

Trends & issues

in crime and criminal justice



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Foreword | *Indonesia has one of the highest rates of workers seeking employment abroad, with the majority of these workers being females employed in domestic service. Due to the nature of recruitment, the process of migration and the location and characteristics of the work, Indonesian migrant domestic workers may in some instances be at risk of abuse, exploitation and human trafficking.*

Drawing on data contained in the International Organization for Migration's Counter Trafficking Module, the experiences of Indonesian victims of human trafficking who were exploited as domestic workers in Malaysia are examined, as well as the risk factors that may have contributed to their exploitation.

Understanding the nature of human trafficking and the risk factors for exploitation is crucial for developing domestic and regional responses that can effectively contribute to anti-human trafficking strategies in the southeast Asia region.

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Experiences of exploitation and human trafficking among a sample of Indonesian migrant domestic workers

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Significant growth in the economies of some Asian countries has led to a strong demand for low-skilled labour, which is largely being filled by migrant workers from southeast Asian countries. Live-in migrant domestic workers are in particularly high demand, as the recruitment of migrants enables women in less developed countries to seek employment in skilled positions, instead of performing care-related and household tasks full-time (Lan 2003; Salazar Parrenas 2000). Yet, migrants are particularly vulnerable to labour exploitation and human rights abuses, which in some cases involve human trafficking (Anti-Slavery International 2006; Human Rights Watch 2010, 2006, 2004; ILO 2006a, 2006b; IOM 2010; OSCE 2010). Labour exploitation can involve abusive working conditions where an employee is forced to work and is not free to cease providing services, as well as wage manipulation, excessive working days or hours, low or no salary and a general disregard for labour laws (such as the absence or substitution of an employment contract; ILO 2009). Labour exploitation can result from human trafficking where a person has been recruited, transferred or received, by means of threat, coercion or deception, for the purpose of exploitation. The vulnerability of migrants to these human rights abuses can be partly attributed to high levels of undocumented labour migration and unscrupulous practices by labour agents, as well as an apparent 'normalisation' or 'invisibilisation' of exploitation and abuse among employers of domestic workers in some countries (GAATW 2011: 57).



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