



STOP

**SEX TRAFFICKING
OF CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE**



SEX TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN IN SINGAPORE

What is child trafficking?

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation.

UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime

A child is anyone under the age of 18 years.

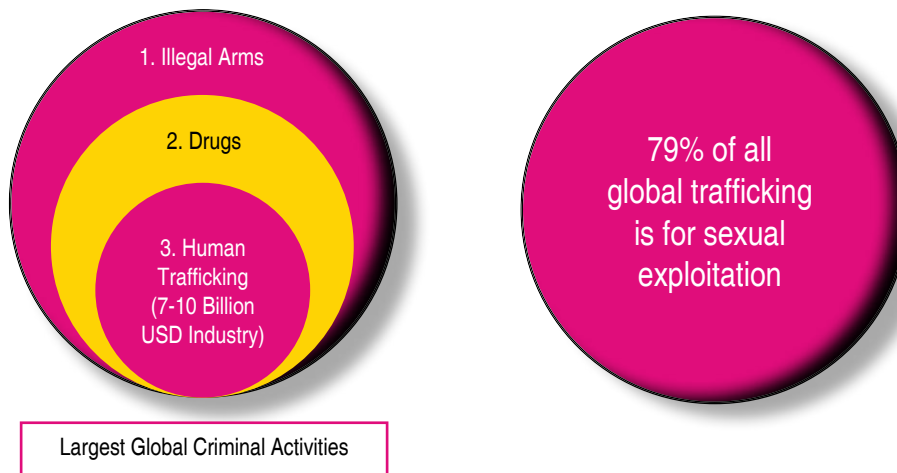
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

What's the problem?

GLOBAL SEX TRAFFICKING

Human trafficking is a complex phenomenon fueled by the tremendous growth in the global sex market. Exploitation is driven by poverty, uneven development, official corruption, gender discrimination, harmful traditional and cultural practices, civil unrest, natural disasters and lack of political will to end it.

The number of child victims trafficked worldwide for sexual exploitation or cheap labour on an annual basis is 1.2 million.¹ Human trafficking, the third largest international crime, following illegal drugs and arms trafficking, is believed to be worth billions of dollars each year. Driving the trade is the demand for commercial sexual exploitation. Seventy-nine per cent of all global trafficking is for sexual exploitation.²



CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING IN SINGAPORE

Reliable figures on child victims of trafficking for sexual purposes in Singapore are difficult to obtain despite the fact that trafficking of children exists in the country, as evidenced by media and non-governmental agency reports. In the Southeast Asia region alone, UNICEF estimates that there are over one million children victimised by the sex industry.³ Between 2004 and 2007, 111 cases of trafficking in women and girls were investigated in Singapore.⁴

Who gets trafficked?

According to the US Government's *Trafficking in Persons Report 2008*, in general, most child victims are trafficked to Singapore from neighbouring countries in Asia, particularly the Philippines, Cambodia, Thailand, India, Sri Lanka and China.⁵ However, the Government of Singapore does not agree with the US State Department's findings on human trafficking in Singapore, saying it is a "gross distortion of reality".⁶ Some children are also trafficked through Singapore and sent to other destinations abroad.⁷

Children may be at greater risk of trafficking from places where they are less protected. This may be because the law is weak or not properly enforced or because children are less aware of the risks of trafficking and are more easily deceived. Countries are considered as:

- 'Sending' or 'origin' – from where children are sent;
- 'Transit' – where the children might be moved through and temporarily kept on the way to their final destination; and
- 'Receiving' or 'destination' – where the children finally end up.

Depending on the reason for trafficking, some countries may only be sending, while others might be both sending and transit. Some countries can be all three. Singapore is primarily a destination country and to a much lesser extent, also a transit country.

Who creates demand?

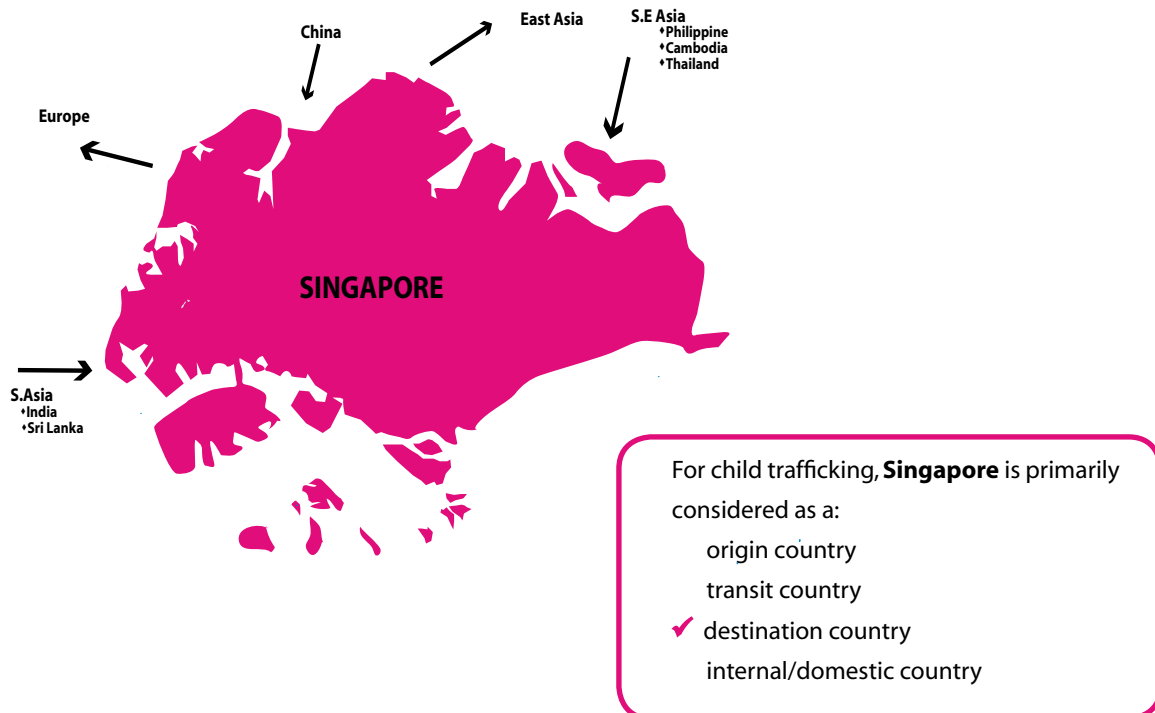
Traffickers prey on children and young people to meet the sexual demands of paedophiles and people who pay for sex. Any person who patronises the commercial sex market may end up sexually exploiting a child. There is actually no common profile of perpetrators who sexually exploit children – they may be young, old, married, single; they come from all kinds of socio-economic backgrounds and work in all kinds of professions. Some Singaporean men are also child sex tourists, and frequent countries such as Thailand and Indonesia.⁸

CASE STUDY

- A Singaporean-native, professor Darwin Rianto Lim, was arrested by Thai police in April 2007 after he placed offers on the Internet to purchase sex with teenage boys in Thailand. However, he is currently on the run, having jumped bail.⁹

Who are the traffickers?

Traffickers can be a stranger or someone the child knows, such as a relative or a friend. Traffickers are often part of an organised criminal network that 'recruits' children and supplies them with fake identification. They may also pose as boyfriends or girlfriends in order to convince children to leave for a new life.



CASE STUDIES

- Three Malaysians were arrested in Singapore after they were caught trying to traffic Sri Lankan children to London via Paris. The Malaysians were caught at Changi Airport in Singapore with three children, aged 11, 14 and 15. Shangar Shanmugam, 39, was sentenced to 15 months in jail while his sister, Patmavathi Shanmugam, 31, received 10 months. Their associate, Vigilechimi Suparayan, 61, was sentenced to four months in prison. Shangar was promised USD \$1000 by a woman known to him as Naga to deliver the children to London. Naga falsified three Malaysian passports for the children at a Malaysian immigration office. Shangar gave a cut of the money to his sister and asked her to pose as the mother of one of the children, the report said.¹⁰
- A Chinese court sentenced two men to death after they were convicted of heading gangs that bought 82 children from their parents and sold them to families in Singapore. An official confirmed that Ke Jianxin was convicted for heading a syndicate that trafficked 38 children to Singapore between 1995 and 2002. Another gang leader, Ke Pengjie, was sentenced to death for selling 44 children. According to reports in the state-run *Shanghai Daily* and Fujian-based newspapers, the rings were based in Anxi, a poor county in south-eastern China's Fujian province, which has a large emigrant population in Singapore. The reports stated that the gangs paid between €495 to €1400 for the children, who were "ordered" by Chinese families in Singapore and smuggled into the city-state on tourist visas.¹¹

- Four suspected racketeers involved in the smuggling of more than 20 Sri Lankan children to Singapore were arrested and taken in for questioning. The National Child Protection Authority disclosed that the parents allegedly sold their children for USD\$15,745 each. The NCPA Chairperson, Jagath Wellawattha, said that in the latest case, three children found abandoned at the Singapore airport were flown back to Sri Lanka.¹²
- Ricky Ho, a Chinese national who lives in Singapore, lured five Indian girls to the city state with the promise of jobs. On reaching their destination, they were employed as domestic help in Singaporean homes. However, six months later, they were transported to Malaysia and sold to a local club in the capital. The victims said that Ho lures girls from the state of Manipur in India, to Singapore then Malaysia, where they are exploited. They also claimed that there may be more than 100 girls from Manipur in Singapore and Malaysia who were recruited by him.¹³ In connection with this case, Manipur authorities arrested Philip Gangmei, a local racketeer from Manipur on 23 September 2008. Three other arrests were made on 3 October 2008, also in Manipur.¹⁴

How can we stop the trafficking of children?

LAW AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

- While the Government of Singapore has demonstrated some law enforcement efforts and made amendments to its Penal Code to combat trafficking in persons, it must conduct thorough investigations and prosecution of child trafficking cases.
- The Government must also increase efforts to identify trafficking victims among at-risk groups, such as children arrested for prostitution and illegal migrants, and at the same time improve the prosecution and conviction of trafficking offenders.
- Establish a child-friendly legal process where victims of trafficking are not criminalised or punished in any way, but are provided with proper legal counsel and guardianship.
- While Singapore has ratified the *Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)*, it must still ratify the *Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography* and the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*.

International Conventions/Laws	Date of Ratification by Singapore	Date of Reports Submitted	UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Recommendations for Singapore
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	1995	Initial Report - 2009	The Committee recommends that the State party ratify the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.
Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography	Not yet	N/A	N/A

International Conventions/Laws	Date of Ratification by Singapore	Date of Reports Submitted	UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Recommendations for Singapore
The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Trafficking Protocol)	Not yet	N/A	N/A
ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour	2001	N/A	N/A

PREVENTION OF CHILD TRAFFICKING AND VICTIM PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE

- The Government of Singapore has not adopted the *Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action*. It is recommended that they do so as a priority to ensure that all children are safe from commercial sexual exploitation.
- The Government must conduct public awareness campaigns to inform the general public about the issue of human trafficking, the amendments made to the Penal Code that criminalise trafficking and the penalties for committing such offences.
- The Government must also take steps to implement prevention initiatives in countries of origin by cooperating with governments in the region for safe migration and awareness-raising on trafficking.
- The Government must make further efforts to protect trafficking victims, such as institutionalising child-friendly procedures in law enforcement, child protection policies in relevant agencies and state operated shelters. At a minimum, child victims must be provided with health and psychosocial care, vocational training, legal counseling and repatriation/ reintegration services.
- The Government must undertake specific measures to reduce demand for sex with children within the legalised commercial sex industry in Singapore.

TO REPORT A SUSPECTED INCIDENT OF CHILD TRAFFICKING, CONTACT:

Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS): Tel (65) 1800 258 6378

MORE INFORMATION

- ECPAT International: www.ecpat.net
- The Body Shop and ECPAT Stop Trafficking of Children and Young People Campaign : www.thebodyshop.com/stop

Endnotes

- ¹ UNICEF. *UNICEF calls for increased efforts to prevent trafficking of children*. 16 June 2007. http://www.unicef.org/media/media_40002.html
- ² UNODC. *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*. 2009. <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/global-report-on-trafficking-in-persons.html>
- ³ UNICEF UK. *Commercial sexual exploitation*. Position paper. 28 January 2004. Accessed from: http://www.unicef.org.uk/unicefuk/policies/policy_detail.asp?policy=8
- ⁴ UNODC. *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*. 2009. <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/global-report-on-trafficking-in-persons.html>
- ⁵ US State Department. *Trafficking in Persons Report 2008*. Viewed at www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2008/
- ⁶ Singapore Ministry of Home Affairs Response to the US 2008 Trafficking In Persons Report. Accessed from: http://www.mha.gov.sg/news_details.aspx?nid=MT10NA%3D%3D-MPRTYj7jQrI%3D
- ⁷ "Three Malaysians Jail for Child Trafficking". *Earth Times*. April 2008. Accessed at: <http://www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/198433,three-malaysians-jailed-in-singapore-for-child-trafficking.html>
- ⁸ *Singaporean Press*. December 2006. <http://www.todayonline.com/articles/153494.asp>
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ "Three Malaysians Jail for Child Trafficking". *Earth Times*. April 2008. Accessed at: <http://www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/198433,three-malaysians-jailed-in-singapore-for-child-trafficking.html>
- ¹¹ UNICEF Child Trafficking News Archives. 2005. Accessed at: http://www.mha.gov.sg/news_details.aspx?nid=MT10NA%3D%3D-MPRTYj7jQrI%3D
- ¹² "Trafficking of Sri Lankan Children to Singapore". *HumanTrafficking.Org*. Accessed on 24 February 2009 from: <http://www.humantrafficking.org/updates/775>
- ¹³ "Trafficking Victims Recount Their Ordeal". *The Shanghai Express*. Accessed on 26 February 2009 from: <http://www.e-pao.net/epRelatedNews.asp?heading=5&src=141008>
- ¹⁴ Basu , Arpit and Singh, Saroj. "5 Manipuri girls rescued from Malaysia nightclub". *The Times of India*. Accessed on 26 February 2009 from: http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Cities/Kolkata/_5_Manipuri_girls_rescued_from_Malaysia_nightclub/articleshow/3585401.cms



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