



National Rapporteur on Trafficking in
Human Beings and Sexual Violence
against Children

Human Trafficking Victims Monitoring Report

2015–2019

Management Summary

trafficking
in
human
beings

Management summary

Human trafficking is a very serious offence that has major disruptive effects on the lives of its victims. Nevertheless, exploitation continues to take place on a daily basis. The number of reports about victims of human trafficking increased in 2019. This would appear to suggest that the authorities have a clearer picture of human trafficking in the Netherlands. At the same time, this rise is one-sided. There are still few reports about certain groups of victims, many of which are vulnerable, such as child victims of sexual exploitation. In addition, the protection and support of vulnerable groups is increasingly under threat. There is a lack of insight into the realities of their victim experiences, in particular with regard to victims of sexual exploitation in less visible sectors and foreign victims who are classified as Dublin claimants. Despite recommendations in previous monitors, there has been no improvement in the protection of these victims and the detection of offenders.

Providing maximum protection to victims of human trafficking requires a sustainable, comprehensive approach. Various parties have a specific role in the comprehensive approach, and they are implementing measures to prevent or combat human trafficking. The organisations engaged in the approach themselves are primarily responsible for evaluating their own policy and practices. The National Rapporteur is also keen to encourage the learning ability of these organisations in tackling human trafficking. Ideally, a cycle of monitoring whether the intended result is being achieved should form the foundation of each process. The starting point should be that measures that are implemented are accompanied by quantifiable targets, which are evaluated and can be adjusted as needed.

In order to assess whether the measures in the approach are having an actual impact on preventing and combating human trafficking, it is essential to continuously monitor the phenomenon as well as the approach. The National Rapporteur intends to support these efforts with this Human Trafficking Victims Monitoring Report. The report provides a statistical update on known victims of human trafficking in the period 2015-2019: how many victims are known, what are their characteristics, what types of exploitation are they the victim of and through which authorities are they identified?

More reports of human trafficking

The number of reports about human trafficking increased sharply in 2019. Between 2015 and 2019, the Coordination Centre against Human Trafficking (CoMensha) received reports on a total of 5,060 victims. Following the huge decrease in the number of reports in 2018, they almost doubled in number in 2019, from 668 victims in 2018 to 1,334 in 2019.

One of the explanations for this rise is the massive increase in the number of African victims. This appears to involve Dublin claimants who report human trafficking, mainly occurred abroad. More information about the nature of the reports is necessary before any definitive explanations can be given about the current surge in the number of reports and before an effective approach can be formulated.

We are also learning more about the forms of exploitation and the sectors in which it takes place. In the period 2014-2018, the form of exploitation was unknown for 15% of the victims, compared with just 11% of victims during the period 2015-2019. This indicates that the reporting entities have more information about victims of human trafficking and that the quality of their registration and reporting is improving.

Despite increased reporting, many worrying trends referred to in previous monitoring reports have continued.

Situation with regard to minors increasingly unclear

The proportion of reported child victims of human trafficking continues to fall, from 25% in 2015 to just 8% in 2019. Domestic sexual exploitation, involving an estimated 3,000 victims per year, is the most common form of human trafficking in the Netherlands, involving by far the youngest victims and offenders. Nearly half are estimated to be minors.

Sexual exploitation moving to less visible sectors

The National Rapporteur notes for the fourth time in a row that the reported victims of sexual exploitation are increasingly found in the less visible sectors, such as home prostitution and escort/hotel prostitution. In the period 2017 to 2019, no less than 89% of victims were reported from these sectors.

The National Rapporteur therefore repeats the recommendation that priority be given to a comprehensive approach to tackling domestic sexual exploitation in the less visible sectors, with a particular focus on the young group of victims. This approach should be formulated and implemented regionally as well as nationally. Local initiatives are crucial for gaining detailed insight into sexual exploitation at the places where it actually occurs.

Technology plays a major role in domestic sexual exploitation

Alongside the focus on the physical location where exploiters, clients and victims meet, it is important to revisit the place where supply and demand initially came together. Technology that facilitates connection, communication and collaboration worldwide is being misused by offenders of sexual exploitation and their clients. Furthermore, technology can be used to increase the vulnerability of victims. While international studies emphasise the role played by technology in sexual exploitation, it is not yet evident in Dutch registration data at this moment.

The National Rapporteur therefore recommends that the role of technology in sexual exploitation be identified and analysed. Moreover, technology should be viewed as an opportunity, in order to build knowledge, strengthen the approach, discourage offenders and increase resilience amongst victims.

Increasing number of African victims of international sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation

The number of reported victims of international sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation increased sharply again in 2019. The increased figures are attributable in particular to foreign victims of human trafficking who invoke the B8 scheme during their asylum procedure in the Netherlands. Usually, these victims have already applied for asylum in another EU Member State and are therefore Dublin claimants. Most are adult Nigerian victims who claim to have been exploited in street prostitution or forced to commit drug offences. This makes 2019 the first year in which Nigeria, and not the Netherlands, tops the list of the leading five nationalities with the most reported victims.

The lack of knowledge regarding the background of this form of victimisation prompted the National Rapporteur to recommend, in the previous monitoring report, that studies be carried out at the European level into these foreign victims of human trafficking. These studies have yet to take place. The National Rapporteur therefore repeats this recommendation. An interna-

tional study could identify the nature and scale of the victimisation of foreign victims of human trafficking. The underlying explanatory factors and the possible role played by organised crime in this regard could also be examined. This could provide insight that is needed to handle reports more effectively, to provide help to actual victims and to improve the detection of offenders.

Impact of COVID-19 on human trafficking

This Victims Monitoring Report deals with the period from 2015 until the end of 2019. Nevertheless, the National Rapporteur is conscious of the impact COVID-19 has had since early 2020 on human trafficking as a phenomenon and on the approach to tackling it. The global coronavirus crisis has given rise to new forms of victimisation. Abuses on the labour market amongst migrant workers, for instance, have increased considerably. This has put vulnerable groups, including migrant workers, under even more pressure. Improved monitoring and insight at the national as well as the local level are crucial if the right measures are to be taken. The National Rapporteur will continue to monitor the impact of COVID-19 with increased attention.



Who is the National Rapporteur?

The National Rapporteur is Herman Bolhaar. The Dutch National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Violence against Children consists of the National Rapporteur and a team of enthusiastic employees with a multidisciplinary background.

What does the National Rapporteur do against human trafficking and sexual violence against children?

The National Rapporteur investigates the nature and extent of human trafficking and sexual violence against children in the Netherlands. In the annual monitoring reports and the thematic studies, the emphasis is on monitoring and improving the strategies for tackling human trafficking and sexual violence against children.

Based on information from a wide range of sources, the National Rapporteur advises national and local government, other administrative bodies, international organisations and professionals who provide help and support, on how to prevent and combat human trafficking and sexual violence against children.

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