



CHILD TRAFFICKING IN URBAN KENYA

Preliminary rapid assessment

terre des hommes
stops child exploitation



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**Commissioned to Integrity Research & Consultancy
by Terre des Hommes Netherlands, Regional Office East Africa**

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Executive Summary

In March 2014, Integrity conducted a preliminary rapid assessment of child trafficking in two settlements of Nairobi, Mathare and Mukuru, on behalf of Terre des Hommes Netherlands. The primary goal of this research project was to assess whether child trafficking occurs in these settlements, how it occurs and in what forms.

Key findings included:

Magnitude of the issue: Through conducting key informant interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders, Integrity found that there are instances of children being trafficked both to and from Mathare and Mukuru. While it is clear that the “economic migration” of children into the settlements is relatively commonplace, substantiated information regarding the number of children trafficked is not available. There are currently no official government statistics keeping track of this issue. Nevertheless, many participants, particularly those providing child services, were able to cite specific cases of children trafficked into or out of the settlements.

Demographics: The demographic profile of children being trafficked is varied, however participants agreed that girls are more vulnerable than boys. Respondents indicated that children are often trafficked from the age of seven onward, becoming particularly vulnerable when they leave Class Eight at school (around the age of 12 to 15). Socio-economically, the children tended to come from poorer backgrounds with orphans often cited as the most vulnerable group.

Activities: The majority of children trafficked in these areas are forced into two primary forms of exploitation: domestic labour and sex work. More generally, child labour appears prevalent in both areas, with children also being used for bartending, *chang'aa* brewing, scrap metal collection, street begging and petty crime.

Trafficking routes: Of children trafficked into the settlements, many appear to originate from rural areas across Kenya, particularly the lower eastern and western regions of the country. Children are also trafficked from the settlements into neighbouring estates. For instance, Eastleigh was identified as being the most predominant destination in the case of Mathare.

Key stakeholders: Relatives were named most frequently as instigating or being involved in trafficking children, particularly from rural areas of the country. In some

cases, relatives may initially intend to bring the children to Nairobi to access education opportunities. However, due to socio-economic conditions, these children are then pushed into labour or other exploitative activities. In other cases, the intention at the outset is to traffic the children. Other named stakeholders included *chang'aa* brewers, bar owners and criminal gangs.

Organisations and government initiatives: Participants were able to name several non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or government departments involved in providing support services to children. However, it appeared that very few focused specifically on tackling the issue of child trafficking directly.

Push/pull factors: Based on the field research, the four main drivers behind child trafficking appear to be the rural-urban migration trend, poverty, lack of education opportunities and a generally low level of awareness about child trafficking as an illegal practice. These factors appear to be closely related and mutually reinforcing.

Trafficking and organised crime: There were numerous anecdotal reports of trafficking gangs or cartels working in the settlements that could not be substantiated with documented evidence. Notwithstanding this important caveat, the existence of organised trafficking gangs or cartels was cited by a number of respondents. One respondent spoke about children being kidnapped having first being sedated. These children are then taken outside the country. A different respondent noted that children come from the rural areas to stay with relatives and then simply disappear. It is unknown whether the relatives are complicit or whether these children are being kidnapped by an organised group. In Mukuru, a respondent spoke about a trafficking cartel “pipeline”, “very well coordinated” from Mukuru to Pipeline, on to Kisumu and then out of the country. Yet another respondent spoke about cartels engaged in child trafficking in Mukuru, but no specific information was provided because “they hide their businesses very well”.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to assignment

In January 2014, Terre des Hommes Netherlands conducted a desk review on child trafficking in urban Kenya with a view to developing an anti-trafficking programme in informal settlements. The desk review identified the need for further primary research in the Mukuru and Mathare settlements in Nairobi to provide data on the magnitude, patterns, routes and impact of the problem. In March 2014, Terre des Hommes Netherlands commissioned Integrity to conduct a rapid assessment in each of these areas. The results of this assessment provide some important preliminary findings and analysis to help inform Terre des Hommes Netherlands' internal decisions regarding future informative research scope for project design.

The aim of the rapid assessment was to interview community members in Mukuru and Mathare about whether or not child trafficking exists, and in which ways it manifests. UNICEF defines child trafficking as the “recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. It is a violation of their rights, their well-being and denies them the opportunity to reach their full potential.”¹ This definition is derived from the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*, supplementing the *United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*.² The Convention and its related Protocols were adopted by the General Assembly in November 2000, and the Protocol on the Trafficking in Persons entered into force in December 2003.

According to the 2012 Global Report on Trafficking in persons, produced by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the practice of child trafficking is documented across the East African region.³ Integrity's rapid assessment revealed preliminary findings on the transfer and receipt of children for the purposes of different kinds of exploitation, the most prominent being domestic labour and commercial sex, in the two studied settlements in Nairobi. Evidence gathered during field research in both Mukuru and Mathare shows that child trafficking to and from these areas does occur, however in the absence of a more comprehensive study, the exact scale of the issue is unknown.

¹ UNICEF: http://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_58005.html

² Further information about the *Protocol*:

<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CTOC/index.html>

³ UNODC 2012 Report: http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/Trafficking_in_Persons_2012_web.pdf

Community members, including key informants working on child-related issues, spoke in detail about the nature of exploitative activities that children are forced into. In some cases, it was challenging to distinguish between trafficking and other forms of child exploitation, indicating that a further survey research component would be required in order to inform future programming. Nevertheless, these initial findings indicate a widely held perception that there is a child trafficking problem in both settlement areas, and there are currently few government initiatives tackling the issue. As such, the findings herein indicate an opportunity for strategic intervention, though more research is needed to define potential scope and modalities.

1.2 Contextual overview

1.2.1 Legal Framework

Until 2010, the specific offence of trafficking in persons (including children) did not exist in national legislation, although Kenya is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which it ratified in July 1990. Article 35 of the CRC directly addresses trafficking: “States Parties shall take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent the abduction of, the sale of or traffic in children for any purpose or in any form.”⁴ The CRC was domesticated by an Act of Parliament in 2001 in the form of the Children’s Act.⁵

In 2010, Kenya’s parliament drafted and passed the Counter-Trafficking in Persons Act, Section 4 of which specifically addresses and criminalises child trafficking.⁶ The President at the time, Mwai Kibaki, signed the legislation into law in October 2010, although it has not taken effect until recently. Despite the creation of targeted legislation, the U.S. Department of State’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons notes:

“Kenya’s Counter-Trafficking in Persons Act went into effect in October 2012; however, the government did not launch and implement its national plan of action, convene the Counter-Trafficking in Persons Advisory Committee, take tangible action against

⁴ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights:
<http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

⁵ Representing Children Worldwide:
<http://www.law.yale.edu/rcw/rcw/jurisdictions/afe/kenya/frontpage.htm>

⁶ Full text of legislation: http://kenyalaw.org/kl/fileadmin/pdfdownloads/Acts/Counter-TraffickinginPersonsAct_No8of2010.pdf

trafficking complicity among law enforcement officials, provide shelter and other protective services for adult victims, monitor the work of overseas labour recruitment agencies, or provide wide scale anti-trafficking training to its officials, including police, labour inspectors, and children's officers.”⁷

Kenya is therefore given “Tier 2 Watch List” status (out of three tiers) by the State Department Office, as it has not demonstrated evidence of increased efforts to combat human trafficking despite passing the law.⁸ A representative from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) noted that Kenya is possibly in danger of slipping into Tier 3 status if the implementation of the Act continues to be delayed.

1.2.2 Mathare

Located 3.2 miles from Nairobi's city centre, Mathare has a population of approximately 800,000 inhabitants and is reportedly the second largest slum in Kenya after Kibera. Mathare encompasses three administrative areas – Mabatini, Mathare and Roy Sambu – and is comprised of five villages, each led by a chief. The villages are divided as follows: Area 1 (Kiamotesia), Area 2 (Kiandururu), 3C (Bondeni), 4B (Gitathuru) and 4A (Koria/Mradi).⁹ The majority of the population originates from Western and Nyanza provinces. According to the Mathare Roots Youth Group, many adults are either casual labourers in the surrounding suburbs or unemployed. Only an estimated 5% of the adult population is legally employed.¹⁰ Members of the youth focus group conducted asserted that many families are comprised of roughly seven to 12 children living in one small room, and there is little access to meals on a daily basis. According to Mathare Community Outreach, only an estimated 20% of children in Mathare attend school, and the highest level of education attained by the majority of children and youth in the area rests at the primary school.

1.2.3 Mukuru

This settlement is located on the eastern side of Nairobi, and is one of the city's largest settlement areas. According to the Covenant Community and Children Foundation, the population is estimated to be around 700,000.¹¹ Mukuru is divided into six villages: Mukuru Ruben, Mukuru Njenga, Sinai, Kayaba, Lungalunga, Fuata Nyayo. Each village is further sub-divided into a number of zones. Mukuru Ruben, for instance, has 14,

⁷ Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons: <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2013/215492.htm>

⁸ For further details on the ranking system, please see: <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2013/210548.htm>

⁹ Mathare Community Outreach: <http://www.matharevalley.org/mvalley.html#>

¹⁰ http://www.mathareroots.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=103&Itemid=27

¹¹ <http://www.covenantfoundation-kenya.org/about-mukuru.html>

namely: Rorie, Simbacool, Kosovo, Bins, Feed the Children, Wesinya, Riara, Diamond, Gateway, Mombasa, Kariobangi, Railway, Maendeleo and Katope. The majority of the community in Mukuru subsists on less than a dollar a day and there is a high level of HIV/AIDS affectedness in the area.¹²

1.3 Overview of research process

The rapid assessment took place over five days between March 10 and 17, 2014 in Mathare and Mukuru. The field research component was undertaken by researchers from Integrity Research and Consultancy. In total, the research team conducted 19 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and six Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with a total of 70 participants. Participants were chosen on the basis of pre-determined selection criteria and contacted for interviews and FGDs by two Community Facilitators, one from each settlement area.

1.4 Research limitations and challenges

1.4.1 Distinguishing between child trafficking and child labour among respondents

As mentioned above, one of the challenges faced during the research process was the disaggregation between child trafficking leading to exploitation and child exploitation occurring among children from and resident in Mathare and Mukuru. In some cases, participants reported generally on the cases of child exploitation that they have witnessed in the area. It was thus important to allocate time during the interviews and groups to discuss 'child trafficking', ensuring that research participants understood the term. Following this additional sensitisation, the researchers were able to probe participants and gather information on their perceptions of the profile of trafficked children in the areas. In addition, time was taken to analyse the data and identify the information specific to child trafficking. As such, we were able to distinguish trends specific to trafficked children vis-à-vis those that are not trafficked but nonetheless engaged in exploitative activities.

1.4.2 Size of the research areas

The size of the two informal settlements made it difficult to cover large areas of Mukuru and Mathare; for instance, the researchers focused mostly on Mukuru-Ruben, one of

¹² http://www.rubencentre.org/?page_id=28

many other settlement areas. The researchers relied on the Community Facilitators to locate participants from across the two areas that were representative of their localised communities.

1.4.3 Low level of community awareness about the illegality of child trafficking

A representative from the CRADLE Foundation noted that national awareness about child trafficking as an illegal act remains very low. Based on responses gathered from community members during FGDs in both areas, it appeared that child trafficking is often perceived as being a normal and even accepted practice, and therefore not seen as illegal or worthy of being reported to local government authorities. This was especially the case when participants spoke about children being brought from rural areas by relatives and subsequently forced to engage in exploitative activities. As such, our questions about the communities' response to cases of trafficking yielded minimal variety, as the majority of respondents noted that these cases are rarely reported to the authorities.

2. Demographics of child trafficking

As discussed above, one of the main challenges of the research was collecting information on child trafficking demographics, and more specifically, generating an estimate of the number of children targeted both in the settlements and from other areas. Gathering statistics on child trafficking as a phenomenon across Kenya, however, has been a significant challenge. The latest research assessment was conducted by IOM on human trafficking in 2007, focusing on the eastern Africa region.¹³ A representative from IOM noted that there are currently no government statistics available on child trafficking in Kenya, although the National Crime Research Centre (NCRC) has reportedly begun a new research project focusing on this issue.

In addition to a few rough estimates, the research team focused on collecting broader perceptions regarding the general profile of trafficked children in both Mukuru and Mathare.

2.1 Estimated numbers

The key informants provided few official or substantiated estimates on the number of children trafficked in either location. Some key informants provided guesses on numbers, but these were not triangulated with other sources, due to the limited number of estimates provided. There may be several reasons behind the failure to provide estimates, including the following:

1. As noted above, it can be difficult to distinguish between children who are more visibly trafficked (for instance, taken without the consent of family members) and those that are coerced by family members to leave their communities and subsequently be exploited. Both are instances of trafficking, however it appeared there was less awareness about the criminality of the act in the latter case. As a representative from Hope Worldwide noted, “there are many cases, but the numbers are not yet established. You see, it is common in Kenya for relatives to take care of children from their relatives upcountry,” thereby making it difficult to fully understand the scope of the issue.
2. Some participants noted that community members are often reluctant to report cases of child trafficking to the local government authorities, either because no action will

¹³ See full IOM report here:
<file:///Users/Alexandra/Downloads/KenyaHumanTraffickingBaselineAssessment.pdf>

be taken or because they fear repercussions. Section 7 on government initiatives provides further information regarding possible reasons behind the reluctance to report.

A member of the Nairobi General Youth Association did provide interesting information regarding child trafficking in Mathare, noting that in 2013 they assisted in helping with 31 cases involving 12 boys and 19 girls. NGYA works with the Children's Department and the Chief's Office in Mathare to trace the origins of trafficked children and assist in reintegrating them into their communities.

2.2 Age range

Mathare: Information obtained during both KIs and FGDs revealed that the age of trafficked children varies greatly, but appears to begin from around seven years old. A key informant also noted that it is common practice in the area that when children reach the age of 12 and above, they are forced out of their homes to fend for themselves, thereby potentially exposing them to traffickers. This is often due to the fact that they are leaving Class Eight¹⁴ in school and become vulnerable, a point raised by a head teacher in the community.

Mukuru: It was reported that traffickers target children of all ages, as they are used for various purposes. For example, it was revealed in the men's FGD that there are chemists in the area who buy infants from their mothers at a fee and sell them to other clients; however no further information was obtained on this phenomenon and who the people may be. The men also noted the presence of a woman in the area who used to steal children below the age of 10 years, and that girls as young as nine years become involved in prostitution. Interestingly, participants from all three FGD (men, women and youth) noted that children leaving Class Eight in school are particularly vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation, which puts them at 12 to 15 years old. Children who graduate Class Eight without opportunities for further study are more likely to seek informal employment. Without the oversight of schools and parents (parents are often encouraging children of this age to become independent) these children are more exposed to organisations and pull factors related to child trafficking. This information was corroborated by a child protection officer at the Ruben Centre.

¹⁴ Class Eight is the highest primary school level in the Kenyan education system.

2.3 Sex

Both girls and boys are considered to be targets of trafficking, however, girls were identified by the majority of KII and FGD participants in both areas as being the more vulnerable population.

The men in the Mathare FGD noted that girls are often likely to drop out of school due to early pregnancies. Once they become pregnant, parents force them out of the house to fend for themselves, thereby increasing their vulnerability and exposing them to traffickers. It was stated several times that the demand for labour is often in the area of domestic work, in addition to sex work, which several key informants noted is seen by communities as being more culturally suited to girls. According to the youth FGD in Mukuru, the nature of work (domestic and commercial sex work) makes girls easier targets, given that it is less culturally acceptable for boys to engage in this work.

2.4 Socio-economic factors

Mathare: Participants from all of the FGDs perceived orphans to be the most vulnerable group vis-à-vis child trafficking. As a teacher from the area highlighted, “caregivers would rather the orphans work than their own children. Most don’t feel any attachment towards them.” Children from poorer backgrounds, child-headed households, single-parent families, rural settings and school dropouts were also mentioned by both FGDs and KIIs as other vulnerable groups.

Mukuru: Children from poor backgrounds, orphans, children from single-parent families, and children raised by or living with step parents are the most likely targets of trafficking. Both the KIIs and FGDs noted the high prevalence of HIV/AIDs in Mukuru, which has led to high numbers of orphans in the area. A key informant and participants in the women’s FGD noted that disabled children are also vulnerable, and mostly used for engaging in street begging.

3. Child trafficking activities

The rapid assessment conducted in both Mukuru and Mathare revealed initial findings indicating that trafficked children are forced to engage in a wide variety of activities. Informants were asked to provide information about the types of activities that children are involved in throughout their experience of trafficking, and many similarities were found between the two areas, however, their manifestations differ.

As noted in Section 1, it was sometimes challenging to differentiate between activities that trafficked children are forced into, versus exploitation that occurs among children originating from the two settlements. However, two categories of activities (domestic and sex work) were highlighted as being prevalent among trafficked children either brought to the settlements or forced to leave and work elsewhere:

Domestic work: In Mathare, girls are reportedly employed as house helps in the neighbouring areas, mainly Eastleigh. Others are employed in Huruma, Mathare North, Buruburu and Muthaiga. They also perform casual jobs, such as washing clothes for a small fee of 50-100 Shillings per day. In Mukuru, it was noted that girls are employed both within Mukuru and in neighbouring areas.

Sex work: In Mathare, informants largely considered girls as the easier targets. A participant from the youth FGD noted that some are “lured with just a packet of chips.” Others are sold as prostitutes, primarily in the ‘*chang’aa dens*’ where they are used to attract customers. In Mukuru, girls as young as nine years old reportedly work in brothels and as pole dancers in clubs. According to the men and youth FGDs, many young girls in the area go to a specific club on Outer Ring Road after school to perform pole dances in exchange for money.

The prevalence of these two forms of exploitation corresponds to findings from the latest UNODC report on trafficking, which notes that the main activities occurring in the Africa and Middle East region were comprised of forced labour (49%) and sexual exploitation (36%).¹⁵

Participants mentioned other forms of child labour and exploitation that may involve both trafficked and non-trafficked children. These are listed below.

Early marriages: It was reported that some parents and guardians give out their young girls to men for sex and marriage in exchange for financial gain. A participant in the

¹⁵ 2012 UNODC Report: http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/Trafficking_in_Persons_2012_web.pdf, p.76

youth FGD in Mukuru noted, “children here are subjected to early marriage. This begins from 14 years old and especially after the girls finish Class Eight, which now seems like a fashionable trend.” However, further research is needed to determine the extent to which children from Mukuru and Mathare are trafficked in order to be sold into marriage, rather than those that are negotiated between two families, as these are two distinct phenomena.¹⁶

Bartending and brewing: Informants in Mathare noted that young girls are mostly employed in pubs or ‘*chang’aa* dens’ as waitresses. They also serve to attract customers and engage in sexual activities. Boys are often employed to brew the *chang’aa*. In Mukuru, young girls are reportedly recruited by local bar owners, usually *chang’aa* dens, to sell illicit brews. The girls often double as sex workers to attract male customers.

Street begging: Begging was noted primarily in Mathare as an activity, with children – primarily those disabled in some form – sent to the streets of the settlement to beg for money or for food.

Petty crime and gun/drug running: Informants in Mathare claimed that criminal gangs recruit young boys and girls to transport guns, drugs and occasionally to commit petty crimes on their behalf. In Mukuru, both boys and girls are reportedly recruited by criminal gangs to help in transporting their weapons, to engage in petty theft, and to peddle drugs on their behalf.

Street vending: Mathare respondents noted that both girls and boys hawk food and snacks on the streets on behalf of their parents.

‘Kuchemba’ or scrap metal collection: Respondents in both areas claim that this is an activity of trafficked children. Young children are often sent by their parents to collect scrap material, while others are employed by dealers to collect materials for sale.

It is noteworthy that participants in each of the Mukuru FGDs stated that not all of these activities are directly forced upon children; some will search for income-generating activities, for instance street vending, in order to support their families.

Men participating in the Mathare FGD also noted that occasionally there are cases where children are not directly forced into exploitation, yet they engage voluntarily due to difficult circumstances, notably hunger, lack of schooling and, in the case of girls and teenagers, providing for children if they become pregnant.

¹⁶ Short paper from ECPAT UK on the phenomenon of child trafficking for forced marriage: http://www.ecpat.org.uk/sites/default/files/forced_marriage_ecpat_uk_wise.pdf

4. Trafficking routes

Participants spoke both about inward and outward flows of children in Mathare and Mukuru, although the majority of cases cited appeared to be inward-focused, with children coming from rural areas across Kenya. In most cases, the area of origin is determined by the ethnic composition of the area to which children are trafficked. For example, in Mathare where the dominant ethnic groups are the Luo and Luyha, most of the children are perceived to be sourced from the Western and Nyanza regions. In Mukuru, children are perceived to be mainly sourced from lower eastern (Ukambani) and Kisii regions - the dominant groups being the Kamba and Kisii. More details about each of these areas are provided below.

4.1 Source and origin areas

Mathare: Information from the FGDs and KIIIs revealed a widely held perception among informants that most children involved in trafficking are sourced from the Nyanza and Western regions by relatives and friends, who issue promises of education, employment opportunities and better lives. All participants also mentioned Mathare itself as a source area. Children are taken from the settlement to other areas, mainly to work in construction companies and in neighbouring estates, including Huruma, Mathare North, BuruBuru, Muthaiga, and in Westlands. A participant of the men's FGD cited a case of an orphan who was taken to work in Nakuru from Mathare.

Cases of children coming from outside the country to Mathare are not perceived to be very common, although two key informants mentioned a few cases of children originating from Uganda.

Mukuru: According to an officer in the Chief's Office, children trafficked to Mukuru mainly originate from lower eastern (Ukambani) and Kisii (Nyanza) areas, as well as the Central and Western regions of Kenya. A few cases of children brought from Uganda to work as house girls were also mentioned. Mukuru itself was also identified as being a source area for trafficking, as with Mathare.

4.2 Transit routes and destinations

Mathare: Participants noted that the majority of children brought to or originating from Mathare are sent to work in Eastleigh as domestic workers and casual labourers. There are cases of children being sent to work in Eastleigh during the day, returning to Mathare

in the evening. There are also reported cases of children sent to other estates, including Kariobangi, BuruBuru, Huruma, and Muthaiga. Others are recruited by house help bureaus in Ngara and Eastleigh.

A respondent at Mission of Hope International spoke of a case where “an eight year old girl was brought into Mathare from Machakos by a relative, under the disguise that she would be going to school. Yet she ended up as a house-help. The child was mistreated and ended up reporting at the chief’s office and was later on picked up by the relatives and taken back home.” A Village Elder noted that children are brought to Mathare from Machakos, Meru, Kisumu and Kakamega.

A key informant from the Children Officer’s Department in Mathare described a case of “a Class Eight girl who went into Huruma to work while pregnant and was accused of stealing. She was later on found outside the children’s office crying.” She further noted that children brought from around the country end up in Mathare and Umoja (as labourers), or in Uganda. Participants in the men’s and youth FGD reported cases of children being trafficked to Saudi Arabia at 17 years old, but no specific details were provided. It is noteworthy that there were few reported cases of children being trafficked outside of Kenya. According to the youth FGD, the lack of identification/travel documents for the children limits this possibility.

Mukuru: Most children are brought from the rural areas to Mukuru to work in the settlement as domestic workers, bartenders, waitresses and commercial sex workers (as described in Section 3) or to be taken to others areas mostly neighbouring estates, including Pipeline, Komarock, BuruBuru, South B, Utawala and Kayole. A respondent from the Good Samaritan Children’s Home described a case where “a girl of about nine was brought into Mukuru from Ukambani by a neighbour to work in the neighbouring estates, but she was mistreated, ran away and ended up in the Home.” Cases were also mentioned of children who were trafficked to Uganda and Tanzania. The participants were not able to identify what type of exploitation these children were subsequently subjected to in these countries.

5. Key stakeholders

The key stakeholders involved in child trafficking can be divided into three broad categories:

1. Actors who are directly involved in trafficking children, for instance relatives and cartels;
2. Actors who are complicit in trafficking, for instance those who engage children in domestic work, sexual exploitation or working in *chang'aa* dens;
3. Members of the community who either ignore or fail to report cases of child trafficking once they become aware of them.

It can be challenging for research to differentiate between these actors, given the sensitive nature of the topic, however the stakeholders listed below were identified by participants as being instrumental in initiating, facilitating or condoning child trafficking activities.

The key stakeholders mentioned by both KIIs and FGD participants in Mathare and Mukuru included parents, relatives, friends, business people, peers and criminal gangs. **Relatives**, however, were the stakeholder mentioned most frequently by research participants. It was noted that it is often aunts and uncles who take advantage of cultural traditions whereby children are entrusted to the care of family members and taken from rural areas with the promise to their parents or guardians of better education opportunities in Nairobi. A key informant in Mukuru noted “many children come from rural areas to Nairobi to stay with relatives. After some time they disappear – nobody knows where they go. In one case, a child was followed and she was found working as a house girl in South B.” In Mathare, some participants argued that in a few cases, relatives have good intentions towards the children when they are removed from rural areas, however difficult circumstances such as hunger or unemployment sometimes force them to push children into income-generating labour.

Participants also noted that most of the traffickers are well known by the community, however members of the same community feel helpless to assist. A participant in the youth FGD in Mukuru noted, “Neighbours contribute a lot [to the problem]. A case of a girl in Class Eight last year: the girl disappeared and it was revealed that a woman, who is a neighbour, was giving her out to men to take advantage of her.”

In other cases, community members do not perceive child trafficking to be a significant issue, or to be their own responsibility. The attitude, as expressed by one participant in

the men's FGD in Mathare, is one of "mind your own business. It's my child and what I do with them is my own business. Take care of yours."

Criminal gangs were also reported as agents of trafficking. It was reported that gangs recruit children and force them to help transport guns, peddle drugs and in other cases to engage in theft. Participants in both the men and women's FGDs in Mukuru mentioned a group known as 'Gaza' that is involved in child recruitment (both boys and girls) for criminal purposes. They are reportedly identifiable by a specific tattoo on their back, and occasionally others on their upper arms.

Others mentioned **chang'aa brewers** as a key stakeholder. These brewers are reported to employ young girls who serve as both waitresses and sex workers in the area. In Mathare, boys were also reportedly employed to brew the *chang'aa*. Older prostitutes, in agreement with bar owners, are also reported to recruit young girls into the trade in the Mukuru area. *Chang'aa* brewers were said to bring children from rural areas in Kenya with the promise of schooling opportunities or even employment.

According to a social worker at the Ruben Centre in Mukuru, there is also a **trafficking cartel** that recruits children from the settlement and transfers them to other areas of the country and even across the border. According to this social worker, it is a well-coordinated cartel that has networks in Kisumu and Kakamega.

Overall, **women** were viewed in both Mukuru and Mathare as the main perpetrators of trafficking. It was noted that this might be due to the fact that they are easily trusted by family members given their cultural role as caregivers and nurturers. It is interesting to note that in Mathare, the participants in the women's FGD were very reluctant to share information about the problem. They also declined to name any of the key stakeholders involved in child trafficking: "It is very hard to know who is involved; you will only observe that someone is being mistreated but you might not know the perpetrator."

They noted it is difficult to know if women are involved in child trafficking because children will often claim that whomever they are staying with is a relative, for instance an aunt, and will not give details. They further noted that there is not much one can do as an individual in terms of reporting cases of trafficking.

6. Government initiatives

Based on information provided by key informants, there was a general indication that certain government bodies working in Mathare and Mukuru have been insufficiently proactive in either measuring levels of child trafficking in the area or directly tackling the issue. The two most cited government bodies include:

Children's Department

One key informant cited the work of the Children's Department in the area, noting that his organisation works closely with them to help children trace their origins and reintegrate them into their families. However, FGD participants in Mathare were unaware of any government initiatives in the area to help address the problem of child trafficking. Two key informants noted that although there is a Children's Department office in the settlement, they didn't seem to be prioritising the issue of child trafficking.

In Mukuru, participants mentioned the Chief's Office as being key to addressing the challenges faced by children in the area, reportedly working closely with the Ruben centre and the Children's Department. However, the Chief's Office did not seem aware of issues related specifically to trafficking. The Assistant Chief of Mukuru stated he had not heard of any cases since he began his role in 2010. The Children's Department in Mukuru, through the Voluntary Child Officer (VCO), was seen by participants to be doing a lot to assist in cases of child abuse and help in tracing the origins of trafficked children. They did note, however, that the fact that the VCO is not paid created some challenges.

Not everyone reported having a positive experience, however. One key informant from Mukuru described numerous obstacles faced when trying to report a case of child trafficking to the local government: "The whole case was turned on us as an organisation and we were fearful of following it up".

Police

Three police officers interviewed during the research in the two areas did not perceive child trafficking to be a significant problem, contrary to the majority of the other research participants. This might be due to several factors, including: unwillingness to investigate instances of trafficking; little capacity to do so and possibly being complicit in or turning a blind eye to the problem. The youth group FGD participants noted that the area lacks friendly reporting centres and the community members fear reporting such action due to perceived repercussions from perpetrators. Participants from the men's FGD in Mukuru cited corruption among the police as a major impediment to the successful investigation of the cases.

7. Analysis of push and pull factors

The assessment revealed that although the problem of child trafficking exists in the two areas, it is difficult to establish the magnitude of the problem. It is notable that community awareness about the issue is very low. Participants routinely cited a number of socio-economic and cultural factors that increase child vulnerability to trafficking.

Rural-Urban Migration Effect

For some children, the promise of a city life is often a sufficient reason to convince them to depart from their community with a relative to Nairobi. A participant in the Mukuru youth FGD illustrated this by posing the following question to the group: “Who among us if given the opportunity to go abroad, irrespective of the work involved, will resist? Even for the children who have never been in Nairobi, this is an opportunity of a life time.” The promise of a better life, schooling opportunities and employment were identified as major reasons to lure children into trafficking, as well as to convince parents to participate. Another participant noted: “In some cases, parents from poor rural backgrounds plead with those from Nairobi to go with the child. There is a lot of desperation. Many see Nairobi as their only hope to a better life.”

Poverty

FGDs and KIIs in both Mukuru and Mathare reported that poverty, characterised by low income, poor living conditions, lack of employment opportunities and lack of food, is the main cause of child trafficking in both areas. A participant in a FGD stated, “in most cases for children from well-off families, parents will always come looking for their children [if they are taken].” However, in cases of low-income families, parents encourage their children to leave the home to search for employment opportunities that will enable them to help provide for their families. Although this does not necessarily mean that parents are directly engaged in trafficking, the fact that they are pushed to leave home makes children more vulnerable to being trafficked to urban areas and subsequently pushed into exploitative activities.

Another related challenge is the difficulty families face in providing basic services such as healthcare and education to children, especially in rural areas. A social worker at the Leo Toto Children’s Home in Mukuru stated, “children from upcountry who are HIV positive are normally brought to Nairobi for NGOs to take care of them. The assumption is that care for these individuals is better in Nairobi than in the rural areas, and there is also that dependency.” Once they leave their families and are brought to urban areas, this may also increase their vulnerability to trafficking.

Single Parent Households/Orphans

Both FGD and KII participants noted that orphans and children in single-parent households were more likely to be victims of trafficking. Respondents agreed that a child orphaned due to HIV/AIDs (high prevalence in the two informal settlements) was at a higher risk of trafficking. In some cases, an orphan's replacement caregiver(s) (often family or neighbours) view them as a burden. As a result, it is easy for these vulnerable children to be sacrificed to trafficking when times are lean.

Children from broken families, for instance those in single parent households or living with step-parents, were also reported to be easy targets of trafficking. Along with child victims of familial abuse or those engaged in child labour, children in these conditions are more likely to run away, thus increasing their risk.

Education

Limited access to education and the lack of educational opportunities is perceived to be a major push-factor. The youth FGDs in both Mathare and Mukuru argued that most of the victims are Class Eight graduates or drop outs who have no chances of advancing their studies due to cost. Furthermore, participants decried the lack of programmes to help children transit into secondary education after Class Eight. Participants claimed that in some instances relatives take advantage of this vulnerable situation and promise parents or guardians of such children schooling and skills training opportunities in Nairobi.

The promise of schooling opportunities was cited as the main pull factor for the children from rural areas. A key informant in Mathare noted, "many children are forced to drop out of school due to lack of school fees. They then become frustrated by life, girls get married early and boys are involved in odd jobs or go to the streets."

Lack of Awareness

Low community awareness about child trafficking was also reported to exacerbate the problem. Participants in FGDs both in Mukuru and Mahare blamed low awareness as a key part of the problem of trafficking. Respondents claim that trafficking occurs while the community watches. A head teacher from Mathare noted "community members are not aware of children's rights, they don't see it as a problem. For example, parents in the rural areas believe that their children are in very good hands. They don't see anything wrong with the children being taken up by relatives."

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

Trafficking of children in Kenya is a dynamic phenomenon, which takes different forms and involves the movement of children, both within and outside national borders. Internal or inward-focused trafficking, with children coming from rural areas to work in the city and its outskirts, was more dominant in the two informal settlements than the trafficking of children beyond Kenya's borders. The assessment revealed that the problem of child trafficking does exist in the two settlement areas, though it is unclear to what extent.

The assessment further revealed that trafficking targeted children of all ages. Both boys and girls were reported to be potential targets, however girls were reported as the most vulnerable group due to economic, social and cultural factors.

Children from socially and economically vulnerable backgrounds were reported as more at risk of trafficking. As cited above, orphans were particularly noted as key targets. A key life transition, the graduation from Class Eight, marks a particularly vulnerable time for children, particularly those from impoverished or insecure family units. Few current programmes exist to help children transition from primary school into the work force, and there are also few opportunities for scholarship or fee waiver programmes at secondary schools.

Traffickers are thought to often be relatives/ family members and people who are well known by the parents and community. Relatives were reported as the major actors in trafficking, usually promising the children and their parents schooling opportunities, employment or better lives in Nairobi.

Research with community members indicated that the level of community awareness of this issue is low. The government's ability to act on cases reported is limited and as such the community is apathetic of any government action.

Once children are trafficked, they engage primarily in domestic work and are subjected to sexual exploitation. Other activities that children engage in more generally in Mathare and Mukuru include begging, street vending, scrap material collection, work in bars and criminal activities like drug peddling and stealing. There are likely to be trafficked children who are also forced into these activities, however the rapid assessment uncovered a primary focus on domestic and sex work.

General Recommendations

Training, sensitisation and awareness creation: This should be at the community and government level. It will be important to train government officers and children's officers on how to handle and address cases of child trafficking. At the community level, communities should be sensitised on issues surrounding child trafficking, related dangers and reporting mechanisms.

Economic empowerment to caregivers and parents: One of the main factors identified as causing trafficking is poverty. Providing avenues through which parents can generate income will go a long way in keeping children in school and protecting them from traffickers. Moreover, families must be incentivised to keep their children in school given the associated costs and perceived cost of losing a member of the family work force to schooling. Programmes rewarding students financially for progression through grades have been successful in other parts of East Africa, particularly as it relates to girls' education.

Educational support for children: Most children drop out of school or are unable to proceed after Class Eight due to lack of school fees and opportunities for study. If these opportunities are availed to them, the risk of children being trafficked will potentially be minimised. Technical training centres to create opportunities for self-employment for young people were recommended by participants in both the KIIs and FGDs.

Rehabilitation, counselling programmes and support to victims of trafficking: According to respondents, many trafficked children emerge traumatised from the experience, while others lack avenues for escape and are exposed for long periods of time. Some participants noted that communities have no means of helping the children once they are rescued.

ADDENDUM

Estimates on numbers of trafficked children in Mathare and Mukuru settlements, Nairobi, Kenya

As noted in Integrity's report on the rapid assessment of child trafficking in Mathare and Mukuru settlements, obtaining concrete statistics on the numbers of children involved proved challenging. This addendum collates information provided during key informant interviews and focus group discussions regarding numbers of child trafficking cases. While some estimates were provided, it was not possible to verify or triangulate the information during the five days allotted for field research.

Mathare Cases

- A Village Elder in Mathare reported that an average of five cases is reported each month to the Chief's Office. According to him, the children are mainly brought in from Machakos, Meru, Kisumu and Kakamega.
- A member of the Nairobi General Youth Association noted that in 2013 he assisted in helping with 31 cases involving 12 boys and 19 girls. He explained that the NGLYA works with the Children's Department of the Chief's Office in Mathare to trace the origins of trafficked children and assist in reintegrating them into their communities.
- A programme manager at Mission of Hope International spoke of a case where "an eight year old girl was brought into Mathare from Machakos by a relative, under the disguise that she would be going to school. Yet she ended up as a house-help. The child was mistreated and ended up reporting at the chief's office and was later on picked up by the relatives and taken back home."

The most concrete estimate came from the Village Elder, who noted an average of five cases each month, implying roughly 60 children trafficked to Mathare from different parts of Kenya a year. A further 33 cases were mentioned, as outlined above, but it was not possible to establish an associated timeframe.

Mukuru Cases

- A social worker from the Good Samaritan Children's home described a case where "a girl of about nine was brought into Mukuru from Ukambani by a neighbour to work

in the neighbouring estates, but she was mistreated, ran away and ended up in this home.”

- A key informant in Mukuru noted “many children come from rural areas to Nairobi to stay with relatives. After some time they disappear – nobody knows where they go. In one case, a child was followed and she was found working as a house girl in South B.”
- A participant in the youth FGD in Mukuru noted, “Neighbours contribute a lot [to the problem]. A case of a girl in Class Eight last year. The girl disappeared and it was revealed that a woman, who is a neighbour, was giving her out to men to take advantage of her.”
- An inspector from the Mukuru police station was also interviewed, and he noted that child trafficking is not a serious problem in the area. He did note that there have been two cases where young girls from Western Province were brought to the settlement to work as domestic labourers (‘house helps’).
- Two people were arrested in Eastleigh, and children were rescued and taken back to school (Village elder).

In total, therefore, five specific cases of child trafficking were directly referenced. However, given that participants mentioned several other locations where children were trafficked to and from, we can infer that there have been far more cases. These include children trafficked from lower eastern (Ukambani) and Kisii (Nyanza) areas, as well as the Central and Western regions of Kenya. A few cases of children brought from Uganda to work as house girls were also mentioned, though no specific numbers were given. Regarding children trafficked from Mukuru to other areas, the following neighbouring estates were mentioned: Pipeline, Komarock, BuruBuru, South B, Utawala and Kayole.

Secondary Sources

During a short interview with a representative of IOM, it was noted that no statistics exist on child trafficking in Kenya. IOM conducted a baseline survey of human trafficking in Eastern Africa, including Kenya, in 2007. According to IOM, this is the most up-to-date research on Kenya, although it was not focused specifically on children.¹⁷

¹⁷http://publications.iom.int/bookstore/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=1&products_id=726%5C

The 2012 UNODC report on human trafficking noted there were 4,200 victims of child trafficking across the Middle East and Africa, however this data was not disaggregated according to country.¹⁸

In 2008, Kenya's National Bureau of Statistics produced a "Child Labour Analytical Report – Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey."¹⁹ While this survey did not focus on child trafficking specifically, the data is interesting given the overlap between the two phenomena. The survey results show that a total of 773,696 children were classified as being in child labour, with 13,621 in Nairobi. Global child labour estimates produced by ILO show that in Sub-Saharan Africa, 47,735 children were involved in labour (21.7% of all children in the region) in 2012. This decreased from 25.4% in 2008.²⁰

¹⁸ http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/Trafficking_in_Persons_2012_web.pdf, p.74

¹⁹ <http://www.ilo.org/ipecinfo/product/viewProduct.do;jsessionid=716529ea9611709e3bf1e352cfc214a5817494f4ef1276a346e553b6e11e8bda.e3aTbhULbNmSe34MchaRah8Tahv0?productId=16175>

²⁰ http://www.ilo.org/ipec/Informationresources/WCMS_IPEC_PUB_23015/lang--en/index.htm

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