislation. Article 116 of the Constitution defines the hierarchy of laws, listing ratified international agreements right after the Constitution. According to article 122, these agreements, ratified by law, have preeminence over local laws that are incompatible. This provision forces the lawmaker to make the necessary changes in national legislation in order to adapt it to international legislation, providing protection of all human rights.

The **Civil Code** guarantees children who are not yet 14 years of age the right to carry out legal actions themselves, whereas their legal representative carries out other legal measures with their consent. According to Albanian legislation, a child is an adult at 18 years of age, when full legal capability to act is assumed.

The **Labor Code** prohibits the hiring of minors under 16 years of age and anticipates a reduction of labor time to 6 hours per day. The employment of children includes compulsory education to age 16 years.

The **Penal Code** guarantees children special protection from crimes against them and contains provisions aimed at the protection of life, health, freedom, sexual integrity and the moral dignity of minors. In this general framework, the protection of minors from illegal trafficking is also attained.

Provisions of Albanian Penal Code

- Article 100: Sexual intercourse with female.
- Article 101: Forced sexual intercourse with minors of 14-18 years old.
- Article 109: Kidnapping.
- Article 114: Prostitution exploitation under serious circumstances.
- Article 117: Pornography.

Although legislation on the subject of employment and education has been consolidated, that related to child trafficking was addressed only after 2000. This was because this phenomenon, as previously discussed, did not exist in Albania before the '90s.

A series of important changes were made to the Penal Code in 1995, particularly relating to prostitution and sanctions were provided by law for criminal offences directly or indirectly relating to human trafficking. For instance, wrongful taking of children (Article 127) and exchange of children (Article 128) were considered criminal offences. Severe penalties were provided for sexual relations with minors (Article 100) as well as maintenance, exploitation, financing and renting out of premises for prostitution, kidnapping of a person or child under the age of 14, unlawful deprivation of a person's liberty, endangering life or causing physical assault, sexual assault, removal of identification papers, falsification of identification papers, threat, and commission of criminal offenses in collusion by armed or criminal organizations.

The latest changes to the penal code make enforcement of Albanian criminal law also applicable to foreign citizens dealing with illegal human trafficking. This provides for the protection of Albanian minors against the criminality of foreign citizens, not only in Albania, but also outside that territory. This change was made in order to protect Albanian children from trafficking, especially those living outside the country as a result of emigration with their families or running away from their families.

¹⁸ Constitution of the Republic of Albania, p. 18, Tirana, 1998

Further changes were made to Albanian legislation after 1998 to bring it into line with the abovementioned, ratified conventions. For the first time, in 2001, criminal procedures were provided that would enable the discovery, prosecution and punishment of trafficking in human beings, considering them activities posing severe social danger. Article 110/a, 114/b and 128/b, which provide for criminal provisions, respectively for trafficking in persons, women for prostitution and children, were added to the penal code. Sentences for trafficking in children are the most severe, varying from 10 to 20 years incarceration and to life imprisonment if the action leads to death.

The Albanian government is engaged in the process of international cooperation for drafting, approving and signing repatriation agreements with Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, and Moldova, as well as for improving in visa regulations in order to cut off the channels of trafficking.

In spite of existing deficiencies (no definition of the term trafficking in persons, no law for witness protection, no support for the victims of trafficking, no consideration for the best interest of the repatriated child) Albanian legislation, especially through improvements made in 2001, has laid the appropriate foundations for fighting human trafficking.

Still, there is a need to carry out a comprehensive review of the existing laws and enforcement mechanisms in order to ensure that they fulfill the obligations assumed under the ratified conventions. This exercise may reveal inconsistencies, inadequacies or other defects that require remedy. To ensure full compliance with the conventions, steps may need to be taken to consolidate or harmonise disparate laws, expand coverage of the law, increase penalties, provide compensation for child victims and protect them from reprisals, guarantee that all girls and boys under 18 are covered, and strengthen enforcement mechanisms.

Ratification of the conventions and adoption of national laws to implement its provisions will fail to secure effective action unless they are accompanied by a firm government commitment to work towards the elimination of child labour, including child trafficking, identifying implementing agencies and ensuring legal enforcement. Once the state ratifies the conventions, it must take immediate steps to ensure that national laws are brought into conformity with the provisions of these conventions.

3.2 Governmental policies and respective institutions

The Albanian Government, as a member of the Stability Pact Initiative against Organized Crime, has put trafficking high on its political agenda. Beginning in 2000, the government intensified its efforts in the fight against human trafficking in general and of children in particular.

The inclusion of child trafficking issues into national strategies is a matter of urgency which should be accompanied by the review, and possible reform, of laws and enforcement mechanisms.

A National Strategy for Children (2001-2005) has been approved, which defines the strategic objectives of the policy of the Albanian government for children and the

main areas of work for all institutions regarding child development and protection. It provides for raising awareness of the phenomenon of trafficking, the setting up of municipal and communal structures for the treatment of children in need and at risk, the improvement of legislation concerning children and includes coordinating actions of the central and local governments and NPOs and international organizations for the prevention of and the fight against trafficking.

In December 2001, the Albanian Government adopted the **National Strategy for the Fight against Trafficking** comprising a National Plan of Action which includes concrete action against trafficking and names responsible institutions. Drafted by an inter-ministerial working group and assisted by the OSCE Mission in Albania, the Council of Europe, the US Embassy, and NGOs this strategy is aimed at awareness of the public at large and improvement in the legal framework with regard to preventive measures as well as more direct assistance to the victims. Accordingly, the Albanian government is committed to take appropriate measures and also to transform the strategy into a set of specific actions. Concurrently, a National Conference on Combating Child Trafficking in Albania, supported and financed by IPEC and UNICEF, was organized in November 2001 by the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Interior. This conference produced a list of recommendations for the National Strategy on Combating the Trafficking of Human Beings and led to the organisation of a National Focal Point Committee on child trafficking in Albania. This serves as evidence that the government considers interventions to child trafficking of paramount importance.

Albania's main political aspiration is progressive integration into European Union structures, to this aim the opening of negotiations for the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) has been formally launched. In order to effectively respond to the current Albanian situation and to the assessed needs, in 2002 the government approved the **Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRSP)** - a comprehensive government strategy initiated by the World Bank. The PRSP process offers great potential for decent work and for mainstreaming child labour issues into national social and economic policy. The main focus on children is in connection with education, health and social policy programmes.

Efforts are underway to revise the PRSP in order to incorporate the Millennium Development Goals (MDG Baseline) along with the Country Common Assessment in Albania. The Albanian Response to the Millennium Development Goals report covers a general situation analysis of effective activities as follow-up to the UN Global Conferences and Summits of the '90s, in order to define the MDG benchmarks for further monitoring and reporting - their relevance to Albania specifically and to recommend future UN and other stakeholders' interventions to address the gaps identified.

The **Strategy for the Development of Social Services** (March 2003) and the **Strategy for Employment and Vocational Training** (February 2003) determine the focus for changing the country's economic and social conditions and averting the major causes of trafficking - poverty and unemployment. The strategy anticipates the establishment of social protection for children, decentralizing and widening the variety of social services available, the empowerment of residential care institutions

for children in need and cooperation with NGOs for alternative forms of social services such as SOS villages, shelters, or foster families.

Governmental institutions

The State Committee for the Fight against Trafficking of Human Beings began functioning in January 2002. The Minister of State, under the auspices of the Prime Minister, heads this committee and is the national coordinator for anti-trafficking.

The anti-trafficking office has been established in the Ministry of Public Order, including a unit for anti-trafficking of children. Specialized anti-trafficking units have also been set up in 12 regional Police Departments including special premises for the treatment of those returned from trafficking. Meanwhile, the Albanian Ministry of Public Order has signed cooperation agreements with IOM and UNHCR which provide obligatory exchange of information, protection of police forces, referral of trafficking cases, and assistance for the trafficked victims.

The National Steering Committee on Child Labour (with child trafficking as one of the worst forms of child labour), established in November 2001 and administered by a ministerial decree, is fully operational and the Child Labour Unit within the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is acting as its secretariat. The chairman of this committee is the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs; its members are representatives of different ministries, the President's Office, employers' and workers' organizations as well as NGOs, with the seniority and authority to speak and make commitments on behalf of their institutions.

The directory of social services within the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs addresses issues of child trafficking and supervises the residential receiving center in Linza for women, girls and children returned from trafficking. This center was set up in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Order and IOM.

The State Committee for Equal Opportunities (formerly the Committee for "Women and Family") includes the unit responsible the implementation of the strategy.

Albanian authorities cooperate with local and international NGO-s on a number of anti-trafficking issues:

- There are 35 contracts of cooperation between NGOs and regional police departments and district police commissariats. A number of anti-trafficking projects have already been carried out, such as OSCE/ODIHR's project "Training of Trainers on Women's Rights and Anti-trafficking Education" and setting up ICMC/IOM's shelter for reintegration of trafficked persons. A special training was arranged in cooperation with IOM for all anti-trafficking police in January/February 2002 at the Police Academy, as well as training courses in regional police departments and criminal police commissariats, with the border police and public order police inspectors.
So far, about 660 police have been trained and the training is on-going. The courses cover not only police techniques but the special needs for treatment of trafficked victims, and methods of cooperation with international organizations and NGOs.

- During 2001, NGOs treated 465 Albanian women aimed at reintegrating them into their families and society. In 2002, assistance was provided to 129 foreign citizens and 211 Albanian women. Recently, special treatment has been offered to minors, with a total of nearly 36 receiving assistance.
The “Hearth” receiving centre has been functioning for a number of years in Vlora, funded by Save the Children. It assists girls returned from trafficking, especially from Italy exploited for prostitution. Of the 276 girls sheltered during 2002, 78 of them belonged to the 13-18 year age group. The majority came from urban areas, thus testifying to a new tendency compared to that of the ‘90s, when the overwhelming majority came from rural areas.
- During 2001 and 2002, several programs for public awareness were conducted regarding the risk of trafficking and its consequences to society. These programs were designed and implemented by: the Ministry of Education and Science in the educational system in Albania, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the State Committee for Equal Opportunities, international organizations with offices in Tirana such as IOM (an 18-month campaign), UNICEF, UNHCR, ILO-IPEC, International NGOs such as “Save the Children,” the US, British and Dutch Embassies, as well as local NGOs dealing with the problem of human trafficking. These awareness-raising programs target all strata of society but more specifically young people and children. The Ministry of Education and Science, in cooperation with IOM, has developed a special one-year program of teacher training, public awareness, and lectures for secondary and high schools.

Government endeavors to combat trafficking of human beings, including child trafficking, may seem piece-meal unless viewed in a regional Balkan context. The key actors in south-eastern Europe, as members of the Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings, are coordinating their activities to effectively tackle the issue.

Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings

The establishment of the Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings in June 2000 (Inaugural Meeting: 18 September 2000 in Vienna), making trafficking issues one of the priorities within the OSCE and the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, is of great importance.

One of the main objectives of the SP TF is to enhance and further strengthen regional co-operation among the various anti-trafficking actors in the Balkan region and beyond, among the International Organisations active in the region and among the governments of the countries in the region.

It aims to assist key actors in South Eastern Europe to better address human trafficking and associated human rights abuses by agreeing on priority areas of concern (awareness-raising, training and capacity building, law enforcement co-operation, victim assistance and protection, return and reintegration assistance, relevant legislative reform, prevention) and by co-operating on anti-trafficking activities in the field.

A Regional International Center for the Fight against Illegal Trafficking was set up in Vlora in October 2001, with four participating countries: Germany, Italy, Greece and Albania. This centre has assumed a major role in addressing the problems of trafficking - including child trafficking, weapons and drugs.

4. Demographic, educational and socio-economic profile of cities studied

Tirana, Vlora, Elbasan and Korça were the four cities selected for this study.

Although there is no comprehensive statistical data that would enable a complete profile of the selected cities, existing and indirect data are used to that end.

Tirana and Vlora are the largest and initial source cities for trafficking followed by Elbasan and Korça. Tirana, Korça and Elbasan are the most vulnerable areas for child trafficking, whereas Vlora is for human trafficking - especially young girls for prostitution - due to its geographical position as the main port closest to Italy. The four selected cities are among the 7 most populous, and together make up 62% of the urban population with a correspondingly high level of unemployment.

There is a visible presence of the Roma and Egyptian communities in all four cities. Statistics for these communities are lacking; the 2001 census did not document ethnicity. However, based on indirect data it is estimated that about 120,000 Roma live in Albania. The number of Egyptians is even greater. These groups, aside from social discrimination, also suffer from a high level of illiteracy, poor health conditions and lack of employment possibilities. Their children make up the most marginalized and most maltreated stratum, easily targeted by traffickers.

Tirana, the capital and largest city with 352,352.402¹⁹ has 11.1 % of the country's population. The populace is very heterogeneous due to internal migration; an estimated 45% of the emigrating influx came into the district of Tirana. Average density for the city is 80 times higher than the country's average, 8.161 inhabitants per square kilometer.

Females make up 50.5% of the population. The age group of 0-18 year olds in the Tirana census comes to 108,342 persons.

While Tirana represents the highest level of education in the country, 10.6% of the population has not completed 8-year schooling or is illiterate.

Unemployment is high in Tirana. According to INSTAT, the indicator in 2001 was 25.3%, up from 9.1% in 1989. Only 45.8% of the population of working age (15 years or older) is employed and about 26% of those employed have temporary, seasonal or incidental jobs.

The number of families is 89,764 or 12.3% of the country's total. 11% of them receive social welfare allowances.

The areas with the highest indicators of unemployment and poverty and lowest education level have been populated mainly by newcomers from other districts of the country.

Tirana has the largest number of children living in the street and is a significant resource for child trafficking.

¹⁹ INSTAT. Females and males in Albania, (population by city, p. 17), October 2002.

Elbasan, located in central Albania, has seen the least demographic movement compared to the other cities studied. In April 2001 the urban area had 95,211 inhabitants registered, over 32,000 under 18 years old.

According to the state Social Service data, Elbasan is one of the five cities most affected by poverty. There are about 18,000 unemployed and scarce chances for employment due to closure of the metallurgical factory.

Vlora, in the southwest, ranks sixth in terms of population with 74,585 inhabitants. During the '90s it experienced marked changes in economic activity leading to a high level of unemployment, although the official rate is 13%. A large number of families have members abroad, mainly in Italy, and their remittances serve as a major source for subsistence. Social welfare allowances are given to 8% of families. The collapse of the pyramid schemes in 1997 drastically worsened the situation of this region in comparison to other cities. The under-18 age group of 29,668 makes up a significant part of the population.

Until the summer of 2002, Vlora was the transit point for the illegal crossing of a large number of people, local and foreign, including children. In August 2002, a sizeable anti-trafficking police operation effectively stopped the trafficking of clandestine emigrants by speedboat to Italy.

Korca is a city of 58,854 inhabitants in the southeastern part of the country. In the period of 1992-2002, many locals traveled legally, mainly to Greece, and during the last 5 years also to the U.S.

The under 18-year-olds comprise 17,090 inhabitants. About 20% of the population is unemployed and 17% of families live on economic assistance.

There are numerous Egyptian and Roma families, many who wander constantly.

Korca is relatively new to the trafficking phenomenon, commencing toward the end of the '90s. Being close to the border with Greece, traffickers from other districts began to use it as a crossing point to points beyond.

According to the Ministry of Public Order, there is data for trafficking of children, especially of infants for adoption or transplanting of organs. Albanian criminal elements are connected with criminal networks using Macedonia, Thessaloniki, and Athens to reaching further out into the Balkans.

In 2002, local police reported the denunciation of 30 cases of children trafficked to Greece to beg in the streets of Greek towns.

5. Main Findings

5.1 Factors influencing child trafficking

Child trafficking is a complex problem with multi-dimensional roots. Poverty and the essential need to earn a living combined with lack of education and employment opportunities force the issue for parents and families. These conditions have been exacerbated by the powerful economic and social shift causing crisis throughout Central and Southeastern Europe in the last decade.

Push Factors

5.1.1 Poverty and the desire to earn a living

The desire to escape poverty and improve the family economic situation are the main factors with the greatest impact on child trafficking. During the interviews both parents and children emphasized the main reason their children were trafficked as terrible poverty and inability to meet minimum life conditions. The mother of a released trafficked child describes her very difficult family situation:

"I was living in one small room with six children. I did not have anything to feed them. Sometimes they had to sleep without eating anything. It was so hard to see them suffer. I asked myself several times how I would survive together with them".

a 37-year- old mother, interviewed in Korca

The reasons interviewed children gave for leaving home are closely related to parental economic difficulties and the lack of ability to provide food and shelter. The results from the questionnaires of released children were: 10 were without adequate food; 27 sometimes had enough food and 14 children often did not have enough food.

Most of the parents of the child victims of trafficking were unemployed, facing financial difficulties, housing problems and unhealthy living conditions.

Parents and children at risk from trafficking all responded that they were living in dire financial circumstances without any income or outside economic support. The only aid or assistance is so small that they cannot even fulfill their basic survival needs. In almost all families contacted, economic difficulties were accompanied by housing deficiencies; some were living in cardboard houses without water, electricity, or toilet. One of the parents describes her family situation:

The situation is worsening every day. We live in a small muddy house without electricity, without water. The only solution to escape this poverty is to beg in the street. Three children of mine are begging in the street

a mother of three children interviewed in Elbasan

Even in cases where families had a living space, it was very limited in relationship to the number of family members. It is not rare to find more than ten people living in a small room. Parents and children contacted through the survey described their housing situation as insufficient, as the mother of a trafficked child in Vlora says: *"I have twelve children and we live in two small rooms"*.

Based on the questionnaires, results from the four cities were:

- 51 children were living in big families - 6 or more persons;
- 9 children were living with their grandparents;
- 6 children were living with their relatives (uncle, aunt, cousins);
- 17 children did not respond to the question about their families.

It must be mentioned that child trafficking began not only because of economic hardship but also from the parents' ignorance concerning the dimensions of this new phenomenon in Albanian society. Children were forced to take on parental responsibilities and help their family to survive and at the same time, parents themselves became victims of traffickers by believing promises of gaining income from their children's work abroad. In cases of trafficking girls for prostitution, the victims were tricked with job offers, false marriage, or even kidnapped by pimps who used aggressive means and enticing offers.

The stories that parents and children tell are distressing, describing the pressure they underwent before making a decision. These stories have also been disseminated in the media, as in the excerpt below:

*How I sold my baby for 100 thousand leke ...
In the beginning I was shocked by the offer that was made to me, says Donika, but they were so insistent and made me accept their offer. They told me that I should sell my baby because it would improve the situation for me and my other children. The pimps did not tell me the price for my baby; meanwhile I did not have any money to feed my children. Both my husband and myself were unemployed; we were getting only the social assistance...*
"Korrieri" newspaper, November 2002

The family circumstance becomes worse particularly when one of the parents and/or family members has health problems. The interviews and questionnaires revealed that cases of one invalid parent, a mother suffering from high blood pressure, or two disabled children are not uncommon. Some of the parents from these families stated that they saw children as a desperate solution for their dilemma. Typically girls are obliged to drop out of school and take care of the sick parent or family member, whereas boys emigrate and work abroad in order to help their families. These families face many difficulties to survive their frustrating situation, and unfortunately these difficulties are often transferred to their children. The mother of a released child interviewed in Korca mentions that "these children mature sooner than the others" and this puts many responsibilities on their young shoulders. In order to fulfill the expectations of their families, these children start working in the streets doing jobs such as washing car windows, begging, selling small items, or shoe shining. Having to

sell children is seen by parents as a last resort to survive and escape from poverty and misery.

5.1.2 Dysfunctional families

Most families contacted were distinguished not only by difficult economic conditions, but social problems as well. A majority of the children released from trafficking belong to dysfunctional families, a characteristic closely linked to poverty level.

A range of dysfunctional families contacted through the survey can be categorised as:

- families with parents married more than once, sometimes joining children from different marriages;
 - 8 children living with a stepmother
 - 10 children living with a stepfather
- single fathers;
 - 10 children living only with a father
- single mothers;
 - 16 children living only with a mother
- both parents;
 - 33 children living with both parents
- extended families living in adverse conditions quarrelling and in constant conflict
 - 6 children living with relatives
- families with severe social problems of domestic violence or paternal alcohol abuse.

Domestic violence is one of the main social problems identified as a cause of children leaving their homes. One of the boys released from trafficking, an 18-year-old from Elbasan, describes his violent situation at home: *"I could not stand my father any more. Every night he came back home drunk. After that he beat everybody at home. I just wanted to leave from there".*

These household problems have a great impact on the children's decision to leave. Many children interviewed yearned to escape from their situation and to live a better life hopefully without aggression; in families with domestic violence, children were fearful to return.

"Everyday that I went home there was a lot of fighting. One day my father beat everyone at home. That time I did not go out to play for two days since my body was black and blue... Sometimes I even went to sleep at my grandmother's since I was afraid to go home".
a 17-year-old boy released from trafficking, Elbasan

The family situation is exacerbated where other problems are present, such as incest, a prostitute mother or a convict father.

5.1.3 Low education level of parents and lack of employment opportunities

Rudimentary education and lack of employment opportunity are closely linked; parents in the survey were shown to be both under-educated and typically without a profession.

There were several instances where all the family members were begging, selling clothes in the villages, collecting canes, and doing other incidental work on the street; in many cases more than one family member tried to emigrate. Two children interviewed talked about how they had emigrated with their father to Greece. They tried to find jobs and when they couldn't, turned to begging.

The educational level of the parents contacted was very low. Many of them hadn't gone to school themselves and are not keen on having their children go to school. Other parents had only a rudimentary education and no information about parenting or educating their children.

During group discussions with parents of trafficked children and children at risk, one parent was concerned about the scarcity of job prospects. Some also mentioned that they belonged to Roma and/or Egyptian communities which made the situation worse. Lack of employment opportunities without survival alternatives creates additional problems; it is "the main obstacle to the improvement of the family situation", some Korca parents declared.

	Never gone to school		Unfinished elementary school		Elementary school		Unfinished primary school		Primary school		Unfinished secondary school		Secondary school		I don't know	
	Female	Male	female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Age:																
9		1		.		.		.		.		.		.		.
10		1		.		1		.		.		.		.		.
11		2	1	1		.		.		.		.		.		.
12		2		1	1	1		.		.		.		.		1
13	1	1		3		.		.		.		.		.		1
14	1	2		2		.		1		.		.		.		.
15		1	1	4		1		.		.		.		.		.
16	2	1	1	3		.		.		.		.		.		.
17	1	.	1	2		.		.	1	.	1		.	.		.
18		1		2		.		1	1	.	1		.	.		.
19		.		.		.		1	1	1		.	1		.	.
20	1	.		.		.		1		.		.		1		.
21		.		.		1		.		.		.	1		.	.
22		.		.		.		.	1	.		.		.		.

Table: Education by age and by gender.

5.1.4 Low education level of children and inequality between the sexes

Lack of education is one of the critical factors for analysis of the children's situation and the distinctive feature making them vulnerable to trafficking. Children have to drop out of school or never register at all because of economic reasons. The 'poverty cycle' continues because parents themselves have little or no education. Parents are aware of the importance of educating their children but cite the difficult economic situation as justification not to send them to school. The questionnaire results show:

- 27 children have never been registered in school;

- 28 children finished elementary school;
- 18 children finished high school;
- 10 children dropped out of school.

When boys' and girls' level of education is compared, the survey showed a discrepancy – girls' education is markedly lower than boys.

- 18 boys finished elementary school compared with 6 girls
- 23 boys have never been to school, compared with 8 girls
- 2 boys have dropped out of school compared with 6 girls

Besides the impact of minimal education levels and gender differences, economic factors and family culture and religion also effect the situation. In one of the interviews with the father of an at risk child, he mentioned that his four daughters were not attending school for religious reasons, but this was not true for his two sons.

5.1.5 Attitude towards ethnic minorities

Until 2000, child victims in Greece came from a mixture of backgrounds. An important characteristic of the trafficked children after the year 2000 was that most of them belonged to Egyptian or Roma communities. The children of these communities are more vulnerable to trafficking because they are more likely to be truant working street children. Findings of Terre des Hommes support this assumption: "In 2002, according to the comparative experience of the various partners active in Albania in prevention or the reintegration of trafficked children, 95% of the families affected by trafficking in children belong to the Egyptian communities".

Minority rights issues have also been raised in print media:

The Roma children remain the most at risk group from trafficking; 80% of Roma children are illiterate. Roma children in Albania are victims of violence, trafficking and have the right to education denied them. Racism towards this minority, especially towards children, is confirmed by the teachers themselves, and certainly this promotes illiteracy. Racism is one of the main reasons why the Roma children drop out of school. These are results from a report prepared by "Save the Children".

"Shekulli" newspaper, September 2, 2002

PULL FACTORS

5.1.6 Inadequate legislation and/or difficulties in enforcement

Cases of non-implementation of legislation, problems in the judicial system and lack of existing legislation for witness protection keep people from denouncing trafficking and traffickers. Most of the parents and children contacted through the

survey noted that they felt threatened by traffickers and several of them asked that their stories remain confidential.

During a focus-group discussion in Korca, the parents of children released from trafficking were concerned about the possibility that their children could be trafficked again. They pointed out that: “as long as strong penalties for traffickers do not exist, we and our children will continue to be at risk”. The same concern was shared by parents of NTC. They had heard about trafficking and were concerned about their children’s safety. Parents repeatedly mentioned problems with reference to Albanian legislation; the parents thought the government did not have strict rules or laws to punish traffickers.

5.1.7 Lack of hope within the country and belief in a better life abroad

The drastic changes that have taken place in Albania since 1990 have been accompanied by a lack of hope, causing emigration to be viewed as the best alternative. Neighboring countries, such Greece and Italy, are most feasible due to proximity and lower transportation costs. The idea of emigrating is accompanied by the belief that life outside the country is markedly better and more lucrative for themselves and their families.

The belief in “a better life” has also been reinforced by media images, unrealistic ideas of life abroad as well as from the influence of neighbors and relatives living out of the country. In almost all cases, children released from trafficking told of somebody – a relative or neighbor – who was a “guarantor” for them to go and work abroad. Interviews with children released from trafficking and their parents emphasized the fact that their friends, neighbors, and/or a relative encouraged the idea. One of the mothers interviewed tells of her experience:

“My brother-in-law promised me that he would take my son and find him a job. I thought that this would be an opportunity for our life to improve. My husband and I were unemployed, so we did not have any other choice”

the mother of a child released from trafficking in Elbasan

Disappointment often follows these kinds of promises. One parent relates:

“My brother promised that he would take my son and me to work in Greece. Here we are hopeless. We have been deceived here. I thought that my brother would help me, but three have passed and his promises have been only lies for us.

the father of a child at risk for trafficking in Elbasan

The parents of children released from trafficking felt regret for the difficult experience their children had faced; life outside Albania hadn’t been an improvement. Some parents commented:

"From the trafficking experience, neither we nor our children have earned anything. On the contrary we are disappointed because we found out that the life in Greece is not any better"

during the focus group with parents of children released in Korca

5.2 Profile of Families and victims of child trafficking and at risk for trafficking

5.2.1 Profile of victims of child trafficking and at risk for trafficking

Frequently, trafficked children had already been working on the streets, making them more susceptible; questionnaire results from released children revealed that 52 were working before they were trafficked. At the same time, most key informants noted that trafficking is related strongly to child vulnerability, exacerbated by deprivation of education.

From the children filling out questionnaires, the main characteristics identified were:

- maltreatment and neglect;
- malnourishment;
- lack of clothes;
- no education or low level of education;
- working in the streets;
- bad friendships;
- dysfunctional families;
- being orphaned.

The growing effect of consumerism on children's lives, exposure to modern culture, the desire to earn money, and peer pressure all make children more receptive to trafficking.

At the local level, one or more of the following factors may increase the vulnerability of children being trafficked:

- misperception about destination,
- reproduced through trafficking networks,
- neighbors' children already trafficked,
- poverty or very low income, or
- fragile family situation due to alcoholism, unemployment, sexual abuse, or domestic violence.

5.2.2 Family profiles

It is evident that family vulnerability leads to child vulnerability. Access to education, health and nutrition are directly linked to the family's social and economic circumstances. During interviews in Korca with two mothers of children at risk and from a group discussion organised with parents in Elbasan, it was agreed that trafficked children generally come from families where:

- parents do not have even minimal education;
- parents are divorced and/or remarried;
- family members live in poor conditions;
- large extended families live together.

They are also characterized by various social problems such as alcoholism, health problems, or domestic violence.

All the research tools used - focus group discussions, key informant interviews and case studies - suggest that children are deprived of education, nutritional food intake and affection if parental care, particularly the mother's, is absent. At the same time, most key informants noted that with little education and knowledge of employment skills outside the household, most women and girls face extreme economic difficulties if a breadwinner dies, divorces or abandons them.

Parents' role in children's decision to leave

Most of the time parents were aware of the fact that their children were going to work abroad, mainly in Greece or Italy. In the interviews, there was some disparity between the responses from children and their parents regarding the parent's role in the child's decision to leave. Generally, the parents did not admit that they knew about the child's decision to leave. On the other hand, the children maintain that parents were aware of their resolve to go abroad for work. However, there is a tendency for the children to justify a parent's decisions by saying, *"We did not have anything to eat; the parents did not have any other choice"*.

A correlation exists between the child's age and the parent's role in their decision to leave. In interviews, the age of trafficked children varied from 7-12 years old, and divided along gender lines - 7-12 for boys and 9-12 for girls; the younger the child when leaving the country, the larger the role of parents in the decision. With older children peer pressure was a stronger factor in the choice to leave. Parents often reported they were hoping their children would bring some income to the family. It should be noted that frequently parents were not aware of the difficulties and challenges that their children would face.

In many cases the parents trusted their children to relatives, neighbors or friends to accompany the children on the journey and "take care" of them abroad. Children's exploitation by relatives is not rare. A 15-year-old girl in Tirana, never trafficked, tells about her experience by saying, "After my mother left, my grandfather forced me to go in the street and beg. I continued begging until my mother came back".

In almost all cases, the parental decision for children to leave was not an easy one. One of the mothers told her story through tears:

"My heart was broken but I couldn't think of any other solution. When I told my son about the possibility of him leaving he was hoping to earn some money so he accepted it".

mother of a child released from trafficking, Vlora

Undoubtedly, for all the parents, it was a distressing choice to make for their children to leave home especially considering that Albanian parents traditionally make extensive sacrifices for their children. The above example is only one of many showing how parents suffer when they determine that their child should leave. One interview with a father demonstrated that there are also parents who did not accept offers to send their children abroad:

"From the moment that we came to Tirana (the family migrated from Lezhe) we had different offers to send our son to Greece. We did not accept, because he was doing well in school and he himself was against it for the same reason".

father of a child at risk for trafficking , in Tirana

There are cases where the Albanian media has presented the parents' role in their children's decision to leave home.

Minors exploitation

Many times the parents of trafficked children are aware of the trafficking of their children and gave up their children in exchange for a sum of money. Some of these children stay ten hours per day on the sidewalks to beg or to steal. This is the working day of one minor in Italy, accompanied by physical and psychological violence.

"Shekulli" newspaper, September 2, 2002

5.3 Child Trafficking Process

5.3.1 Recruitment Process of trafficked children

The recruitment process of children for both trafficking and exploitation purposes is closely related, from the viewpoint of the persons involved and methods used; many similarities were identified during interviews with all target groups - children, parents and key informants. However, the recruitment process is directly related to the sex and age of the victim, family conditions and the final destination of the trafficked children.

Ways of recruitment. In almost all cases, traffickers promise to pay the family of the child an amount of money - in a lump sum or periodically. Usually the first money earned by the child's work goes to cover the cost of sending the child to the destination country. The trafficker is always somebody the family knows, thus the recruitment process is not sophisticated.

In 90% of the interviews, recruitment happened after sealing an agreement with a family member of the child. In every scenario motivation was the extremely poor conditions of the families of the trafficked children and an urgent need for money to survive.

In many interviews, wording such as: "the parents agreed", "my mother negotiated", "my mother asked me to go", "my father decided" and so on were used.

My mother agreed with a friend of my aunt's to take me to Greece. We arrived close to the border by taxi and in the evening, when it became dark, we crossed the boarder by climbing in the mountains. After one day walking we were captured by the police and they deported us back to the boarder. After two days we left again and the second time we were successful.

a trafficked child in Korça

People involved. In the majority of circumstances the parents and the traffickers were involved. There are stories of the mother as the initiator; sometimes the father takes the role of negotiator or both of them negotiate and consult, depending on the relationship with the trafficker. There are rare cases when the child leaves alone, based on his own decision, when the initiator is a friend of the child. The trafficker is usually more often than not someone the family knows directly or indirectly - the child's or parents' cousin, an aunt or uncle, the parents' friend or neighbor. Such prior relationships make the decision and the bargaining easier. However there are circumstances in which the parents are not involved and the children are cheated by their friends.

The son of our neighbour convinced my son to leave. He took my son without telling me. My son was 9 years old and when he came back he said that he left with some other children 15-16 years old. My son was the youngest. He was not afraid when he passed the border and when he arrived abroad they were accommodated in the house of our neighbour. I only saw my son 6 months later when the police returned him home.

Border Crossing. The preferred country for traffickers is Greece. This is because it is easier to cross the border, inexpensive and, in most cases, there is no need to prepare documents for the child; the greatest expense is for travel costs to the border. Trafficking to Italy is more difficult. The traffickers must collaborate with networks that prepare false documents or hide the child on the ferry; the risk of discovery is high due to frequent police inspections.

One friend of our oldest brother arranged everything - how to cross the boarder and where to work. After two days we had to leave our family. The "person" came by car to our house with two other children and a woman. Close to the customs, only we, the children, got out of the car. A young boy took us and ordered us to follow him without talking. It was dark and the road was very difficult. The other two children that were smaller than me were exhausted. After midnight we met with the "person" and the woman who were waiting for us with another taxi (Greek license). They accompanied us to Thessaloniki.

a child from Korça

The interviews show that often the families and traffickers make repeated attempts before succeeding. In all cases of children returned by police to the home country, the traffickers arranged for them to travel again.

5.3.2 Children's living conditions

Trafficked children live under arduous conditions. Data illustrates that these children are considered merely work tools for profit; they are generally given only minimal food and lodging. There is no social life, entertainment, schooling or training activities in their lives. No gift or positive reinforcement is given for the work they have done, no matter how challenging.

Based on responses from the two interviewed trafficked released children's groups (61/22) and two group discussions with the released children in Tirana and Elbasan, it became evident that, in spite of their age, the children's daily life was solely work. Following working hours, only a few hours of sleep were allowed so that they would be able to resume work the following day or night.

This high intensity child exploitation is related to their bosses' interest to generate as great a profit as possible within a short period of time. They have learned from practice that the situation is no longer the same as at the beginning of the '90s. Groups of children are not stable; they either escape themselves, are caught by police or assisted by NGOs of Albania or the trafficked country and returned. Based on the data, time of stay varies from 3 to 6 months. There have been only rare cases of children remaining for up to a year. An example of the intensity of exploitation is affirmed by children interviewed in Tirana, Elbasan and Korça, who stated that they had started work immediately upon arrival at their destination, following only a very brief rest insufficient for the exhausting journey they had completed.

Type of work

Data shows that children are engaged in a panoply of activities that have been proven to be profitable for traffickers. The youngest age group, 6-11 years old, is engaged entirely in begging. There is a strong correlation between this type of activity and age and ethnic background, mainly Roma or Egyptian. This indicator also appears for not trafficked children. Based on interviews with them and their parents, the tendency is for engagement in the same type of work inside and outside the country. The largest group consists of street-vending children, the majority in Greece, who sell handkerchiefs or flowers. This group affirms that it has been doing the same work in Albania, with more varied articles such as cigarettes, lighters, pre-paid mobile phone cards, almonds or seeds. Another category is the group involved in illegal activities such as theft and a smaller group involved with drugs.

CHILD TRAFFICKING - ALBANIA

Activities	Gender		Age															
	Male	Female	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22		
Sexual services																		
no	40	12	1	2	5	6	5	6	7	6	5	4	3	1	1	1		
yes	2	7	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	1	1	2	1	2	1	.		
Dancing																		
no	42	19	1	2	5	6	6	6	7	7	6	6	4	3	2	1		
Massage																		
no	42	18	1	2	5	6	6	6	7	7	6	5	4	3	2	1		
yes	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.
Begging																		
no	25	12	1	2	2	4	6	4	2	2	4	3	3	2	2	.		
yes	17	7	.	.	3	2	.	2	5	5	2	3	1	1	.	1		
Selling things in the street																		
no	31	17	1	2	4	5	6	4	5	3	6	5	3	2	2	1		
yes	11	2	.	.	1	1	.	2	2	4	.	1	1	1	.	.		
Waiter																		
no	41	19	1	2	5	6	6	6	7	7	6	6	4	3	1	1		
yes	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.		
Working in home																		
no	40	18	1	2	5	5	5	6	6	7	6	6	4	3	2	1		
yes	2	1	.	.	.	1	1	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Working in agriculture																		
no	37	19	1	2	5	6	6	5	5	6	6	6	4	2	2	1		
yes	5	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	2	1	.	.	.	1	.	.		
Taking care																		
no	42	19	1	2	5	6	6	6	7	7	6	6	4	3	2	1		
Drug dealer																		
no	40	18	1	2	5	6	6	6	7	7	6	5	4	2	2	.		
yes	2	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	1	.	1		
Other																		
no	37	17	1	2	3	5	6	6	6	5	5	5	4	3	2	1		
yes	5	2	.	.	2	1	.	.	1	2	1	1	.	.	.	.
No answer																		
no	42	19	1	2	5	6	6	6	7	7	6	6	4	3	2	1		

Table on Types of Work

Only 17% of those interviewed affirmed that they have been involved in sexual services (girls). However, from interviews with parents of trafficked children and group discussions with parents in Vlora and Tirana, it became apparent that many of their daughters, sisters, relatives or acquaintances (13 to 17 year olds) had been involved in prostitution abroad - in Italy, Greece, or Belgium. It is striking that parents or family members confirm they have no contact whatsoever with their daughters or sisters. They were reticent to discuss this issue at length, which shows that the silence has more to do with fear from the consequences of such disclosure than with a feeling of shame. Danger continues to remain high for victims of prostitution, both for the trafficked person and her relatives or denouncers and witnesses.

Another group was engaged a variety of jobs: in agriculture, as waiters, running games of luck (boys only), housework, street car-washing (girls and boys) and other such activities.

Some of the interviewees said they knew they were going to work, but twenty of them noted that the work they were engaged in was not the one mentioned before their departure; thirty of the children did not know the kind of work they were going to do. Thus, as a rule, others made decisions for them and they were not consulted.

Klodi, who had been promised agricultural work, said that he had to make money begging or stealing - 30,000 drachmas per day. Although he managed to make that amount, he was not given any of it. (interviewed, 13 years old, Elbasan)

Working hours are another significant indicator not only of exploitation, but also control over the children. Data shows that working hours vary between 3 hours and 18 hours – only one respondent for each extreme. Only three children worked less than 6 hours per week and for most of them, working hours were on average 10-12 hours per day. Of the released children, 65% worked 7 days a week. Working hours are connected to the type of work; begging or street vending children tell of even longer working hours. Both work and sleep were controlled; in a group discussion, children noted that “they only let us sleep for 5 hours.” Among released children, 34% said they worked at night – mainly children involved in sexual services, drug dealing, or working as waiters or thieves. Eight of the night labourers said they worked 7 nights a week.

The working day is longer for released children than those of never trafficked children working in Albania. The latter note that if they get tired they can leave or decide for themselves when to work. However, these statements must be taken with some reservation, as other sources testify that there are criminal networks inside the country that exploit street-children for long working hours and that children are afraid to denounce them.

Profit from child labour is another element that is under total control of the bosses. Based on the responses regarding reward for their work, it is clear that a good part of the children were not provided everything their contracts had stated - food, lodging and clothes. Some of the children testified that they had to sleep in tents under very rough conditions.

Some of the released children said they did not know how much money they made. This happened because a portion of them were uneducated and could not distinguish different bills and also because the person supervising them (beggars and vendors) would collect whatever they had made several times during the day. A majority of children thought that a portion of the remuneration for their work was sent to their families or parents, but when they returned they found out this was not true. Of all those interviewed, only 21 respondents (30%), stated that their parents got something (17 in cash and 4 in other forms) from their work.

The parents, most of who had agreed to their children going abroad to work, said that the experience had been disappointing. They certainly did not pay anything for the children’s travel, but they had been promised part of the working profit on a regular

basis. In the best cases, this did happen in the first two or three months and then payments would stop. The amount of money gained was between 5,000 and 15,000 lek per month and only for a brief period of time.

None of the interviewed parents or parent groups acknowledged an improved home situation due to money from the child's work. The mother of two children returned after being trafficked said, "We sent our children and they were worked to the extreme - in order to build a house...However, we are still out in the open. 'They' did not give us anything..."(Elbasan)

Recently, in Gramsh, a small town in the Elbasan region, a child returned from trafficking in Greece where he had worked for 4 years and earned a lot of money for his boss. He denounced the boss because the man had not kept his promise to give the boy's family their due. According to the press, the child, currently 16 years old, said that he had earned a great deal by begging. The denunciation served to uncover a network of traffickers, one well-known in the city as president of the local football club.

Gazeta Shekulli, April 2003

To the released children, it is more monetarily attractive to beg in Tirana or Durrës, with profits varying between 200 and 800 lek, or take street jobs such as: selling plastic bags, prepaid mobile phone cards, cigarettes, seeds, or street car-washing or working in iron dump sites with profits varying between 1,200 and 1,600 lek per day. This is because they "work" on their own, they have "experience," they do not become part of a group and have no boss to control them, force them to work, punish them or take money from them. Some can earn even more - 2,500 lek per day in the case of a 13-year old prostitute in Tirana.

5.3.3 Child's relations with families and others

Connections with families were prohibited. In rare cases, when traffickers were under pressure of being denounced by parents, children would be allowed to make a brief telephone call to the family, always under supervision.

"After four years, I managed to get in touch with my daughter in Florina by telephone", said a mother from Korça.

They would receive no medical care in case of illness. Children stated that they were not taken to hospital when they got sick and, furthermore, there were even cases of children being abandoned due to their illnesses. In addition the bosses were interested in the crippling of children for use as beggars. *"I was told – cut your arm off as you will make much more money,"* – said one of the children. Parents relate that children have returned from trafficking traumatized, with scars, asthma, and even amputated limbs.

The type of work and the conditions in which it was carried out have gone against the interests and desires of the children and are harmful to their physical and mental health. However, one third of the children said that if they could have had another job they would have stayed. This was a result of the difficulties following their return:

continued poverty, family problems, inability to go to school (lacking money for books and clothes) and no job to put them on the track of a normal life. Only seven said that they would like to go back.

Thirty-six of the 62 respondents stated that they would like to go to school and learn a vocation. Many of them have been made aware that this is the path to their social integration.

Relations with others. Children state that outside the country they feel powerless, constantly threatened, supervised and controlled at every step. Half of the children testified that they could only move around accompanied, whereas 25% could move around by themselves. In such conditions, it was difficult for children to ask for help or contact the police. Forty of them did not ask for help from anybody. A very small number managed to contact the police but not in a premeditated manner.

During work hours, overseers would control profit, but also protect children from assault by the police. They would generally work segregated from each other, the degree of isolation depending on the type of work. It was greater for those in sexual services and home services, whereas those involved in drugs and thievery would work in groups. Between these categories were the street beggars and vendors. The bosses would stop them from speaking Albanian or communicating with each other. Any violation of the rules would be followed by violent reprisals; should they attempt escape, they were threatened with murder or the death of their loved ones. Children were also scared of each other and did not dare discuss or decide anything together. There was only one case of a boy and a girl from Korça who made a deal jointly to escape from their boss.

Relationship to the “bosses” and control

Control is an important element in the life and work of trafficked children. Level of control largely depends on the type of work and the working conditions of the child, that is: out in the open, in the street or enclosed quarters, the way things have been forced upon them, deals made, and the child’s age or sex.

When correlating the type of work done with responses to the question “Were you forced to do any of this work?” 50% of the children answered no with the exception of those in agriculture. At the other extreme are the children involved in drug dealing who affirm that they did this type of work under duress. This probably has to do with the awareness they have now, following their return, that the “work” they were doing is punishable by law. Half the interviewed children in ‘illegal’ work stated that they had been forced, most of them “physically forced”.

Forms of physical violence were clarified in the semi-structured interviews with 20 released children and their parents. Some examples are: “they would not give us food,” “they were beaten,” “cigarettes were put out on my belly,” “he was burned with a hot iron,” “he would beat him with the washing machine hose,” “they were immersed naked into cold water,” “I was forced to swallow shampoo.” “They were threatened to be killed if I ran away, “My tongue would be cut off”.

There was only one instance noting good treatment from the tutor- a woman being kind to a girl from Tirana selling flowers in the streets of Thessaloniki. Children also testify to the involvement of women as mediators and supervisors of their work and profits. In prostitution, a larger number of women control the exploitation of little girls.

5.4 Release and after

5.4.1 Return of trafficked children

The majority of children released from trafficking in the survey were returned by police:

- 31 children were arrested;
- 16 children made the decision to come back home themselves;
- 6 children returned home with somebody's help;
- 30 children did not give any explanation of their release from trafficking

Most of the children were returned either due to arrest or pleas for police assistance. At the same time, a considerable percentage decided to come back to their homes and found a way to do it.

If children are caught and arrested in Greece they are treated differently according to their age. If 12 years old or over, they are kept in jail and when there are enough children to fill up a lorry or bus, deported back to the Albanian border where the trafficking cycle is usually repeated. Children below 12 years of age are placed in an orphanage. The National Centre for the Protection of Children in Greece, which tries to identify families in Albania and return the children, reports that out of 272 children found in this situation in 1999, only two had been returned to their families²⁰.

The children's experiences during the time they were trafficked strongly influenced their future decisions whether or not return to work abroad. From the interviews with children released from trafficking, most of them continue to work in the streets after they come back home. During a group discussion conducted in Tirana with 10 children, 8 boys and 2 girls, all of them asserted that they wanted to leave again. They mentioned that their parents had conflicts and were not able to fulfil their minimal needs. The same results also emerged in group discussion in Elbasan with children released from trafficking.

Through interviews, children released from trafficking categorically stated their preference not to go abroad again. One 17-year-old boy from Korca released from trafficking said: *"After the terrible experience that I had in Greece, I would never go back"*. Another boy from Korca, is more optimistic in saying: *"I am doing well in school and I don't think any more about working abroad"*.

When the children were asked what they wanted to do now, after being released from trafficking; they answered in several ways:

²⁰ Limanowska, B; "Trafficking in Human Beings in South Eastern Europe", June, 2002.

- 34 children wanted to go to school;
- 17 children would like to learn a profession, such as: smith, builder, musician, hairdresser, tailor/dressmaker, or driver;
- 4 children would like to stay with their parents;
- 14 children would like to work abroad;
- 15 children did not list any particular preference

5.4.2 Reintegration Process and challenges

Open social services, adoptive families and specialised programs are often considered intervention areas by national and international NGOs. With the support of the international community, some NGOs, such as “Help for Children”, have developed activities for social and academic reintegration. These “intervention models” are being taken into consideration more and more by the ministries concerned, Social Affairs and Education.²¹

The reactions of the families after children are returned are diverse. One of the children who made the decision to come back home himself, tells his story:

When I came back home, I did not feel really welcomed. They (parents) already know that I escaped from the pimp. He has called and threatened them by asking to give him back the money that he spent for my trip to Greece, if I would not go back there. My father was angry because he could not see a way to pay him back”.

A 17-year-old boy released from trafficking in Korca

In the group discussions with parents of trafficked and released children, the idea arose that with the money earned from their children’s work their economic situation had not improved. *“The children did not get anything from this experience; even the parents themselves were disappointed with real life in Greece”.* There were even cases where parents blamed their children’s return from trafficking for their difficult economic situation, creating the possibility that they could be re-trafficked. This scenario happened to several of the children contacted. One of the fathers interviewed in Tirana mentioned that: *“his son returned from the Greek police is still begging in the streets since they have no other alternatives”.*

Because the trafficking experience is extremely harsh and painful, there are many consequences for children who have been victims. These consequences are felt by the children themselves, their families as well as the entire community. Parents of released children and key informants expressed their concern:

The consequences that child victims of trafficking or their families suffer are psychological traumas that also have an impact on the community, through hearing or suffering personally from trafficking experiences”.

Physician, engaged by NGOs in Vlora

²¹ Terre des Hommes; “The Trafficking of Children in Greece”, January, 2003.

After coming from Greece her daughter was thinner and had lost her smile and was not very active... Even though she looked like she missed us she stayed isolated and as a foreigner at the family".

the mother of a girl released from trafficking in Vlora

In general, the parents of released children find it difficult to fully understand their children's traumas because of their lack of education and unavailability of information. Parents can more easily identify physical injury or health problems and for this reason the psycho-emotional damage of trafficking experiences may become lasting because it goes untreated.

Unfortunately, most of the children released from trafficking have to resume the same jobs that they had before they were trafficked. There are even cases where children have been used as drug couriers and sometimes they were maltreated and abused; the traffickers tested drugs on the children's bodies. In these cases the children suffered terrible consequences and health problems.

There were a number of cases of children trafficked several times to Greece. A mother tells the story of her son who had gone to Greece several times on foot:

The last time that my son left for Greece he walked for seven days and was caught by Greek soldiers. The whole group was returned home. When my son came back he was so exhausted that he couldn't walk for a week. Since that time I decided that my son would not go any more abroad even if we starved..."

a mother of trafficked children in Elbasan

Because of painful experiences working abroad, many children refuse to talk about it. Several children asked for their stories to remain confidential.

The children released from trafficking expressed their desire to go and work in Greece again, but this time for themselves and through legal means. They would no longer agree to work for others any more or be exploited. A few children released from trafficking abroad start working in other cities of Albania. Some of them come to Tirana and sleep in the streets and when they go home, stay with their families.

There are some positive experiences of children working in Greece; when the police sent them to Greek institutions for street children they adapted well, making it difficult to return to their poor families in Albania. In these cases, the experience of coming back was shocking since they compared their home with the institutions where they had been. One of the interviews with a mother illustrates this scenario:

Because of the economic situation, I sent my 11-year-old son to Greece. Two other children suffer some mental health problems. After my son left the streets, he went into an institution for street children, "Smile child", in Greece. He stayed there for one and a half years and adjusted very well After that we asked him to come back. When he returned he had many problems in communication, he had a bad appetite; and he could not stand his father when he was beating his siblings".

A mother of child released from trafficking, in Tirana

The integration process of a child released from trafficking is long and complex, although often when victims return there are NGOs that try to help them. Various linked factors have to be taken into consideration during the reintegration process:

Firstly, when the children come back home they realize that the situation in their families has not improved; on the contrary it seems worse. In most cases the parents are still unemployed, fight or argue with each other and the father is still violent and continues to abuse alcohol.

The parents' position towards the possibility of their children being trafficked (from group discussions) can be divided into three attitudes:

1. They would never want their children to suffer this experience again;
2. They are afraid their children will become victims of trafficking again;
3. They see the children working abroad as their only choice.

Parents contacted express their helplessness to stop the trafficking because they themselves are begging in the streets; they do not see any other alternative. As one of them articulates:

We cannot stop our child from being trafficked again. He doesn't even listen to us. Now he is 14 years old and has started smoking. He leaves home without even saying anything. All these things are concerning us but we cannot do anything. We are even thinking of all leaving and going to Greece."

a father of a trafficked released child, in Tirana

Secondly, the communities which these children return to don't offer many integration opportunities, especially when they are Roma or Egyptian. Stigma and negative attitudes towards children returning from trafficking make the situation more difficult. In some cases, when they are registered in school, they are older and have to restart school at the age when they left. In these cases they feel deficient since they are not studying with classmates of the same age.

In the beginning the teacher put me in the last desk since I am older than my classmates. My classmates did not talk to me in the beginning because of my age. Now it has changed, the teacher and my friends love me."

a girl released from trafficking, in Korca

Unfortunately, the possibility that these children released from trafficking will again be trafficked exists. Children released from trafficking who are doing well in school and have started a "normal" life are few. Even when these children would like to go abroad again and work at other jobs, this traps them into an endless cycle of escape and return to the reality of their problems.

6. Programmatic Responses towards child trafficking

During the transition period, there have been a number of national and international organizations and institutions contributing in one way or another to combat child trafficking and child abuse. The government of Albania has responded to the problem of trafficking of human beings in general and child trafficking in particular through serious programmatic measures.

According to the ILO Convention No.182, member states should implement “immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour as a matter of urgency”.

The first step for states that have ratified this Convention is to set priorities for national action against these worst forms, including child trafficking. The government of Albania has set the trend in this direction by adopting a **National Strategy to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings**. This document was drafted by the Ministry of Public Order in cooperation with representatives of: the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry for Education and Science, the Ministry of Justice, the General Prosecutor’s Office, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports and the National Intelligence Service. After consultation with international institutions and local NGOs, the draft document was approved by the Parliament in December 2001. This is a medium-term strategy, covering 3 years, with the mission to establish principal directions of efforts for achieving:

- prevention and stoppage of the traffic of human beings,
- protection and help for the victims of trafficking and
- measures for their integration in the society.

The most important part of the strategy is the national Plan of Action and Coordination, which defines the objectives, activities, responsible institutions and the related budget.

The challenges are great:

- revision and enforcement of legislation;
- preventive measures;
- direct assistance to victims; and
- raising public awareness.
-

National Strategy for Children. This document was drafted by the Committee of Equal Opportunities and approved by the Albanian government in March 2001. It is guided by the principles of the Albanian Constitution and the articles of the Convention for the Rights of the Child. The strategy puts emphasis on all categories of children, including children at risk for trafficking for prostitution purposes, organ donation or criminal activities. Four main directions are defined for further actions:

1. Prevention through increased awareness and increased access to education,
2. Protection,
3. Return and
4. Reintegration.

A national plan of action is part of the strategy, with concrete procedures, responsible institutions and time frame included.

The first national conference on child trafficking, “All together in the fight against child trafficking”, was held in Tirana on November 6th, 2001. It was inter-ministerial, with objectives to mobilize policy makers and rally public opinion concerning child trafficking; to put the child trafficking issue high on the political agenda of the government; to submit concrete child trafficking recommendations for the National Strategy on Human Beings, and finally to set up a joint National Focal Point Committee on child trafficking for all institutions and NGOs dealing with this issue.

Comprehensive programme interventions

Experience in combating child trafficking shows that, in order to be effective and meaningful, interventions must be broad-based and comprehensive. It is important to stress that intervention success is based on a strong link among all aspects; close coordination between prevention, protection, repatriation and reintegration is required. Repatriation is successful only when the child is reintegrated within his family and community and prevented and protected from the risk of re-trafficking.

The *prevention* component is crucial in addressing the root causes of child trafficking and contains the following components:

- **direct support to children at risk and their families** through income-generating activities, financial schemes and skills training to help parents meet the basic family needs and prevent children dropping out of school;
- **educational opportunity** for girls who are often discriminated against in their societies and are the first to fall prey to traffickers;
- **community mobilisation and awareness-raising** in vulnerable areas, in order to create a common sense of responsibility to protect potential victims from traffickers. This can be achieved through:
 - **Organising of project debates** at schools, in the community, in government institutions,
 - **Revitalising life in the problem areas** through recognition of the situation and organising the above-mentioned activities
 - **Making the social institutions responsible:** organising round tables with teachers, community leaders, and offering training.
 - **Regenerating the positive values in marginalised families** through scheduled follow-up visits

OSCE has been coordinating anti-trafficking activities among the international organizations and providing support for local NGOs, including capacity building. Regarding prevention measures, OSCE has supported the Women’s Rights and Anti-Trafficking Education project (WRATE), which began in November 2000 with the goal of raising awareness in Albania of women’s rights under international human rights conventions and domestic law. The project included training of trainers and curriculum development.

Terre des Hommes (TDH) has implemented a prevention program named P.R.A.E.V.E - "Prevention, Reintegration and Assistance for Child Victims of Exile" together with Help for Children (NPF-local NGO), with the agreement of the Albanian authorities and support from UNICEF -Tirana and the OAK Foundation - Geneva. Programme objectives were to prevent the risks of exile by making 3,000 children of the Elbasan and Korça regions aware of the problem and, with the support of schools and parents, to set up a recording and detection system for children at risk, as well as a system of direct intervention for "high-risk" children.

Various activities were planned to meet the objectives of the PRAEVE programme, such as the production and distribution of materials (booklets, posters, videos, etc.) to make people more aware of the problem and the creation of a photo identification file for each child. Teaching materials about school dropouts and the risks of street life have been prepared for teachers.

IOM is currently carrying out a project for "Prevention of Women and Girls' Trafficking through Awareness Raising and Institutional Capacity Building". This project also focuses on prevention through an information campaign - including radio and television, public announcements, printing and dissemination of posters and leaflets, designing materials for schools on gender/domestic violence and trafficking - to increase public awareness. The information collected through a questionnaire and focus group discussions with teachers, parents and students throughout Albania will be included in the materials to be used in schools. Training for how to use the supplementary material has been taking place with Ministry of Education officials and teachers.

International Social Service (ISS) is also involved in the prevention of child trafficking. In 2000, ISS implemented projects in two villages near Tirana, identifying high-risk families with children. ISS offered professional courses to 50 young people (hairstylist, tailor, mechanic, electrician, and plumber) for a period of five to six months. The organization networked with businessmen and facilitated the placement of these youths in a business apprenticeship program near their homes. ISS paid 60% of the youth's salary; 15% were employed by the business after their apprenticeship.

The *protection* component is related to

- **involvement and collaboration of law enforcement and legal authorities** - ensure that children are treated with all consideration due their age, protected from traffickers and employers
- **training of social workers** - psycho-social trainees and drafting training of programmes
- **identification of mechanisms for children with psycho-social needs** (trauma) - evaluation of staff psychologists and drafting models for psycho-social assistance
- **physical protection for children at risk through shelter centres** - collaboration with agencies and groups dealing with this problem
- **involvement of police for minors** for protection of children at risk - organising training for minor police agents; trainings for children as victims not criminals

- **setting up foster families for children at risk** - definitions for criteria and selection
- **advocacy to the general prosecutor** - study and lobby for protection of minors in Albania as well as the destination countries; creation of international case files

Another component of the IOM project is capacity building of the judiciary and teachers concerning law enforcement, in order to understand the trafficking phenomenon, prosecute traffickers, decrease the criminalisation of victims and help in its prevention. Training courses for public order police were held at the Police Academy from October to December 2001, making a total of 109 police officers trained from Tirana Police Directorate and Academy. The design of the curriculum, the training of trainers and the training of police personnel - both at the Academy and in the field - have been completed by working closely with the Police Academy; the curriculum produced during the project has been incorporated into the training programme of the academy

During *withdrawal and repatriation* it is important to identify and locate trafficked children, evaluate their needs, protect them from further abuse and remove them from their exploitative situation in a carefully planned and sensitive manner. The mechanisms for effective withdrawal and repatriate of trafficked children are the following:

- **involvement and collaboration of law enforcement and legal authorities** to treat children sensitively, protect them from traffickers and employers, and safely return them to their countries of origin;
- **transit centres** play an important role in responding to the immediate needs of children on their way back home;
- **programmes** that seek to sensitise, train and strengthen the capacities of national partners;
- **bilateral and regional cooperation** to harmonize anti-trafficking legislation to facilitate both the repatriation of children and prosecution of traffickers.

ISS - Albania, in collaboration with ISS - Italy, is working on a project concerning unaccompanied minors. ISS has experience treating problems related to abandoned unaccompanied children who become exposed trafficking; from 1992 to the end of 2002, ISS intervened in 4,457 cases. When possible, they facilitate the return of the child and then take measures toward reintegration. The nature of the work for family reunification of Albanian children involves four steps:

1. creation of a file on the child,
2. determination of whether the child can be brought safely back to Albania,
3. repatriation and family reunification,
4. reintegration once the child has been repatriated.

In cases where the child has been trafficked with permission of the parent and reintegration back into the family is difficult, an attempt may be made to place the child in a social welfare institution or foster care.

The largest number of repatriations, 700 cases, came from villages and/or poor communities. ISS realized that school and job training were insufficient and that provision for tools and subsequent training would be necessary. They receive requests concerning children from both within and outside of Albania, identify the family and try to discover why the child is living abroad. When possible, ISS facilitates the return of the child and then take measures aimed at reintegration. ISS staff attempted to reintegrate several children back into school system.

Terre des Hommes has been implementing a repatriation pilot project (RSA Project). Since the beginning of the bilateral partnership between Albania and Greece, with the close cooperation of Arsis, a Greek NGO, and with the Filoxenia centre of Thessaloniki, more than 15 children have been returned to their families in Albania and have now benefited from adapted programs. Since 2001, the children and families, beneficiaries of TDH programs in Albania, will be registered and photographed for identification in case of disappearance.

The work being done by Terre des Hommes consists of encouraging the Albanian authorities and NGOs to meet the destination country's authorities and NGOs with regard to child trafficking. In this way they can collaborate on the criteria for analyzing the situation of child trafficking victims, the procedures acceptable to both sides and the financing of repatriation, in compliance with their respective laws and international standards.

Reintegration programmes are at the heart of all anti-trafficking strategies.

Activities regarding reintegration of children can be divided in two categories:

1. social reintegration activities and
2. economic reintegration activities
- 3.

Social reintegration is focused on various levels:

- **Reintegration within families:** sensitising families, following-up with the child within the family, psychological support for the child and family,
- **Reintegration within foster families:** selection of foster families according to criteria, preparation of the family and child for placement, social and psychosocial follow-up of the child
- **Reintegration in shelter centres:** preparation of the centre personnel and the child for the placement, follow-up of the child

Other activities include services for returnees including medical care, psycho-social rehabilitation schemes, legal counselling, formal or non-formal education and vocational training. Whenever possible, children who are very young are reintegrated into their families. Successful reintegration schemes are long-term endeavours that require monitoring and regular follow up of each child several months after the child has left the programme.

Economic reintegration means that financial support to the families must be coordinated among economic support programs and assisting families to approach prospective employers in both public and private sectors.

The IOM project "Voluntary Return and Reintegration of Illegal Migrants and Victims of Trafficking Stranded in Albania" started in April 2002. Helping migrants to return safely in a dignified manner and successfully reintegrate in their home

countries, the project aims to discourage potential illegal migrants and victims of trafficking from future illegal migration towards the EU Member States.

Another important project under implementation is “Reintegration Assistance to Albanian Victims of Trafficking through Capacity Building of National Reintegration Support Network” started in December 2001. A Reintegration Center (RC) was opened in mid-February 2002 to provide temporary protection, medical and psycho-social counseling and return and reintegration assistance to Albanian victims of trafficking. The shelter can accommodate up to 28 victims, who enter voluntarily, and has 24-hour security to ensure the protection of the victims and staff. In the first year, until February 2003, 90 Albanian victims of trafficking have been assisted and offered a reintegration package tailored to their needs including: immediate medical assistance; legal, psychological and social assistance; job/vocational training or employment; and foster care/independent living:

Since January 2000, IOM and The International Catholic Migration Committee (ICMC) have implemented the IARS project, “Inter-Agency Referral System for Return and Reintegration Assistance to Victims of Trafficking”. As the first and only project of its kind in Albania, the IARS project faced substantial challenges in attempts to provide an escape route for women and girls caught in the harsh realities of Albania's trafficking networks. While these challenges still pose obstacles to full development of a return and reintegration system it has succeeded in establishing a coordinated operational response capable of assisting up to 30 third-country-national trafficking victims per month. Based on such success, IARS in 2002 focused on refining shelter, return and reintegration assistance activities only for third-country nationals.

ICMC is managing a shelter for foreign victims of trafficking who are being assisted by IOM to return home. The shelter accepts those who will voluntarily return home, offering medical and social services provided by IOM

Help for Children (NPF-local NGO), with UNICEF support, is creating reintegration classes for street children, the majority of whom have been commercially and sexually exploited in Greece. Already over 1000 children have been reintegrated into the regular curricula in the four original target cities of Tirana, Korça, Elbasan and Berat and the program during 2002 was expanded to include Pogradec, Kuçova and Cerrik.

NPF is also working on the reintegration of children returning from Greece. According to their assessments, 80% of their beneficiaries have been trafficked. The program includes: assessment of the situation in Greece in cooperation with Greek organizations, monitoring of informal repatriation, reintegration of children into schools, development of a legal model for the protection of trafficked children, and lobbying for children's rights.

Save the Children prepared a report on child trafficking in Albania in 2001, providing information on trafficking in young girls for prostitution and, primarily, boys for begging and cheap labor. Save the Children works to support the return and reintegration of trafficked girls and women and to prevent children from being trafficked in the future.

In 2001, Save the Children helped a national NGO, The Hearth, to establish the first shelter for trafficked Albanian girls and women in Vlora. During 2002, the shelter offered short-term psychological, social and medical care to 359 women and girls, of whom 289 had been trafficked. Seventy-eight were under 18 and the great majority had been under 18 when first trafficked.

In 2002, more than 200 women were reunified with their families, although for many, it is proving very difficult to make a new start while living back at home. Thirty girls and women (18 Albanian and 12 foreign nationals) were referred to other agencies, either for assisted repatriation to their own countries or for a longer-term reintegration process away from their families.

Both The Hearth and Save the Children are founding members of an anti-trafficking coalition, All Together against Trafficking, which includes government officials and representatives of national and international organizations.

Save the Children also participates in a witness protection task group, which assists women at risk who have given evidence against their traffickers. Proper witness protection legislation and structures are needed in order to protect these women courageous enough to give evidence to the police. It is vital that more traffickers, including the especially powerful ones, are convicted and imprisoned.

When Save the Children intervened to deal with the urgent need of providing safe shelter for trafficked Albanian women, they turned their attention to the issue of prevention. In partnership with the NGO Help the Children, extensive consultations were carried out with children, parents and community leaders in the two small towns of Cërrik and Kuçova. The aim was to find out more about children's lives, and in particular, the factors that had led so many to be caught up in trafficking. It became clear that one important problem was the lack of social activities for children and young people, making them long to leave their towns in search of excitement elsewhere.

Save the Children decided to support the establishment of youth activity centers in Cërrik and Kuçova. Each center has a library and sports and musical facilities - table tennis, keep fit equipment, computer, sound systems and musical instruments. If the centers are shown to make a difference to the lives of young people over the longer term, Save the Children will consider supporting local groups to open centers in other small towns.

Terre des Hommes has also implemented a Transnational Actions against Child Trafficking (TACT) pilot project. The objectives were that "At the end of 2003, all concerned Albanian and Greek organizations are mobilizing a part of their means to fight child trafficking, in preventing, protecting, repatriating and reintegrating actions, through an effective and accredited inter-regional²² and international coordinated network. All concerned Albanian and Greek authorities are sensitized on a national level to fight child trafficking and co-ordinate actions towards trafficked children, and are co-operating on international level with their counterparts²³".

²² Inter-regional: between Albanian regions

²³ Counterparts: concerned local authorities in origin or destination countries

An NGO coalition called BKTF (se Bashku Kunder Trafikimit te Femijeve – All Together Against Trafficking) on child trafficking is set up last year with the composition of nine local and international NGOs and UNICEF, ILO-IPEC and IOM as advisors. This coalition “ is determined and committed to act according to the principle of the best interest of the child in combining efforts and experience in order to protect Albanian children from trafficking in the light of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international and national legislation and mechanisms”,²⁴

²⁴ The trafficking of Albanian Children in Greece – Terre des Hommes

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

Although strides have been made in Albania during the last few years towards improving the reasons for and results of trafficking, the problem of child trafficking is still a long way from being solved. This Rapid Assessment Survey is not optimistic; there has been no dramatic decrease in the number of trafficked children. The root causes that fuel trafficking continue to prevail in the country: poverty, unemployment, corruption, organized crime and lack of prosecution or adequate sentencing for perpetrators. There is a high ratio of supply to demand and disdain for victims in the destination countries.

Some progress has been made in the areas of:

- Raising public awareness and encouraging policy makers to consider child trafficking as an important issue;
- Enforcing legislation concerning trafficking in general and of children in particular;
- Formulating policy which contributes, directly or indirectly, to alleviation of trafficking;
- Establishing and supporting state institutions to counter trafficking and
- Strengthening the NGO networks engaged in this field.

To fight effectively against trafficking, extreme sensitivity of all stakeholders is required. There must be complete data on the number of unaccompanied migrating and trafficked children, as well as identification of street children at risk for trafficking. Both governmental and non-governmental institutions need to enhance their capabilities. Regional cooperation will help to obstruct trafficking routes.

On the basis of the survey, the following recommendations are offered, targeting four principal areas of concern in combating child trafficking: prevention, protection, repatriation and reintegration.

1. PREVENTION

- Improve legislation relating to child traffickers and augment enforcement of existing laws
- Increase opportunities for legal immigration for employment or vocational training
- Support family reunification for children with migrant parents
- Reinforce borders to prevent illegal crossings and coordinate police operations with neighboring countries
- Organize and fund awareness campaigns,
- Integrate information into the educational system through textbooks and curriculum
- Establish municipal structures to identify and be concerned with orphans, poor children and other high-risk groups, particularly in rural areas

- Encourage a return to school for street children, rural girls and other marginalized children with social and financial incentives
- Support collaboration between local institutions and NGOs for assistance programs to poor families
- Formulate a strategy and action plan to integrate the Egyptian and Roman communities

2. PROTECTION

- Improve the legal framework to establish criminal, civil and administrative liability for all those involved in child trafficking
- Provide a child protection system in compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Draft a strategy for witness protection, including relocation
- Conduct public awareness campaigns in destination countries, highlighting conditions of exploited Albanian children
- Intensify the fight against corruption within the judiciary
- Fortify bilateral and regional agreements to improve judicial cooperation among countries

3. REPATRIATION

- Establish a legal framework and national benchmarks for repatriation of trafficked children
- Coordinate state agencies and their Italian and Greek counterparts for return of children
- Encourage establishment of reception centres in all major trafficking cities of Albania

4. REINTEGRATION

- Create a rehabilitation centre for repatriated children while strengthening existing ones
- Provide sufficient anti-trafficking training to NGOs and government agencies
- Coordinate and synchronise donor policies to avoid overlap and ensure sustainability of NGO activities
- Support efforts of NGOs with government policies and funding

8. APPENDICES

8.1 CASE STUDIES

The story of one ex - trafficked child in Korca – ALBANIA

Born and grown up in Korca, Sokol, is a ten-year-old chum, who lives together with his mother, his 12-year-old-stepsister and two younger stepbrothers, aged six and one year and a half. Being one of the poorest families in the area of Korca, it faces deep economic and social hardship. All children have been delivered illegally, and neither the mother is capable of identifying their fathers. She is jobless and does not possess any job.

Although Sokol has been trafficked four times to the neighboring Greece, he still considers this phenomenon quite normal. Most of his peers are trapped in this cycle. "You don't earn much money here," said Sokol. While in Albania, he spent most of the time begging out in the streets. He has never attended school, due to his age or due to a lack of interest by his mother.

He used to cross through the mountains in order to go to Greece. He affirms that other children were part of the group. The trip was tiresome, long, always trying to escape the sight of police. They were met by a stranger, who used to take them to a house inhabited by other children. During his stay in Greece, he used to beg, sell, steal and work from sunlight till sunset. "We used to have better food than in Albania and get dressed better," affirms Sokol. Although he was obliged to give an assigned portion of his money to the pimp, he was able to conceal extra 'profits' in the earth, at a park.

Sokol admits that children were maltreated during their jobs. They were beaten with a belt, taken to hot showers, burned with cigarettes etc. He was not supposed to meet anyone else during his stay in Greece. They used to change locations every month in order to lose tracks. Sokol asserts that he has been apprehended by police and imprisoned for one month in Greece.

Sokol is not the only child trafficked in his family. His older stepsister has been trafficked to Greece, at the same time, in the same location. The mother has always been involved in trafficking her children. Every time they were trafficked, she was aware of that. She even entered into negotiations with the traffickers and received money while her children departed for Greece. Furthermore, she reveals that the traffickers are her neighbors, but she is reluctant to disclose any names because of fear and possible imminent threats. Meanwhile, she has carried out many abortions. In an instance, according to a deal with the traffickers, she was supposed to give birth to a child in Greece, to be thereafter trafficked.

Upon return to Albania, Sokol was approached by the local NGO in Korca – Help for Children (HFC) to start coming at school in order just to meet their peer (without forcing him to attend school). When coming at school, at the beginning he was quite problematic, used to fight with his peers and make a lot of noise. His teachers recall

that at the beginning, it wasn't easy to work with him. He used to avoid questions, answering evasively.

His teacher and social assistant had to establish a bond of trust in order to get him to talk. However, being a recipient of HFC and in regular contacts with teachers, peers and his mother, he has drastically changed. He has become friendlier, possesses a sense of humor, sings beautifully and is endowed with some impressive wit. "I want to be a driver, when I become an adult," says Sokol smiling nicely.

Involvement of parents in the child trafficking phenomenon

The phenomenon of children trafficking has been the result of several economic and social factors influencing families and communities. This occurs for several reasons which are the consequence of specific situations and a severe economic situation characterized by numerous elements:

- parent's marriage at an early age
- parents' lack of - general and professional
- unemployment –as a consequence of the abovementioned factor
- numerous children in a family
- difficult living conditions
- non-registration of families with administrative structures
- permanent instability of communities as a result of their traditions and mentality
- lack of state social policies for economic and institutional support for children affected by this phenomenon

Who are the persons carrying out the trafficking of children?

These can be divided into several groups:

1. persons who are unidentified and unknown to the families and children
2. persons who are known by or close to the family
3. so-called friends of the child or adult persons he hangs around with for a period of time

A considerable number of interviews from all groups affected (trafficked children, those in danger of being trafficked, children released from trafficking, those still in a trafficking situation or social workers who have been working with the above categories for a long time) support the conclusion that in the majority of cases the impetus for and mediators of the trafficking have been the parents themselves. The family represents the foundation for potential trafficking. A family situation, badly built by parents or as the result of specific circumstances becomes the "promoter" of children trafficking.

Based on the interviews, parents were the main persons who led children to trafficking, with a difficult economic condition as justification. Whether or not they are pushed by others, they are accomplices in the sale or exploitation of their own children. In the majority of cases, the desire of the child to go and work abroad has not been considered at all.

There have been numerous cases of children departing with relatives working abroad and parents acting as mediators. Other cases show parents as protagonists of the trafficking; finding themselves in difficult economic conditions they opt for the easiest way out - exploitation of children with the hope that it will better their economic condition.

When the child has departed in the company of a family relative or a known person (often a boyfriend of the children's mother), an already established deal between these persons and parents, yields cash payment at the time of departure. Parents usually negotiate monthly compensation during the time the child is being exploited. However, in almost all cases, such a payment has not been made, at least not regularly.

In those cases where children go with their parents to work abroad, they are equally exploited:

"...an 8-year old girl together with her 6-year old brother and their mother, left for Greece with their mother's boyfriend. The family owed huge debts; both parents were jobless and the mother, deceived by a fake love, chose the path of emigration together with her children, which she brought over to work. All settled in the house of a friend of the mother's boyfriend and all three of them (the mother and the two children) went out every day from dawn to dusk to beg. All profits were initially handed to the mother at the end of the day. After some time, police seized the mother and the children were left under the care of the man, who maltreated them and took all profits from them. Aside from the maltreatment of their own pimp, the children had to put up with the maltreatment of the pimp's friend, who had given them shelter. The girl was forced to do housework, cook for everyone, do laundry, etc. These were in addition to the exhausting work she did all day. In the morning, the children were forced to wake up early and go out and work until one day, police caught them and sent them back home..."

"... the child left with a cousin of its mother after the latter had made the negotiations. The child remained in Fier for 3 days under the pretext that they would wait until the papers were ready. Other children were brought together and would then he and the group would be sent to Italy. After this plan did not become reality, they left for Greece on foot. After two days of travel, they arrived in Athens, working as beggars and car window washers. To keep away from the police, so they would not be seen as being under the tutelage of adults, they slept outside in tents. The children were treated very badly. Profit during the day was considerable, about 20-25 drachmas. It was given to the pimp who promised to send it to the parents, but that never happened. She sent the profit to her husband in Albania who bought a house with the money.

After some time, police caught the child and placed him in an institution. He later escaped the institution and returned by bus to Albania, where he found out that his mother had not gotten a penny of the arrangement that had been made with the cousin, except for the amount at departure time (10,000 leks)..."

These are only a few of the numerous cases of child trafficking, which illustrate the implication of parents. Often, after parents have been disappointed by traffickers when the child is repatriated, they refuse to send their children abroad again. But in

other cases, when they have received amounts of money over time, they keep sending their children abroad with the hope that this will improve their living conditions.

It should be noted that parents do not hide their negotiations from the community and people around them and find no need for secret arrangements even for sales of children.

They only begin to react when disappointed after the child's repatriation since they have not received the money promised them. It is only then that they start playing the role of victim, saying that the trafficker deceived the child and they (the parents) had not been aware. They don't reveal their implication when asked how it happened that the child left, although the child may have already confessed parental negotiations with the traffickers. Parents try to interpret the stories of their children's trafficking with sad, moving and touching tones:

"The child...was sent by his parents in October 2000, together with the son of his father's uncle and after staying for a week in Fier at the house of the latter, left for Greece and walked across the border over the mountains. Being only 9 years old and weak too, the child would get exhausted very quickly. He was forced to beg in the streets of Athens and tortured in terrible ways and with terrible tools; in fact, the traffickers went as far as cutting off his leg and arm so he would make more money while begging.

After 6 months, police caught the child. In the meantime, the traffickers, through violence and torture, had prepared the child for this moment: he was not to tell them who he got there with, who sent him out in the streets, who he worked for or who gave him shelter. If he did that, his life would be in danger.

As soon as his parents stopped getting the promised amount, according to the initial agreement, they denounced the trafficker to the police. Newspapers wrote about this case and got in touch with an organization offering social services for emigrants. The parents insisted that the child be sent back, claiming that their cousin had kidnapped the child and that they had never wanted the child to leave. However, the child reported the opposite; he had no knowledge of the story his parents were telling..."

8.2 Involvement of the Gypsy Community in the Child Trafficking Phenomenon

In Albania, the Gypsy community is estimated to be as much as 10% of the general population. This is one of the highest percentages for an ethnic community in Albania.

The Gypsy community is often assimilated with the Roma community (or, in popular language: arixhi). It should be noted that the Roma and the Gypsy are two different communities, with different origins, mentality and traditions.

The Roma are known to be a nomadic people. Based on information gathered, it is said that the Roma community's origins are in the Far East, India. Centuries ago, they moved through the Middle and Near East and were then dispersed into European countries. Life in a community is an important factor that has affected the preservation of their identity: they have preserved their language, habits, traditions, and even have their own flag.

The Gypsy community is believed to have originated from the countries of Northern Africa. They, like the Roma community, moved toward Europe, but over time were assimilated did not preserve their identity, losing their language, traditions and other cultural features.

Based on informal data, the majority of trafficked children come from Gypsy families. Through interviews, we find that the figure totals approximately 85% of the cases of trafficked children. According to conversations with social workers, representatives of NPOs, and teachers, there are few cases of trafficked children being Roma and even fewer of these children being "white." In the majority of cases of trafficked children, the children do not attend school; they loiter in the streets of towns. In many cases, families consider school to be a dangerous place for children. "A lot of bad things may happen..." to them there!

"It often happens that Gypsy children quit school," say teachers, "and from other children you learn that the child left for Greece with somebody - a cousin of the family or someone else that the children do not know."

Based on conversations and interviews, there are very rare cases of traffickers attempting to recruit "white" children. They almost always seek victims among the Gypsy community. Usually traffickers belong to the same community from which they recruit. They pick children coming from families with many tangible problems and are almost certain of the success of the recruitment.

Given that they come from the same community, they know the habits, traditions, mentality and reactions of families and the parents of children easily become victims of this process. In the majority of cases of trafficked children, the families know the trafficker; he is usually a relative or a neighbor who promises to take care of the child and provide assistance to the family.

This large percentage of involvement of Gypsy children in the process of trafficking occurs due to several different factors. For a long time, this community has been marginalized and treated as servants. The Gypsies have always been considered by other Albanians to be simple and ignorant. During the communist years, the community gained special attention compared to previously, but they remained despised and marginalized. After the '90s, this marginalization became even more striking.

In the gypsy tradition, unlike that of the “white” Albanian or Roma family, connections between family members are not very strong. In general, gypsy families experience acute social problems.

On the basis of interviews with children, parents, people who work with the Gypsy community, we find that Gypsy families in general have an unstable family structure. The majority of trafficked children come from families whose parents are separated - children do not know their parents, or the mother does not know who the child’s father is. The feeling of responsibility toward the family is scant or is nonexistent. “It is easy for traffickers to recruit from these families,” teachers and social workers say, “because often parents do not assume their responsibilities and the child just idles around in the street, without any care.”

The Gypsy community in general suffers from a feeling of inferiority, which it displays openly in a variety of situations. It is a fact that many have had very little education or no education whatsoever. This is a reality that has existed for some time in Albania, both due to the fact that the state has not demonstrated proper care toward this community, and because the community itself in general has not shown interest. Based on this fact, as well as on relations inside the family, it is obvious that this community has low self-esteem. In general, expectations are limited, which has made seemingly simple “alternatives” acceptable to the community. In conversations with youths, they often respond negatively to suggestions concerning education and employment. Often, when told that if they study and are successful in school, they may continue their studies, they respond: “Well, who would send me to school? I am a Gypsy!” Even a suggestion to seek a job where there is a chance of being hired is answered by, “Who will want to hire me? They want the white hand...”

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