

12 June 2007

New Government Report Uncovers Hundreds of Missing Children

ECPAT UK welcomes the long overdue release of a government report on child trafficking into the UK.

The results validate ECPAT UK's own research announced in the [Missing Out](#) report (launched 15th January 2007) and confirm a horrendous picture of children from all over the world brought to the UK for sexual abuse, labour exploitation and illegal adoption.

The research, endorsed by the Home Office, claims that 56% of the 330 known or suspected trafficked children reported have gone missing without trace. The report indicates that of the trafficked children who went missing and were later found there was suspicion or evidence of abuse in the time they had been gone. The report highlights failings in social welfare arrangements for these children.

The government can no longer turn a blind eye to the hundreds of trafficked and abused children who go missing each year. Failures by social service and immigration teams to provide proper safeguards leave these children vulnerable to the criminal gangs that victimise them over and over again. It is a disgrace that these children are placed in sub-standard care, often unsupervised Bed & Breakfast accommodation, because immigration policy removes their rights to full protection.

"There is something fundamentally wrong in society when hundreds of vulnerable children without families in the UK go missing and the authorities refuse to take rigorous measures to find them, nor can they provide full details of these children to a government report," said Christine Beddoe, Director of ECPAT UK.

ECPAT UK believes that every child who enters the UK alone or without a parent or legal guardian should be treated as suspected trafficked and afforded special protection measures while their case is being investigated.

ECPAT UK is calling for:

- An independent [Inquiry](#) into all migrant children who go missing from local authority care.
- An immediate response to CEOP's report by the Minister responsible for Children, Beverly Hughes MP, to provide leadership and guidance to all agencies on the welfare of child victims of trafficking.

ECPAT UK and World Vision [Thr3e Small Steps](#) campaign is calling for:

- Removal of the UK Reservation on immigration matters to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child – this Reservation effectively reduces the rights of migrant children to access full protection.
- Ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Human Trafficking
- The appointment of a National Child Trafficking Rapporteur – to independently monitor child trafficking and report annually.

CEOP CHILD TRAFFICKING REPORT – KEY FINDINGS

- 330 children suspected or confirmed trafficked.
- 183 out of 330 have gone missing from care (56%).
- 185 of 330 were girls (56%); 140 of 330 were boys (42%).
- 105 of 140 boys (76%) are missing from care.
- 44 source countries were identified.
- China (72), Nigeria (38) Vietnam (22), Afghanistan (19), Eritrea (14) – top 5 source countries.
- 63 of 72 Chinese children (88%) have gone missing.
- Top three regions: East Asia, West Africa and East Africa.
- Eastern Europe and Russia constitute 4th largest region with 33 cases (of 330).
- 91% (300) children were between 14-17 years of age.
- 19 African girls were identified as being known/suspected trafficked for domestic servitude.
- 36 African girls were identified as known/suspected trafficked for sexual exploitation.
- Those trafficked for domestic servitude range from 12 - 17 years of age.
- 22 Vietnamese children were identified as being trafficked. 11 girls/11 boys aged between 14 - 17 years. 6 of these children were arrested as a result of being found in cannabis factories.
- 14 girls from Eastern Europe and Russia were trafficked for sexual exploitation.
- Youngest child was 9 months old being brought to UK by unrelated guardian for unknown purposes. Another child of 4 years suspected of being brought to UK for illegal adoption. One 5 year old was suspected of being brought to UK for domestic servitude. One child of 6 and three siblings were trafficked for benefit fraud.
- Children have passed through the following 9 airports: Heathrow, Gatwick, Stanstead, Birmingham, Manchester, East Midlands, Belfast, Prestwick and Doncaster-Robin Hood.
- Many children entering UK with no passports or false passports. Determining country of origin is dependent on child's claim and language used.
- Most children have come from poor families with little access to education.
- Children from African backgrounds for sexual exploitation and domestic servitude tend to be most destitute. The youngest African child trafficked for sexual exploitation was 12 years.
- Children coming from Eastern Europe report being befriended by 'boyfriends' before being trafficked. These girls have had more access to education but vulnerable from abuse and neglect within the family.

- Research data collected from 41 law enforcement agencies, 21 BIA agencies, 20 Children's Services and 8 NGOs. Research data was collected from questionnaires returned within the deadline. Additional phone follow up or meetings were conducted if clarification was needed. Separate interviews were conducted with Asylum Screening Units and NGOs.

- Study concludes that numbers of trafficked children are not complete, under reported and not conclusive.

About us

ECPAT UK (End Child Prostitution, Pornography and Trafficking) is a leading children's rights organisation campaigning to protect children from commercial sexual exploitation.

ECPAT UK is a coalition of nine agencies working for the protection of children's rights, which are: Anti-Slavery International, NSPCC, Save the Children UK, The Body Shop Foundation, The Children's Society, Jubilee Campaign, UNICEF UK, and World Vision UK.

ECPAT UK is the official UK representative of the international ECPAT movement that spans the globe in over 70 countries.

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