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Criminal Trafficking and Slavery: the dark side of global and regional migration  
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## **AN OVERVIEW OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

**Conference on Criminal Trafficking and Slavery  
University of Illinois  
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### **Abstract**

Over the past few years, there has been an increase in the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings to and from Africa, as well as within the continent. Evidence suggests that virtually no countries in Africa are immune from trafficking. These countries are all affected as countries of source, destination, transit or a combination of all three. While human trafficking has a devastating impact on individual victims, its impact also undermines the safety and security of affected nations as it is a global health risk and it fuels the growth of organised crime.

Trafficking is one of the largest profit makers for organized crime in Africa. (It is arguably the lowest risk activity for criminal groups due to widespread corruption, lack of legislation and low rates of prosecution). Most forms of trafficking are to be found in Africa, some of these being: men, women and children are trafficked for farm labour and domestic work; women and children are trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation (as prostitutes; for pornography, for pedophile rings; for the under age sex tourism trade); women are trafficked to South Africa to be 'wives' in the mining industry; young girls are sold as child brides; children are trafficked to be used for various activities as child soldiers and are also trafficked for use in ritual sacrifice. These patterns of trafficking take place both within and across countries.

Six key priorities have been identified by The Round Table for Africa's Program of Action (2006-2010) on *Crime and drugs as impediments to security and development in Africa* for dealing with human trafficking on national, regional and international levels.

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*For those of you who think it cannot happen to you, I want you to know that the dragnet of the traffickers is so wide that only God knows who is safe.* Titi Atiku Abubakar, Wife of Nigeria's (former) Vice President (Agbu 2003: 1).

## **Introduction**

Over the past few years, there has been an increase in the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings to and from Africa, as well as within the continent. Adepodju (2005: 75) points out that, until a few years ago, little was known about the phenomenon, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, and that, until the late 1990s when activists, the media and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) began raising the alarm, very little had been written on human trafficking in Africa.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC) study, *Crime and Development in Africa* (UNDOC, 2005), puts the figure of African nations involved in the trafficking of human beings at 89 percent, however, a trawl on various NGO sites on the internet reveals that virtually no countries in Africa are immune from trafficking. These countries are all affected as countries of source, destination, transit or a combination of all three.

While human trafficking has a devastating impact on individual victims, its impact also undermines the safety and security of all the nations it touches as it is a global health risk and it fuels the growth of organised crime.

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to provide an analysis of trafficking in all 54 African countries, an attempt will be made to present a broad overview of the main features of trafficking in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly Southern Africa, by focusing on the predominant forms of trafficking characterizing different regions. The trade in children<sup>1</sup> is a huge business, with billions of US dollars in annual turnover worldwide (IOM, 1997) and some light is shed on child trafficking in Africa. The paper concludes with an outline of the key priorities identified by The Round Table for Africa's Program of Action (2006-2010) on *Crime and drugs as impediments to security and development in Africa* for dealing with human trafficking, especially the organized criminal element involved in trafficking.

The United Nations' (UN) definition of trafficking is adopted in this paper.

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<sup>1</sup> Thirty five percent of all trafficked persons globally constitute children under the age of consent (Agbu, 2003).

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## **UN definition of Trafficking in Persons<sup>2</sup>**

*a) Trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons by means of the threat or the use of force or other forms of coercion, or 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, at a minimum, the exploitation or the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;*

*b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used;*

*c) 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 means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article;*

*b) Child shall mean any person under the age of eighteen years of age.*

## **Root causes of trafficking**

The root causes of trafficking in Africa are many and varied. Underlying many of these causes is Africa's poverty trap which involves a range of mutually reinforcing economic and social ills. People become part of the human trafficking chain because of various reasons that are either push or pull factors. *Pull factors* include, inter alia, economic differentials that make even relatively poor neighbouring cities, regions or countries more attractive, conflicts which generate a demand for soldiers and also domestic and sexual services, the adoption trade, and the use of organs or body parts for rituals. *Push factors* mainly include poverty, deteriorating living conditions, human deprivation, persistent unemployment, gender discrimination, lack of information and education, harmful socio-cultural practices and lack of legislative and policy frameworks. Women and children tend to be the most vulnerable to human trafficking as they often carry the burden of poverty.

## **The link with HIV/AIDS**

Poverty<sup>3</sup> and HIV/AIDS are linked in a vicious circle. The growing AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan African countries has exacerbated the vulnerability of women and children to traffickers as breadwinners, parents and other caregivers succumb to the disease. The UNAIDS/WHO *AIDS epidemic update*, released in December 2005, puts the number of

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<sup>2</sup> The full document of The United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children is available at [www.uncjin.org/Documents/Conventions/dcatoc/final\\_documents\\_2/convention\\_%20traff\\_eng.pdf](http://www.uncjin.org/Documents/Conventions/dcatoc/final_documents_2/convention_%20traff_eng.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> It is important to note, however, that the relationship between poverty and HIV/AIDS is not simplistic. Some countries in East and West Africa have a low HIV prevalence rate, despite high levels of poverty. Also, not only poor people are infected or affected by HIV. This indicates that poverty is not the only factor that enhances vulnerability to HIV and its impacts (UNDP, 2002: 2)

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people living with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) at 40.3 million. (Close to 5 million people were newly infected with the virus in 2005). While sub-Saharan Africa has just over 10 percent of the world's population, it is home to more than 60 percent (two thirds) of all people living with HIV – 25.8 million. In 2005, an estimated 3.2 million people in the region became newly infected, while 2.4 million adults and children died of AIDS. Among young people aged 15-24 years, an estimated 4.6 percent of women and 1.7 percent of men were living with HIV in 2005 (UNAIDS/WHO, 2005: 17).

The increase in the proportion of women being affected by the epidemic continues. In 2005, 17.5 million of those women live in sub-Saharan Africa. Eighty one percent of the total women living with HIV/AIDS live in sub-Saharan Africa as do 87 percent of all children living with HIV/AIDS. At the same time, the region hosts 11 million children who are orphaned due to the epidemic, which means that eight out of ten AIDS orphans worldwide live in sub-Saharan Africa. Poor children are more likely to be engaged in labour; which often means missing out on an education and the opportunity to earn a decent wage. “Denied a decent standard of living and, often education, information and vital life skills, they are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation” (UNICEF State of the World's Children Report, cited in Pretoria News, 2006).

The epidemic continues to intensify in Southern Africa. HIV infection levels among pregnant women are 20 percent – or higher – in six southern African countries (Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland and Zimbabwe). In Botswana and Swaziland infection levels are around 30 percent. South Africa's epidemic shows no signs of relenting and in Mozambique, HIV infection levels are rising alarmingly (UNAIDS/WHO, 2005: 4).

The underdevelopment which results from poverty in sub-Saharan Africa is a breeding ground for criminal activity.

### **The globalization-trafficking-crime nexus**

Globalization has provided the thrust to both those who wish to migrate and those who traffic the unwilling. New forms of communication and new opportunities of moving finances have expanded the scope for global crime (Graaff, 2003: 56) and the involvement of international criminal organizations<sup>4</sup> in human trafficking can be located within the infrastructure and trends associated with a rapidly globalizing world, eg increasingly open borders, better transport and an increase in overall migration flows. All these characteristics of globalization bolster the forces of supply and demand that

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3 Estimates on the extents of such activity vary between US\$500 billion to US\$1 trillion in the year of 1994. Criminal activities include not only drug trafficking, which is the biggest source of income, but also trafficking in weapons, nuclear material, illegal immigrants, women and children, and finally money laundering. Criminal groups include the Sicilian mafia, the American mafia, Colombian cartels, Mexican cartels, Nigerian networks, the Chinese triads, the Japanese *Yakuza*, the Russian *Mafiyas*, and the Jamaican *posses* (Castells, 2000 (vol 3): 170-172).

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underlie trafficking. A growing number of criminal networks world-wide are showing an increased sophistication with regard to moving large numbers of people at higher profits than ever. .

### **A focus on women and children**

Trafficking in women and children is becoming increasingly transnational in scope (ECPAT International, 2004: 1) and is emerging as an issue of global concern. The most lucrative part of the trafficking of women and children involves sex trafficking. This includes forced prostitution, bride trafficking, child prostitution and child pornography (Ellerman, 2002:3). The vulnerability of women to trafficking is ascribed to their lack of rights by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women (quoted in Truong & Angeles, 2005: 4) who says:

*... the lack of rights afforded to women serves as the primary causative factor at the root of both women's migration and trafficking in women. The failure of existing economic, political and social structures to provide equal and just opportunities for women to work has contributed to the feminization of poverty, which in turn has led to the feminization of migration, as women leave their homes in search of viable economic options. Further, political instability, militarism, civil unrest, internal armed conflict and natural disasters also exacerbate women's vulnerabilities and may result in an increase in trafficking.*

### **Trends and patterns of human trafficking in Africa**

As in the rest of the developed and developing world, trafficking is one of the largest profit makers for organized crime in Africa<sup>5</sup>. (It is arguably the lowest risk activity for criminal groups due to widespread corruption, lack of legislation and low rates of prosecution). Most forms of trafficking take place in Africa: men, women and children are trafficked for farm labour and domestic work; women and children are trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation (as prostitutes; for pornography, for pedophile rings; for the under age sex tourism trade); women are trafficked to South Africa to be 'wives' in the mining industry; young girls are sold as child brides; children are trafficked to be used for various activities as child soldiers and are also trafficked for use in ritual sacrifice. These patterns of trafficking take place both within and across countries.

#### ***West and Central Africa***

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) UK, about 200 000 children are taken from their homes in West Africa each year and sold into domestic slavery, prostitution, labour exploitation, or procured for sacrifice in black magic rituals in the West. Central to the phenomenon of trafficking in West and Central Africa is abuse of the tradition of placing children with extended families or other care-takers when they cannot be cared for by their parents. Nigeria is the centre of this regional trafficking market. It is a major source, transit and destination for trafficked women and children. (The children of Benin City in the east of the country are usually the victims of this trade

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<sup>5</sup> The global value of human trafficking was estimated to be over US\$12 billion in 2003 (Tyler, 2003: 3).

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in misery) (Clayton, 2004). People are trafficked to Europe, the Middle East and other countries in Africa for the purposes of forced labour, domestic servitude, and sexual exploitation. Nigerian girls and women are trafficked for sexual exploitation to Italy, France, Spain, the Netherlands, Cote d'Ivoire, and South Africa. Children are trafficked for domestic labour and street hawking within Nigeria and to countries in West and Central Africa. Nigeria is also a destination for Togolese, Beninese, Ghanaian, and Cameroonian children trafficked for forced labour (Eye on Human Trafficking: Issue 6, 2005a: 6).

Ghana and Senegal are also source, transit and destination countries for trafficked women and children (Adepoju, 2005: 77). Human Rights Watch (2003: 1) has documented four routes of child trafficking into, out of, or within Togo and say that Togo's trade in children is illustrative of a larger, regional phenomenon involving at least thirteen West African countries. The four routes of child trafficking identified are: (1) the trafficking of Togolese girls into domestic and marker labour in Benin, Nigeria, and Niger; (2) the trafficking of girls from within Togo to other parts of the country, especially the capital, Lomé; (3) the trafficking of girls from Benin, Nigeria and Ghana to Lomé; and (4) the trafficking of boys into labour exploitation, usually agricultural work, in Nigeria, Benin and Côte d'Ivoire (Human Rights Watch, 2005: 1). Research conducted in Togo revealed that these children come predominantly from poor, rural backgrounds and have generally very little schooling before being trafficked. Most were promised that by going abroad they would gain some formal or vocational education, which they could then use to earn money for themselves or their families. Children are often trafficked following the death of at least one parent. Others had parents who were divorced, or at least one parent living and working away from home. HIV/AIDS has been identified as a growing cause of orphanhood in Togo, and a possible factor in susceptibility to child trafficking.

### *East Africa*

The IOM (Eye on Human Trafficking: Issue 7, 2005: 6) has reported on Ethiopian women and girls who travel to the Middle East in search of work (or who are recruited by so called 'labour brokers') who are often treated like slaves and abused sexually. Ethiopian women and girls who migrate to Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen and Saudi Arabia suffer from maltreatment, physical, sexual and emotional abuses (Pretoria News, October 21, 2005). NGOs in Ethiopia have reported on the numbers of the women who commit suicide, and those whose bodies are returned with missing internal organs<sup>6</sup>.

### *Southern Africa*

South Africa is a country of origin, transit and destination for extensive regional and international trafficking. Various categories of trafficking operations have been identified:

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<sup>6</sup> Personal communication with Ethiopian NGOs.

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#### *Mining wives*

Women continue to be trafficked from rural areas of Mozambique and Maputo for sale to mine workers on a gold mining district west of Johannesburg, known as West Rand. The trafficking operations are run by Mozambican and South African men on both sides of the border. Taxi drivers commuting between the two countries, Mozambique and South Africa, recruit young women from rural areas such as Macia and Chokwe in Mozambique's Gaza province (and Maputo). At the Ressano Garcia border they may drop them along with other migrants they may be smuggling. A guide will take them through so that they can evade border officials before meeting at the other side. Alternately, passage across the border can be bought for R100-150 (US\$16-25). The women are driven through Johannesburg to Carletonville where there is significant gold mining activity. At the mine hostels (large single-sex hostels), thousands of men live close to the mines where they work, yet there is little recreation and little on which to spend their money. Drinking and sex are two of the few diversionary activities easily available on a day-to-day basis. They are sold for five- to six hundred Rands (US\$80-100) (Eye on Human Trafficking: Issue 6, 2005b: 1).

#### *Sex trade*

Thai and Central European women are sold to brothels; Lesotho children<sup>7</sup> are used in orgies by Free State farmers and businessmen, and Cape Flats children are reportedly sold to ship's crews. Women are trafficked from refugee-producing countries through the network of refugees resident in South Africa. South Africa has become a key hub for the sex slave trade. South Africans are being trafficked to Macau and Hong Kong. South Africa is a large exporter of sex slaves from central Europe, Thailand, Lesotho, Mozambique and Zambia to other African nations. Long-distance truck drivers traffic victims from Lesotho to Cape Town, Zambia and Zimbabwe, with the help of corrupt immigration officials at the border posts. Small numbers of Zambian women, lured by fraudulent offers of employment or marriage, are trafficked to South Africa for forced prostitution. Zambia is reportedly also a transit point for regional trafficking of women to South Africa (Eye on Human Trafficking: Issue 3, 2004; Keremire, 2002).

#### *Underage sex tourism*

South Africa is also becoming a major destination for underage sex tourism in cities such as Cape Town, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and Durban (Smith, 2004). Estimates of children in prostitution in SA range between 28 000 and 30 000, approximately half of whom are between 10 and 14 years of age, and half of whom are between 15 and 18 (Molo Songololo, 2000). Young girls exploited in commercial sex arrive both from within the country and from different parts of the region — Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland, Zambia, Cameroon, Malawi, Rwanda, Senegal, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Ethiopia (ILO-IPEC, 2002: 17).

### **The trafficking of children**

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<sup>7</sup> This claim by the International Organization for Migration in Pretoria has been met by scepticism by various sources.

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Child trafficking occurs for many reasons, but, according to the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO-IPEC, 2003: 23) it is overwhelmingly a demand-driven phenomenon. It occurs predominantly because there is a market for children in labour and in the sex trade, and this is matched by an abundant supply of children, mostly from poor families, who are easy prey for those who seek to make a profit by exploiting their vulnerability.

#### *The commercial sexual exploitation of children*

Commercial sexual exploitation remains the predominant form of exploitation of trafficked children as it is the most lucrative. This includes bride trafficking, child prostitution and child pornography (Ellerman, 2003: 3). The growing demand for children for commercial sex can be traced, among other things, to growth of the sex industry at the country and international levels. While research shows that most regular prostitute users do not necessarily seek out under-age providers, it is true that in many countries (especially Southern African countries), fear of HIV/AIDS and ignorance of its transmission, peer and societal sexualization of youth, and a rising indifference to the consequences of sexual exploitation of children, have seen a growth in demand for younger sex partners (ILO-IPEC, 2002: 24). The demand for underage sex has given rise to practices like Lomé's so-called *marche du petit vagin*, literally, the market of the small vagina (Human Rights Watch, 2003: 3). The growth of tourism also draws vulnerable children into high-risk situations in the hope of earning some of 'the tourist dollar'. So-called 'sex-tourists' are then also drawn to such destinations as word spreads (often via dedicated websites) that children can be bought cheaply for sex, and women and children may be trafficked into the resort to meet this increased demand.

There are many factors that increase the vulnerability of children and hence the supply of potential victims of trafficking, both voluntary and coerced. Among the most prevalent causes are: poverty and the desire to earn a living or help support the family; lack of education and access to schools; lack of appropriate means to earn a living; conflict and natural disasters that devastate local economies; cultural attitudes towards children and girls in particular; and local laws and regulations. Desperate parents are often willing to surrender children to traffickers without an understanding of the consequences. Undoubtedly, some families are aware that the child will be offered for commercial sexual transactions or will endure intolerable labour conditions.

#### *Children in armed combat*

Another distinctive pattern of trafficking found in a number of African countries relates to the exploitation of children during armed conflict. This involves the abduction and transportation of children for and by both governments and rebel militias (ILO-IPEC, 2002). (While many children involved in these conflicts have been forcibly recruited, many have enlisted voluntarily as a means of survival in war-torn regions after family, social and economic structures have collapsed.) Children are recruited because they are perceived as cheap and expendable, easily brutalized into fearless killing and unquestionable obedience. They are often chosen for the most dangerous assignments or

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forced to participate in appalling human rights abuses, sometimes against their own families or communities (Amnesty International, 2006: 1).

Armed hostilities involving children less than 18 years old occurred in 28 countries and territories between 2001 and 2004 (International Federation Terre des Hommes, 2006: 1). *The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers* believes that more than 120 000 children under the age of 18 years (about one third of the world's child soldiers) are currently participating in armed conflicts across Africa. Some of these children are no more than 7 or 8 years of age. The countries most involved in the use of child soldiers are: Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Congo-Brazzaville, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda. (Africa Recovery, United Nations, 2006: 1, ReliefWeb, 2006: 1).

Children are recruited by both government armed forces and armed opposition groups. *The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child* on the involvement of children in armed conflict prohibits the direct use of under-18s in hostilities, the compulsory recruitment of under-18s by governments and any recruitment of under-18s by non-government armed groups (International Federation Terre des Hommes, 2006: 1).

While the overwhelming majority of African states set 18 as the minimum age for recruitment, (whether voluntary or through conscription), younger children are inevitable recruited due to the lack of systematic birth registration in many African countries. Many African states – inter alia Benin, Cameroon, Mali and Tunisia – appear to follow appropriate recruitment procedures that prevent underage troops being recruited in the army. However, in Angola, Burundi, Congo-Brazzaville, The DRC, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Uganda, children, some no more than 7 or 8 years old are recruited by government armed forces, almost as a matter of course. Just as certain African governments have chosen to violate national laws, so have opposition groups flouted public declarations and pledges not to recruit and use children in combat. One example is Uganda, where the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) systematically abducts children from their schools, communities and homes. Children who attempt to escape, resist, cannot keep up, or become ill are killed. Generally, the rebels take their captives across the border to a LRA camp in Sudan. There, these children are tortured, threatened and sexually abused. Latest reports suggest that the LRA has turned to selling abducted children into slavery in exchange for arms (ReliefWeb, 2006: 3).

Child soldiers perform a range of tasks. They are used for participation in combat, as porters, carrying food or ammunition), to find<sup>8</sup> and prepare food, as messengers or spies, to lay mines and explosives, to act as decoys, couriers or guards, other non-combat roles, and sexual slavery (Amnesty International, 2006: 1; ReliefWeb, 2006: 2).

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<sup>8</sup> Children are often required to raid villages for food.

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Girls<sup>9</sup>, too, constitute the ranks of child soldiers, though generally in much smaller numbers than boys. Some join voluntarily for their own protection and others are abducted. As well as being involved in combat and other roles, they are frequently subject to forms of sexual violence. Many of them are forced to become ‘wives’ of soldiers or are raped and passed around from man to man. The risks to these girls of sexually transmitted diseases or unwanted pregnancies are enormous. Girls are also often the victims of child soldiers (Amnesty International, 2006: 1; ReliefWeb, 2006: 2).

Children participating in armed conflict are at risk of death and great physical and mental damage. In addition to the physical and mental risks – which apply equally to adults – children are often at an added disadvantage as combatants due to their immaturity. They are widely perceived to be dispensable commodities and receive little or no training before being thrust into the frontline. They are often massacred in combat as a result (ReliefWeb, 2006: 2). Drugs are regularly used to subdue the children and induce their dependency. Many of the atrocities committed by the child soldiers are as a result of the drugs they are often forced to take to make them torture their victims. But drugs alone do not account for the atrocities committed by children. It is their systematic abuse by adults combined with a pervasive culture of violence that is ultimately responsible. Despite near-universal condemnation of child soldiering and a solid legal and policy framework, lack of political will is an obstacle to achieving concrete improvements and effective child protection on the ground (Economic Perspectives, 2005: 26)

The long-term social consequences of the use of children in armed conflict is summarized by Mr Olara Otunnu, UN secretary-general’s special representative for children and armed conflict who sees the exploitation, abuse and use of children in today’s warfare in Africa as “... nothing short of a process of self-destruction... This goes to the very heart of whether or not in large portions of Africa there is a promise of future for these societies” (Africa Recovery, United Nations, 2006: 3).

#### *The trafficking of children for ritual sacrifice*

The discovery of the headless and limbless body of a young boy between the ages of four and six floating in the River Thames in London in 2001 led ultimately to the discovery of a ring of Nigerian human traffickers. Investigations by a multi-agency unit revealed that the young boy had been brought alive from Benin City in Nigeria to London to be sacrificed in a ritual killing<sup>10</sup>. It is believed that this case is just the tip of the iceberg and that there may have been other ritual killings which were not discovered or recognized as such before the investigation raised awareness of the practice (BBC NEWS, 2006a,b). A confidential report into the sacrifice and abuse of children at African churches describes how pastors are profiting from the trafficking of young boys from Africa into Britain. Uncircumcised boys are being smuggled in to the country for human sacrifice by

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<sup>9</sup> Despite growing recognition of girls’ involvement in armed conflict, girls are often deliberately or inadvertently excluded from rehabilitation programs (Amnesty International 2006:1).

<sup>10</sup> Human sacrifice (specially the sacrifice of children) occurs in a number of African countries. Examples of sacrifices reported in three of Liberia’s counties, and involve beheading and organ removal (Human parts such as genital organs are believed to offer supernatural power.) (ReligionNewsBlog.com, 2006b).

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fundamentalist sects whose members believe their ritual killing will enhance spells. In one of the many chilling findings, it was suggested that youngsters were smuggled into the United Kingdom and given to men with HIV who believe that having sex with a child (a virgin) will cleanse them (ReligionNewsBlog.com, 2006a).

*The trafficking of the young and vulnerable is aptly summed up by Albert Thomas, first Director of the International Labour Organization (ILO) who says "...The exploitation of childhood constitutes the evil the most hideous, the most unbearable to the human heart..." (ILO-IPEC, 2002: iv).*

### **The involvement of criminal networks**

Organized crime has increased in Southern Africa since the end of the Cold War and particularly in South Africa since the transition from apartheid to a non-racial democracy. While South Africa, given its comparative wealth, is the main focus of criminal networks, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia are important strategic links. Surrounding states are used as a conduit for the smuggling of illicit merchandise to South Africa, and in turn, goods are smuggled out of the country both for regional markets and for destinations further afield.

Given the apparent scale of the problem in this region, Shaw (2005) observes that surprisingly little research has been given to the scope and causes. In no cases is this clearer than in the involvement of West African, particularly Nigerian-, criminal organizations in Southern Africa. While West African criminal networks are active throughout the world, the costs of their activity in Southern Africa may be higher by virtue both of the degree of their penetration and the weakness of state institutions to counter the threat. West African criminal networks are involved in a range of illicit activities. The trafficking in illegal narcotics is the major source of resources which can be channeled into other criminal operations (or legitimate businesses) like the production or securing of false documentation, advanced fee fraud (419 scams), kidnapping, cheque and credit card fraud, dealing in stolen goods, and trafficking in human beings.

Besides West African criminal networks, other international criminal syndicates<sup>11</sup> believed to be involved in the trafficking in human beings in South Africa (and Southern Africa) are Chinese Triads (a number of locally based groupings have been identified) (cf Gastrow, 2001), Russian and Bulgarian Mafias and smaller syndicates comprising nationals on either side of national borders, eg Mozambican and South Africa Nationals. Porous borders and corruption together with the absence of dedicated legislation and regional cooperation has allowed traffickers to operate with impunity.

### **US TIP Report ratings**

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<sup>11</sup> Personal communication with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Pretoria, South Africa and the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNDOC), Pretoria, South Africa.

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The 2005 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report, published by the US Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (2005) has graded 35 African countries on a four-tier<sup>12</sup> scale. Sudan and Togo have been rated Tier Three (T3) countries. Eight countries are Tier Two Watch list countries, and 25 have Tier Two (T2) status. No country has achieved Tier One (T1) status.

Ten Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries are profiled in the 2005 report. These are Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Mauritius, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. All have Tier Two ratings except South Africa<sup>13</sup> and Zimbabwe, which are Tier Two Watch list countries. Areas identified which require more attention are: the vigorous investigation and prosecution of trafficking cases; adequate victim protection; and trafficking prevention measures. In many cases, clear, comprehensive legislation has been identified as particularly lacking in the SADC region.

### **Feasible cross-national strategies to address human trafficking**

The Round Table for Africa (organized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and hosted by the Government of Nigeria) was held in September 2005 in Abuja to review a Program of Action (2006-2010) on *Crime and drugs as impediments to security and development in Africa*. The Round Table was attended by 14 Ministers and senior government officials, representatives of various NGOs from 14 African Member States, development partners and international organizations.

The Program of Action is the strategic and operationally oriented framework for technical cooperation over the next 5 years directed towards the reduction of the impact of crime and drugs as impediments to security and development in Africa. The main objectives, proposed actions and key partners in the implementation of the objectives and actions regarding trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants is dealt with under one of six 'clusters' identified, i.e. *Cluster III. Illicit trafficking, organized crime, corruption, money laundering and terrorism*. A number of key priorities, proposed actions and possible key partners are identified (UNDOC, 2005: 20-23). The key priorities are:

- *Key priority 1 — Strengthen the capacity of criminal justice systems to address human trafficking for all forms of exploitation and smuggling of migrants;*
- *Key priority 2 — Support and protect victims and witnesses, including children, by providing basic materials, medical assistance and care, counseling and legal assistance, return/repatriation with dignity, among others;*

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<sup>12</sup> T1 is for nations in full compliance with the 'minimum standards' of tackling the problem of trafficking. T2 is for countries that are making significant efforts to end trafficking but are not quite there yet. T2 Watch List is for nations not deserving a firm placement on the T2 rung. T3 is for countries unable or unwilling to deal with trafficking. Countries not on the list have not yet been profiled.

<sup>13</sup> A national Task Team has been established in South Africa to direct a comprehensive and strategic response to human trafficking with a view to formulating trafficking legislation for South Africa by 2006.

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- *Key priority 3 — Establish and strengthen subregional anti-trafficking networks and action plans and international cooperation;*
- *Key priority 4 — Strengthen the capacity of and cooperation between the relevant authorities, civil society and other bodies dealing with trafficking and smuggling, return/repatriation and reintegration;*
- *Key priority 5 — Promote prevention, protection and regional cooperation;*
- *Key priority 6 — Raise public awareness among groups at risk, such as women, children and migrants.*

These key priorities address a range of issues like prevention and deterrence; law enforcement and prosecution of traffickers; protection of trafficked persons; awareness raising and advocacy work and campaigning on national, regional and international levels in the fields of legislation and litigation, social policies and assistance programmes; public relations, documentation and information services, training and educational programmes, regional and international networking aimed at long term strategies.

Key partners identified to attain the objectives deriving from the stated priorities include: Governments, NGOs, Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGOs) (eg Interpol, International Labour Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), regional organizations (eg Southern Africa Regional Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization (SARPCCO), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), South African Development Community (SADC), African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (UNAFRI), United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Educational, Scientific And Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Department of Peacekeeping Operations, regional economic communities, international financial institutions, African Union (AU).

## **Conclusion**

The development process in Africa is being hampered by crime. Investment levels are low due to the perception that the rule of law does not prevail. Crime destroys human and social capital and damages, especially through corruption, the relationship between the state and its citizens. The Programme of Action is the strategic and operationally oriented framework for technical cooperation over the next five years directed towards the reduction of the impact of crime and drugs as impediments to security and development in Africa.

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