

Modern Slavery Issue Brief

January 2023

Addressing vulnerability to modern slavery in a growing tide of migration

Large-scale migration is one of the key global economic, political and security challenges of the twenty-first century, with multiple economic, social and humanitarian repercussions for migrants, their communities, origin countries and destination societies. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the total number of people residing outside their country of origin has grown by almost 85% in the last 30 years, reaching 281 million in 2021- of which 170 million are migrant workers who seek job opportunities abroad.¹ The estimated number of internal migrants (migrants inside of their country of origin) is even larger: 763 million people worldwide.² Additionally, the number of people forced to flee their homes due to environmental or human-made disasters (e.g., armed conflict, violence, persecution) reached 89.3 million in 2021,³ and continued to grow in 2022 to unprecedented levels after the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the onset of emergencies from Africa to Afghanistan and beyond.³ These figures imply that roughly every seventh inhabitant of the planet is a migrant or displaced person.ⁱⁱ

These large migratory flows - especially those across international borders - have led to the emergence of a multi-billion dollar "migration industry" that can be particularly lucrative for those willing to use physical violence, intimidation or deceit for exploitative purposes. Human trafficking, in particular, has become a highly

Key Findings and Recommendations

- Large-scale migration – domestically and across international borders - exposes millions of migrants to traffickers willing to use physical violence, intimidation or deceit for exploitative purposes.
- An even larger number of migrants become victims of modern slavery once they arrive at their destination, having left their homes voluntarily and often migrating through legal channels.
- Economic marginalisation, limited access to social and institutional support, prejudice against migrants, restrictive immigration policies and labour regulations that give undue control to employers and recruiters are key factors that render migrants vulnerable to modern slavery victimisation.
- Armed conflicts and natural disasters exacerbate migrants' risk of being exploited, acting as stress multipliers to other sources of vulnerability.
- The prevailing policy response of adopting stringent border controls and criminalising (illegal) migrants is incapable of tackling the migration-modern slavery nexus, and might render trafficking and exploitation worse.
- Addressing the structural causes underlying migration-related modern slavery is an important but long-term endeavour.
- However, a range of policy tools and programmatic interventions can contribute to help attenuate this issue in the short to medium run, including: reforming visa systems that put migrants at the mercy of employers and recruiters; separating labour enforcement from immigration control; strengthening identification and support systems for migrant victims of modern slavery; and implementing initiatives that promote safer migration such as skills partnerships and cash transfer programmes.
- These regulatory and policy measures, however, must be framed within and in accordance with broader public awareness programmes that address prejudice against migrants, as their success will ultimately depend on the support of migrants' employers, co-workers, peers and, more generally, of the citizens in the host societies.

ⁱ Almost 60% of these (53.2 million) were internally displaced, while the remaining 36.1 million were forced to move across international borders.

ⁱⁱ The IOM uses "migrant" as an umbrella term referring to any individual who moves away – temporarily or permanently - from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across international borders. More restrictive definitions distinguish between migrants and displaced persons - the latter concept encompassing only individuals forced to leave their homes and relocate (either across international borders or within a State) as a result of conflict, natural or human-made disasters. In this issue brief we generally follow the IOM's approach and denote all movements of persons away from their place of usual residence as migration; we only use the term "displaced persons" when referring specifically to individuals obliged to flee their habitual residence due to conflict, natural or human-made disasters.

lucrative business.ⁱⁱⁱ It is estimated that traffickers worldwide make estimated profits of more than 30 billion dollars annually, with migrants making up a significant share of the victims in most global regions.^{iv} An even larger number of migrants become victims of domestic, sexual or labour exploitation once they arrive at their destination, having left their homes voluntarily – e.g. due to the promise of attractive job opportunities – and often migrating through legal channels.

Extant research has underscored the particularly high vulnerability to modern slavery of migrants and displaced people. In this direction, statistical analyses have found that the number of migrants from a given region is positively and significantly correlated with the number of modern slavery victims from that area, after controlling for other relevant drivers of migration and modern slavery victimisation.⁵ In short, in a world with large economic disparities and closed borders, large migrant flows seem to be progressively associated with upsurges in the incidence of modern slavery.

In this issue brief, we survey the existing literature and available evidence discussing the connection between migration and modern slavery, examining the main structural factors underlying such connection while also considering the growing influence that armed conflict and climate change exert on the migration-modern slavery nexus. We then review the predominant approaches adopted by states aimed at tackling migration-related modern slavery, and explore alternative policy responses that have been promoted by international organisations, NGOs and civil society actors. We conclude by pointing to possible future steps policy-makers, practitioners and other relevant stakeholders could undertake to more effectively fight modern slavery among migrant populations.

It is important to emphasise that this issue brief focuses exclusively on the link between migratory flows and modern slavery, and makes no comment on the issue of migration as a whole, as wider political debates about border controls, policy, systems and net migration targets are outside the scope of our research. We recognise the increased political pressure from certain quarters when it comes to tighter immigration and border controls in many – especially high-income – receiving countries.

Migration and modern slavery: a look at the structural factors behind this relationship

Much of the literature exploring the underlying factors linking migration to modern slavery focus on economic conditions as the main causes “pushing” individuals to leave their homes in search for better opportunities, while simultaneously rendering them vulnerable to modern slavery victimisation in their destination regions or countries. As is well known, poverty, unemployment and lack of economic opportunities play a major role in explaining why most people migrate (whether legally or not). For individuals in deprived areas, emigration may be the only or most effective strategy to improve their economic opportunities, boost their income and achieve a better life for them or their children.

At the same time, poor economic conditions are also strongly correlated with modern slavery victimisation. Migrants leaving areas characterised by extreme poverty, high unemployment rates and deficient social protection schemes are disproportionately at risk of becoming victims of modern slavery: their wish to escape their dismal living conditions at home makes them more prone to take risks in the migration process, which can be easily exploited by criminal agents. Migrants from more economically disadvantaged areas also tend to be low-skilled and less educated. They are therefore less likely to be well informed about their migration and employment options in their host societies, and usually lack the qualifications and social capital needed to find formal, well-paid jobs. Consequently, they are more easily deceived and more likely to fall victims of modern slavery or targets of traffickers, as well as more inclined to consent to – or at least endure – hazardous or even exploitative working conditions.

Economic marginalisation – poverty, unemployment, lack of education, low skill levels – interacts with individuals’ socio-demographic characteristics (above all, gender and age), rendering different groups of migrants particularly vulnerable to specific types of exploitation. Extant research has underscored that modern slavery operates in highly gendered ways. Available estimates indicate that women and girls represent vast majority of victims of forced domestic labour and commercial sexual exploitation, while men are more likely to be

ⁱⁱⁱ Arguably the most widely accepted definition of human trafficking is contained in the Palermo Protocol (2000, Article 3, paragraph (a)). According to it, human trafficking denotes the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of people through force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting them for profit.

^{iv} According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 50,000 human trafficking victims were detected across 148 countries in 2018 (the latest available estimate). Migrants represent at least half of the detected victims in Europe, the Middle East, East Asia and the Pacific, and 25% in North America.

subject to state-sponsored forms of modern slavery as well as to labour exploitation in agriculture, construction, manufacturing and warehouse work. While existing statistics do not break down gender-specific forms of exploitation according to victims' migrant status, it seems likely that these gendered patterns also affect how male and female migrants are impacted by modern slavery.⁶

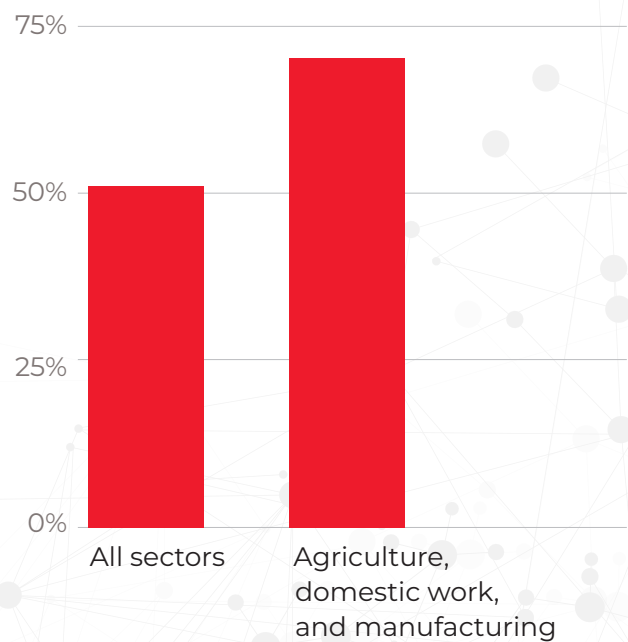
Migrants' individual vulnerabilities and contextual background offer only a partial and incomplete explanation of the connection between migration and modern slavery, though. A vast body of research has underscored the role of recruiters and recruitment agencies in the migration-modern slavery nexus. Recruitment agencies can take various forms and shapes, from individual recruiters – including migrants' acquaintances, neighbours or even family members – to loose networks of intermediaries, to multinational enterprises operating at a global scale, and are especially active in sectors where there is seasonal demand for workers (e.g., agriculture and domestic work), in situations where workers and employers do not speak a common language, and where workers need to travel long distances to reach their job site. International migrants are particularly likely to rely on recruitment agencies due to their lack of language skills and/or to deal with the complex visa procedures in place in some destination countries.

Although these agencies can play an important and valuable service matching the demand and supply of labour across geographies and sectors, there have been numerous reports of recruiters actively deceiving migrant workers regarding the nature of the job for which they are recruited, the living and working conditions involved, the travel conditions and their legal status in the destination countries. There is also ample evidence that unscrupulous recruitment agencies resort to coercive recruitment practices such as isolation, surveillance, withholding of money or identification documents and physical threats or violence in order to force migrants to do work they may not have originally consented to.⁷

Even if agencies and recruiters are not directly involved in trafficking criminal networks explicitly aimed at exploiting workers or are unaware of the vulnerable situations faced by migrants, the exorbitant recruitment fees they usually charge – which can amount to tens of thousands of dollars – exacerbate these migrants' risks of modern slavery victimisation. These recruitment fees typically cover travel expenses, passport and visa processing costs and medical exams, but also tend to include unspecified

service charges, much of which go directly to the recruiters. Migrants often need to get a wage advance or take on substantial debt to cover the fees (with interest rates as high as 80% annually), sometimes using family assets (e.g., homes, lands) as collateral. Hence, failure to repay these loans can have severe personal and social consequences for the migrants, who may be forced to accept difficult or exploitative labour conditions in order to be able to honour their debts and are often unable to freely leave their job until the debt is paid in full. As a result, recruitment fees frequently leave workers in situations of debt or bonded labour: According to the ILO, 51% of workers in situations of forced labour experience debt bondage; this proportion reaches 70% among workers in sectors with "high risk" of modern slavery prevalence like agriculture, domestic work and manufacturing.⁸ Indebted workers are also less likely to complain or report abuses in their workplace due to the risk of termination and similar repercussions that may affect their ability to pay their debts.

Percentage of victims of forced labour experiencing debt bondage



Source: Own elaboration based on data from Fair Labor Association (2019) and ILO (2022).

The characteristics of migrants' destination and the sectors of activity in which migrants are more likely to be employed affect their likelihood of falling victims of modern slavery as well, especially among international migrants. Labour shortages in middle and high income economies (associated in turn with low fertility rates, longer life expectancies, and growing tax and social security

burdens); the competitive pressure to lower labour costs imposed by our globalised economy – in particular in sectors like agriculture, catering, construction, the service industry and domestic work; and the relative paucity of regular migration opportunities in a world of increasingly closed borders, create a market for illegal migrant workers as well as incentives for exploitative employers, traffickers and criminal organisations to engage in the type of exploitative practices comprehended within modern slavery.

In this direction, restrictive immigration policies have been identified as major causes of vulnerability to modern slavery among international migrants, especially among those with lower skills, who are less likely to meet the requirements of legal migration pathways. Undocumented migrants – who do not have permission to work or stay in their destination country – exhibit higher vulnerability to modern slavery than those who are documented. These migrants are typically forced to move and find work through irregular channels, are excluded from existing systems of labour protection or organised labour, and have limited – if any – access to legal and law enforcement systems that might otherwise protect them. Their lack of access to social networks in the host societies and the fact that they cannot legally resort to formalised institutions like trade unions, associations or guilds leaves them particularly vulnerable to exploitation and renders them completely dependent on their employers. Additionally, their fears of being reported to the authorities – and thus detained and/or deported – makes it easier for employers and traffickers to keep them under exploitative conditions.

Even among documented migrants, restrictive immigration schemes that condition the residence status of an immigrant to her continued employment with a particular sponsor and similar mechanisms that give undue control to employers and recruiters also increase the risk of exploitation. These labour migration visa schemes put “legal” migrants at the – economic and legal – mercy of employers and recruiters, leaving them with no bargaining power to demand the respect of their labour rights even when formally entitled to such protection and potentially trapping them into exploitative conditions, often amounting to forced

labour or servitude. Available evidence indicates that it is not uncommon for migrant domestic workers under “tied visas” to have their passports confiscated, to be prevented from leaving the place of employment unaccompanied, and in some cases to suffer physical, psychological or even sexual abuse.⁹ The Kafala system for low skilled migrant workers applied in some of Gulf and Middle Eastern countries is frequently mentioned as an example of such coercive regimes, particularly in view of the public attention received by cases of labour exploitation among foreign nationals employed to work on 2022 World Cup projects.^v However, temporary labour migration policies that prevent migrant workers from freely circulating in the labour market and give employers the status of de facto enforcers of migration controls are quite widespread among migrant-receiving economies like Australia, Israel and – to some extent – the UK,^{vi} among others.

Racism, xenophobia and prejudice against migrants in host societies can also exacerbate their vulnerability to modern slavery and “legitimise” the mistreatment and exploitation of migrant workers. Migrants from certain ethnic or religious minorities and those coming from impoverished or “backward” regions are often not perceived as “equals” by employers, and deep-set societal norms of racial discrimination make it almost “permissible” for them to be subject to abuses that would not be tolerated if directed to local workers.¹⁰

Systematic discrimination against migrants may also be structurally built into local laws and policies or limit their access to legal and law enforcement systems that otherwise could protect them. Prior research has shown that xenophobia can lead to the passage of discriminatory laws and inaction on modern slavery. Discriminatory practices may also be reflected in how existing laws are implemented: studies have shown that when members of law enforcement or law-making bodies are prejudiced against migrants or against workers in general, they are less likely to protect them and less willing to address their exploitation.¹¹

These risks are further compounded when the criminal justice system in the destination countries is ill-equipped or ill-suited to fighting modern slavery. In countries with

v Although Qatar claims to have officially abolished the Kafala system, critics argue that the reforms have been in practice rather minor and poorly implemented, and that the situation of migrant workers remains essentially unchanged in practice.

vi The visa system for migrant domestic workers introduced in the UK in 2012 provided overseas migrants with a six-month, non-renewable right to stay, and precluded them from changing employers. Some modifications have been introduced in this system since 2016, including the possibility for overseas domestic workers to change employers – but only to another job as a domestic worker in a private household – if they do not stay longer than 6 months.

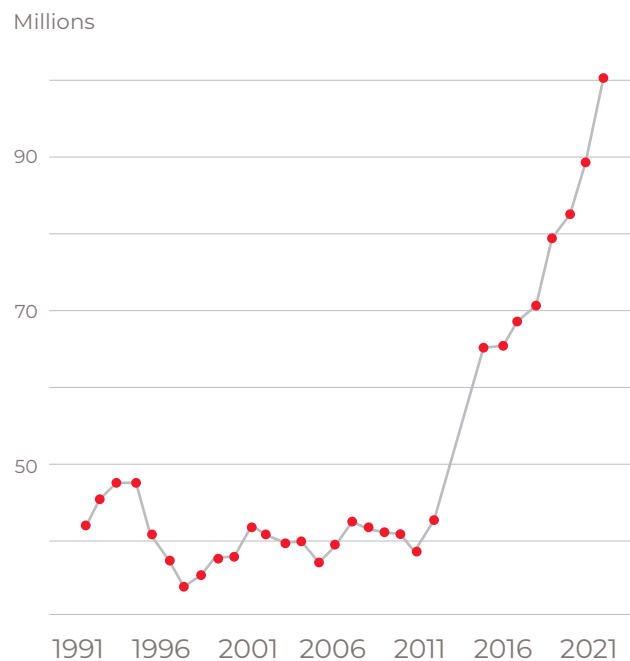
weak, unenforced or no laws against modern slavery and minimal regulation of recruitment agencies, the likelihood of catching and punishing modern slavery offenders is markedly low, rendering these activities less risky and more profitable for exploiters. Even when protective mechanisms against modern slavery do formally exist, the absence of well-defined guidance regarding which legal framework should be used to punish recruiters (i.e., anti-trafficking laws, criminal legislation, labour laws or provisions concerning recruitment-related abuses), coupled with lack of oversight, disincentives for victims to self-identify out of fear of criminalisation or deportation, and the fact that modern slavery is a low priority for some legal and enforcement systems vis-à-vis immigration control, leave gaps that can be actively leveraged by recruiters and employers.

Conflict, Climate Change and Displacement: new drivers of migration-related modern slavery

Besides these structural determinants of migration, political breakdown or socio-economic dislocations associated with armed conflicts and natural disasters play an increasing role in explaining the displacement of people within and across countries. Although these are hardly new phenomena, forced displacement of people worldwide as a result of conflict and environmental degradation has reached unprecedented levels, with the total number of internally and externally displaced people surpassing 100 million in 2022. The war in Ukraine, for instance, has sparked the fastest-growing refugee crisis in Europe since World War II,¹² and climate- and weather-related disasters have led to more than 30 million displaced people in many parts of the world (including China, the Philippines, Bangladesh, India, the US and Haiti) over the last two years.¹³

Forced displacements of people typically take place against a breakdown of law and order, loss of livelihood, major disruption to infrastructure and support systems, and an overall uncertainty among those fleeing that can create and magnify opportunities for modern slavery exploitation. Evacuated from their communities, isolated from family members and cut off from their traditional support networks, forced migrants and internally displaced people have limited options of earning sustainable livelihoods in their new destinations and struggle to meet their basic needs, thus becoming at risk of falling victims of modern slavery.

Number of forcibly displaced people worldwide



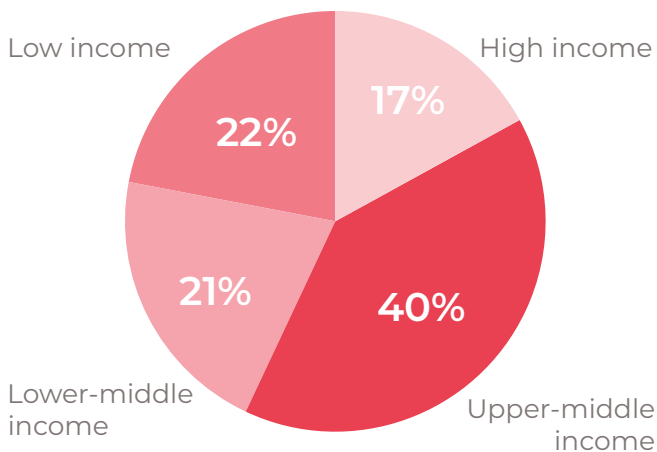
Source: Own elaboration based on data UN Refugee Agency (2022).

These conditions act as stress multipliers to other socio-economic and contextual drivers of modern slavery, exacerbating forced migrants' exposure to exploitation. As an illustration, Anti-Slavery international reports that, following annual flooding in north-east India, women and girls – groups that we noted above are especially susceptible to modern slavery victimisation - are commonly forced into child slavery or forced marriage to make ends meet.¹⁴ Similarly, there are concerns that the war in Ukraine will lead to increases in sex trafficking and exploitation among displaced women and children, who constitute 90% of the refugee population.¹⁵ Forced displacements "increase the desperation of already marginalised groups", and these desperate groups become easy targets for traffickers and recruiters.¹⁶

The vulnerability of displaced populations to modern slavery is further compounded by the fact that almost half (43%) of forcibly displaced people are hosted by low- and lower-middle income nations,¹⁷ which typically have limited state capacity to deal with the humanitarian, economic and legal consequences of massive inflows of immigrants fleeing conflict-torn areas or regions undergoing severe environmental degradation. However, high- and middle-income nations hosting refugees from war-torn areas or regions facing environmental disasters are not immune to these problems either. As an example, major concerns have been raised about the design and

implementation of the Ukraine-specific visa schemes in the UK. According to some sources, the confusion and long waiting times associated with the processing of visa applications propel people into dangerous situations or to seek alternative entry routes, all of which may intensify their risks of being exploited and/or trafficked.¹⁸

Destination countries of forcibly displaced people



Source: Own elaboration based on data UN Refugee Agency (2022).

Despite growing awareness about the relationship between conflict- and climate-related migration and modern slavery, the nexus between these phenomena remains under-studied and subject to little rigorous empirical research. More research is therefore needed to identify and more accurately estimate the nature and extent of the relationship between conflict- and environmentally-driven migration and modern slavery, as well as to formulate adequate policy responses. We will explore these issues in more detail in the following issue brief.

Policy responses to migration-related modern slavery

State responses to the growing prevalence of “migration-related modern slavery” have predominantly focused on the migration aspect of this relationship, and have typically consisted of the adoption of harsher laws aimed at controlling and restricting immigration. Trafficking and modern slavery in this context have been framed as threats to state security, with the emphasis placed on the criminalisation and deportation of perpetrators and/or survivors, prioritising national interests of keeping

migration numbers down over the interests of victims of these crimes.¹⁹ In the UK, for instance, some authors argue that the Government continuously invokes security concerns to excuse delays in providing accommodation, support and legal solutions for refugees and/or forced migrants arriving in the country who might be at risk of modern slavery victimisation.²⁰

This security-centred approach is in conflict with the UN Trafficking Protocol, with legislation guaranteeing the protection of modern slavery victims, and with international and domestic standards that protects the rights of non-citizens. Moreover, it fails to address the root causes of the migration-modern slavery link, and as a result is ultimately ineffective in tackling this phenomenon. In fact, this strategy arguably aggravates migrants’ risk of victimisation and the prevalence of modern slavery among migrant populations, pushing immigrants into illegality and fostering the emergence of clandestine and/or illegal migration industries. On the one hand, tighter border controls, coercive labour migration regimes and – more generally – higher barriers to safe and legal migration enhance the allure of illegal migration, allowing “shadow migration industries” offering services such as the provision of false documents, cross-border smuggling or work procurement abroad to thrive. At the same time, the trend towards criminalisation and control discourage migrants from cooperating with or reporting any abuses suffered to border or law enforcement authorities out of fear of being deported or facing other legal consequences in the receiving countries,^{vii} a situation that unscrupulous employers or traffickers can take advantage of to force these migrants to work for endless hours with no or little pay, in dangerous circumstances, and with minimum safety conditions. Both aspects therefore reinforce migrants’ vulnerability to modern slavery and the opportunities for criminal organisations to exploit such vulnerabilities, especially since the risks of prosecution and arrest in modern slavery cases remain relatively low vis-à-vis other types of crimes.

In sum, traditional policies and interventions adopting a state-security and migration-centric perspective have proven to be largely unable to address the root causes and risks underlying the connection between migration and modern slavery. As a result, they have also been ultimately ineffective in the fight against both migration and modern slavery. Moreover, some scholars argue that

^{vii} Of course, there are additional reasons why migrants subject to modern slavery abuses and exploitation might be unwilling to cooperate with immigration or law enforcement authorities, including fear or retaliation from traffickers and their unwillingness to disclose their experiences due to trauma or shame.

moderate expansions in legal migration opportunities – e.g., through the relaxation of immigration restrictions or the creation of guest worker programmes – are by now insufficient to solve this problem given the accumulated magnitude of global migration pressures.²¹

In view of the failure of state-led policy responses, international organisations, donor agencies and civil society organisations are espousing alternative programmatic interventions aimed at providing migrants with career development opportunities and widening the range of livelihood options available to them, both in their origin and destination countries. An example of this type of initiative is the Global Skills Partnership (GSP), a bilateral labour migration agreement between origin and destination countries proposed by the Center for Global Development as a way to link skill formation and skilled migration. The destination country agrees to provide technology and finance to train potential migrants with targeted skills in their country of origin, and receives migrants with precisely the skills they need to integrate and contribute upon arrival. The country of origin agrees to provide that training and receives support for the training of non-migrants too, thereby helping to increase its human capital and curb “brain drain”.²² The GSP model is currently being implemented by Belgium in North Africa within the ICT sector; by Australia and New Zealand in the Pacific Islands within the hospitality sector; by Germany around the world within the construction and engineering sector; and by the UK in sub-Saharan Africa within the healthcare sector. Building on these successful experiences, the ILO, IOM and UNESCO have launched the Global Skills Partnership on Migration in 2018, working alongside employer and labour organisations to apply the principles and goals behind the GSP programme at a global scale.

Cash transfers or micro-finance schemes have also been proposed – sometimes alongside skills development programmes, sometimes as stand-alone interventions – as ways to prevent distress migration motivated by acute economic necessity, which, as noted above, is strongly correlated with the likelihood of modern slavery victimisation. In this direction, Innovations for Poverty Action has found that small cash incentives or interest-free loans can help mitigate some of the risks associated with migrating.²³ This includes enabling a larger proportion of friends and family from the home village to migrate together, allowing the migrants to bring their safety net along with them. However, while these approaches are promising, they are still in early phases, and there is limited evidence regarding their

ability to effectively “break the link” between migration and modern slavery.

Another example of a potentially fruitful initiative to fight modern slavery among migrants is the fair recruitment strategy led by the International Labour Organization (ILO).²⁴ Over the past 5 years, the ILO has been working alongside employers, labour organisations and governments to promote fair recruitment laws and practices, and curb abuses by recruiters and labour intermediaries through licensing schemes, regulation of recruitment networks and verification of the legitimacy of overseas recruitment agencies. Again, data on the effectiveness of this ILO initiative is still limited and findings therefore inconclusive. Critics argue that, by concentrating on recruitment agencies and gangmasters, it neglects the important role played by informal familiar, social and migrant networks as local intermediaries between migrant workers and employers. As an illustration, data on migrant workers subject to exploitation in the European Union suggests that more than half of them were recruited through personal networks of friends, acquaintances and family members.²⁵

Moving Forward

Immigration control and border security are increasingly at the centre of citizens’ demands in many high income countries. Political office-holders are prompted to adopt such deterrent measures due to growing public support for tighter borders. However, governments, policy-makers and law enforcement authorities must come to terms with the fact that, in a context of growing migration flows and increasing supply of migrants willing to leave their homes to escape poverty, famine, wars and natural disasters, the prevailing approach of adopting more stringent border controls and criminalising (illegal) migrants is – at best – incapable of tackling the “migration-modern slavery nexus”, and might in fact render trafficking and exploitation worse.

Addressing the key socio-economic and contextual factors underlying migration-related modern slavery (e.g., poverty, lack of education and employment opportunities in migrants’ origin countries, gender inequality) is a daunting and definitely long-term endeavour. However, government authorities, international organisations and NGOs have at their disposal a range of policy tools and programmatic interventions that can attenuate modern slavery victimisation among marginalised and vulnerable migrants in the short to medium run.

In this direction, work visas that tie overseas workers to specific employers, and immigration policies that condition residence permits to the existence of an employment contract are a fundamental source of vulnerability for migrants. The introduction of work permits allowing overseas workers to switch employers and residence permits that are not automatically terminated if workers lose their job can help reduce migrant workers' vulnerability to exploitation. Some European countries like Ireland and the UK have already taken steps in this direction.

Similarly, a lack of effective regulation of recruitment agencies, and low barriers to entry into the businesses, allow unscrupulous companies to - directly or indirectly - profit from the exploitation of migrant workers. In the last few years, some - mostly origin - countries have increasingly adopted legislation aimed at banning recruitment fees and monitoring or regulating the activity of recruitment agencies. However, most high income nations are yet to adopt legislation limiting or banning recruitment fees,²⁶ arguably the most pernicious practice affecting migrant workers.

Available evidence also indicates that irregular migrants are more likely to become victims of modern slavery in their destination country than documented migrants. In order to ensure that irregular migrants can safely report the abuses they are subject to regardless of immigration status, governments must separate labour market and immigration enforcement activity. These two functions are currently "conflated" in many destination countries, where law enforcement authorities are often being tasked with two separate - and often conflicting - responsibilities: the removal and deportation of the undocumented persons, on the one hand, and the identification and rescue of modern slavery victims, on the other.

To address this issue, countries like Spain and Belgium have created specialised police units experienced in trafficking and modern slavery. Compared to "regular" police and migration authorities, these specialised police forces are more willing to treat irregular migrants who have been subjected to exploitation as crime victims, rather than as criminals. Irregular migrants, in turn, have been shown to be more likely to cooperate with these special police forces than with other authorities.

The success of this experience also points to the importance of setting up specialised support systems

for migrant victims of modern slavery and training law enforcement authorities - but also labour inspectors, immigration officers and consular staff - in victim assistance and protection. Creating opportunities for victims and authorities to interact informally and build trust, and involving migrants' informal networks - such as friends, relatives, co-workers, acquaintances and migrant communities - can play an important part in helping migrants engage with existing support systems, making it easier for them to leave their exploitative situations and aiding authorities in the identification and prosecution of perpetrators.

Programmatic interventions championed by international organisations, NGOs and private actors like skill development partnerships, cash transfer and micro-finance programmes, and ethical recruitment initiatives, can also help tackle the migration-modern slavery nexus. While these approaches are still in their infancy, they can contribute to addressing some of the fundamental sources of vulnerability faced by migrants. Additionally, non-state actors could also play a role in networking and facilitating the organising of migrants in high risk sectors.

These initiatives, however, can only complement, not substitute, state-led efforts in this area. If we are to address modern slavery victimisation amongst a growing tide of marginalised and vulnerable migrants, governments must take a leading role in tackling the migration-modern slavery nexus while simultaneously meeting the citizenry's demand for immigration control and border security. This will require authorities to make use - and possibly refine - the policy tools already at their disposal, including: revising visa requirements that create vulnerability; prohibiting recruitment fees in domestic legislation and ensuring recruitment agencies are not complicit in or directly benefitting from abusive practices; disentangling immigration control from labour enforcement; and adopting promising practices that provide greater social and institutional support for migrants. These regulatory and policy measures, however, must be framed within and in accordance with broader public awareness programmes that address prejudice against migrants, as their success will ultimately depend on the support of migrants' employers, co-workers, peers and, more generally, of the citizens in the host societies.²⁷

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