SWiFT Evaluation
EVIDENCE FOR SAFE MIGRATION

LONDON SCHOOL of HYGIENE &TROPICAL MEDICINE

SWiFT RESEARCH BRIEFING NOTE

Asia Regional Briefing Note • No.2 October 2018

Emerging findings from STUDY ON WORK IN FREEDOM TRANSNATIONAL (SWiFT) Evaluation

Human trafficking and modern slavery: Insights for intervention development

CONTEXT

According to the most recent estimates from the International Labour Organization and Walk Free, women account for 71% of modern slavery victims[1], but there is limited evidence on how to effectively prevent this problem. The South Asia Work in Freedom Transnational Evaluation (SWiFT) is a five-year programme of research and evaluation commissioned by the Department for International Development, which is seeking to answer the question: How can the trafficking of women and girls be prevented?

This brief proposes a conceptual framework for the development of interventions to prevent human trafficking and modern-slavery, based on research with female labour migrants in South Asia across Bangladesh, Nepal and India.

DEVELOPING INTERVENTIONS TO PREVENT HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY

Trajectory approach

A trajectory approach to human trafficking recognises that exploitation can occur once or at multiple stages throughout a migrant worker's journey and that interventions should be designed accordingly. Individuals are often influenced to migrate for work by their aspirations and due to distress migration, which is commonly related to substantial interpersonal and structural power inequalities, local unemployment and weak social protections.[2] For migrant workers, exploitative arrangements often start prior to migration with extortionate money-lending and unscrupulous recruitment. Migrants may then be placed in abusive employment and even re-victimised if they seek re-employment elsewhere. Taking a trajectory approach means focussing on contextual realities at each stage of the migration process and accounting for the challenges of unpredictability. Adopting a trajectory lens helps identify the most significant ways people are exploited, and ideally, the most critical points to intervene. Interventions can begin by supporting migration decision processes within families, the financial preparations they make to secure a job (including recruitment conditions like fees and contracts), employment arrangements, working and living conditions, and extend to the options they have to leave employment situations that are unfair or abusive. Intervention strategies also need to consider how age, gender, social position, education, nationality and ethnicity may affect access to resources at each point of the migration trajectory.

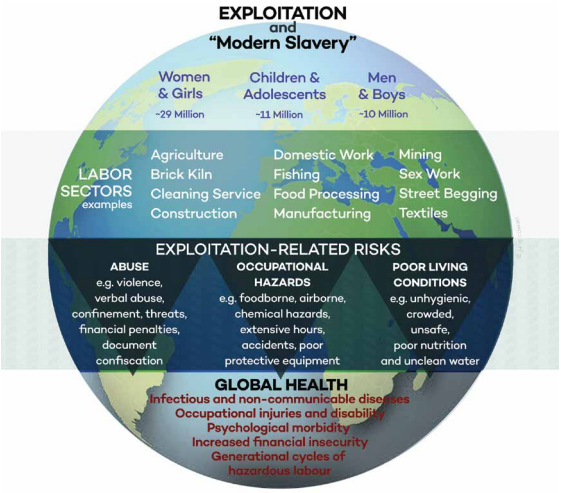


FIGURE 1: Exploitation, risks and global health

Source: Zimmerman and Kiss, 2017.

What needs to change?

Interventions that target just one section of the migration trajectory tend to overlook important links between stages. For example, some activities have offered pre-migration support, with the aim of raising awareness and building knowledge to empower workers to find fair and safe work conditions, stand up for their rights or abandon unfair work situations. However, findings from SWiFT – especially returnee interviews – point to the centrality of addressing risks along the entire trajectory, including social protections at origin locations, and importantly, among actors in transit and destination settings (recruiters and employers) where power inequalities become the greatest.[3]

1. International Labor Organization, *Global estimates of modern slavery: Forced labour and forced marriage*, ILO, Editor. 2017: Geneva.
2. Deshingkar, P. (2017) Towards contextualised, disaggregated and intersectional understandings of migration in India, Asian Population Studies, 13:2, 119-123, DOI: 10.1080/17441730.2016.1189655.
3. Blanchet, T. (2018) *From Risks to Rights: Evaluation of a Training Programme for Women Aspiring to Migrate for Work.* SWIFT Publication: Drishti/LSHTM.

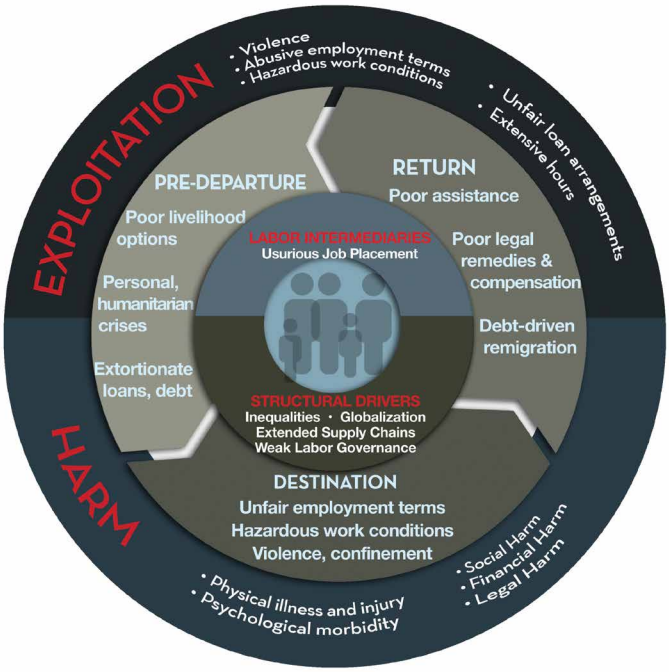


FIGURE 2: Socioeconomic determinants of labour exploitation and harm

Source: Idem 2017.

Pre-departure information and empowerment interventions require complementary protection strategies. Within SWiFT's research, many women expressed the need for interventions that support them throughout the migration process. It was not unusual for women to indicate that programme messages are often not applicable during later stages of the migration process, especially as they become more isolated from support resources. Women frequently perceived that risk and harm increase over time during their migration. They suggested, for example, the need for more and more reliable emergency contacts and support mechanisms at their work destination, especially when they become trapped in exploitative situations. The challenge may be how to ensure women can access the various resources throughout their journey.

Sector approach

A sector approach recognises that acts considered 'human trafficking', 'modern slavery' or 'forced labour' often fall under these singular headings, when, in reality, different sectors can exploit people in different ways.[4] Exploitation also varies by location, magnitude, drivers and means and causes different forms of harm. For example, South Asian domestic workers who go to Gulf States through formal recruitment agencies are subject to different exploitative practices than less formally recruited domestic workers who remain in their own country – or than fishermen on Thai fishing boats and garment factory workers. Workers experience diverse living and working conditions, differing access to food and water, and sometimes, acts of verbal, physical and sexual violence.

Distinctions may also be important between more regulated sectors (e.g. factory work, agriculture, mining) and unregulated sectors (e.g. commercial sex work, bride trafficking, trafficking for begging). These variations have substantial implications for intervention targets and to guide strategies to reduce or prevent exploitation. That is, it is important to consider who contributes in what ways to which abuses and in which circumstances. A sector approach means looking within and between sectors to avoid homogenising distinct acts and causes of exploitation, and to target appropriate interventions to differing abuses.

Strategies to meet migrant worker needs

Interventions need to take serious account of context, including particular recruitment modes, specific work conditions and employment arrangements in each sector to ensure prevention mechanisms are well-targeted. Over the past decade, responses to 'modern slavery' have often fallen within the same conversation. However, to ensure research programmes and interventions are responsive to the context and populations at risk, we need stronger evidence on what happens in each sector, locally, regionally and for particular individuals. For instance, effective anti-trafficking interventions in India may not work as well in Bangladesh or Nepal. However, experiences in one location or to address certain risks, such as recruitment abuses, can offer important lessons for other settings. Moreover, interventions should be carefully monitored at each stage of implementation to inform ongoing adaptation, as needed.

Intervention development: A public health approach

Human trafficking is easily recognised by the physical and psychological harm it causes, yet, to date there has been insufficient attention to the global health burden related to extreme forms of exploitation. Evidence from around the world and from different labour sectors shows how trafficking survivors are frequently subjected to abuse and suffer serious health problems.[5,6] Similarly, emerging findings from SWIFT indicate that people trafficked for work may experience various aspects of forced labour, violence, occupational health and safety risks, and poor living conditions. These lead to physical and psychological morbidity and social and financial damage. Importantly, even among labourers who are not formally identified as victims of modern slavery, global figures indicate that millions of men, women, and children work in low-wage, hazardous, and exploitative jobs.[7,8] Annual work-related deaths are estimated at 2.3 million, of

4. Polaris. The Typology of Modern Slavery Defining Sex and Labor Trafficking in the United States. March 2017. Polaris, Washington DC.
5. Kiss L, Pocock NS, Naisanguansri V, Suos S, Dickson B, Thuy D, Koehler J, Sirisup K, Pongrungsee N, Nguyen VA, Borland R, Dhavan P, Zimmerman C. Health of men, women, and children in post-trafficking services in Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam: an observational cross-sectional study. The Lancet. 2015 March;3(3):154–161.
6. Ottisova L, Hemmings S, Howard L.M., Zimmerman C and S. Oram. Prevalence and risk of violence and the mental, physical and sexual health problems associated with human trafficking: an updated systematic review. Epidemiology and Psychiatric Sciences. Vol 25: 4. 2016, pp. 317-341.
7. Ahonen EQ, Benavides FG, Benach J. Immigrant populations, work and health – a systematic literature review. Sc and J Work Environ Health 2007;33(2):96–104.
8. Kharel, U. The Global Epidemic of Occupational Injuries. Counts, Costs, and Compensation. PhD Dissertation. May 2016.

which a majority occur in low-income countries and low-wage sectors.[9] These labour-related risks are also expensive for health systems, with global costs of work-related injury and illness an estimated US$2.8 trillion.[10]

Policy and programme implications

Public health approaches to researching trafficking suggest we seek evidence on the causes of harm, so we can target the primary drivers of exploitation. Addressing human trafficking and labour exploitation as a global health concern leads us to draw on approaches used for other complex social problems related to inequalities and human rights, such as violence against women (Figure 2). Treating labour exploitation as a public health burden also then encompasses a larger population of low-wage workers, who are at the greatest risk of occupational and other health hazards and exploitative work situations.

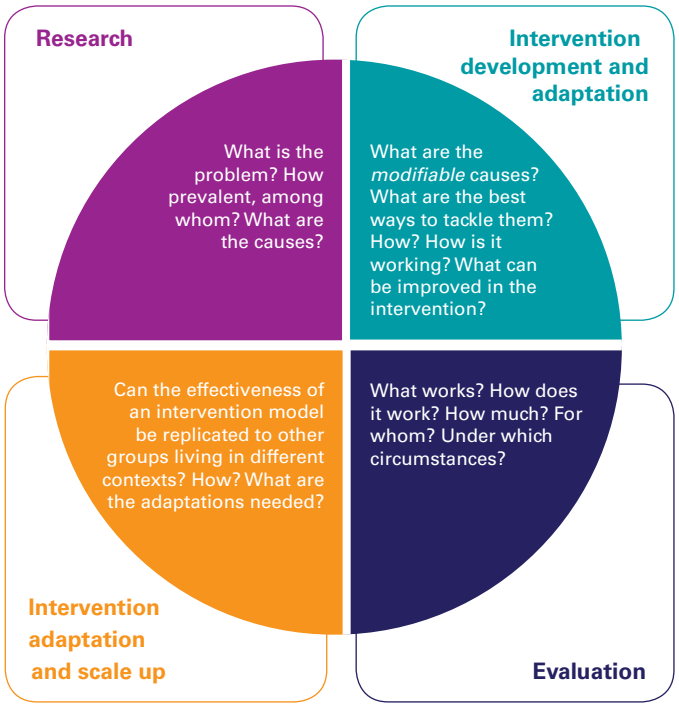
Adopting a health focus allows for more compelling cases to be made to governments and donors. Health arguments emphasise the human and financial burden of exploitation and the importance of prevention, and conversely, the economic and development gains of improving the health and well-being of people, families and future generations.

What do we need to know to prevent trafficking and modern slavery?

For interventions to successfully reduce human trafficking, modern slavery and lesser forms of exploitation, research needs to ask similar types of questions already used to guide, other interventions, like those to prevent gender-based violence (Figure 2, Figure 3).

The success of interventions will depend on how well they are informed by robust evidence on the drivers of exploitation in different populations and settings. We can improve interventions effectiveness and cost-effectiveness if we have more specific evidence on how risk and protective factors interact in terms of context and sectors along the migration trajectory. We can strengthen interventions by gaining a more in-depth understanding of the ways that structural factors, such as transnational economics, business models, immigration legislation and politics, influence exploitation. For the next generation of interventions, these types of evidence will ensure that state and civil society actions and investments work for workers.

FIGURE 3:



A complex systems approach to prevention of human trafficking

Ananya's story (see Box 1) is a fictitious yet plausible example that illustrates the complexity of a migrant woman's experience. It highlights how a woman's social network and the migration context are central to her decisions and ultimately influence her migration trajectory. For Ananya, the local context presented certain opportunities and risks, which she navigated via the resources available to her. As research on other interpersonal risks (e.g. violence, health) indicates[11], the challenges this woman faced are not independent forces, but are instead 'interconnected experiences that constrain several aspects of her life over her lifetime, constraints that may be passed on to her children'[12]. This example is intended to indicate the complexity of human trafficking and that there is not a *magic bullet* to alleviate the multi-layered determinants of exploitation. That is, to protect individuals from being exploited, it is necessary to intervene along the trajectory of migration- and job-related risks. Prevention requires tackling the individual and contextual 'causally tangled determinants' and interventions that address the complex and systemic nature of labour exploitation. Responses to labour migration-related exploitation will require cross-sector, transregional and transnational thinking and a network of partnerships that can support a woman throughout her migration journey, from the departure arrangements, to her workplace and during her employment and throughout her return home.

9. Takala J, Hämläinen P, Saarela KL, et al. Global Estimates of the Burden of Injury and Illness at Work in 2012. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Hygiene.* 11: 326–337 DOI: 10.1080/15459624.2013.863131
10. Ibid.
11. Jewkes R, Fulu E, Tabassam Naved R, Chirwa E, Dunkle K, Haardörfer R, et al. (2017) Women's and men's reports of past-year prevalence of intimate partner violence and rape and women's risk factors for intimate partner violence: A multicountry cross-sectional study in Asia and the Pacific. *PLoS Med* 14(9): e1002381. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1002381
12. Kaplan GA, Roux AV, Simon CP, Galea S. Growing inequality: bridging complex systems, population health, and health disparities. Westphalia Press; 2017.

BOX 1: Ananya's story

Ananya is a 28 year-old woman living in rural Nepal. She had an arranged marriage at the age of 12. Ananya gave birth to her first child at 14, followed by two more children.

One day, Ananya was at the market talking to a friend who told her about how much money her cousin was making as a domestic worker in Oman. The chance to make more money overseas was tempting, as her mother had recently fallen ill and was unable to afford care, and her husband did not earn enough from his agricultural work. She also wanted to give her children a chance for a better education. After some contemplation, Ananya talked to her husband and they decided she should migrate. She was 24.

Ananya's father-in-law knew someone in the village who could help arrange a job abroad. For Ananya, it wasn't easy to understand the process, so she simply had to trust this recruiter, who seemed to know the system and have many contacts in the Kathmandu and abroad. The recruiter explained the details of her employment to Ananya and her husband, though she didn't actually see a contract. The overwhelming amount of paperwork was surprising, so she was grateful for his help. She got a loan from her brother-in-law to cover her visa, training in Kathmandu, medical expenses, and flight, and moved to Jordan, leaving her children in the care of her sisters.

But once she arrived, Ananya found out she had to work more than 12 hours a day, every day without a break. She had to sleep in the kitchen and was not allowed to leave the house, ever. Her employers humiliated and shouted at her all the time. Additionally, her passport was confiscated and her salary was never paid in full – based on a purported fee discrepancy in the recruiter's agreement. Her situation became so desperate that Ananya escaped and ran to the police station. The police did not seem to care about her story, and promptly took her back to the house. After that, her employers started treating her worse until the end of her contract.

When back at her village, Ananya struggled to re-integrate. In addition to the pernicious whispers and gossip about her amongst the villagers, her husband accused her of being unfaithful. She lost her appetite and had difficulties sleeping. In spite of the adversities, Ananya still believes her migration was the best thing for her family. With her remittances, they managed to buy some land and her son transferred to a better local school. However, she still owes money to her brother-in-law, can no longer afford her mother's medication, and is tired of her husband's jealousy and aggressive behaviour. Migrating seems like a good option again. This time, she believes that she knows what to expect, and is more prepared to deal with the challenges of life abroad.

This brief was supported by UKaid from the Department for International Development. However, the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the department's official policies.

SWiFT Evaluation
EVIDENCE FOR SAFE MIGRATION

UKaid
from the British people

LONDON SCHOOL of HYGIENE &TROPICAL MEDICINE