



ESSOP 2010: Well Child Care  
13-16 October, Kuşadası, Turkey,

# Child Trafficking: Definition and Implementation

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# Aim

Explore the concept *child trafficking* and implementation of anti-trafficking activities through examination of cultural practices in Guinea-Bissau and Iceland



# Trafficking of Human Beings

## Actions

- Recruitment
- Transportation
- Transferring
- Harboring
- Receiving

## Means

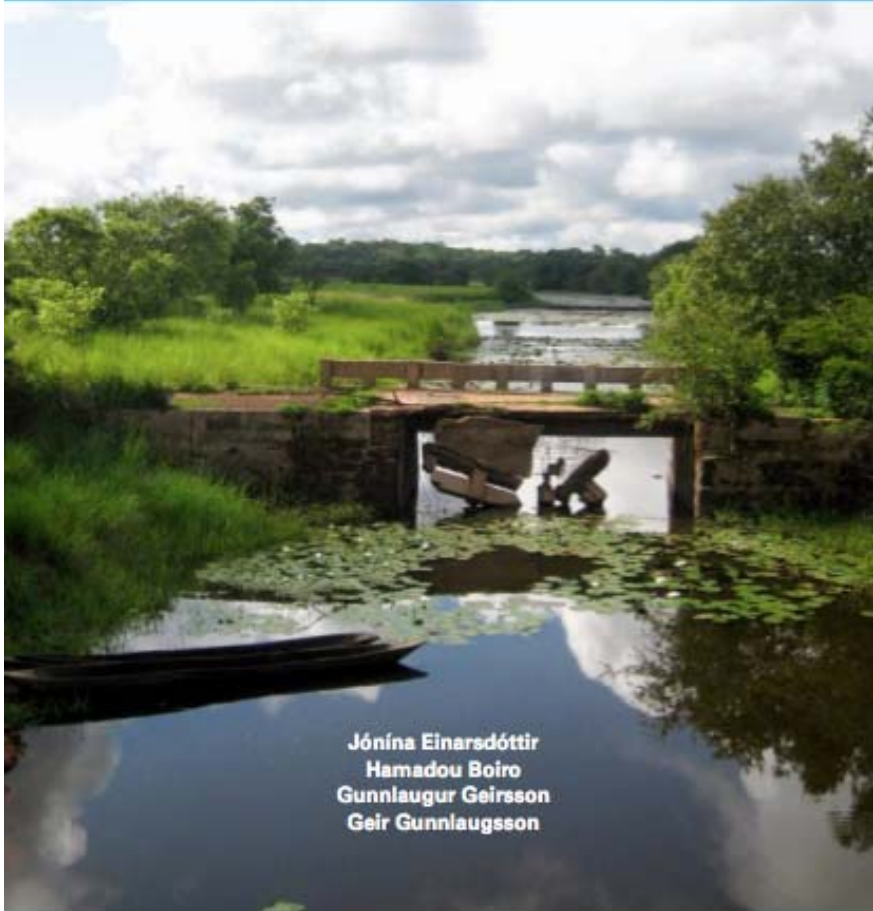
- Threat/use of force
- Forms of coercion
- Abduction
- Fraud
- Deception
- Abuse of power

## Purpose

- Prostitution
- Pornography
- Violence/Sexual exploitation
- Forced labor
- Involuntary servitude
- Debt Bondage (with unfair wages)
- Slavery and Similar practices



## Child trafficking in Guinea-Bissau An explorative study



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# What amounts to child trafficking?



- Child labour abroad or away from home?
  - domestic work, assistants for fishermen and weavers, cotton and cashew, harvest, shoe-shiners, traders, etc.
- Fostered children?
- Early and/or forced marriage?





# Koran schools in West Africa



Classified as child trafficking when students beg on behalf of their teachers



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## GUINEA-BISSAU-SENEGAL: On the child trafficking route



Photo: Pierre Holtz/IRIN

Children begging on the streets of Dakar, Senegal

BAFATA, 23 November 2007 (IRIN) - In northern Guinea-Bissau, in the dark of night, a dilapidated bus carrying 17 children is parked on a quiet side road. Its driver awaits a signal from a bus up ahead in the convoy illegally crossing the border into Senegal.

For 24 hours, the children do not eat or drink as the bus waits and waits. The signal never comes.

At midnight the first bus is intercepted by police before reaching the border. The next morning, the second one is stopped. The third and final vehicle in the convoy is never found. All three were taking children from Guinea-Bissau to work in the cotton fields of southern Senegal.

The convoy was one of three alleged child trafficking operations – involving more than 140 children from all over the country – stopped by Bissau police in the last month. Seven people – one from Senegal and six from Guinea-Bissau – are in police custody in the north-central city of Bafatà.

Child trafficking is common between Guinea-Bissau and Senegal, where – as in the rest of West Africa – borders are poorly guarded. But increasingly, police and local leaders are trying to quell the tide of youth smuggled to the cotton fields in Senegal's southern agricultural area or to the busy streets of the

capital, Dakar.



# Child trafficking discourses

- **Parents**
  - Claimed to sell their (least favorite) children
    - Is it indifference, lack of love and/or poverty?
  - Deceived to send their children
    - Ignorant, naive, helpless ... ?
- **NGOs and other 'rescuers'**
  - Happy stories of liberation
    - Parents unhappy to get their children back





# Bissau-Guinean children in Koran schools abroad

- Variations between ethnic groups
- What child is sent?
- What families send their children abroad?





# Begging

- “When children beg they learn bad habits” (Imam)
- “Begging cannot be considered exploitation ... It does not belittle a child to beg, rather it makes you humble and resistant” (Marabout)
- Begging acceptable as a means to sustain a child while studying the Koran (parents)
- Begging acceptable if children “study properly” and “have a good place to sleep” (mother)



# Suffering

- “You can have money without suffering, for example by winning in a lottery. However, you cannot have knowledge without suffering [work].” (Marabout)
- Suffering only meaningful and acceptable if it results in something good (parents)
- “When you are old it is too late to fight back and gain knowledge” (father)



# Parents' points of view

- Religious education important for development of personality
  - Learn dignity, humbleness and endurance to sustain hard life
- Parental obligation to give children religious education
  - God rewards parents in afterlife





# Parents' points of view

- **Away from home**
  - "The Prophet Mohammed said: look for knowledge as far as China"
  - Children study more
- **Why Senegal?**
  - Respected for religious education
  - Support from ordinary people
  - 'The lights of Dakar'
- **Class struggle within the Fula**





# Parents' points of view

- **Recruitment of children**
  - Parents ask a marabout they know to educate their child
- **Exploitation of children**
  - Certain marabouts known to be more interested in child begging than teaching
- **Lack of educational opportunities**






# Repatriation

- **Boys sent back home with airplane**
  - At times without their consent
  - May return to Senegal and become street-children
- **Families ashamed**
  - Names announced in radio
  - Feel criminalized
  - Failure for a child to return without completing the education



Photo: Heba Aly/IRIN   
Children, brought from Guinea-Bissau to Senegal years ago, line up at the airport in Dakar to return home after years of beatings and forced begging

IRIN News



# “Trafficking is a heavy word”

The  
Economist

## Pushers' paradise; Guinea-Bissau.(How cocaine pours through Africa)

Article from: [The Economist \(US\)](#) | Article date: [June 9, 2007](#) | [Copyright information](#)

The drugs trade in the continent's first narco-state is booming

TAKE a long jagged coastline, a collapsed state, a collection of powerful politicians and soldiers keen to make a buck or more and you have a drug peddler's paradise. You also have Guinea-Bissau, a tiny former Portuguese colony on Africa's west coast that Latin American cocaine is pouring through, mostly en route to booming markets in Europe. The country has won the dubious honour of becoming Africa's drug-distribution hub and, some fear, its first narco-state.

Precise figures for a business as shady as drugs are hard to come by. But two fortuitous seizures of over 600 kilos of cocaine, worth over \$30m ...



# Parents

“Do you think they [Western countries] are paying money to combat what they call trafficking without having other motives?”



## What motives?

- NGOs “use our children to get money”
- Christian organizations in Dakar “want our children to become Christian”
- “Western countries want to eliminate Islam”



# Why are anti-trafficking activities ineffective?

- **Cases not identified**
  - Difficult to detect - most often hidden activity
  - Victims criminalized
    - illegal immigration
    - human smuggling
- **Victims do not want to be identified**
  - Do not see themselves as trafficked
  - Afraid of revenge
  - Do not want repatriation
- **Lack of focus on the driving forces**



# What is child trafficking?

- **All child labor vs sexual exploitation**
  - See the history of Palermo Protocol
- **Children on the move vs children at home**
- **Narrow vs wide definition**
  - Totally 212 cases of child trafficking identified in USA during 2000-2009
  - Many customs and practices in West Africa classified as child trafficking



# Why use wide definition?

- International legal framework
- Prosecution of offenders
- Gives media attention
- Easier to get financial support





# Problems with wide definition

- Criminalization of communities
- Conflict between communities and child-protection organizations
- Draws attention from 'real' trafficking
- Other violations of children's rights ignored





# Do no harm!



GAATW. (2007). *Collateral Damage: The Impact of Anti-Trafficking Measures on Human Rights around the World*. Bangkok, Thailand: Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women.

Dottridge, M. (2008). *Kids Abroad: Ignore Them, Abuse Them or Protect Them: Lessons on How to Protect Children on the Move from Being Exploited*. Geneva: Terre des Hommes.

