

# Where have all the Children gone? ...and when will we ever learn?

*Helmut Sax,  
Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights, Vienna*

International Round Table  
Re-Branding Human Trafficking – The Interface of Migration,  
Human Trafficking and Slavery

Regional Implementation Initiative/IDM – Vienna, 29/9/2017

# Discuss exploitation first

- ▶ Socioeconomic inequality, weak social services => dependencies increase => risk of abuse of power for own profit increases => discussion should start with exploitation, not trafficking
  - ▶ Migration adds further risks/vulnerabilities
  - ▶ Status of children adds further multiple vulnerabilities – age, gender, trauma/coping
    - Weak protective response structures
    - Worst case: forced criminality – criminalisation/disrespect for non-punishment principle
    - THB children = no “normal”/”collateral” risks, but deliberately situations created/exploited
- => Risks of exploitation/trafficking increase

# Child protection

- ▶ Child protection system – protective environment?
  - Density of safety nets? Targeted/relevant, adequate? Reflective/interested in feedback from children?
  - Should be integrated, holistic, not isolated – e.g. check guardianship, return procedures – best interests determination?
- ▶ Assessment – see e.g. GRETA reports
  - Negative: blurred concepts of trafficking/exploitation, isolated responses, lack of identification, guardianship, child-focused assistance, access to justice, return; reliance on detention ⇔ Smile of the Child/Greece: children don't need a guard, but someone to care – trust building
  - Positive: some multi-disciplinary/sectoral efforts, outreach, guardians, mediators

# Responses

- ▶ Guiding principles: best interests + child participation (direct involvement of children in prevention, service development, feedback)
  - Prevention – social policies, family services – address inequality, status of children/awareness-raising, education
  - Raise prestige of social work (salaries, training)
  - Proactive identification/outreach
  - Reporting of presumed cases – hotlines for children
  - In proceedings: child-friendly justice beyond courts – also for admin procedures in THB identification, asylum, return, child protection
    - Includes: adequate setting, child's access to information, interpretation, guardians + legal assistance
  - Specialised assistance – seeking child feedback in institutions
  - Access to complaints – Ombudsman
  - External monitoring – National preventive mechanisms
  - Research and evaluation – see Mike D/UNICEF, Olivier, BIM projects, GRETA country visits

# Expected outcomes of stronger child participation

- ▶ Improved relevance/effectivity of response
  - Convincing offer for vulnerable children/policy to address children running away
- ▶ Improved sustainability
- ▶ Means of self-reflection, re-connect with target groups
- ▶ => it's a right – process and result
- ▶ => make them heard and seen, end invisibility and ignorance of children

Thank  
you!