

inadequate school infrastructure, and illiteracy (particularly among parents), all of which contribute to high dropout rates. Exacerbating this problem is the lack of education alternatives for children who have returned home or who have been removed from hazardous labor situations.

Furthermore, their communities are not organized to receive them and provide them with an education.

In response to these challenges, in 1999 the Ministry of Family, Social Protection and Solidarity established a unit for Family and Childhood that works on a variety of programs to combat child trafficking, including creating village vigilance committees and building crisis centers for children. The Ministry of Family also works to provide educational spaces for child laborers, particularly those engaged in domestic service and vidomegons.

The National Commission on Child Rights, an inter-ministerial committee headed by the Ministry of Justice, Legislation and Human Rights that includes representatives from NGOs, religious organizations and Parent-Teacher Associations, was established in 2000. The international media attention attracted in 2001 as a result of the *Etireno*, a ship that was believed to have originated in Benin and was reported to be transporting trafficked children, prompted the Government of Benin to increase its efforts to combat child trafficking and child labor. These efforts included the development of a two-year action plan (2001–2003) by the National Commission on Child Rights to combat trafficking. Benin is also one of nine countries participating in a USDOL-funded project to combat the trafficking of children for exploitative labor in West and Central Africa, described at <http://www.dol.gov/ILAB/grants/education/sga0305/bkgrdSGA0305.htm>.

In October 2002, the government of Benin developed a rapid response plan (plan d'urgence) to combat child trafficking, which includes activities to improve legislation and strengthen child protection efforts. Also in 2002, the National Committee against Child Trafficking was formed.

Benin has already made strides in fighting child trafficking and promoting education, particularly within the formal system. In order to foster sustainability and build on existing activities and achievements, applications should take into account existing programs and seek to fill gaps that have not already been addressed. Applicants should especially consider the need for and availability of formal versus non-formal, transitional or

vocational education programs in proposed target areas, and tailor approaches accordingly. USDOL would also like to ensure that the EI project complements efforts in Benin already funded by the U.S. government without duplicating them.

Burkina Faso

In 2000, the ILO estimated that 43.5 percent of children between the ages of 10 and 14 in Burkina Faso were working. Most working children in the country are found in agriculture, gold mining and washing, and informal sector activities including domestic service. Children often start working in the mining sector as part of households, at ages as young as six. The HIV/AIDS epidemic has also orphaned numerous children, thereby increasing the population of street children, an at-risk group for child labor, in Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso.

Due in part to its geographic location, Burkina Faso is a sending, receiving and transit country for trafficked children. Yet few statistics are available on the phenomenon. Furthermore, there is low public recognition of child trafficking as a problem and there is a perception that sending a child to work through trafficking increases family income. The salaries or promised salaries, albeit small, give villagers cause to believe that money is to be made in exodus. In reality, the middlemen who recruit, transport, and place children generally live off the earnings, each receiving a portion of the money promised to the child or family.

External, or cross-border, trafficking represents roughly one-quarter of intercepted children, and the countries most believed to receive children are Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, and Mali, with smaller numbers going to Gabon and Niger. The majority of externally trafficked children tend to be boys whose primary destination is Côte d'Ivoire. Foreign children working in Côte d'Ivoire are at greater risk considering the current political unrest in that country.

Seventy-four percent of trafficked children intercepted between September 2001 and May 2002 were moving internally. Of these children, 65 percent were girls. In general, children are trafficked from rural areas such as Tougan, Gaoua, and Diebouyou into Bobo-Dioulasso, Ouagadougou and Ouahigouya where they work as domestic servants, street vendors, and in prostitution. An ILO study estimated that more than 81,000 children in Bobo-Dioulasso and Ouagadougou have been internally trafficked and placed in work situations by an intermediary.

Elsewhere children are moved from the northern and central villages, especially in the Dedougou and Boromo regions, for agricultural work in the regions of Bobo-Dioulasso and Banfora. Both boys and girls work in cotton production, an especially arduous and dangerous job considering the hours of work, the intensive physical labor, and the use of pesticides. Cotton producers in Kompienga and the provinces of N'Gourma, Tapoa and Gnagna also hire migrant children. Since this work is seasonal, children may return home at the end of the season.

Many codes in the penal system regulate children's work and protection, but child trafficking itself is not illegal. The Ministry of Social Action and National Solidarity has drafted a National Action Plan on Child Trafficking, and is working with the Ministry of Justice to revise national legislation to address child trafficking. The Ministry of Social Action has also established Vigilance and Surveillance Committees that involve representatives from the Ministry of Employment, police, local authorities and NGOs, employers and transport companies, among others. The government of Burkina Faso has drafted an agreement with Côte d'Ivoire to address child trafficking between the two countries, but the process has stalled due to the current political situation in Côte d'Ivoire. Burkina Faso is one of nine countries participating in a USDOL-funded project to combat the trafficking of children for exploitative labor in West and Central Africa, described at <http://www.dol.gov/ILAB/grants/education/sga0305/bkgrdSGA0305.htm>.

Studies of repatriated children who have been trafficked show that most have received little, if any, schooling. Many are from rural, illiterate households. Nationwide, adult literacy rates hover around 24 percent, with less than 15 percent of the adult female population qualifying as literate.

Although education in Burkina Faso is compulsory from ages six to 16, the minimum age to work is 14. In 1998, the gross primary enrollment rate was 42.3 percent, and the gap between boys' and girls' enrollment was significant (50 percent for boys and 34.5 percent for girls). School enrollment is also lower in rural areas (especially in the eastern region of the country), and girls are particularly affected. Other problems that plague the education system include a shortage of trained teachers, high teacher absenteeism, inadequate infrastructure, a French-only system of instruction, and a perception that education is not beneficial (especially in the case of girls). Inaccessibility of