



SI PRESIDENT
Maureen Maguire

SI PRESIDENT ELECT
Siew Yong Gnanalingam

SI TREASURER
Kathy King

SI DIRECTOR OF ADVOCACY
Leigh Ellwood Brown

GLOBAL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Deborah Thomas

The 7th edition of the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons (2022) has been rightfully described as capturing our world at a fragile tipping point. The report consisted of 11 points of interest that the authors wanted the public to be aware of as well discussions regarding what the global trends emerging during COVID 19 were as well as discussing profiles of victims, traffickers, trafficking organisations' forms of exploitation, trafficking flows, the criminal justice response to trafficking and overviews regarding every region regarding human trafficking.

1. To begin with for the first time, in 2020, the number of victims detected globally decreased ranged from a 50% reduction in East Asia and the Pacific to 12% reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa. According to the report the change in trends could be the result of three different factors affecting especially low- and medium- income countries during the pandemic: lower institutional capacity to detect victims, fewer opportunities for traffickers to operate due to Covid-19 preventive restrictions, and some trafficking forms moving to more hidden and less likely to be detected locations.¹ Based on the reports analysis, the experts believed that there was little evidence to suggest that the threat of this crime has diminished with the drop in detected victims, and many reasons to fear that Covid, crises, conflicts and the climate emergency are escalating trafficking risks.²

2. Trafficking for sexual exploitation was also less detected during the Pandemic. Many identified victims of sexual exploitation are often exploited in public venues, such as bars and clubs or outdoors. However, during the protective measures applied in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, sexual exploitation was reduced globally by 24% compared to 2019. According to the report, law enforcement and public services were under increasing strain during this time and coupled with pandemic-related restrictions on movement and business operations may have at least temporarily reduced some forms of trafficking, including trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and cross-border trafficking. The number of sexual exploitation cases may have also been reduced due to the closure of public spaces which would result in sexual exploitation being pushed into less visible and less safe locations and more concealed and harder to be detected. During 2020, only 11% of trafficking for sexual exploitation took place in outdoor public settings ;19% took place in either a legal or unofficial brothel, 23% took place in a bar or Sauna/Massage parlor and 22% took place in a hotel or private home.³

3. Upon reviewing adjudicated trafficking cases, this report also determined that most victims were actually rescuing themselves. Instead of being proactively identified they escaped exploitation by coming forward on their own. and reached out to the authorities on their own initiative. This constituted an alarming result for the authors of

¹ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp iii see also.

² UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp 7 see also pp 21.

³ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp iv-v see also pp 7, pp 21, pp 35.

this report, considering many victims of trafficking may not identify themselves as victims. Fewer cases were also initiated by law enforcement, members of the community and civil society. E.g., 41% was initiated by victim 28% by law enforcement 11% by community or strangers 10% by the victim's family and 9% by civil society and other institution.⁴

4. According to the report, a global slowdown in convictions had also accelerated during the Covid-19 pandemic. In the year 2020, a 27% reduction in the number of convictions was recorded globally compared to 2019; globally ranging from 56% in South Asia, 54% in Central America and Caribbean to 46% in South America and 18% in North Africa and the middle east. However, the number of convictions increased by 22% in Sub-Saharan Africa and 14% in Central and South-Eastern Europe.⁵ This drop in convictions for trafficking in persons, though, seems to be part of a broader phenomenon in all criminal justice efforts. Convictions for homicide and drug trafficking seemed to follow the same trends.⁶

5. There was also what was described as an “increased impunity” in home countries resulting in more victims being trafficked to more destinations. While countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and in South Asia were convicting fewer traffickers and detecting fewer victims when compared to the rest of the world, victims from these regions were also increasingly identified in a wider range of destination countries compared to victims from other regions.⁷

7. *“For predators and human traffickers, war is not a tragedy – it is an opportunity”*⁸ Previous UNODC research has shown that conflict settings increase the vulnerability of people to become victims of trafficking in persons. Conflicts increase the number of victims of trafficking exploited within and outside crisis areas. War and conflict continued to offer hunting grounds for traffickers in 2023. However, until recently, most conflicts were in Africa and the Middle East and, as a consequence, most of the victims resulting from conflicts were originating from and trafficked to countries in Africa and the Middle East.⁹

The Ukraine:

Prior to the escalation of conflict in 2022, Ukraine was already a significant origin of human trafficking. Analysis showed a relationship between the people forced to flee Ukraine in 2014 and 2015 as a result of the conflict in the eastern part of the country, and increased detection of trafficking in persons from Ukraine to Western and Central Europe in the following years Between 2017 and 2021 victims trafficked outside Ukraine

⁴ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp vi see also pp 18 and pp 68.

⁵ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp vii see also pp 64-67.

⁶ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp vii see also pp 64.

⁷ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp viii see also pp 18.

⁸ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp viii see also pp 52 citing the UN Secretary General in March of 2022.

⁹ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp ix see also pp 18.

were also detected in 40 countries in Central Europe, Southern Europe and Eastern Europe.

The current refugee emergency in Ukraine is the elevating risks of trafficking for the Ukrainian displaced population. The 2014 conflict in Ukraine quadrupled the number of Ukrainian victims detected in Western Europe in 2016. However, the number may now be greater. UNHCR has estimated 89.3 million people had been forcibly displaced at the end 2021. This includes people fleeing from conflicts, persecution and human rights violations including the Ukraine. At the time this report was created, UNCHR was already reporting about 5.6 million individual refugees from Ukraine recorded across Europe since 24 February and 7.1 million internally displaced in Ukraine; all of which could provide a fertile recruiting ground for traffickers.¹⁰

8. Climate change is increasing vulnerability to trafficking in persons by acting as a stress multiplier. In 2021, 23.7 million people were internally displaced by disasters, while many crossed borders to escape climate-induced poverty. While a systematic global analysis of the impact of climate change on trafficking in persons is missing, community level studies in different parts of the world point at weather induced disasters as root causes for trafficking in persons. The widespread and intensifying impacts of climate change are heightening vulnerabilities to trafficking in persons. Rising and shifting temperatures and weather patterns are disproportionately affecting poor communities relying on the primary economic sector, including agriculture and the extraction of natural resources. Economic hardship and other challenges put more people at direct risk of being trafficked while increasing the incentives for others to engage in trafficking activities. Over the last two decades, climate-related disasters have doubled in frequency, leading to loss of livelihoods and increasing displacement. In 2021 alone, more than 23.7 million people were displaced by such disasters. As regions of the world become increasingly uninhabitable, people on the move will face high risk of exploitation along migration routes. “Slow-onset climate change impacts” could force an estimated 216 million people to migrate within their own countries by 2050.¹¹

While understanding the impact of climate change on trafficking in persons still requires comprehensive research, some examples show how weather- induced natural disasters can expose communities reliant on fishing, farming and agriculture to higher risk of trafficking. This box provides an overview of emerging trends in a selected number of countries for which information was available.¹²

Typhoons in the Philippines

Cases of trafficking in persons increased in 2013, after Typhoon Haiyan struck the Philippines, causing approximately 6,300 deaths and displacing 4.4 million people.¹⁰⁴ The Eastern Visayas region was particularly affected. At the time, one in four migrant

¹⁰ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp ix and pp 55-56.

¹¹ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp x see also pp 18, pp 62-63.

¹² UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp 62.

workers employed in the area were already living at the poverty line. Many of the agricultural and fishing industries, which employ the most vulnerable segments of society in the Visayas, were destroyed. An estimated 21,000 families lost their livelihoods due to the damage. Between 2013 and 2015, national authorities recorded about 670 cases of trafficking in persons in the regions affected by the typhoon alone, and key informants in government and NGOs reported that these cases increased. More recently Typhoon Rai in 2021 caused displacement of more than 590,000 people in the Philippines. The International Labour Organisation estimated that 2.2 million workers were directly affected and became at immediate risk of exploitation.¹³

Cyclones and Storms in Bangladesh

Trafficking in persons has been commonly detected in the Sundarbans – the world’s largest contiguous mangrove forest. Situated at the border between India and Bangladesh, it is considered a hotspot for climate change-related catastrophes.¹⁴

In the Bangladesh Sundarbans, damage to property and crop failures during frequent floods and cyclones has pushed a large section of the population (43 per cent) below the national poverty line in 2014. Forced and debt-bonded labour has been documented in fisheries and factories in the region, which often employ children as part of their workforce. The prevalence of these exploitative practices show that traffickers take advantage of the economic need of the population who struggle to cope with reduced access to income-generating activities.¹⁵

The significant number of vulnerable individuals in this disaster-prone region allows traffickers to organise large recruitment campaigns. They operate as both private businesses and more complex criminal networks that traffic people internationally. Furthermore, those who migrate from disaster-affected areas to Dhaka or Kolkata in search of better living conditions can find themselves with no resources or social networks, making them vulnerable to be targeted by recruitment agents who trap them in exploitative bonded labour schemes.¹⁶

Droughts and Floods in Ghana

Droughts and floods in Ghana are forcing many to migrate, with cases of trafficking of children for forced marriage or labour exploitation being increasingly documented. Reports of trafficking have also been associated with the migratory movements of men and boys who relocate from north to central and southern parts of Ghana to find employment on farms or in mines in combination with labour intensive and unregulated industries.¹⁷

¹³ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp 62.

¹⁴ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp 62-63.

¹⁵ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp 63.

¹⁶ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp 63.

¹⁷ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp 63.

Women and children leaving farming communities devastated by droughts and floods in northern Ghana also become vulnerable to trafficking when they move to urban areas in the south. There, they may end up working as kayayie (porters), becoming fully dependent on their low-paid and commission-based jobs to meet basic needs such as food and accommodation. Intermediaries, or so-called “agents”, who recruited them may never pay them, meanwhile only increasing their debt. They are instead forced to work in difficult conditions as manual labourers or porters, becoming easy targets for traffickers who take advantage of their basic needs for food and shelter.¹⁸

Hurricanes and Rising Sea Levels in the Caribbean

The geographical location of the Caribbean islands enroute from South to North America, together with loss of employment opportunities due to intense tropical storms and cyclones, rising sea levels and biodiversity degradation, expose coast communities to the risk of being trafficked or engaging in trafficking activities. Those who have lost or experienced greatly diminishing returns on their fishing livelihoods and are unable or unwilling to leave have greater incentives to turn to trafficking and smuggling to generate income. Some of those who had worked in the fishing industry have resorted to using their boats to transport smuggled migrants and victims of trafficking for organised criminal groups, a phenomenon also observed in other similar settings.¹⁹

With their livelihoods, homes and health negatively affected, many in the region migrate to North America and Europe for better economic opportunities and may fall into the hands of traffickers on these dangerous journeys.²⁰

9. Boys and men account for a greater share of detected victims as new forms of exploitation emerge.

More male victims - both boys and men - have been detected in greater numbers over the past decade. Increasing proportions of identified victims have been trafficked for the purpose of forced criminality and mixed forms of exploitation. Notwithstanding the global reduction in detection, male victims make up the single profile to be increasingly detected, about a three per cent rise from 2019. At the same time, the share of detected victims in criminal activities and in mixed forms of trafficking has increased rapidly over the last five years.²¹

10. Woman and children suffer greater violence at the hands of traffickers.

Analysis of court cases shows that female victims are subjected to physical or extreme violence at the hands of traffickers at a rate three times higher than males, while children are subjected to physical or extreme violence at a rate almost two times higher than adults.²² E.g., Analysis of the case summaries collected by UNODC suggested that traffickers use more violence with women and child victims, especially girls. Female victims, of any age described in these cases, were three-times more likely to suffer

¹⁸ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp 63.

¹⁹ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp 63.

²⁰ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp 63.

²¹ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp xi.

²² UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp xii see also pp 18.

physical or extreme violence (including sexual violence) during trafficking than males. The same dataset showed that children (girls and boys) were 1.7 times more likely to suffer physical or extreme violence than adults (men and women), and girls were 1.5 times more likely to suffer violence than women. This held true in all regions of origin, regardless of the type of criminality involved or form of exploitation.²³

11. More highly organised traffickers exploit more victims, more violently and for longer periods of time

Traffickers' structure and level of organisation differ profoundly. Court case summaries reveal that organised criminal groups account for most detected victims and convicted offenders. Individual traffickers operating on their own may traffic a few victims each, but globally they may account for a significant number of victims. When larger, more structured criminal organisations get involved, they manage to traffic more people in a more violent manner and for longer periods of time.²⁴

12. Women are more likely than men to be convicted: Women investigated for trafficking in persons are significantly more likely to be convicted than men.²⁵

The report also addressed what the profile of victims were during 2020²⁶ as well as what forms of exploitation were being used.²⁷ Female victims continued to be the most detected among those trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Nearly two-thirds of detected victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation are women and another 27 per cent are girls.²⁸

The report also addressed evolving forms of trafficking including trafficking in forced labour and observed that, in terms of share, trafficking for forced labour accounted for 39 per cent of total victims detected in 2020, a bigger share than ever before seen.²⁹ As far as the sex of victims trafficked into forced labour, according to the cases collected by UNODC, female victims seemed to be largely trafficked for domestic servitude. Females were also trafficked for street selling, as well as to work in catering and in agriculture. In some areas the percentage of females in forced labour was high. In the Middle East and North Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, North and Central America between 40 and 50 per cent of the detected trafficking victims in forced labour were females.³⁰

Victims trafficked could also face other forms of exploitation which were mainly detected in mixed labour and sexual exploitation situations. This subset of victims was increasing in share worldwide. E.g., Whereas two per cent of all detected victims underwent mixed forced labour and sexual exploitation in 2018, ten per cent did in 2020. In addition, more than 21 per cent of the total trafficking victims detected in the

²³ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp 25.

²⁴ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp xiii, see also pp 18.

²⁵ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 E.g., pp 25-27, see also pp 58-60.

²⁶ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 E.g., pp 25-33.

²⁷ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp xiv.

²⁸ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp 26-33.

²⁹ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp 36.

³⁰ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp 36.

United Kingdom were victims of forced labour and sexual exploitation and two-thirds of whom were females and one-third male.³¹ The share of detected victims trafficked to be exploited for forced criminal activity had been increasing too, being overwhelmingly males, especially boys at 68 per cent.³²

Among the other forms of exploitation, exploitative begging accounted for about one per cent of the victims globally detected in 2020. According to the case summaries collected by UNODC since 2012, victims forced into begging can be adults with physical disabilities, children exploited by their own parents in connection with harmful social practices, homeless children with no parental care, or families in extreme poverty. So called sham marriages which is a type of trafficking has been detected in European Union countries. Other forms of trafficking for forced marriage concerns girls forced to marry in the context of harmful social practices. This has been reported in South-Eastern Europe, Africa and the Middle East. Finally, another form of trafficking for forced marriages involves young women traded to men for marriage, which mainly has been reported in South-East Asia.³³

Trafficking flows,³⁴ and profiles of traffickers³⁵ and trafficking organisations were also discussed. Of interest was that trafficking was mostly organised³⁶ with the exception that, more than other actors, individual traffickers were convicted for the sexual exploitation of children under the age of 14, including the production of child sexual abuse material.³⁷ Migrants, refugees, displaced people, and those in economic need were all at risk of being targeted by traffickers.³⁸

The report also described Cyberspace as being the Frontier for Trafficking and Counter Trafficking Efforts with a platform that included all types of human trafficking including organ trafficking. The COVID-19 pandemic recently provided a grim case study in how traffickers misuse technology at great scale and adapt strategies based on societal developments. Online recruitment, child grooming and exploitation were widely used by traffickers during the pandemic. According to OSCE and UN Women, trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation online, including sexual exploitation material, live streaming and Child Sexual Abuse Material, increased significantly during the pandemic as lockdown measures and economic instability resulted in increased vulnerability among women and children.³⁹

The end of this report dealt with the trends regarding human trafficking in every relevant region.⁴⁰

³¹ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp 37.

³² UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp 38-39.

³³ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp 39.

³⁴ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp 42-46.

³⁵ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp 58-60.

³⁶ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp 49-51.

³⁷ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp 50.

³⁸ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp 55-56.

³⁹ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp 70.

⁴⁰ UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 pp 76-154.