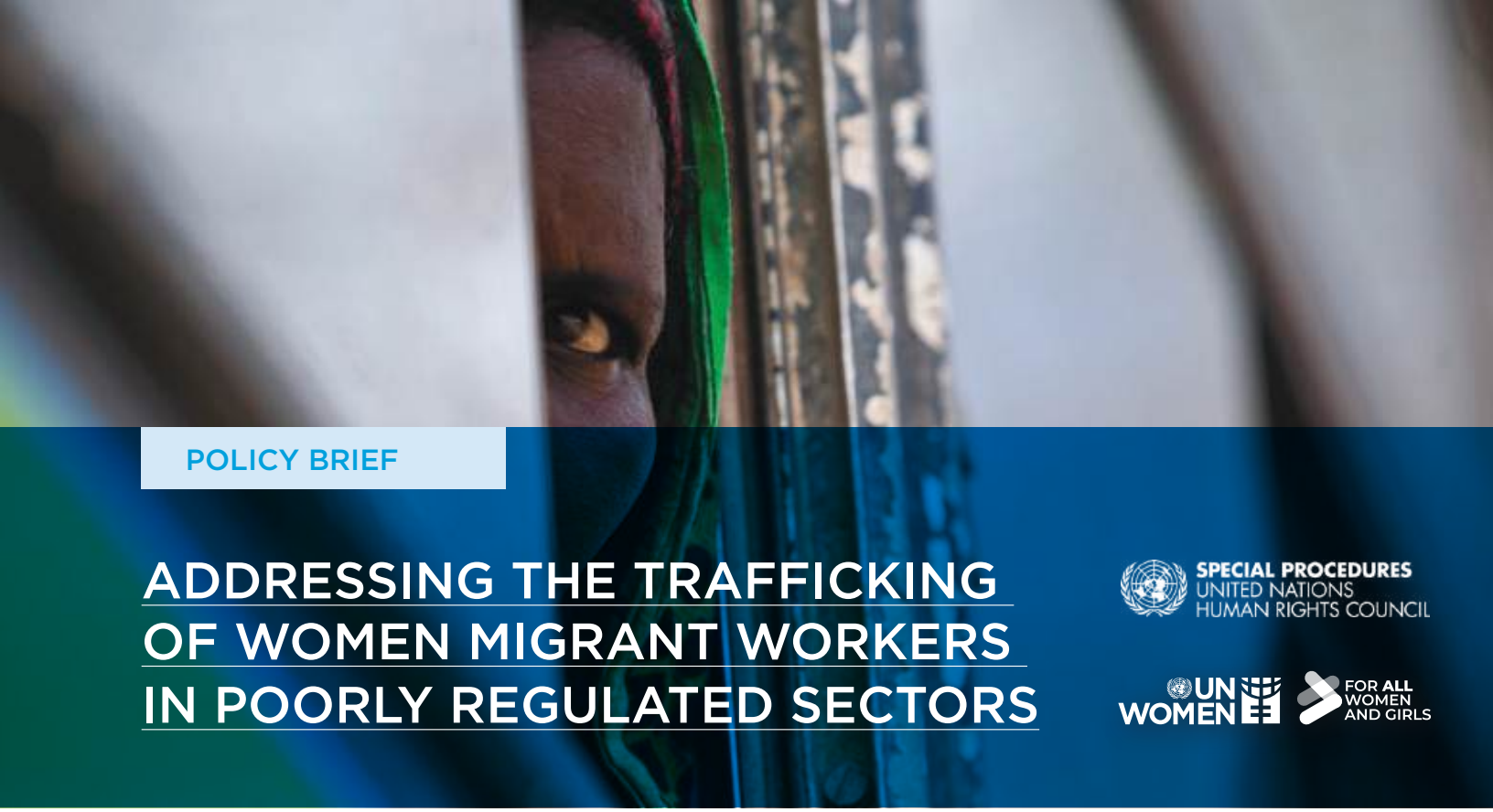

POLICY BRIEF

ADDRESSING THE TRAFFICKING OF WOMEN MIGRANT WORKERS IN POORLY REGULATED SECTORS

SPECIAL PROCEDURES
UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

UN WOMEN

FOR ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

Photo: IOM/Brendan Bannon

Introduction

Trafficking in persons is a crime under international law and is recognized as gender-based violence. Women migrant workers face significant risks of trafficking due to systemic gender-based discrimination, restrictive migration policies and exploitative labour market structures. Globally, women make up a large proportion of trafficking victims, who are often trafficked for sexual exploitation or forced labour. Migrant women are more vulnerable because of their migration status, reliance on unregulated recruiters, and policies that restrict their rights and limit their protection. These factors not only increase the risk of trafficking but also deepen existing inequalities. Gender disparities in labour markets further exacerbate the problem, as migrant women are frequently concentrated in low-paid, informal and unregulated sectors such as domestic work, agriculture, the garment and textile industry, and hospitality and entertainment, where weak regulation enables exploitation and trafficking. Addressing this issue requires governments to strengthen legal and institutional safeguards for women migrant workers, improve regulation and oversight of high-risk sectors, and develop inclusive and gender-responsive migration policies that prioritize the rights and protection of women. By taking these steps, policymakers can create safer migration pathways and reduce the trafficking of women migrant workers.

This policy brief explores the risks to migrant women working in sectors that are poorly regulated and at a heightened risk of trafficking in persons. It explores a range of high-risk sectors to identify the sectoral characteristics from a gender perspective that make women migrant workers more exposed to trafficking in persons. It concludes with a set of recommendations on how to enhance the protection of women migrant workers in sectors with a greater risk of trafficking in persons.

I. Factors contributing to migrant women's heightened risk of trafficking in persons

Women migrant workers are disproportionately affected by trafficking in persons due to pervasive gender inequalities, precarious migration status, economic insecurity, barriers to decent work and gender discrimination in laws, policies and practices. Globally, women represent 39 per cent of detected victims of trafficking in persons,[1] with 66 per cent of them trafficked for purposes of sexual exploitation and 24 per cent for forced labour.[2] Women who are trafficked experience physical violence at a rate three times greater than men,[3] and migrant workers are trafficked for forced labour at a rate three times higher than non-migrant workers.[4]

The risks are compounded by discriminatory migration policies and a reliance on irregular migration routes that expose migrant women to violence and exploitation, including to trafficking. For many women, migration provides them with the best opportunity to improve their lives and those of their families.[5] Yet women often encounter gender-based discrimination in migration policies, which restrict their access to safe and regular migration opportunities. Irregular migration routes and unscrupulous recruiters place migrant women at increased risk,[6] by making them even more vulnerable to trafficking from the moment they depart their countries of origin. Migrant women also face entrenched gender inequalities in labour markets, leading to gender segregation within and among sectors and the undervaluing of their skills. As a result, the poorest and most marginalized migrant women often end up working in low wage labour in informal, precarious, temporary and poorly regulated sectors where their risk of abuse and trafficking is heightened.[7]

Photo: IOM/Catianne Tijerina

BOX 1:

Poorly regulated recruitment systems

Migrant women frequently depend on smugglers or poorly regulated recruiters to facilitate their border crossings and entry into countries of destination. These recruitment systems operate across a range of informal and unregulated or under-regulated economic sectors including agriculture, fishing, manufacturing, domestic work and construction.[8] In some instances, they are licensed and legal multinational agencies.[9]

Unscrupulous smugglers exploit migrants by providing misleading information about job descriptions, locations and living conditions, as well as travel arrangements. They often charge exorbitant and illegal fees that lead to debt bondage, withhold wages and confiscate workers' identity documents, consequently leaving migrant women vulnerable to exploitation, including forced labour and sexual exploitation.[10] In some cases, smugglers sell migrant women to traffickers or operate as fraudulent recruitment agencies that are in fact organized trafficking operations targeting international migrants who seek employment opportunities abroad.

The fact of women experiencing gender-based violence, forced labour and sexual exploitation is rooted in complex social, cultural and economic norms at the intersection of gender inequalities and structural violence.[11] A defining feature of trafficking in persons is the systematic abuse of power and control over women. Poorly regulated sectors heighten the risks of violence, harassment and sexual exploitation, and traffickers systematically control, coerce and manipulate women migrant workers. These acts of violence are embedded in the process of recruitment to assert control and fear, as well as employed by traffickers to maintain dominance, compliance and restrict efforts to escape. Trafficking in persons is also a form of gender-based violence that disproportionally affects women. Due to the gendered nature of trafficking, women are particularly at risk of sexual violence and exploitation. It is increasingly common that victims are trafficked into situations of both labour and sexual exploitation, so-called 'mixed exploitation'. It was reported in 2024 that 8 per cent of victims were detected in mixed exploitation, up from

2 per cent in 2018. Mixed exploitation has been found in sectors such as domestic servitude and agriculture.[12]

Limited access to information, services and support networks also plays a role in exacerbating women migrant workers' risks of trafficking in persons, impeding them from accessing help, resources and essential services that could empower them with knowledge of their rights and help to safeguard them against exploitation. This is the result of various underlying factors. Social and cultural factors play a role, hindering migrant women's ability to integrate into countries of destination.[13] A lack of community integration, including because of isolated and remote work environments, prevents them from connecting with support networks, report abuse or seek help. Language barriers can inhibit their ability to communicate and access vital information about their labour rights,[14] making them vulnerable to misinformation and exploitative practices such as debt bondage schemes, and can deter them from seeking help. In cases of abuse, migrant women often lack legal aid and legal assistance services.

Their working context is another factor. Work in informal and poorly regulated sectors is often out of the reach, scope and capacity of labour inspectorate mechanisms. As a result, migrant women do not benefit from proactive inspection and regulation. Moreover, there is limited trade union presence and support for collective organizing within these sectors and possible restrictions on forming or joining trade unions. All of this impedes women migrant workers from accessing solidarity networks and opportunities to build collective bargaining power to assert their rights, improve their working conditions and resist abuse.

II. Poorly regulated sectors and women migrant workers' heightened risks of trafficking

WHAT ARE POORLY REGULATED SECTORS

Poorly regulated sectors are characterized by a high level of informality and the absence of government regulation, where decent work standards and formal labour protections are unenforced.[15] They often rely heavily on temporary or seasonal migrant work. They pay low wages without benefits or social protections. They are labour intensive and often involve unsafe working conditions and dangerous tasks. Poorly regulated sectors receive insufficient government oversight and are either unregulated or under-regulated. They operate with inadequate or absent monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to protect labour and human rights and lack legal remedies for exploited workers. Power imbalances between workers and employers are a key feature of informal and unregulated sectors, as is the physical and social isolation of workers.

While both women and men are represented in poorly regulated sectors prone to trafficking, women are disproportionately overrepresented in domestic work and the garment and textile industry. This reflects the broader gender segmentation in the labour market, with men often concentrated in other sectors with different forms of risk and exploitation.[16]

HOW DO POORLY REGULATED SECTORS INTERSECT WITH TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

While trafficking in persons can occur in any sector, it is especially prevalent in informal and poorly regulated sectors.[17] These sectors often exist outside formal labour laws, lacking protections and oversight that would normally safeguard workers from exploitation. Informality and remote or private work locations complicate inspection efforts. These are compounded by insufficient government oversight, monitoring and enforcement, as well as limited political will and resources, which in turn facilitate environments where trafficking in persons can thrive unchecked. In this context, there are significant power imbalances that traffickers use to exploit the precarity and vulnerable situation of women migrant workers. They act with impunity, including through the systematic use of sexual violence, harassment and coercion. Moreover, traffickers use the tactics of debt bondage and non-payment of wages as a means to control and manipulate migrant workers.[18]

Photo: UN Women/Luke Duggleby

WOMEN MIGRANT WORKERS' HEIGHTENED RISK OF TRAFFICKING IN PRECARIOUS SECTORS

Migrant women in precarious sectors face a higher risk of trafficking due to a combination of factors. As a result of gender inequalities, discriminatory sociocultural norms and entrenched gender stereotypes in labour markets, many migrant women end up working in informal and precarious sectors.[19] This is especially problematic in situations of tied visa systems and temporary visa schemes where women migrant workers' migration status and employment are tied to a single employer or sector, limiting their ability to seek alternative livelihood opportunities and restricting their freedom of movement. This gives employers considerable control over women migrant workers and heightens their risks of labour rights abuse and gender-based violence. Economic sectors that utilize tied visa systems and temporary visas schemes overlap with poorly regulated sectors where exploitation and trafficking of women migrant workers is common, including domestic, hospitality and agricultural work. Moreover, migrant women are often under economic pressures to support their families. This increased dependence on migrant women's incomes may lead them to accept exploitative work conditions and accrue debts in order to sustain their families by remitting earnings home.[20]

III. Sectoral analysis: the realities of specific industries for women migrant workers

Trafficking in persons occurs across a wide spectrum of labour sectors and contexts ranging from private households to global markets and supply chains. The sectors identified as having the highest prevalence of trafficking in persons for forced labour are agriculture and horticulture, construction, garments and textiles, hospitality and catering, mining, logging and forestry, food processing and packaging, transportation, and domestic, care and cleaning work.[21] Women are largely trafficked for forced labour into domestic servitude and hospitality and agricultural work.[22]

HOSPITALITY AND ENTERTAINMENT

The hospitality and entertainment sectors are key sites of trafficking, facilitating various forms of exploitation, including the mixed exploitation of forced labour and sexual exploitation. The private nature of the workplaces and venues, coupled with a lack of oversight, creates an environment where trafficking can easily be concealed. Notably, bars and hotels rank as the second and third most common venues for trafficking for sexual exploitation, with private apartments supplied by traffickers ranking first[23]

A significant proportion of trafficking cases within the hospitality sector involve women migrant workers, with women and girls making up 87 per cent of victims while 82 per cent of the victims are migrants.[24] The hospitality industry is marked by seasonal and temporary work, underpayment, high turnover and poor working conditions.[25] These factors create a precarious environment for workers. Traffickers in the sector use various exploitative tactics to coerce and manipulate women migrant workers, including debt bondage, confiscation of earnings and threats.[26] There remains a significant gap in data regarding the breakdown of gender and migration status for trafficking in persons within the entertainment industry. Some data are collected on subsectors and on child exploitation but, as a whole, this industry has received insufficient attention.[27]

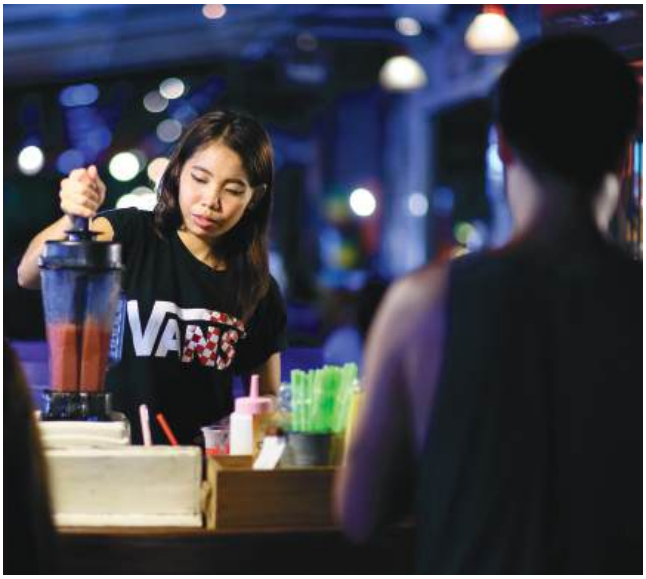

Photo: UN Women/Pornvit Visitoran

In the entertainment industry, bars and nightclubs often feature private spaces hidden from public view, which traffickers can use for exploitative activities.[28] Women in these environments may be subjected to labour trafficking, serving food and beverages, as well as forced to engage in commercial sex with clients.[29] The hidden, private areas further shield illicit activities, enabling traffickers to operate with impunity.

DOMESTIC WORK

Women and girls represent 87 per cent of the victims of domestic servitude.[30] Women migrant domestic workers operate in high-risk workplaces in private homes, which are isolated and informal, lacking access to grievance mechanisms, solidarity networks and community and public services. Living with employers is a key risk factor for the trafficking of women migrant domestic workers, as it can create dependency and can lead to isolation or complete segregation.[31] Globally, the domestic work sector is reportedly the least regulated.[32] Despite the high prevalence of forced labour exploitation, labour inspections are absent in the domestic work sector.[33]

In examining the nature of trafficking for domestic servitude, the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime found that while all forms of trafficking involve significant physical and psychological violence, analysis of court cases and existing literature indicates that women in domestic servitude endure particularly severe sexual, physical and psychological abuse. This violence often includes harassment, psychological manipulation, sexual assault and rape perpetrated by male household members.[34] Data from the International Organization for Migration's Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative reveals that some 15 per cent of victims trafficked for domestic servitude experience sexual abuse. This rate is considerably higher than in other sectors, such as manufacturing (6 per cent), agriculture (3 per cent) and construction (1 per cent).[35] Moreover, women migrant domestic workers and the organizations that represent them have reported severe violence in their workplaces, including cases of murder,[36] while studies have found cases of severe depression, hopelessness and helplessness, resulting in some migrant women committing suicide.[37]

The sector is also characterized by significant power imbalances between employers and women migrant domestic workers, particularly in tied visa systems that link workers' legal status and residency to single employers and limit workers' freedom of mobility—restricting their ability to change employers or leave abusive situations. This situation systematically traps women migrant domestic workers in situations of dependency and heightens their risk of trafficking in persons.[38]

Women migrant domestic workers are often excluded from labour law coverage and benefits, resulting in low wages and poor working conditions. They often experience discrimination, are denied decent working hours and lack access to social security benefits.[39] This is due in part to the low value assigned to domestic work, rooted in discriminatory gender and racial norms that underpay and undervalue women's work across economies and societies.

Legal and social barriers make it difficult for workers to organize and seek justice. Isolation, fear of retaliation and deportation, and lack of time, freedom of movement and legal frameworks for migrant domestic workers to form or join unions: all are obstacles to collective organizing and seeking help. In addition, mistrust of the legal system, lack of formal accountability mechanisms and criminalization of victims creates a culture of impunity, further entrenching exploitation and abuse.[40]

Photo: UN Women/Pornvit Visitoran

Yet, women migrant domestic workers have made impressive strides in organizing worldwide, building on international solidarity and advocacy to form a global union—the International Domestic Workers Federation—made up of national union affiliates from around the world. Notably, domestic workers successfully advocated for the adoption of the International Labour Organization Domestic Workers Convention (C189), a significant victory that established international labour standards for domestic workers, ensuring protections like minimum wages, social security and safe working conditions. However, challenges remain in securing government ratification and implementation of C189 for workers to benefit from these standards and protections: only 40 countries have ratified C189 as of 11 August 2025.

AGRICULTURE AND FARMING

Systemic discrimination persists in the agriculture sector on grounds of gender, race, ethnicity and migration status, rooted in histories of exploitation of peasant communities, Indigenous peoples, tribes and castes. Consequently, the global agricultural workforce reflects this discrimination and segmentation along gender, race and class lines, compounded by a lack of labour rights and protections.[41]

The agriculture sector poses a significant risk of trafficking in persons, especially for migrant workers recruited with seasonal or temporary visas.[42] Women and girls represent somewhere between 25 to 50 per cent of trafficking victims working in this sector.[43] Despite the stable demand for workers in the agriculture sector, there are high rates of informality with 93.6 per cent of workers operating informally,[44] relying largely on temporary and seasonal visa schemes. Workers have little recourse, in part due to fear that their future opportunities to obtain work visas could be jeopardized[45] and in part due to the limited labour protections and lack of access to reporting mechanisms.[46]

Freedom of association and collective bargaining are restricted in the agriculture sector, often because of geographic remoteness, which impedes the ability of workers to unionize and report abuse.[47] Women migrant agricultural workers are at risk of a multitude of rights abuses, from lacking access to drinking water, sanitation facilities and health services to sexual violence and harassment.[48] Despite a growing awareness of the risks of exploitation and trafficking in this sector, there remains insufficient monitoring of recruiters, sponsors and employers; limited inspections of farms and agricultural enterprises; and inadequate human and financial resources to prevent and identify instances of trafficking in persons.[49]

GARMENT AND TEXTILE INDUSTRIES

Precarious migration status, high prevalence of women workers, poor working conditions, low wages, debt and employer control combine to make women migrant workers in the garment and textile sector at high risk of trafficking. Women make up nearly 60 per cent of the garment and textile workforce globally,[50] and while the number of women migrant workers is not well documented, estimates suggest that hundreds of thousands are employed across the industry.[51]

Work in the garment and textile industry tends to be exploitative, with women typically working in the lower tiers of supply chains where wages are lowest,[52] determined by a rate of individual pieces made, and a pervasive lack of benefits and social protection.[53] Risks of trafficking span supply chains and stages of production: growing raw materials, processing, weaving and manufacturing.[54] Moreover, discrimination on the basis of gender and migration status exacerbates the risks faced by women migrant workers in the sector, who earn less than their male and non-migrant counterparts and are subjected to abuse, including sexual harassment and invasive medical checks such as pregnancy and HIV testing.[55]

Women migrant workers in the garment industry are trapped in a cycle of financial instability that makes them susceptible to exploitation and trafficking in persons. Many incur significant debt to secure legal documentation

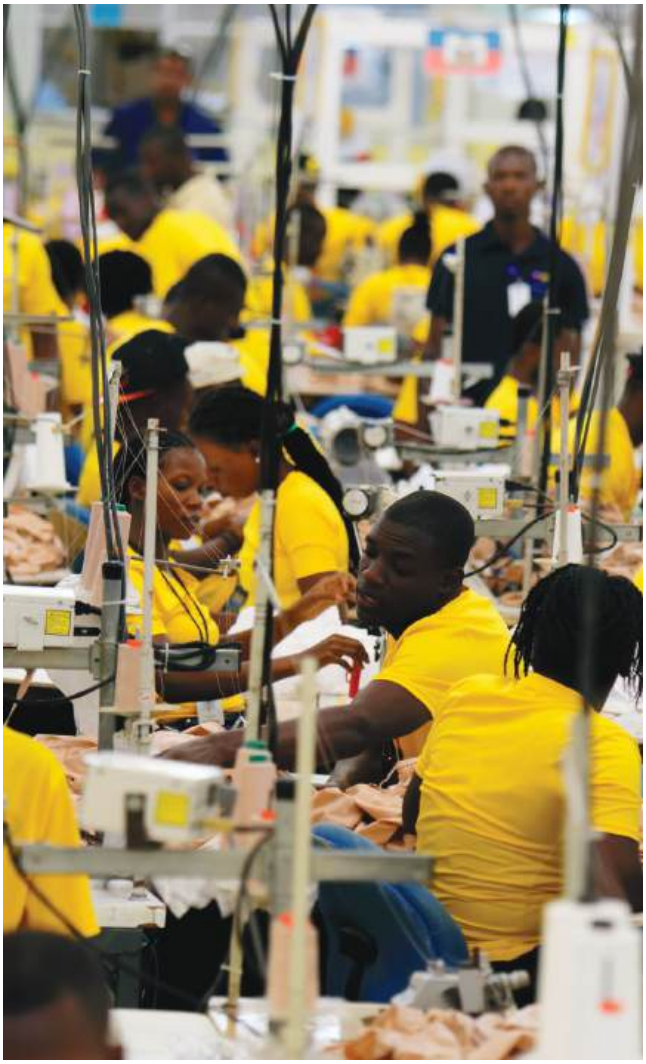

Photo: ILO/Marcel Crozet

and cover recruitment costs, only to have their already low wages reduced through deductions for food and accommodation, often without transparency. They are paid below the minimum wage and subjected to piece-rate pay, whereby they are paid based on the amount of work completed as opposed to an hourly wage or salary. During peak periods, they work excessively long hours to meet production targets, frequently without overtime compensation, while in slow periods, they may have no piece-rate work and no pay at all. This insecurity keeps them struggling to repay their debts, deepening their vulnerability and keeping them in a cycle of exploitation.[56]

The power dynamics in the garment and textile industry are especially complex and exploitative. Women migrant workers in global garment supply chains are frequently from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, with limited access to education, resources and livelihood opportunities. They face high levels of exploitation and forced labour, yet most report being unable to leave due to a lack of alternative livelihoods.[57] Many women migrant workers are employed on temporary work permits that are tied to their employers, restricting their freedom of movement and giving employers the power to threaten their deportation or not renew their permits. Garment workers frequently lack awareness of their rights or the available complaint processes to seek redress.[58]

BOX 2:

Poorly regulated technology and digital infrastructure

Traffickers are increasingly integrating technology in their recruitment operations and across all stages of trafficking. Technology plays a significant role in facilitating trafficking in persons for forced labour and for sexual exploitation through online platforms for recruitment in sectors where women migrant workers are prominent such as domestic work, hospitality and agriculture.[59] Traffickers leverage job listings and social media to deceive victims with false opportunities for jobs to support their families and to gather sensitive information that they later use to coerce, exploit, control and leverage profits from them.[60] Economically disadvantaged women, including migrants, are reported at the highest risk of being targeted online by traffickers.[61] Online operations reduce risks for traffickers by allowing them to hide content, activities and their identities.[62] Using digital tools enables traffickers to work across borders and with greater scale and speed in their operations. With the rise of cryptocurrencies, traffickers can easily manage their illicit financial transactions within a largely unregulated digital economy.[63]

Photo: UN Women/Piyavit Thongsa-Ard

IV. Recommendations

Trafficking in persons is a crime under international law and is recognized as gender-based violence. As part of the state's duty to prevent and address trafficking in persons, its policies and laws must align with existing international human rights frameworks. The following recommendations can contribute to protecting women migrant workers in poorly regulated sectors from trafficking in persons, based on human rights, the principle of non-discrimination and a gender-responsive approach.[64] To implement the recommendations, efforts should be made to ensure the meaningful participation of women migrant workers, migrant women survivors of trafficking and the organizations that represent them.

1. DEVELOP GENDER-RESPONSIVE MIGRATION GOVERNANCE BASED ON HUMAN RIGHTS:

- ✓ Promote good labour migration governance, including through gender-responsive bilateral labour migration agreements, expanding safe and regular migration routes, and regularizing migrants in irregular situations.
- ✓ Ensure migration guidelines and frameworks are gender-responsive, including by addressing the unique risks, challenges and situations of vulnerability faced by women at all stages of migration.
- ✓ Safeguard the human and labour rights of all migrant women, regardless of migration status, in accordance with international standards.
- ✓ Routinely conduct impact assessments on the implementation, enforcement and effectiveness of migration laws and policies. Address issues expediently that lead to situations of vulnerability in regular migration systems, including recruitment systems and temporary or seasonal visa schemes.
- ✓ Ensure recruiters and employers utilizing temporary or seasonal visa schemes comply with human and labour rights.
- ✓ Eliminate visa systems that restrict workers to a single employer or sector, allowing workers the freedom to change employers and access their right to freedom of movement.
- ✓ Strengthen regulation of recruitment intermediaries in alignment with ILO general principles and operational guidelines, including:
  - ➤ ILO Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181).
  - ➤ General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment and Definition of Recruitment Fees and Related Costs (2016).
  - ➤ ILO Forced Labour Protocol (P029) (2014) and Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29).
- ✓ To inform migration governance, collect, analyse and disseminate sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics on the risks of trafficking for women travelling through both regular and irregular migration corridors.
- ✓ Establish firewalls between service provision and immigration enforcement, upholding the principle of non-punishment of survivors of trafficking in persons.
- ✓ Ensure effective implementation of the principle of non-discrimination in all anti-trafficking actions, and in prevention, protection and accountability measures.

2. DEVELOP COMPREHENSIVE LEGAL FRAMEWORKS THAT ENSURE DECENT WORK AND SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR WOMEN MIGRANT WORKERS:

- ✓ Ensure that labour laws and policies provide equal treatment to migrant workers across all employment aspects, closing any protection gaps within laws that exclude migrants, and that they are consistent with international human rights standards.
- ✓ Promote the formalization of informal work in accordance with ILO Recommendation No. 204 (2015), which recommends strengthening decent work and social protections to the informal sector and workers. Ratify the relevant ILO Conventions and implement ILO C189 – Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) and C177 in national policies.
- ✓ Routinely conduct impact assessments on the implementation, enforcement and effectiveness of labour laws and policies, particularly gendered and racialized labour sectors, to ensure they effectively protect women migrant workers.
- ✓ Strengthen inspections, oversight and monitoring of precarious sectors at heightened risk of trafficking in persons, ensuring the enforcement of labour

laws through trained and well-resourced labour inspectorates, including their capacity to protect workers in isolated and remote locations.

3. STRENGTHEN SYSTEMS AND SERVICES TO PREVENT, PROTECT, PROSECUTE AND REMEDY TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS:

- ✓ Develop, implement and adequately resource evidence-based action plans to respond to and prevent trafficking in persons.
  - ➤ Work in partnership with relevant UN agencies and with the active participation of survivors of trafficking in the design and implementation of policy and programmes.[65]
- ✓ To inform such plans, collect, analyse and disseminate sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics on the risks of trafficking for women traveling through both regular and irregular migration corridors.
- ✓ Develop national guidelines and standard operating procedures to identify and respond to trafficking, including industry-specific approaches that prioritize economic sectors known to be high risk of trafficking in persons.
- ✓ Adopt legislative, regulatory and administrative actions to effectively implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and advance legally binding human rights due diligence and reporting obligations.
- ✓ Ensure proactive identification of victims of trafficking, providing trauma-informed and gender-responsive training to labour inspectorates, social workers, civil society organizations and healthcare providers to detect and address trafficking in persons.
- ✓ Enhance access to protection, justice and other remedies for women migrant workers who are survivors of trafficking in persons.
- ✓ Ensure a trauma-informed and gender-responsive approach is taken in identification, referrals and in effective investigations of trafficking.
- ✓ Ensure effective compensation for unpaid wages, wage theft, and access to free legal aid and interpretation services are provided.
- ✓ Ensure sanctions for crimes of trafficking are effective, proportionate and act to effectively deter trafficking offences.
- ✓ Strengthen the capacity of relevant embassies and consulates to address and assist victims of trafficking.
- ✓ Strengthen the accountability of employers and businesses, including recruitment intermediaries as well as technology-facilitated recruitment, through civil and criminal liability, effective investigations and international cooperation.
- ✓ Provide information, pre-departure trainings and activities in accessible formats for migrant women on safe migration, the risks of trafficking and how to report trafficking and seek help.
- ✓ Train migration officials, including law enforcement, border officials and immigration and asylum authorities, to detect trafficking victims and provide support, including referral of potential victims of trafficking to qualified service providers who provide culturally sensitive, survivor-centred services.
- ✓ Protect the human rights and dignity of survivors of trafficking, ensuring they are not criminalized or detained, or punished for unlawful acts that are a direct consequence of being trafficked.
- ✓ Provide permanent residence permits, pathways to citizenship and access to social protections for migrant women who are survivors of trafficking.
- ✓ Guarantee access to quality essential services for migrant women survivors of trafficking, ensuring these services are survivor-informed and culturally sensitive.

Endnotes

1 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). 2024. *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2024:* Men represent 23 per cent, girls represent 22 per cent and boys represent 16 per cent of detected victims of trafficking.

2 Ibid.

3 UNODC. 2022. *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022*.

4 International Labour Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Walk Free. 2022. *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage.*

5 United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). 2022. *Trafficking in women and girls: crises as a risk multiplier – Report of the Secretary-General*. 15 August. A/77/292.

6 UNGA. 2019. *Violence against women migrant workers: Report of the Secretary-General*. 26 July. A/74/235.

7 IOM. 2024. *World Migration Report 2024*; UNGA. 2022. *Trafficking in women and girls: crises as a risk multiplier – Report of the Secretary-General*. 15 August. A/77/292.

8 UNODC. 2020. *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020*.

9 Ibid.

10 UNGA. 2018. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences: Note by the Secretariat.* 27 July. A/HRC/39/52.

11 UNGA. 2022. *Trafficking in women and girls: crises as a risk multiplier – Report of the Secretary-General*. 15 August. A/77/292.

12 UNODC. 2024. *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2024*.

13 ILO, IOM and Walk Free. 2022. *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage*; UNODC. 2020. *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020*.

14 IOM. 2024. *World Migration Report 2024*.

15 UNGA. 2019. *Current and emerging forms of slavery: Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences*. 25 July. A/HRC/42/44. For a definition of the informal economy, see ILO. 2015. R204 – *Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation*, 2015 (No. 204), as well as ILO. 2002. Resolution concerning decent work and the informal economy.

16 UNGA. 2022. *Contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences: Note by the Secretary-General*. 14 July. A/77/163: para. 31–32.

17 Ibid.: para. 41; Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT). 2020. TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS FOR THE PURPOSE OF FORCED LABOUR. Issue Brief 09/2020; and UNODC. 2020. *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020*.

18 UN Women. 2024. From Insights to Action: Advancing the rights of Ethiopian migrant women domestic workers. Policy Brief. New York: UN Women; UNGA. 2018. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences: Note by the Secretariat*. 27 July. A/HRC/39/52: para 57.

19 UN Women. 2024. From Insights to Action: Advancing the rights of Ethiopian migrant women domestic workers. Policy Brief. New York: UN Women.

20 UNGA. 2018. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences: Note by the Secretariat*. 27 July. A/HRC/39/52: para 57; UNGA. 2022. *Trafficking in persons in the agriculture sector: human rights due diligence and sustainable development. Report of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, Siobhán Mullally*. 25 April. A/HRC/50/33: para. 15–18; UN Women. 2017. *At what cost? Women Migrant Workers, Remittances and Development.* Research Paper. January; and UN Women. 2016. *Women Migrant Workers' Journey through the Margins: Labour, migration and trafficking*. Research Paper. November.

21 UNODC. 2022. *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022*.

22 Ibid., also see UNODC. 2024. *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2024.*

23 UNODC. 2022. *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022*; UNODC. 2024. *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2024.*

24 The Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative (CTDC). Sector of labour exploitation: Hospitality.

25 Global Labor Justice-International Labor Rights Forum. 2023. *Hotel Workers' Rights in Development Finance: Realizing Performance Standard 2*; also see Focus on Labour Exploitation. 2021. *"To help workers, I would tell the government to..." Participatory Research with Workers in the UK Hospitality Sector*. Participatory Research Working Paper 2.

26 CTDC. Sector of labour exploitation: Hospitality.

27 Regarding concerns of child exploitation in the entertainment and the tourism industry, see UNGA. 2024. *Study on the sexual abuse and exploitation of children in the entertainment industry: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, Mama Fatima Singhateh*. 5 January, A/HRC/55/55 and UNGA. 2023. *Sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children: Note by the Secretary-General*. 10 July. A/78/137.

28 UNGA. 2024. *Study on the sexual abuse and exploitation of children in the entertainment industry: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, Mama Fatima Singhateh*. 5 January, A/HRC/55/55.

29 UNODC. 2022. *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022;* Polaris. 2017. *The typology of modern slavery: defining sex and labor trafficking in the United States.*

30 CTDC. Sector of labour exploitation: Domestic work.

31 UNODC. 2020. *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020*.

32 UNGA. 2022. *Contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences: Note by the Secretary-General*. 14 July. A/77/163.

33 See some of these concerns reflected in country visit reports of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, Siobhán Mullally, for example in UNGA. 2024. *Visit to Colombia*. 20 May. A/HRC/56/60/Add.1: para. 39 and 49. In particular, paragraph 49 welcomes the creation of a gender-responsive group within the Labour Inspectorate but also raises concerns about the intersection of discrimination on the grounds of gender, race and ethnicity and migration status, which has a direct impact in relation to the lack of investigations into allegations of trafficking in persons for purposes of forced labour in domestic work and

the limited protection of domestic workers from all forms of forced or compulsory labour.

34 UNODC. 2020. *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020*. See as well communications on allegations of violations in the context of domestic work to governments by the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children and others, for example to Oman in December 2022 and to Saudi Arabia in October 2021.

35 UNODC. 2020. *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020*.

36 WIEGO. 2020. *Violence and Informal Work*. Briefing Note. November.

37 UN Women. 2024. From Insights to Action: Advancing the rights of Ethiopian migrant women domestic workers. Policy Brief. New York: UN Women.

38 The communications cited in preceding references are also applicable here. Also see UNGA. 2017. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, on her mission to Kuwait*. 21 April. A/HRC/35/37/Add.1: para. 7.

39 UNGA. 2018. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences: Note by the Secretariat*. 27 July. A/HRC/39/52.

40 Ibid.

41 UNGA. 2023. Summary of the panel discussion on the negative impact of the legacies of colonialism on the enjoyment of human rights: Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. 1 June. A/HRC/54/4; J.F. Perea. 2011. "The echoes of slavery: Recognizing the racist origins of the agricultural and domestic worker exclusion from the National Labor Relations Act." ***Ohio St. LJ,*** 72: 95.

42 UNGA. 2022. *Trafficking in persons in the agriculture sector: human rights due diligence and sustainable development. Report of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, Siobhán Mullally*. 25 April. A/HRC/50/33; ILO, IOM and Walk Free. 2022. *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage*.

43 CTDC. Sector of labour exploitation: Agriculture; UNODC. 2020. *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020*.

44 UNGA. 2022. *Contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences: Note by the Secretary-General*. 14 July. A/77/163.

45 UNGA. 2022. *Trafficking in persons in the agriculture sector: human rights due diligence and sustainable development. Report of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, Siobhán Mullally*. 25 April. A/HRC/50/33: 6, para 18.

46 In this context, see the communication to Guatemala on the situation of workers in the palm oil sector by the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, in November 2020. AL OTH 25/2020 (Spanish); ILO, IOM and Walk Free. 2022. *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage*.

47 UNGA. 2024. Contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences: Note by the Secretary-General. 16 July. A/79/159.

48 UNGA. 2022. *Trafficking in persons in the agriculture sector: human rights due diligence and sustainable development. Report of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, Siobhán Mullally*. 25 April. A/HRC/50/33.

49 Ibid.; UNGA. 2022. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, Siobhán Mullally: Addressing the gender dimensions of trafficking in persons in the context of climate change, displacement and disaster risk reduction*. 15 July. A/77/170.

50 ILO. 2023. "How to achieve gender equality in global garment supply chains." InfoStory. March.

51 Clean Clothes Campaign. 2012. *False Promises: Migrant Workers in the Global Garment Industry – Discussion Paper*.

52 ILO. 2023. "How to achieve gender equality in global garment supply chains." InfoStory. March.

53 Walk Free. Stitched with Slavery in the Seams. Global Slavery Index / Spotlight.

54 Ibid.

55 Clean Clothes Campaign. 2012. *False Promises: Migrant Workers in the Global Garment Industry – Discussion Paper*.

56 Ibid.

57 G. LeBaron, P. Kyritsis, P. Polanco Leal and M. Marshall. 2021. *The Unequal Impacts of Covid-19 on Global Garment Supply Chains: Evidence from Ethiopia, Honduras, India, and Myanmar*. Sheffield: University of Sheffield.

58 Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW). 2019. *The lived experience of women migrant workers*. Bangkok: GAATW.

59 UNGA. 2023. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery including its causes and its consequences, Tomoya Obokata*. 12 July. A/78/161.

60 UNODC. 2021. "Good Use and Abuse: The Role of Technology in Human Trafficking." 14 October.

61 UNGA. 2023. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery including its causes and its consequences, Tomoya Obokata*. 12 July. A/78/161.

62 UNGA. 2022. *Trafficking in women and girls: crises as a risk multiplier – Report of the Secretary-General*. 15 August. A/77/292.

63 UNODC. 2021. "Good Use and Abuse: The Role of Technology in Human Trafficking." 14 October; UNGA. 2023. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery including its causes and its consequences, Tomoya Obokata*. 12 July. A/78/161.

64 For additional guidance, see UN Women. 2018. Policies and Practice: A Guide to Gender-Responsive Implementation of the Global Compact for Migration. In Brief. New York: UN Women.

65 For additional guidance, see UNGA. 2019. *Current and emerging forms of slavery: Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences*. 25 July. A/HRC/42/44.

SPECIAL PROCEDURES
UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

UN WOMEN

FOR ALL
WOMEN
AND GIRLS

Photo: UN Women/MR Hasan

This policy brief was written by Jessica Dalton with contributions from Inkeri von Hase and Michael Stewart-Evans (Economic Empowerment Section, UN Women), Siobhán Mullally (Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children) and Clara Pascual De Vargas (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights).

This publication was produced as part of the Making Migration Safe for Women project funded by the Federal Republic of Germany.

german
cooperation
DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT