



## Summary of the research paper

The International Bureau of Children's Rights is happy to present its findings from the first phase of the project, *Action Strategies for the Protection of Rights for child Victims of Trafficking in Quebec*. This study aims to improve the efficacy of intervention strategies which will be brought to the attention of professionals. This campaign, brought forward by a multidisciplinary team, integrates both a research and action strategy.

This research report is the first publication of a global strategy, of which is composed three general objectives: (1) to improve the protection of child victims of trafficking, (2), to prevent child trafficking and (3) to reduce crime by gaining a better understanding of this problem.

### "A First"

For the first time in Quebec, this report offers a synthesized account of the existing knowledge regarding child victims of trafficking, as well as the activities related to prevention, protection, of rehabilitation and prosecution.

A literature review has been conducted regarding the problem of global child trafficking with a focus on the Quebec and Canadian case. Moreover, interviews have been conducted in eight regions of Quebec, comprised of 50 interviews, 31 of which are individual interviews and 19 group interviews. The interviews were comprised of experts and organizations from diverse areas which touch upon the phenomenon of child trafficking.

### The phenomenon

The vast majority of countries have been affected by this phenomenon, and each constitutes a country of origin, transit and destination of a combination of the three. This is a clandestine phenomenon, and thus difficult to quantify. Few estimates exist concerning the exact number of child victims of trafficking. Nevertheless, UNICEF estimates that anywhere from 1 to 1.2 million children and victims of trafficking each year. Canada is not excluded from this phenomenon; it is principally a country of destination and of transit for both women and children victims of sex trafficking. To a lesser extent, individuals can be victims of trafficking in Canada for forced labor, but Canadian citizens can also suffer internal trafficking within the country for their use in the commercial sex industry.

The *Palermo Protocol* (2002) defines child trafficking as the recruitment, transport, harbouring or the receipt of a child (under 18 years of age) for exploitation, such as sexual exploitation and/or forced labor.

We distinguish between internal and external trafficking. The first refers to the displacement of children within Quebec or still living within Canada, while the latter refers to the notion that the child must cross a Canadian border in order to arrive within Quebec.

### **Child Victims**

Victims of trafficking do not correspond to one singular profile. Nevertheless, a number of such victims tend to be girls aged 14 to 17. The principal factors that place persons at risk are poverty, globalization, social isolation, armed conflicts, technological advances, and restrictive immigration policies.

In the case of internal trafficking, recruitment often occurs in a friendship or romantic relationship based on the dependence of the victim towards the trafficker. In the case of external trafficking, the modes of recruitment are much more numerous and diverse. The common element between the two is often the use of violence and deception as a means of controlling the victims.

Child victims of trafficking suffer a multitude of effects that are detrimental to their development. Among other issues, they are confronted by several psychosocial difficulties. Notably, the child that has been trafficked to a foreign land inherently loses contact with their family and their system of social support, creating feelings of loss and difficulties adapting to their new environment.

Beyond the trauma provoked by the context of exploitation, the child victim is often also subject to physical lesions and contagious diseases due to HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases, as well as unwanted pregnancies. Victims of child trafficking that are sexually exploited can equally have problems linked to alcoholism and drug addition –problems which are often directly caused by their traffickers.

Confidence of trafficked children towards authority figures and social services is often compromised, sometimes because of their experiences or because of a deep sense of general distrust. Currently in Quebec, child victims of trafficking are not identified as such, but are usually identified for other related issues that, even if they were caused by trafficking; do not attest of the complexity of the situation.

### **The Results**

The analysis of results highlights the varying degrees of awareness and knowledge concerning human trafficking, as well as the absence of a common definition of the phenomenon. The actors we met insisted on the importance of raising the awareness about human trafficking for the general public, as well as for both governmental and non-governmental actors that may encounter cases of trafficking, through an effective public educational campaign.

Professionals that intervene directly with child victims of trafficking or children who are at risk must receive training. Most respondents admitted not being aware of the laws relevant to the trafficking in persons including the definition of trafficking, the laws and possible recourses, as well as the parameters governing stakeholders' work.

The use of a common definition of human trafficking which is relevant to the realities of the Quebec and Canadian context will permit a better cooperation between stakeholders, as well as facilitating the identification of victims and the gathering of more accurate data on this phenomenon.

Despite the absence of accurate statistics, the persons consulted believe that the phenomenon of trafficking is expanding. In order to truly understand the gravity of the problem, it is necessary to gather accurate data regarding child trafficking.

The phenomenon of child trafficking is described as a clandestine problem that is difficult to detect, even for a professional that is well informed on the subject. Several respondents expressed their need for further support in order to create and maintain partnership against child trafficking. In order to ensure the protection of victims and to minimize the risks of revictimisation, the cooperation between different partnerships is essential. Better systems of information exchange should be developed in order to intervene and to ensure an appropriate follow up of victims of trafficking, while ensuring the respect of their right to confidentiality.

### The Canadian Response

Conscious of the presence of trafficking, Canada has developed new laws to combat this phenomenon. On June 28, 2002, with the adoption of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, the legislator included in the Act infractions related to trafficking in persons. Also, the 25<sup>th</sup> of November 2005, sections were added to the *Criminal Code* concerning the trafficking in persons and gaining a financial benefit from such activity. Finally, new *Citizenship and Immigration Canada Human Trafficking Interim Guidelines* were issued in May of 2006. These guidelines have the objective of determining whether a temporary resident permit should be granted to victims of trafficking.

Particular attention on children and youth arrested for violation of legislations regarding immigration, prostitution, panhandling or illegal work. This would help ensure that child victims are not punished for infractions directly related to their situation of being trafficked, most notably, the absence of documents concerning their legal status or identity, illegal entry into the country, and/or breaking laws on prostitution, work, or panhandling.

Presently, Canadian laws and policies are principally targeted towards identifying and prosecuting criminals, to seize their assets and to dismantle their network. These measures are clearly important but cannot meet their objective without the collaboration of victims.

We must allow victims, particularly children, to discuss their experiences at their own pace, respecting their rights and their needs. In order to accomplish this however, professionals must be adequately be trained.

## Quebec Services

There is a need to determine the capacity of health and social services in being able to adequately respond to the specific needs of young victims of trafficking once they have been identified or once they voluntarily ask such services for help. While health and social services may provide some protective services, no tools as of yet have been developed to respond to the specific needs of this vulnerable population. In order to do so, resources are needed to reinforce existing programs.

Services offered must respond to the specific need of each child. Several stakeholders that deal with youth in the street, Aboriginal youth, or ethno cultural minority groups maintained that an individual approach to the particular situations is of prime importance.

As indicated in the literature, certain respondents addressed the importance of finding strategies and methods for privileging the empowerment of youth. Allowing a child that has been a victim of trafficking to exert their own power in the process of removing them from a precarious situation considerably increases their chance of success.

## Towards an Action Plan

The trafficking of children certainly exists in Canada. As a result of the findings of this study, the International Bureau of Children's Rights will produce a series of recommendations regarding the fight against the trafficking of children in Quebec. These will serve as an action plan that will be elaborated upon and put into action with the collaboration of our partners throughout 2007.

For further information regarding this project, please contact Catherine Gauvreau, program manager:



Programme contre la traite d'enfants  
BUREAU INTERNATIONAL DES DROITS DES ENFANTS (IBCR)  
1185, Saint-Mathieu Montréal (Québec) Canada H3H 2P7  
☎ (514) 932-7656 poste 223 📠 (514) 932-9453 📧 [trafficking@ibcr.org](mailto:trafficking@ibcr.org)