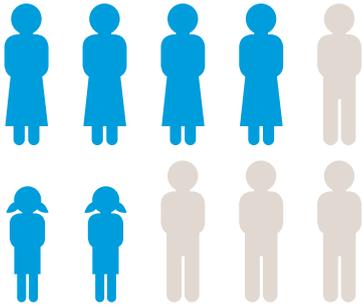# TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN AND GIRLS: CRISES AS A RISK MULTIPLIER. REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (2022)

UN WOMEN

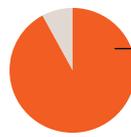## WOMEN AND GIRLS ARE SEVERELY AFFECTED BY TRAFFICKING

In 2020, for every **10 victims** detected globally, about:

4 were adult women

2 were girls.

Surveys of service providers indicate that **women and girls have been more vulnerable to trafficking for sexual exploitation** in local areas and online.

Social norms that allow for male control and sexual entitlement have led to trafficking for the purposes of **sexual exploitation** being the most detected form of trafficking in 2020, of which:

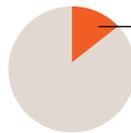**92%** are women and girls.

UNODC found that in at least

25% of cases

trafficking survivors were subject to multiple forms of **gender-based violence** prior to being trafficked.

Recent data also found that the **intimate partner** was the trafficker in:

13% of cases.

CRISES INTENSIFY BROADER RISK FACTORS FOR TRAFFICKING AND EXACERBATE THE VULNERABILITIES OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

DURING COVID

School closures had a **significant impact on girls being educated**.

The number of girls **not** in school, employment or training increased in **28 countries** in 2020.

The number of employed women declined by

54 million in 2020 and

45 million women left the labour market altogether.

Extreme poverty amongst women is also on the rise. New projections estimate that in 2022

124 women aged 25-34 are living in extreme poverty **for every 100 men of the same age.**

Despite this, the majority of social protection measures introduced by governments **did not address women's economic security.**

NATURAL DISASTERS AND CONFLICT

Increased poverty and restricted economic opportunities contribute to trafficking in women and girls and are **exacerbated in conflict and natural disasters.**

Economic and physical insecurity places women and girls in desperate situations where they are more likely to pursue risky opportunities or be deceived by traffickers.

The breakdown of State capacity and the rule of law increases existing vulnerabilities and creates an enabling environment for traffickers to operate with impunity.

The rise in displaced and stateless persons **increases the economic vulnerability** of women and girls and their risk of trafficking and exploitation.

Conflict-related sexual violence has also been linked with abductions for the purpose of trafficking as well as trafficking for sexual exploitation in displaced persons camps.

THE IMPACTS OF RECENT CRISES

Trafficked women and girls **experienced greater barriers to accessing support services** during COVID- 19 lockdowns.

Public resources were diverted from prosecuting offenders and protecting survivors as a result of COVID-19. For the first time since 2003, there has been **drop in the number of trafficking cases** that were prosecuted and convicted in 2020.

The United States analysis of the national trafficking hotline in 2020 saw an increase of

120% in the proportion of potential victims for whom **social media platforms were used for recruitment into trafficking.**

The conflict in Ukraine is resulting in the **fastest population movement since World War II** and an estimated

90% of those fleeing are women and children

Intensification of traffickers' activity in the borders and outside Ukraine has been reported.

In the Tigray conflict in Ethiopia, women's and girls' experiences of sexual violence have been connected with **trafficking for sexual exploitation.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

Addressing vulnerabilities in crisis contexts

1. Recognize trafficking of women and girls as a form of violence.

2. Address the gendered dimensions of vulnerability through:

   • Investing in education and community-based programming that challenges harmful social norms, male domination, and sexual entitlement.

   • Addressing the economic drivers and other vulnerability factors that may push women and girls to seek risky opportunities for income generation that could lead to their exploitation.

   • Strengthen capacities of response teams in IDP, refugee or large migration movement settings to better identify potential victims and ensure the safety and security of women and girls.

3. Support women's rights and survivors' organisations to inform gender-responsive crisis action plans, and ensure their meaningful participation and access to influence in decision-making

Response

1. Ensure that survivors of trafficking are given long-term, comprehensive reintegration support, including economic empowerment and psychological support that is not conditioned by the pursuit of criminal justice.

2. Build mechanisms for front-line actors (such as border officials, police, health care workers etc.) to identify trafficking victims and strengthen referral pathway.

3. Actors that are providing humanitarian assistance in the context of crises must have in place zero tolerance policies for cases of personnel committing trafficking of women and girls. Organisations must commit to ensure adequate vetting and training personnel on this policy and set up referral mechanisms to identify cases and ensure that those who commit these acts face justice.

Addressing the role of technology in trafficking

1. Strengthen efforts to detect and monitor activities associated with trafficking online. Understand how online platforms where recruitment occurs can monitor, flag, and refer potential cases. Partner with technology companies, social media and online platform service providers to strengthen efforts to prevent trafficking and increase service provision.

Safe and orderly migration options in situations of crisis

1. Facilitate safe and orderly migration during crisis, especially through the provision of temporary, humanitarian and family reunification visas.

2. Ensure that women and girls have access to formal identification such as social security numbers and identity cards so they can access all the support and entitlements to facilitate legal migration, access to services and humanitarian assistance.

Data

1. Data collection efforts through humanitarian responses should include tools and methodologies to collect disaggregated trafficking data by age and gender, and include information on other factors such as disabilities, race, sexual orientation, etc in line with do-no-harm principles.

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