



Initiatives to Combat Human Trafficking

The UAE government is committed to the global effort to combat human trafficking, and is working closely with international and regional law enforcement officials to apprehend and punish violators of human trafficking laws. The UAE is also deeply concerned about the victims of this crime and their physical and emotional well-being, and is establishing appropriate mechanisms to support and assist victims in need.

The UAE is aggressively implementing a four-part anti-trafficking plan, designed to prevent the crime, enforce the law and provide necessary support to victims:

1. Legislation

In November 2006, the UAE government adopted a new federal law providing strict enforcement provisions and penalties for convicted traffickers. The following year, the UAE National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking was formed. The committee coordinates anti-trafficking efforts at all levels in the seven Emirates of the Federation.

At a United Nations forum, then-US Ambassador Mark Lagon noted that the UAE is “the first government in the Gulf to enact a comprehensive anti-trafficking law.”

The UAE’s commitments are in accordance with the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In addition, the UAE ratified the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, in 2008.

2. Enforcement

The UAE is working to increase law enforcement capacity and awareness. Steps include training and workshops for police officers and public prosecutors and developing mechanisms to monitor and track human rights abuses. In addition, the UAE has held several training sessions with various law enforcement departments and ministries, focusing on the prevention of human trafficking, security and the enforcement of laws.

Twenty human-trafficking-related cases were registered in 2008, double the number from the previous year.

Simultaneously, the number of prosecutions and the severity of punishments prescribed by the UAE courts also increased significantly. There were six convictions in 2008, compared to five in 2007. In 2007, jail terms for those convictions ranged from three to 10 years, while in 2008, two people received life sentence for their crimes.

In addition, a new visa regime aimed at curbing illegal recruitments came into effect in July 2008. In November 2008, Abu Dhabi Police discovered and obstructed an attempt by an international organized crime ring to traffic persons to Europe via the UAE’s airports.

Police are tracking tourist companies that illegally bring women into the country. The licenses of companies caught carrying out illegal activities are being cancelled. At least two nightclubs exploiting women were shut down in 2007, and several others are under surveillance. The number of legal cases prosecuted in the UAE involving prostitution rose by 30 percent from 2006 to 2007.

3. Victim support

Recent improvements in labor standards and regulations will have a positive impact on decreasing the scale of human trafficking. Steps include electronic payments to workers, standards for housing, a standard contract for domestic workers and bilateral agreements with supplier countries.

For example, Dubai Police conducted an 18-month drive ending November 2008 which resulted in the collection of 52 million dirhams (\$14.2 million) in unpaid labor wages from various companies.

The UAE also is invigorating government, charitable, and social networks to provide support for victims of trafficking. Dubai's Foundation for the Protection of Women and Children provides social services for victims, including counseling, in-house schooling, and recreation facilities. Between 2007 and 2008, the foundation has supported 115 women and children, including 43 suspected victims of trafficking. Working with organizations such as the International Organization for Migration, some women have been repatriated to their home countries.

Under the umbrella of the UAE Red Crescent Authority, the Shelter for Women and Children in Abu Dhabi opened in late 2008. As of March 2009, the shelter was providing assistance to 15 human trafficking victims. The Red Crescent, part of the International Committee of the Red Cross, is supervising shelters across the UAE for women and children.

Other organizations offering similar social services are the Social Support Center of the Abu Dhabi Police and the Human Rights Care Department of Dubai Police.

4. Bilateral agreements and international partnerships

Human trafficking has its point of origin in the home countries of guest workers, and the UAE has signed agreements with several labor-exporting countries to regulate the flow of the workforce. In order to deny unscrupulous private recruitment agencies from cheating and trafficking workers, all labor contract transactions will be processed by labor ministries or offices in the supplying countries.

The UAE, India and the Philippines are collaborating on a pilot project to survey and document best practices in the management of the temporary contractual employment cycle. The project will receive expert input from the Arab Labor Organization, the International Labor Organization and the International Organization on Migration.

A range of other international collaborations include a UN partnership to recreate the UAE police administration into a "center of excellence," exchanges with non-governmental organizations to build knowledge and expertise, and outreach to foreign embassies in the UAE.

In March 2007 the UAE made a significant multi-year commitment to the United Nations for the establishment of the unprecedented Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT). This forum unites many countries, multiple UN agencies, intergovernmental entities and the NGO sector under a single banner and has facilitated unprecedented cooperation by the international community.

In February 2009, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime released the “[Global Report on Trafficking Persons](#),” funded through the UN.GIFT. The “first global report on modern slavery,” covering 155 countries, contained some critical and important revelations, including the fact that 40 percent of all countries had not yet convicted a single trafficker.

The UAE participated in an assessment of its human rights record, conducted by the UN. This Universal Periodic Review was unanimously adopted at the 10th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva in March.

In 2009, the UAE issued its second [Annual Report](#) on combating human trafficking, outlining the country's initiatives and results in greater depth.

Child Camel Jockeys

Since 2005, the UAE has worked closely with UNICEF on the repatriation of several hundred young children who once worked as camel jockeys in the UAE. The UAE government implemented a law banning camel jockeys under the age of 18 and authorized strict penalties of fines and up to three years in jail for breaches of the act.

By September 2006 more than 1,000 underage jockeys had been successfully repatriated to their home countries, where they were provided with social services, education, health care and compensation. In December 2006 the UAE government set aside more than \$9 million for a second phase of the UNICEF program, which will provide compensation for anyone who has ever worked as an underage camel jockey in the UAE. As a follow-up measure, the UAE committed \$8 million for the establishment of monitoring mechanisms to prevent children formerly involved in camel racing from re-entering hazardous or exploitative labor.

UNICEF officials have publicly praised the UAE camel jockey repatriation program and held it up as a model for other countries to follow.

Domestic Worker Law

The UAE established stringent contract standards for domestic workers, which became effective in April 2007. These standards govern working conditions, vacation, air tickets, medical care and salary, ensuring that the labor rights of domestic workers are standardized and protected across the UAE. Government agencies are required to enforce the new contract when issuing new work visas, ensuring that the standards are upheld in all individual agreements.

In January 2008, the UAE hosted a forum with Asian labor-exporting countries to address concerns surrounding overseas employment, including domestic work. This ministerial consultation was part of the Colombo Process, a regional consultation on overseas employment, and was the first meeting to be hosted by a country of destination. The “Abu Dhabi Dialogue” included the Colombo Process countries and other GCC states, as well as an observer from Human Rights Watch.

In November 2009, Peter Sutherland, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on International Migration and Development noted, “What the UAE is doing to improve living conditions for expatriate workers is impressive.”

March 2010