

Camel Jockeys of Rahimyar Khan

By Syed Mehmood Asghar
with Sabir Farhat
& Shereen Niaz

Findings of a participatory research on
life and situation of child camel jockeys



Pakistan Rural Workers
Social Welfare Organisation



Save the Children
Sweden



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- A world that respects and values each child,
- A world which listens to children and learns,
- A world where all children have hope and opportunity.

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Acknowledgment



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Country Manager
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Preface

Trafficking of children for camel racing from Pakistan to UAE has been going on for more than 30 years as the government authorities and civil society organizations failed to take any action to stop it. The only voices of concern have been in response to newspaper reports of deaths among children while racing camels. International television news channels have made documentaries on these children. This created awareness and demands that children must not be used in inhuman sporting events which could cost them their lives.



Despite this awareness and concern, there have been very few initiatives to gather facts and investigate the issue in depth. Most of the studies generally looked into issues such as the reasons for trafficking, target communities from where the children were trafficked, routes of trafficking etc. but none have investigated the situation of children whilst in UAE as camel jockeys and conditions in which they spent their time there.

This research is therefore a unique and a pioneering effort by Save the Children Sweden and Pakistan Rural Workers' Social Welfare Organization in gathering data from repatriated children, who had returned to Pakistan after working as camel jockeys in the UAE. The information collected from these children is the most important aspect of this research study as it gives us a detailed account of the situation which the children faced at the hands of sheikhs, bedus or their cohorts. The information shows the severity of abuse and exploitation of children, which persists, in the camel racing industry even today.

The research has also gathered important information from other sources like parents, caregivers, agents, and some adults who had worked in the UAE as camel trainers and supervisors of camel farms. Other stakeholders such as the police and law enforcement agencies, lawyers, local government authorities, teachers, religious leaders, and working and non-working children also actively participated in the consultations.

An important aspect of this research has been a review of literature on camel racing in the Gulf region. The literature review helped understand the context and evolution of camel racing in Arab society and trace the transition in status of the camel in Arab culture.

The research clarifies some of the myths associated with the issue of child camel jockeys and explains the modus operandi of trafficking mafia in achieving their ill objective. This report very clearly identifies different groups of people involved in child trafficking and those who collaborate with traffickers at different levels.

This is a qualitative research study which seeks to throw light on the broader context of child trafficking for camel racing. Its purpose is to provide the facts and understanding for those, whether in the government or civil society, who are unaware of the issue. It gives a wealth of information and guidance for initiating intervention programmes aimed at combating child trafficking for camel racing.

I am pleased to present this report to you. I hope it will go a long way in contributing to our knowledge and understanding of the context of child trafficking for camel racing and the situation of children after being trafficked.

The report was written by Syed Mehmood Asghar with the assistance of Mr. Sabir Farhat and Ms. Shereen Niaz. The written text was extensively reviewed and edited by Ms. Angela Coleridge and Mr. Ghulam Qadri. Mr. Ghulam Qadri also helped with the final layout of the report.

Lisa Lundgren
Regional Representative
Save the Children Sweden
South and Central Asia

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Executive Summary



Trafficking in humans is a growing concern for governments and civil society globally. Over a million people are reportedly trafficked each year; women and children being the main victims. The trafficked people end up in prostitution, bonded labour and other forms of hazardous and exploitative working environments. Children, taken from Pakistan as camel jockeys, are a part of this trafficking.

There are international instruments to combat this. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) explicitly prohibits exploitation of children and recognises their inherent need for special care, protection and upbringing within the family. Articles 6, 9, 11, 19, 32, 34, 35 and 36 of the Convention make state parties responsible for protecting children from all forms of exploitation: sexual abuse, commercial sexual exploitation and exploitative labour. The Pakistan Government is a party to UNCRC. It has ratified the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. It has also ratified ILO Convention 182 on elimination of worst forms of child labour. Yet Pakistan is among the countries of origin, transit and destination for women and children trafficked and exploited.

It is a known fact that children are trafficked from Pakistan to wealthy Gulf States for camel racing. These children are mainly taken from poor families in the southern part of Punjab Province in a trade that has been on going for 30 years. Authentic data on the volume of this trafficking is not available, but there have been studies aimed at understanding some aspects, such as its cause, the most affected communities and the trafficking routes. None have focused on the children's traumatic experiences once they had been trafficked.

Save the Children is committed to a world that respects and values each child; that listens to them and learns from them; that offers them hope and opportunity. The plight of these trafficked children was therefore the focus of this present research. By listening to their stories it aimed to learn about their lives as camel jockeys, and thus to find a way to offer hope and opportunity for their future. It worked in collaboration with a Bahawalpur-based NGO, Pakistan Rural Workers Social Welfare Organisation, in the district of Rahimyar Khan in the southern Punjab. This region was selected because of the number of children trafficked. It was estimated that 15,000 children had been taken from the district to the UAE and Gulf States as camel jockeys.

Information on the background to camel racing in the Gulf has been included in the report and is seen as essential in understanding this rapidly developing sport. The main source of information has been a publication by Dr. Sulayman Khalf (1999) *Camel Racing in the Gulf*.¹ This comprehensive account traces the status of the camel in Arab society and the emergence of the sport as we know it today. It reflects on the historical role played by camels, both economically and for transportation in the deserts of Arabia. It looks at how all this changed with the discovery of oil and a life style offering limitless luxuries; how this had brought the camel to the brink of extinction within Arab culture.

In order to preserve this vanishing Arab heritage, the UAE Government promoted the sport of camel racing. Royal patronage and big stakes soon increased its popularity and a Camel Racing Association (CRA) was set up to regulate the game in UAE. The rising stakes and heightened

“We send them because we are poor. I instead of seeing my child dying of hunger it is better he dies somewhere else where I cannot see him.”
a parent



competition was also fuelling a search for lighter-weight jockeys and during the 1970s this began to involve children. But it was not till the late 1980s or early 1990s, after some publicised child deaths on the racetrack, that this trafficking became known. In 1980 UAE passed the Federal Labour Code which banned children from labour. In 1993 the UAE responded to international pressure and used this law to ban the use of children in the sport. The CRA also amended their rules to prohibit children under 14 years old and weighing less than 45 kg from being camel jockeys. However this ban was not implemented and the practice has continued unchecked.

This research aims to help rectify that situation. Its objective is to contribute to an enhanced understanding of the nature, underlying causes and consequences of child trafficking as camel jockeys. Through a thorough documentation of the experiences of children who have been trafficked it wants to identify the factors which are promoting this trafficking and understand the perspectives of children and family members about it. It hopes to be able to identify the rehabilitation needs of the ex-child jockeys through their active participation. By investigating this trafficking it could also look for other groups of people who are being trafficked along with the children, and for what purposes.

The research methodology is based on participatory interactive consultations with child victims of trafficking; children at risk of being trafficked; their families and caregivers; some former camel trainers in the Gulf; agents of people involved in child trafficking, political and religious leaders and concerned government officials. An initial situation assessment and stakeholders identification exercise was carried out before the consultations with children and other stakeholders.

“I only remember death was dancing on all sides, the children were falling down and the cars following the race were taking away the bodies of those who were killed or injured.”

ex-camel jockey





“Traffickers have a very strong network, both in the country and abroad. Everyone has to work together and there must be a national plan of action if it is to be stopped.”

a stakeholder

The research respondents include 46 children who went through the trafficking and exploitation trauma. All had been trafficked at an average age of five years, the youngest being three and the oldest aged eleven. On average these children spent about four years on the camel racing tracks and fifteen of them had spent seven years. Twenty nine children had been sent back to Pakistan by the age of ten, and the remaining seventeen between the ages of eleven and fifteen. They had been repatriated because of their racing injuries or their weight exceeding 20 kg. All had been trafficked to the UAE.

Child jockeys had very hard lives. They were put in *azbas*, or camel farms, in the desert where they lived for 24 hours a day. The only time they were taken out was when they were needed to race the camels. They were mostly without any caregiver, in the company of adult workers and treated exploitatively. They are physically and sexually abused, made to work from dawn till dusk and poorly fed to keep their weight under 20 kg level. They said they were terrified when put on the camel's back but they were even more afraid of their masters. Their parents had no idea of their real situation and only learned about it when their child was sent home. Most parents said they would not send their children to the Gulf again, 'even if offered millions in cash'.

The research points to poverty, lack of economic opportunity, illiteracy and unawareness about child rights as being the main reasons why families allow their children to be taken to the Gulf as child jockeys. There are also gangs of kidnappers who kidnap children and smuggle them to the Gulf. The participants suggested that effective measures are needed to reduce poverty, promote education and implement laws against child traffickers.

Based on the participants' suggestions, this research recommends that there needs to be international commitment to implement existing legislation and stop cross-boarder trafficking. The Government of Pakistan needs to take appropriate legislative, administrative and diplomatic measures to control trafficking inside Pakistan and offer the education and training which could give real options to families trapped by poverty. Communities need to work with the government to increase awareness, educational opportunity and economic initiatives.

Introduction



Significance of this documentation

Human trafficking has become a serious challenge to governments and civil societies throughout the world. Women and children are increasingly becoming commodities to be sold on the world market. More than a million females and children are trafficked each year and are forced into prostitution and bonded labour on false promises of better employment abroad. The children who are trafficked for camel jockeys are among them. There is no denying the fact that global human trafficking has now become more lucrative than that of smuggling arms or drugs.

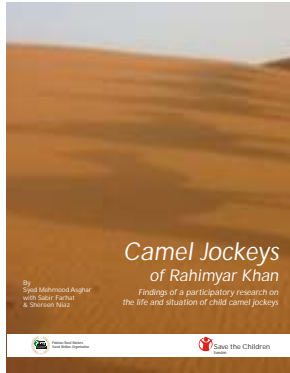
However, human trafficking does not take place in isolation. It is directly related to the social and economic realities of a society. Pakistan is a country of origin, transit and destination for women and children trafficked for purposes of sexual exploitation, forced labour and slavery. It is also a source country for young children who are trafficked to the Gulf countries like UAE, Qatar and Bahrain to work as camel jockeys.

Focus of the Research

Though the Government of Pakistan has ratified the ILO Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labour, and an ordinance on human trafficking has been promulgated, there is as yet no reliable data on this trafficking. This is particularly the case on child trafficking to the UAE and Gulf States for camel racing. The only generally known fact is that it is happening, and that children are injured, disabled and killed in the sport. There is no information on the number of children, how they are trafficked, what routes are used, who are involved in the business, and, most importantly, the ordeal through which these children pass after being trafficked. It is these important questions that the current research explores.

Method of Investigation

Information was collected through interactive dialogue techniques with the ex-child jockeys; their parents and families and other children vulnerable to trafficking; community leaders, overseas employment agents and officials from agencies responsible for monitoring immigration and human trafficking. The children were facilitated through a structured set of participatory tools. The adults took part in focus group discussions on different aspects of child trafficking from the region.



Layout of this report

This report is arranged in five sections:

Section 1 is the introduction. It highlights the significance of this particular documentation in the current global fight against trafficking. It states the focus of the research and outlines the method of investigation used.

Section 2 explores camel racing in its historical context and the economics of the industry which has affected so many lives. It describes its present sophistication, the racetracks and categories of racing camels, and how the camels are trained. It then introduces the district of Rahimyar Khan as the focus of this research and explains the reasons for its selection.

Section 3 gives the research background. It looks into the definitions of human trafficking and the legal instruments available for combating it. It gives the research objectives and explains the methodology with a breakdown of the target groups involved.

Section 4 looks into the research findings. It explores the trafficking triangle involving the child, his family and the agent, and what fuels this trafficking. It looks in detail at the target group of ex-camel jockeys and their personal testaments. It gives the trafficking routes and procedures which were used, and details the life of the trafficked children once they become camel jockeys. It exposes the abuses they were subjected to and draws on professional opinions as to the impact of such treatment.

Section 5 collects together the suggestions of all those who participated in the study. It then makes recommendations concerning the responsibilities at international, national and community level if the trafficking of children for camel jockeys is to be stopped.

Camel Racing & Historical Context¹

The Historical Background



Camels have always exerted their influence on the lives of the *bedu* of Arabia. The huge expanses of desert in the Arabian Peninsula and other Arab lands imposed harsh modes of life which require endurance, patience, and determination. Camels provided transport, milk, wool and meat. They became associated with every area of life: social, religious, economic and cultural. This gave them a place of unrivalled honour and dignity, and were closely associated with the glories of the Arab historical past.

The tradition of camel racing in the Arab peninsula is hundreds of years old. Historically, camel racing had been a sport, which was fully integrated into the social and economic life of the *bedu*. Camel races (*sibaqat ul hejin*) were divided into two categories, races during 'social celebrations' and 'competition races'. Races during festive social occasions were celebrated by the local community and included religious feasts, celebrating rainfall, weddings, circumcision, and perhaps the occasional visit of a prominent tribal sheikh. These races were run across 300-500 meters and riders exhibited their riding skills while brandishing their swords and rifles, or stood holding hands while two or three camels ran parallel to each other. There were occasional individual competitions for sport, but the winners received no prizes. Occasionally at wedding celebrations prizes may have been given by the family of the groom. These were small symbolic statements, basically a sign of recognition represented in the form of a dagger, head cloth, or other item of clothing.

In competition races, riders would be selected the evening before and a starting point agreed. A prize was usually declared beforehand. These competitions were often the result of a challenge among camel owners or were triggered by the visit of a leading sheikh who had offered a prize. The race usually started early in the morning and racing distances were relatively short, extending between 3 to 4 km. Unlike today, camels sat down at the starting line, and upon hearing a short cry, they rose up and ran. There were no rules governing the age of competing camels or the age and weight of the rider. As recently as the early 1970s, race camels were ridden by their owners, and usually by the nimble youngsters in the family. There were local races in each



emirate, which usually preceded the larger inter-emirate races. The larger races were always headed and patronized by the ruling sheikh families and at these events the ruling sheikh of the emirate where the race was taking place provided the prizes. Even in these races, rules regarding camel type, age categories or riders were lacking.

Today, camel racing in the UAE has changed radically. This change started in the early 1980s when those who were developing the sport found themselves in a difficult situation, without prior experience to draw on. Some organizational methods and rules in horse racing were adopted. This led to the founding of the Camel Racing Association (CRA) in the UAE on 25 October 1992. Their goal is to continue to develop this heritage sport by institutionalising it throughout the Emirates.

The young camel jockeys are being trafficked from Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, and there are incidences that Sudanese children are also being used.

New rules published by the Emirates Camel Racing Federation in June 2003 stipulated that any camel jockey must be aged 15 years or more and weigh at least 45 kg. However the rules are being ignored and allegations remain that many racers are too young and weigh too little, but the Emirate Government have avoided stopping this trafficking in slaves because they themselves are camel and slave owners.

Camel racing has now assumed the status of a national sport in the UAE. It takes place throughout the country, from the local to international level. There are 15 racetracks across the country with spacious and well-kept stadiums for viewers. The racing season starts in October and continues till April.

Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan, late President of the UAE, has been instrumental in his promotion and support of camel racing. He has formulated his goals and directives as a means of preserving this ancestral sport and protecting authentic Arab customs and traditions.

It is not clear exactly who was responsible for introducing children as camel jockeys or when this happened. Those involved in the sport say this practice originated to the mid 1970s when Arab sheikhs came to hunt in Rahimyar Khan District in Punjab, adjacent to Cholistan Desert in Pakistan.

Young camel jockeys are now being trafficked from Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, and there are incidences that Sudanese children are also being used. Destination countries have been identified as UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Mascut, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Under international pressure the UAE Government banned employing children as camel jockeys in 1993. However, the ban has so far been ineffective and the practice of young jockeys riding racing camels continues today.



“There is a difference between a sheikh and bedu. Sheikhs usually belong to the royal family and are very rich whereas the bedus are comparatively poor but even then they own about five to seven vehicles”

a masool





The camel racing industry

The transformation in lifestyle brought about by oil has been rapid and profound. The camel had been at the centre of all traditional economic activity. In the former pastoral way of life, the bedu utilized the camel in every possible way, not only for the food and transport to survive their harsh environment, but also for raiding and for numerous political activities and for their sport and recreation. The camel has been adapted and utilized to serve this changing lifestyle to become a pillar of traditional Arab heritage and character. Its significance has come to be associated with the pride and glory of the Arab people.

The vast oil reserves in the Gulf had shattered the traditional way of life and replaced it with a new economic system linked to all the complexities and aggression of capitalist commercial forces in the global economy. Old small towns and villages dotting the shores of the Gulf were transformed into glittering cities built out of concrete, steel and glass. These expanding capital cities were like powerful magnets, and the bedu, who were always ready to move where the grass was greener, were drawn to them. They settled in these towns and cities to enjoy the comforts of an affluent sedentary consumer life, with extensive free welfare services and provisions. This has made the camel redundant and the pastoral way of life is vanishing. The all-wonderful, all-purposes 4-hoof 'drive machine' has given way to its Toyota counterpart.

There was growing concern that this central feature of traditional culture must not be lost, and the camel, in particular the racing camel became the symbol of this cultural revival. The royal family of the UAE took the lead. They actively promoted and patronized the revival of Arab authentic heritage and the preservation of their ancestral sport. Camel racing became a national industry. Labour and capital was mobilised, as were individuals, agencies and institutions. Over the last two decades it has resulted in an elaborate organizational hierarchy, which reflects the new dynamics generated by oil wealth, and the interplay of local and global forces. At the top of

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the hierarchy reside the owners of the camels, notably the ruling sheikhs of the various emirates. They own the finest and largest number of racing camels. Under them are a small number of wealthy merchant families and some tribesmen who own and breed racing camels, particularly in the Emirates of Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah. Their interest in racing camels is motivated by three main reasons: for commercial purposes through buying and selling camels; to gain prestige; and to emulate the ruling families in heritage revival.

The dynastic ruling families in the emirates, such as the Al Nahyan of Abu Dhabi and Al Maktoum of Dubai, have great power. Most members are now involved in owning fine racing camels which they entrust to bedu camel breeders to train. Informed sources say that the three senior brothers of Al Maktoum family own an estimated 15,000 camels of which a third are racing camels used for breeding. This will require a large number of trainers or '*mudhamers*'. There are also *masools* who are responsible for running the *azba* and come mainly from Sudan. Camel farms range in size from 6 to 100 camels or more.

Sheikh Zayed, late President of UAE, and his eldest son Sheikh Khalifa have established research centres for developing the breeding stock on the outskirts of Al Ain city. Several camel specialists, immunologists and laboratory research assistants have been recruited from places as far as Australia to staff these centres, which are equipped with elaborate technologies for training camels, such as gymnasiums and swimming pools. These are large two floored buildings which have 100 employees who manage the monthly expenditure of Dh 25 million (US \$ 6.2 million). This money is spent on the camel farms, agricultural farms and palaces and on their private guards. The *mudhamer* in the sheikhs' camel farms receive around Dh10,000 as a monthly salary. He is also given a four-wheel drive car, a water tank truck, a mobile phone and a walkie-talkie radio that he uses to give instructions to the jockeys during the races. His personal success in training winning camels is usually the road to his fame and fortune, as he then becomes well known and may be approached by sheikhs to train their camels. Top trainers are in high demand and can ask high prices for their expertise and skills.

The winning racing camels bring cash prizes to their owners, as well as four-wheel drive vehicles and beautiful sedan cars such as BMW, Mercedes, Lexus, Toyota Land Cruiser, Nissan Patrol Super Safaris, etc. However these prizes are not as significant for them as the increase in the value of their winning camel. 'She won a car' has become one of the yardsticks by which a camel's quality is recognised, thus bestowing honour and prestige as well as the car.

The Racetrack



The racetrack is locally known as *al दौरا* (circle) or *al markadh* (running place). The distance round the *doura* is 10 kms but this can be shortened to 8 kms with specific openings and enclosures, depending upon the type of race and age of camel. The sides of the *doura* are fenced with iron rods, which keep the camels on the track and prevent them from going astray. At any one time 30 to 50 camels take part in a race. The only part of the race visible from the stadium is its start and finish, totalling about 3 minutes. The remainder of the race can only be viewed on TV screens placed in the stadium. A special road is constructed alongside the racetrack for mobile television cameras, and this allows the entire race to be viewed live.

Categories of Racing Camels



Arabic name	Age	Distance in km	Average running time (min/sec)
Haq	2-3 year	4	6.5
Leqai/Madrab	3-4 year	5	8.5
Yetha (male & female)	4-5 year	7	13
Thanaya	5-6 year	8	14
Thanaya Abkar (females)	5-6 year	8	14
Thanaya Je'dan (males)	(males)	8	14.2
Hool	over 6 year	10	17
Thulel (females)	over 6 year	10	17
Zumool (males)	over 6 year	10	17.3

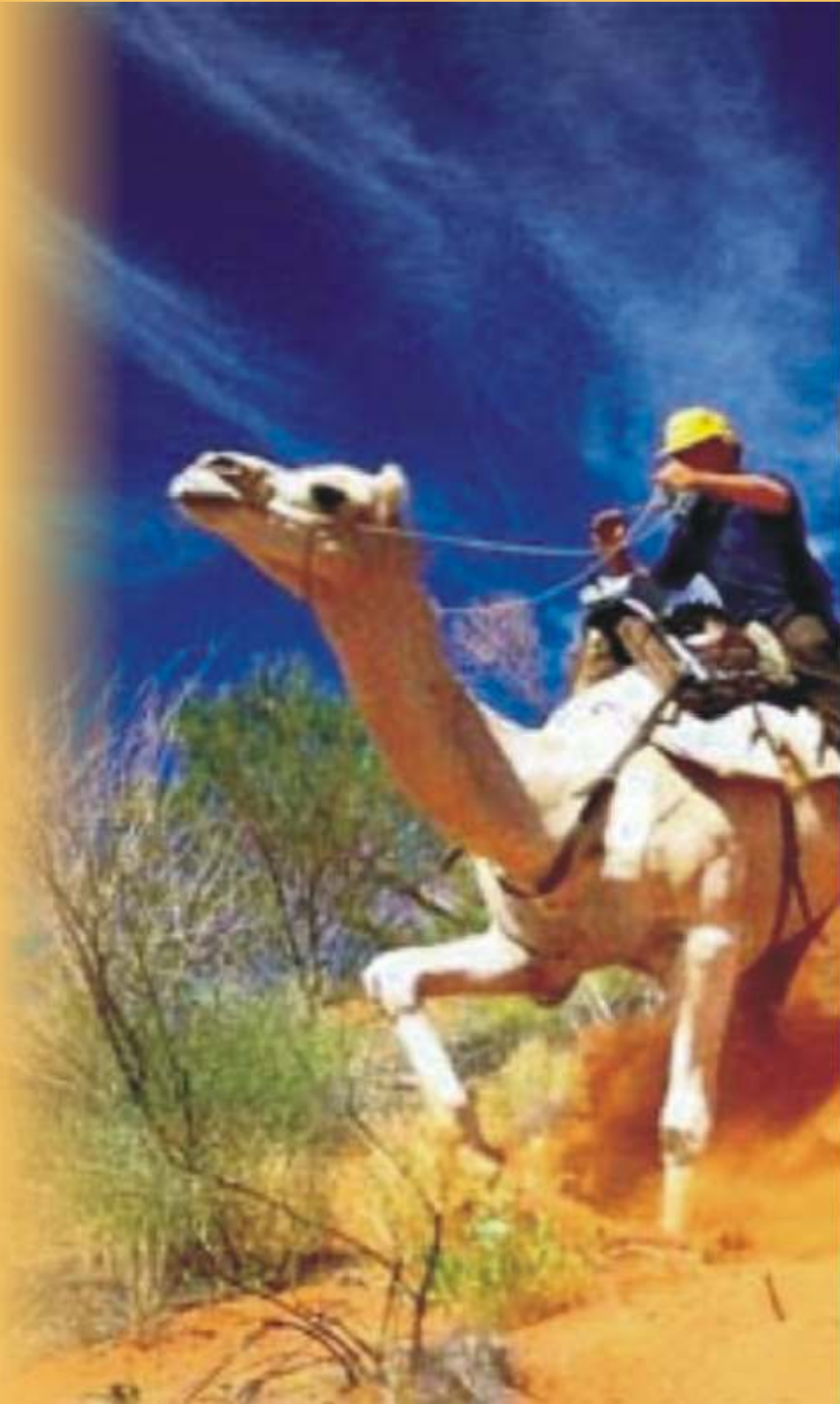
Races are organized according to the sex, age and breed of the camel. The lean, slim and agile racing camels are known as *al hejin*. Just over 90% of racing camels are female as they tend to be faster, females are also more gentle and easier to handle. The races are held in the morning between 7:30 am and 10:00 am, and in the afternoons between 2:30 pm and 5:00 pm. The Camel Racing Association ensures that only appropriate camels run in each race category. The CRA approved categories of racing camels are tabulated above.

Training of Ra

The racing camels are kept in the *azba* or camel farms. These *azbas* are established by the sheikhs deep inside the desert. The sheikh allocates required finances and resources for the running of the *azba*. Various workers are employed under the supervision of the *masool* or *mudhamer*, and each is assigned specific daily tasks. For example, an *azba* with ten racing camels requires three to four workers. One will be involved in taking camels out for al *tasrieh*, while the second will be responsible for preparing fodder and water. A third may be assigned the task of keeping the camels clean and groomed. In addition, the *rakbi* boys who are hired as camel jockeys are forced to help these men carry out their tasks.

The young camel jockeys come from poor countries like Pakistan. As soon as young camel jockeys exceed 20 kg, they become unfit for camel racing and are given work at the *azba* or are sent to work on the agricultural farms owned by the sheikh. All staff, including child jockeys, live at the *azba*. The *masool* or *mudhamer* get their monthly salary, wages for labourers, a four wheel drive car, a mobile phone, radio, water tank truck, petrol expenses, necessary fodder and food supplies for the people living in the *azba*. The labourers working in an *azba* represent the lowest stratum with least pay within the hierarchical order of the camel racing industry. Their monthly wage averages around Dh 600-800.

The trainers occupy an important position in the camel racing business. Traditionally they come from bedu families who have knowledge and experience of camel racing. Some of the Pakistanis who have been involved in camel racing and have enough experience have also been appointed as *mudhamer*. The *mudhamer's* personal success in training a winning camel is usually his road to fame, with the possibility of being





approached by sheikhs to train their camels.

There are two types of camel training. The first type is referred to locally as *al adab*, which means proper behaviour, or *al ta'ah* (obedience). It involves breaking in the young camel when it is about 13-14 months old. The process takes one to three months and involves attaching the young camels by rope to an old well-seasoned camel known as *al qeliesa*, to act as a guide and companion in the training process. The young camel is trained to wear the *al shidad*, the soft blanket saddle. It becomes accustomed to being mounted by a young rider, and most importantly, it gets trained to run on a track. The *rakbiya* (plural of *rakbi* - jockey) are involved in this training as well as the racing. The training is also designed to take away their fear, and to make them part of the camel-racing world. Usually the *mudhamer* ride their *al qeliesa* camels with their sticks in hand, each leading two or four young camels that in turn have small *rakbiya* on their backs. The training continues until the camel has acquired the running aptitude and can negotiate a race with ease and confidence. When the camel is three years old, she is ready to start racing.

The other, and more important, type of training is called *al tadhmeer*, which is aimed at achieving high athletic fitness for racing camels. The term *al tadhmeer* literally means 'making the camels slender and fit.' There is a more or less uniform camel training pattern followed by all *mudhamers*. The training programme begins with *al tasrieh*, taking the camels out for purpose-oriented walking in the desert in the early morning. Initially the *al tasrieh* distance is around 20 km, which is gradually increased to 40 kms a day depending upon the weather conditions. The *al tasrieh* process usually consists of three to five hours and aims to make the camel lose fat, and become well trimmed and fit.

The Socio-Economic Situation of Rahimyar Khan²

The desert is well known for hunting, and Arab sheikhs and kings come each year for this reason. But they have taken the liberty of expanding their choice of game to young nomadic children of this area, either kidnapping or buying them from their poverty-stricken parents or guardians, to be used in camel racing.



Rahimyar Khan District of Punjab Province was selected for this research investigation, because of being the leading source district for trafficking children. Generally speaking, the community is unaware of the issues surrounding child trafficking. They do not see it as a problem as there have been no initiatives by the government, civil society or law enforcing agencies to take any action. Even though all the stakeholders carry responsibility for this social evil, all have failed to perform their legal and moral duty.

Rahimyar Khan District was declared a separate administration district in 1943. It is bounded on the north by Muzaffargarh District, on the east by Bahawalpur District, on the south by Jasimир (India) and Ghotki District of Sind Province and on the west by Rajanpur District. The total area of the District is 11,880 square kilometres and it comprises four Tehsils, namely Rahimyar Khan, Sadiqabad, Liaquatpur and Khanpur. There are three municipal committees and five town committees in the District. A prominent feature of the area is that the sub-soil water level on the river side of the main line of Pakistan railway is generally sweet, while on the other side it is brackish.



Road to Rahimyar Khan Airport constructed with financial support of shiekh of UAE.

The total population of the District is 3,141 million (male 1.637 million and female 1.504 million). The total number of children is 1,680,614, the number of male children is 879,539 and female children is 801,075. There are mainly two linguistic groups living in this area, the Punjabis and the Siraikis. Punjabis are settlers in this area and are of a higher caste, they include the Arian or Mian, Jat, Cheema, Warrich, Bajwa etc. and they have most power. The lower castes are the Rais, Chachar, Sakhera, Faqir and Wirand and live close to the Cholistan desert. More than 40 per cent of the population in the district is living below the poverty line and this percentage is rising. The most vulnerable lead lives below the poverty line and are least able to protect themselves from being exploited. This is the situation amongst the families living in the villages around the Cholistan desert.

The late ruler of UAE, Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahayan built a palace 27 kilometers south east of Rahimyar Khan city in the Cholistan desert in the early 1970s. The palace grounds cover about 625 acres and are used as a base for the royal family and their guests who come for the hunting season between October and March/April. The palace employs a work force of 350, most of whom are on a daily wage and are only employed when the royal family or their guests are visiting. The royal family has also acquired vast agricultural lands in the district, estimated to be about 9,000 acres. Crops are cultivated on these royal farms throughout the year and orchids and animal farms have been established, they employ about 1,500 people.

The Sheikh has been instrumental in developing the communities in the area. He initiated a number of welfare and development projects, including the construction of an airport, a big hospital, roads, and housing colonies for poor people. Four prominent housing colonies have been constructed and are known as Adu Dhabi Colony No: 1, 2, 3 and 4. The number of houses in each colony are 300, 260, 150 and 60, respectively and have all the basic facilities.



A medical complex set up by the UAE Government in Rahimyar Khan.

When the royal family members and their guests arrive for the hunting season, social and cultural activities are laid on in which the local population takes an active part. These activities include partridge hunting using trained falcons, and animal racing with camels, donkeys, bulls etc. Those who take part in the races are given prizes by the sheikhs.

During the hunting season all the poor people from the district and the adjoining areas relocate themselves to be near the palace. This is in order to receive cash money from the royal family who normally distributes between rupees Rs. 1,000 and 1,500 among the poor people. Some royal family members also visit the homes of the poor, giving food and money. There are countless stories about the generosity of the royal family in which they have given luxury vehicles such as a Pajero to poor workers in the palace.

The Rahimyar Khan District is famous because of its proximity to the Cholistan desert, where climatic conditions are similar to the UAE and Gulf States. The desert is well known for hunting, and Arab sheikhs and kings come each year for this reason. But they have taken the liberty of expanding their choice of game to young nomadic children of this area, either kidnapping or buying them from their poverty-stricken parents or guardians, to be used in camel racing. There are millions of dirhams at stake in these races and the Arab sheikhs, mostly from Abu Dhabi and Dubai, purchase these children and force them to serve as camel jockeys. In the past 15 years, many children have been trafficked from District Rahimyar Khan. Mention was made of this in the national Press. It recently stated that a group of 22 children were being deported from the UAE who had been trafficked there from Rahimyar Khan to take part in camel racing.³ The scale of the problem in this area is much higher than other cities like Dera Ghazi Khan, Ghotki, Rajanpur and Muzaffargarh, which are also infamous for child trafficking for camel racing.

The Research Background

Human Trafficking

UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons defines trafficking in persons as:

'Trafficking in persons' shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of 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. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

The law in Pakistan defines human trafficking as:

'Human trafficking' means obtaining, securing, selling, purchasing, recruiting, detaining, harbouring or receiving a person, notwithstanding his implicit or explicit consent, by the use of coercion, kidnapping, abduction, or by giving or receiving any payment or benefit, or sharing or receiving a share for such person's subsequent transportation out of or into Pakistan by any means whatsoever for any of the purposes (attaining any benefit, exploitative entertainment, slavery, forced labour or adoption).

Save the Children defines the child trafficking as:

... the recruitment and transportation of a child within a country or between countries, with the aim of exploiting him or her. Children can be abused sexually or used in crime or in other forms of forced labour. The children often come from poor and defenceless circumstances. Some are forced into trafficking; others are lured in to it by the promise of well-paying jobs. They realise what they have got involved in too late. They are transported between different places, kept locked-up and have nowhere to turn. Children who are transported over country borders often have their passports taken away from them.

The Legal Framework for Preventing Child Trafficking

UN Convention on the Rights of The Child (UN CRC)

The UN CRC provides a guiding framework for upholding the rights and dignity of children worldwide. The convention recognizes children's inherent need for special care and protection. It protects children from all forms of exploitative labour, and requires state parties to take appropriate national, bilateral and multinational actions to combat these abuses.

Pakistan, being a signatory of the UN CRC, has to take effective measures to implement it in letter and spirit. Both the Governments of Pakistan and UAE have ratified the CRC.

UN CRC articles relating to trafficked children

- Article 6:** *Every child has the inherent right to life, and the State has an obligation to ensure the child's survival and development.*
- Article 9:** *The child has the right to live with his or her parents unless this is deemed to be incompatible with the child's best interests. The child also has the right to maintain contact with both parents if separated from one or both.*
- Article 11:** *The State has the obligation to prevent and remedy the kidnapping or retention of children abroad by a parent or third party.*
- Article 19:** *The State shall protect children from all forms of maltreatment by parents or others responsible for the care of the child and establish appropriate social programmes for the prevention of abuse and the treatment of victims.*
- Article 32:** *The child has the right to be protected from work that threatens his or her health, education or development. The State shall set minimum ages for employment and regulate working conditions.*
- Article 34:** *The State shall protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse, including prostitution and involvement in pornography.*
- Article 35:** *It is the State's obligation to make every effort to prevent the sale, trafficking and abduction of children.*
- Article 36:** *The child has the right to protection from all forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child's welfare not covered in Articles 32, 33, 34 and 35.*

National & International Laws to Combat Trafficking

The Government of Pakistan has also ratified the Optional Protocol to the UN CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, and the ILO Convention 182 on the Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labour. This Convention identifies the worst forms of child labour, which include child prostitution, child pornography and child trafficking. It applies to children trafficked for sexual and non-sexual purposes who are then forced to work in exploitative labour situations. The Government of Pakistan also ratified the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution on 5th January 2002.

Various provisions of the Constitution of Pakistan also prohibit slavery and forced labour, guarantee protection of citizens and promotion of social justice. The President of Pakistan promulgated Prevention and Control of Human Trafficking Ordinance on 3rd October 2002 to prevent and control human trafficking and to protect and assist victims of such trafficking. The punishment is a fine and prison sentence of 7 to 10 years.

The use of children as camel jockeys has been illegal in the UAE since 1980, under the country's Federal Labour Code. In 1993, late UAE President Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahayan signed a decree to reaffirm the ban on child jockeys. The UAE Camel Jockeys Association then framed a rule declaring it illegal to employ a child under the age of 14 years or weighing less than 45 kg. This is also illegal under international law.

The rules and regulations published by the Camel Racing Association (CRA) in 1993 also prohibit employing child jockeys. These rules state that persons who breach the regulations regarding child jockeys will not be allowed to participate in the races of the season. Before this, child jockeys were made to ride the camels by being tied on using Velcro fastening. This was very unstable and the children would slip and get trapped underneath the camel or trampled on. The use of helmets was also very uncommon and children would suffer head injuries too.

Constitutional Protection in Pakistan

The Constitution of Pakistan guarantees protection of all citizens. Relevant articles of the constitution read as:

- Article 4:** Right of an individual to be dealt with in accordance with law;
- Article 9:** No person shall be deprived of life or liberty;
- Article 11:** Slavery, forced labour, etc. are prohibited;
- Article 14:** Inviolability of dignity of men;
- Article 25:** Equality of citizens before law and equal protection;
- Article 25(3):** State can make special provisions for protection of women and children;
- Article 37:** State shall take steps for the promotion of social justice and eradication of social evils.

Despite these rules and regulations, all the camel jockeys are too young and most are aged between five to ten years old. Their main qualification, according to camel experts, is their light weight and racing experience. This is the only way to achieve greater speed. Within 6 months of the promulgation of the regulation regarding the weight of the jockey, camel owners criticized it as not 'realistically suitable'. As a result, the regulation was amended to disallow jockeys weighing 'not less than 35 kg' to participate in the race. This new rule is also being ignored by camel owners. Jockeys weighing 25 kg or less continue to be employed.

Hence, all national and international laws could not prevent employing children as camel jockeys and their trafficking by organised mafia. In this context Save the Children Sweden collaborated with the Pakistan Rural Workers Social Welfare Organization (PRWSWO) to undertake this research.

CRA rules and regulations on camel jockeys (1993)

- Small children are not allowed as camel jockeys.
- The jockey's weight should be similar to the international standards of the horse jockeys and their weight shall not be less than 45 kg.
- The jockey shall be medically examined to ensure his fitness.
- The jockey must wear a protective helmet.
- Each jockey shall be given an identity card which is issued in accordance with the conditions acceptable and approved in all Emirates and racetracks.

The Research Objectives

The research had the following objectives:

1. To contribute to an enhanced understanding of the nature, underlying causes and consequences of child trafficking including its linkages with tourism and hunting sports industry in the area.
2. To understand and document more comprehensively the experiences of children who have been trafficked but now have returned back to their families.
3. To identify the communities and factors contributing to promoting child trafficking.
4. To understand the perspectives of children and parents/family members about trafficking.
5. To investigate the issue of trafficking and to find out if any other group(s) of people, besides children, are also being trafficked and for what purposes.
6. To identify all the rehabilitation needs: psychological, social and physical, of the children through their active participation.

The Research Methodology

The research methodology was based on the active participation of children. It involved both trafficked and vulnerable children as key informants. Other stakeholders who were consulted included parents, caregivers, teachers, community leaders, district government officials and elected representatives of the local bodies, religious leaders, judiciary, bar and officials from law enforcement agencies: the police, Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), and Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF).

To identify the target areas an initial assessment was made in Rahimyar Khan district. This assessment identified the areas where child trafficking cases are reported in high number. Five areas were selected as target area for the study, based on the assessment report.

The research team was made up of two senior staff members of SCS - Pakistan and eight staff members of PRWSWO. It was divided into four groups; one facilitated consultation with former camel jockeys and their parents, the second facilitated consultation with people involved in child trafficking, the third with working and school-going children and the fourth with other stakeholders.

SCS designed a special toolkit for this research. This toolkit provided separate tools on interactive group activities for their consultations with each target group. For the consultations with children, there were interactive activities ensuring maximum child participation. For the consultations with adult focus groups, there were discussions using open-ended questionnaire. Before using the toolkit a group of researchers was sent to the target areas to field test the tools. The exercise was used to identify target child and adult groups. Based on this field-testing report and the identification of target groups, necessary amendments were made in the toolkit.

Before undertaking the research SCS trained team of researchers in thematic areas of UNCRC: child protection, child participation, consultation with children and use of the research toolkit. The trained researchers facilitated the three target groups of participating stakeholders using the toolkit. They discussed the problems and identified key issues with each group, and then documented the responses. All consultations were carried out in a neutral environment to ensure that each participant had the opportunity to participate without interference from the outside.

Target Group

Children's Target Group

- 46 children repatriated home after serving as camel jockeys in the UAE;
- 75 street and working children (15 from each target area) at high risk of being trafficked;
- 75 school-going children (15 from each target area).

Parents' Target groups

- 20 parents or caregivers of children repatriated from UAE;
- 75 parents (15 from each target area) of street and working children;
- 75 parents (15 from each target area) of school-going children.

Other Target Groups in the Community

- 5 officials of law enforcement agencies representing police, Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF);
- 15 teachers and 15 community leaders;
- 5 district government officials;
- 5 elected representatives of the local bodies;
- 5 religious leaders;
- 5 members of judiciary/bar.

Research Findings



How children got involved in camel racing

The study confirmed that camel racing was first introduced in the Rahimyar Khan District by the rulers of UAE in early 1970s, when they built their palace in the Cholistan desert and started their hunting and tourism with families and friends. The races were organized near the palace and winners were awarded with cash prize money and luxury vehicles. This generated a lot of interest among the people in the area who started to take an active part in the races on a regular basis.

Gradually, as competition increased, more novel ways of winning the races were introduced, one of which was to use children as camel jockeys. Children were introduced because of their light weight. The prize money and luxury cars served as a big incentive to use children in the racing. Gradually people started sending their children to UAE without realizing the risk to their life or the possibility of injury and permanent disability. Their only objective was to earn money. Similar races were also introduced in Bahawalpur District which is adjacent to Rahimyar Khan District.

“Trafficking of children for camel racing is like an addiction and people in the villages are trying to take the lead over the others in sending their children to UAE. According to very conservative estimates about 15,000 children from Rahimyar Khan district are in UAE and involved in camel racing. Of these, 5,000 children alone are from Rahimyar Khan tehsil”

Haji Nazar, Councilor



A group of ex-camel jockeys at a consultation with the research team

Some of the adults mentioned that while they were working in the UAE as labourers, their Arab employer would often ask about the number of children they had in Pakistan and would encourage them to bring their children back when they return from their holidays. In some cases their employers would give them gifts or cash money in advance, so that they would bring their children to UAE.

When the airport was built at Rahimyar Khan by the rulers of UAE, they began to land their personal planes and this made it easy for the local people to send their children to UAE as camel jockeys. With this trend setting in, some local people became the 'agents' of the sheikhs in the UAE. They started purchasing children from poor families, with the lure of a good job in UAE and monetary benefits. Soon this menace spread to the adjoining districts of Rahimyar Khan such as Bahawalpur and Multan districts in the Punjab and the Tharparkar district of Sindh Province.

“When the people see other people wearing a Seiko 5 watch and a bosky (type of silk cloth) suit, they also develop the greed to have the same. If they see with their eyes what happens to their children, they would die of crying.”

Abdul Shakoore,
Parent of a disabled child
camel jockey

The Trafficking Triangle

“No child goes with his own consent. Those who do it are doing ‘Zulm’ on us. We will never send our children abroad.”

ex-camel jockey



This child was recruited as a camel jockey at the age of three and sent out to UAE via Iran. Iranian authorities rescued the child at a border checkpoint and repatriated him to Pakistan

The research pointed to a ‘trafficking triangle’ involving the child, his family and agent. Though the exact number of children trafficked as camel jockeys is unknown, conservative estimates by those involved in the camel racing industry put the number at around 15,000 from the Rahimyar Khan district alone. Most are forced to go by their parents who are very poor, and see it as an easy way to get money.

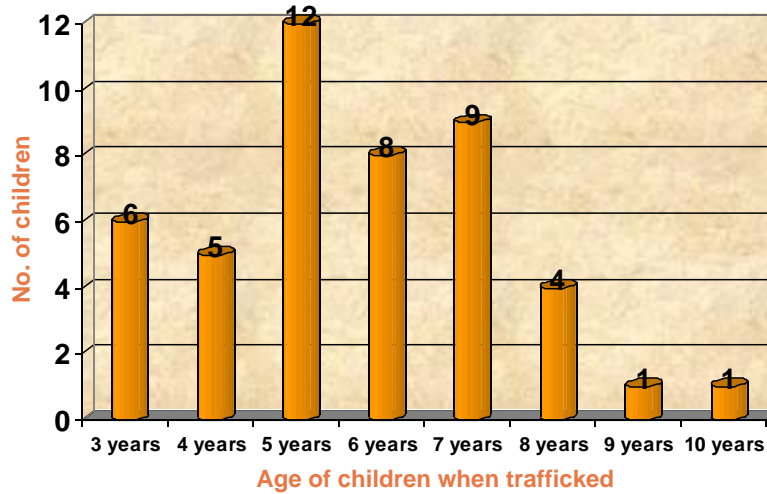
Besides the agents who work closely with the families of trafficked children, the research also uncovered information on other groups of individuals who are kidnapping children and selling them on to the trafficking mafia. About nine of the ex-camel jockeys narrated their personal experience of being kidnapped or seeing other children kidnapped by different people.

In one particular case the kidnapped child came back to his home after two years. When he was asked where he had been, he said he had been working as a camel jockey in the UAE. Other cases were reported where kidnapped children had not returned, suggesting that they had been taken on elsewhere for bonded labour or beggary, or had died in the UAE while working as camel jockeys.

Most of the children who were trafficked did not know who was taking them abroad or for what purpose. Some could record being told, ‘they would be playing with the sheikh’s children’. None knew they would be used as camel jockeys.

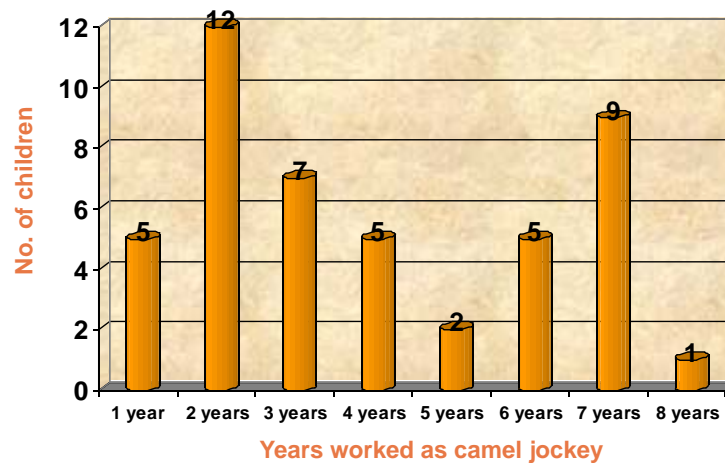
The Trafficked Children

Age of children when trafficked



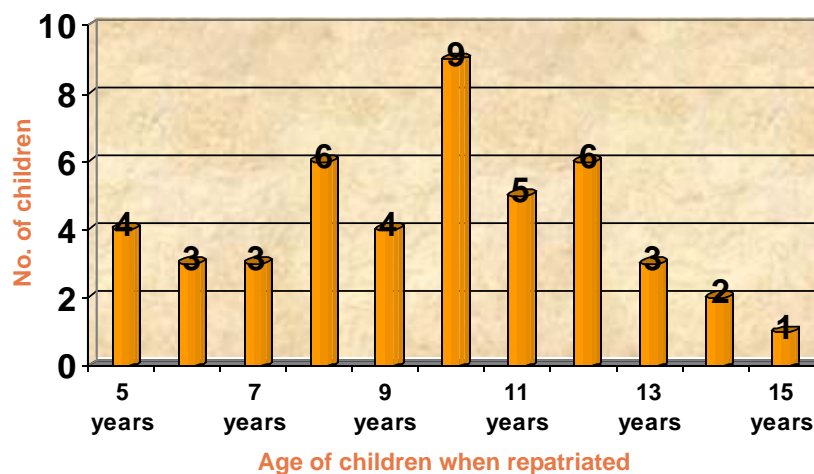
Among the former child jockeys who participated in the research, most were 5 years old when trafficked; the youngest were three and the oldest eleven. The research results indicate that children aged between three to seven years are the preferred age group for trafficking because of their defencelessness and their light weight. They were also easy to traffic at such a young age because they could not stand up to the traffickers or authorities on the camel farms.

Years worked as camel jockey



On average, children participating in the research spent four years in the UAE. A majority of them worked as camel jockey for two years, but there were 15 children who had spent an average of seven years as camel jockeys.

Age of children when repatriated



The age at which these children returned to Pakistan was mainly around ten years (20%). Of the remaining children, 29 (63%) returned between the ages of five and ten years and the other 17 (37%) returned between the age of eleven and fifteen years.

This trend clearly shows that as soon as a child weighs over 20 kgs, he is of no use and is returned. Children who crossed this age barrier were kept on because of being underweight or for other labour at the azbas. In one particular case the child informed that he had returned to Pakistan after becoming overweight. However he soon returned to UAE to join his two elder brothers as a labourer on an *azba*.

One point of interest is that five children (11%) returned within a year of being trafficked. This was because their parents or relatives brought them back after realizing their true situation. In two cases the reason was a disability caused by a fall. One child broke an arm and a leg, and the other broke his ribs and neck when he fell off and was trampled by the racing camel.

Story of Imran

Imran fell from his camel while racing. When he landed on the ground, he was trampled on by the other camels in the race. He lay unconscious and no one bothered about him till the race was finished. After the race he was thrown into a pickup van and brought to the *azba* by the *masool* and the *mudhamer*. He was not provided with any medical treatment except a pain-killing spray which is used for treating all sorts of injuries. Imran's brother who was also working as a camel jockey in one of the nearby *azbas* only came to know about Imran's accident after one and a half month when he secretly visited him in the night. When the *masool* of the *azba* where Imran's brother was working came to know about this visit, he beat him with sticks. Imran was sent back to Pakistan after two months as the lack of proper medical treatment had left him with a disability.

The Families



A group of family members of ex-camel jockeys at a consultation

“My disabled child who lost his leg in a camel race is a curse for me through out my life”

a parent

Poverty was cited as the main reason for parents sending their children for camel racing. Other reasons were greed for a bright future; to pay off debts and being deceived by agents with promises of a very bright future for them and their family. One of the parents mentioned the competitiveness in the community which is driving parents. Another parent mentioned the lack of educational and job opportunities which has pushed them to take this drastic action; it had seemed an easy way to make money.

Very few families had benefited financially, and this was only when the children had gone with their fathers or close relatives, not with the agents. They were unanimous about the seriousness of the issue and how unhappy they were about it. Yet, they could see that there are still some ignorant parents who want to send their children.

Parents said they had no idea about the inhuman, exploitative and abusive situation their children would face in UAE. If they had known, they would never have sent their children. They only learnt about the situation when their children came back. Now, they would never agree to sending their child with an agent. They knew of so many children who have been killed or become disabled or retarded due to this inhuman sport using small children.

The Agents

"The agents are influential people who have contacts with the local politicians and higher police authorities. Whenever they arrest or take action against the agents, they are pressurized by their superiors or political figures of the area to stop the action or release the agent."

a police official

Parents were unanimous about the role of agents. Agents are not telling parents about the real situation their children will face in UAE and parents were deceived by rosy visions of bright futures and the luxuries of life which they would get if they sent their children to UAE. Agents should be controlled. They were misleading people. The parents could see that an agent, who is earning Rs. 200,000 - 300,000 for sending one child, will be working hard to entice them to send their children. The role of an agent must be eliminated and the community as a whole has to take some responsibility for this.

One of the agents, Mr. MI, was interviewed. He mentioned that both male and female agents are now active in trafficking children from Pakistan. Initially there were only male agents in the business but over the last eight to nine years, female agents have become increasingly active, because of the new restrictions at airports imposed by the government. The women have developed close relationships with the sheikhs and bedus, and most of the time are used for sexual purposes or prostitution. No one dares to stop them at the airport as they are fashionable and modern and know the rules and regulations. The immigration authorities do not stop them for fear they will create a scene.

The parents mentioned that most of the children who are not accompanied by their parents or relatives, are very badly treated by the agents and their cohorts in UAE. The children are exploited and the agents take the monthly salary of Dh. 500-600 given by the sheikh or bedu. Only a very small amount of this (approximately Dh. 200- 250) is sent to the

An Agent's Point of View

An agent Mr. MI was interviewed in connection with the research study. According to Mr. MI he has been to UAE and had seen the situation for himself. According to him 'sheikh or bedu are very nice and kind people.' They treat children with love and pay a lot of money to children but the agents take all the money and do not give it to the family of children. 'Children are free to eat and enjoy a good life'. Children are trained in 3 months by keeping them close to camels and using them to feed, clean and exercise the animals. If children die during the race then it is their 'destiny' because God wanted it this way. "Being a Muslim, this is our belief." He said agents like to choose Pakistani boys because they are known to be so brave.

The Role of the Agent

The sheikh's or bedu's agent in UAE (a Pakistani) is asked to provide X number of children and is paid by the sheikh or the bedu at the rate of Rs. 300,000 to 500,000 per child. The Pakistani agent in UAE contacts his agent in Pakistan to send children to UAE. The agent in Pakistan had already collected information on the poorest of the poor families in the area and also knows about the number of children they have and the type of economic problems the family is facing. The family is offered a job for the child in UAE and is asked to pay Rs.20,000 to 30,000 to get travel documents for the child. This happens despite the fact that the sheikh or bedu had already paid the main agent in UAE. The family takes a loan from someone in the area in order to pay for the child's visa, passport fees and air fare. In the case of the family not being able to pay the required amount, the agent takes the child on the condition that he will deduct the amount from the salary of the child in UAE.

After identifying the children the agent contacts a female agent and a male agent to take the children to UAE. A fake marriage certificate (Nikahnama) is made in which both the agents are shown as husband and wife. Then a passport is made for both the agents and the names of children (normally two) who are to be trafficked to UAE are endorsed in the female agent's passport. In this way four or five strangers become a 'family'. After completing this formality, the 'family' sends the passport details to the main agent in UAE who manages to get a visit visa to UAE for the 'family' through the good offices of sheikh or bedu. Once the visa arrives, the family departs for UAE. As soon as the 'family' arrives at Dubai or Abu Dhabi airport, the children are taken to an azba in the desert and the female agent goes to the city for prostitution purposes. Normally these women stay in Abu Dhabi or Dubai for three months which is the visit visa's time frame.

“Everyone knows about agents in Rahimyar Khan. They are notorious and hold immense influence which they use to make local people surrender to their commands. Mr. YB who is working in Noor-i-Wali locality, always threatens parents about killing their children in the Gulf. Another agent Mr. SC is the main person behind child trafficking from Rahimyar Khan”

a group of parents

child's family in Pakistan and the agent keeps the rest for himself. When a child falls from a camel and injures himself or becomes disabled, the sheikh or bedu will pay the child some cash compensation, but this is also taken by the agent. The children are at the mercy of agents and are powerless to stand up to them. Parents said they had information that the male agents who traffic children have also sexually abused them on their way to UAE.

Some of the parents mentioned that they are also at the mercy of agents (both male and female). If they want their child back, they have to find the agents and implore them to return their child. This is because the child has no passport of his own and his particulars are endorsed in the agent's passport. If the agent agrees to the parents' request, he will demand money for the visa and air travel etc. The child's family will have to pay about Rs. 20,000-30,000 extra to the agent to get their child back. According to the parents the amount of money they spend in sending and bringing back their child is too much and the child's income has not helped to improve their economic condition.

Trafficking Routes & Procedures

“Most of the agents have contacts with the immigration authorities at the airports and borders. The immigration authorities are bribed by the agents at the airports and law enforcement personnel at the border with Iran”
an agent



The agents are running the trafficking business with connivance of immigration and border security officials. Handsome sums are paid in bribe to secure safe passage for children trafficked by air, road or sea route.

Of the total 46 children consulted, only two mentioned that they were taken to UAE by sea. The rest mentioned that they were taken by air to either Abu Dhabi or Dubai. The children who went by air used different Pakistani airports. From Rahimyar Khan they went to Lahore and Karachi by bus or train and from Lahore and Karachi they flew into UAE. Some children mentioned that they went to Quetta by train from Rahimyar Khan and from Quetta they went by road to Iran and flew from there to the UAE.

The two children who went by sea mentioned they were first taken to Karachi by bus, then from Karachi they went to Gwadar and from Gwadar they went to Dubai in a fishing trawler. One child mentioned the ship he was travelling in had lots of fish on the one side and on the other side there were many children and some adults, probably 300 altogether. The other child mentioned that the ship in which he went to Dubai had about 150 people, half of them were children.

Some of the children mentioned that when they were going to UAE, they were so young that they were taken on the laps of their parents or agents. Most of them didn't remember if they faced any problems at the airports while some of them remembered that when the airport authorities objected to their going out of the country, they were bribed by the people accompanying them and they were allowed to pass.

Two boys, Rizwan and Mohsin mentioned that they were accompanied by their uncle but were caught at Dubai airport. A taxi driver helped them in their release and then sold them to a bedu who kept them as slaves for two years and treated them very badly. Rizwan had to take part in the races. Though he had won races, the money paid to him was taken by his uncle and he did not get anything except physical and mental abuse.

Children who were taken by road via Iran mentioned that they were stopped by the Pakistani border security police while crossing the border, but the agent would pay Rs. 10,000 to the police, and they were then allowed to proceed to Iran. If the Iranian border police caught the

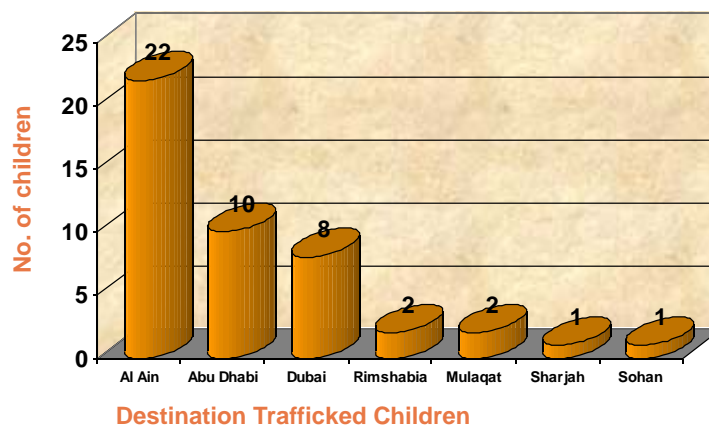
families crossing into Iran, they would let them free on the assurance that the family is going to visit the Roza or the shrine of Hazrat Imam Ali Reza (A.S), one of the sacred places for Muslims.

We were informed by one of the agent that most of the people who cross into Iran and from Iran enter into UAE do not have visas with them. The agents are in touch with their colleagues in UAE by phone, and usually arrange visas for the children and the accompanying people in Iran. Due to this rush of people two big hotel complexes have been constructed at Bandar Abbas in Iran which can house more than 5000 people. Iranian security agencies raid these hotels and arrest people, mostly from Pakistan, for illegally entering Iran. All the families are sent back to Pakistan via Quetta.

As stricter measures are taken by the government to prevent child trafficking, the more innovative techniques are being used by the traffickers for trafficking children to UAE. This was revealed during an interview with an agent and in the focus group discussion. More and more young women are now entering the trafficking business and involved in child trafficking to UAE. These women are modern and fashionable and have ample knowledge and information on immigration rules and regulations. Sometimes they even challenge the immigration authorities if they stop the women or children from leaving the country. These women are known to the sheikhs who keep them as their maids or for sexual purposes. According to the agent, most of the women are involved in prostitution and earn a handsome amount of money while in UAE. Sometimes the mothers of children also accompany them but on arrival in UAE they are separated from their children and are either taken to sheikhs' residences to work as maids or taken to prostitution dens for prostituting.

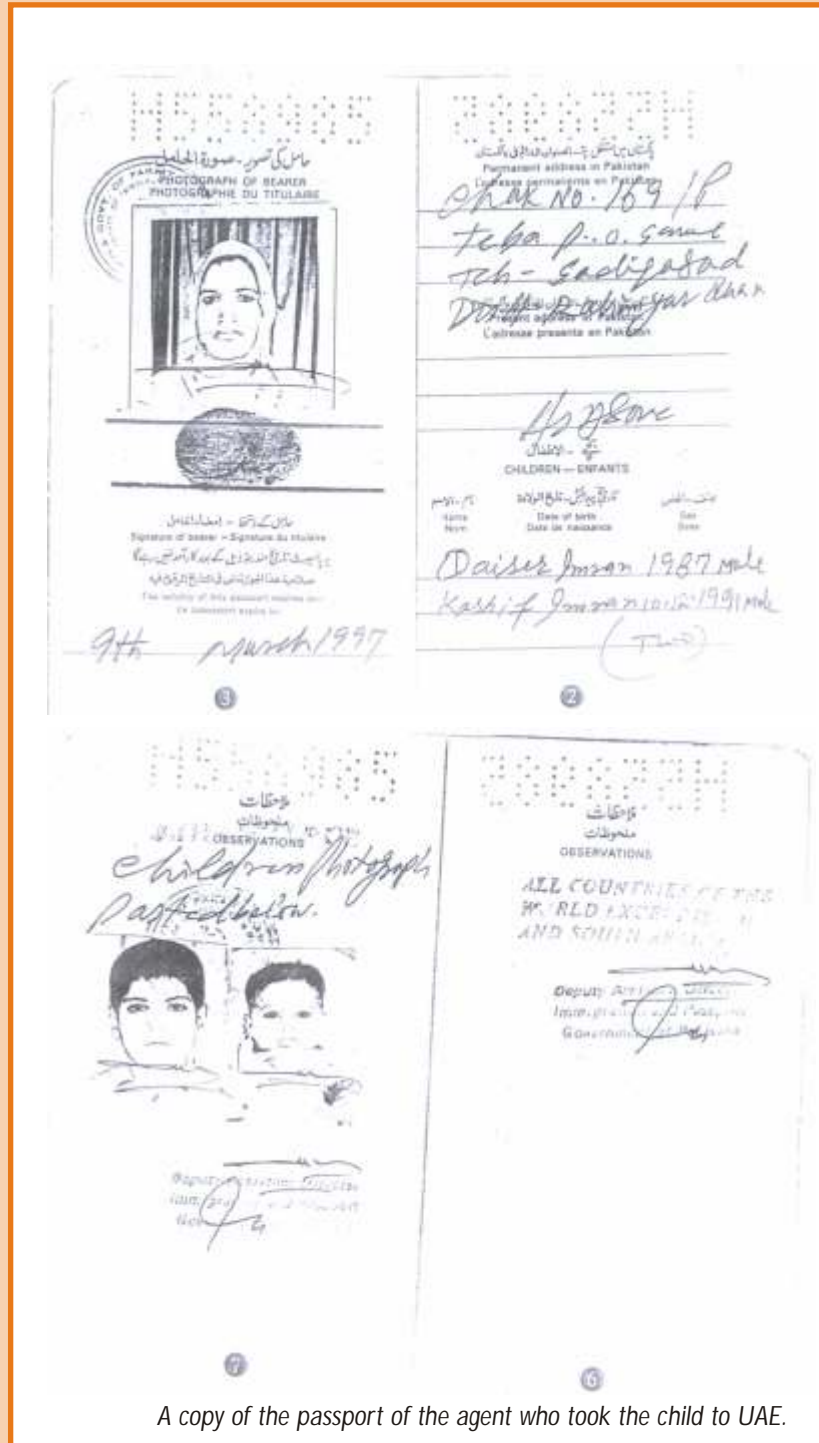
Destination of trafficked children

All of the 46 children consulted were trafficked to UAE. The emirates where most of the children were taken were Al Ain 22 (48%), Abu Dhabi ten (22%) and Dubai eight (17.5%). Other destinations were Rimshabia, Mulaqat, Sharjah and Sohan. One child mentioned that he has been competing in camel races all over UAE.



An ex-jockey tells his tale

“I went to UAE along with a women namely Ms. Rashidan Bibi, who was not my real mother. She handed me over to bedu who took me to an azba while she went to a place famous for prostitution. After a few days the masool at the azba, who was a Sudanese, made an attempt to rape me but I escaped and went to the bedu’s home. I informed the bedu but he did nothing to stop the masool. The masool at last succeeded to rape me thrice. At the third time I cried loudly on which the bedu became angry with the masool.”



A copy of the passport of the agent who took the child to UAE.

Portrait of a Camel Jockey



The ideal camel jockey would be between the ages of five to eight years weighing about 15 kg. The lighter the camel jockey, the better it is, so that the camel can run faster. Children are used as camel jockeys until they weigh over 20 kg. A child could be trained as a camel jockey within three months. One of the myths associated with camel racing, 'loud cries of the child makes the camel run faster and the younger the child the harsher the cries and the faster the camel runs', was totally dispelled by all ex-camel jockeys and *mudhamer* who were interviewed during the research. The children are properly trained to ride the camels and they don't cry or make noises. If this was the case, according to an agent, then the bedus or sheikhs would have used girls as camel jockeys because they would be more scared of riding a camel and would have cried much louder than boys.

If a camel jockey is injured or hurt and is disabled he is then of no use to the bedu or sheikh. The child is then repatriated. Similarly, a child who grows older and/or exceeds the weight limit is sent to the agricultural farm of bedus or sheikhs for work. In some cases the child is retained in the *azba* to work as a labourer. If there is no work for the child he is sent back to Pakistan.

A camel jockey is paid a salary in the range of Dh 500- 600 per month. In some cases if they won the race, they were given a small amount of cash as prize money, called *baksheesh*. A child mentioned that he worked as a camel jockey for eight years but only managed to bring home Rs 20,000 in the end.

The child jockeys are given instructions before and during the race by the *mudhamer* or owner of the camel. The camel owners have provided jockeys with electronic hearing or voice receiving sets to receive instructions from the owner or *mudhamer* of the camel. This receiving set is tied on the chest of camel jockey. During the race the instructions are given to the jockey through this apparatus and the jockey hits the camel as per instructions from the *mudhamer* of the camel. The camel is usually hit on the neck, under the belly, under front leg, under back leg or on the back depending upon the situation of the camel in the race. The camel jockeys are also verbally abused through this instrument if they do not perform well.

The children said the winning camel owner would receive luxury cars and cash prizes whereas they didn't get anything despite the fact that they won races for the owners.

Life in the Azba



Children sharing their experiences at a consultation

The children unanimously mentioned that they were treated inhumanely by everyone at the *azba* and that the camels were much dearer to their employers than a human being. If anyone got injured or died in the race they would not mind, but if their camel got injured, they would become very angry and upset and would brutally punish the person responsible for it. One of the child mentioned that he was much more scared of the *bedu* than the camel itself because of the *bedu's* threat that if he fell off the camel during the race, he would be brutally beaten.

The children felt their lives were always at risk while working as camel jockeys in races. Those who had their male relatives with them at the *azba* were in a better position than those children who were without any relatives.

They got little to eat, and had harsh beatings from different people even for minor mistakes, and were given electric shocks. Some of the children said that sexual abuse of children was rampant. One child mentioned that he witnessed a child being sexually abused by a *masool* at an *azba*. Mr. AP, a camel trainer or *mudhamer*, mentioned that sexual abuse of children is very common and according to his estimates at least 10 percent of the total children are sexually abused. Yet another camel trainer Mr. RAB mentioned that children are sexually abused in almost 75 percent of the *azbas* in the UAE.

Mr. AP mentioned that the government of UAE had enacted a law in 1996/97. The law stipulates 18 years imprisonment for those found guilty of child sexual abuse. But the children are not aware about the law nor do they have resources to lodge a complaint against the abusers. The child normally can only make a complaint to the *bedu* or *sheikh*, who then avoid the legal proceedings and try to settle the case at the *azba* level by giving some compensation to the child. Mr. AP didn't know of any case in which the abuser had been punished for his crime.

The death of camel jockeys while racing was a common feature. One child, Ali Reza, mentioned that a child died in front of his eyes in the race track. This made him so scared he asked his mother to take him back to Pakistan. According to Mr. AP the children who die during the race are buried on the spot. In the case of a child's brother or relative being present they are given compensation by the *bedu* or *sheikh*. If there are no relatives, then no compensation is paid. No one wants the government to know about the death of the child to avoid trouble. Therefore the death is kept secret and the child is buried immediately.

Children said they follow a very strict routine. They live at the azba for 24 hours a day and are not allowed to move out of it. They would sleep on cardboard on the ground and some of them were bitten by scorpions. They would take the camels out for exercise in the early morning at around 4 a.m. under the supervision of mudhamer.

Daily routine

Children said they follow a very strict routine. They live at the azba for 24 hours a day and are not allowed to move out of it. They would sleep on cardboard on the ground and some of them were bitten by scorpions. They would take the camels out for exercise in the early morning at around 4 a.m. under the supervision of *mudhamer*. They would ride 20 km one way and then back, returning to the *azba* around 11 am. After two hours rest they would give food and water to the camels, even though there were other labourers employed to do this. Most of the time it was the children who were asked to do the cleaning at the *azba*. In the afternoon, they would once again take the camels out for exercising

Food and health care

The children said that the bedu or sheikh always tried to control the weight of the camel jockeys to keep them lighter than 20 kg. Once they gain some extra pounds they are considered of no use. A bedu or sheikh would risk losing the race to use a heavier jockey. They would therefore give strict instructions to the *masool* of the *azba* to control the diet of all camel jockeys. The quality and quantity of the food was totally inhuman. Their ration was aimed at stunting their body weight, growth and development. The food normally comprised of a handful of boiled rice with some lentil or *khichri* (rice and lentil cooked together) the food normally given to patients with stomach problems) or tomato paste with half bread or sometimes a handful of dates. One six-year-old child mentioned that he was given electric shocks by the bedu for eating dates meant for the camel. Some of the children mentioned that the bedus would feed their camels with milk, ghee, almonds and dates but would starve them of hunger.

The children said that the bedus and sheikhs have developed very novel ways of keeping the weight of the camel jockeys down. When a child jockey gets 'over-weighted' he is provided very limited food every second day. If this does not work, the child is given electric shocks 15-20 times a day until his weight comes down to 'desired' level. The electric shocks are normally given on the hands and legs of the child. Yet another brutal method is to hold the child's head under water in the water tank 15-20 times daily. No food is given to the child during the period he is subjected to the cruel treatment for weight-loss.

Children had different experiences of medical care if they had an accident during the race or sickness at the *azba*. One group had no access to health services whatsoever. If they break a limb the *mudhamer* or *masool* would throw them in a pickup and take them to the *azba* where they were given a pain killer spray to treat the injuries. The other group of children mentioned that an ambulance was always ready at the race venue with all the facilities. If a child got injured he was treated in the ambulance or sometimes taken to the hospital for treatment. If the child recovered fully he would return to the *azba* otherwise he was sent back to Pakistan.

The physical impact of camel racing



Children drawing a body map

A body mapping technique helped the children to express how they felt about camel racing. For this, one of the ex-jockeys lay on a large sheet of paper and his body outline was drawn round. With the help of this body map, the children wrote down the different types of physical and psychological injuries which they felt are closely associated with camel racing. Among their statements were:

'Death can occur.'

'Different part of the body like hands, legs, feet, head, backbone and ribs can break or get injured.'

'Ones' heart can burst with fear.'

'We are verbally abused which has a bad effect on our minds.'

'I wished there were no camels in this world'
Mohabbat

The first time Mohabbat Ali was put on a camel it was still night time, "There were lights in my eyes and I could not see. I was so afraid!" He fell to the ground and the camel trod on his neck and ribs and both were broken. His family says he has an iron rod in his neck to give it support, he finds speaking very difficult. He was sent home and is now begging on the streets.



In another exercise the ex-jockeys were asked to think back to the first time they were put on a camel or took part in a camel race, and to write down all their feelings they had then. It was clearly a very painful experience for them. These were some of their words:

'I was so afraid that I lost my breath. I saw a boy fall down from his camel and die, and I could not breathe.'

'I cried and screamed, but there was no one to listen to our cries.'

'I could not see anything. I sat on the camel at 4:30 in the morning. I only remember the lights which came into my eyes. I fell down and badly hurt myself. Next time I was more terrified of sitting on the camel.'

'My heart beat so fast, I trembled at the very sight of the camel and fell down unconscious.'

'My fear made me fall down from the camel and I broke my leg, but then the fear disappeared.'

'I only thought of God. I prayed that Almighty God protect us from this hell. I left everything on the will of Almighty Allah. We only saw death and nothing else.'

'None of us were happy, even after winning the race. I wished so much that the camel would stop and I could get down and go back to my home. I wanted to get rid of these animals'

Shock Therapy



Children demonstrating how electric shock is applied to camel jockeys

“We were given electric shocks by the *masool* and *bedu* 15 to 20 times daily by tying electric wires on our ankles and hands and two persons firmly holding our hands and feet so that we could not move. Similarly our heads were held under water at intervals 20 to 30 times daily. While going through this process no food was given to us. We were given only half bread every second day. This inhuman treatment was aimed at reducing our weight from between 32 and 38 kg to 15 and 17 kg ”

Imran and Ali Raza, ex-camel jockeys

Professional Opinion on Shock Therapy

Dr. Naeem Zafar MBBS, DCH, MD, DCHN, FCPS,

Child Specialist, Consultant Child Health and Protection, Pakistan

Electric Burns: If these children are given 220 volt burns for short duration these do not destroy a lot of tissues as electricity burns are proportionate to the current and duration, but they can destroy blood and muscles, nerves and vessels, and are more dangerous than apparently thought. If electric shocks are actually used, they are liable to cause loss of grip and less good performance on camel back. It does not reduce weight. It is a psychological trauma and means of terrorization.

Dips in water: This is psychological trauma. The only medical reason could be to increase their lung capacities by holding their breath.

Malnutrition: Malnutrition has serious effects on a growing body, for example:

Body defences are lowered and children get prone to infection. Other systems are also weakened and this reduces the optimum performance of the heart, lungs, liver and kidneys etc. This means that they cannot tolerate stress or extremes of temperature etc. These children lose weight and their body mass decreases. Initially the fat dissolves to provide calories, but once fat stores are depleted, the muscle protein starts to break down and ultimately proteins from the liver, kidneys and heart also break down. These children do not grow in weight or height and their development is also slowed.

The development of secondary sexual characteristics is also delayed, therefore they enter puberty late. Their bone weight is also reduced and these bones are deficient in calcium and therefore easy to break. The heart is small and cannot pump enough blood to the body while exercising and can fail easily.

The liver is initially fatty and later gets smaller. Its functions are seriously impaired and these children cannot manufacture essential enzymes and hormones required for the normal daily functioning.

The intestines lose their characteristic fur-like structure and become paper-thin. They cannot absorb even the little diet that is offered and this causes repeated diarrhoeas. They also get infected easily and diarrhoea and dehydration are most common causes of death in such children.

The kidneys cannot concentrate urine well and they can continue to lose water even in dehydration so the dehydration can be more difficult to handle in malnourished children.

The muscle break down leads to quick fatigue, they tire easily and have less exercise tolerance. They have more muscle cramps and continue to have pains and aches especially at night.

The nervous system is also affected. They have initial craving for food but as time goes on the body refuses to accept food and they become apathetic. These children have very low body defences and can get more infectious diseases than their normal peers. Also the usual illnesses cannot be handled well and they can get seriously ill very quickly and the recovery is more difficult and protracted.

Most of the physical problems of severe malnutrition are manageable though difficult to treat and they can recover. The stunting (short stature) is not reversible and these children then have less ultimate height as compared to their genetic potential. Some of the scarring of kidneys and other body organs make them prone to early old age disease and therefore, the longevity is also reduced.

The worst trauma is psychological: Malnutrition leads to fatigue, lassitude, restlessness, irritability and anorexia. They may not even feed when offered food and go on becoming weaker. They always look tired and pale-faced. Their complexion is muddy and eyes lack lustre.

Psychological effects of terrorization are different and would lead them into isolation nightmares, and they may become totally psychotic. Their ability to relate to others is impaired. Low self-esteem may lead to depression and suicidal tendencies. Adjustment to peers and family is difficult and they cannot trust the people around them. The psychological effects can be permanent and these children have difficulty adjusting in their jobs, married life and relating to people. They may develop paranoid characteristics.


Dr. Ghalia Al-Thani, MRCP (UK), FRCPCH,
Member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

I am a paediatrician and work closely with these children. Both questions on shock therapy and water dipping surprised me. Neither in my practice as a paediatrician or working with these children have I come across any such incidences and to the best of my knowledge, there is no link between such practices and weight loss. Having said that, I would like to emphasize that these children are often underfed in order to keep them as light as possible. This of course leads to moderate-severe stunting, malnutrition and failure to thrive. The physical and psychological consequences of that are pretty obvious. The other factor I would like to confirm is the multiple types of injuries these children sustain ranging from genital injuries all the way to severe brain damage and death.



Charlotte Wright, Senior Lecturer/Consultant in Community Child Health
Glasgow University, Yorkhill Children's Hospital, UK

Electric shocks and 'dipping' would have no direct effect on weight gain or growth except possibly via the trauma and distress caused to the children, which might result in temporary loss of appetite. It seems more likely that these techniques were used to punish and intimidate the children and possibly to harden them up to deal with fear. Whatever the logic, these actions are clearly illegal and abusive and would have long-term effects on the children's emotional development. Withholding food is a pretty effective way of restricting growth and if continued for many years would usually result in permanent stunting and puny stature due to the restriction of growth of bones and muscles. It would also place the children at greater risk of infection.



Dr. Evelyn Eisenstein, Paediatrics/Adolescent Medicine,
Doctor of Nutritional Sciences, CEIIAS and State University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

This is just simple child torture and exploitation for profit. To keep a child under-nourished will keep him with short stature, low weight, low weight/for height, stunting and wasting, decrease food consumption, decrease mental development, increase passivity and all kinds of physical and psychosocial diseases, including pubertal delay. The body has metabolic adaptation mechanisms to reduce growth under unfavourable conditions. And all kind of work efforts added to a child's period of growth until 14-16 years is considered unlawful in most civilized countries, including International Labour Office criteria. As a paediatrician I would suggest to you to make all political and professional efforts to END immediately this torture and traumatic experience, through International Paediatric Association, World Health Organization and UNICEF official pressure! Children need food, nutrients, water, rest periods, and no torture or traumatic experiences to grow/develop healthier - 4th principle of the Declaration of Child's Rights by the United Nations (November 1959). Here in Brazil, there are already laws/regulations prohibiting children less than 16 years to be used as horse jockeys, and the role of the Brazilian Paediatric Society was important for political pressure and to end this kind of men's power domination against growing children, who are victimized and traumatized for the rest of their lives.

Story of RAB Chachar

My date of birth is 12 March 1983 and I am 21 years old. When I was four or five years old I went to UAE to work as a camel jockey. I went with my elder brother who was 18 years old at that time and was working at an *azba*. I worked as a camel jockey for four years and after that I came back to Pakistan. In Pakistan I got admission in a school and got education up to class eight. On 27 May 1998 I went back to UAE due to pressure from a bedu who wanted me to come back and work in his *azba* as *masool* or supervisor. I did not have a passport but the bedu took me with him in the plane of the royal family which was visiting Rahimyar Khan at that time. I was concealed in a big wooden crate to make sure that the sheikh did not see me. The crate was lined inside with foam, holes were made for air to pass through and to avoid suffocation. Some food items including fruits and soft drinks were put in the crate for me to use. Once in the plane I came out of the crate and reached UAE where no one checked my documents. I was taken to an *azba* to work as a *masool*. I had ten people who worked under me. There were also four child camel jockeys at the *azba*. There were ten camels.

I soon realized that it would not be possible for me to continue my work at the *azba* due to inhuman treatment of child camel jockeys at the hands of bedu. As I had no passport with me it was difficult for me to come back to Pakistan. I then started demanding the bedu to make a passport for me on the pretext of making my stay in UAE legal. The bedu helped me in getting a new passport by staging a drama. The bedu asked one of his employees to overturn one of bedu's four wheel drive jeeps on a sand dune in the desert at Al Ain and put it on fire to show that an accident has happened which destroyed the bedu's vehicle. I witnessed the whole drama along with many others, the bedu's driver drove the vehicle on a sand dune at quite high speed and the vehicle turned turtle. The driver came out of the vehicle through the window and then he put the vehicle on fire. After this the bedu informed the insurance company of the accident and made an insurance claim for the vehicle.

Based on this accident I then applied for a new passport at the Pakistani Embassy in UAE, giving them the reason that my passport was in the vehicle when it caught fire. The embassy interviewed me and after making sure that my story was true, issued me a new passport. The bedu then helped me in getting the UAE visa as well as putting an entry stamp on my passport. The Pakistani embassy then put the exit stamp on my passport on behalf of the immigration authorities to make the whole thing legal. Once I managed to get my passport, I deliberately had a fight with the bedu in order to get my *aqama* or residence permit cancelled. After three months I came back to Pakistan. I completed my education to metric in 2000 and then started learning the skills as an auto mechanic. Now I am working in the palace of Sheikh Zayed at Rahimyar Khan as motor mechanic where I am providing services to the guests of the royal family who come to Pakistan to hunt. If their vehicles breakdown, I go in the field to repair them. Besides getting the salary at the palace, I also get some baksheesh (tip) from the royal family guests. Approximately 7,000 people benefit when royal family guests are visiting Rahimyar Khan during the hunting season.

Suggestions & Recommendations

Suggestions by ex-child jockeys

“Use of children in camel racing is an inhuman practice; it should be banned”

Ban camel racing using children

The children were unanimous in saying they would never go back to UAE for camel racing. They recommended that using children in camel racing should be banned, as it was an inhuman practice. If the Arabs want to have camel racing, children should not participate. They had been forced to see death many times in their lives before the final death comes. They said they were more afraid of the owner of the camel than the camel. They thought that the President and the Prime Minister could stop what is happening and that laws should be strictly implemented. They asked, “would the President have allowed his own child to race the camels?” Children are the first responsibility of parents yet their own parents had sent them abroad.

To live with the bedus was like living in the hell. “In this free world, the owners of camels have treated us like slaves.” They said they would rather die of hunger than return to race camels. They knew what happens there, and this is why they will never go back. If they were over-weight, they were given electric shocks twenty times a day to reduce their weight. They were given half a bread to eat. They faced dangers and threats but all the prizes went to the owners. Even though they could be killed they still had to win the race. Sometimes they wanted to kill all those responsible for trafficking and camel racing. They hated camels and felt helpless when tied on camel backs.

Need for rehabilitation

When discussing rehabilitation, the children aged 14 years and above felt that they are useless without education. But the time for education had passed and they are no longer interested in it now. The children under 14 years still wanted some basic education. Some of the children were interested in acquiring technical skills so that they could earn a living for themselves and their families. Some children thought that starting a small business would be beneficial for them.

Suggestions by working & street children

“We should have opportunities to learn some skills so that we can earn something for our families”

Stop trafficking; provide education, income generation opportunities

The working and non-working street children thought that trafficking and use of children as camel jockeys could be stopped if education was available at least up to primary level. Children should have opportunities to learn some skills, especially children over 10 years of age, so that they can earn something for their families. They recommended that financial assistance should be provided to the families of poor children so that they can start their own businesses. There should also be some recreation facilities for the children, as this will prevent them from roaming on the streets.

Suggestions by parents

“There is a need to provide assistance to the families of poor children so that they can start their own businesses.”

Raise parents' awareness

Parents could see a vital role for themselves in combating child trafficking at the local level by refusing to send their children to UAE. They would be willing to meet with other parents, to tell them about the experiences their children had had as camel jockeys and persuade them not to let their children go. This needed to be supported by public awareness campaigns to raise awareness locally. Educational institutions could play an important role in raising awareness on this issue in the communities and particularly among the children. However they could see that families with no other source of income could be easily trapped into letting their children be trafficked.

Limit the role of the agent

They suggested that the government should immediately stop the immigration and the border authorities from taking bribes and allowing children to leave the country. The role of the agents must be limited. Village lambardars could play an important role in controlling these agents, but the communities would have to take their own actions to get rid of them. Agents can so easily lure innocent people into their trap. If they can earn Rs. 200,000-300,000 per month they will definitely work hard to entice parents to send their children.

Rehabilitation through education & jobs

On the issue of rehabilitation, parents thought that education was essential for repatriated camel jockeys. These children have lost out on education. Yet it is so necessary to give them a new start and they should have opportunities to get education. Children who are not interested in education should be given some skills so that they can work and help their families, they could also begin to make a living by starting small businesses.

Suggestions by stakeholders

“Illiteracy is a major cause of child trafficking. The government and the civil society must take initiatives to spread literacy and awareness.”

Raise awareness

The stakeholders thought that many parents had been driven by greed and the lure of becoming rich over night. The inhabitants of the target area are innocent and submissive. They do not know how grave the situation will be for their children and they need to know about the menace of child trafficking in their area. It will require a wide awareness campaign, together with social mobilization and the involvement of influential people within the communities to stop the menace. Awareness programmes on the existing laws on trafficking also need to be initiated. The law enforcement agencies should deal with agents with an iron hand. Agents have become very powerful and play a key role in trafficking children.

Reduce poverty

Effective measures need to be taken to reduce poverty in the target areas and the socio-economic condition in the target communities needs to be improved. The government could introduce cottage industry and provide ample agricultural loans and livestock development. Credit facilities could also be provided. Illiteracy is one of the causes of child trafficking; therefore suitable measures need be adopted to make the population literate, with the help of government and civil society organizations.

Rehabilitation

In their discussion about rehabilitation and re-integration of the victims of child trafficking, they were aware that there are no services or institutions which provide support to repatriated trafficked children. There should be psychological support and counselling for both the children and their families. Medical services should also be made available for ex-jockeys who have suffered injuries from camel racing. Arrangements should be made to trace parents or guardians of children who were rescued, and there should be legal aid for the child victims and their families.

Better Coordination

The stakeholders stressed the fact that traffickers have a very strong network, both within the country and abroad. There is need for coordinated effort with a concrete plan of action among like-minded organizations and the government to tackle child trafficking problem. They recommended that there should be close coordination and interaction between the government line department functionaries and civil society organizations. It is necessary for local government elected representatives at the grass roots level to join hands in their efforts to combat this menace.

The role of media and religious leaders needs to be enhanced to create awareness in the community. There should be an effective information dissemination and sharing system in place to stop cross border trafficking.

Core group on child trafficking

While giving these general recommendations, the group suggested establishing a core group on child trafficking in Rahimyar Khan. This core group should meet on a regular basis to discuss the support/assistance mechanisms for the victims.

Recommendations

“People involved in the ruthless trafficking of women and children are well organized. To counter this the Government and civil society must be totally committed, and work together to develop a National Plan of Action against human trafficking.”

International action

The trafficking of children for camel racing in the UAE is a serious issue which should be dealt with between governments at the highest level, using diplomatic channels. International pressure could be put on the UAE Government by different human and child rights organizations as well as concerned governments to effectively implement the rules and regulations of UAE camel jockey association which bars the use of children as camel jockeys. The Government of UAE should be asked to create and contribute to a ‘rehabilitation fund’ for the rehabilitation of the victims of camel jockeying.

National action

Stringent legislative measures need to be adopted by the Government of Pakistan through which the culprits (agents and their cohorts) of human and child trafficking are given severe and exemplary punishments. All known agents in the target communities should immediately be arrested and investigations initiated against them for legal proceedings.

The Government should take effective measures to stop human trafficking in general and child trafficking for camel racing in particular, especially to the Gulf. The capacity of the immigration and law enforcement authorities at the borders needs to be strengthened and law enforcement agencies made aware of the modus operandi being used by child traffickers. A special wing within the FIA and Immigration should be created to prevent human trafficking, especially of children.

The immigration and passport authorities in the country should be especially vigilant while endorsing children's particulars in any adult(s) passport. A proper verification system has to be established to ensure genuine endorsements. The local government authorities and Nikkah registrars should ensure that no Nikkah certificate is issued to fake couples. Similarly, the local government authorities should also ensure effective birth registration in the target areas in order to minimize the chances of using fake information for endorsements in the passports.

Some type of verification system has to be put in place to verify the validity of married couples. Influential people in the communities, including religious leaders, can play an important role in this regard.

The government should initiate special rehabilitation (physical, mental and social) programmes for the rehabilitation of repatriated camel jockeys. All the repatriated camel jockeys should be provided with education and skills training to make them active members of the society. The government should take special measures to ensure free and compulsory primary/secondary education in the southern belt of Punjab and Sindh provinces. There also needs to be special measures to provide economic opportunities to the people in the affected districts in order to curb human/child trafficking.

Community Action

Anti-trafficking vigilance committees should be established at the village/district level in the target communities to monitor the situation and prevent child trafficking by taking action against the agents. NGOs and community based organisations should take initiatives to support the government in providing free and compulsory education and economic opportunities in the affected areas. Communities could initiate their own rehabilitation and re-integration programmes for returning jockeys. Both the electronic and print media should undertake effective media campaigns to create awareness among the poorest segments of the society about the consequences and use of children as camel jockeys.

Acronyms/Abbreviations

CRA	Camel Racing Association
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
Dh	Dirham (UAE)
Rs	Rupees (Pakistan)
SCS	Save the Children Sweden
PRWSWO	Pakistan Rural Workers Social Welfare Organisation
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

Technical Terms

<i>Al दौरا</i>	Circle
<i>Al mirkhad</i>	Running place or racing track
<i>Sibqat al hejjin</i>	Camel racing
<i>Al hejin</i>	Agile racing camel
<i>Al mudhamer</i>	Camel trainer
<i>Rakbi</i>	Jockey
<i>Rakbiya</i>	Jockeys
<i>Azba</i>	Camel farm
<i>Al tadmeer</i>	Making the camel slender and fit to achieve high athletic performance
<i>Al tasrieh</i>	To let camels roam and forage while being guided to do some serious walking
<i>Al tajheem</i>	Running training
<i>Masool</i>	Administrator of <i>azba</i>

References

1. Dr. Sulayman Khalaf 'Camel Racing in the Gulf: Notes on the evolution of a traditional cultural sport' . *Anthropos* pp 85-106, 1999 issue, <http://enhg.4t.com/articles/camelrac/camelrac.htm>

This paper offers an ethnographic documentation of camel racing as a growing traditional cultural heritage sport in contemporary Gulf Arab societies.

2. Information collected by stakeholders in Rahimyar Khan
3. Daily Dawn Newspaper, Lahore, 3 May 2003

Signs of hope

Since this research was carried out in June 2004, there have been signs of hope for the child camel jockeys :

Community action in Rahimyar Khan

In February 2005, a six-day training workshop was given by Save the Children Sweden for PRWSWO in Rahimyar Khan, to build their capacity. Since then a group of ex-jockeys called 'child club members' has been formed. Eight committees were set up in the district, two female and six male. These are made up of parents, teachers, social worker, local government officials and ex-agents. PRWSWO have been training them in child rights and community participation. Further training is planned in July 2005. This will be in community mobilization techniques and child protection issues. These communities will then work for rehabilitation of returnee camel jockey and prevention of trafficking.

International and national action

Repatriation of some child jockeys:

In response to mounting pressure, the UAE has reaffirmed their commitment to enforce their ban on children under 16 years old from camel racing, and ordered owners to hand these children over by May 31st 2005. The UAE authorities would then complete the immigration formalities and return the children to Pakistan with the help of UNICEF.

On June 21st 2005, the first group of twenty-two children was returned to Pakistan by the UAE. The Pakistan Government authorities said they would try to trace the children's families and were setting up child protection centres in the major cities .

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