



In Brief



South Africa: The Trafficking of Children for Purposes of Sexual Exploitation

By Molo Songololo
Cape Town 2000

Financially supported by terre des hommes Germany

Statistical figures concerning the situation of children and young people in South Africa

- Approximately 45 % of the population (18 million) in South Africa are children and young people below the age of 18.
- Ca. 60 % of the children and young people are living below the poverty line.
- About 400.000 children and young people between 10 and 18 do legal or illegal work (according to Molo Songololo about 200.000 children each between 10 and 14 and 15 and 18).
- According to police estimates 28.000 girls and boys (elsewhere the figure 38.000 is mentioned) work as prostitutes, either in brothels, privately or on the street (no official statistics are available).
- In Cape Town alone about 25 % of the prostitutes are children according to police sources (no official statistics are available).

Factors favouring the commercial sexual exploitation

- Poverty, connected with high unemployment and a large number of early school leavers
In 1995 50 % of boys and girls broke off their primary and secondary school studies.
- Inadequate or ineffective protective mechanisms for children and young people . There are neither sufficient state bodies nor are the NGOs able to remedy this bad situation by their own activities.
- Sexual abuse by next of family members and others in close contact with the child.
- Widespread family and domestic violence, often linked with poverty, drugs or alcohol.
- Increased urbanisation
About 50 % of South Africa's population is living in towns or conurbations (1996). A growth in city dwellers with all social consequences.
- Favourisation of commercial sexual exploitation by their parents or with their involvement.
- Increasing demand for sex with children and young people.

Personal characteristics of the children affected by trafficking and/or prostitution

(based on The House, Johannesburg)

- children aged between 4 and 17
- children coming from rural areas to Johannesburg
- children who, for various reasons no longer wish to or are able to return home or to public shelters
- children who have already been sexually abused.



Groups of people involved in child trafficking

(based on the statements of girls and young women affected)

- parents
- relatives and brothers and sisters
- adult prostitutes
- teachers
- organised groups and gangs from South Africa and from abroad
- taxi and minivan drivers

Characteristics of beneficiaries of sexual exploitation

(based on statements of girls and young women affected)

- Men of all age groups, social origin, religions and nationalities.
Special mention is made of taxi drivers, farmers, doctors, lawyers, businessmen, visitors to illegal bars (shebeens) and other bars, restaurants, policemen, work migrants from abroad and from other regions of South Africa, foreign and South African tourists.
- In rare cases women are also beneficiaries of sexual exploitation.

Routes within South Africa

(based on the statements of girls and young women affected)

- Child trafficking in South Africa occurs both between individual big towns and between rural regions and the big towns. Here children and youngsters are generally taken to the nearest possible destinations and are held there. As a result, no large distances need to be bridged with the victims.
- The routes lead from the provinces KwaZulu Natal (Durban, Pietermaritzburg) and Eastern Cape (East London, Port Elizabeth) into the provinces Gauteng (Johannesburg, Pretoria) and Western Cape (Cape Town).
- Within the province Gauteng with the Johannesburg/Gauteng metropolitan area the routes lead from Diepsloot, Alexandria and Soweto to Johannesburg, from the rural districts around Pretoria to Pretoria.

International Child Trafficking

(based on statements by the police, public bodies, the Thai embassy and female journalists)

- South Africa is both country of destination and transit country for child trafficking from other African nations (Tanzania, Zambia, Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Senegal, Mozambique, Angola)
- The Trade route via South Africa generally leads to South-East Asia (eg. Bangkok).
- The majority of the trade is organised by international groups (mafia) from South-East-Asia and Eastern Europe (Russia, Bulgaria). These organisations are (it is assumed) also simultaneously involved in the trafficking with women and drugs, cigarettes, illegal money and CDs.
- Countries of origin in Eastern Europe are Russia, Bulgaria, Rumania, Latvia, Estonia, Czechia and Slovakia.
- Countries of origin in South-East-Asia are Thailand and Taiwan.

Sexual exploitation and criminal organisations

(based on the statements of 19 girls and young women as well as journalists and public institutions)

- In Cape Town the trafficking with children and young women as well as their sexual exploitation is mainly controlled by criminal organisations. Both women- or girls gangs and gangs dominated by men exist in Cape Town.



- Mostly girls and young women become dependent or they come under the organisations' control as a result of kidnapping or by collaboration between the parents and the gangs.
- On the one hand, collaboration means the direct sale of the girls to the gang or they are obliged to clear the debts of their parents through prostitution.
- In the Cape Town metropolitan area Golden Acre and Parade are the regions in the city where girls and women are kidnapped, Salt River and Green Point are the areas where they are kept or forced into prostitution.
- Contacts also arise via male and female members of the gangs who accost women and girls with the intention to bring them into the milieu of the gangs, to force them into prostitution in brothels or on the street and prevent them from escaping through violence (beatings, rapes, locking them up)
- Generally, girls of socially underprivileged classes, homeless people, girls with elder siblings in the gangs, girls who come from the countryside to the towns
- The people affected are also forced into larceny, robbery, drug trafficking or into working in illegal bars (shebeens) or into having to „recruit“, control or guard other girls. They are also involved in conflicts within the gangs or they become witnesses or involved in killings of gang members.
- The women and girls aged between 13 and 15 had been held between several days and several months, before they succeeded in escaping.
- Girls and young women also become gang members or organise themselves in separate women gangs. The interviewees were members of the gang for a period between 3 months and 5 years. They were active in prostitution and larceny.
- Joining the gang and its membership often is based on a combination of coercion and deception.



Contact & further Information

terre des hommes Deutschland e.V.
Hilfe für Kinder in Not
Bundesgeschäftsstelle
Internationale Kampagne gegen
Kinderhandel
Ruppenkampstr. 11a
Postfach 4126
D-49031 Osnabrück

Telefon: 0541/7101-182
Telefax: 0541/707233
Internet: www.tdh.de
e-mail: kinderhandel-kampagne@tdh.de