



UNICEF STUDY GUIDE

Agenda Item: Combating International Trafficking and Exploitation of Children

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1. Letter from the Secretary General

Esteemed delegates of TFLMUN'26,

It is a great honour to welcome you to one of the most vivid and inspirational events in our city. As the Secretary General of this valuable conference, it is my pleasure to be a part of the experience.

Our special executives and deliberately selected organization members have set their first priority to seek all of your interests, and we all specifically see our event as a mission to be superior and the most inspirational. Speaking for myself and our team, we worked tirelessly day and night without hesitation for your best interests and to provide you the opportunity to express yourself in every aspect as a delegate of TFLMUN'26. We state that each and every one of our conference's delegates is held in high esteem, and you are welcomed equally. We believe that TFLMUN'26 is going to be one of the only events where everyone is free to be themselves comfortably and enjoy the spirit of Model United Nations.

By attending our conference, you will have the opportunity to engage in meaningful debates, challenge yourself in the aspect of self-confidence, and improve yourself intellectually. You will feel the excitement of new friendships, and most importantly, you will experience the quality of the sensational conference first-hand. We urge you to comprehend that besides being a platform to debate, our conference will be the journey to your personal growth along with unique entertainment.

We look forward to witnessing all of our delegates' efforts and determination. Let TFLMUN'26 be the step for your excellence and self-growth!

Yours faithfully,
Adal Çavuşlu
Secretary General of TFLMUN'26

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2. Letter from the Under Secretary General

Esteemed delegates,

It is with great pleasure and anticipation that we extend our warmest welcome to each and every one of you as the Chairboard of UNICEF. We are eminently honoured to have you here to discuss about one of the most pressing concerns regarding the future of our children, child trafficking and exploitation.

As a famous advocate for children in poverty, Wess Stafford has once said “If we nurture the dreams of children, the world will be blessed. If we destroy them the world is already doomed.” Across the globe, millions of children remain vulnerable to systems abuse that strip them of their dignity, safety, fundamental rights and childhood by a crime that society is yet to take proper precautions for. Based on the data gathered by UNICEF, children account for nearly one-third of identified trafficking victims globally. As globalization enhances movement and collective effort regarding the problem, it has also unfortunately expanded the reach of trafficking networks.

As delegates of UNICEF you are entrusted with the responsibility to confront such problems and contribute by coming up with necessary solutions. I encourage all my delegates to speak up to advocate for the rights of children in this conference. Let this committee serve as a platform to engage in meaningful debates for a world where every child is protected from exploitation and given a chance to change our world.

Sincerely,

Defne EVIM
Under Secretary General of UNICEF
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3. Introduction to the Committee

a. What is UNICEF

UNICEF, special program of the United Nations (UN) devoted to aiding national efforts to improve the health, nutrition, education and general welfare of children.

UNICEF was created in 1946 to provide relief to children in countries devastated by World War II. After 1950 the fund directed its efforts toward general programs for the improvement of children's welfare, particularly in less-developed countries and in various emergency situations.

The organization's broader mission was reflected in the name it adopted in 1953, the United Nations Children's Fund. UNICEF was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1965. It is headquartered in New York City.

UNICEF has concentrated much of its effort in areas in which relatively small expenditures can have a significant impact on the lives of the most disadvantaged children, such as the prevention and treatment of disease. In keeping with this strategy, UNICEF supports immunization programs for childhood diseases and programs to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS; it also provides funding for health services, educational facilities, and other welfare services. Since 1996 UNICEF programs have been guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which affirms the right of all children to "the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health." UNICEF's activities are financed by both government and private contributions.

4. Introduction to the Committee

a. Key Terms and Concepts

Children Welfare :

Child welfare, services and institutions concerned with the physical, social, and psychological well-being of children, particularly children suffering from the effects of poverty or lacking normal parental care and supervision. In the Western world, and particularly in the larger cities, child welfare includes a range of highly specialized services that go far beyond physical survival and deal with such problems as personality development, vocational guidance, and use of leisure time. In less-developed countries and in the aftermath of war and disaster, child welfare services may apply only the essential measures to keep children alive, such as emergency feeding, shelter, and simple public health precautions. The general standard of living, the level of education, and the financial resources of the country are among the factors that determine child welfare standards.

Exploitation of the Prostitution of Children and Sexual Exploitation :

Prostitution and related matters outside of the scope of trafficking in persons is specifically reserved for the laws and policies of the individual States parties. The approach of UNODC in this respect then, is not to evaluate policy and national approaches to the broader issues of prostitution, but rather to examine the concept of exploitation of the prostitution of others contained within the Protocol and the normative and operational levels in countries that take different policy approaches to the issue of prostitution.

The terms exploitation of the prostitution of others and sexual exploitation have been intentionally left undefined in the Protocol in order to allow all States, independent of their domestic policies on prostitution, to ratify the Protocol. The Protocol addresses the exploitation of the prostitution of others only in the context of trafficking. There is no obligation under the Protocol to criminalize prostitution. Different legal systems — whether or not they legalize, regulate, tolerate or criminalize, comply with the Protocol.

The “UNODC Model Law against Trafficking in Persons” offers the following definition of exploitation of prostitution of others: “Exploitation of prostitution of others shall mean the unlawful obtaining of financial or other material benefit from the prostitution of another person”.³ The term “unlawful” was added to indicate that this has to be unlawful in accordance with the national laws on prostitution. If using these terms in domestic law, it is advisable to define them. The “UNODC Model Law against Trafficking in Persons” offers the following definition of sexual exploitation: “Sexual exploitation shall mean the

obtaining of financial or other benefits through the involvement of another person in prostitution, sexual servitude or other kinds of sexual services, including pornographic acts or the production of pornographic materials.

Forced Labour or Services :

Forced labour or other services shall mean all work or service that is exacted from any person under the threat of penalty and for which the person concerned has not offered him- or herself voluntarily. However as said for children it is not possible for a minor to work or service without the child's legal guardians permission.

Forced Service Marriages :

Forced Service Marriages shall mean,

(i) A woman [person] or child without the right to refuse is promised or given in marriage on payment of a consideration in money or in kind to her [his] parents, guardian, family or any other person or group; or,

(ii) The husband of a woman, his family or his clan has the right to transfer her to another person for value received or otherwise; or person.

A woman on the death of her husband is liable to be inherited by another The definition refers solely to the practice of forced or servile marriages in relation to women. Legislators may consider updating this definition to include practices in which both women/girls and men/boys can be the subject of forced or servile marriages. This may cover trafficking for marriage and certain forms of "mail order bride" practices.

Slavery :

"Slavery" shall mean the status or condition of a person over whom any or all the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised; or

"Slavery" shall mean the status or condition of a person over whom control is exercised to the extent that the person is treated like property.

Servitude :

“Servitude” shall mean the labour conditions and/or the obligation to work or to render services from which the person in question cannot escape and which he or she cannot change

Serfdom :

“Serfdom” shall mean the condition or status of a tenant who is by law, custom or agreement bound to live and labour on land belonging to another person and to render some determinate service to such other person, whether for reward or not, and is not free to change his or her status.

Culture of Impunity :

In the context of trafficking, a culture of impunity occurs when those involved in the criminal business model and/or in the trafficking chain do not face any consequences for their act. Arrests, prosecutions and convictions, holding perpetrators accountable, increases the general and specific deterrence constituting an element of prevention. This does not only include the traffickers but also their accomplices and those who knowingly benefit from the services provided by victims. The culture of impunity is sustained by gaps in legislation or the faltering application of existing laws. Countering the culture of impunity and increasing accountability involves intensifying the number of investigations, prosecutions and convictions not only against traffickers but also against those who profit from the crime and exploit the victims.

Criminalization :

Not only traffickers are involved in and take advantage of trafficking. There are also those who exploit victims and use their services. The Anti-trafficking Directive provides the option of criminalising those who knowingly use services exacted from victims of trafficking; this is encouraged by the 2017 Communication. The law at EU level varies, with some Member States imposing no sanctions at all to some

having criminalised those people, others already have prosecuted and convicted perpetrators. Criminalising the knowing use of services is not only important to discourage the demand on which the trafficking business thrives, but also increases accountability towards the victims and is an important tool to prevent the crime from happening in the first place.

Non-Punishment Principle :

This refers to the non-prosecution or non-application of penalties to the victim. Victims of trafficking may find themselves in breach of the law for example, due to immigration offences, theft or drug trafficking. The principle of non-punishment entitles national authorities not to prosecute or impose penalties on victims of trafficking in human beings for their involvement in criminal activities that they have been compelled to commit as a direct consequence of being trafficked. The aim of such protection is to safeguard the human rights of victims and to encourage them to act as witnesses in criminal proceedings against the perpetrators. This safeguard should not exclude prosecution or punishment for offences that a victim has voluntarily committed or participated in.

Trafficking Chain :

Trafficking in human beings is considered to be one of the most profitable forms of organised crime. The trafficking chain includes the complex interplay of economic transactions linked to trafficking in human beings: from legal persons or businesses, legal or illegal, to individuals or crime groups, and those benefiting and using the services of the victims, the chain is multi-layered and starts the moment in which the victim falls under the control of the trafficker. The chain has a supply aspect, i.e. the availability of individuals who can fall prey to traffickers and a demand one, i.e. the readiness by consumers to benefit from the services provided by victims. Actors receiving economic profits along the chain may range from relatives of victims, informal or formal recruitment agencies, labour market intermediaries supplying labour in specific sectors or sub-contractors in global supply chains, as well as travel agencies, visa services and taxi or other transport enterprises.

Unaccompanied and Separated Children :

Children, especially unaccompanied and separated children, are a high-risk group for trafficking. It is important to clarify, though, that unaccompanied and separated children are not per se victims of trafficking. Unaccompanied and separated children registered as victims of trafficking in the EU are both EU and non-EU nationals, including those trafficked within their own Member State.

Children within Vulnerable Groups :

Traffickers, exploiters, perpetrators and abusers profit from all opportunities, whether they manifest in particular challenges or legislative loopholes. They take advantage of vulnerable people, such as women, children, the Roma people, persons with disabilities, and take advantage of vulnerabilities such as poverty, discrimination, gender inequality, male violence against women, lack of access to education, conflict, war, climate change, environmental degradation, and natural disasters. It is not vulnerability that renders people victims of trafficking: women and girls are not trafficked because of their gender; girls and boys are not victims because of their age. Trafficking is a crime fuelled by the profits it generates and by the demand for services exacted from the victims.

National Rapporteurs or Equivalent Mechanism :

The Anti-Trafficking Directive requires Member States to appoint National Rapporteurs or Equivalent Mechanisms, who are mandated with the following tasks: assess trends in trafficking in human beings, measure the results of anti-trafficking actions, gather statistics, and reporting.²¹ They should transmit this information to the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, on the basis of which, the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator contributes to the reporting carried out by the Commission. In the context of these coordination efforts, the EU Network of National Rapporteurs or Equivalent Mechanisms (NREMs) holds bi-annual meetings and keeps regular contact with the Office of the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator. NREMs have different statuses and structures: in some Member States, NREMs that are independent from the government, whereas in others, NREMs are part of the national administration. Contacts and other information on the NREMs can be found on the EU Anti-Trafficking website.

Migrant Smuggling :

Trafficking is not per se a migration related phenomenon, nor does it require the crossing of borders. A significant number of victims in the EU are EU nationals, including trafficked within their own Member State, and not all non-EU victims arrive to the EU through irregular migration routes. As a complex crime, trafficking is linked to multiple other crimes, and some may be supporting offences, facilitating the different stages of the trafficking chain in specific contexts.¹⁸ Migrant smuggling is only one example. It is key to bear in mind the differences between these phenomena, trafficking in human beings is a grave violation of human rights, a crime against the person, the goal of which is obtaining financial profits through exploitation. Smuggling of migrants is linked to the irregular movement of people across borders or the facilitation of irregular stay in a country. Trafficking in human beings and migrant smuggling cannot be used interchangeably, as the legal consequences of each offence are different.

Gender-Specific Approach :

Trafficking in human beings is strongly gendered: female victims represent a clear majority of the reported victims and they are overwhelmingly the victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. The way in which vulnerabilities are shaped, the forms of exploitation and the harms experienced by victims are affected by gender. Sexual and other forms of exploitation are rooted in gender inequalities.

The EU legal and policy framework is gender specific. The European Commission recognises trafficking in human beings as a form of violence against women. The specific situation of women and girls needs to be addressed in all aspects of anti-trafficking action, from prevention to addressing the victims' needs. This includes taking into account gender in education and awareness raising campaigns, the identification of victims, assistance and recovery measures, and the handling of criminal proceedings.¹⁷ Anti-trafficking measures addressing the specific situation of women and girls need to be aligned with broader strategies combating violence against women.

Consent :

A victim may have consented to being trafficked but this consent is irrelevant when it has been obtained by the means listed in the Anti- Trafficking Directive: threat, use of force or coercion, fraud, deception, abuse of power or taking advantage of a person's vulnerability. This is also the case when a person who has control over the victim has received benefits to surrender her to traffickers. In the case of a child, trafficking is punishable even if none of the above-mentioned means has been used to obtain his or her consent.

"Lover-boy" Method:

This technique remains prevalent in Europe, particularly in Romania and surrounding regions, where perpetrators lure victims into sexual exploitation under the guise of romantic relationships.

b. Historical Background

For much of human history, across cultures and continents, slavery was legal, regulated, and common. It was often perpetrated by one people group onto another. However, in the 19th and 20th centuries, an international movement began to abolish slavery in all its forms. Our understanding of and fight against child trafficking have grown out of these movements.

Slavery is no longer legal anywhere in the world, but child trafficking still occurs in every country. Here's a brief history of human trafficking, including a timeline of events internationally that have shaped our understanding of human trafficking and the fight against it.

Slavery Before the Transatlantic Slave Trade

Depiction of captives or slaves from a war, shown being led with ropes tied around their necks, in a relief dating back to the late 12th or 13th century. This artwork is located in the Bayon Temple at Angkor Thom,

Cambodia, as seen in an image featured on [History Today's National Gallery of Cambodia](#).

Slavery before the Transatlantic Slave Trade was a widespread practice with a long history, varying significantly across different regions and cultures.

Ancient Civilizations (Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome):

Slavery was a common feature in ancient civilizations. In Mesopotamia and Egypt, slaves were used for domestic services, agricultural labor, and large-scale construction projects like pyramids and temples. In ancient Greece, particularly in Athens, slaves were employed in households, mines, and as rowers in galleys. Rome had a vast number of slaves, used as domestic servants, artisans, factory workers, and even as gladiators.

Islamic World:

Slavery was practiced in Islamic lands from the 7th century onwards. Slaves were used for a variety of purposes, including as soldiers (Mamluks in Egypt), servants, and laborers. The Islamic slave trade also involved the transportation of slaves from Africa to the Middle East and North Africa.

African Slavery:

Before the Transatlantic Slave Trade, various forms of servitude and slavery existed in different African societies. Some were akin to European serfdom, while others involved the enslavement of prisoners of war or debtors. African slaves were sometimes used as domestic workers, soldiers, or officials.

Asian Slavery:

In India, China, and Southeast Asia, slavery existed in various forms. In China, for example, slavery was primarily domestic, while in India, the caste system had aspects that were similar to slavery. In Southeast Asia, slavery ranged from war captives to debt bondage.

Americas:

Pre-Columbian civilizations like the Aztecs and Mayans practiced slavery, typically using slaves for labor, human sacrifice, or as pawn slaves (debt bondage).

Europe:

During the Middle Ages, serfdom, a condition not unlike slavery, was widespread in Europe. Serfs were bound to the land and subject to the will of the landowners.

The nature of slavery varied considerably in these societies. In some, it was more akin to indentured servitude or serfdom, with certain rights or paths to freedom for the enslaved. In others, it was more severe, with slaves regarded as property. Unlike the race-based chattel slavery that developed during the Transatlantic Slave Trade, earlier forms of slavery were often not explicitly based on race but on social status, debt, war captivity, or religion.

1500-1866: Transatlantic Slave Trade

During the 16th century, Portugal began traveling overseas to Africa to purchase or capture people, enslave them, and take them back to Europe. Other European nations followed.

1525 marked the first slave voyage from Africa to the Americas. Over the next roughly 350 years, during a period known as the Transatlantic Slave Trade, some 12.5 million slaves were shipped from Africa around the world. 10.7 million arrived in the Americas, including the Caribbean, South America, and North America. Between 300,000 and 400,000 thousand enslaved Africans arrived in North America.

During the 16th century, owning African slaves was a legal and governmentally condoned practice. It wasn't until 1807 that Britain first outlawed slavery. The United States followed in 1820, nearly 40 years before the American Civil War. Despite the laws outlawing slavery, the last reported transatlantic slave voyage arrived in the Americas in 1866.

1850-1900: The Traffic of Chinese Women and Children into the United States

The Chinese began arriving in the United States in significant numbers in the mid-1800s. They were drawn to the United States by the promise of lucrative jobs associated with the California Gold Rush and the construction of the Central Pacific Railroad.

As the number of Chinese immigrants grew, they became the targets of racial hatred and violence because of the perceived economic threat. At the same time, concern spread over the practice of "coolie" labor. At the end of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, many countries around the Americas began contracting "coolie" labor from China as a source of low-wage workers. However, many critics said that this practice was simply a new form of slavery, sometimes using coercion, deceit, and violence.

Thus The Page Act of 1875 both sought to limit the immigration of Asians into the United States and prevent the traffic of unwilling persons and "immoral" women (i.e. prostitutes). It created fines and jail time for anyone who tried to bring people into the United States "without their free and voluntary consent, for the purpose of holding them to a term of service." This effectively stopped the immigration of nearly all Chinese women.

Thus, by the early 1880s, males made up 95% of the Chinese population in the U.S. This spurred the illegal traffic of Chinese women into California and the American West by Chinese gangs called Tongs. Most of the Chinese women who crossed the Pacific in the mid-1880s were enslaved, and many of them were forced into prostitution by these gangs. The trafficking of Chinese women into the early 1900s.

1900-1910: The International Agreement for the Suppression of “White Slave Traffic”

Following the abolition of the African slave trade, “white slavery” became a topic of interest for many international governments as people became aware of European women, often immigrants, ensnared in forced prostitution. White slavery was defined as the “procurement — by use of force, deceit, or drugs — of a white woman or girl against her will for prostitution.”

In Paris, international conferences against white slavery took place in both 1899 and 1902. In 1904, the Mann Act, or the International Agreement for the Suppression of “White Slave Traffic,” was signed as the first international agreement on human trafficking. The act focused on migrant women and

children. In 1910, 13 countries signed the International Convention for the Suppression of White Slave Trade to make this form of trafficking illegal.

1919: The International Labor Organization

In 1919, the International Labor Organization was formed in order to provide protective standards for working conditions such as pay and hours.

1921: International Convention for the Suppressions of Traffic in Women and Children

During the 1900s, human trafficking — both forced labor and sexual exploitation — was at an all-time high. In 1920, following the First World War, the League of Nations was founded. It was the first international organization of nations and had the goals of maintaining world peace and focusing on international issues such as human trafficking. In a 1921 League of Nations international conference, 33 countries signed the International Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Women and Children.

This agreement represented several important steps forward. The issue of White Slavery was changed to “traffic of women and children”

1949: United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Prostitution of Others

After the Second World War, the member-nations of the United Nations adopted the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others in 1949, the same year as the landmark document on human rights. It was the first legally binding international agreement on human trafficking.

However, as of the present day, only 66 nations have ratified it.

c. Recent Incident Related to the Agenda Item

Major international and local law enforcement operations have disrupted several high-profile child trafficking chains.

Operation Dev, Global takedown of “Kidflix” and INTERPOL Operation July 2025 are counted as instances for this matter. To acquaint while simplifying each of these incidents; One of the largest pedophile platforms, Kidflix has been taken down by an international operation involving more than 35 countries with the support of Europol. Operation resulted in more than 1,400 suspects and the rescue of 39 children.

Following the takedown of Kidflix, in the same year, INTERPOL started operating a global operation in order to takedown more crime syndicates and trafficking networks. The operation resulted in the arrest of 158 human traffickers and more than 1,200 potential victims have been taken into custody including children varying from 2 to 16 years old.

Police Stations have globally emphasized that many of these trafficking networks have been using social media platforms to operate for years.

In April 2026 in a significant breakthrough, Indian police managed to track and take down a well-established inner-state child trafficking network rooted in many major Indian states such as Delhi and Gujarat. The supposed mastermind of the network is currently facing accusations related to child trafficking, infant commerce and heaps more. It is crucial to note that during the breakthrough, Indian Police used artificial intelligence programs to track down the supposed mastermind.

As of late 2025 and early 2026, U.S Department of Justice (DOJ) began releasing series of document that currently totals up to approximately 3.5 million pages which also include more than 200.00 images and video footage. The files include grand jury transcripts and investigative records, bank records and flight logs. The release of the files further demonstrated the evidence of sexual slavery, reproductive violence, torture and trafficking of children. With scale of the crimes, these were not isolated incidents but a systematic attack on civilian population.

Following the release of the files, UN independent human rights experts issued a rare and sharp condemnation following the release of over three million documents under the Epstein Files Transparency Act. Experts suggested that the documented patterns involving major politicians, business leaders and diplomats across the world may be faced with legal consequences for crimes against humanity due to the systematic nature of Epstein's exploitation network. Patriarchal systems of power's protection of perpetrators was condemned by experts. The disclosure process was also criticized due to there being many errors that exposed sensitive victim information furthermore causing even more trouble to victims while potentially shielding high-profile suspects such as major politicians, diplomats, business people and academics.

The files' global release triggered significant international response and condemnation and many governments has taken legal actions against the prepedators. For instance, in United Kingdom His Majesty's governments issued warrant for the arrest of many high-profile figures including Prince Andrew who were under the suspect of misconducting in public Office related to their links with Epstein. Alongside this development numerous business leaders and academics have been forced to resign as many were suspected of being related to Epstein's crimes.

In April 2026, UN Special Rapporteur Siobhan Mullally described the conflict related "normalization" of child trafficking as a dire human rights breach, stating that the breakdown of state authority has turned children into disposable strategic assets.

For instance, the situation in South Sudan has reached to a breaking point due to the massive influx of 1,4 million people fleeing the war of neighboring countries. This massive influx resulted in the normalization of systemic sexual slavery with the said “justification” being the ongoing war, extreme displacement, lack of housing and restricted humanitarian access has left unaccompanied children highly vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking. UN experts are currently calling for the African Union-mandated Hybrid Court to urgently take legal actions and precautions.

As for another example, a joint UN Report released in February 2026 detailed a widespread child trafficking crisis mastered by criminal gangs in Haiti. The report has stated the number of children recruited into armed groups and said criminal gangs has skyrocketed by 200% in 2025 and 2026. Most of these recruited children serve as lookouts, messengers and even participants in violent acts of crime in the active gangs. UNICEF emphasizes that despite being forced into illegal activities minors must be treated as victims requiring rehabilitation rather than criminals.

5. International Compacts, Agreements and Legal Frameworks, Regarding the Agenda Item and Various Countries Approach

a. International Compacts, Agreements, Resolutions and Legal Frameworks Regarding the Agenda Item

(1949)

United Nations Convention

Post-World War II, the United Nations adopted its first legally binding international agreement on human trafficking, focusing on the suppression of trafficking in persons and the exploitation of prostitution.

International Agreement for the Suppression of “White Slave Traffic” or the MANN Act

In response to the increasing problem of European women and children being coerced into forced prostitution, a coalition of international governments united to establish the inaugural global accord targeting human trafficking. This agreement primarily concentrated on protecting migrant women and children from exploitation.



(ILO)
The International Labor Organization

The establishment of the ILO was a pivotal move in setting protective standards for working conditions, representing a crucial advancement in the recognition and fight against labor exploitation.



(1921)
International Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Women and Children

The League of Nations facilitated the signing of this convention, acknowledging the high incidence of human trafficking for both forced labor and sexual exploitation

during the early 1900s. This agreement was crucial in expanding the definition of human trafficking to include all races and both genders.



Throughout the last few decades many precautions has been taken by UN Organs in order to combat against child trafficking and exploitation.

The law for matters related to children originate from Convention on the Rights of the Child. While Convention on the Rights of the Child being not entirely related to Child trafficking, Articles 32-36 on Convention on the Rights of Child indicates that “States must prevent child abduction, sale and trafficking” and “...Protects children from exploitation”. Convention on the Rights of the Child specifically matters because almost every country in UN has signed it.

In 2000, Palermo Protocol was resolved as the main international law on trafficking by United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes. Within Palermo Protocol; the official definition of trafficking was given, types of trafficking and concepts regarding trafficking were accentuated. Palermo Protocol required countries to criminalize trafficking, protect victims and cooperate internationally. Children along side women were emphasized as prime candidates for trafficking.

In 2010, the first, global, system-wide strategy was planned with the Resolution 64/293 by the United Nations General Assembly. The resolution encouraged education campaigns to people in order to acknowledge the risks, addressed the root causes like poverty and lack of education regarding the issue, called for countries to provide; safe housing, medical and psychological care, legal assistance for victims of trafficking, urged states to criminalize trafficking fully, strengthened international cooperation such as; extradition and shared investigations and additionally urged governments, NGOs and UN agencies to work together. Before the Resolution 64/293 efforts against trafficking were fragmented and arduous to track, 64/293 solidified the trafficking as a coordinated global priority.

Following the Resolution 64/293, in 2017 the Resolution 71/322 was brought into force towards the strengthening of the earlier methods. In addition to other points stated; The Resolution 71/322 called for better data collection due to many child trafficking cases going unreported, emphasized cross border cooperation since broadly speaking child trafficking is international, highlighted gender and age vulnerability by recognizing that children need special protection systems. With Resolution 71/322 previous points were implemented and integrated to real-world effectiveness.

Through the following years United Nations Security Council has further resolved the Resolution 2331 and 2338. The Resolution 2331 focused on trafficking in conflict zones and terrorism while Resolution 2338 focused on accountability and justice against trafficking. Resolution 2331 recognized forced labor, sexual exploitation and child soldiers as a motive to smuggle children by

extremist organizations and urged countries to cut funding linked to trafficking in addition to other points; while The Resolution 2388 pushed governments to investigate and punish traffickers, end impunity; encouraged victim-centered justice systems and protection for children during the trials: promoted training police and judges for the cause. Legal consequences further solidified the deterrence of crime.

Along side all the resolutions, United Nations Children's fund helped to identify children in vulnerable groups, (refugees, poor communities, etc.) provided education access, social workers, safe shelters for both victims and at-risk children and helped to reintegrate victims to return to families and safety.

Besides all, International Labour Organization has made many immense verdicts on the topic, such as Convention No. 138 which sets a legal working age and prevents exploitation that can cause trafficking and Convention No. 182 which requires immediate elimination against child trafficking, forced child labor and slavery of children. Such Conventions applies globally.

b. Country Specific Anti-Trafficking Laws

In addition to the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) in the USA and the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive, several other countries have notable country-specific anti-trafficking laws that are pivotal in the global fight against human trafficking. Some of these include:

India

The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (ITPA), 1956: Originally known as the Suppression of Immoral Traffic in Women and Girls Act, it was amended in 1986 and is the primary legislation in India for combating trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation.

United Kingdom

Modern Slavery Act, 2015: This Act consolidates and simplifies previous offenses relating to trafficking and slavery. It introduces

measures to protect victims of slavery and trafficking, and it requires businesses to report on their actions to prevent modern slavery in their operations.

Canada

The Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act, 2014: This Act is part of Canada's strategy against human trafficking, focusing on criminalizing the purchase of sexual services, providing assistance to victims, and public awareness campaigns.

Australia

Modern Slavery Act, 2018: Similar to the UK's legislation, Australia's Modern Slavery Act requires certain large businesses and entities to report annually on the risks of modern slavery in their operations and supply chains, and the actions taken to address those risks.

Brazil

The National Policy to Combat Trafficking in Persons: Established in 2006, this policy in Brazil aims to prevent trafficking, suppress the trafficking networks, and ensure assistance to victims, along with promoting their social reintegration.

Thailand

Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act B.E. 2551 (2008): This Act represents Thailand's comprehensive legal framework to combat human trafficking, with provisions for prevention, prosecution of traffickers, and protection of victims.

Philippines

Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003: This Act, officially

known as Republic Act No. 9208, is a landmark legislation in the Philippines, criminalizing all forms of trafficking and establishing strong penalties for offenders.

7. Key Challenges

a. Rapid Growth in Technology and Online Exploitation

By 2026, many child trafficking networks have shifted their strategy from direct physical abductions to digital platforms. With the development of technology, nowadays child trafficking is heavily online. Before the rapid growth of technology, perpetrators used find prime candidates for trafficking mostly in public areas, arrange exploitations directly *physical* and take long time manipulating the chosen victims. Whereas with the development of technology, (especially artificial intelligence and social media platforms) victims can now be selected easily, quickly and globally with the presented opportunities of digital world. Online trafficking has four steps : First is targetting which basically is looking for children who are lonely, isolated, who are active in social media and who post personal information publicly. Then starts the gradual manipulation/ grooming process where perpetrators pretend to be someone victims can closely relate to emotionally to build trust. Once the trust is build perpetrators often ask for personal information, explicit images and pressure or threaten the child. The shame and fear can force the child into harmful situations and exploitations for profit. Countries such as Philippines, United Kingdom and United States are suffering from the rise of online child exploitation networks.

Such reasonings as speed, scale, lack of awareness and anonymity make it even tougher to track down the perpedators and avoiding child exploitation.

b. Lack of Reliable Data Collection

One of the biggest in combating child trafficking is that the crime is unfortunately ignored most of the time. Unlike other crimes, trafficking often happens in private spaces (homes, informal workplaces, online platforms), making it extremely difficult to detect. Many cases go unreported due to many causations such as families being afraid of retaliation and stigma from perpetrators, fear of governmental authority / interference, social isolation and norms, victims being threatened, manipulated or forced. This creates a major gap between number of official cases versus actual cases.

Regardless 21st century being referred to as the age of opportunities and technology, many underdeveloped nations are yet to acquire centralized databases, trained personnel to identify victims and potential victims, cooperation of legal governments, NGOs, local police departments and social services. All these inadequancies unfortunately make it even more troubling than it is to combat child trafficking and exploitation.

c. Conflict and Instability

In conflict zones, normal systems end up collapsing. Police stations stop functioning, schools close, families get separated, borders become uncontrollable, safe sheltering turns into a luxury. No one stays there to protect children, this is called the protection vacuum. Lack of protection makes it convenient for traffickers and armed groups to take advantage of this entropy. These criminal organizations and individuals deceit children with promises for jobs, food, safety or said people even pretend to be humanitarian aid workers, helpers or trusted soldiers. After deception children are often subjected to fighting, labor, sexual exploitation, forced marriages and serfdoms. Some real world examples of this unfortunate incidents has recently happened n Haiti, South Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, Palestine and Israel due to the sheer reality of war.

d. Poverty and Inequality

Poverty is one of the strongest root causes of child trafficking. Poor families struggle survive due to their basic needs such as food, shelter, education) not being sustained and children becoming economically vulnerable. Economic desperation creates the pressure to follow any opportunity, even the false ones. Traffickers often offer false opportunities like job offers, better life in cities, to said desperate people as a fortunate turn events or solution. This eventually leads up to children being exploited, being forced into labor, forced marriages, servitude and armed conflict. Some global instances of poverty resulting child trafficking happens in Nepal, Bangladesh and Brazil. Poverty doesn't automatically cause trafficking yet it reduces choices and increases risk taking under the pressure.

e. Financial Systems and Money Flow

Modern trafficking network rely heavily on money systems that are harder to trace instead of physical control. These include : Cryptocurrencies, online payment systems, complex international transfers... Payment for exploitation is often transferred by such ways or split into smaller amounts and sent over a long period of time in order to avoid suspicion. Such ways solidify this issue as a key challenge on account of anonymity, speed, lack of expertise, jurisdiction gaps and complexity of the evidence. Many experts argue if you can track the money it could be more convenient to dismantle trafficking and exploitation networks.

f. Migration

Migration when it is irregular, forced or poorly regulated significantly increases the risk of child trafficking. In 2026, this issue has been made even more urgent by rising displacement due to conflict, climate change, economic instability and rising human rights

breach. Migrant children often end up separated and alone during the journey across the borders. Without parental or legal protection children have to rely on smugglers, “informants” or “helpers” which often results in unfortunate circumstances such as sexual, physical and mental abuse, forced labor, captivity, servitude and etc. before, during and after the journey. A major part of migrant children are undocumented and most don’t even report abuse or seek help trigger by fear of deportation or in an effort to avoid authorities. Over the years UNICEF has repeatedly highlighted that migrant children are among the high-risk groups to trafficking globally.

g. Displacement

Displacement is the act of moving someone from their original residence, or the state of being displaced. It typically refers to the physical and forced removal of people. Displacement is a crucial global issue that fuels and perpetuates many forms of violence and crime including child trafficking. Displacement is more prevalent

in war zones, areas of conflict, regions with high population density and underdeveloped countries. In these areas, children face more danger, law enforcements and criminal activity because they lack any form of security. As mentioned in many other issues, this situaton is widely disseminated. It increases the pressure on children and makes them more gullible and receptive to child trafficking. This is a major obstacle to both protection of human rights and combat against child trafficking.

h. Lack of Accountability Justice and Impunity

Different countries define child trafficking differently even with global legal frameworks such as Palermo Protocol and the

Convention on the Rights of the Child. Despite the provided guidelines some exploitation types are still not fully criminalized by respected laws with the most well-known being digital exploitation. Lack of accountability and justice may come of from weak investigation, cases not being detected or reported, self interest, corruption and legal loopholes. With no punishment against criminals, crime continues and expands.

Many examples of lack of accountability, justice and impunity are most visibly seen in countries like Mexico, Cambodia and even some European Union countries.

i. Weak and Underdeveloped Child Protection Systems

Even with pre-existing laws, many countries struggle against child trafficking because of their child protection systems being under developed or weak. Child Protection Systems include social workers, police units specializing in the aid of children, schools, reporting systems, shelters and rehabilitation services. If functioning smoothly, these services identify children at risk early, intervene potential crisis, support children mentally and physically. Yet without the proper functioning of these systems, children are left to become prime candidates for violent acts and crimes, suffer from mental, physical or sexual abuse without any help and etc. UNICEF has highlighted the cruciality of the situation by saying “The existence of laws is almost meaningless without systems capable of protecting, identifying, supporting and aiding vulnerable children.”.

J. Cross-Border Coordination Failures

Even with international organizations such as United Nations, countries still attempting to fight child trafficking individually without cooperating with each other. Child trafficking is a transnational crime with victims moving across the borders and traffickers operating in multiple countries. Trafficking networks take advantage of desynchronized enforcements and at the very last remain untouched.

K. Lack of Awareness and Education

Lack of education and awareness is one of the most unregarded root causes of the problem yet also one of the most impactful ones. Many children are completely unaware of grooming tactics, fake job offers, fake scholarship offers, deceptive modeling offers used as tactics, dangers of digital platforms and how can one protect themselves from them which makes it easier for traffickers to take advantage of children. With enough deception and manipulation unaware children may voluntarily trust traffickers. Apart from this many parents and institutions for children are yet to be aware of such risks. Parents who lack knowledge about trafficking risks in low-education settings or neglectant parents often don't make provisions to protect children. Institutions such as schools also altogether fall insufficient in taking necessary additional measures. UN organs like UNICEF have been stressing well-established education systems can be one of the strongest defense mechanism against child trafficking and exploitation if functioned adequately.

7. Questions to Consider

- * How do poverty and inequality increase children's risk of being trafficked ?
- * How has technology changed the way child trafficking operates ?
- * What mechanisms can UN develop to reduce child trafficking and exploitation ?
- * What role do online platforms and technologic developments play in enabling or preventing exploitation ?
- * What is the difference between trafficking and smuggling ?
- * How do financial systems make it easier or harder to track traffickers ?
- * Should governments focus more on following the trail of money rather than just arresting individuals ?
- * What role does and should schools and communities play in prevention ?
- * How can awareness campaigns be made more effective ?
- * Why are migrant and displaced children at higher risk ?
- * How can countries balance cross-border security for child protection ?
- * What are the main barriers to successful prosecution ?

- * How can justice systems become more victim-centered in trials related to the agenda ?
- * Is international law like Palermo Protocol enough to address modern trafficking ?
- * How do funding gaps affect outcomes ?
- * Why is child trafficking so underreported ?
- * What can be done to improve data collection and transparency ?
- * How can international organizations like UN improve coordination between countries ?
- * Can trafficking ever be fully eliminated or only reduced ?
- * What responsibility do developed countries have in addressing global trafficking ?
- * How do cultural, social, economics and political factors interact in sustaining trafficking ?
- * How do gender and age of children influence vulnerability to trafficking ?

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