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Method of presentation: oral presentation

Abstract title: Is ban on begging an effective strategy to fight child trafficking?

Background: Begging has been labelled the 'weapon of the weak.' Regulation of groups allowed to beg has a long history and has been identified as emergence of social policy. Most religions regard begging as honourable when exercised by legitimate groups. Currently begging is increasingly banned to protect tourists industry, businesses and the general public from unwanted intrusion and to counteract human trafficking. In Senegal, the Criminal Code of 1964 prohibits begging in public in Senegal but excludes alms-seeking in religious context. In the fight against human trafficking, the ban on begging was reactivated in 2005, including alms seeking by Quran school boys. Here we examine opinions of stakeholders in Dakar, Senegal, on the ban on begging adopted by the Senegalese government to counteract child trafficking and the consequences for those the ban aimed to help.

Method: The history of the Senegalese bans is scrutinized by secondary data and interviews with Bissau-Guinean and Senegalese Quran masters and NGO and government representatives. Participatory approach was adopted and child beggars asked about their reactions to the ban.

Results: Due to threats of withdrawal of international aid, ban on begging from 2005 was enforced in August 2010, but withdrawn within few weeks. The ban created fear and hunger among begging Quran school boys while NGOS and the international community endorsed it to rescue the very same boys. Quran teachers, the population in general and some members of Parliament opposed the ban while a others claimed the ban would hurt those it aimed to help.

Discussion: Ban on begging in a society that accepts it on religious grounds is ineffective without implementation of supportive activities for those it aims to help.

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