

---

# AT WHAT COST

HUMAN TRAFFICKING |

| FORCED LABOR |

| CHILD LABOR

---

## AT WHAT COST:

### Street Labor

Most of the world's 218 million child laborers work in agriculture, and most work within their own families. But many do not even fare this well. In India, there are some 420,000 children living on the street, plus some 700,000 girls who do domestic work in others' homes. There are as many as one million street children in Russia. In Latin America, estimates reach into the tens of millions.

The abandonment of children onto the street ought to trouble us not only when it results in terrible living conditions, but also when it is systematic. The Roma in Albania exemplify this perfectly. Year after year, their children are consistently found on the streets of Tirana, and throughout Italy and Greece. They are essentially pushed out by severe poverty that has arisen neither accidentally nor suddenly. Rather, it is the result of decades if not centuries of violence and discrimination throughout Europe. Since being targeted by the Nazis, Roma have been largely excluded from the economic gains of past 60 years.

Yet for much of that period, Enver Hoxha's socialist regime provided the Roma in Albania with a measure of equality. As Albanians, they were guaranteed education and employment, though Roma were often restricted to menial or traditional, unskilled work. This rough parity did not, however, survive the death of socialism in the 1990s. As Albania as a whole has made tentative economic gains in the last decade through ties with the European Union, the nearly 100,000 Roma in Albania have suffered sharp increases in inequality.

The dynamic that pushes children onto the street is distressingly simple. Roma families face entrenched poverty due to a lack of education and employment. One survey found the unemployment rate among Roma to be more than four times the national average. Many of their children speak Romani, rather than Albanian, when they enter school, and often report open discrimination. Most of these families cannot afford books and school supplies. Faced with uncertain long-term gains, they pursue short-term solutions.

Roma children follow a number of different paths into work. Their families may send them directly to the capital, Tirana, where an average child earns \$2.31 a day by begging. Or, seeking bigger gains, family may essentially rent a child to another Roma family that is emigrating to Italy or Greece. These families may receive a lump sum payment, in the range of 100 to 150 euros, or may expect a continuous stream of remittances. A young child (6-11 years old) can earn 10 euros a day begging in Greece, of which one-fourth to one-fifth is sent home to the family. Older children may be put work in agriculture, where wages range from 15 to 20 euros per day. Others are set to work as thieves or prostitutes.

Children who have returned from these experiences have reported predictably dismal working conditions. They are forced to work 10 to 12 hour days, seven days a week. They may be beaten or burned with cigarettes. When abroad, traffickers may forbid children to speak their own language or to speak to other