



# CHILD TRAFFICKING IS INCREASING

**We need to take action now!**



OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON  
VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

## 2025 report to the Human Rights Council

Office of the Special Representative of the  
Secretary-General on Violence against Children

## The Special Representative and the Team



**United  
Nations**

The 'United Nations' or the UN, is an organization of almost all the countries in the world, created to promote development, peace and security, and human rights.

The UN is a place where Member States (countries that are members of the UN) discuss common challenges and find solutions TOGETHER, for all humanity, including CHILDREN. The head of the UN is called the 'Secretary-General'. The UN Secretary-General selects people to work with him on specific issues.



**The Special Representative  
of the Secretary-General on  
Violence Against Children (or  
SRSG-VAC), Najat Maalla M'jid**  
is one of them.

Najat and her team help countries end all forms of **violence against children**, in all settings, everywhere, always putting children first!

# CHILD TRAFFICKING

Is when criminals  
(called 'traffickers')  
**trick or force children**  
(it is called recruitment)  
**to take advantage of them**  
(it is called exploitation)

**Exploitation** is when somebody takes advantage of a child, to encourage or force them to do things that are harmful (or in violation of their rights), and makes money or receives something in exchange.

**! AS A CHILD YOU CANNOT AGREE TO BE EXPLOITED.**



Sometimes children are moved  
to another city or country for  
this purpose.

Child Trafficking  
happens in all  
regions of the  
world.

Children are trafficked  
for different reasons, but  
it's very common that  
they are trafficked to be  
forced to work or to be  
sexually exploited.

Child trafficking  
is a serious crime  
and a violation of  
human rights.

Digital technologies  
make it easier to  
trick children into  
trafficking

Traffickers  
benefit from the  
vulnerability of  
children.

Child  
trafficking  
is driven by  
money.



# HOW MANY CHILDREN ARE TRAFFICKED AND WHY?

It's very difficult to know exactly how many children are trafficked, because many of them don't report it.

More than one third of victims of human trafficking that reported are children

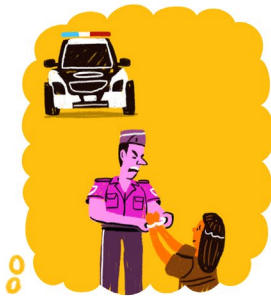


UN Office on Drugs and Crime says that in 2022, 38% of reported victims are children.

For example, children may not report and ask for help because ...



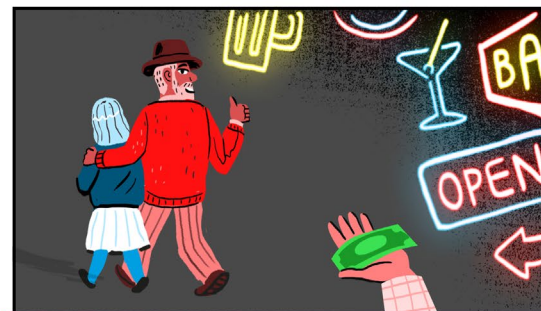
They fear of being harmed by their traffickers



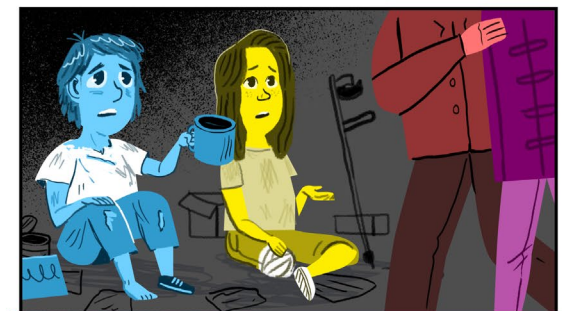
They also fear that they might get arrested



or maybe there is no way to report it.



Girls tend to be trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation, child marriage or for domestic work.

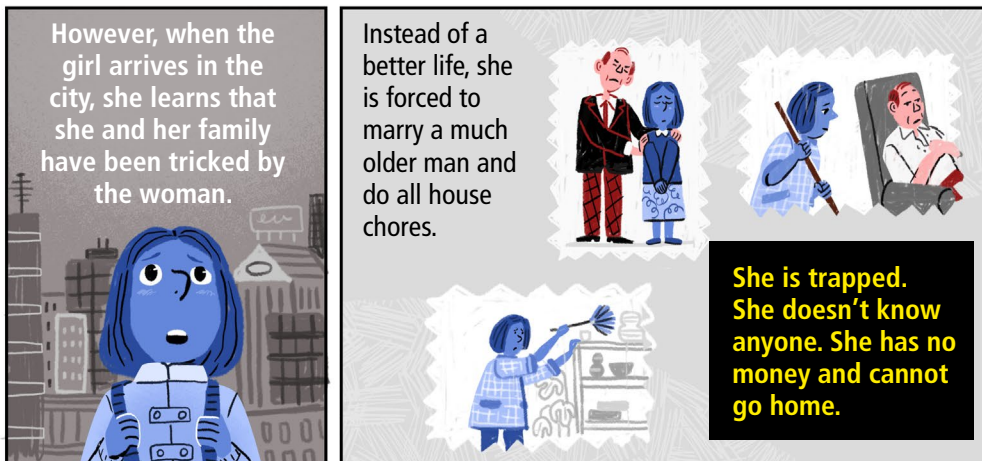
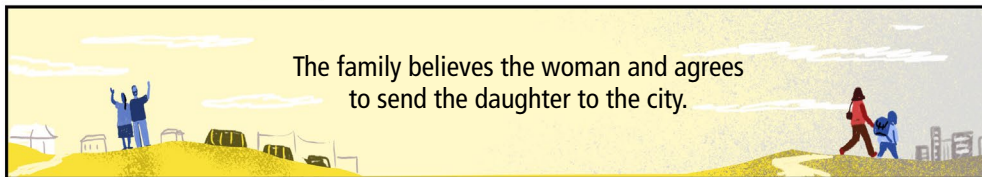


Many boys are trafficked for forced labour and begging on streets.





# A STORY ABOUT **child marriage**



# A STORY ABOUT **child labour**





# WHO CAN BE TRAFFICKED?

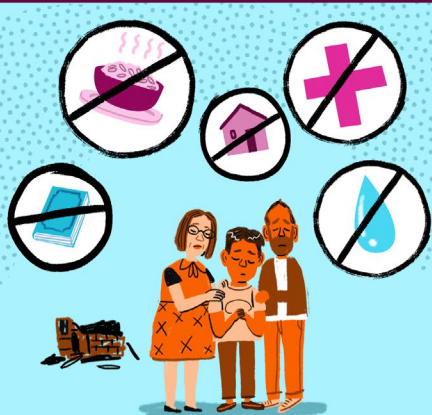
Anyone can be trafficked, but this booklet focuses on children.

All children of all ages can be victims of trafficking, but these situations can make children more vulnerable.



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE VULNERABLE TO TRAFFICKING?

### In times of crisis, like war or natural disasters:



families might lose their homes, struggle to find food, and children might not have access to important services like school and healthcare.

Many people, including children, might have to leave their home and their town... sometimes their country.



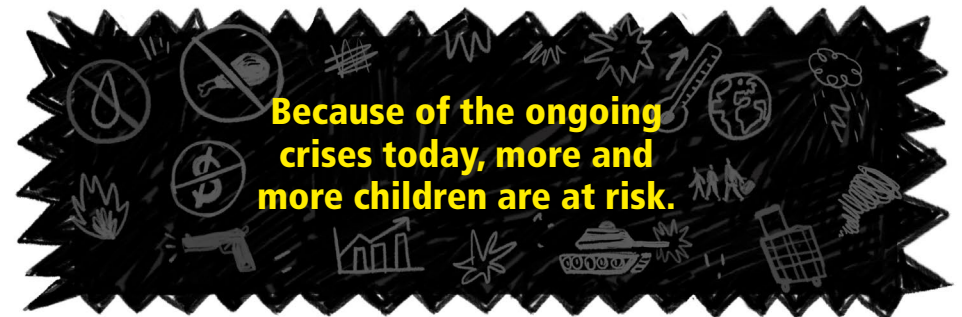
Some children might lose their family and might be on the move, alone.



Poverty and discrimination also make children more vulnerable



Because of the ongoing crises today, more and more children are at risk.





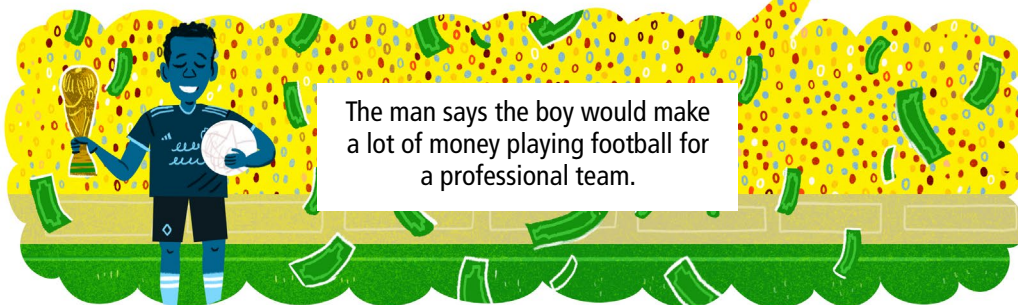
## FOR EXAMPLE

Poverty and not having enough food can make children more vulnerable. Sometimes, families are also tricked by traffickers.

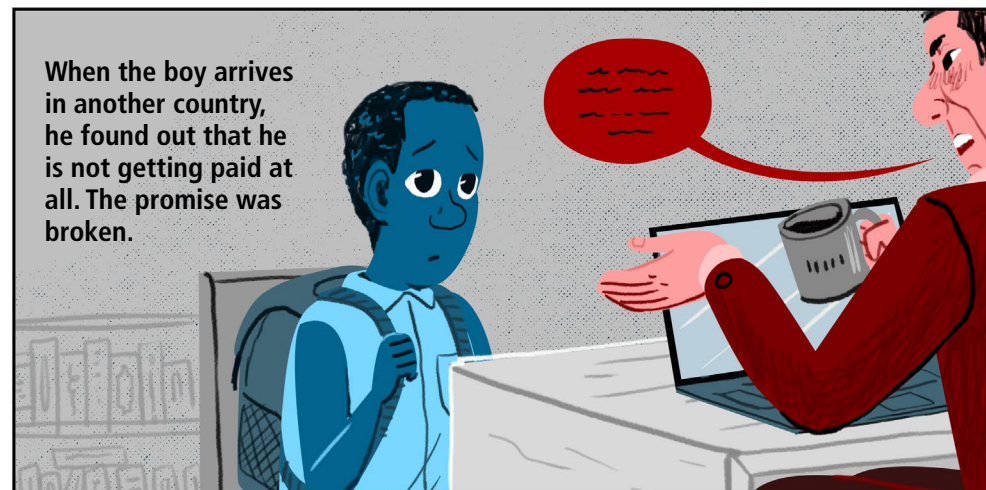
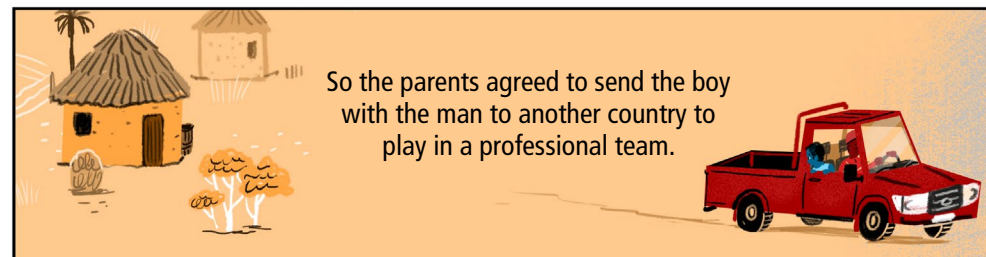
# A STORY ABOUT a football player



One day after a match, a man comes to talk to the boy, asking if he would like to play in a professional team in a big city in another country.



The boy has eight other siblings and the parents are struggling to provide enough food, clothing and school supplies for all children. It would be helpful if the boy can play football and make money for the family.



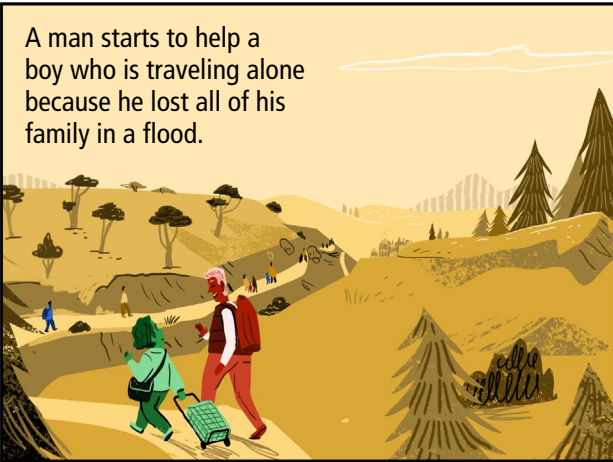


## FOR EXAMPLE

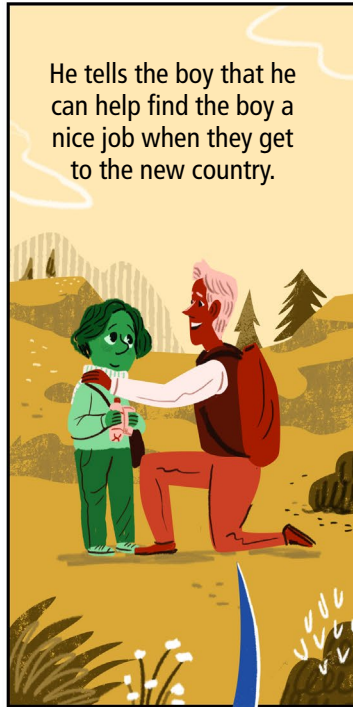
Children who are displaced can be more vulnerable. Armed conflict and violence in a community or climate change and natural disasters (for example, earthquakes, hurricanes and floods) can cause children and families to be displaced.

# A STORY ABOUT a child on the move

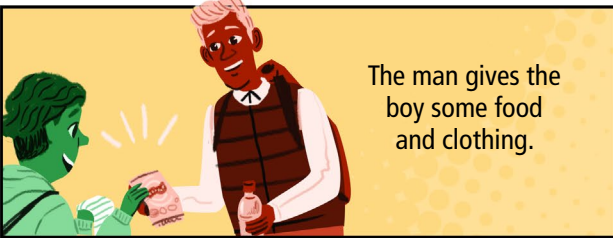
A man starts to help a boy who is traveling alone because he lost all of his family in a flood.



He tells the boy that he can help find the boy a nice job when they get to the new country.



The man gives the boy some food and clothing.



With a good job, the boy will be able to support himself and start a new life in a new country



When they get to the new country, the boy is forced to work long hours instead of enjoying life in the city or going to school.



He is trapped.



He cannot leave the situation because he does not have money and he has no family to ask for help.



## WHO ARE THE TRAFFICKERS?

Those who commit these crimes are called traffickers.



They may act alone or as part of criminal networks to recruit, transport and exploit children within and across countries.



Traffickers use techniques to make children feel special and get close to them or to their family with a purpose to force, trick or persuade children to exploit them.



Traffickers are not always strangers. They might be someone children know or trust.

## WHY DOES TRAFFICKING HAPPEN?

It is very difficult to understand why bad things happen in the world. But there are certain things that we know are behind child trafficking.

Child trafficking is a serious crime.

### THERE IS A BIG PROFIT (MONEY)

Traffickers exploit children because they make money out of it.

#### FOR EXAMPLE:



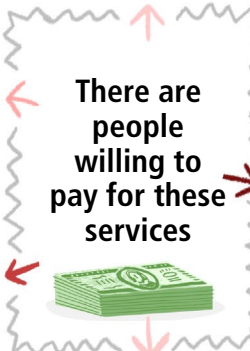
By forcing children to work.



By marrying children off (to someone paying money)



By making children do criminal activities.



There are people willing to pay for these services



By exploiting them sexually.



By arranging for children to be adopted illegally (someone paying money to adopt them)



### LOW RISK OF GETTING CAUGHT

Traffickers make money without being caught and paying for their crimes. It is because of:

#### Child trafficking is not reported because...

... children have no access to reporting



... there are not enough services for victims



... there is stigma (people judge you or family may reject you)



#### CORRUPTION

(someone in like a boss or a leader breaking the rules and using their power to get something (like money) for themselves.)

and

#### IMPUNITY

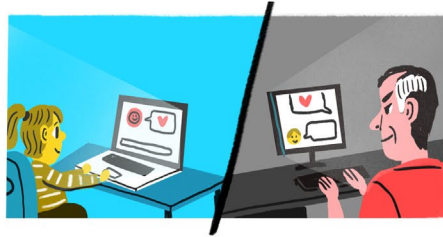
(someone breaking the rules and not getting punished.)



# TECHNOLOGIES MAKE IT EASIER FOR TRAFFICKERS

Child trafficking happens in person, but digital technologies are used more and more to trick children into being trafficked.

For example, traffickers use technologies like social media and chat to find and contact children and also to contact other criminals involved.



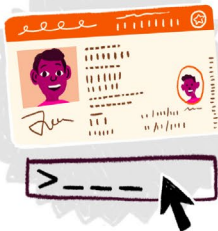
Also, technologies help criminals be anonymous, making it harder to find them when they are committing a crime.



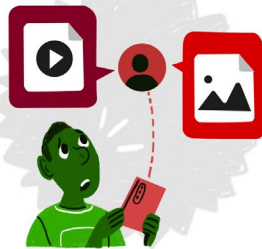
## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) can also be used by criminals to traffic children.



It can help find, recruit and manipulate victims.



It can be used to create false documents and identities that can be misused by traffickers.

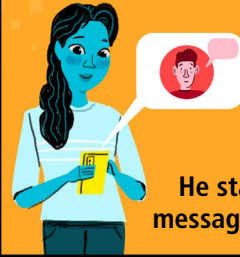


Or to create images and videos used by traffickers to force children to do things that are harmful to them.

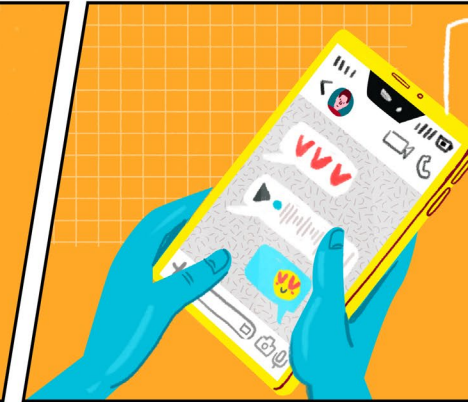
## A STORY ABOUT intimate photos and videos

This is an example on how technology is used to trick and exploit children.

A teenage girl meets a teenage boy on a social media platform.



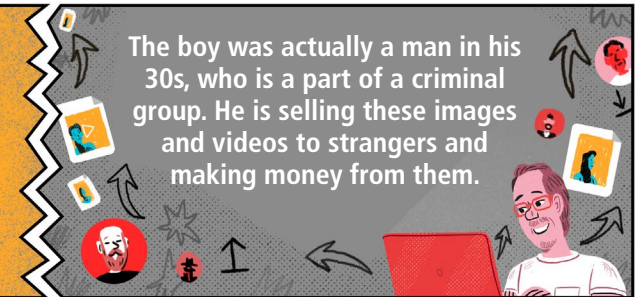
He started messaging her.



They talked every day. They have not met in-person yet, but they decided to become girlfriend and boyfriend.



One day the boy asks the girl to share videos and photos of herself in ways that are inappropriate, hurtful, and wrong.



The boy was actually a man in his 30s, who is a part of a criminal group. He is selling these images and videos to strangers and making money from them.

The girl was being tricked to believe that he was her boyfriend, and he cared about her.



She is sad and depressed.



A few days later, she receives a text message from the man saying that if she doesn't pay him money, he will share the inappropriate photos of her to the entire school.





# The Way Forward

The world is facing a child rights crisis, but more people are aware of the problem and they are **working together!**

# ICAT

Inter-Agency Coordination Group  
against Trafficking in Persons

That's why the **United Nations** coordinates a special group called '**ICAT: the Inter-Agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking in Persons**', and they came up with a set of recommendations for governments and other organizations.

[Click here to learn more](#)



For example, in **November 2024**, representatives of around **120 countries** came together in Bogota, Colombia to discuss how to end all forms of violence against children.

At the conference, **the countries made promises** (called pledges) **on what they would do to protect children from violence.**

**TO END CHILD TRAFFICKING,  
WE MUST ADDRESS THREE AREAS:**

**Children's  
vulnerabilities**



**The growing  
demand and digital  
technologies**

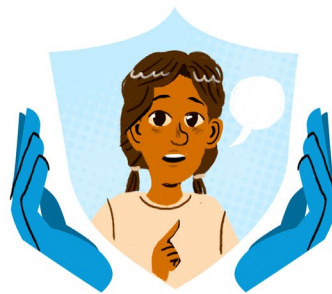
**Make sure that the  
justice system is fair  
and child-friendly**



## CHILDREN ARE PART OF THE SOLUTION!



**Children need to be a part of this work!**  
Children know what they need and adults need to listen carefully.



**There has to be an easy way for  
children to report to the authority and  
ask for help.**



**This will make it easier for children and  
adults who have survived child trafficking  
to participate in policy making.**



**Let's keep up  
the fight against  
child trafficking**





OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF  
THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON

# **VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN**

Check  
out other  
child-friendly  
reports and  
resources  
[here](#)

Let's  
continue the  
conversation

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 [srsg-vac@un.org](mailto:srsg-vac@un.org)

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Illustrations by [@oyemathias](#)