

THE GENDER DIMENSIONS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS IS A HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION THAT AFFECTS THE LIVES OF MILLIONS OF WOMEN, GIRLS, MEN AND BOYS WORLDWIDE.

A large majority of identified trafficked victims are women and girls; however, men and boys are also victims of different forms of trafficking

- ❶ Women and girls account for 71% of all trafficked victims detected globally.
- ❷ Young girls represent almost three quarters of identified child trafficking victims.
- ❸ While women still represent the majority of trafficking victims, the proportion of identified male victims has increased from 16% in 2004 to 29% in 2014.
- ❹ The Secretary General Report on trafficking in women and girls acknowledges that “The harms of trafficking are known to be more severe for women and girls than for men and boys given the exposure of the former to specific forms of exploitation such as sexual exploitation and violence, domestic servitude and forced marriage.”
- ❺ Trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation is the most predominant form of global trafficking currently detected, accounting for 54% of all forms of trafficking.
- ❻ Females represent 96% of victims trafficked for sexual exploitation.
- ❼ Traffickers who exploit women for other purposes, such as forced labour, begging, and domestic servitude, commonly exert sexual violence over victims as a means of coercion and control.
- ❽ The share of victims who are trafficked for forced labour has increased in recent years. About four in ten victims detected between 2012-2014 were trafficked for forced labour, and out of these victims, 63% were men.
- ❾ Male victims represent 82% of trafficking for organ removal.

ROOT CAUSES AND RISK FACTORS: WHY TRAFFICKING DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTS WOMEN AND GIRLS

- ❶ **Gender inequality:** Gendered poverty, lack of viable employment opportunities, lack of control over financial resources and limited access to education are all factors that can exacerbate the vulnerability of women and girls to trafficking.
- ❷ **Gender-based violence:** Gender-based violence and cultural norms that normalize such violence contribute to the cycle of violence against women and make them more vulnerable to trafficking.
- ❸ **Discriminatory labour or migration laws and gender-blind policies:** Labour and migration laws that lack a human rights and gender-sensitive approach may restrict women’s ability to move freely and change employment, which increases the likelihood that women will seek employment in unregulated and informal sectors. This subsequently increases women’s vulnerability to trafficking and exploitation.
- ❹ **Conflict, post-conflict settings and humanitarian crises:** In the absence of the rule of law during crises, women and girls can become highly vulnerable to different forms of exploitation. This is due, for example, to the fact that women and girls can be targeted by armed groups for sexual slavery, domestic servitude and forced and child marriages.

LINKS BETWEEN MIGRATION, TRAFFICKING AND WOMEN

International migration has increased by more than 40% between 2000 and 2015. Although increasing attention has been given regarding the links between migration and trafficking, little attention has been attributed to the gender dimension of this linkage. Women now account for more than half of all global migrant workers, resulting in what is called the feminization of the global labour market. There are gender-specific vulnerabilities and risks faced by women throughout their migration trajectory, which makes them more susceptible to trafficking. Due to gender discrimination and the undervaluation of low-skilled occupations, women are commonly concentrated in low-skilled and low paid jobs – such as domestic work – that fall under unregulated and informal sectors with little or no legal protection. These conditions make women particularly vulnerable to gendered specific exploitation, forced labor, extortion, debt bondage and violence. As such, even documented women migrant workers are at risk of being trafficked and/or exploited in their new workplace. Due to gender discrimination in employment practices, they may have less leverage than male migrant workers to negotiate the conditions of their work and may have less knowledge of their rights.

RECOMMENDATIONS: A GENDERED APPROACH TO PREVENTION AND RESPONSE TO TRAFFICKING

- **Moving beyond a security framework:** While many states have made progress towards implementing law enforcement frameworks to address the issue, more needs to be done to ensure a human-rights/survivor-based, and gender/age-sensitive approach – *an approach that responds to the tailored needs of men, women, girls and boys as different groups with specific needs.*
- Responses to trafficking continue to place a greater emphasis on the prosecution and conviction of traffickers rather than on support for victims and survivors. The provision of adequate support and assistance by specialized and comprehensive services, irrespective of whether survivors agree to participate in criminal proceedings, is essential.
- **Prevention:** Ensuring that response strategies to trafficking are in place is crucial; however, the issue of prevention requires much more attention than it has received to date. Prevention measures should be strengthened through awareness-raising, including targeting groups of vulnerable populations that are at risk of becoming victims of trafficking. Prevention strategies should also include measures addressing the root causes and risk factors that increase the vulnerability of women, men, girls and boys, with particular emphasis on how intersectionalities¹ render certain groups more vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation. States should therefore expand their trafficking prevention measures to address gender norms and unequal power relationships, which contribute to gender specific poverty, unemployment, limited access to education, gender specific risks posed by unsafe migration processes and gender-based discrimination in general.

CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING MALE TRAFFICKING VICTIMS

- A lack of a gendered approach to trafficking undermines the uniqueness of the male victim's experience.
- Gender stereotypes can undermine the ability to correctly identify male trafficking victims. This prevents male victims from receiving the necessary assistance and protection services.
- Stereotypical constructions of masculinity may result in men's reluctance to acknowledge that they are trafficked and/or to identify themselves as victims.

¹ The overlap between different social categorizations, such as race, gender, and class, that contribute to systematic discrimination.

- ❶ **Ensuring coherence:** It is necessary to ensure policy coherence between anti-trafficking, migration and labour market regulations in line with a human rights-based and gender-based approach. For example, migration and anti-trafficking policies must ensure that trafficking victims are not wrongfully punished as illegal immigrants.
- ❷ **Integrating gender specific anti-trafficking measures into broader programmes:** During conflicts and natural disasters, humanitarian responses, disaster relief programs and conflict management must actively address the issue of trafficking and ensure gender and age-sensitive measures that account for the different needs of women, girls, men and boys. The problem of trafficking in various contexts needs to be viewed along a conflict and crisis-peace-development continuum.
- ❸ Actions to prevent and respond to trafficking should be incorporated into broader sustainable development frameworks, policies and programmes aimed at economic and social development, human rights, the rule of law, good governance, education, health, natural disaster and post-conflict reconstruction.
- ❹ **The role of states:** States should ensure that laws, regulations and programs that address trafficking are gender and age-sensitive and that capacities exist to address the specific and unique needs of women, girls, men and boys.
- ❺ **The role of professionals:** Professionals dealing with human trafficking require tailored training that supports a gender and age-sensitive approach, which ensures the protection and adequate provision of services to victims (including health, justice, immigration, education, shelter, etc.). For example, victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation often face severe health ramifications, such as unsafe abortions, complications with their reproductive system and exposure to sexually transmitted diseases. A gender-sensitive approach also requires addressing the concerns and fears that prevent trafficked persons from seeking out services and help. For example, female trafficked victims can face particular issues with reporting, which can be due to different factors such as: lack of female guards, fear of lack of confidentiality, fear of stigmatization from their community or attachment to their traffickers (who could also be their legal 'husbands').
- ❻ **Research and data:** The United Nations System, along with relevant research bodies and governments, should improve the collection, analysis and dissemination of sex and age-disaggregated data to promote a better understanding of the gender and age dimensions of trafficking, including in conflict and humanitarian contexts.

WHAT IS ICAT?

The Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT) is a policy forum mandated by the UN General Assembly to improve coordination among UN agencies and other relevant international organizations to facilitate a holistic and comprehensive approach to preventing and combating trafficking in persons. ICAT was formally established in March 2007, pursuant to the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 61/180. ICAT consists of 16 UN members and two partner organizations, ICMPD and the OSCE. The members of the ICAT Working Group are the ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNODC, and UN Women (joined December 2016).