



United Arab Emirates

# **COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE UAE**

Annual Report  
2009-2010

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## Foreword

As the UAE government's formal campaign against human trafficking enters its fourth year, the results from 2007 to 2009 suggest that the country has made significant and rapid progress. However, the UAE is also mindful of the challenges that remain. Our commitment to improve the detection and prosecution of trafficking offences is stronger than ever.

The professional criminals who engage in the trafficking of human beings exploit any weaknesses that they can find in official safeguards. We must remain vigilant and never let our guard down.

One measure of the UAE's performance in tackling this crime is the increase in the number of human trafficking-related cases that have been identified. While 20 cases were recorded in 2008, 43 cases were registered last year. Crucially, the number of convictions has also risen significantly.

During the past year, the UAE expanded the size and scope of the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking by including public prosecutors, law enforcement officers, as well as representatives of the human rights association and victim shelters as its members; registered and prosecuted the first case under the "organised criminal gang" clause of Federal Law 51; formally opened a new shelter for victims in Abu Dhabi; ratified the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, in line with our international commitment; conducted regular workshops and training sessions to make law enforcement officials aware of new trafficking methods and adapt their response accordingly; and launched a website to serve both as an official source

of information and a forum for interaction between the public and law enforcement agencies.

These and other endeavours were acknowledged by the Geneva-based Human Rights Council when the Working Group Report on the UAE's Universal Periodic Review was unanimously adopted in March 2009. In another step, forward, the UAE fulfilled its commitment made in Geneva to invite Special Rapporteurs from the United Nations to examine human rights issues.

As part of the UAE's efforts to tackle human trafficking crimes in the country proactively, the next round of initiatives includes: launching a media campaign to enhance public awareness about human trafficking at our airports and embassies abroad; studying the possibilities of amending Federal Law 51 to make it more effective and more closely aligned with the Palermo Protocol; looking at opening more shelters for victims of human trafficking; and, expanding cooperation with other countries and international agencies to deliver more effective results locally and abroad.

Furthermore, the UAE will continue to take a lead on this issue in the region and internationally, acknowledging the existence of human trafficking as a problem that afflicts our society and many others around the world. The fight against human trafficking is our fight, and a goal we share with all responsible nations. We have achieved a number of our objectives in a short span of time, but we will continue to remain committed to improving our efforts to keep pace with international best practice in tackling this crime.

***Dr Anwar Mohammed Gargash  
Chairman, National Committee  
to Combat Human Trafficking***

## Introduction

In keeping with the trend since 2006, when the UAE launched its fight against human trafficking, 2009 saw encouraging progress in our efforts to combat human trafficking. As a committed and responsible member of the international community, the UAE will continue to remain proactively engaged in the global anti-human trafficking campaign.

The UAE receives large numbers of temporary contractual workers every year, who have made an important contribution to the country's development. Unfortunately, criminals have been engaged in recruiting contractual workers and in trafficking them illegally into the UAE. For the majority of trafficked persons, it is only when they arrive in the UAE that they realise that the work they were promised does not exist and they are forced instead to get employment in jobs or conditions to which they did not give their consent. Since the criminal activity begins in their home countries, creating a partnership with both source and transit countries is now of paramount importance to the UAE's national strategy.

The government also recognises the importance of addressing the commercial impetus behind human trafficking in any national legislation and policy. Trafficking is a thriving global business that generates billions of dollars a year. It is also linked to other organised crimes like human smuggling, drug trafficking, and money laundering. The majority of transnational victims are trafficked into commercial sexual exploitation and the rest into forced exploitative labour.

The implementation of the UAE's legal and social support mechanisms during the last three years of its concerted fight against human trafficking has been recognised by the international community. Although the UAE

welcomes constructive help and criticism from international partners and organisations, the anti-trafficking agenda will be determined by the government. The UAE appreciates that as in many other countries, the challenges to government agencies in combating human trafficking are numerous and complex. The government is committed to checking the exploitative and coercive abuse of any human life in the country and is making great strides to check this by pursuing its four-pillar action plan: legislation; enforcement; victim support, and; bilateral agreements and international cooperation.

This report is part of the UAE's new approach to share information with the general public and the international community, and highlight the country's stance on the issue, record progress, identify obstacles and challenges encountered during the last year, and spell out future initiatives. The report also aims to measure the country's progress over time on this issue and serve as a channel to promote dialogue, transparency and knowledge exchange at an international level.

The government recognises that the more informed we are about victims, the source countries, transit routes and methodologies of traffickers, the more we can do to prevent this crime. This report attempts to help integrate the various processes involved in this effort – collaboration with law enforcement agencies, international organisations and victim support centres, data collection and analysis.

## Pillar I – Legislation

Since 2006, the multi-disciplinary Federal Law 51 continues to provide the legal framework for handling human trafficking cases. Since the legislation was enacted, more and more people have become aware of the law.

Article One of this law defines trafficking as “recruiting, transporting, transferring, harbouring, or receiving persons by means of threat or use of force, or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or of position, taking advantage of the vulnerability of the person, or, the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation, engaging others in prostitution, servitude, forced labour, enslavement, quasi-slavery practices, or the detachment of organs.”

Legally, this definition classifies an activity as human trafficking based on the following four factors:

1. Form of trafficking – recruiting, transporting, transferring and harbouring;
2. Means of trafficking – by use of threat or force, or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or of position, taking advantage of the vulnerability of the person;
3. Examples of exploitation – engaging others in prostitution, servitude, forced labour, enslavement, quasi-slavery practices, or organ trade.

This definition is closely aligned with that outlined in the Palermo Protocol and by other international legislation. It offers strong punitive measures, including maximum penalties of life imprisonment and covers all forms of human trafficking.

Under the law, a life sentence is applicable if the crime is committed through deceit, if it involves the use of force or threat of murder or bodily harm, or if it involves physical or psychological torture. Furthermore, the 16-article law prescribes stiff penalties against traffickers ranging from one year to life imprisonment and fines of 100,000 dirhams and one million dirhams (\$27,500 and \$275,000).

In addition, Article 364 of the UAE Penal Code protects against forced prostitution and Article 365 lays out penalties for those establishing and managing places for prostitution. The UAE also issued Law No. 39 in 2006 on international judicial cooperation, which includes articles on the extradition of suspected or convicted criminals to judicial authorities to try them or execute the sentences given to them. It also provides for mutual judicial assistance in criminal cases, including human trafficking (Articles 6-37).

As part of its comprehensive national and international strategy to combat trafficking, in May 2007, the UAE ratified the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (2000), which includes provisions for international cooperation in anti-human trafficking efforts. More importantly, in February 2009, the UAE ratified the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol), which is one of the two protocols attached to the Organized Crime Convention.

The National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking has appointed a sub-committee to study the possibilities of amending Federal Law 51, particularly in order to emphasise the protection and repatriation of victims, thus bringing the law more in line with the Palermo Protocol.

## Pillar II – Enforcement

Since a Cabinet order established the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking in 2007, the Committee is coordinating efforts and enforcing plans at various levels in the seven emirates of the federation. The Committee includes representatives from the federal ministries of Interior, Foreign Affairs, Labour, Health and Social Affairs, as well as State Security and the UAE Red Crescent Society. In February 2009, the Cabinet strengthened the National Committee by adding public prosecutors, law enforcement officers, and representatives from the human rights association, as well as victim shelters to its membership.

The responsibilities of the Committee include:

- Studying and revising human trafficking legislation with a view to enhancing and securing necessary protections in accordance with international standards.
- Preparing reports on efforts taken by the UAE to fight human trafficking, in coordination with other authorities and relevant bodies in the country.
- Studying reports related to human trafficking and taking relevant action towards realising their recommendations.
- Coordinating efforts among government authorities concerned with the issue of human trafficking such as ministries, departments, corporations and organisations, as well as coordinating follow-up actions taken to achieve these objectives.
- Promoting public awareness on matters related to human trafficking through conferences, seminars, brochures, training and other means in order to achieve the goals of the committee.
- Participating in international conferences and forums related to combating human trafficking.

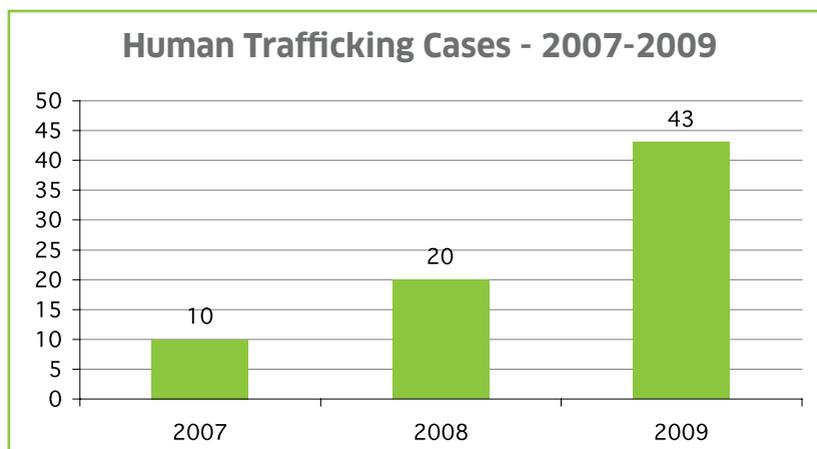
The Committee, which meets frequently, is committed to encouraging additional progressive and forceful legislative efforts to assure country-wide compliance with international standards and implementation of the laws that are in place. The Committee has also been taking the lead in publishing annual reports on human trafficking since 2008 to ensure transparency and dissemination of information, as well as increase awareness among the public in general and the international community. The UAE believes that data collection and analysis is important because the more information there is, the more that can be done to stop such activities.

### Cases registered under Federal Law 51

The UAE federal government and those of the seven individual emirates have focused on increasing awareness for the enforcement of anti-human trafficking laws. According to official reports, at least 43 human trafficking-related cases were registered 2009 under Federal Law 51. This compares with 10 and 20 in 2007 and 2008 respectively, suggesting that the detection process is intensifying with each passing year. Notably, there were convictions in at least 35 cases in 2009.

Human Trafficking Cases - 2009				
Emirate	Number of			
	Cases	Victims	Accused	Conviction
Abu Dhabi	7	22	35	4
Dubai	21	36	63	16
Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al Quwain, Fujairah	13	19	23	13
Ras Al Khaimah	2	9	4	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>35</b>

Source: Prosecution departments of various emirates' and federal courts, UAE



In a notable case, the Criminal Court in Abu Dhabi sentenced seven men to life in prison – the harshest penalty possible in the emirate’s largest known human-trafficking ring. The January 2010 verdict was a tough response to a crime that came to light in November 2009, and prosecuted under the “organised criminal gang” clause (Article 2) of Federal Law 51, which states that “the penalty shall be life imprisonment if ... the perpetrator is a member of an organised criminal gang, or has consciously taken part in the activities of that gang”.

It is only the second time a life sentence has been handed down in a human-trafficking case; the first being in Ras Al Khaimah in early 2009. In addition, six others – accused of assisting with the trafficking and exploitation of the 18 victims – were each sentenced to 10 years. All will be deported after completing their sentences.

The 15 women victims involved in this case were granted one million dirhams (\$270,000) by Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, Chairperson of the General Women’s Union, and an additional undisclosed sum earmarked for the women’s rehabilitation in their home country.

This unique case was not just an important milestone in the efforts of the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking, but also exemplified the cooperation and coordination of all agencies that are part of the committee – police, victim shelters, public prosecution and the judicial system as a whole.

### Increasing awareness

The fact that human trafficking cases are no longer confined to one emirate indicates that the UAE’s efforts, in disseminating information among officials and the public at large, is starting to have the desired impact. The Committee anticipates further improvement once the UAE’s plan to launch an anti-human trafficking publicity campaign at airports and UAE embassies abroad materialises in 2010. This has been proposed based on our observation that human trafficking, especially for sexual exploitation, has its origins outside the country.

Further, an official anti-human trafficking website ([www.nccht.gov.ae](http://www.nccht.gov.ae)) to serve as an official information source was launched in 2009. We hope this will become an effective way of raising public awareness and a communication channel between the public and the Committee.

With these improved results in registration, prosecution and conviction, the UAE is working harder to gather and deploy the necessary manpower to increase the crackdown against human trafficking activities as efficiently as possible.

As part of a comprehensive awareness campaign to enhance public and law enforcement knowledge about this crime and explore ways of limiting it, workshops and training sessions are being conducted by the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking in cooperation with various law enforcement departments and ministries. These workshops are attended by the relevant departments of naturalisation

and residency, police and public prosecution. The primary purpose of such programmes is to ensure that those on the front line of the fight against trafficking work to international standards. Specific departments in various ministries are also being encouraged to conduct their own specialised training programmes to acquire the required skills to better tackle the crime. Several ministries and departments have set up special units to tackle human trafficking crimes, both at the federal and local levels, leading to the following activities:

- In January 2009, 80 officials held a brainstorming session to discuss the national strategy against human trafficking. Attended by senior representatives from law enforcement and the judiciary departments of both federal and local governments, the seminar focused on the need for more training to equip police officers and other law enforcement personnel to better identify potential trafficking cases and monitor companies supplying workers in order to prevent abuses. During the seminar, the officials were urged to tighten control on labour supply offices and ensure they do not abuse newly recruited labourers. The officials were instructed to focus on more prosecutions and work towards a centralised documentation system on trafficking to better understand the extent of the problem.
- As part of the UAE's holistic approach to victim support, the National Committee organised a two-day workshop-cum-training programme focusing on victim identification in February 2009 in cooperation with the International Organisation on Migration. This programme was aimed at improving the knowledge base of the law enforcement officials dealing with human trafficking cases.
- The National Committee also organised training courses on human trafficking laws at the Dubai Judicial Institute, which was attended by officials of law enforcement departments and federal judiciary.
- Similarly, a two-day forum – Human Trafficking: Challenges and

Obstacles – was organised by the Dubai Police and the Dubai Women's and Children Foundation with the aim of unifying the efforts of all bodies concerned with combating the crime. It was attended by representatives from the ministries of interior, labour, health, the Dubai and Abu Dhabi police and other agencies. Another symposium on protecting victims of human trafficking was held in Abu Dhabi. Organised by the Ministry of Interior, it was attended by delegates from various ministries, federal and local departments, civil societies, as well as the United Nations Development Programme. Both these forums made several recommendations about upgrading Federal Law 51 and improving victim support, among others, which were discussed by the National Committee to Combat Trafficking. The final decisions on all these recommendations have been communicated to the relevant departments for implementation as appropriate.

- Under the auspices of the Emirates Human Rights Association, a symposium on human trafficking was held at the Dubai Cultural and Scientific Association in June.
  - Separately, the association organised a panel discussion and screened a documentary film on human trafficking crimes and its impact on the country.
  - The association distributed a brochure on human trafficking crimes, with details of laws meant to limit such crimes, ways of controlling them and efforts undertaken by the UAE to curb human trafficking.
  - It signed cooperation agreements with a number of law firms to follow up on financial issues pertaining to victims of human trafficking, particularly with regard to waiving court fees.
  - The association also founded a specialised committee on human trafficking in order to educate the community on the various types of human trafficking crimes and, with the help of competent authorities, assist victims of human trafficking regain

confidence and engage more meaningfully with the society.

- A delegation comprising 20 law enforcement officials and shelter personnel were part of training programmes at the International Training Centre for Human Trafficking Prevention, part of the Belarus Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in July and October.
- The Dubai Attorney-General set up a permanent taskforce of specialists on human trafficking in Dubai in October. It will comprise advocates with broad experience in the field, women prosecutors, legal and social researchers and psychiatrists. This comes as part of the Public Prosecution's strategic objective of working towards a "fairer and safer society". It also translates into reality the recommendations of the technical committee, which had suggested a more methodological investigation and legal procedures while dealing with human trafficking cases. It is expected that the interpretation of the law would improve further and that cases will be followed up more vigorously. The taskforce will also draw up a mechanism to provide legal, psychological and social support to the victims, as well as strengthen the state's role in international judicial cooperation.

### Initiatives by Ministry of Interior

The Ministry of Interior – whose mandate includes offering support to all security entities by providing them with intelligence information, conducting research and preparing criminal analysis, as well as developing and maintaining a security-related statistical database – undertook several measures to check human trafficking:

- During 2009, it established a Human Rights Department, which includes women public prosecutors, legal researchers, social workers and psychological advisers, who are specialists in human trafficking cases. This department reports to the Federal Investigation Department and is responsible for preparing

combating plans and policies, in addition to setting standards to deal with such crimes and minimising their impact; it studies the methodologies used by criminal gangs and follows up on their backgrounds, motivation, as well as local and international human trafficking links; offers training; investigates crimes; coordinates with Interpol and related entities, as well as shares information with other countries and international organisations in order to help control human trafficking crimes; and follows up on local and international legislations and conventions related to human trafficking.

- The department monitors the implementation of human rights commitments of various ministries and addresses their violations.
- It coordinates with the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking to ensure that vulnerable groups, like women and children, are protected from trafficking crimes, as well as other forms of exploitation and abuse.
- The department helps prepare periodic analysis and reports of the trends involved in trafficking crimes.
- The interior ministry's Federal Security Information Management System provides support by sharing facts and figures on crimes with all security agencies, both at the emirate and federal levels. It is also in charge of developing and maintaining a well-protected and circulated statistical record.
- In the realm of developing counter-trafficking measures, the ministry exercises the following powers:
  - Prepares plans and policies, as well as mechanisms to deal with such crimes.
  - Monitors operational methods of the criminal gangs specialised in human trafficking, identifies them and takes follow-up action.
  - Studies the motives behind the link between local and international gangs dealing with human trafficking crimes.

- Trains officials with regard to detection of human trafficking cases.
- Participates in the process of ascertaining information from victims.
- Coordinates with the concerned Interpol department and other stakeholders, including neighbouring countries and international organisations, with regard to exchange of information on human trafficking crimes.
- Shares combating strategies with various government departments.
- Coordinates protection efforts with victim shelters.
- Helps in the counselling and rehabilitation process of victims.
- Authorises exemption of fines for victims who have violated visa regulations.
- Coordinates efforts to chart out a new law for domestic workers, with more clarity on the rights of employers and employees.
- Devises public awareness programmes and disseminates information.
- During 2009, the interior ministry organised at least 16 training sessions, symposia, conferences and workshops either in the country or abroad, attended by approximately 250 officials.
- With regard to tightening security measures against human trafficking, the interior ministry undertakes the following steps:
  - Intensified checks at borders and ports.
  - Impose strict conditions on tourist companies pertaining to issuing of visas to women under the age of 30 years because of their vulnerability to exploitation.
  - Strict enforcement of IRIS scan at airports to ensure that deported people do not re-enter the country with a different name and passport.
  - Ensure that children and parents possess separate passports, which helps better verification of identity.

### Dubai Police efforts

- Dubai Police established a new facility in 2009 to monitor and control human trafficking. This centre will be involved in the following activities:
  - Conduct field studies and workshops to discuss and analyse human trafficking issues.
  - Conduct training programmes to ensure that the law is implemented strictly and victims' rights are protected, along with making all support services available to them at the time of arrest and interrogation; it will also communicate with the victims' embassies and consulates.
  - Coordinate with the concerned authorities to ensure the rehabilitation of victims and their reintegration into the society.
  - The centre will work towards raising public awareness about the crime and ways of preventing it.
  - It will participate in international efforts to combat traffickers.
  - The new centre is equipped with the people and tools to carry out research, with multilingual staff fluent in Russian, Chinese, Urdu and Arabic.
  - It also has the mandate to address workers' complaints against labour law violations and exploitation. During 2009, this department responded to 717 individual complaints and 88 group complaints from workers calling its hotline service (8005005). From among the group complaints, 53 of pertained to delay in salary payments, 14 were related to cancellation of work permits, nine about better salaries, seven for better services, three for termination of services and two complaints about reduced salaries without justification. The department also inspected 1648 labour accommodation sites, of which 287 sites were revisited after falling short of basic regulations the first time.
- In addition, Dubai Police conducted various programmes dealing with the following themes – Together Against the Modern-Day Slavery;

Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking; Forging Partnerships; Generating Public Awareness; Monitoring International Reports; Hotline for Workers; Know Your Rights; Caring Touch: We Are With You; Mobile Labour Courts; and Protection of Labour Rights.

- Dubai Police also conducted workshops, training sessions and lectures on the following issues: Role and Responsibilities of Labour Inspectors; Forum on Combating Human Trafficking Crimes; and Dealing with Blue-collar Workers.
- Dubai Police signed a memorandum of understanding with the Dubai Foundation for Women and Children in November for better cooperation and coordination between the two institutions.

### Labour reforms

The UAE is aware that in order to intensify its anti-human trafficking drive, labour mobility needs to be more effectively managed through the formulation of appropriate legal and policy frameworks, the development of enhanced administrative structures and on-going capacity building. The UAE has introduced several changes to its labour policies to protect the expatriate workforce, which is having a positive impact. It must be stressed, however, that the UAE – with expatriates making up 80 per cent of its population – believes that labour issues should not be linked to human trafficking, and should be treated separately.

In the past, progress towards these objectives has been seriously hampered because of differences in the approaches taken by the countries of origin and destination. However, the UAE has been attaching greater importance to improving dialogue with individual countries of origin and seeking to establish multilateral consultation.

Despite the challenges, the UAE is aiming to manage and govern the working environment in line with international laws and best

international labour practices in key areas such as highly regulated standards of labour accommodation, payment of wages on time and mechanisms to address grievances justly.

As part of the UAE's efforts to create specialised institutions, the Ministry of Labour has recently created a new division to combat human trafficking, which monitors against the possibility of such crimes being committed on workers. It also monitors the activities of recruitment agencies to ensure that proper measures are taken ahead of employing workers, especially with regard to protecting them against any form of exploitation.

Some of the labour-friendly measures undertaken during 2009 include:

- **Human rights awareness.** A specific action plan to raise awareness of human rights-related labour issues was outlined by the labour ministry at the beginning of the year. The initiative was coordinated by 17 government departments and included the private sector. Between January and April, the labour ministry, in collaboration with the International Labour Organisation's Regional Office for Arab States and the United Nations' Regional Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, organised a series of events for labour and other government inspectors to improve how they address human rights issues as part of their duties, as well as raise public awareness on labour and human rights. These events included a training course on inspection and human rights; train-the-trainer workshop; orientation campaign on upholding a culture of respect for human rights; and culminated with a seminar that discussed a host of issues, including human rights in work places, combating forced labour, public-private partnership in upholding fundamental human rights and promoting corporate social responsibility.

- **Wage Protection System (WPS).** It is now mandatory for all business organisations with 100 or more employees to channel their workers' salaries through banks, which is a marked shift from the system of cash payments to blue-collar workers. As part of the WPS, the labour ministry intends to expand this plan to include all business organisations by May 2010. The system, which is being enforced in cooperation with the central bank and local exchange companies, not only helps timely payment of salaries, but also assists the ministry in verifying if companies make undue deductions from the salaries of workers. By November, more than 500,000 workers were already receiving their salaries through bank transfers.
- **Decent Work Country Programme.** The labour ministry, in coordination with the International Labour Organisation has begun the process of establishing the "Decent Work Country Programme". This technical cooperation protocol seeks to achieve its goal through four strategic approaches:
  - Create an environment where the fundamental principles and rights at work are observed, particularly combating all forms of discrimination at work.
  - Endeavour to create more employment opportunities for women and men to enhance their access to decent jobs and income through adoption of suitable education and training policies that are responsive to labour market needs.
  - Strengthen national capabilities to enhance and expand the umbrella of social protection and support the role of social security networks in protecting the less-privileged.
  - Consolidate social dialogue and ensure proactive contribution from social stakeholders in formulating UAE socio-economic policies.
- **Pilot project.** Following up on the approval of the Abu Dhabi Declaration by all major labour-sending and labour-receiving countries of Asia in 2008, the UAE labour ministry, along with

the Indian and the Philippines governments, began in 2009 a pilot project to survey and document best practice in the management of the temporary contractual employment cycle. The three governments are collaborating towards the development of a pilot project with expert input from the Arab Labour Organisation, the International Labour Organisation and the International Organisation on Migration. The overall goal of the project, involving 2400 workers, is to test a range of practical measures that will serve to improve the quality of life and work of contractual workers. The project has been divided into four phases: first, the creation of a more transparent and fair recruitment and deployment process for workers desiring to come to the UAE; second, the creation of more effective institutions that can assist temporary contractual workers during their time of employment in the UAE; third, the identification of workers whose contracts are expiring and the creation of programmes to prepare workers for their return to their own country; and finally, the creation of institutions and policies that will more effectively reintegrate workers in their country after they return. The project demonstrates that it is possible to implement reforms that engender a fairer and more productive environment for employers and employees alike.

- **Managing fallout of economic crisis.** As a consequence of the world financial crisis and the resultant global economic slowdown, the UAE labour market also experienced a contraction and related problems, particularly in the private sector. Among others, the labour ministry minimised the repercussions of the slowdown by adopting the following measures:
  - The ministry set up a hotline (800665) for workers to lodge complaints over unpaid salaries. The new initiative dubbed "My Salary" also allowed workers to air their grievances online ([www.mol.gov.ae](http://www.mol.gov.ae)) through the ministry's portal if their payments were delayed by 15 days or more. Complaints can be

filed in 12 languages including Arabic, English, French, Hindi, Farsi, Russian and Urdu. In its first month, May 2009, 331 complaints were recorded.

- Since January 2009, shelters were set up under the auspices of the Higher Committee for Labour Crisis Management for workers who lost jobs, work permits and accommodation. Nine teams were formed all over the country. Affected illegal workers are allowed to stay in these shelters until their cases are reviewed with their sponsors and settled in accordance with the labour law. These shelters also offer food and medical facilities.
- Recognising the need for a more flexible regulatory system for the labour market during an economic slowdown, the Labour Ministry has proposed providing redundant workers with visa extension facilities for up to six months (expatriates currently have just one month to leave the country after their employment is terminated). Visa application fees would also be reduced for companies that hire unemployed workers already in the country.
- **Construction workers cite improved conditions.** Seventy-nine per cent of construction employees, originating from key Asian source markets, and currently residing in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, said their situation is better now than it was before arriving in the country, according to the findings of a survey into working conditions in the construction industry, conducted by Zogby International, an independent US-based polling organisation. The April-May 2009 survey – with an interview sample of 752 construction employees and a margin error of plus or minus 3.6 per cent – was asked about satisfaction levels at workplaces, accommodation standards, quality of general services and the choice of the UAE as a work destination.
- Moving ahead, as part of the labour ministry's plans to protect workers' rights and improve their working and living conditions,

new rules for labour accommodation standards – Manual of the General Criteria for the Workers' Accommodations – that was approved by the Cabinet in June will be implemented to meet international best practices by 2014. These include mandatory consultation with the ministry on construction of new labour camps that are in line with international standards, renovating existing camps within a set grace period and the closure of camps that do not meet the ministry's requirements.

- The number of violations of the labour department's midday work ban during the summer months of 2009 dropped by nearly half compared to 2008, and the number of workers who were hospitalised for heat-related illnesses was down by at least 25 per cent. Plans are now underway to extend the break, which is benefitting about two million construction workers, from two to three months (June-August).

### **Pillar III – Victim support**

The UAE's holistic approach to combating human trafficking includes significant initiatives that determine how victims are treated by law enforcement officials, as well as expanding the help and welfare programmes available to them. These programmes are designed to be prompt and just. The government firmly believes that those who are sexually exploited must be treated as victims, protected and supported through counselling and rehabilitation programmes. At the same time, those responsible for trafficking individuals into prostitution or into forced labour will be punished according to the UAE law.

The government has a growing track record of providing assistance and protection to victims of sexual abuse. It provides shelter and counselling for these victims. The government works with foreign governments and NGOs when cases are brought to its attention. Victims have been given protection and shelter while their paperwork is processed, and are then repatriated based on their consent and at the government's expense under the 'Crime Victim Assistance Programme.' The National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking has issued a decree (7/18/2010) with new guidelines to all the concerned authorities, including police, public attorneys and victim shelters, about being sensitive during investigation and enhancing victim support.

Aside from government-headed initiatives, charitable and social networks are also active in the UAE. Foremost among these is the Dubai Foundation for Women and Children (DFWAC), which was established in 2007 to provide support and psychological care to all women, both nationals and expatriates, who are victims of violence with a particular focus on human trafficking, domestic violence, and child abuse. These services are free of charge and non-discriminatory.

### **Dubai Foundation for Women and Children**

The shelter was the first step towards institutionalising victim support in line with international standards. It is governed by an independent board and is in contact with similar shelters in other countries to introduce best practices in shelter management and administration. The foundation plays a vital role in improving social services for victims by providing a refuge to overcome the psychological and physical effects of violence, oppression and neglect.

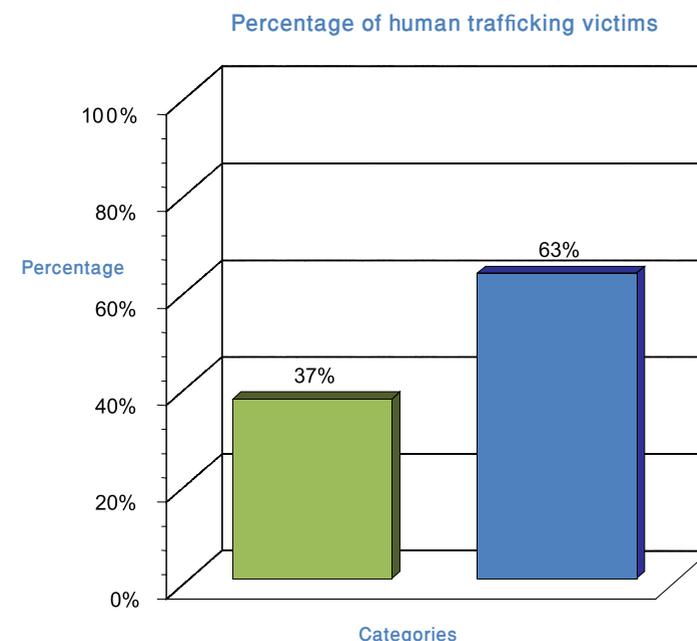
The foundation's facilities can accommodate up to 250 people and include spacious lawns surrounding the complexes; nurse and physician's office, indoor playroom for children of victims; a well-equipped gymnasium, as well as football, basketball and volleyball facilities for adults; and an in-house restaurant. In addition to housing, victims are provided comprehensive services including immediate medical and psychological care, case management, consular, immigration and legal support, educational and vocational training, and psychological counselling and groups. The foundation works in collaboration with national and international partners to ensure victims receive a quality continuum of care.

The following are some highlights of the Dubai shelter during 2009 and the socio-economic status of the victims:

- The Foundation helped 89 victims, 33 of them related to human trafficking.
- The average age of these trafficking victims was about 21 years. While the youngest was 12 years old, the oldest was 33 years old.
- Eight victims were below 18 years of age.
- A quarter of the trafficked victims (27 per cent) never attended schools or received any kind of vocational training. More than half the victims attended primary and high school (33 per cent and 27 per cent respectively), and two victims studied in college, but did not complete their courses.

- While 17 trafficked victims were unmarried, eight were married, six divorced, one separated, and another was a widow.
- Only three of the 33 victims were rescued before being forced into prostitution.
- Fourteen victims claimed they had not been paid by the traffickers despite being exploited, 10 received less than 1000 dirhams per month, three received between 1000 and 3000 dirhams, and five of them received unspecified, irregular payments. However, one claimed to have been paid 10,000 dirhams a month.
- Twelve victims entered the country on work visas, seven on visit visas, three on dependent residency visa and one on a tourist visa. Ten victims were unaware of the kind of visa they were issued before entering the country.
- At the time of being admitted to the shelter, only five victims had valid visas. While eight of them were aware that their visas had expired, 20 of them were unaware of the status of their visas.
- Eight victims were mothers who had children in their home countries (seven of them had one child, and the other, two). Only one victim was admitted to the shelter with a child (single mother).
- While 20 of them were recruited in their home countries, 13 of them were recruited in the UAE. All those recruited from their home countries were aware that they were destined for the UAE. Six of them, however, transited through other countries before arriving in the UAE.
- Only one victim – a 13 year old girl – was aware that she would be sexually exploited, after being sold to the traffickers by her guardians, following the death of her parents. The rest were trafficked on the pretext of either a new or better job. Eleven of them believed they would work as housemaids, four as saleswomen, four as unspecified workers in companies, four as dancers, three as waitresses and one each as a cook and hair dresser. Three victims were unaware of the nature of job they had been recruited for.

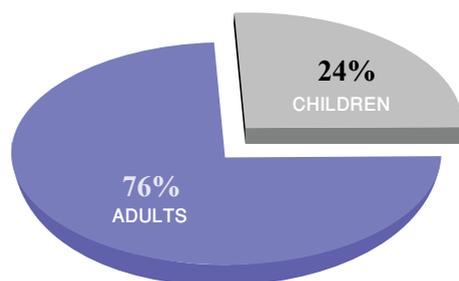
- While 10 of them realised they had been trafficked for sexual exploitation the day they arrived in the UAE or accompanied the trafficker (in case of those recruited in the UAE), 16 realised a “few” days later, five of them after a week, and one after a month.
- While 14 victims were coerced verbally into complying, 13 were beaten and four were raped, before they complied.
- While 11 of the victims were recruited directly by the traffickers, three were directed to the traffickers through family friends, 10 by other friends and one by a relative. The remaining 10 victims were unsure about how they were trafficked.
- Only 19 of the 33 victims were discharged from the shelter by the end of 2009. Fifteen of these were repatriated to their home countries.



Only 33 of 89 clients in 2009 were trafficking victims

- It should be noted that all the repatriated victims were sent home after being given a list of resourceful people and institutions to contact in their countries, when needed. The foundation also made direct contact with the International Organisation for Migrants in the victims' countries, and/or with other related agencies there to follow up with the victims. Only five victims chose not to make direct contact with any agency in their countries. The foundation, however, continues to follow up on all the repatriated victims by making direct phone calls on a regular basis.

Children and adult victims of trafficking (33 cases - 2009)

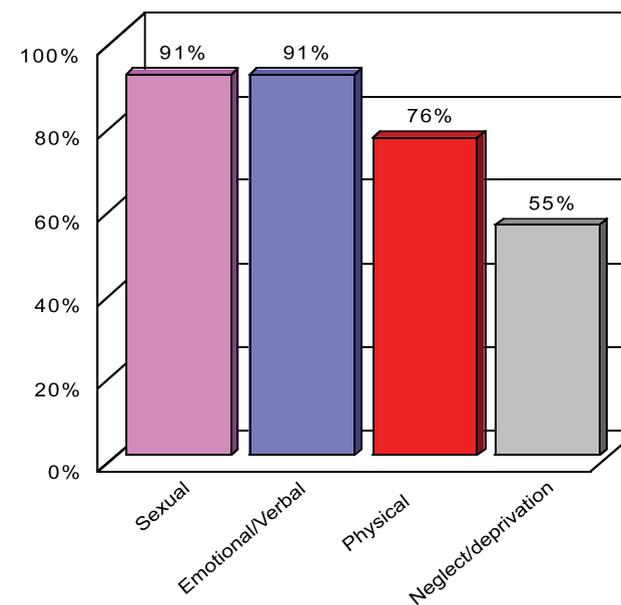


Referral sites for victims of trafficking at Dubai shelter in 2009

No.	Referral site	No. of cases	(%)
1	Dubai Police/CID	27	81.1%
2	Department of Naturalisation	3	9.1%
3	Dubai Prosecution	1	3%
4	Other*	2	6.1%
<b>Total</b>		<b>33</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* One of these two cases was referred by Ewaa, the Abu Dhabi shelter, and the other by Umm Al Quwain prosecution.

Types of abuse experienced by victims of human trafficking



Duration of stay at DFWAC *	Number	(%)
≤ 30 days	3	15%
31-90 days	4	21.1%
91-180 days	2	10.5%
181-365 days	10	52.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>100%</b>

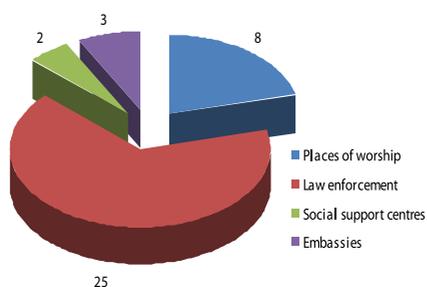
\* Discharged cases only

## Ewaa – shelter for women and child victims of human trafficking, Abu Dhabi

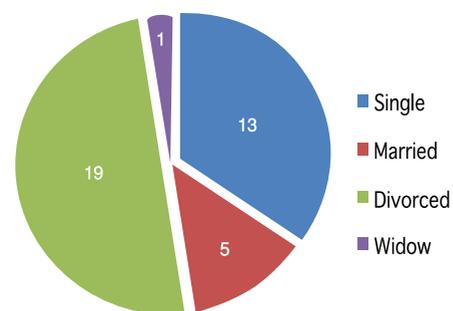
Under the umbrella of the UAE Red Crescent Authority, Ewaa – shelter for women and child victims of human trafficking, Abu Dhabi – formally started operating in February 2009. By December, Ewaa had provided temporary refuge to at least 38 women, mostly victims of forced prostitution. Most of the victims are aged between 20 and 30 years, and belong to different nationalities – Arab, Asian, European and African.

All victims are entitled to rehabilitation and receive further assistance such as medical and psychological support. Ewaa has residential facilities, a reading room, craftwork facilities, a meeting room, office space, and a provision for in-house social workers, a fully-equipped clinic, a gymnasium and a swimming pool.

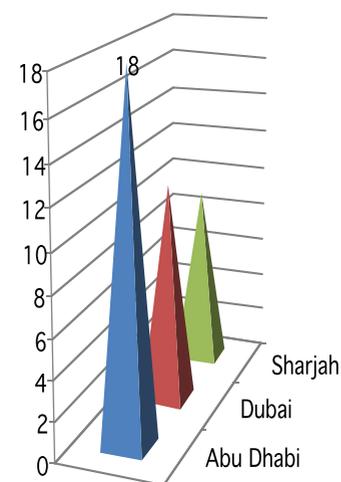
The facility, which can now accommodate up to 30 people, is likely to be expanded during the next few years. The shelter is planning to launch a publicity campaign and emergency helpline to encourage more victims to break out of exploitation. Simultaneously, it is also working with the police departments of some of the emirates to develop a ‘humanitarian code’ to deal with trafficking victims.



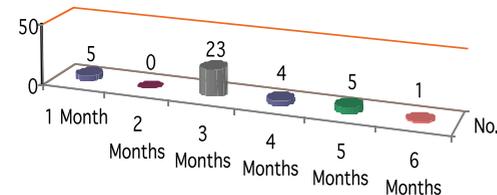
Source of victims	No.
Places of worship	8
Law enforcement	25
Social support centres	2
Embassies	3



Marital Status	No.
Single	13
Married	5
Divorced	19
Widow	1



Access Port	No.
Abu Dhabi	18
Dubai	11
Sharjah	9



Duration of stay	No.
Month or less	5
2 months	0
3 months	23
4 months	4
5 months	5
6 months	1

Both shelters now have a 24x7, multi-lingual hotline service operated by trained women staff (Dubai – 800111 and Abu Dhabi – 8007283), which are increasingly being used by victims. The staff at both shelters are trained to deal with victims sensitively, and co-ordinate suitable follow-up. According to the shelters, women are usually transferred to their facilities by church groups, courts, the police and embassies. Other organisations offering similar social services are the Social Support Centre of the Abu Dhabi Police and the Human Rights Care Department of Dubai Police. The resources of all these institutions are increasingly being utilised.

Encouraged by the efficient working of both Ewaa and the Dubai Foundation for Women and Children, the UAE is now considering plans to open more such shelters across the country. The National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking is studying a mechanism of laws and bylaws that would facilitate the process of giving licences to more shelters. Two new centres in Sharjah and Ras Al Khaimah are likely to be opened in 2010. Each of these shelters is likely to accommodate 20 women.

Thus, the UAE is ensuring that capacity-building efforts for victims is matching the growing number of cases, which are the result of growing awareness about the government's campaign and efforts.

#### **Pillar IV – Bilateral agreements and international cooperation**

Since human trafficking in the UAE has its point of origin in the home countries of guest workers, the government has intensified coordination with labour-exporting countries. The anti-trafficking committee has found that the traffickers and their victims often originate from the same country, making it more difficult for authorities in the UAE to uncover the crime – a challenge that could be overcome with greater bilateral cooperation.

Over the last few years, the UAE has signed labour agreements with several countries, including India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, China, Thailand and Philippines. These agreements are aimed at regulating the flow of the labour workforce and denying unscrupulous private recruitment agencies the chance to cheat and traffic workers. In some cases, labour contract transactions are required to be processed by labour ministries or offices in the sending countries.

Other efforts in the international cooperation arena that were undertaken in 2009 include:

- Following a combined effort, the Indonesian embassy in Abu Dhabi reported in March that there was a 36 percent drop in the number of incidents of exploitation of Indonesian housemaids in Abu Dhabi in 2008 compared to the previous year.
- Officials have been appointed in the state of Kerala in India to conduct investigations at a local level and prosecute agents involved in trafficking to the UAE. The Indian government is considering appointing similar investigators in other states as well. Further, India is focusing on pre-departure training for women and men travelling to the Gulf to work as housemaids and construction

workers. By 2013, New Delhi is targeting pre-departure training for 150,000 workers.

- In efforts to both gain from and share the anti-human trafficking experiences of international organisations and the global community:
  - A two-day workshop-cum-training programme was held in February in cooperation with the IOM, which was aimed at improving the knowledge base of UAE law enforcement officials dealing with human trafficking cases.
  - In March, a UAE delegation was part of a two-day conference titled “Human Trafficking at the Crossroads – Private-Public Partnership to Fight Human Trafficking” in Bahrain.
- In February, the UAE’s anti-human trafficking efforts received a boost with the publication of the “Global Report on Trafficking Persons” released by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. The report was funded through a donation of 55 million dirhams (\$15 million) made to the United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Trafficking by the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, His Highness General Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. The “first global report on modern slavery”, covering 155 countries, contained some shocking revelations, including the fact that 40 percent of them had not yet convicted a single trafficker.
- Five cases of human trafficking-related extradition requests were recorded in 2009, compared to four in the previous year. While the extradition process reached its logical conclusion in two cases, requests are under consideration in three further cases.
- It is worth highlighting here that the Working Group Report on the UAE’s Universal Periodic Review was unanimously adopted at the 10th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva in March 2009. One of the critical areas addressed in the UAE’s report that was first presented in December 2008 was human trafficking. The

UAE made several voluntary commitments in its bid to tackle the crime – first, ratifying the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, which was fulfilled through an official notification in February.;

- Responding to the official invitation extended by the government, two special UN rapporteurs – one on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and the other on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance – visited the UAE separately and held discussions with various ministries, civil society organisations, academics and ordinary citizens in several emirates. Commending the UAE’s “cooperation and openness”, a preliminary report of the rapporteur said: “The recent review of the UAE by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and by the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council demonstrates that the authorities are willing to find ways and means of addressing human rights challenges faced by the people in the UAE and to ensure compliance with international human rights standards.” The UAE welcomed the preliminary findings as “constructive” and “recognition” of the government’s proactive initiatives.
- Three sisters were sentenced to varied prison terms in Armenia in April 2009 after the UAE and Armenian authorities worked together to gather evidence against them and expose a human trafficking network that lured vulnerable women to the UAE. The UAE government has vowed to further investigate any information provided by Armenian authorities that would help untangle other cases or avoid future exploitation of women.
- In November, an Emirati delegation participated in the second international workshop in Turkmenistan, which focused on ways to enforce laws and strengthen judicial cooperation to curb human trafficking.

- In December, the UAE and Armenian governments signed a memorandum of understanding facilitating cooperation on anti-human trafficking efforts. Similar agreements are being negotiated with Thailand and Belarus, among others.
- The Ministry of Interior has signed agreements with Russia, Italy, Germany, France, Canada, South Africa, Belarus, Poland and Austria on security cooperation, including human trafficking. Another 13 agreements are being discussed with Thailand, Romania, Uzbekistan, Bahrain, Singapore, Afghanistan, Tunisia, Finland, Hungary, Spain, Netherlands, Bangladesh and China.

## Conclusion

The UAE is approaching the human trafficking problem not just as a domestic problem, but coordinating much more effectively at the international level. More importantly, it considers human trafficking to be wrong and unacceptable to Islam, Arab culture and the UAE value system. The government believes that human trafficking is a despicable crime and is committed to working to combat this practice in any form.

The government is working hard on every element in its four-pillar strategy: legislation, enforcement, victim support, as well as bilateral agreements and international cooperation. Since the government first acknowledged this problem, it has consistently and continuously improved its efforts to limit the crime, as well as adhere to international standards, wherever possible.

It has made significant progress in a short period of time, but realises that much more needs to be done, and is ready to move ahead constructively and systematically. It will continue to demonstrate resolve, and acknowledge where it needs to improve. Simultaneously, the UAE will continue to cooperate with all appropriate regional and international law enforcement officials to apprehend, prosecute and punish those violating the UAE's human trafficking law and those attempting to use the country as a channel to violate anti-trafficking laws of other countries.

The UAE is committed to becoming a model for change in the region and an active member of the international community. It continues to welcome direct discussion and collaboration with other governments, public or private sector groups, or international organisations that share the vision of stemming the tide of human trafficking.

**NATIONAL COMMITTEE  
TO COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

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