

Scourge of child trafficking addressed

'The *marabout* (Quranic teacher) promised my father that he would take care of me and teach me Quran. But when we reached Senegal, he forced me to beg on the street. I must bring him \$1 every day. He beat me severely when I failed to get that amount.' This is the story of a former victim of child trafficking found at the Friends of Children Association office in Gabu, Guinea-Bissau. Over the past decade Quranic teachers have increasingly been linked to child trafficking for forced begging. An [Institute for Security Studies](#) (ISS) analysis notes that criminal networks exploit this practice and profit from the vulnerability of poor families to develop a parallel economy, preying on children to make money. According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, **the forced begging of children in Senegal generates \$8m annually**. The eastern regions of Gabu and Bafatá are Guinea-Bissau's main child trafficking centres. The ISS study notes that trafficked children live in deep emotional misery and are often subjected to sexual abuse by bigger students or to physical abuse when they don't deliver their assigned daily amount. However, enforcing laws against child trafficking remains a major challenge. To overcome these challenges, ISS says Senegal and Guinea-Bissau should urgently establish formal bilateral cooperation on the matter, and their respective police agencies should exchange information. Bit said both governments need to provide law enforcement staff and border officials with adequate training in detecting and reporting trafficking.