EXPLOITATION IN ALBANIA:
The Child Perspective on Child Begging
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** ................................................... 4
- **INTRODUCTION** ............................................................. 7
- **Objective** ........................................................................ 7
- **Scope** ............................................................................ 8
- **Methodology** .................................................................. 8
- **Challenges** ...................................................................... 9
- **ANALYSIS: THEMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS** ............ 11
- **Economic Factors** ......................................................... 12
- **Education** ...................................................................... 13
- **Forced Labor** ............................................................... 14
- **Relationships** ............................................................... 15
- **Future Strategies** .......................................................... 16
- **Intertwining Themes** .................................................... 17
- **CONCLUSION** ............................................................ 19
- **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** ............................................. 20
- **SOURCES** ................................................................... 21

Disclaimer: The positions and recommendations expressed in this report are those of the author only, and are not intended to reflect the official policy, positions or opinions of BKTF Coalition, World Vision International or World Vision Albania and Kosovo in any way.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While many forms of human trafficking occur in Albania, this report focuses specifically on child labor. Bashkë Kundër Trafikimit të Fëmijëvë (“All Against Child Trafficking” or BKTF) Coalition was started in 2008 by several domestic and international organizations in Albania to provide collaboration for the prevention and protection of child trafficking. Through this collaboration, BKTF Coalition developed a Situational Analysis of the trafficking throughout Albania. The analysis provided information on programs implemented or to be implemented by the Government of Albania and many of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in trafficking and child protection. However, BKTF recognized a need to involve children in this analysis as well as future initiatives. BKTF with the assistance of World Vision International, organized for Albanian children to be interviewed about their perspectives of child labor that could influence future programs and initiatives for child protection. The following report details the findings and provides recommendations based on an analysis of the data.

The information gathered during the research focused on five major themes:

1. Economic Factors
2. Education
3. Forced Labor
4. Relationships
5. Future Strategies

These themes stemmed from the initial questions asked as well as the answers provided during the interviews. Many of the themes intertwined with the others, so an additional analysis of how these themes affect the others is included.

The researcher, a Masters student from George Mason University on behalf of BKTF Coalition, with the aid of a translator conducted all the interviews. Overall 65 children were interviewed throughout Tirana and Durres, Albania. The research was conducted through different types of interviewing methods including:

1. One-on-one interviews
2. Focus group interviews

The findings of the research demonstrate the complexity and the challenges of combating forced labor. Depending on their age, the children understand these complexities and believe that not a lot can be done to change the circumstances of those working in the street. The children appreciate the programs BKTF Coalition members and the government have put into place, but do not recognize that these programs are already affecting them to challenge the system of forced labor and move to creating better conditions and society that they live in.
INTRODUCTION

This report follows Bashkë Kundër Trafikimit të Fëmijëvë (“All Against Child Trafficking” or BKTF) Coalition’s 2009 Situational Analysis of the current trafficking situation in Albania and focuses specifically on the exploitation of children working in the streets.

BKTF Coalition was established to coordinate the efforts of twenty-four national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in Albania. These NGOs are focused on prevention, prosecution, and protection of children trafficked throughout the country. As noted on the web site, BKTF Coalition advocates for “national strategies on child trafficking, the establishment and enforcement of child protection mechanisms and the improvement of services delivered to children, who are victims of trafficking, abuse or exploitation as well as at risk children”.

OBJECTIVE

As stated in the “Terms of Research” this research will help to better understand the lives of the children victims or potential victims of exploitation, trafficking and abuse and allow BKTF Coalition to undertake more effective advocacy and awareness initiatives in reducing child exploitation, trafficking and vulnerability. Additionally, BKTF Coalition focused on several specific issues for the researcher to do, including:

- Understanding the daily lives of the children living and working in the streets.
- Learning how children perceive their daily work.
- Knowing the role of their families in preventing child exploitation.
- Identifying the challenges faced by the children working in the streets.
- Researching violent or abusive situations toward children working in the streets.
- Identifying how the children’s abuse is acknowledged and referred to officials who can assist the children in understanding their rights and potentially stopping the abuse.
- Discovering the degree to which children are involved in the decision making of working and of their futures and expressing their opinion regarding child rights and their right to be protected against exploitation.

1www.bktf-coalition.org
SCOPe

This report focuses on:
- Interpreting perspectives of local children about exploitation and specifically children working and begging in the street
- Determining the impact of specific measures by BKTF Coalition and member organizations

METHODOLOGY

The researcher conducted approximately 65 interviews with children ages 5-18, 26 of them girls. All the children are from the Roma population of Albania. See Figure 1 in the Analysis section for full break down of data. The interviews were semi-structured focused on the qualitative measures of the program, i.e. what children like or dislike about certain aspects of the programs, and how children retain the information and bring it to their homes to teach their parents, siblings and other relatives while potentially helping them to understand the issues and challenges of child begging.

From the initial interview questions outlined in the methodology, the following questions were decided upon and asked during interviews:

1. Describe your day.
2. If you go to the center, who do you go with?
3. Which center do you go to? How long are you there for?
4. What do you like about going to the center?
5. What do you not like about going to the center?
6. Do you eat breakfast? If so, what do you eat?
7. How are you treated when you are working?
8. Are you the only one in your family working and bringing money home?
9. If you go to school, how long do you stay for?
10. What is your dream? What would you want to do if you didn’t work?
11. What would you change about your day if you could change anything?

The interviews were held over a 6 week period with each interview lasting from 5 minutes to 20 minutes. Interviews were conducted with one child or with focus groups of children of approximately the same age.
CHALLENGES

During the interview process there were several challenges that could influence the data gathered. These challenges include the language barriers and the presence of several social workers during the interviews.

All interviews were conducted in Albanian and needed the use of a translator to ask the questions and provide transcription after the interviews of the responses due to the researcher not knowing the language. The lack of language skills did not allow the researcher to participate in the moment of the interviews to ask additional questions but had to rely on the translator. In order to overcome the language challenge, the researcher worked with the translator before and after each interview to determine if additional questions or line of questioning needed to be asked in order to ensure the data followed the objectives of the research.

In several instances, some of the social workers at the different centers remained in the room with the researcher and translator during interviews. Their presence may have created false baseline of data with the children only providing answers they thought the social worker wanted to hear or the researcher wanted to hear. Additionally, several times, the social worker interrupted the interview to answer the questions or intimidate the child answering the questions.

As many of the interviews lasted approximately five minutes, this was another challenge. Based on the reaction of the children, several themes stood out as the reason for the short interview time including the age of the children, i.e. the children were young enough that they were not in school; unwillingness to answer questions; or the lack of knowledge of children working, whether themselves or friends.

CURRENT SITUATION

According to the U.S. Department of State’s 2009 *Trafficking in Persons Report*, Albania is a source country for children trafficked for the purpose of forced labor, including forced begging with ethnic Roma children the most at risk for forced begging. BKTF’s 2009 Situational Analysis describes begging as either seasonal or permanent and a means of economic survival for parents and children. Specifically for the Albanian Roma population, there is significant marginalization and lack of opportunity to alleviate poverty and lack of social support that impact the families.

The Government of Albania has put into effect penal codes to criminally prohibit sex and labor trafficking. Convictions in 2007 and 2008 focused on sex trafficking rather than labor trafficking (TIP 2009, 60). Other programs instituted include awareness raising campaigns in high school curriculum through the Ministry of Education and other NGOs and in-kind assistance to NGO-managed shelters.

Based on research, child laborers tend to fall into three categories: “full-time” street children abandoned by their families or communities; “full-time” children who themselves abandoned their families, often due to abuse of one kind or the other; and “part-time” street children who are children who stay in the streets to beg or do other activities, but return home to their families every day (Danaj 2009, 18). It is estimated that 40% of Roma families require their children to work (Bass et al 2008 quoting ICS 2002, 9). Additionally, according to research, Roma children average 4.2 education years with 64 percent of these children ages 7 to 20 reported as illiterate (Bass et al 2008 quoting UNDP 2005, 9).
ANALYSIS

“In urban communities, formerly rural families lose their traditional ways of life. Poor migrant families often have limited capacity to take care of their children in large cities. Children may run away or become street children” – Louise Shelley (2010)

In analyzing the data, several overarching areas developed during the interviews including financial support, education, forced labor, and future strategies. Many of these areas intertwined with each other in the answers the children provided which will be analyzed at the end of the analysis section. These factors were themed from the interview questions and answers. Also found in this section is a quantitative graphical analysis of the data (Figure 1, page 17). However, many of these factors stem from the root causes behind trafficking in general such as poverty, unemployment, inequality, marginalization, gender and more (Danaj 2009 quoting UNICEF 2006, 15). BKTF’s 2009 Situational Analysis determines poverty should not be considered a major cause of trafficking but as a condition that is combined with others like inequality, discrimination, history of violence and abuse in the family and the community creating a vulnerable situation.

Along with the analysis, the researcher includes several recommendations based on the interview data for future BKTF Coalition initiatives whether working with government or for member organizations to focus on specifically to address the needs of the children. Children were asked their opinions about children working in the street, which will be outlined throughout this paper, however few of the children were able to provide recommendations on their own, so all of the recommendations are direct from the researcher.

All names have been changed to respect the privacy of the children. Where applicable ages have been added and are their correct ages. Several children did not provide their ages.
**ECONOMIC FACTORS**

In order to understand the children’s perspectives about their home life and economic levels, questions were asked about whether their parents worked and if the children worked what did they do with the money they earned. The children were also asked if other members of their family, specifically siblings worked to assist with financial support. Overall the results were varied; however 60% of the children interviewed do not work or have not worked in the past. Those that work or have worked in the past said they work for money to help support their families with food and additional basic needs. Most of these children did not believe they were forced to work by their parents but wanted to help the financial situation of their family and provide additional income. The children did not mention that the parents were misusing the money for anything other than food if they gave the money to their parents. From the interviews, it is mostly the boys that are working and they are involved in collecting scrap metal, working at a parking garage or family store, selling sodas, and begging. Based on the answers, the children working in the streets fall into all of the categories as defined by BKTF’s 2009 Situational Analysis. Three of the older children would be considered “full-time” who have abandoned their families while the rest fall into the “part-time” category, going home after working in the streets. In terms of whether these children were the only ones working in their families, the majority that worked were providing supplemental income to their parents working. If they have younger siblings, those were not working or the children did not specify.

“I work collecting scrap metal and give the money to my parents. No, it is not good to work when you are young, but there is not much else for us to do”
– Eric, 14 years.

“I work, yes and give money to my parents but I decided on my own to work, it was not my parent’s decision”
– Roger, 10 years.

“My mom told me to go and bring money home. I like to work and work with two other boys. Work is like playing for me. I only work on the weekend”
– Chris, 8 years.

**Recommendations**

In researching BKTF Coalition member programs, many focus their efforts on providing the parents with ways of obtaining additional income through selling handicrafts they can make in their home. In focusing efforts on the parents and how they can increase income, this will allow the children to not have to work.

For some of the teenage children, they are old enough to understand money can provide them with basic needs like shelter, clothing, but also allows them to buy nicer items or do more things with their friends as they earn more money.

“I work for myself to earn extra money to go to the pool” – Frank, 14 years.

Specific recommendations include:

- Develop awareness campaigns for parents on ways they can increase their income focused on selling handicrafts, government financial support or other means.
- Work with the National government to determine what the current financial aid packages are and how they can be developed to assist more families where their children are working or susceptible to working.
- Develop materials for children to understand their rights as children and emphasize alternate ways for them to earn spending money that does not involve working in the streets.
EDUCATION
From the mix of ages and those that are of school age, 58% of the children are currently enrolled in school and enjoy being in a classroom. The children that are not in school are not there for a variety of reasons including financially supporting their families, feeling too old to be in school, or lack of good relationships with the other children. One child mentioned that the school closest to him had closed and it was too far to try to go to another school. The financial support factor and relationship factors are analyzed deeper in their sections.

Several BKTF Coalition members are focused on registering these children and working to get them to attend school. Many of the centers also provide after school tutoring, which has helped a lot of the children to integrate in the public schools, learn to enjoy school, and be able to excel in their schoolwork. This tutoring aids many of the children who feel they are too old to start school again, especially if they were unable to attend previously or missed a couple of years. All of the children interviewed participate in the study sessions at the centers.

Additionally, several BKTF Coalition members offer peer educator programs which allow older children to mentor some of the younger children. BKTF members are also working to register these children. Registering is not guaranteeing the children will attend school, but there is now a record that the child exists. Knowing the child exists provides data to the organizations and the government which can assist in justifying future programs and providing financial support for these programs.

“I like to study...especially Albanian language” – Brian, 13 years.

“I like school, like to study, especially math” – Edwin

“I like to study, but I don’t feel like I am very good at it. I like biology” – Ronald, 13 years.

However, many of the children dropped out because of fighting with some of the other children as well as others that worked during school hours so dropped out of school.

“I am afraid because I was beaten by the other children. There is only one school and so I could not go to another school. I liked school, but I don’t know what else I can do besides going to the center to study there” – Louis, 14 years.
“I do not go to school. I am now too old for school, but didn’t like it when I was there”  
– Mark, 14 years old.

“I choose not to go to school, my parents do not say anything about whether I should stay in school or not. I like to study at the center”  
– Edwin, 11 years.

“I decided to work by myself. Once I was working, my mom decided that I should continue work and not go to school”  
– Matt, 14 years.

“Children were fighting and using bad language and I didn’t like it. I fought with some of the children, so decided not to go”  
– Edgar, 14 years.

FORCED LABOR
Many of the children were asked about their opinion of children working in the streets and what they thought could be done to help keep them from working. Those that were asked this question determined that a lot of the children, especially the younger ones are forced by their parents to work and that there is nothing that can be done to change this.

“Children working in the street is not a good thing. Parents obligate them to work, but there is nothing to do for this because parents will always force their children to beg.”  
– Edward, Albanian teenager.

“No, not good [that the children are working], but the fault is of their parents forcing them”  
– Richard, 16 years.

“No, not good [that the children are working], but they don’t have anything else to do because their parents tell them to go and force them to go to help get more money for the home”  
– Evan, 13 years.

“No, it is not good. [But] it is their choice to work and the parents are not forcing them, they only want to have extra money. Only a small portion [of children] are forced. If their parents have a good job, then the children don’t have to work”  
– Thomas, 16 years.

Recommendations
One program offered by BKTF Coalition members is the Second Chance Program which provides a mix of classes to supplement school classes and allow children to catch up in their studies. Programs like these can assist children in focusing on their future whether they are able to find better jobs that can earn more money or lead them to further schooling that can help with careers.

- Continue educational programs that assist children with their studies either in school or in the centers.
- Create adult education programs for the parents to be able to finish their studies or even start their studies to be able to increase their marketability in the workforce.
- Develop education tracks that focus on different career paths for the children and allow them to focus on their future. This can be organized with the National government and the high schools.

Recommendations
BKTF Coalition has developed several awareness campaigns focused on child begging and forced labor. One campaign included the “World Children’s Day” in June. These campaigns should continue and increase throughout Albania. Additional recommendations include:

- Develop more peer educators that can talk about the effects of forced labor with other children.
- Create a presentation for the peer educators to take to the schools and reach out to other children about the effects of forced labor and child begging. This could be a play or musical event that can be performed for many years, but can also be elaborated to incorporate the most current issues.
RELATIONSHIPS

The children were asked about their relationship with their parents, siblings, and other children either at the centers or at school. From the interviews, 45 of the children were asked if they had a good relationship with their parents, of these 45 children, 41 said they got along with their parents and felt loved by them. Additionally, they felt they had good relationships with their siblings if they had them. All of the children liked going to the centers to play with the other children there or to study and learn. Several children did not have good relationships at the schools if they attended school. Many of these children ended up dropping out, going to the centers for tutoring or other classes where they felt more comfortable. While many of the children were uncomfortable or did not get along with some of the other children in school, major discrimination did not come up in the interviews. The children who were willing to answer and give their thoughts about forced labor determined there is nothing to be done for these children because their parents are forcing them. It seems the children respect the family relationship and would not involve themselves in their friends’ problems to help them even though they observe that children should not have to work and the consequences of these children being forced to work. The perspective of not getting involved in others problem is a larger challenge within Albania society and specifically in the different neighborhoods or communities where the Roma population live and work and where forced labor is occurring.

“Our parents treat us very well so we like to stay with them a lot and play with them”
– Ralph and Maria, brother and sister, 7 and 5 years.

“At home I stay with my brother and sister. I have a good relationship with my parents”
– Robert, 15 years.

“I have a good relationship with my parents. They want me to go to school”
– Ivan

One of the children, James, 14 years old, lives in Tirana away from his parents as they did not treat him well. In order to live without his parents, he begs in the street. “I don’t mind begging in the street and living with my friends. I loved my parents, but they did not love me. It is good at my age to work.”

Recommendations

As the majority of the children felt they had a good relationship with their parents ensuring this relationship continues should be a main concern for BKTF Coalition members. BKTF Coalition members should work with the children and their parents to help them understand their rights as a child and how important these rights are to combating forced labor. Additionally, community programs may increase the willingness of specific families to join the programs if other families or children are involved.

- Continue to teach parents and children about their roles and responsibilities within the family.
- Create programs for parents and children to participate in together, i.e. musical events and games.
- Build community relations to develop their understanding and awareness of the root causes and issues of children working in the street.
FUTURE STRATEGIES
The children were asked about their futures and what they would like to do or how they might be able to change their lives. Overall the children had typical childhood dreams of becoming singers, hairdressers, footballers, journalists, and painters. However these were mainly dreams and the children did not know how to necessarily achieve their dreams. In the Roma population, singing and music is a huge part of their heritage and culture. Several of the children sing at family or community functions, although they children did not specify if they get paid at these functions. Approximately 95% of the children were happy with how their day went with either playing, going to the center, and going to school. Most of the children did not think they could change their circumstances or did not have any ideas about how to change their days. The majority of the children interviewed did not talk about how they would get into university or make their dreams happen. This could be due to their ages and not thinking beyond the next year. One girl, 14 years old, did talk about going to university and continuing her studies, but did not elaborate about how she would achieve this. She also mentioned at the end that her parents might keep her from attending again next year, so while she has her dreams, it is unlikely she will accomplish them with her parents keeping her from continuing her education.

"I like my day. I like what I do in the center and don't want to change anything. I like the other children at the center and playing with them"
– Andrew

As previously stated, the children were asked about their thoughts on children working in the streets. Most did not think there was anything to do to change this and that those children were forced by their parents.

"The children that work in the street, they have the right to not work because they are too young. And they also have the right not be forced"
– Michael, 14 years.
INTERTWINING THEMES

Many of the overarching themes intertwined with each other, one following the other as demonstrated by what Denise said above about her home life and future schooling. Many children are unable to attend school because they felt the need to work or were made to work by their parents. The poverty level of some of these families forces the children to work, whether they decide on their own or are made to by their parents, to provide additional income for basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing. Many of the older children are working because they feel it is their duty.

“It is a fact that you have to help your family when you are poor. When you are 16, you feel that you have to help your family because you are a man”
– Thomas, 16 years.

Because of the poverty levels, school becomes less important and so the children do not see a future beyond their current family situations. An additional intertwining theme was food. Initial interviews showed that all of the children were eating breakfast at home before going to school, the center, or staying home to play depending on their age. However, the challenge is in what the children were eating for breakfast, from potatoes to hamburgers to cookies. For the older children, they worked to help provide groceries for their families so that food would be available for meals.

“I like to eat cookies with milk [for breakfast]”
– Maria, 5 years.

“Money is for me but sometimes I buy stuff for my family, like food”
– Eliot, 13 years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-12</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-18</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too Young for School</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In School</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in School</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Life</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With Family</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Family</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Currently</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has not Worked</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked in the Past</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Quantitative Analysis of Data

Recommendations

Recommendations were mentioned for each theme; however, some of the recommendations can be combined to combat two or more together and perhaps save time and money. For instance, the recommendations for educational programs can help focus the children on establishing future plans for themselves through career tracks. These programs may also increase the financial support the children will provide their families by obtaining better jobs when they are older. An additional recommendation would be to provide nutrition education to parents and children. Nutrition education can include not only what kinds of foods are healthy, but also ways to make economical and healthy meals for the entire family.
CONCLUSION

The goal of the research was to determine the perspective of children in Tirana, Albania about working in the streets whether it was the child themselves working, friends of theirs, or children they might see daily working and then analyze the resulting data to help BKTF Coalition incorporate these perspectives in future programs and initiatives. This research is extremely important to the future of child protection and advocacy in Albania and to the end of forced child labor. In order to implement different programs, all stakeholders need to buy in to the goals and believe that the programs will be effective. Children represent one of the stakeholder groups and a large part of obtaining success in stopping forced labor. BKTF Coalition is focused on incorporating children into the process of developing their programs with this report starting that process.

From the data analyzed, it seems BKTF Coalition member efforts, specifically those running the centers have improved the lives of many of the children interviewed. The centers offer the children a place for them to go outside of their homes and school and provide them with clean clothes and many times something to eat. Sometimes the centers offered educational lessons when the children are not in school whether they have never been to school, dropped out of school or go when school is not in session (after school, during the summer, etc). However, through the research, only a small portion of families and children are being reached to understand the consequences of child labor and to stop children being forced to beg or work in the streets. The root causes of trafficking, from lack of money to education, provide a basis for future programs and are incorporated in the report themes. From the report themes, the researcher developed several recommendations for BKTF Coalition to focus on and create robust programs. The programs can range from providing economic support to the families to tutoring for the children to influencing larger mandates within the government to provide assistance to the children working in the streets, their families and communities and combat child labor, whether forced or not.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Danjela Shkalla from BKTF Coalition for her overall efforts of coordinating my time in Tirana and providing all the materials I needed to complete this report. I would like to thank my translator and guide extraordinaire, Andia Shabani.

I would like to thank BKTF Coalition members who provided access to their facilities and coordinated for the children who come to their centers to participate in this report.

I would like to thank World Vision Albania for taking care of logistics and also providing me with their knowledge of child exploitation in Albania. I would also like to thank George Mason University and specifically Dr. Louise Shelley, human trafficking expert and Director of the Terrorism, Transnational Crime and Corruption Center (TraCCC).

I would especially like to thank the children for participating and providing candid answers. I hope this report will help with their future dreams and allow them to continue to strive to be the best they can be.
SOURCES


