



# RESPONDING TO CHILD TRAFFICKING

An Introductory handbook to child rights- based interventions drawn from Save the Children's experiences in Southeast Europe



**Save the Children**



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rights-based interventions drawn from  
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## **Regional Child Trafficking Response Programme, Southeast Europe**

*Implemented in the framework of the Stability Pact Task  
Force on Trafficking in Human Beings, with funding from the  
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Swedish International  
Development Agency (SIDA), and the Oak Foundation*

**Responding to Child Trafficking: An introductory handbook to child rights-based interventions drawn from Save the Children's experience in Southeast Europe**

Prepared and written by Galit Wolfensohn  
Copy-edited by Sandra Thomsen

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The quotes in this publication are real and come from children and staff who participated in the Regional Child Trafficking Response Programme.

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# Preface

Throughout Southeast Europe, recorded cases of trafficked children are growing and high-risk and trafficked children remain vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Despite positive increases in responses to child trafficking over the past two years among key actors in Southeast Europe, the capacity of government actors and other duty bearers to take effective measures to protect children from being trafficked remains limited by weak child protection mechanisms, a lack of resources (material and technical), and a limited understanding about the vulnerability of children-at-risk and what interventions are effective. This has been exacerbated by a general failure of governments from both Eastern and Western Europe to address the structural dimensions and underlying root causes of child trafficking in the region.

In May 2002, Save the Children initiated a *Regional Child Trafficking Response Programme in Southeast Europe* in an attempt to strengthen national and regional responses to child trafficking and to increase protection for trafficked children and children-at-risk. In partnership with local and national actors, Save the Children piloted six child trafficking interventions in Albania, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia to address the prevention, protection, and/or reintegration needs of these children, and to share the learning and related recommendations from the pilot projects with practitioners and decision-makers in the region.

This report is for shared learning. It presents our most important experiences, learning, and recommendations and is intended primarily for field-based practitioners interested in developing rights-based child trafficking interventions. It may also be of interest to government representatives, donors, or representatives of international and national non-governmental organisations interested in child trafficking or in child rights issues more generally.

The first part of this report presents a brief overview of child trafficking issues in Southeast Europe and outlines some general principles for adapting rights-based strategies to counter-trafficking programmes. The second part presents concrete examples of different child trafficking interventions, drawn from the experiences of the regional programme.

In the Balkans, many positive initiatives to address child trafficking are currently underway, and these can be strengthened and built upon. At the same time, a great deal remains to be learned about what interventions are effective to increase protection for trafficked children and children-at-risk and to address some of the underlying factors contributing to their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. It is hoped that this report can play a small part in contributing to this effort and give a greater voice to children in the process.





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Indrit Qerimi, age 9

# I. What is child trafficking?

“I went to Greece with a man. In Greece he treated us very badly. He made me beg for money. I gave all the money to him. He used to hit me. I still have scars on my face from the beatings. We suffered a lot.”

– 14-year-old boy, trafficking survivor, Tirana, Albania

“They advised me not to refuse to dance because I would have to do it anyway, but with a gun to my head. You behave nice, otherwise they kill you.”

– Adolescent girl, trafficking survivor, Bucharest, Romania

Every year, thousands of boys and girls from Southeast Europe are trafficked for the purposes of profit and exploitation. They may be recruited by deception, coercion, or force, transported within or across national borders, and sold several times over. Children may be trafficked for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation, forced labour, begging, petty crime, agricultural work, domestic work, or illegal adoption.

### What is child trafficking?

The first internationally agreed upon definition of trafficking in persons is found in the *UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime* (2000) (also known as the Palermo Trafficking Protocol) as follows:

“[T]he recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

Exploitation shall include, as a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery. The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation... shall be irrelevant when any of the...[aforementioned] means...have been used.

The 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 above listed means].

“Child” shall mean any person under eighteen years of age (Art.3).”

Thus trafficking of children involves:

- The transfer of the child that separates him/her from his/her community.
- The presumption of coercion, fraud, deception, or abuse of power on the part of the trafficker.
- The exploitative intention of the trafficker.

### What is the magnitude of the problem?

There are no accurate statistics on how many children are trafficked and numbers vary. This is due to the clandestine nature of trafficking combined with difficulties in identifying victims, the reluctance of victims to report their experiences to authorities for fear of repercussions, and the lack of both a precise definition and of systemic and comparable data collection methodologies.

The UN claims that an estimated 1.2 million children are trafficked for the purposes of labour or sexual exploitation globally, while the US Department of State estimates that 800,000 - 900,000 women and children are trafficked annually (not counting internal trafficking) (USDOS, 2003; ILO 2004).

International Organisation for Migration and the European Commission estimate that 120,000 women are being trafficked to the Western Europe for purposes of commercial sexual exploitation each year, while EUROPOL and Anti-Slavery International make more restrictive estimates and refer to "tens of thousands". An estimated 10 to 30% of these are suspected of being under the age of 18. Reports from field-based NGOs suggest that an estimated thousands of younger boys and girls, under the age of 13 are trafficked from and throughout Eastern Europe for other purposes including forced labour, domestic work, agricultural work, begging, and petty crime (UNICEF, ONOHCHR, OSCE/ODIHR, 2002; EUROPOL, 2003: [www.europol.net](http://www.europol.net); ILO-IPEC, 2004).

The Regional Clearing Point on Counter-Trafficking reports that a growing percentage of minors are among identified victims of trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation in Southeast Europe, including an emerging trend of internally trafficked children (RCP 2003).

Trafficking is not a new problem. It is global in scope and appears to have increased in the context of recent trends in globalisation, including expansion of free market economies, growing disparities in wealth, increased demand for cheap labour, expanding tourist markets, and facility in international transportation and communication. In Southeast Europe, trafficking has grown dramatically since the early 1990s as a result of dramatic changes in political, economic, and social conditions and their resulting impact on individuals and institutions.

## Child trafficking in southeast europe

Child trafficking throughout Southeast Europe has increased over the past decade. This can be explained by the multiple political, social, and economic upheavals brought about by post-communist transitions and compounded by armed conflict in the mid- and late-1990s. The impacts of these shifts have included increased poverty, disintegration of social structures and support networks, institutional weakness, increased migration flows (and attempts by governments of wealthier countries to stem them), a rise of gender-based discrimination and violence, weakened rule of law, rampant corruption, and increases in organised crime, all of which have proved fertile ground for traffickers.

## How does it happen?

### **Searching for a better future**

Children and their families may be lured by traffickers through false promises of employment, marriage, or educational opportunities elsewhere. Many young people are attracted by the promises of personal freedom, dignity and a better quality of life in the West, while others see it as the only opportunity to make money to help support themselves and their families. In some cases children may knowingly go to work in the sex industry, but may not realize the brutal conditions that await them.

### **Recruiters build a relationship of trust with the child**

The majority of trafficked children are recruited by someone they know. Recruiters may be men or women, including acquaintances, neighbours, friends, or boyfriends. In some cases girls who were trafficked become traffickers, returning to their home villages to recruit others with temptations of material comforts and a better life. In other cases, particularly trafficking of younger children, family members, including uncles, brothers, or mothers, may be involved in trafficking. Many families may not recognise this as trafficking as such, and see it, rather, as a survival strategy for the family or as a protection strategy for their child (i.e. sending him/her away to a place that holds the promise of a better future).



### Trafficking networks in the balkans

Trafficking networks are widespread in the Balkans and include large organised crime syndicates, as well as small informal cells. Traffickers operate transnationally (i.e. trafficked Albanian girls have been found as far away as South Africa). Trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation often follows the same routes as drug and arms smuggling – it is considered the third largest criminal business world-wide, generating billions of dollars. Those involved in trafficking younger children for forced labour or begging often operate independently or in the context of small-time criminal networks.

### Trafficking routes

Children can be trafficked across national or international borders or within the same country. In Southeast Europe, the primary countries of origin (where children are trafficked from) include Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, and Moldova; the primary countries of destination (where children are received) include Kosovo, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina; and the primary countries of transit (which serve as an entry point into another country) include Serbia, Montenegro, and Croatia. These categories are not absolute, however, as most countries in the Balkans fall under all three categories, and distinctions between them are becoming increasingly blurred. Children can also be trafficked within the same country, to avoid detection, and recorded cases of internal trafficking are on the rise. Exploitation of the child can happen along the way. Trafficking patterns are dynamic and change over time depending on local conditions, supply and demand factors, border regulations, and visa requirements, among other variables.

## What are the consequences of trafficking on children?

### Ongoing exploitation and abuse

The exploitation and abuse suffered by trafficked children constitute a severe violation of their human rights. Many suffer physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and exploitation at the hands of traffickers, pimps, or clients. At worst, trafficked children may be subject to

regular beatings, rape, and torture. Some may suffer deliberate maiming by their so-called “owners” in the interest of profit. Their movement is often severely restricted, and many face threats of physical punishment if they do not make enough money or hand over most or all of the earnings to those who control them.

Most trafficked children suffer under harsh living and working conditions and have little access to health care and education, and many are at high-risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS. Living in a foreign city or country and separated from their community, they may have little access to support networks and can find themselves isolated and alone. Threats against trafficked children or their families by pimps or traffickers, mistrust of authorities, lack of legal status, and not knowing where to turn for help may keep them from trying to escape. In some cases, children have complicated and/or emotionally dependent relationships with their traffickers (both loving and hating them), who may be the only adult point of reference in the country where they are exploited. This may make it difficult for them to plan and act upon an escape.

## **Challenges of returning home**

Trafficked children who return home face many difficulties. Oftentimes, they return to the same environment from where they were trafficked in first place – yet conditions there remain unchanged. Abusive home environments, endemic poverty, social discrimination and marginalisation, lack of job opportunities, limited access to education, little or no social welfare support mechanisms, and traffickers at large present some of the many challenges.

These challenges are made worse by the impact of the experience of trafficking on an individual child, which may include trauma, loss of trust, long-term psychological and emotional hardships, and low self-esteem.

“

**“Many girls have been trafficked from Kucova...the mentality here makes it very difficult [for them to come back]...people point fingers and blame.”**

– 16-year-old girl, Youth club member, Kucova, Albania

**“Most if not all girls trafficked for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation express a dramatic loss of trust in strangers, in friends, in family, and even in themselves. Girls may suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, including recurring nightmares, difficulties concentrating, high levels of distress, feelings of dependence, and low self-esteem. Many have difficulties adjusting to “regular life”, for example, they cannot hold a regular job, do not know how to manage money or how to take care of themselves.”**

– Psychologist, Save the Children, Romania

”

Severe social stigma, rejection by their families, difficult home environments, and feelings of guilt and shame may compound these hardships and leave children feeling isolated and misunderstood. Lack of social and educational skills may further limit their ability to integrate with the general population of children, minimize their options for the future, and increase their chances of repeated exploitation. Children who choose to testify against their traffickers may face threats to their security and thus live in constant fear for themselves and their families. Many are at risk of being re-trafficked.

## What puts children at risk?

**“I was living with my brother, my mother and her husband in our village. I went to high school, and every day I had to walk five miles from home to school and back. My mother’s husband drank alcohol daily and every time he got drunk he would sexually harass me. My mother knew about this and did nothing.”**

- Adolescent girl, trafficking survivor, Bucharest, Romania

### No access to adequate protection

In the majority of cases, trafficked children have suffered previous forms of exploitation and abuse. Most come from families with difficulties in which caregivers are unable to provide adequate support and protection to the child. Many trafficked children come from economically and/or socially marginalised communities, and as such, their access to protection mechanisms such as social services, income generating opportunities, quality education, and other services is often limited. Cultural factors, such as early marriages, migration patterns, and children’s roles as central contributors to the economic family unit, may also increase children’s risk.

There is no direct causal link between any one risk factor and being trafficked. For example, not all poor children are trafficked. Rather, children’s vulnerability must be understood as a combination of different risk factors, taking into account the available options, decision-making processes, and related survival strategies of children-at-risk and their families. Furthermore, these must be understood against broader socio-economic and geo-political contexts. In the Balkans context, conditions faced by countries in transition include growing disparities in wealth, decreased opportunities for viable income generation, increasingly restrictive migration policies, increased corruption and decreased rule of law, growing levels of gender, racial, and ethnic inequality, discrimination and violence, weakened social protection mechanisms, economic and social dislocation, globalisation of transport and markets, and ongoing demands for cheap labour in the West, among other factors.

## 2. Why distinguish between trafficking of children and trafficking of adults?

“My parents don’t work. They don’t have money and they traffic us. My parents trafficked me when I was nine years old. They needed money. A man said he would take me to Greece and send them money. They sent me with him.”

– 14-year-old boy, trafficking survivor, Tirana, Albania

“I asked them to let me go home. I was crying. They watched me while I was speaking on the phone, but even so, my mother realized that something was very wrong.”

– Adolescent girl, trafficking survivor, Bucharest, Romania

As with adults, the exploitation of children as a result of trafficking is a fundamental violation of the most basic human rights including the right to life, the right to dignity and security, the right to just and favourable conditions of work, the right to health, and the right to equality. These are rights that are recognised in all main international human rights treaties as belonging to all persons, irrespective of their sex, nationality, social status, occupation, or other difference.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike adults who are trafficked, however, children are recognised as having particular protection needs as compared to adults, and governments and other stakeholders have a special obligation to ensure and protect their rights and to make sure these needs are met.

Thus, trafficking of children warrants particular attention and specific responses due to:

- **The vulnerability of children to being trafficked.** For example, children are perceived as more docile and cheaper than adults for working in exploitative labour situations; young girls and boys may be in greater demand for the sex industry on the basis that they are less likely to be infected by HIV/AIDS; and, marginalised children may be less equipped than others in their community to resist trafficking and exploitation and may have fewer opportunities to work in a non-exploitative environment.
- **The distinct psychological, physical, and social impacts of trafficking on children and on their prospects for reintegration.** For example, suffering trauma at early developmental stages may have greater consequences for a child's long-term development and healing.
- **The legal responsibility of States** towards ensuring and protecting the rights of children as stipulated in *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* and other international norms and instruments.

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<sup>1</sup>Save the Children - UK , Advocacy on Child Trafficking and the Human Rights System, MEKONG, 2003.



## What is the negative impact on an individual child?

**“I don’t know who to trust. Sometimes I don’t even trust myself.”**

– Adolescent girl, trafficking survivor, Bucharest, Romania

**“At first [when I came back] I was scared to go outside in the daylight....I was afraid that people would see how ugly I was.”**

– Adolescent girl, child trafficking survivor, Bucharest Romania

The negative impact of trafficking and the resulting abuse and exploitation on a child may be:

**psychological**, including:

- feelings of shame, guilt and low self-esteem
- a sense of betrayal and lack of trust
- nightmares, sleeplessness, hopelessness, and depression
- substance abuse
- thoughts or attempting of suicide

**physical**, including

- physical violence, including beatings, torture, and rape by pimps, traffickers, and/or customers
- contracting of sexually transmitted infections – children have tissues that are more easily damaged, cvvvthey are in a limited position to negotiate safe sex, and they may lack access to education about safe sex and sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS

**social**, including:

- rejection by their family
- lack of social and educational skills to integrate with the general population of children



*Workshop participants, Roma Information  
Centre*

### 3. What is being done to stop child trafficking?

“I proposed to a girl that we run away. We had no idea that the pimp and the police were watching us. They caught us and sold us. They knew that we would try to escape. We realized that we have no escape. The police brought us back every time.”

– Adolescent girl, trafficking survivor, Bucharest, Romania

“They destroyed my papers, they gave me another name, they have stolen my identity.”

– Adolescent girl, trafficking survivor, Bucharest, Romania

“It was a police raid. The pimp hid us in the basement. We stayed there for about a week. We were desperate and hungry. We thought that they forgot us there.”

– Adolescent girl, trafficking survivor, Bucharest, Romania

## Programme responses: prevention, protection and assistance

Current programme responses to child trafficking in Southeast Europe are diverse in terms of their objectives, target groups, areas of operation, activities, and approaches to work. Very generally, these interventions can be categorized in the interrelated areas of: prevention, protection, and assistance to trafficked persons (including return and resettlement). Within each of these broad intervention areas falls a wide range of activities and target groups. These may include direct services for trafficked children, capacity-building for service providers, support for policy development and legislative reform, establishment of coordination mechanisms, and mapping and assessment of existing services, among others.

Child-focused **prevention** strategies aim to prevent children from being trafficked by reducing the risks for children-at-risk, increasing their access to effective protection mechanisms, and addressing the root causes of trafficking, including targeting traffickers and the demand sector. Activities may include: raising awareness with children-at-risk; strengthening national and community-level child protection mechanisms; and, building the capacity of duty bearers to better identify and protect children-at-risk.

Child-focused **protection** strategies aim to address the direct protection needs of trafficked children through legal, policy, or programme responses. Activities may include: programmes to identify and “recover” victims; providing services that meet the children’s immediate needs for security, accompaniment, food, accommodation, health care, counselling, and legal support after their initial identification/recovery, during the initial reflection period<sup>2</sup>; strengthening and/or creating operational referral mechanisms once trafficked children are identified; and, strengthening legal frameworks to protect them in countries of transit and destination and upon their return to their home country.

Child-focused **assistance** activities aim to help trafficked children “move beyond” their trafficking experience, rebuild a sense of trust and self-esteem, integrate into a new or previous home environment (i.e. within the country of origin or in a third country), and

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<sup>2</sup>Ideally this immediate support carries on into medium- and long-term (re)integration support, during and after their (voluntary decision to) return to their home country and/or decision to stay in the third country, as needed.

learn how to live independently. This may involve addressing their medium- and long-term support needs in the areas of psychosocial counselling, family mediation, education and/or vocational training, income-generating activities, and the finding of long-term housing solutions.

**“Often the traumas suffered by girls trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation are multiple and stem from a lifelong history of mental and physical abuse. Effectively supporting their reintegration/recovery is a long-term process that requires ongoing interventions addressing the experience of trafficking, as well as the root causes, and personal background and history of the individual girls.”**

– Psychologist, Save the Children Romania

## Who is involved in counter-trafficking initiatives?

A range of actors are involved in counter-trafficking initiatives. These include government ministries (i.e. Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Public Order); legal and judicial professionals; police and border guards; counsellors and social workers; teachers and educational authorities; health workers; employment and labour office representatives; civil society organisations including those providing social work and emergency counselling and accommodation services; and, children and their communities. In addition, a range of regional, international, and national non-governmental actors are active in supporting the work of both government and civil society to strengthen their counter-trafficking response. Coordination and cooperation among all these actors is crucial to helping ensure and protect the rights of trafficked children and children-at-risk.

## National responses to child trafficking in southeast europe

All the governments in Southeast Europe have signed the *UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime* and its protocols, and are adapting national legislation to increase penalties for traffickers and in some cases, increase protection for victims. Increased national attention to trafficking is evidenced by the appointment of national government coordinators on anti-trafficking, the establishment multi-disciplinary anti-trafficking national working groups, and the adoption of National Plans of Action to combat trafficking in human beings, which commit governments to supporting and carrying out counter-trafficking activities.

### Focus on Child-Trafficking

Specific initiatives to combat child trafficking are also underway. In December 2003, government representatives signed the *Sofia Declaration*, which commits them to establish comprehensive action plans and strategies to combat child trafficking, including to:

- Develop and adopt minimum standards for the treatment of child victims of trafficking based upon the guidelines developed by UNICEF in accordance with other international and non-governmental organisations;
- Systematically collect data on child trafficking;
- Take all necessary measures to establish effective procedures for the rapid identification of child trafficking victims;
- Adapt special referral procedures to assist and protect trafficked children involving all relevant institutions, agencies, and authorities.

In December 2003, sub-working groups on child trafficking were established within existing multi-disciplinary anti-trafficking national working groups. In March 2004, governments in the region presented draft National Plans of Action to combat child trafficking at the 6th Meeting of the Stability Pact Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings held in Belgrade. The meeting included, for the first time, a focus on trafficking of children for forced labour.

Attention from the European Union has also been encouraging, as is evidenced by the endorsement of the *Brussels Declaration on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings* by the European Council of Ministers in May 2003, which mentions special vulnerability and needs of children trafficked and sets recommendations and standards for best practices, and the drafting of a *European Convention Against Trafficking in Human Beings* (expected by late 2004), among others.



## The role of regional, international and national actors

Anti-trafficking initiatives have been encouraged and facilitated through technical support and funding from regional bodies and their member governments, as well as by international and national organisations.

Efforts to encourage and strengthen national cooperation among countries in SEE to streamline and accelerate efforts to combat trafficking have been supported by the Stability Pact Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings (working under the auspices of the OSCE).<sup>3</sup>

A number of international and national organisations within the region are providing support to anti-trafficking initiatives, including building the capacity of NGOs and governments. These include the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the Council of Europe, International Organisation for Migration (IOM), International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), International Labour Organisation (ILO), Europol, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR), and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

In addition, a range of child-focused anti-trafficking interventions are being carried out by international and national NGOs throughout the region including by Save the Children, Terre des Hommes, ECPAT, International Catholic Migration Committee (ICMC), and La Strada Foundation.

Non-governmental organisations have a unique role to play in anti-trafficking responses. They may have close links to children-at-risk and their communities and thus have a solid understanding of the needs and concerns of marginalised groups. Often smaller and less bureaucratic than governmental actors, they may be more flexible and innovative in their activities and lead the way in developing new counter-trafficking initiatives. This valuable knowledge and experience can contribute to the collective efforts of all stakeholders to improve conditions for trafficked children and children-at-risk.

<sup>3</sup>The Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe established a Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings in September 2000 in the interest of improving coordination and cohesion among counter-trafficking responses in the region. The Task Force aims to assist key actors, the governments as well as IOs and NGOs active in the region, to better address trafficking in human beings and associated human rights abuses by agreeing on priority areas of concern and by cooperating in anti-trafficking activities in the field. The focus of its anti-trafficking strategy is on concrete joint action involving all sectors and all actors whose intervention is necessary to counter the activities of traffickers and to assist victims. (<http://www.osce.org/attf/index.php3?sc=Introduction>).



Tia Idrizi, age 9

## 4. What is a rights-based approach to child trafficking interventions?

“When I decided to leave Romania, there was no chance for me here. I had a child to support, my parents kept asking me for money, the child’s father left for Italy and didn’t come back. I tried many times to find a job, but who would hire me without a high-school degree and with a child waiting for me at home? So I thought that this was my last chance. I left for Serbia helped by a man, but there I was sold and finally I ended up in Sarajevo.”

– Adolescent girl, trafficking survivor, Bucharest, Romania

## How does this relate to child rights?

### The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) (UN CRC) represents the best tool to ensure and protect the best interests of the child, as a focus of a rights-based approach to addressing child trafficking. The UN CRC provides a comprehensive legal framework for prevention, protection and recovery of trafficked children and/or children-at-risk of being trafficked. It has been ratified by all but two States world wide.

Five categories of children's rights are violated through trafficking, according to the UN CRC:

1. The right to life (Art. 6.1)
2. The right to survival and development (Art. 6.2)
3. The right to protection:
  - a. from discrimination and punishment (Art. 2.2)
  - b. from physical or mental violence (Art.19.1)
  - c. from economic exploitation (Art. 32)
  - d. from sexual exploitation (Art. 34)
  - e. from illicit transfer abroad (Art.11)
4. The right to participation (Art. 12)
5. The right to information (Art. 13)

The UN CRC explicitly provides for the right of the child to be protected against trafficking in Article 35:

*"States Parties shall take all appropriate, national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent the abduction of, the sale of or traffic in children for any purpose or in any form"*  
(Art. 35. UN CRC).

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<sup>5</sup> Including Art. 2, the protocol defines the sale of children as "... any act or transaction whereby a child is transferred by any person or group of persons to another for remuneration or any other consideration." In addition, Art. 3 provides that States Parties shall ensure the definition of the following acts as a crime, irrespective of whether they are committed domestically or transnationally, or on an individual or organised basis: "Offering, delivering or accepting, by whatever means, a child for the purpose of Sexual exploitation of the child; Transfer of organs of the child for profit; Engagement of the child in forced labour."

The Optional Protocol to the UN CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (2000) further clarifies this article by defining the “sale of children” and by recognising internal as well as transnational trafficking and trafficking on an individual and organised basis.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the Optional Protocol makes measures designed to protect the rights and interests of child victims mandatory, as opposed to the Palermo Protocol, which is discretionary, (ECAPT, 2004).

### Save the Children's response to child trafficking: using a child rights framework

Save the Children's conceptualisation of the problem of child trafficking is based on Articles 6, 11, 19, 34 and 35 of the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*. The Convention provides for children's right not to be subjected to trafficking and sexual exploitation and places the obligation on the State to take appropriate measures to prevent trafficking of children for any purpose.

Save the Children attempts to go beyond the anti-trafficking efforts to date, by developing a regional strategy against trafficking that approaches the problem from a child rights framework. This perspective is unique as it takes into account the voices of children and their right to information (Articles 12 and 13 of the UN CRC), both of trafficking survivors and those vulnerable to exploitation, and uses their input to develop sustainable programmes generated from the ideas of children themselves. Save the Children further focuses on the fundamental principle that all actions must be taken in the best interests of the child and the right of children to express their views freely in matters that affect them, including providing them with the opportunity to do this in various forums that have a responsibility for their affairs.

## Legal instruments

Applicable international legal instruments that address child trafficking include:

- *UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (2000)*
- *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989)*
- *Optional Protocol to the CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2000)*
- *ILO Convention Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour No.C182 (1999)*<sup>5</sup>
- *Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948*
- *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1979)*
- *UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984)*
- *International Convention on the Protection of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (1990)*

## Promoting the Principles of the UN CRC

Policies and interventions addressing trafficked children and children-at-risk should aim at ensuring and protecting these rights and promoting the principles of the UN CRC, regardless of whether the children are within or outside of their country of origin, namely:

- Non-discrimination (Article 2). All rights apply to all children without exception. It is the State's obligation to protect children from any form of discrimination and to take positive action to promote their rights.

<sup>5</sup>For the full text of the ILO Convention 182 see: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipe/ratification/convention/text.htm>. Art. 3 provides that "...the term worst forms of child labour comprises (a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; (b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances; (c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties; (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."



- Best Interests of the Child (Article 3). All actions concerning the child shall be in his or her best interests.
- Survival and Development (Article 6). Every child has the right to life. The state has an obligation to ensure the child's survival and development.
- Participation (Article 12). Girls and boys have the right to be involved in decisions affecting them.

States have the primary responsibility to respect, protect, and fulfill the human rights of trafficked children and children at risk of being trafficking under international law<sup>6</sup>. Governments in Southeast Europe have ratified the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* and other relevant human rights treaties that explicitly or implicitly prohibit the trafficking of children. National laws also prohibit the practice. Anti-trafficking programmes based on children's rights should therefore address State obligations under national and international law to protect children from trafficking.<sup>7</sup>

### UNICEF Guidelines for protection of the rights of children victims of trafficking in southeastern europe

In 2003, UNICEF developed *Guidelines on the Protection of the Rights of Children Victims of Trafficking in Southeastern Europe* that set out standards for good practice with respect to protection and assistance of child victims of trafficking, with the aim of providing guidance to governments, state agencies and international and non-governmental organisations in developing procedures for special protection mechanisms of child victims of trafficking. They are currently being adapted to national contexts.

<sup>6</sup>"States" obligations include the following: to prevent violations; to investigate violations; to take appropriate action against the violators and to afford remedies and reparation to the victims of such violations." (Save the Children, 2003)

<sup>7</sup>Save the Children UK, Advocacy on Child Trafficking and the Human Rights System, MEKONG, 2003.

## How can a rights-based approach be applied in practice?

Actors can apply a rights-based approach to child trafficking interventions by building programmes from a child rights perspective to ensure that the rights of trafficked children and children at-risk are fulfilled. Such an approach ensures that fundamental social, economic, and political human entitlements are promoted in ways that increase choices and enhance human dignity, freedom, and empowerment. Key features of rights-based approaches are presented below.<sup>8</sup>

### **Putting children at the centre and recognising them as rights-holders and social actors.**

Child trafficking interventions must see children as key actors, not as passive recipients of assistance. They should give priority to enable children to actively participate in claiming their rights and should provide and support child-friendly environments.

### **Calling on governments as primary duty bearers, to be accountable to children and the international community.**

Child trafficking interventions should call on governments to be accountable for ensuring and protecting the rights of trafficked children and children-at-risk and should work to support the ability of all duty bearers and primary caregivers to better protect children's rights.

### **Taking a holistic perspective that requires a multi-sectoral response.**

Child trafficking interventions must take into account a holistic view of children and their environment to address the multiple political, social, and economic factors that increase their vulnerability to exploitation.

The immediate consequences of trafficking should be addressed as well as the root causes and related risk factors. At the individual level, these risk factors may include, among

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<sup>8</sup> *Child Rights Programming. How to Apply Rights-Based Approaches in Programming.* Save the Children Alliance. 2002; *Trafficking in Persons, A Gender Rights Perspective*, UNIFEM, UNIAP

others: domestic violence, sexual and psychological abuse; limited family and community support; relative poverty; low levels of education; lack of awareness of the dangers of undocumented migration and lack of options or education for safe migration; limited personal resources to activate self-protection (e.g., low self-esteem); and, cultural systems (e.g., sanctioning early marriages). At the structural level risk factors can include economic, gender, and ethnic inequalities that underlie social, economic, and political structures and policies that have an impact on individual rights.

**Using participatory and empowering approaches built on ethical standards, particularly with respect to children.**

Child trafficking interventions should build upon the strengths and resilience of children and their communities and involve them in developing, implementing, and/or evaluating interventions, as relevant. Promoting the participation of children and their communities is a crucial part of this process.

**Seeking inclusive solutions and gender-sensitive responses, which involve a focus on those boys and girls who are at risk and discriminated against.**

Child trafficking interventions should develop specific strategies to detect and target children most at risk of being trafficked, taking into account their specific cultural, gender, geo-political and socio-economic contexts. This must begin with a clearer understanding of the specific risk factors of children-at-risk, of their protective environment, of what options exist, and of the dynamics of child trafficking in their community.

**Aiming for sustainable results for children by focusing on not only immediate, but on structural causes of problems.**

Child trafficking interventions must take into account broader socio-economic and geo-political variables that underlie the vulnerability of individual children and their communities. These include the growing gap between rich and poor, limited income generating opportunities at home, restrictive migration policies, increases in corruption and organised crime, weakened social support and protection mechanisms, and growing levels of gender inequality, discrimination, and violence, among others.

**Working at multiple levels to effect change, including in countries of origin and destination.**

Child trafficking interventions must address these issues at multiple levels: directly with children-at-risk, their families and their communities, and indirectly by building the capacity of service providers who work with them, by facilitating and strengthening the ability of duty bearers, including in countries of destination to protect children's rights, and by working on the demand side of child trafficking.

**Building partnerships and alliances for the promotion of the rights of the child, including using regional and international cooperation to focus on those who are most at risk and discriminated against.**

Child trafficking interventions should aim to develop coordination and harmonisation in anti-trafficking strategies appropriate to the specific context in the region or country. One actor cannot possibly address all the support needs of trafficked children and children-at-risk. Establishing partnerships with other actors across sectors, working in collaboration with local and national authorities, and participating in working groups can help ensure that change happens at the macro-level and that a balance of work is achieved. Documenting and disseminating good practices can contribute to collective learning and a strengthened regional response. Actors can enlist the assistance of others to build a constituency of support for the rights of children at risk of being trafficked, while ensuring that the best interests of the child are respected.

Actors should cooperate and coordinate with governments, regional organisations, and multilateral agencies with the aim of informing policies and practices that address the root causes of trafficking, protect the rights of children who have been trafficked, and ensure their safe return and rehabilitation.

**Encouraging legal, policy, and institutional reform and articulating a long-term goal which is clearly set out in international legal frameworks that are shared by governments, donors, and civil society, in the interest of promoting long-term change for children.**

Child trafficking interventions should attempt to ensure that micro-level needs are addressed through enabling macro-level policies. This includes calling on governments and other

decision-makers to ensure that appropriate standards, mechanisms, and guarantees are in place in legislation, policy, and institutional frameworks to ensure and protect the rights of children most at risk.

Child trafficking interventions should also contribute towards a coherent long-term strategy, which is informed by child rights and international legal frameworks, is clearly communicated to key stakeholders, and is internalised by them and supported so that strategies can be resourced and harmonised across sectors.



*Antonela Mejdani, age 9*

## **5. What is Save the Children's Regional Child Trafficking Response Programme?**

From May 2002 to March 2004, Save the Children ran a *Regional Child Trafficking Response Programme in Southeast Europe* in collaboration with local partners, the programme implemented six pilot projects in Albania, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia that aimed to reduce the risks and increase protection for children-at-risk and trafficked children. Project activities were diverse in nature and included:

- raising awareness and promoting life skills with children-at-risk;
- providing community-level social, cultural, educational, and family support to children-at-risk;
- providing psychosocial, legal, and material support to trafficked children who have returned home;
- building the capacity of duty bearers and service providers to better protect trafficked children and children-at-risk;
- strengthening coordination mechanisms to improve multi-sectoral responses; and,
- working to change policy through formal and informal advocacy efforts.<sup>9</sup>

Projects adopted a rights-based approach to work and attempted to involve children and their communities in developing, implementing, and/or evaluating the interventions in the interest of giving them a voice, learning from them, and ensuring interventions were relevant to local needs and interests. Projects applied a multi-tiered strategy that combined work at different levels to effect change. Thus, for example, direct work with children and communities was complemented and carried out in parallel with other interventions such as: research and analysis to inform interventions; capacity-building with duty bearers to support them in efforts to better protect children; formalisation of coordination mechanisms in order to work with other stakeholders to build a strengthened collective response; and, lobbying decision-makers to make long-term sustainable change within policy, institutional, and legislative frameworks.

The following chapters present an overview of child trafficking prevention activities, approaches to work, and lessons learned as drawn from the experiences of the pilot projects

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<sup>9</sup> For a more detailed overview of Save the Children's *Regional Child Trafficking Response Programme, Southeast Europe* please see Appendix 1.



and illustrated with examples from the work<sup>10</sup>. Specifically, they focus on the areas of:

- prevention through awareness-raising and community development
- capacity-building
- coordination
- advocacy
- working with the media

This information was drawn primarily from the experience of staff, partners, and children involved in the Regional Programme and was collected by the author through a combination of: non-formal interviews and focus group discussions held with staff, partners and children in the pilot projects, as well as direct observation of projects during a series of field visits to pilot project sites; discussions with staff and partners in the context of five regional workshops held over the course of the programme; quarterly project reports prepared by national programme coordinators; research reports prepared by pilot project teams, and; review of secondary source data.

The information presented is not meant to be comprehensive in scope, but rather is intended as a starting point for sharing experiences among practitioners working on child trafficking issues in the interest of building more effective interventions in the future.

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<sup>10</sup> Although one of the six pilot projects (Save the Children Romania) included providing counselling and reintegration support to child victims of trafficking, it was felt that this topic of direct support could best be covered in a separate document. Salvati Copiii has developed a Guideline for Professionals working with child victims of trafficking. As all pilot projects included an element of awareness-raising work, this activity is given the most detailed attention in the text. This is not to say that awareness-raising should be a priority over other prevention activities – but simply reflects the balance of activities from the pilot phase of the regional programme. One of the conclusions of the programme was that more attention should be given to addressing root causes of trafficking in prevention work, with awareness-raising serving as a complement to, rather than a focus of, such efforts.



*Edison Mehmeti, age 12*

## 6. What is meant by “prevention”?

“I got married and had a child when I was 16 years old. I lived with my father, my brothers, my husband and my child. I was in debt – I didn’t have a heater or any money for food.”

- Adolescent girl, trafficking survivor, Bucharest, Romania

“My mother brought men into our house, so I would sleep over at the neighbors’ place. I was adopted when I was three years old. I went to a school for children with special needs. When my adoptive parents divorced, I was placed in my mother’s care. But, she wasn’t in the mood for me. She was in the mood for men.”

- Adolescent girl, trafficking survivor, Bucharest, Romania

## **A rights-based approach to prevention**

The term “prevention” is used to refer to a wide range of anti-trafficking interventions, which may vary dramatically in terms of their content, target group, and scope.

From a rights-based perspective, prevention strategies in anti-trafficking should aim to ensure the rights of children at risk of being trafficked, reduce the variables contributing to this risk, and increase the quality and number of protection mechanisms available to them. The promotion and protection of children’s rights should thus form the starting point for developing any prevention response. Children should be active participants in these efforts, with opportunities to express themselves and claim their rights.

Individual risk factors may be exacerbated by structural weaknesses in national child protection mechanisms that limit the availability and access of quality protection services to high-risk children and their families. As trafficked children have often suffered exploitation and abuse prior to being trafficked, increasing children’s access to a strengthened child protection system, which includes interventions that prevent and/or address abuse and exploitation early on, can go a long way to preventing child trafficking. In addition to addressing protection needs, a holistic prevention response should also address the root causes of trafficking, and frame responses against broader geo-political and socio-economic contexts in countries of origin and destination.

There is no one simple formula for effective prevention. This is understandable as risk factors for children-at-risk are multiple and the dynamics of trafficking and resulting exploitation are complex. In fact, defining precisely which children are at high risk of being trafficked and why, and devising ways to identify them and intervene effectively, are some of the key challenges facing practitioners. A greater understanding of risk factors, the dynamics of trafficking, the decision-making processes of high-risk groups, and the options available to them, as well as a systematic and critical assessment of interventions to date, are needed to develop more effective responses.

## Key questions for project planning

The dynamics of child trafficking can differ significantly from country to country in terms of nature and scope, and in terms of national capacity to respond. In planning the pilot projects, national teams from the Regional Child Trafficking Response Programme conducted desk studies on the situation of child trafficking in their respective national contexts, including a mapping of key stakeholders and a gap analysis. In Albania and Kosovo, findings from research reports commissioned by Save the Children prior to the pilot projects informed the development of project plans<sup>11</sup>. Country teams looked at the following questions:

- **What is the extent of child trafficking** in our country, city, town, community? What are the nature and dynamics of child trafficking (nature of exploitation, recruitment strategies, recent trends, vulnerable areas)?
- **Who are the children most at risk of being trafficked?** What variables contribute to this risk? How do these different variables interrelate?
- **What protection mechanisms (formal and informal) are available to high-risk children and their families** (i.e. what services are available, who are the main actors, what institutional and policy frameworks exist, what referral mechanisms are there)? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current system? Where are the key gaps?
- **What can we offer in terms of resources, expertise, and capacity to address these gaps in order to decrease risk and increase protection? Who should we be working with? Where and how should we be working?**

<sup>11</sup> See *Child Trafficking in Albania*, by Daniel Renton, Save the Children Albania, March 2001; *Child Trafficking in Kosovo*, by Terry Roopnaraine, Save the Children in Kosovo July 2002.



*Valbona Zenollari, age 14*

## 7. What role can awareness-raising play in prevention strategies?

“I accepted the proposal to work as a housekeeper in Italy. I was thinking that I’ll have enough money to make a surprise to mother for Christmas.”

– Adolescent girl, trafficking survivor, Bucharest, Romania

“I thought it couldn’t happen to me...my friends weren’t interested in it.

No one mentioned it, we didn’t care.”

– 15-year-old girl, Montenegro

Raising awareness about child trafficking – with children, duty bearers, the general public, and/or the demand sector – can be one important component of a comprehensive prevention strategy. Awareness-raising methods can vary depending on the target audience, intended impact, and resources available. They can range from focus group discussions with small target groups of children to mass media campaigns with the general public, and everything in between.

This section looks at different forums and methods for awareness raising including:

- public information campaigns
- developing messages with and for children
- interactive forums, including workshops, debates and creative performances
- involving children in raising awareness
- promoting self-protection



### Low level of awareness about child trafficking

When the pilot projects began in May 2002, the level of awareness about child trafficking in all project sites amongst children, the general public, front-line workers, and government representatives was minimal and/or misinformed. In some of the pilot project countries/entities (Croatia, Kosovo), awareness about trafficking amongst the public was found to be very low, while in others (Romania, Albania, Serbia, Montenegro), there was some level of awareness, but a limited understanding of the phenomenon and much misinformation generated as a result of existing media coverage. Oftentimes, trafficking was negatively associated with prostitution and illegal smuggling. In addition, trafficking was often identified as an external problem – something that happens in other countries or to other people (e.g., foreign women) – and as such, there was a general indifference to the issue.

In some cases, the very term “trafficking” – which is a foreign word in local languages of the region and not easily translatable – was misunderstood. For example, during field research conducted by Save the Children Kosovo, some respondents confused the word “trafficking” with the term “traffic accidents”. In many cases, particularly in conservative rural communities, trafficking, and its association with sex, violence, criminal activity, and prostitution, was a taboo subject that could only be addressed indirectly.

In most project countries, little if any awareness existed about children being trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation or for other purposes, such as forced labour or begging. For those organisations working on counter-trafficking, few if any distinguished between adult and child victims, and none had child-specific provisions or programmes in place.

Given this climate, all six pilot projects decided to implement an awareness-raising component in their work.

Different awareness-raising strategies may have different objectives, including:

- to provide children with information to help them make informed decisions, for example, about safe migration practices to thus reduce their chances of being exploited as a result of trafficking;
- to raise the awareness of duty bearers about their responsibilities towards children and of the legal and institutional mechanisms available to protect them;
- to challenge popular misconceptions about trafficking among the general public and to promote empathy for and acceptance of victims of trafficking

- to raise awareness of the demand sector or potential “users” of trafficked children about the conditions under which trafficked children are kept, and of the criminal repercussions of contributing to their exploitation.

## How can public information campaigns be used?

Mass media, including video, television, radio, and billboards can be a useful vehicle for disseminating information about child trafficking to a broad audience. A public information campaign can sensitise the public to the issue as a first step in encouraging them to take responsibility for child trafficking, either through lobbying for increased protection in their own communities and/or through challenging the tacit approval of exploitation of children. Such campaigns should focus on the particularities of child trafficking and frame the issue from a child rights perspective.

### Raising awareness through mass media campaigns

Projects in Romania, Kosovo, and Serbia developed mass media campaigns as part of their awareness-raising work. They produced video/television spots, radio spots, posters and/or billboards about child trafficking and disseminated them nationally with the support of local partners, media outlets, and, in the case of Kosovo and Romania, the police. In Romania and Serbia, professional production companies worked with staff to develop the materials, while in Kosovo, staff themselves developed the materials with local youth involved in the production of the videos.

What distinguished these campaigns from existing media campaigns on trafficking was their focus on the child, and their attempt to frame the issue from a child rights perspective. The media campaigns were not seen as ends in themselves, but rather as part of a broader strategy of prevention, which were undertaken alongside complementary prevention activities including interactive workshops, lobbying, and advocacy and policy reform.

## Targeting demand

In Kosovo, primarily a destination country for trafficking, the project developed two parallel mass media campaigns, targeting the general public as well as users of the sex industry (the “demand” sector), respectively, with the aim of raising their awareness about the prevalence of trafficking in minors in Kosovo.

More specifically, the campaign targeting the general public aimed to encourage Kosovars to acknowledge child trafficking as a problem affecting Kosovars (not as an external problem), and thus to be alert to the potential dangers, as well as to encourage ownership of the issue.

The campaign targeting the demand sector aimed to make them aware that some women in the sex industry are in fact minors who may be there unwillingly, and that purchasing sexual services from these minors is a crime punishable by law. Famous Kosovar personalities were used in the demand campaign, and the material was distributed on television and radio channels Kosovo-wide. Save the Children Kosovo engaged the cooperation of Trafficking and Prostitution Investigation Unit (and the police forces) in disseminating the printed material in bars throughout Kosovo.

All too often the impact of mass media campaigns is not adequately assessed, as to do so effectively requires resource-intensive evaluation methods that many actors cannot afford. Yet monitoring and evaluation of public information campaigns should be invested in to ensure that the extensive resources put into such initiatives are well founded. Furthermore, time should be invested in piloting public information materials with target groups to ensure that messages are clear and relevant.

## How can messages about trafficking be made child-friendly?

**“The [anti-trafficking] posters in the centre are good for decoration, but they also make children think twice.”**

– 14-year-old girl, Youth club member, Cerrik, Albania

**“Trafficking is a new term, with a new definition. The phenomenon itself has existed for a long time. The problem is that we live with it but it happens to others, such as to neglected people, but not really to us. The challenge [in raising awareness] was how to make it relevant to people.”**

– Psychologist, Montenegro

### Key elements of child-friendly messages

Developing clear messages for children about child trafficking can be challenging given the complexity of the issue and the sensitivity of the subject matter. Providing children with a realistic sense of the risk factors for child trafficking and with practical tips on what they can do to protect themselves can help ensure that they feel informed and empowered, rather than helpless and scared. Information materials should be adapted to take into consideration the age, developmental stage, and cultural context of the target group. It is important to ensure that messages:

- are clear and easy to understand and are developed in an age and culturally appropriate way
- do not frighten children but rather help them learn positive means of self-protection
- include practical tips on what children can do to protect themselves
- include personal stories of trafficked children to help give a human face to the issue.

Pilot testing awareness-raising material with the target group can help ensure that messages are clear and have the desired impact. Defining how and which children participate will impact the outcome of consultations. Oftentimes, the most accessible groups of children for consultation are not those at highest risk of being trafficked. As such, their perceptions

of what messages are effective may be different from those the campaign hopes to target.

Information material, including videos, posters, leaflets, and radio spots, can be used as part of an information campaign and/or distributed to children during awareness-raising workshops as a starting point for discussion, a reminder of important messages after the workshop ends, or as reference for further information.

### **Involving children in developing messages**

Involving children in developing messages about child trafficking can be an awareness-raising activity in itself, creating an opportunity for children to think through the issues in order to present key messages to their peers. Children can be involved in developing information material in various ways, including:

- through pilot groups, providing feedback and suggestions on how to refine draft information material
- as part of a working group to design and produce information materials with the support of a professional (e.g., graphic designer)
- in the context of creative workshops or drawing contests to produce information materials independently

In all these cases, the process of involving children in developing messages is more important than what they actually produce. Furthermore, through such involvement, children have the opportunity to have their views shared with a wider public.

## Youth develop information poster on child trafficking

Fifteen young people from two cities in central Albania participated in a workshop to develop messages for a poster on child trafficking. The youth, aged 13-18, had previously participated in training on child trafficking and worked with a facilitator to develop messages for their peers. In working groups they explored a series of four questions (*What is the objective of the poster? Who is the target audience? What is the desired impact? What is the specific message and advice?*), brainstormed different messages, discussed the results from each group, and voted on their favourite one. A professional graphic designer then incorporated the message into an awareness-raising poster, which was pilot tested and then printed and disseminated to schools and community centres around Albania. The poster reads:

“Trafficking Affects All of Us – It Kills the Future

- ask someone you know and trust before you act
- build the future through school
- if you want to know more get linked with our [youth] centre (contact us)”

The exercise provided an opportunity for the young people to think more in-depth about child trafficking and assess how to share this information with their peers. The poster in turn reflected the opinions of the youth themselves, and left them very proud to see their words in print.

## Travelling children’s art exhibit on child trafficking

In Serbia, Save the Children’s local partner, the *Roma Information Centre*, put together an art exhibit of children’s drawings featuring advocacy messages about child trafficking. The exhibit, travelled to schools and community centres around Serbia and was featured at the *6th Ministerial Forum of the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe, Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings* (Belgrade, March 2004). It served as a way to raise awareness about child trafficking through children’s own words and pictures. The drawings were documented in a publication entitled *Preventing Child Trafficking: Opinions of Children on Dangers from Human Trafficking and Ways of Protection* (2004).

Involving children in developing informational material requires advanced planning, designated time and resources, and an experienced facilitator who is familiar with trafficking, child rights issues, and participatory processes. The importance of the latter cannot be underestimated. Children should be treated as equal partners in such processes, and facilitators must build and maintain their trust by demonstrating respect, making commitments that are realistic, living up to these commitments, and making sure to accurately incorporate and represent the children's input into the final product.

## What strategies can be used to promote interactive learning about trafficking?

**“I thought victims got what they asked for – I heard about it from adults.”**

– 14-year-old boy, peer-educator, Montenegro

**“Lots of kids saw anti-trafficking television spots, which left them confused, they had no idea what spots were about.”**

- Psychologist, Institute for Children with Behavioural Problems, Croatia

Interactive awareness-raising forums such as workshops, public debates, travelling art exhibits, drama workshops, and community assemblies about child trafficking, can provide effective ways to engage children by providing them with an opportunity to ask questions and to discuss issues in depth. Children themselves can take the lead in conducting awareness-raising activities, including as peer-to-peer educators, organisers of community forums, or performers of art, theatre, radio, and dance pieces.

Practitioners can use the context of interactive forums to promote ideas of tolerance and mutual respect, to help children build life skills, and to encourage critical thinking and media literacy. This provides children with tools they can use to protect themselves and helps ensure that the learning generated is relevant and transferable to other areas of children's lives. Practitioners can also use the context of forums to challenge popular

misconceptions about trafficking among children and communities, and to explore related themes of exploitation, gender relations, racism, economic and social disparities, and children's rights.

### What children knew about trafficking

In discussions with children, pilot project teams found that in the majority of cases, the main source of information about trafficking came to children through the media. However, much of this information was found to be incomplete and misleading. For example, children may have heard the term “trafficking” but were not sure what it meant, or they associated trafficking negatively with prostitution. In some cases, discussions about trafficking revealed deep-rooted prejudice against minority groups. For example, children in a Romanian classroom assumed that all traffickers were Roma. Most children did not feel personally at risk of being trafficked, particularly in transit and destination countries, where they were often not aware that child trafficking existed.



### Awareness-raising workshops

Workshops were the most commonly used format for awareness-raising activities with children in the pilot projects. The workshops were held with mixed groups of boys and girls and targeted children and youth ranging in age from 9 to 18 years. Individual workshops were adapted to the specific age and cultural context of the target group, and varied in terms of length, location, and numbers of children attending, depending on the objectives, context, available resources, and local circumstances, which differed significantly across the pilot projects. Different workshop formats included:

- one-hour workshops in primary and secondary school classrooms (with an average of 30-45 children attending per workshop)
- one-and-a-half hour workshops in children's clubs (with anywhere from 15-40 children attending each)
- a cycle of 10 one-hour workshops embedded into existing special education classes held in elementary schools and institutions for children with trouble with the law (5-12 children attending per group)
- one-and-a-half hour peer-to-peer workshops (with an average of 25 children attending each)
- one- to two-hour workshops in displaced-persons camps, Roma settlements, clubs for children without parental care, and rural villages
- two-part 90-minute workshops held one week apart, in secondary schools (with 20-30 youth attending)

Of the main objectives of the workshops were to provide children with an opportunity to ask questions and express their opinions about child trafficking, both to promote active learning and to learn from children about their concerns and opinions about trafficking and related issues. Workshop facilitators applied different participatory techniques during the workshops in this interest, and adapted them as appropriate to the target group and workshop context.

Children were eager to share their thoughts and opinions, and workshop discussions were often lively.

## Workshop structure

While the specifics of workshop structure and content differed among projects, all attempted to frame the issue of child trafficking in terms of human rights and made reference to the principles of the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*. While details varied, all workshops covered four basic components:

1. What is child trafficking; how does it happen; who is involved (trafficker, the child trafficked);
2. The consequences of trafficking and why it is a violation of human rights/child rights;
3. Who is responsible to protect children from being trafficked, and how children can protect themselves;
4. Where to go for more information.

## Participatory methods

**“We [had the opportunity to] discuss with children....[and together we explored why] it is ok for every person to have a right to decide where they want to live, but it is not ok for others to take a child and tell them where they have to live. This is exploitation.”**

- Educator, Croatia

Using participatory methods in the context of awareness-raising workshops promotes active learning and helps empower children. Giving children an opportunity to ask questions and express their opinions gives them greater investment in the learning and provides facilitators with feedback on how children are interpreting the information presented. Actively engaging them in the topic can encourage children to think critically about the issues surrounding child trafficking and about what active role they can play in protecting themselves and their communities.

Participatory methods can include:

- verbal methods including discussions, brainstorming, debates
- visual methods including drawing, painting, modeling, collective drawing, collages, mapping, story boards
- performance methods, including drama/theater, dance, songs, pantomime, role-play stimulation, imitation, role-play
- written methods including creative writing, poetry, collective narrative, articles

It is important to follow up on these activities with a discussion with children about what, how, and why they produced what they did to encourage deeper reflection and further discussion.

The extent to which individual children have the opportunity to actively participate in interactive forums depends in part on the time available and the number of children attending. For example, short one-time workshops (e.g., under 60 minutes) with large groups of children (e.g., 45) may only provide facilitators with enough time to share basic information about trafficking and get limited feedback from children. Longer workshops (e.g., 90 minutes), or a series of multiple workshops over time, with small groups of children (maximum 15) create space for the active involvement of all participants and give facilitators and children a chance to establish a level of familiarity with the topic and with each other, which allows for more in-depth discussion,

### **The role of the facilitator**

The role of the facilitator is crucial to determining the “success” of a participatory workshop. Facilitators should be familiar with child rights, child trafficking, and participatory methods. They must be good communicators and good listeners, demonstrating respect for children and modeling positive behaviour of tolerance and mutual respect for different viewpoints. Facilitators should help children feel comfortable, encourage their active participation, and help guide the discussion in a way that helps children feel empowered, including providing information about what children can do, rather than leaving them feeling disempowered and afraid.

## Workshop facilitators

**“It was a challenging task for educators to know how and how much to say to children.”**

– Workshop facilitator, Montenegro

The workshop facilitators in all pilot projects played a central role in developing the content and structure for the workshops in collaboration with Save the Children staff.

When the pilot projects began, there was little child-friendly educational material available on child trafficking. Facilitators were charged with developing this material drawing from: meetings with anti-trafficking experts; information in counter-trafficking reports; and, orientation training on child trafficking organised by Save the Children. Emphasis in the training was put on taking a rights-based and participatory approach, and facilitators were encouraged to involve children as much as possible in the discussions and workshop activities. The content and structure of the workshops were adapted and improved based on feedback from children.

Across the pilot projects, facilitators had a range of professional backgrounds and included: teachers, school psychologists, social workers, animators from children's clubs, university students from faculties of social work and psychology, lawyers, and youth peer-to-peer educators. This diversity added a richness to the work. Many had substantial experience conducting child rights workshops with children and working with participatory methods.

## Training kit for prevention education

Save the Children Romania developed a training kit for its volunteers who carry out prevention workshops in schools. The training kit covers four areas:

1. General information on child trafficking (drawing from research reports, documentaries, or other video material)
2. Child rights and counter-trafficking activities (including an overview of the principles of the UN CRC with a special focus on child participation and non-discrimination)
3. Communication techniques with children (how to listen to and understand children, and rules to be respected while working with children)
4. The structure of the workshop (including examples of interactive methods, such as role-play)

## **Taking age and gender into account**

Child trafficking workshops can be held with young children as well as with adolescents, although methods and messages must be adapted to the specific age and developmental stage of the children as well as to the cultural context and the dynamics of the group. Young children tend to be more receptive to messages offering cautionary advice, but are also more easily frightened. Older children and adolescents tend to perceive themselves as less vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, but may be receptive to engaging in more in-depth discussions about underlying gender, social, economic, and political dimensions of child trafficking and exploring the issue of individual and collective responsibility for ensuring and protecting children's rights.

Boys and girls may react differently to information presented in workshops, with girls feeling more directly affected by the potential risk of being trafficked, particularly for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation. As such, it is important to broaden the discussion about trafficking in order to engage both boys and girls in thinking through their potential roles as victims and as exploiters in order to shed light on the responsibilities of everyone to challenge exploitation and abuse.

## How can children be involved in raising awareness about trafficking?

**“Children are ambassadors amongst their peers...if a child gets info from peers, they share it.”**

- Psychologist, Institute for Children with Behavioural Problems, Croatia

**“The youth could hardly believe that they would be able organise a training on their own...and they are so proud of their achievements.”**

– Adult Animator, Kucova Youth Centre, Albania

### Child-led initiatives

Children and young people can take the lead on raising awareness among their peers and their communities through activities such as peer-to-peer education, child-led debates and community forums, art, theatre, radio, and/or dance pieces, among others. Such initiatives can provide an opportunity for children and youth to develop leadership skills and to actively learn from and teach each other.

### Peer-to-peer education on child trafficking

In Albania, Save the Children and local partner Help the Children trained 15 youth as peer educators in a series of two in-service training sessions. The youth developed workshop content for child trafficking in collaboration with the project team and were provided follow-up support in the field. In Montenegro, Save the Children partnered youth educators with adult educators to co-facilitate workshops in schools. In Romania, Salvati Copiii worked with volunteer university students from faculties of social work and psychology who led awareness-raising workshops with children in schools.

Youth felt that peer-to-peer education was an effective way to share information, as children are more attentive to messages delivered by their peers. Peer educators wanted to make sure they were prepared to deal with sensitive issues that could arise in the context of a workshop on trafficking and asked for and received ongoing support and training from staff. They were also supported in developing their facilitation skills, and in the end, surprised themselves by what they were able to accomplish.

### Using drama, dance and art in child-led initiatives

Save the Children Kosovo offered youth club members from Gjakova, Skenderaj, and Podujeva small-scale grants to produce child-led awareness-raising activities on child trafficking. Youth took up the challenge and produced creative pieces, including dance, theatre, and artwork, which they performed/displayed in their communities.

In Gjakova, youth from the *Gjakova Youth Centre*, developed a dance piece on child trafficking (using methodology from social dance) that they performed and recorded on a video, which was then disseminated to children's clubs in neighbouring municipalities.

In Skenderaj, a group of youth from the *Committee for the Protection of Children's Rights* produced a theatre piece about the experience of a trafficked boy and performed it in primary schools in the region.

In Podujeva, a group of children from *Kosovo Action Together* organised an art exhibit that showcased paintings by children about child trafficking.

The youth felt that creative activities provided alternative means of exploring and expressing the issue of child trafficking with their peers, and their performance in public forums provided an opportunity to discuss the issue amongst the broader community. The projects also helped the children involved develop leadership skills as well as deepened their understanding of trafficking.

### Youth radio

In Montenegro, after attending an awareness-raising workshop, youth involved in a school radio station decided to devote one show to the issue of child trafficking. They conducted interviews with their peers to solicit their opinions and then put together a news piece that was aired on the closed-circuit school radio.

## Debating the issue of child trafficking

“I learned more through debates than through workshops. We had to prepare arguments and come to our own conclusions.”

– **16-year-old boy, participant in Debate Summer Camp, Podgorica, Montenegro**

Save the Children Montenegro worked in cooperation with the *Association of Debate Clubs* and the *Open Society Institute of Montenegro Debate Clubs* to support youth in conducting public debates on child trafficking. Youth held debates in front of their peers in four secondary schools. Save the Children and partners also organised a four-day debate summer camp on child trafficking for 50 Montenegrin disadvantaged youth, aged 14-17.

Children had to prepare for the debates by conducting background research and formulating a position on the topic of child trafficking, which motivated them to ask questions they might not have otherwise asked. The friendly competition of the debate forum motivated children to take on the challenge, and the debates themselves encouraged children to think critically about the issues and engage with them in an active way.

## How can we help children protect themselves?

“**Nobody can imagine how bad it really is. Even if the girls who lived it tell you about it, or you if you read about it somewhere.... Only in living it do you really understand what it means. But by then, it is too late.**”

- Adolescent girl, trafficking survivor, Bucharest, Romania

“**This poster looks very nice, but it wouldn't have made any difference to me.**”

– **Adolescent girl, trafficking survivor, giving feedback on an anti-trafficking poster,**  
Bucharest, Romania

In some cases, providing information about risk factors of trafficking may not be, in and of itself, enough to protect at-risk groups from being exploited, and individual children and youth may decide to take the risk regardless.



Helping children at-risk strengthen self-protection mechanisms may contribute to reducing their risk. Life-skills education can be used to strengthen self-protection strategies through addressing issues such as:

- awareness of risky behaviour
- how to better assess risks
- how to negotiate out of exploitative situations
- how to deal with abusive relationships
- self-confidence to withstand pressure or coercion
- how to build self-esteem
- knowledge of where to turn for support

### Strengthening life-skills with children-at-risk

Croatian NGO, the *Centre for Social Policy Initiatives*, in cooperation with the *Institute for Children with Behavioural Problems*, implemented a child trafficking prevention programme targeting primary school children enrolled in a Day Care Treatment Programme in Zagreb.

The prevention programme consisted of a series of 10 one-hour workshops held over a 10-week period. It introduced the issue of child trafficking gradually, framing it within a broader discussion about child rights. Role-play and other participatory methods were used to encourage children to experiment with life skills, such as non-violent forms of conflict resolution, anger management, communication skills, and assertiveness, as well as to empathise with victims of trafficking.

The facilitators were teachers who had worked with the children for at least six months and thus had established a relationship of trust with them. This allowed for more open discussions and more in-depth life-skills work. The extended time frame of the workshops allowed time for children and teachers to explore the issues in more depth, and the children's daily interaction with the teachers allowed them to seek support as needed.

## What are some challenges to awareness-raising?

### Personal disclosures

**“I was taken by surprise. A little girl came up to me after the workshop and told me she was being abused by her godfather.”**

– Workshop facilitator, Montenegro

Awareness-raising workshops on child trafficking may be the first time children have the opportunity to discuss issues of sexual abuse and violence, and for some, this may speak to their personal experiences of trauma or abuse. Some of these children may choose to disclose, indirectly or directly, their experiences to the facilitator during the context of the workshop or afterwards.

It is necessary to be sensitive and prepared to respond to children's disclosures of abuse, including information on who to report to, in the best interests of the child and without jeopardising the safety of the child. Save the Children has a *Child Protection Policy* and related information and resources on the protection of children which outline how to respond to child abuse exploitation in the best interests of the child.

### Monitoring and evaluation

Often the impact of awareness-raising strategies on reducing the risk factors and increasing protection for high-risk children is not clear. In order to make sure such strategies have an impact, it is important to be very specific about objectives and intended changes sought, and to design the strategy, including a monitoring and evaluation plan, accordingly. A critical evaluation of the effectiveness of awareness-raising efforts on reducing the risk for children at high risk of being trafficked should be a priority.

## Strategies for monitoring awareness-raising workshops

In all pilot projects, workshop facilitators adapted and improved the content and structure of the workshops based on feedback from children.

Children's active involvement in workshop discussions and activities (including creative activities such as drawing and role-play) helped facilitators assess children's understanding of the topic so they could tailor the workshop content accordingly. In addition to interactive activities, feedback mechanisms included one or a combination of question-and-answer sessions, direct observations, and questionnaires, among others. Facilitators documented children's feedback and wrote regular workshop reports.

Facilitators in all projects met on a regular basis to share ideas and experiences, revise the workshop content, structure, and method, and provide mutual support. These regular meetings were crucial to building a team spirit, promoting learning within the group, and improving the responsiveness of workshops to children.

## Targeting high-risk groups

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**“My father doesn't let me go to school. He says I know enough now and that I should stay home and wait to get married.”**

– 12-year-old girl, Tirana, Albania

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Awareness-raising with children may not necessarily reach those children most at risk of being trafficked. Detecting and addressing high-risk children (e.g., out-of-school children, children in remote rural areas, separated children) may be a challenge, due to the difficulty in accessing them through conventional means, such as through urban schools or children's clubs. In some cases, marginalised communities may be suspicious of outsiders and closed to any contact with them. Specific outreach strategies and information materials must be tailored to high-risk groups, taking their geographical location, socio-economic and cultural context, and mobility into account.

Outreach strategies may include:

- mobile teams targeting street children that providing basic health care, food, and information
- travelling workshops and/or community theatre targeting remote rural communities
- partnering with ‘insiders’ who are known and trusted by the target community

### Workshops in Roma settlements

Save the Children Montenegro held select awareness-raising workshops with communities in isolated Roma settlements. Access to the communities was facilitated by one of the workshop educators who had previously worked with them. Parents were supportive of the initiative, but also insisted that the workshops be held with the adults before the children attended. Community members generously offered their homes as premises for the workshops as facilities were limited.

### Peer-to-peer education in rural areas

**“[The recreational activities] were very attractive as their lives are empty in the village...they have nothing to do.”**

– Adult animator, Kucova Youth Club, Albania

Peer-to-peer educators from the youth centre in Kucova, Albania held an anti-trafficking awareness-raising workshop in a nearby rural village from which many girls had been trafficked. Educators approached the village leaders and presented the activity plan that included recreational activities following the training. Thirty villagers participated, including 25 girls, and afterwards community members invited the educators to come back and hold additional workshops.

More conventional awareness-raising workshops can provide opportunities to detect high-risk children, by asking participating children to share information about any friends, family members, or neighbours who have been or may be at risk of being trafficked. Such information can then be referred to the appropriate actors (e.g., social services, police,

crisis centre staff) and followed up on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the best interests of the child. Follow up interventions should be long-term in nature, providing children with stable reference points (such as social workers) and monitoring and providing support to children and families in difficulties (see section on community-based responses below).

## When families are involved in trafficking

**“My father wanted to send me to Greece. I knew he wanted to traffic me. I heard him. I was scared. I didn’t want to go. I had heard the stories [from other children who had been trafficked] and knew it was bad. My father prepared my clothes. He set them out, but I ran away. I stayed away for three days so he couldn’t send me away.”**

– 13-year-old boy, Tirana, Albania

In cases when children are trafficked by family members, raising awareness about child trafficking, in and of itself, may not be effective as an intervention strategy. Families may not perceive this as trafficking and may not recognise the element of exploitation involved. Furthermore, providing information does not in and of itself address the range of variables that combine to make children at risk. In such cases, other prevention strategies must be explored, including family and community-based interventions that, for example, attempt to address the economic needs of the family and that work with parents to ensure that traditional cultural practices and norms are in line with the best interests of the child.

Awareness-raising activities should be part of a broader strategy of prevention, rather than ends in themselves. Oftentimes, it is not lack of knowledge that makes children at risk of being trafficked, but rather a lack of protection mechanisms and a lack of legitimate opportunities for safe migration. Furthermore, the majority of people who migrate do improve their living conditions<sup>12</sup>. As such, awareness-raising should be conducted alongside other complementary prevention interventions to address multiple risk factors (e.g., weak family structures, socio-economic vulnerabilities, limited access to education).

<sup>12</sup> Ginzburg, 2003



Qamile Sherifi, age 9

## **8. What role can community-based responses play in prevention strategies?**

“OK, you come here and give us posters and information, but what are you really going to do for us and our communities? We need you do something substantial – to develop interventions that address unemployment, that address the poverty of our community.”

– 16-year-old boy, participant in focus group discussion, Montenegro

Community-based responses to child trafficking can play a key role in contributing to broader multi-level strategies for protecting children. They can work to activate protection mechanisms in the very communities where children live, play, go to school, work, or find temporary refuge. Specific community-based interventions can differ broadly in scope and substance and may range from small-scale income generating projects to the establishment of youth centres that provide peer counselling, vocational training, and/or recreational opportunities. One of the potential advantages of a community-based approach is that it involves the target community in identifying and proposing responses to underlying risk factors. It also builds on existing community resources and in so doing, ensures the relevance and sustainability of interventions and strengthens the community's capacity to protect itself.

Community-based prevention activities can work to address one or more of the risk factors among children-at-risk and their families. This section presents examples of different intervention areas, including:

- Supporting families and caregivers
- Promoting local economic development
- Investing in education
- Developing community resources for youth

Practitioners are encouraged to be creative and to explore, alongside children and their communities, other possible strategies and programme activities.



## Supporting families and caregivers to create a protective environment

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**“My mother left when I was very young. My father is an alcoholic. He raised me. He always accuses me of being with a boy. He yells at me a lot and makes me leave the house. I have nowhere to go. Sometimes I go to my aunt’s house or a neighbor’s house.”**

– 14-year old girl, Tirana, Albania

**“My parents abandoned me and I was placed in the care of my relatives. At the age of 16, I became pregnant. My relatives threatened to throw me out if I didn’t place the child in an Institution.”**

- Adolescent girl, trafficking survivor, Bucharest, Romania

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A large proportion of trafficked children have suffered earlier forms of exploitation and abuse, including sexual abuse and domestic violence. The children most at-risk are those with little or no support from their caregivers, including separated children, children placed in institutional care, children from families with difficulties, or street children.

Parents or caregivers who have access to strengthened social service systems which provide family support, address domestic violence and child abuse, and present housing alternatives in the best interests of the child, have greater chances of increasing the protective environment for their children. Child trafficking prevention strategies can attempt to strengthen child protection systems within the family and at the community level through interventions, including:

- emergency support, temporary shelter, and crisis centre counselling
- outreach mobile teams (health and social workers), home visiting schemes
- family counselling, support and referral, good parenting programme
- improving information and referral services among different sectors (e.g. schools, hospitals and social services)
- free telephone hotlines
- foster care programmes

## Providing emergency support to high-risk youth

In Romania, two teen-aged sisters ran away from home after being sexually abused by their father. They joined a group of street children and were approached by the leader of the group who wanted to take them to Serbia (presumably to be trafficked). One of the sisters was afraid and convinced her sister to go to the Save the Children Romania counselling centre for help.

The counselling team placed the sisters with their grandparents, who are now supporting them on a limited monthly income of 100 US dollars per month. While the sisters are safe with their grandparents and doing well in school, there are moments when they dream of “taking a chance” and going abroad to earn enough money for their grandparents and themselves to live.

According to Save the Children Romania’s counselling team, the girls need an entire package of services to reduce the risk of accepting the temptations of a trafficker – this includes substantial material support for food, school supplies, transportation, and medicine, as well as psychotherapy for themselves, counselling for their grandparents and mother, and legal counselling.

While in many ways unique, this case points to the broader trend of social vulnerability underlying the risk factors for individual children to be trafficked. These include abusive home environments, limited family support, poverty, and limited economic opportunities, coupled with dreams of a better future. Interventions must take a comprehensive multi-disciplinary and holistic approach in addressing these different social, economic, cultural, and psychosocial factors if they are to be effective.

## Promoting local economic development

**“I work. I collect cans in the garbage to sell. If I don’t find any then we don’t have any food to eat.”**

– 9-year-old boy, Tirana, Albania

**“Trafficking affects us in terms of the economic situation here, which is really difficult...our parents struggle for us, they have difficulties, we look outside for opportunities.”**

– 15-year-old boy, Youth club member, Cerrik, Albania

Poverty is one of the underlying factors contributing to trafficking by increasing the vulnerability of children and their families, which may put them at higher risk of exploitation and abuse. Economically marginalised communities may, furthermore, have less access to social services, quality education, and other support mechanisms that can serve as protective mechanisms. Here, poverty is understood in a relative rather than absolute sense, and should be analysed against the context of lack of opportunities at home, gender, ethnic, and racial inequality and discrimination, as well as, in the case of youth, the desire of a young person to leave. This is not to say that all poor children are trafficked, but rather to recognise the structural, socio-economic, and geo-political inequalities that inform vulnerability and characterise a large proportion of trafficking flows (e.g., rural to urban, underdeveloped to more developed regions or countries, etc.).

Adult caregivers who have access to viable income generating opportunities may be less likely to rely on their children to contribute to the family income, and children and their families may have greater access to protection mechanisms as a result. Child trafficking prevention strategies can attempt to decrease the economic vulnerability of children-at-risk and their families through activities such as:

- supporting vocational training and employment for youth and adults
- providing fair, secure, safe and healthy working conditions
- supporting local small-business development
- supporting credit and savings programmes
- providing short-term emergency material support to families

## Investing in education

**“I used to go to school [grade one] but I was sick a lot and the children were mean to me. I quit. I want to go to school but they won’t let me because I missed too much.”**

– 15-year-old boy, Tirana, Albania

**“I have never been to school. My parents love me but they don’t have the means to send me to school and they are not interested in educating me.”**

– 10-year-old girl, Tirana, Albania

**“I want to have a profession. If I learn at school then I can have a profession... Then I can help my family and my children. My life will be better than the lives of my parents. They know very little. I want to know more and to help my children when I’m married.”**

– 14-year-old girl, Tirana, Albania

A large proportion of trafficked children do not complete secondary school, and many younger children who are trafficked have never been to school. Girls and children from marginalised minority groups may be particularly disadvantaged when it comes to access to quality education. Families may not see school as providing useful skills to their children (or, in the case of minority groups may not find an expression of their culture there) and as such, may not see it as a priority, thus widening the school drop-out rate and increasing risk factors among these children.

Providing children and youth with opportunities to build formal and non-formal educational, vocational, and life skills helps develop their confidence and increases their opportunities for safe employment and a better future. In addition, children who attend school regularly have daily access to a social safety net that they may not otherwise have. In these ways, their chances of being exploited as a result of trafficking are decreased. Prevention strategies focusing on education can include support to formal and non-formal educational activities including:

- literacy and basic education classes for out-of-school children

- vocational training for out-of-school adolescents
- life-skills and leadership training for children and youth-at-risk
- affirmative action and integration programmes for girls and children from disadvantaged minority groups
- programmes to monitor and follow up on school attendance

### School reintegration programme

*Children of the World Albania* is a local NGO that runs a socio-educative centre for at-risk and trafficked children in the middle of Kinostudio, one of Tirana's most impoverished neighbourhoods. Families there face a range of challenges including: poverty, unemployment, domestic violence, substance abuse, low levels of education, socio-economic marginalisation, and lack of access to support services. Many children in the neighbourhood have never been to school, have dropped out of school, or are in danger of dropping out of school. Oftentimes their families do not see school as a priority and prefer to have their children contribute to the family income by working or begging on the streets. Some children from this community have been trafficked to Greece or Italy by family members. Early marriages are common, with girls as young as 12 being married.

The aim of the centre is to reduce the risks of trafficked, street, and out-of-school boys and girls by providing them with support in the areas of education, psycho-social counselling and family relations.

*Children of the World Albania's* team of social workers and educators provide a combination of centre-based and outreach activities to children and their families. This includes a school reintegration programme that involves three streams: basic education for adolescents who have never been to school; education to help more advanced students qualify to enter regular classrooms; and, an integration program, which monitors and supports children who attend integrated classrooms in public schools. Older children are offered vocational training courses and are supported to find jobs afterwards.

Staff members have seen a tremendous change in children since their involvement in the centre. They are more confident and self-assured, more open and communicative with staff and other children, and some take on leadership roles in the centre, including mentoring other children.

## Developing community resources for youth

**“Many kids here at risk. No one supports them. Children here don’t have a place to ask for help.”**

– 14-year-old girl, Youth club member, Cerrik, Albania

**“We have nothing to do but stare at the trees and watch the grass grow.”**

– 10-year-old boy, during community consultations, Cerrik, Albania

**“In Kucova, there are only a few opportunities to express talents and skills. The closed mentality makes it difficult to express who we are and what we are able to do.”**

– 15-year-old girl, Youth Board member and peer-trainer, Kucova Youth Club, Albania

Trafficked children often come from home environments that cannot provide adequate support and protection. Resources in the wider community for at-risk children and youth are also limited. Children-at-risk may find themselves isolated and may have no positive role models or persons to turn to for support. This may increase their chances of engaging in risk-taking behaviour.

Support can be provided to at-risk children and youth through youth-targeted community services and resources that provide them with opportunities to socialize, build skills, and meet positive role models. Such interventions may include:

- youth centres and youth clubs
- outreach programmes for young people at risk
- peer-support and youth counselling; peer discussion groups
- young people befriending schemes
- leadership training
- opportunities to take on youth-led initiatives
- healthy recreational opportunities

## Youth centres

**“We feel free [at the youth centre] because it is made specifically for us. We are part of the centre ... We are the centre.”**

– 15-year-old girl, Youth club member, Kucova, Albania

**“I feel comfortable here... I have friends here...we are free to say what we think.”**

– 16-year-old boy, Youth club member, Cerrik, Albania

Save the Children Albania partnered with local NGO *Help the Children* to establish two youth centres for children and youth living in two economically impoverished cities in central and southern Albania.

The youth centres aim to decrease children’s risk of being trafficked by increasing their access to supportive resources within the community, by building on children’s resilience by providing opportunities to learn, build skills, and socialize, and by disseminating information about trafficking and related protection strategies through peer-to-peer education activities. Approximately 80-100 children and youth, ranging in age from 6-19 years, attend the centres daily, and membership is free.

Youth attending the centres have started to think differently about issues, and this includes a new willingness to talk openly about trafficking issues and a new-found empathy for victims of trafficking. The centres have also had a positive impact on relationships between children and their parents, as well as on the community as a whole by serving as a new resource to support youth and facilitate a process of community dialogue.

**“There has been a change in mentalities – before, girls couldn’t go out by themselves, but now they come here, even after dark. Since they come here they also have more freedom to go other places. [These changes are as a result of the fact that] both girls are more confident and families have more trust.”**

– Adult animator, Kucova Youth Centre, Albania

## Weekly discussion groups for youth

*Children of the World Albania* organises weekly discussion groups with children and young people at risk in order to encourage them to communicate and express themselves on issues of common concern, to make them more conscious of their capabilities and rights, and to improve their knowledge about the topic at hand.

Discussion groups are held at the centre or at people's homes. Between 10-25 young people attend regularly.

The subjects of the meeting are chosen by the children, in consultation with educators, and have included: domestic violence, child trafficking, relationships between girls and boys, safe sex, drugs, tobacco, alcohol, early marriages, school drop-outs, and street children. These discussions help *Children of the World Albania* disseminate information on risk factors and involve and engage the community in the centre, and helps staff get feedback from the community.



## 9. How can a rights-based approach be applied to community-based interventions?

“I worked for the man for one year and then I ran away. The police found me and put me in jail. Later they put me in an orphanage in Greece. It was good. I liked it there better but when the man didn’t send any money to my parents, they [my parents] told the police that I had been kidnapped. I stayed in the orphanage for about one year and then they made me go back to my parents. I wanted to stay at the orphanage but they made me go back.”

– 14-year-old boy, trafficking survivor, Tirana, Albania

Applying a rights-based approach to community-based interventions can contribute to increasing the quality of counter-trafficking activities for children-at-risk. The following section highlights some of the positive approaches to community-based work, illustrated with examples from the projects, including:

- adopting a holistic approach
- working with the child in the context of their family and community
- identifying children's strengths and building a relationship of trust and mutual respect
- involving children in project planning and implementation
- providing opportunities for inclusion of marginalised children
- involving multiple stakeholders

## Adopting a holistic approach

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**“[Adopting a] holistic approach...allows us to better understand and respond to the need of the child in the context of his or her community. We do this through (a) working with the parents; (b) educating the children (schooling); (c) building relationships of trust with the child; and, (d) working with local authorities to advocate on behalf of children and generate greater support from community stakeholders.”**

– Educator, Children of the World, Albania

**“[We do not divide] social and educational work. Even if some staff have to devote themselves to specific tasks (educators to teaching, social workers to family assessment), social and educational work are two parts of the same action (prevention and reintegration).”**

– Staff, Children of the World, Albania

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## Addressing multiple risk factors

Addressing a range of children's rights by targeting multiple risk factors in the context of one community-based programme intervention can increase the positive impact of activities

for children-at-risk. For example, an education-focused programme that promotes literacy skills among street children (i.e. ensuring a child's right to education) can also provide psychosocial support, life-skills training, health care, and family counselling to children (i.e. addressing their right to survival and development, protection, and participation). Different programme components can develop organically in response to the needs identified during the course of working with the community.

## Promoting multi-sectoral collaboration

Working with a multi-sectoral team within the same programme (e.g., social workers, educators, and lawyers) can help to better address the multiple variables that contribute to children's risk and to ensure a more holistic response. Multi-sectoral collaboration among staff can be promoted through regular information sharing (e.g., through meetings and reporting) and joint planning in order to analyse and respond to each child on a case-by-case basis.

### Holistic approach

*Children of the World Albania* started its programme with classroom-based work and added new components in response to a range of support needs of children and their families identified over time. These include centre-based and outreach activities led by staff educators and social workers such as: daily food assistance; permanent detection (identification and registration of children-at-risk); teaching in literacy, preparatory, and integrated classes; vocational classes for adolescents; educational and recreational activities in the centre and community; after-school support; sport activities; preparation of joint activities and performances with neighbourhood schools; facilitating group discussions with children and the community; and weekly meetings with parents.

The activities are interrelated and complement each other by addressing the multiple support needs of children who attend the centre. Efforts to address the multiple risks facing these children are made more difficult in a context where social support services for the children and their families are minimal if at all existent. Given such limitations, *Children of the World Albania* tries to work in close collaboration with the municipal and local authorities, educators, and social workers to provide support to the families.

## Working with the child in the context of his/her family and community

**“My father doesn’t live with us but he still comes back and abuses my mother even when we are there. He won’t let her leave the house. She had beautiful hair, but he cut it all off.”**

– 9-year-old boy, Tirana, Albania

**“Most of these children leave the socio-educative centre and go back to stressful, chaotic and oftentimes abusive home environments – the realities of their home and family life must be taken into account if you are going to truly support the child.”**

– Social worker, Children of the World, Albania

Involving caregivers in prevention activities for children, or working directly with them to promote positive child-rearing practices, non-violent communication strategies, and nurturing/supportive environments, in order to link them to supportive networks or to address their economic vulnerabilities may contribute to decreasing family-based vulnerabilities of children-at-risk. Programmes can involve primary caregivers in a variety of ways, including:

- providing counselling and other support to caregivers
- improving parent-child relationships through family counselling
- involving caregivers in supporting children’s activities
- inviting caregivers to participate in advisory groups and to take ownership of the activities

## Working with families in difficulties: counselling, referral, participation, material support

**“We encourage parents by working with them. We started to ask children to share what happens at the centre with their parents. Some parents now support activities at the centre. Sometimes we run training with the mothers, and then they run training with other women in their own community...[now parents] started telling each other to send their children to school.”**

– Educator, Children of the World, Albania

Staff at *Children of the World Albania*’s socio-educative centre for out-of-school and street children must ensure the cooperation of the caregivers to keep their children in the programme, as they may not see school as priority, preferring to have their child contribute to the household income.

*Children of the World Albania* addresses this in three ways:

- offering families support in the form of monthly food aid (flour/salt/oil) to supplement the loss of family income as a result of the child being in class, and to help ensure parental commitment to continue sending their children to class.
- conducting regular home visits that help social workers identify problems that may arise in the family context and referring caregivers to services such as legal aid, health clinics, and other sources of relevant support.
- encouraging caregivers to come to the centre and organising regular discussion groups with mothers and fathers to increase their level of responsibility in the education of their children in order to improve the communication and solidarity between parents and staff. Topics for discussion have included parental roles, early marriages, the importance of school for the future of children’s lives, and the relationships between children, parents, and educators.

Working with the parents and caregivers is a central part of the programme. Sensitising them to the importance that school can play in creating a positive future, encouraging their involvement in the education of their children, and helping to improve their living conditions, helps enable them to ensure their children’s rights are met. One of the challenges of this approach is balancing the need to address the basic material needs of the family in the best interests of the child, against the long-term viability of this resource-intensive approach for the sustainability of the centre.

Staff at the centre have seen a change among some of the parents who are showing more positive interest in their children and in the centre, and are more conscious of their children’s skills, needs, and rights. An increased number of parents now come to the centre and ask about the learning and behaviour of their children. Some parents participate in supporting the activities at the centre.

## Identifying children's strengths and building a relationship of trust and mutual respect

**“A. is 13. She came to the centre one year ago. She had been raped by her brother and was very withdrawn. We used drawing exercises to bring her out of her shell, and later on, through talking and creative play, we got her to open up and talk about what happened. Over time, we’ve given her increased responsibility, such as letting her take care of the younger children. This helps build her confidence.”**  
– Educator, Children of the World, Albania

**“We try to encourage girls to make their own decisions. Often the girls are surprised, this is the first time they are asked for their opinion or consulted in such a way.”**  
- Psychologist, Save the Children, Romania

Identifying the individual strengths of children-at-risk and encouraging them to build on and draw upon in their own resources helps them gain self-confidence and increases their self-protection mechanisms. Building a relationship of trust with children and fostering a sense of security, safety, and mutual respect is fundamental to this process. Giving children-at-risk increased responsibilities and involving them in decision-making further helps to build their self-esteem, provides them an opportunity to develop new skills, and encourages them to take ownership of the programmes they are involved in.

### Giving children responsibilities and fostering relationships of trust

Developing positive, nurturing, trusting relationships between children and staff contributes to the success of the socio-educative centre run by *Children of the World Albania*. Children who come to the centre know that they are understood, listened to, loved, and trusted. Adults demonstrate respect for and confidence in their abilities. Together, this contributes to an atmosphere of safety and security through which children can build their resilience.

When possible, staff give children responsibilities by putting them in charge of different activities at the centre. For example, older children are given the responsibility of helping younger children with their homework, and children take turns being responsible for monitoring class attendance or classroom tidiness. Staff have seen a marked improvement in children's self-confidence that comes with an increased sense of responsibility.

### Involving children in designing reintegration plans

Building on children's strengths is central to supporting children who have been trafficked. At Save the Children Romania's counseling centre, reintegration efforts are adapted to developmental stage and age of the child, and the child and his/her support network are active participants in designing the individual plan. This serves a dual purpose of ensuring the relevance of the intervention to the particular needs of the child, as well as promoting "healing" by encouraging the child to take responsibility for their own life, which in turn helps build their confidence. As the trafficking experience is often one of powerlessness that erodes self-esteem, this element is particularly important. Trafficking can also erode the family's self-esteem and reintegration efforts should take this aspect into account in order to 'restore' dignity to the parents involved in trafficking their children.

## Involving children and their communities in project planning and implementation

**“Consultations with children before the project started helped us (and them) better understand their needs, issues, concerns and wishes, and helped us design the project accordingly.”**

– Programme Coordinator, Save the Children Albania

### Planning Consultations

Involving children and their communities in identifying needs and formulating prevention responses can help ensure that interventions are relevant, identify resources available at the community level, and increase the likelihood of sustainability. It may also contribute to empowering the affected communities to take ownership of the project and strengthen the community's capacity to protect itself. Consultations can be carried out through activities such as:

- participatory research
- consultation meetings
- focus group discussions
- interviews
- community mobilisation efforts to inform and empower marginalised groups

Planning consultations should be conducted by an experienced facilitator who can help the community and children prioritise among the range of needs and interests, against the available resources. Informing this effort with background research and a mapping of current interventions is crucial to ensuring the intervention makes sense within the broader context of work in the community.

### Monitoring and feedback mechanisms

It is important to carry out consultations with children and their communities in the context of an ongoing programme. These can help in monitoring the progress of the work



and in adapting and improving the activities in accordance to the needs and interests of the target group. Feedback mechanisms can take the form of discussion groups, questionnaires, regular meetings, and or creative activities such as artwork or role-play. Regular feedback from partners and staff – through reports and regular meetings – to exchange experiences, chart progress, flag concerns, and address any problems, can also be conducted and programme interventions adapted accordingly.

## Promoting child participation

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**“Rules here are decided by us. We respect the rules here because we decided them. We don’t tell others what to do, but together we share advice. We started understanding what freedom means, when we establish the rules.”**

– 14-year-old girl, Youth club member, Cerrik, Albania

**“[There is a] beauty in organising [the youth centre] ourselves, we feel proud. If we organise things ourselves, it makes us feel part of the centre.”**

– 16-year old girl, Youth club member, Kucova, Albania

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Actively promoting the involvement of children in planning and implementing programme activities contributes to building their leadership skills and self-esteem and helps ensure that activities are relevant to their interests and needs. Involving children from the beginning of a project and giving them responsibilities early on promotes their ownership of the process and presents a positive model of inclusivity. Children’s participation can be promoted and supported through a variety of capacity-building initiatives, including training on project management, peer-to-peer education, and advocacy. There are many ways to actively involve children and youth in programmes, including as:

- Decision-makers – acting as participants in a group of leaders that develop and implement activities, sitting as members on a board of youth-serving organisations
- Peer educators or mentors – passing messages to their peers and to adult members of their community and teaching younger children

- Advocates – organising campaigns and public debates on issues relevant to their lives, joining conferences that discuss children and young people’s issues, and making public presentations on the issues that concern them
- Peer counsellors – listening to and supporting other young people and providing advice on various issues
- Researchers in participatory action research – identifying the research problem, designing the research methodology, implementing the research, analysing the data, and making conclusions from the analysis
- Observers – observing activities and collecting reliable and important feedback and inputs from adults running the activities, and collecting important data that would be missed during the event without their participation (Save the Children in Montenegro, 2004).

## Youth-run centres

A ten-member youth board, comprised entirely of children and youth, is responsible for managing and implementing activities at a community youth centre, supported by Save the Children and local partner Help the Children, in central Albania. Children form a coordination board that decides upon and implements the activities at the centre, which include education, recreation, and community events.

The youth board meets once a week to review ongoing activities and plan for the following week. Representatives on the board are nominated by their peers, and membership is on a rotation basis. Two adult animators supervise the management of the centre, and an advisory board, comprised of parents, local authorities, and school teachers, functions as a reference group.

By giving children responsibilities, and by building their capacity to manage and implement activities, the centre promotes self-empowerment of the children, and this strengthens their ability to protect themselves. The youth have demonstrated increased self-confidence and leadership abilities, and have a new sense of responsibility for themselves, their peers, and their community. Over time, the youth from the centre have increasingly gained the respect of the community and local authorities and have been sought out as spokespersons for children’s rights.

## Providing opportunities for inclusion of marginalised children

**“Right now, most of the out-of-school population coming to the centre are boys. The girls stay at home. They stay at home because they are not good at school, there are no jobs, they are at risk, and [the more isolated they get] the more limited is their perspective on life. It is difficult for them to socialize, they have no friends. Sometimes, families don’t allow them to leave the house. They are less educated and become more passive, and are less willing to seek out new knowledge. I am trying to think of ways to reach out to these kids and involve them in the centre.”**

– Adult animator, Kucova youth club, Albania

Providing opportunities for inclusion of children-at-risk may require specific strategies, particularly in the context of community development initiatives that may have an area-based approach. Effectively identifying and reaching marginalised groups and providing opportunities for their inclusion requires a clear understanding of what variables contribute to their risk, as well as a clear sense of what targeted interventions can contribute to ensuring that their rights are met. Following from this, careful planning, including finding “entry points” into communities at risk and ensuring that adequate time and resources are made available, is needed. Community members should be actively involved in developing and implementing resulting strategies, drawing from their existing skills and resources, and socio-cultural, gender, economic, and family contexts must be taken into consideration.

**“Beneficiaries” or people belonging to “target groups” must be treated as actors in their own development, not as inferior people in need. Enable efforts to mobilise and empower marginalised communities to build on their existing skills and resources and to identify and make changes in their environment. This will contribute to their communicating and collaborating with other actors in the community, and promote participation in common activities.**

– Staff, Children of the World, Albania

Challenging stereotypes and other social divisions among staff, community members, and marginalised groups is important to promote and ensure an environment of tolerance, mutual respect, and inclusivity.

### Developing outreach and inclusion strategies for out-of-school children

One of the key challenges facing a youth centre in Albania was how to more directly target high-risk groups, including out-of-school and Roma children, to actively involve them in the activities of the centre.

The existing social divides within the community were replicated in the youth centres, with the leadership of the centre comprised primarily of the “privileged” children with no representation by children from the “marginal” communities.

Staff have been working to foster a sense of equality, mutual-respect, and acceptance of difference amongst the youth through discussion groups and anti-discrimination material, and have been increasing outreach to more marginalised children.

As a result, a greater number of out-of-school children have been attending the centre, although most of these are boys, who mostly participate in recreational, rather than educational and/or leadership activities. Plans are underway to establish vocational training activities for these boys and to find more effective ways to involve out-of-school girls in the centres. These plans will have to address the over-protectiveness of their families, as well as the impact of their isolation on their confidence levels and ability to socialize.

Providing greater opportunities for inclusion for marginalised groups of children is a long-term undertaking in which adults and peer educators can play a major role.

## Involving multiple stakeholders

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**“We involved [local authorities] from the beginning in all the activities of the centre such as inviting them to the opening ceremony and asked the Mayor to speak about how to improve the situation of children in Kucova, in order to show them what we do and also make them feel involved, to encourage ownership.”**

– Adult animator, Kucova Youth Centre, Albania

**“There is a need for long-term intervention and cooperation with public authorities with responsibilities in the areas of preventing and combating human trafficking and child protection in order to have a sustainable impact.”**

– Project Coordinator, Save the Children, Romania

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One programme cannot possibly address all the challenges confronting children-at-risk. Interventions can be more effective if multiple stakeholders, including municipalities, local authorities, schools, health care services, social services, police, and community leaders, work together to provide support to children in the context of their families or communities and to help ensure that a range of risk factors are addressed. For example, education programmes must be linked to other elements of children’s lives, including education for families and communities to support children, community-level networks for protection, and strategic links between schools and programmes to protect children from abuse and exploitation. Such coordination efforts can be facilitated through:

- memorandums of understanding with police, social workers, and other service delivery actors, as well as with relevant government Ministries
- local-level coordination groups and referral mechanisms
- community-level child protection networks

Establishing formal partnerships with other actors to carry out joint project activities can help promote a comprehensive and cohesive approach to interventions. Involving local and national authorities as partners is particularly important and helps ensure local ownership and sustainability of the project. Working in coordination with civil society actors to link ongoing activities can help mutually strengthen interventions, and partnering with local NGOs, including those that have established relationships with more isolated

and/or closed communities, can help in reaching out to new communities. Cooperation can be strengthened through ongoing communication and regular meetings with partners and communities. Specialists from partner organisations can be invited to take part in meetings and trainings, and conversely, staff can attend seminars organised by partners and use the opportunity to network with other actors. Over time, as the credibility of the working relationship is established, ties with key stakeholders can be strengthened and the efficiency of work improved. Building positive relationships with the media can also help build a constituency of support for the work

### Mobilising community-level partnership

Albanian NGO *Help the Children* (NPF) has several years of experience working directly with trafficked children and their families and as such is well known and trusted by the community. NPF successfully sought to secure support from local authorities to establish youth centres in two small towns. The support came in the form of approval as well as symbolic material contribution, in order to promote their “buy-in” and their sense of ownership and responsibility for community projects. Local authorities from each city donated abandoned buildings to house the centres, and agreed to pay nominal utility fees for each. NPF also built on its existing relationships with the school authorities to get support for the centres from teachers, school principals, and parents, which was crucial to the success of the project.



Leonard Dalipi, age 8



# **10. What role can capacity-building play in child trafficking responses?**

“One of the biggest challenges we face is the negative attitude of the public and representatives of different institutions. For example, in hospitals, doctors don’t want to treat trafficked girls...[initially] we tried to explain to people repeatedly that they are victims...but in the end we decided to say she’s a social case, rather than telling people the truth.”

– *Social Worker, Save the Children, Romania*

“The capacity of intervention of the staff, but also of the partners, was a permanent concern for the project. This is why an important part of our activities were dedicated to this aspect.”

– *Project Coordinator, Save the Children, Romania*

Facilitating and strengthening the ability of multiple stakeholders, including duty bearers, front-line workers, partner organisations and children and families themselves, to ensure and protect the rights of trafficked children and children-at-risk is an important component of child trafficking response strategies. Training, technical support, and professional exchanges can contribute to sensitising them to the problem and can help them build specific technical or professional skills.

## Support Material

Guidelines, handbooks, toolkits, and other instructive resources can work to complement training by providing support materials that individuals can refer to after the training is completed. Rather than stand-alone documents, they can be introduced in the context of a training workshop so that the information in them can be discussed and explained in detail.

### Good Practice Guide for professionals

Save the Children Romania developed *Good Practice Guide on Child Trafficking* for professionals in order to share good practices on working directly with trafficked children. The Guide was developed by a multi-disciplinary team of psychologists, social workers, police and lawyers who have accumulated experience working with trafficked children. It covers a range of topics including: introduction to child trafficking; case management; psychological counseling; social work; juridical aspects of child trafficking; and, police intervention. The Guide will be distributed to police stations, local child protection departments, schools, and NGOs across the country.

## Capacity-building with professionals

Oftentimes, duty bearers and/or front-line workers may not be aware of child trafficking and/or may not have the technical skills to effectively work with high-risk and trafficked children. Training is one way to improve the capacity of professionals and other front-line workers (including police, lawyers, judges, social workers, psychologists, and government

representatives) to increase protection for trafficked and/or high-risk children. The objectives of training with professionals may include:

- raising awareness about child trafficking, about the roles and responsibilities of individual stakeholders with regards to high-risk and trafficked children, and about what institutional, policy, and legislative frameworks exist to help protect children;
- building specific technical skills for different professionals, such as child-sensitive/child-centred case management or investigative techniques;
- challenging negative attitudes of service providers in order to ensure that trafficked children are treated with dignity and with respect for their fundamental human rights.

Conducting a series of training sessions, follow-up training, and/or in-service training can reinforce learning and have a longer-term impact on participants. Trainers can experiment with participatory learning techniques such as role-play and case study response, which promote active learning.

## **Multi-sectoral training**

Conducting joint training with different actors, and inviting individuals from different professional sectors to participate in the same training, can promote dialogue and strengthen linkages across disciplines, contribute to strengthening referral and coordination mechanisms, and help develop a multi-sectoral response, which is especially critical to strengthening counter-trafficking responses. Inviting government representatives and/or local authorities to contribute to and participate in training can promote local ownership of the issue, provide an opportunity for them to deepen their understanding of and sensitivity to child trafficking, provide a forum for informal advocacy, and help to strengthen relationships with them.

## Training for practitioners

Save the Children Romania conducted training sessions for representatives of the specialised structures of the Ministries of Justice and Interior working with victims of trafficking or sexual exploitation (including policemen, lawyers, juridical counsellors, as well as representatives from the National Authority for Child Protection and Adoption) and for practitioners from the multidisciplinary teams from the counselling centres, namely psychologists and social workers. One session of training focused on intervention and investigation techniques for cases of sexual abuse and human trafficking, while another focused on the prevention of re-victimization of sexually exploited children during penal trials.

Trainers used role-play to illustrate the dynamics of a police interview in the interest of encouraging police to empathise with victims of trafficking.

As a result of the training, participants had a better level of knowledge about trafficking and sexual abuse and exploitation, the risk factors, the psychological profile of victims, and strategies for interviewing children without violating their rights. As a result, their empathy for victims increased. In addition, communication amongst professionals from different government departments improved as a result of simply being in the same room together and discussing issues, as did the collaboration between Save the Children and the Ministry of Interior.

Psychologists and social workers also received training in counselling skills and case management. Topics covered included issues such as gender sensitivity, best interests of the child, privacy, child rehabilitation, interviewing child victims of sexual abuse, rights to health services, periodic review of protection measures, access to appropriate information, respect for child opinion, and avoiding stigmatization. These topics were discussed and presented from the child rights perspective during the training sessions, and were also presented in the guide for specialists.

## The importance of conducting local-level training

Conducting local-level training with direct service providers and other front-line workers who may come in direct contact with trafficked children and children-at-risk is a crucial yet often overlooked activity (due in part to the resource-intensive nature of the effort). Local-level training can be done directly or through cascade training (i.e. training of trainers) and can be complemented with practical toolkits, guides, or manuals.

## Capacity-building with staff and partners

Capacity-building activities can be aimed at strengthening the ability of staff and partners to translate principles of child rights programming and child participation into practice. For example, the principle of child participation is widely lauded, yet individuals have different assumptions about what this means, and may have a limited understanding of and experience in how to translate it into field-based interventions. Providing training and/or technical support on how to integrate participatory methodologies into programme activities may be one approach to ensuring this element is a core part of the programming.

### Training on participation

One of the challenges facing the regional programme lay in how to capture – in a participatory way – the expertise at the field level, including programme experiences and children's views, in order to bring this learning and insight to decision-makers and other key stakeholders.

A regional workshop on participatory learning and action methodology was held with project coordinators and partners in the interest of helping participants identify how they were already using or might increase the level of child participation in their projects, and how they could better document their activities, using this documentation and resulting outputs (e.g., reports, guidelines, etc.) strategically to refine their programs, share their learning, lobby stakeholders, and advocate with and for children on trafficking concerns.

### Exchanging experiences on prevention education

In March 2003, Save the Children Montenegro organised a sub-regional meeting on child trafficking, bringing together NGOs from Montenegro, Slovenia (*Kljuc*), and Serbia (*Psihofon, Child Rights Centre*) to exchange experiences on prevention education with youth on the issue of trafficking.

## Capacity-building with children and communities

**“Personally, coming to the centre helped me. Before, my judgment was childish. Coming here, and having information through training and participation in debates started me thinking differently about issues-about becoming a useful member of society, helping parents, helping friends, helping other people in need.”**

– 16-year-old girl, Youth club member, Cerrik, Albania

Building the capacity of children and their communities, for example, to plan and carry out small-scale initiatives, and/or to train their peers in child trafficking issues, is an important way to ensure the sustainability of community-level interventions. Promoting exchange visits among children from different community-based interventions can contribute to building capacity by serving as an informal in-service training, where they have an opportunity to visit projects in action and speak to their peers. This can generate ideas about new ways of doing things as well as provide a point of critical reflection on and comparison of their own projects.

### Exchange visits between youth centres

**“The exchange visits were positive. They allowed partners to spend time together and get perspective on their own work.”**

– Project Coordinator, Save the Children, Kosovo

In June and July 2003, children and animators from children's centres in Kosovo and Albania visited each other's projects. The youth centres were at different stages of development, and children exchanged ideas about how to manage and organise them. They also gained some perspective on their own work and were able to feel confident both in what they had achieved and in the uniqueness of their respective centres. Several children maintained links with those they met after the visit and are planning future visits.



Workshop participants, Roma Information Centre



# **11. How can coordination help strengthen child trafficking interventions?**

“I can’t live in my village anymore. The perpetrator escaped from jail and he is threatening me.”

– Adolescent girl, trafficking survivor, Bucharest, Romania

“...We believe that strengthening the relations with these [governmental and international] institutions reduced the bureaucratic procedures and increased the rapidity of actions within the public institution because our activity as NGO became known.”

– Programme Coordinator, Save the Children, Romania

Effective coordination and collaboration among anti-trafficking actors can strengthen the collective capacity of all actors to effectively respond to child trafficking, and ultimately, to have a greater and more sustained impact on ensuring and protecting the rights of high-risk and trafficked children. Bringing together a range of actors from different sectors can help strengthen multi-sectoral collaboration, which is crucial to effectively address the multiple risk factors of high-risk and trafficked children and their communities.

The importance of conducting anti-trafficking work in coordination with key stakeholders/actors across different sectors cannot be underestimated, nor can the challenges of doing so effectively. The complexity of the trafficking phenomenon (including its clandestine nature), the different disciplinary approaches to it, the lack of clear understanding of and agreement on what responses are effective, the conflicting mandates of different organisations, limited or weak coordination mechanisms, and limited history of collaboration amongst and between (a relatively new) civil society and governments in the region combine to make coordination a challenge.

## **Positive models of coordination**

Amidst such challenges, positive models of coordination do exist, including formalised mechanisms such as:

- inter-ministerial working groups on child trafficking
- national anti-trafficking coordination groups
- inter-agency coordination groups
- thematic working groups (e.g., child trafficking, witness protection, separated children and/or other high-risk groups of children)
- civil society coalitions
- referral mechanisms to ensure protection for victims of trafficking

## **The contribution of child rights actors**

Child rights organisations may be perceived as valuable members of anti-trafficking coordination groups as they can bring relevant field-based experience and expertise in

child rights to the table. Decision-makers may be interested in addressing child protection issues but may not have previous experience in this area, and governments may look to NGOs to provide them with useful information about the direct experience of children.

### National Board for Combating Trafficking

Save the Children Montenegro joined the National Board for Combating Trafficking in Montenegro in June 2002. The Board is coordinated by a National Coordinator (government representative) and at that time included membership by IOM, UNICEF, OSCE, UNHCHR, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and three local NGOs (the Women's Safe House, and the SOS line as a project of the Montenegrin Women's Lobby). All board members are seen as partners in implementing the National Anti-Trafficking Programme. Save the Children Montenegro presented and refined its proposed intervention in close consultation with the Board, and expanded the scope of its awareness-raising activities in response to a request by the National Coordinator. In early 2004, Save the Children Montenegro organised an information roundtable for the newly formed sub-working group on child trafficking within the National Board in order to strengthen member capacity to address child protection issues.

## Strengthening impact through coordination groups

Membership in anti-trafficking coordination groups may provide opportunities to increase impact by:

- sharing information and exchanging experiences with other actors
- putting the issue of child protection on the anti-trafficking agenda
- participating in joint training efforts
- developing common policies, minimum standards, and/or guidelines
- strengthening referral mechanisms
- coordinating programme responses
- implementing joint project activities
- strengthening advocacy efforts by presenting a united voice to decision-makers
- strengthening relationships with other anti-trafficking actors

Coordination groups may face many difficulties due to lack of political will of participants or due to excessive competition and/or discord amongst members against the context of

weak facilitation and leadership. Mobilising around a concrete project or a specific theme (e.g., witness protection) can strengthen coordination efforts, as can a strong facilitator who promotes a sense of ownership amongst members and who facilitates a sense of cooperation and harmony. This is no easy task, and sufficient resources must be set aside to ensure that coordination efforts are adequately supported.

### *Coalition All Together Against Child Trafficking*

In Albania, a coalition of national and international actors working against child trafficking – *All Together Against Child Trafficking* – was established in 2002 with the aim of strengthening local- and national-level response to and protection of trafficked children and children-at-risk. The coalition serves as a forum for coordination and information sharing among members and as a tool for lobbying the Albanian government. In early 2004, the coalition was invited by the Albanian government to give feedback on its draft National Plan of Action to combat child trafficking.

### *Inter-agency working groups*

Save the Children Albania became member of the witness protection working group, which started informally as an emergency response to an urgent need for protection for the trafficked child, and which has transformed into a more formal working group. This group signed an Memorandum of Understanding with the Albanian government to advise on witness protection cases and has contributed to the drafting of the witness protection law in Albania.

## **Conferences and roundtables**

Joint conferences and roundtables provide additional opportunities to bring key stakeholders together to share information about child trafficking, and possibly develop concrete plans of actions or recommendations. Where formal coordination mechanisms do not exist, such events may serve as a first step towards establishing them. Child rights organisations may be seen as relatively neutral by other stakeholders in what is oftentimes a politicised environment, and as such may be in a unique position to facilitate such coordination efforts.

## Anti-trafficking conference

Save the Children in Kosovo co-facilitated a Kosovo-wide Anti-Trafficking Conference (October 2003), which brought together for the first time key stakeholders to discuss trafficking and develop recommendations for a plan of action.

The coordinating committee for the conference met regularly over a period of many months to prepare for the event. Save the Children in Kosovo played a catalyst role in facilitating this process. As a child rights organisation, it was perceived as a neutral actor (in a politicised environment) and was able to capitalise on this in the interest of bringing different actors together around a common objective. This created an opportunity for key agencies working on different aspects of anti-trafficking to come together to share information and experiences beyond the context of the conference.

It is hoped that the same group of agencies will continue to meet regularly after the conference, to coordinate their work on trafficking in Kosovo.

## Roundtable on child trafficking

Save the Children in Serbia organised a roundtable on child trafficking in October 2003, which brought together for the first time key actors working on child trafficking in Serbia to share experiences of anti-trafficking activities in Serbia to date and to prepare recommendations/guidelines for future work in the field of trafficking prevention and protection.

Representatives of the Serbian Government (Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of Education), international organisations (OSCE, IOM, UNHCHR, CRS), and local non-governmental organisations (ASTRA, Child Rights Centre, Roma Information Centre) presented their work and achievements over the period 2002-2003. This was followed by discussions and the preparation of joint recommendations for future work.

The proceedings from the roundtable have been published in Serbian and English and are being disseminated regionally (Save the Children in Serbia, 2004).

## Regional coordination

As child trafficking is a cross-border phenomenon, coordinating with other actors bilaterally and regionally is important to contributing to a comprehensive analysis of and response to the phenomenon. The objectives of regional coordination efforts can mirror those of national level coordination, namely, information sharing, strengthening referral mechanisms, coordinating programme response, and instituting change at the level of regional policy and legislation frameworks. Regional coordination can take place through existing institutional frameworks, such as inter-governmental forums or regional policy-making bodies.

### Stability Pact Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings (SPTF)

The Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe established a Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings in September 2000, in the interest of improving coordination and cohesion among counter-trafficking responses in the region. The Task Force Secretariat, located in Vienna, takes the lead in the development of coordinated anti-trafficking activities, policies, and structures in Southeast Europe.

The Task Force works with an Expert Coordination Team, comprised of international organisations and NGOs, which offers input and expertise to the SPTF to enable it to provide governments with a picture of the challenges and guidance on anti-trafficking activities within the SPTF framework.

Save the Children sits as a member on the Expert Coordination Team, which allows it to work in collaboration with other actors to put child rights issues on the agenda, to contribute the learning from its field-based work on child trafficking regionally and globally into the formulation of policy and programming, and to keep abreast of policy and programme issues regionally.

Less formal mechanisms, such as professional networks or joint interventions in the context of regional programmes, can also provide forums for regional coordination. Establishing democratic forums for communication and information sharing, such as electronic listservs, newsletters, and internet sites, can be useful tools for strengthening a network and promoting ownership among members. Face-to-face meetings among participants are important, as they promote the formation of personal relationships, which is the glue that can help strengthen a network.

## Regional programme networks

One of the main objectives of Save the Children's Regional Programme was to strengthen the regional response to child trafficking by piloting child-focused interventions, and by sharing information, exchanging experiences and good practices, to build capacity among participating staff and partners from around the region. The programme attempted to strengthen links among and between participating pilot projects (in Albania, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia) through a series of regional meetings, support to bilateral exchange visits, dissemination of information and facilitation of communication among partners through email, newsletters, and telephone contact.

Relations among staff and partners of the six pilot projects strengthened over the course of the programme and partners drew benefits from belonging to a regional initiative. Their participation in a collective effort encouraged them to take on a challenging work area and gave them the opportunity to link with actors from across the region. Many partners were able to establish greater legitimacy with decision-makers at the national level by nature of their involvement in a regional effort, and thus to better advocate for the protection of trafficked children. It became clear that building and sustaining a regional network of actors is a slow process that must be actively maintained and built over time. The challenges of maintaining such a network across geographies, cultures, languages, and conflicting political histories must be recognised and an assessment of progress measured accordingly.

## Local-level coordination

In the context of weak national child protection mechanisms, strengthening local-level coordination and referral mechanisms in the interest of supporting community-based protection responses can be a viable strategy to help support high-risk and trafficked children.

Bringing together key stakeholders at the local level who may not have a history of working together (including police, social workers, health workers, educators, and local authorities) to coordinate around child trafficking, can help strengthen relations between them and increase a community's capacity to protect its children. High-risk children and their families should be included in these efforts. In this way communities are empowered

to assume protection for their children and are supported to identify their own problems and look at possible solutions.

The promotion of community-level coordination and response recognises that while ultimate responsibility for child protection lies with national level authorities, the community can be a rich source of local-level resources and can be mobilised in the interest of supporting children in a context-specific and thus relevant manner. In order to be sustainable over the long-term, local-level responses must be coordinated with and supported by regional and national level initiatives and by duty bearers to create an enabling environment for them to function.



## Community-based child protection networks

Community-based protection networks bring together local authorities, police, educators, social workers, parents, and health workers to assess the situation of child protection needs at the community level and to develop a strategic response to strengthening formal and informal protection networks. Such community-based approaches work to empower key stakeholders in the community to assume protection for their children, to support them to identify their own problems, and to look at possible solutions.

The networks build on the existing community-level resources and mobilise them collectively towards a joint objective and end. This model of collaboration can work at the community, regional, and national level. By facilitating the development of local responses to local needs it promotes sustainability, is relevant to the local context, encourages local ownership of the process, and builds on the resilience of the community members, including the children.

*Children of the World Albania* has established an Anti-Trafficking Community Network which brings together, through regular meetings, stakeholders from three administrative units in Tirana - including representatives from the local authority, police, school, and social services – to identify cases of children-at-risk and follow up on referral and support to them and their families.



*Ahmet Alushi, age 14*

## **12. How can working with the media promote the best interests of trafficked children?**

“If no one likes to eat potatoes, no green grocer is going to put potatoes in his store if he can’t sell it.”

– 14-year-old boy, during a facilitated discussion about the demand side of trafficking, Tirana, Albania

The media plays a powerful role in shaping public opinion and is often the primary source of information about trafficking for children and the general public. As such, it has the potential to play a positive role in raising awareness about the issue, in sensitising high-risk groups to the dangers of trafficking, in generating new information through investigative journalism, in lowering public tolerance for criminality, exploitation of children, gender discrimination and human rights violations, and in challenging a moral complacency that may tacitly accept using children for purposes of exploitation and profit.

### **Building positive links with the media**

Building positive links with the media and soliciting their support in promoting responsible, accurate, and sensitive reporting about child trafficking issues can be an important component of any advocacy strategy. Strategies to promote responsible media coverage of child trafficking can include:

- conducting media training with staff and partners and developing media kits/talking points to guide them when speaking to the media
- conducting workshops with journalists on child rights and child trafficking to raise awareness about issues of concern
- preparing case studies to share with the media in order to illustrate the protection concerns of high-risk and trafficked children as well as to highlight their strength and resilience
- conducting media monitoring and writing letters-to-the-editor in response to misleading or sensationalised news coverage

It is important to take the opportunity to meet with the media to frame child trafficking as a human rights concern. Sharing clear, brief advocacy messages with the media, preparing case studies to illustrate the protection concerns of trafficked children and children-at-risk as well as to highlight their strength and resilience, and providing concrete examples from programme work may help to counter sensationalised stories of trafficked children.

## Ensuring media coverage is in the best interests of the child

Requests by the media to interview trafficked children must be assessed in the best interests of the child on a case-by-case basis, keeping in mind that revealing the identity of the trafficked child may have severe consequences for his or her safety and prospects for reintegration. If permission is granted, it is important to ensure that the journalist commit to respecting the fundamental principles of child protection, including confidentiality and ensuring the integrity of the child, during the interview, in the final news item, and in the context of how the story is used. It is also important to ensure that the child being interviewed is aware of his or her rights, including the right to confidentiality, to refuse to answer any questions or to give only information they feel is important, and to stop the interview whenever he or she wants, for whatever reason.

### Guidelines on Child Trafficking and Media Coverage

Trafficked children and their families may be at serious risk of harm from traffickers. Public attention to their story, their identity, and/or their location may dramatically increase this risk. Exposure may also have a devastating effect on a trafficked child's process of recovery, destroying relationships with family members, colleagues, and friends who may not have known about his or her trafficking history.

Save the Children's Regional Programme developed *Guidelines on Child Trafficking and Media Coverage* to provide guidance to staff and partners involved in anti-trafficking work on how to respond to requests by the media. The intention of the guidelines is to help staff assess the risks of granting the media direct access to children who have been trafficked, and to set conditions if that access is granted. The Guidelines also aim to help staff present consistent information to the general public on child trafficking issues, all the while taking into consideration the protection needs of children who will be directly or indirectly affected by this media coverage<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Guidelines on Child trafficking and Media Coverage, Save the Children Regional Child Trafficking Response Programme, Southeast Europe, Tirana, December 2003.

Laustavite trgovino DECOM!

MO LIMO VAS !!!!!

(Stop child trafficking)  
Workshop participants, Roma Information Centre

# **13. How can advocacy be used to make long-term change for trafficked children and children-at-risk?**

“The community is not organised. People should be more organised to raise their voice and ask for changes. Everyone talks about children’s rights but who actually cares. They do nothing about it. We organise community forums and debates to discuss these issues.”

– 16-year-old girl, Youth club member, Cerrik, Albania

“Some things aren’t easy to change – change doesn’t come in a day.”

– 14-year-old boy, Youth club member, Cerrik, Albania

Ensuring that duty bearers are aware of and carry out their responsibilities towards high-risk and trafficked children in a manner that ensures and protects their human rights should be a fundamental element in rights-based anti-trafficking strategies. Advocating with key decision-makers to institute relevant measures at the levels of policy, legislation, and practice can help ensure that these changes are sustainable and supported over the long-term.

## **Some results of advocacy**

Advocacy on child trafficking can result in:

- greater attention to child protection issues in anti-trafficking forums
- the introduction of child protection provisions in relevant policies and legislation
- greater awareness by duty bearers about what steps they can take to help secure the rights of high-risk and trafficked children
- introduction of child-specific components into ongoing anti-trafficking activities or development of new child-specific interventions

Developing an advocacy strategy that clearly articulates a long-term goal, identifies key advocacy targets, allies and opponents, and sets out an action plan can help direct advocacy efforts. Such a strategy can also serve as a broad framework for programme planning and help to ensure that short- and medium-term interventions contribute towards meeting the long-term goal.

## **The importance of field-based knowledge**

Field practitioners have an important and unique contribution to make towards advocacy efforts, as they may have direct contact with trafficked children, children at-risk, and their communities, and thus have insight into the challenges they face and their related support needs. Opportunities to raise child protection issues with key decision-makers and other anti-trafficking actors can be pursued through:

- anti-trafficking coordination groups
- organising public meetings or roundtables



- mass media campaigns
- research reports and related report launches or media events
- local-level community meetings, debates or public forums

Working with other child rights organisations may be an opportunity to pool resources, coordinate efforts, and concentrate actions to lobby for change towards increased child protection at national levels.

### Raising the issue of child protection

Formal and informal advocacy activities have been carried out by Save the Children and partners on child trafficking, with staff participating in and raising the issue of child protection in relevant national forums, with key decision-makers, and with the media. This includes membership on and/or contribution to national anti-trafficking coordination groups, and most recently, to the newly formed inter-ministerial sub-working groups for preventing and combating child trafficking (December 2003) where they offer their expertise on the elaboration of respective National Plans of Action (NPAs).

Becoming a member of national and/or inter-ministerial boards is a way for Save the Children and child rights partners to raise child protection issues with key decision-makers and directly contribute to the development of policy and practice. Membership on these boards was granted in large part due to the merit of their field-based experience and unique child rights perspective.

External circumstances created positive conditions for Save the Children and partners to have an impact in terms of advocacy work on child trafficking, including growing political and donor attention to the issue, related regional pressure on governments of Southeast Europe to address it, and the interest of these governments in EU accession and their related receptiveness to positively respond to such pressure.

## Report on child trafficking in Albania

In March 2001, Save the Children published the report *Child Trafficking in Albania*, which documented anecdotal accounts of children being trafficked from, through, and to Albania, based on information drawn from interviews and focus group discussions with children, communities, and front-line workers.

At a time when governments were resistant to acknowledging the problem of child trafficking, the report provided insight into the phenomenon and received widespread attention, serving as a key advocacy tool to push for change at national and regional levels.

## Promoting children as advocates

**“What was most useful was the forum where you invite adults to listen to your debates. Municipality representatives are invited to the talks. They listen to us. They make promises that are not always kept, but at least they are present. It’s a start.”**

– 16-year-old girl, Youth club member, Cerrik, Albania

Trafficked children and children-at-risk are experts on their own lives, and their opinions and perspectives are central to developing appropriate responses. As such, one important role of a child rights organisation can be to facilitate the process of translating the experiences and self-identified needs of these children and their communities into recommendations for action. Children’s own stories, artwork, and opinions can be documented and incorporated into such recommendations in order to make a stronger case.

## In their own words

Save the Children Romania produced a report documenting the experiences of eight girls trafficked for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation. Told in their own words, the girls share stories about their lives before being trafficked, during the period of exploitation, and after their return. They conclude with visions for their future as well as advice to other young people who may be at risk.

The report aims to provide an opportunity for these girls to share their experiences and advice with at-risk youth, decision-makers, and the general public in the interest of preventing other children from being trafficked and improving protection for and assistance to trafficked children and children-at-risk in the future.

Child rights organisations can play a role in promoting high-risk and trafficked children as advocates for their own concerns by liaising between these children and decision-makers and by providing a platform through which their voices can be heard. Children can, for example, organise and/or participate in community forums, public debates, working groups, and/or steering committees. Inviting key stakeholders to attend such events can put duty bearers to task with regards to their responsibilities for increasing child protection, promote dialogue, and contribute to generating multi-sector coordination.

Involving children in advocacy efforts helps ensure that issues are defined in a way that is relevant to those they impact the most. Giving children responsibilities for organising and carrying out advocacy activities gives them greater ownership of the process and contributes to building their leadership skills and confidence.

### Youth organise community forums on trafficking

In Kosovo, children from the youth centres *Kosovo Action Together* and *Gjakova Youth Centre* organised the first community forums on child trafficking in Gjakova and Podujeva, which built upon the model of a children's assembly. Local authorities, including the mayor, local police, teachers, as well as UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) representatives, were invited to participate in discussions and answer children's questions. It was a good opportunity to bring different stakeholders in the community together to talk about trafficking and to challenge authorities on their role in protecting the community and children.

In Albania, youth centres, supported by *Save the Children* and local NGO *Help the Children*, hold bi-monthly community forums on different issues of concern, including child trafficking. This provides an opportunity to raise awareness about a particular issue, to mobilise the community, and to advocate with decision-makers.

Effective advocacy must be grounded in documented experience and related analysis. This requires time and resources and is often overlooked and/or not seen as a priority by field-based organisations given the limited resources and wide range of other urgent needs that are required at the field level. Time and resources must be set aside in order to inform advocacy work in the interest of having a more sustained and long-term impact for high-risk and trafficked children. Given this, advocacy is not an end in and of itself but rather should be seen as a part of a broader strategy to effect change.



*Edison Mehmeti, age 12*

# **I 4. Conclusion and Recommendations**

“Trafficking affects all of us....If we – young people – are the future of the country and our lives are jeopardised, the future of the country is also jeopardised.”

*– 14-year-old girl, in context of facilitated discussion at a workshop on developing information material, Tirana, Albania*

“The more possibilities we create for children, the more we reach our objectives.”

*– Adult animator, Kucova Youth Centre, Albania*

There is no one simple formula to stop child trafficking, and a great deal more needs to be learned about the variables - both individual and structural - contributing to children's vulnerability, and about what interventions are effective. As indicated by the examples illustrated in this handbook, many positive anti-trafficking initiatives are currently underway in Southeast Europe. Yet, trafficking of children continues, and much more remains to be done to ensure and protect the rights of trafficked children and children-at-risk.

As a starting point, a rights-based approach to child trafficking interventions can contribute to this effort by offering a range of complementary strategies to ensure and protect the rights of and decrease the risks for trafficked children and children-at-risk. It draws from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which provides for a child's right not to be subjected to trafficking and exploitation, and which places the obligation on the State to take appropriate measures to prevent trafficking of children for any purpose. Such a rights-based approach recognises children as rights-holders and social actors and is informed by the fundamental principle of ensuring the best interests of the child. It aims to give children an opportunity to voice their opinions, claim their rights, and have a say in decisions that affect them. It works with duty bearers to strengthen the protective environment for children and their families, increase their access to quality support services, and address the root causes that underlie their vulnerability to trafficking-related exploitation and abuse.

All six pilot projects in Save the Children's Regional Child Trafficking Response Programme in Southeast Europe adopted a rights-based approach to their work. This included actively soliciting and taking into account the ideas of children – both trafficking survivors and those vulnerable to exploitation – to shape project activities and draw learning from the process. They did so in the context of a regional initiative, which provided an opportunity to pool their collective knowledge, experiences and learning, in the interest of having a greater impact for children. A summary of the learning and related recommendations drawn from this approach is presented below.

## **Promoting the active involvement of children and their communities**

- Put children at the centre and recognise them as rights-holders and social actors.
- Involve trafficked children and children-at-risk and their communities as key players in identifying their needs and mobilising responses to address these needs.
- Use strategies that build on children's resilience, encourage their ownership of interventions, build transferable leadership and other skills, and help ensure that interventions are relevant and sustainable.
- Promote and enable children to become advocates, including involving them in decision-making and/or advisory bodies.
- Involve children from the beginning of the project to give them greater ownership and to promote a process of inclusivity.
- Treat children as partners in planning, rather than as tokens in an adult-led process.
- Build relationships of trust and mutual respect with children and their communities, identifying and building on their strengths and resources.
- Factor in the necessary time and resources required to carry out participatory activities.
- Work with a facilitator who is well versed in participatory methods and who has a good knowledge of child rights and child trafficking.
- Focus on the process of participation rather than on the output.
- Establish positive relations with local authorities to encourage and promote the sustainability of community-based interventions.

## **Strengthening strategies to reach and include children and families most at risk, including gaining a greater understanding of multiple risk factors and of preventive efforts to address them**

- Develop distinct strategies to target high-risk groups, taking into consideration their socio-cultural, economic, and family contexts. Different strategies may be needed to target girls and boys respectively.
- Have a clear analysis of the variables contributing to the vulnerability of marginalised groups to trafficking and related abuse and exploitation, of their protective environment,

and of what options are available to them.

- Work with “insiders”, such as local NGOs, to establish a positive relationship with the target community.
- Promote an environment of mutual respect, tolerance, and inclusivity, and be prepared to challenge bias and discrimination among staff, partners, and children.

### **Strengthening child protection mechanisms and providing long-term support to trafficked children and children-at-risk**

- Provide medium- and long-term support to trafficked children and children-at-risk and their families.
- Support government and local partners in developing and/or strengthening national and community-based child protection programmes that work to reduce risk factors to being trafficked, including addressing vulnerabilities linked to domestic violence and other forms of abuse, socio-economic marginalization, low levels of education, presence of traffickers in the community, and lack of awareness and life skills.
- Address the overlapping variables (e.g. psychosocial, cultural and socio-economic) that contribute to children’s risk of trafficking and related abuse and exploitation, and take into consideration both the immediate and broader structural contexts (that operate at local, national and regional levels) which shape them.
- Work with a multi-sectoral team (e.g. social workers and educators) to better address the multi-dimensional vulnerabilities of children and to ensure a more holistic response.
- Work with the child in the context of his/her family and community, including promoting capacity of parents to support their children.
- Partner with other actors to share information, coordinate efforts, and/or formulate a joint response.
- Work at multiple levels to effect change, including in countries of origin and destination, both directly with children and their communities through field-based interventions, and indirectly with stakeholders through strengthening the ability of duty bearers, service providers, caregivers, and children themselves to protect children’s rights.
- Critically assess the impact of current interventions to ensure more targeted and effective responses.



## **Strengthening the capacity of duty bearers and partners, with special emphasis on the local level**

- Conduct training with duty bearers and service providers, as well as with staff and partners, to increase their awareness and improve their capacity to identify and support children-at-risk in order that they might address the children's specific protection and development needs and work with them in a child-sensitive manner.
- Build the capacity of children (and their communities) to help themselves, through training and other skills-building exercises, to ensure that projects are successful, to build their confidence, and to promote their independence and capacity to carry out further work.
- Place special emphasis on supporting local-level training of service providers.
- Develop child-rights-specific training manuals, toolkits, and guidelines to complement existing training activities for practitioners.
- Strengthen and support local structures to conduct follow-up training, cascade training, and/or provide ongoing technical support.
- Support the exchange of good practices among stakeholders, including children, including through documentation and publication of lessons learned, joint conferences and roundtables, and professional exchanges.
- Invest time and resources in conducting thorough evaluations of programme interventions, and disseminate the findings in the interest of strengthening collective learning and response.

## **Formalising coordination of stakeholders within and across different sectors to strengthen referral and response mechanisms for trafficked children and children-at-risk**

- Bring together key stakeholders – including police, social workers, educators, health workers, lawyers, and local authorities – to formulate a joint strategy for child protection and help ensure that multiple risk factors are addressed.
- Coordinate with local and national actors to exchange experience, harmonise interventions, formulate guidelines for policy and practice, and develop joint

programmes. Formalise coordination mechanisms among stakeholders, including across different sectors through, for example, memorandums of understanding or the establishment of coordination groups, working groups, and task forces.

- Strengthen and support referral mechanisms for trafficked children and children-at-risk, including at the local level.
- Ensure that local-level referral systems are harmonised with national-level mechanisms, and strengthen related policies, legislation, and infrastructure to facilitate this process.
- Establish community-based child protection networks, bringing together key stakeholders (including children and their families) to increase the community's capacity to protect its children.
- Coordinate with governments, regional organisations, and multilateral agencies with the aim of informing policies and practices that address the root causes of trafficking, protect the rights of children who have been trafficked, and ensure their safe return and rehabilitation.

### **Strengthening policy, procedural, legislative, and institutional frameworks in countries of origin and destination**

- Call on and support governments, as the primary duty bearers, to ensure that procedures in countries of origin and destination place human rights and the best interests of the child at the centre of any decisions regarding trafficked children or children-at-risk, and to ensure that resources are invested in developing a greater range of options for them.
- Call on decision-makers to address the broader structural elements contributing to the vulnerabilities of children and their families, and to address the demand side of trafficking, which plays a central role in contributing to children's ongoing exploitation and abuse.
- Build partnerships and alliances with other actors to promote the rights of the child and to lobby for change – nationally and regionally – in the interest of having a greater collective impact.
- Develop positive relations with media to encourage and enable them to cover the problem of child trafficking in the best interests of the child.

- Develop an advocacy strategy that clearly sets out long-term objectives, and ensure that programme interventions inform and contribute to meeting them.
- Invest time and resources in documenting and disseminating learning from field-based interventions in order to inform evidence-based advocacy.
- Aim for sustainable results for children by focusing on not only immediate but also on structural causes of problems in countries of origin and destination.

It is hoped that the recommendations and experiences presented in this handbook can contribute to the efforts of actors concerned with child rights in the region to better ensure and protect the rights of trafficked children and children-at-risk, and to give a greater voice to those children whose voices are not easily heard.

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International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour ILO-IPEC - <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipec/index.htm>

ILO Mekong Sub-Regional Project to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women - <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/bangkok/child/trafficking/>

International Save the Children Alliance - <http://www.savethechildren.net/alliance/>

International Organization for Migration (Counter-Trafficking Activities) - [http://www.iom.int/en/who/main\\_service\\_areas\\_counter.shtml](http://www.iom.int/en/who/main_service_areas_counter.shtml)

Save the Children Regional Alliance Information Databank (SC RAID) - <http://www.savechildren-alliance.org.np/index.php>

Stability Pact Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings - <http://www.osce.org/attf/index.php3>

Terre des Hommes, Stop Child Trafficking - <http://www.stopchildtrafficking.org/site/index.php?id=163>

UNICEF - [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)

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# Appendix I

## Programme Summary

**Save the Children**  
**Regional Child trafficking Response Programme, Southeast Europe**  
**May 2002-March 2004**

### **Overview**

In May 2002, Save the Children launched a Regional Child Trafficking Response Programme in Southeast Europe. The goal of the programme is to reduce the number of children trafficked from at-risk communities in Southeast Europe and increase protection for at-risk and trafficked children through a combination of appropriate and sustainable project interventions, capacity-building, coordination, and advocacy at national and regional levels.

The regional programme is comprised of six pilot child trafficking interventions in Albania, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, and Romania, which, in collaboration with national child rights partners, are implementing prevention, protection, and/or reintegration activities with at-risk and trafficked children. Interventions include awareness-raising and community development activities with at-risk children, as well as the provision of direct counselling and reintegration support to trafficked children. The emphasis on participatory child rights-based programme methodologies aims to provide children and their communities with opportunities to shape project interventions and ensure their relevance to children's lives. Children are also encouraged to express and document their concerns related to child trafficking and to propose recommendations for future action. This input informs advocacy work and allows children to contribute to the broader discussion about trafficking in persons.

The regional dimension of the programme brings implementing partners from the region together to share information, strategies, and experiences on child trafficking interventions with the hopes of strengthening national and regional capacity to effectively respond to the phenomenon. The lessons learned from the interventions are being documented and will inform good practice guidelines to be developed and disseminated to key decision-makers and practitioners at the conclusion of the programme.

The main objectives of the regional programme are:

1. To contribute to a greater understanding and awareness of the needs and concerns of trafficked and high-risk children by directly consulting with children and actively involving them in programme development, implementation, and/or evaluation. Children's views and feedback inform programme development and form the basis of recommendations for future action.
2. To generate more and better child trafficking interventions, directly, through the implementation of six national-



level pilot projects, and indirectly, through the compilation and dissemination of good practice guidelines drawn from the experience of the projects. The direct interventions are tailored to the specific context of child trafficking in each country and build on the existing capacities and/or expertise of implementing partners.

3. To strengthen regional network of actors responding to child trafficking across Southeast Europe, directly, through facilitating joint activities among partners included within the framework of the regional programme, and indirectly, through active participation in and support of relevant national- and regional-level coordinating forums.
4. To contribute to longer-term goals of eliminating child trafficking and fostering an environment where children's rights are promoted and respected through capacity-building and formal and informal advocacy on child protection issues with key anti-trafficking stakeholders, including governments, international organisations, and front-line workers.

## **Target Groups**

The programme targets trafficked and at-risk children in Albania, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, and Romania including boys and girls, aged 18 and under, who are trafficked for the purposes of forced labour, begging, and sexual exploitation. At-risk children differ across national contexts, but include: children who suffer family violence and abuse, children who lack family support and protection, children out of school, socio-economically marginalised children, and formerly trafficked children. Other direct beneficiaries include social workers, police, teachers, judges, and government representatives as well as partner NGOs who participate in capacity-building activities. Indirect beneficiaries include parents, families-at-risk, the general public, and other actors working on anti-trafficking issues.

## **Pilot Project Summaries**

### **ALBANIA – Prevention and Reintegration through community development: Youth Centres and Socio-Educative Centre**

Save the Children in Albania and its partner NGO Help the Children established youth centres in two high-risk areas of the country, which are managed by a children's board comprised of children and youth. Children from the centres are trained as peer educators and conduct awareness-raising workshops about child trafficking in small towns and surrounding villages. The centres, which are attended by 80-100 children (aged 8-18) daily, organise educational and recreational activities and hold bi-monthly community debates on social issues, including trafficking.

Save the Children also supports local NGO Children of the World Albania, to run a school-reintegration programme as part of a socio-educative centre for high-risk street and working children, located in one of the most impoverished neighbourhoods in Tirana. Children of the World Albania's team of educators and social workers works closely with 150 children (aged 6-18) and their families to provide educational, counselling, and material support in the interest of helping them develop new skills, build their self-esteem, and create new opportunities for the future.

### **CROATIA – Prevention through cycle Life-Skills workshops with high-risk Croatian children and Interviews with Separated Children**

The Centre for Social Policy Initiatives (CSPI) in Croatia developed and supports the implementation of an anti-trafficking awareness-raising curriculum, which includes life-skills training, for 60 high-risk Croatian children (aged 9-18) in day care treatment programmes in Zagreb. CSPI works in partnership with the Ministry of Social Work to conduct interviews with separated migrant children housed in an emergency shelter in Zagreb, in the interest of referring them to appropriate legal, social, and psychological support services, and exploring the link between migration and trafficking.

### **KOSOVO – Prevention through Awareness-raising workshops in children's clubs, Mass Media Campaign targeting source and demand, & Kosovo-wide Anti-Trafficking Conference**

Save the Children in Kosovo, in partnership with local NGOs, Gjakova Youth Centre, the Committee for the Protection of Children's Rights, and Kosovo Action Together conducted anti-trafficking awareness-raising workshops with 9,230 children (aged 12-17) in children's clubs in three economically depressed regions of Kosovo: Gjakova, Skenderaj, and Podujeva. Save the Children also developed two parallel Kosovo-wide mass media campaigns using video, radio, billboards, and posters to raise awareness about child trafficking with Kosovo youth as well as to target the "demand" sector – that is, clients of the Kosovo sex industry. Finally it co-facilitated a Kosovo-wide Anti-Trafficking Conference, which brought together for the first time key stakeholders from around Kosovo to discuss trafficking and develop a plan of action. Save the Children is currently working with the Ministry of Education to develop an anti-trafficking component in the school curriculum and is conducting teacher training on child trafficking.

### **MONTENEGRO: Prevention through awareness-raising workshops in schools**

Save the Children in Montenegro held child trafficking workshops with 14,650 children and youth (aged 12-18) in primary and secondary schools in 17 municipalities of Montenegro as part of a Montenegro-wide child trafficking awareness-raising campaign. They also conducted targeted workshops for high-risk groups of children in refugee camps and collective centres, Roma settlements, clubs for foster families, and orphanages and ran a summer camp on child trafficking and child rights for 50 disadvantaged youth. Save the Children analysed children's feedback on the issue of child trafficking and published its findings into a research report.

### **ROMANIA: Protection and Reintegration through Assistance to trafficked women and girls; Capacity-building for Professionals; Prevention through awareness-raising workshops and mass media campaign**

Salvati Copiii (Save the Children in Romania) in partnership with IOM and the Ministry of Interior provided direct assistance in the form of counselling and reintegration support to 45 trafficked and high-risk women and girls. It also conducted training workshops with 131 professionals (police, social workers, psychologists, and government

representatives) on how to work with sexually exploited, abused, and trafficked children and is developing Good Practice Guidelines for Professionals. Salvati Copiii also works on prevention, conducting awareness-raising workshops with 1,290 children (aged 12-15) in 52 primary and secondary schools in Bucharest and developing a mass media campaign to raise public awareness about recruitment strategies for child trafficking.

**SERBIA: Prevention through awareness-raising workshops, mass media campaign and roundtable**

Save the Children in Serbia, in partnership with local NGOs the Child Rights Centre, Astra, and the Roma Information Centre, conducted awareness-raising workshops on child trafficking with 2,545 children (aged 12-15) in primary and secondary schools throughout Serbia. Save the Children in Serbia also developed a mass media campaign on child trafficking comprised of short television and radio spots, and posters, which were disseminated throughout Serbia. Finally, it held a roundtable on child trafficking, bringing key practitioners together to share experiences on their project interventions and published a resulting report.



# RESPONDING TO CHILD TRAFFICKING:

an introductory handbook to child rights-based  
interventions drawn from Save the Children's  
experiences in Southeast Europe