

**BACKGROUND RESEARCH TO  
THE UNICEF REGIONAL REPORT**  
Situation of Children in the Context  
of Migration in ASEAN Member States



**CASE-STUDY**

# Migration and Risks of Child Trafficking and Exploitation

Drivers beyond poverty and the role of businesses in driving and providing protection against exploitation amongst migrant children, Viet Nam



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A project implemented by UNICEF  
and co-funded by the European Union and UNICEF

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This research was managed and commissioned by United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Regional Office for East Asia and Pacific (EAPRO), with support from the European Union in the context of the cross-regional programme *Protecting Children in the Context of Migration in Southeast, South and Central Asia 2018-2023* to Coram International at Coram Children’s Legal Centre (CCLC). It supplements the UNICEF regional report *Situation of children affected by migration in ASEAN Member States*.

Co-funded by the European Union. This publication was made possible through the financial support of the European Commission. The contents of this background case-study are the sole responsibility of CORAM and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union and UNICEF. The European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

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19 Phra Athit Road Bangkok 10200 Thailand  
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April 2023  
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## Acronyms

<b>ASEAN</b>	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
<b>CCRB</b>	Center for Child Rights and Business
<b>CREST</b>	Corporate Responsibility in Eliminating Slavery and Trafficking
<b>EAPRO</b>	East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IO</b>	International Organizations
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>MoET</b>	Ministry of Education and Training
<b>MoI</b>	Ministry of Interior
<b>MoJ</b>	Ministry of Justice
<b>MOLISA</b>	Ministry of Labour Invalids and Social Affairs
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Government Organizations
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children’s Fund
<b>VCCI</b>	Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry

# 1. Executive summary

## 1.1 Introduction

This report presents the findings of an in-depth case study on children affected by migration in Viet Nam, particularly exploring drivers and risks of child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration, as part of a regional situation analysis of children affected by migration in ASEAN states, commissioned by UNICEF East-Asia and Pacific Regional Office (UNICEF EAPRO), through its European Union-UNICEF co-funded programme, 'Protecting children affected by migration in Southeast, South and Central Asia' (2018 – 2022).

Children in Viet Nam are trafficked both internally and externally for a range of purposes, including forced or exploitative labour, child marriage, child sexual exploitation and baby trafficking.<sup>1</sup> Research indicates that the prevalence rate of child trafficking in Viet Nam is as high as 5.6 per cent.<sup>2</sup> Children who are trafficked and experience exploitation in the context of migration experience a range of negative outcomes, including compromised physical health from hazardous working conditions, sexual health problems as a result of sexual exploitation and low mental health and wellbeing.<sup>3</sup>

This research sought to fill knowledge gaps and develop an in-depth, contextual understanding of drivers of child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration in Viet Nam beyond the indicator of poverty.<sup>4</sup> This research adopted a business lens to understand the role of businesses in driving and providing protection against child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration. The research aimed to address the five following research questions:

1. What are the drivers of child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration beyond poverty?
2. What factors influence young people's attitudes and perceptions towards migration, and how are these linked to child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration?
3. How do risks and experiences of child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration differ across different labour industries?
4. What role do businesses play as drivers of child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration and how have businesses been responding to child protection needs (particularly in informal sectors)?
5. How have child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration, associated protection risks, and access to protection support evolved over the last three years (particularly during Covid-19)?

The research employed a mixed-methods design, including a desk review of existing literature, 30 key informant interviews (KIIs) with experts in the field of child trafficking and labour exploitation and a survey administered to children and young people in Viet Nam on child trafficking.<sup>5</sup> Qualitative data underwent

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<sup>1</sup> Blue Dragon, *What makes people vulnerable to human trafficking?* Nov 2021.

<sup>2</sup> K. Apland and E. Yarrow, *Casting Light in the Shadows – Child and Youth Migration, Exploitation and Trafficking in Viet Nam*, Coram International, 2019.

<sup>3</sup>; Stöckl et al. *Trafficking of Vietnamese women and girls for marriage in China*, Global Health Research and Policy, vol 2, 2017; UNICEF, *An analysis of the commercial sexual exploitation of children in selected provinces and cities of Viet Nam*, 2011; ILO, Vietnam General Statistics Office and MoLISA, *Viet Nam National Child labour Survey 2018: Key Findings*, 2020; K. Apland and E. Yarrow, *Casting Light in the Shadows – Child and Youth Migration, Exploitation and Trafficking in Viet Nam*, Coram International, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> K. Apland and E. Yarrow, *Casting Light in the Shadows – Child and Youth Migration, Exploitation and Trafficking in Viet Nam*, Coram International, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Survey data was a secondary dataset from a previous child trafficking project. See: K. Apland and E. Yarrow, *Casting Light in the Shadows – Child and Youth Migration, Exploitation and Trafficking in Viet Nam*, Coram International, 2019.

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thematic analysis. The survey included a sample of 166 young people who had migrated without a parent or caregiver before the age of 18 and 3,333 young people who had not previously migrated.<sup>6</sup> Inferential analysis of the survey focused on factors linked to children’s experiences of exploitation in the context of migration without a parent or caregiver and factors linked to children and young people’s attitudes towards migration.

## 1.2 Findings

### 1.2.1 Drivers of child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration beyond poverty

Certain groups of children are more vulnerable to exploitation in the context of migration. The survey for children and young people indicated that children with disabilities are extremely vulnerable to exploitation in the context of migration. Lower wealth made children who migrated more vulnerable to emotional violence, while children from ethnic minority groups were more likely to experience physical violence (particularly H’Mong children). Children living in rural areas were more likely to experience wage exploitation, and girls experienced more frequent sexual exploitation. Children who did not make the decision to migrate were more likely to experience exploitation, and children with lower education and wealth and ethnic minority status were less likely to make the choice to migrate.

Key informants also highlighted that education, rurality and ethnicity are risk factors for child trafficking, and that these are interlinked with poverty.<sup>7</sup> Additional family characteristics that increase children’s risk of trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration include being from a single-parent household, being a child who remains behind when parents migrate, being a child who has migrated with parents, and living in a household in which family violence is present.<sup>8</sup> In these circumstances, children are at increased risk of neglect and seek to escape their home circumstances.

The internet is increasingly being used for the facilitation of child trafficking. With children having greater access to social media, this provides a new platform through which recruiters can approach, befriend, groom, deceive and subsequently traffic children.<sup>9</sup>

### 1.2.2 Factors influencing young people’s attitudes towards migration and risk for trafficking

A key driver of child trafficking is a lack of knowledge and awareness of the risks of migrating alone without a parent or caregiver amongst children.<sup>10</sup> One hundred percent of children who migrated without a parent/caregiver in the survey experienced some form of abuse or labour exploitation. Associations between demographic characteristics and more positive views towards migration amongst children who had not migrated were examined using the survey data to identify factors which increase risk of future child lone migration, and therefore increase risk of exploitation.

General patterns showed that younger children and those in rural areas had more positive attitudes towards migration and were less aware of the dangers of lone child migration, putting them at greater risk of exploitation. Ethnic minority groups saw migration as more dangerous and were less likely to want to migrate or consider irregular migration, supporting the narrative that this group of children, in particular, have little agency in their migration. Children who were already child workers had more positive views towards migration

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<sup>6</sup> K. Apland and E. Yarrow, *Casting Light in the Shadows – Child and Youth Migration, Exploitation and Trafficking in Viet Nam*, Coram International, 2019.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with an IO, Feb 25 2022; KII with an NGO. Feb 15 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with an IO Feb 25 2022

<sup>9</sup> Interview with an IO, Mar 8, 2022; KII with Government, Mar 21 2022.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with an NGO, Feb 21 2022.



than those who were not working. Children with low emotional wellbeing and poor family relationships or experiences of neglect were more likely to consider irregular migration routes, providing insight to how children seeking to escape difficult home circumstances can put them at increased risk of trafficking or exploitation in the context of migration.

### 1.2.3 Child trafficking and exploitation in different labour industries

Seventy-five per cent (N = 125) of children in the survey reported working in an industry when they migrated. This was distributed between the service industry (21 per cent), manufacturing (16 per cent) garment industry (13 per cent), agriculture (11 per cent<sup>11</sup>) sex work (6 per cent), domestic labour (6 per cent) and ‘other’ (25 per cent). The only demographic characteristic linked to working in particular industries was gender: girls were more likely to work in the sex industry, and boys were more likely to work in agriculture and manufacturing. Key informants noted that boys are more likely to be trafficked into mining, agriculture and fishing industries, whereas girls are more likely to be exploited in domestic, service and sex work industries.<sup>12</sup> Others noted that children living in poverty and with lower levels of education are particularly vulnerable to exploitation in informal businesses with poor working conditions and without employment contracts or insurance.<sup>13</sup>

Survey data indicated no differences in children’s experiences of physical abuse across different industries. However, children working in the sex and agriculture industries experienced the most frequent emotional violence, and children who worked in the sex work industry reported feeling less safe than children in other industries. Children were most likely to experience wage exploitation in the service industry. Children who had migrated to work in agriculture were least likely to want to migrate, viewed migrating for work as less empowering and reported significantly lower emotional wellbeing compared to other industries, suggesting they had more negative experiences when migrating to work in this industry. Together, findings indicate that migrating to work in the agriculture industry may pose particular risks to children. Within the agriculture industry, several key informants referred specifically to the risks posed to children who migrate to work on farms and plantations.

Children are also particularly vulnerable to exploitation within rattan and sea grass production industries, the garment industry, the handicraft industry and the mining industry, with the latter two being noted as ‘hidden’ exploitative child labour industries.<sup>14</sup> Over a third of key informants referred to the fishing industry as one in which children are vulnerable to exploitation. However, knowledge of child trafficking and exploitation in the fishing industry has increased amongst government and non-government service providers and key stakeholders over the last few years, resulting in programmes to help prevent and support trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration (for example, the ILO, IOM and UNDP “Ship to Shore” programme).<sup>15</sup>

### 1.2.4 The role of businesses in driving and preventing child trafficking and labour exploitation in the context of migration

Many informants noted that no child labour exists in large (Tier 1)<sup>16</sup> businesses, due to the successful enforcement of child labour laws and practices such as auditing to ensure compliance with regulations in place

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<sup>11</sup> The agriculture category includes one child who was working in the fishing industry.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with IO, Feb 25 2022.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with child labour expert, Mar 10 2022.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with IO, Feb 25 2022.

<sup>15</sup> ILO, Ship to Shore Programme <https://shiptoshorerights.org/vn/>

<sup>16</sup> Tier 1 refers to enterprises at the top level of the supply chains, often including international corporations.



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to prevent exploitative child labour, both by the Government and international brands.<sup>17</sup> However, Tier 1 factories often outsource production and rely on lower tier supply chains, in which laws are not monitored or controlled to the same extent.<sup>18</sup> The limited monitoring and failure to comply with labour regulations within lower-level supply chains is a key barrier to being able to ensure the prevention of exploitative child labour.<sup>19</sup> Many smaller businesses lack understanding of child labour laws (particularly the recent changes in the Labour Code of Minor Workers<sup>20</sup>), lack the support that is available to larger enterprises with regards to education and training on child labour laws, or lack the resources to implement child labour regulations and provide safe working opportunities for 15-18 year olds.<sup>21</sup> This often results in businesses avoiding hiring youth, which pushes children into working in informal industries and increase risk of exploitation.<sup>22</sup>

Few labour trafficking cases result in prosecution, due to inadequate resource provision and the complicated procedures for prosecuting those who exploit children for labour purposes, meaning those who traffic children for labour purposes continue to do so with limited consequences.<sup>23</sup>

NGOs and IOs are implementing programmes in Viet Nam to improve knowledge of child trafficking within businesses, such as the CREST programme, which provides training to enterprises on supply chains, assessments and audits, to inform businesses about trafficking and modern slavery.<sup>24</sup> Programmes are resulting in smaller businesses developing practices and policies to support the safe employment of youth.<sup>25</sup> However, barriers remain, including limited programme funding.<sup>26</sup> Businesses also play a crucial role in reducing the risk of child trafficking by supporting parents through parenting support programmes, adequate wages and childcare facilities, particularly for migrant parents.<sup>27</sup>

Low levels of education and a lack of easily accessible vocational training is a barrier to children accessing safe, legal employment. Children are forced to seek employment in lower skilled jobs in informal industries, which puts them at higher risk of exploitation. However, some businesses are providing training to young people to enable them to secure non-exploitative, legal employment.<sup>28</sup>

### 1.2.5 Changes in the landscape of child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration during Covid-19

The closure of Viet Nam's border due to the outbreak of Covid-19 resulted in a reduction in the trafficking of children for the purposes of sex tourism<sup>29</sup> and a sharp decline in the number of child trafficking victims to China.<sup>30</sup> Findings indicate a shift in the form of child trafficking; some key informants noted that children are still being trafficked abroad through illegal routes<sup>31</sup>, that trafficking across borders has shifted to different

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with IO, Mar 8 2022.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with IO, Feb 25 2022.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with corporate social responsibility expert, Mar 4 2022.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Business director, Mar 21, 2022.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Business, Mar 7 2022.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with NGO, Feb 28 2022.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with child labour expert, Mar 10 2022.

<sup>24</sup> [IOM's CREST Programme | IOM Viet Nam.](#)

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Business, Mar 4 2022; Interview with business, Mar 7 2022.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Business Association, Feb 24 2022.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Centre for Child Rights and Business, Mar 16 2022; Interview with business, Feb 28 2022.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with business leader, Feb 28 2022.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with IO, Mar 8 2022.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with MOLISA, Mar 21 2022.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with NGO, Feb 28 2022.

countries, such as Lao PDR and Cambodia<sup>32</sup>, and internal trafficking to informal service industries, such as karaoke bars, has increased.<sup>33</sup>

Covid-19 has led to an increase in poverty and unemployment for many families, due to businesses closing factories during lockdowns. Children have dropped out of education to find employment, migrating from rural areas to cities for work.<sup>34</sup> Covid-19 has also seen an increase in domestic abuse<sup>35</sup>, which, as noted above, is a key driver for child trafficking.

Businesses have been employing fewer staff to meet Covid-19 regulations, and there has been a shortage of migrant workers who returned to rural homes during lockdowns. This means that businesses have had to outsource more of their production to meet order requirements for brands.<sup>36</sup> Informal businesses being utilised more frequently at lower levels of the supply chain puts more children at risk of exploitative labour.<sup>37</sup> However, some noted that the labour shortage has resulted in larger businesses adapting to employ more children aged 15-17 in order to increase the pool of available workers, supporting youth employment in accord with child labour laws.<sup>38</sup>

More children have been at increased risk of recruitment for the purposes of trafficking during Covid-19, due to the increased use of social media.<sup>39</sup> However, technology has also enabled many children to remain in education remotely and access reliable resources during Covid-19 (thus reducing risk of migration for work purposes and resulting exploitation risk), and has enabled NGOs to continue supporting trafficking victims.<sup>40</sup>

### 1.3 Conclusions and recommendations

There are multiple drivers of trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration beyond poverty, including age, gender, rurality, education, family violence, child neglect and ethnicity, with these factors often being interlinked. Online social media platforms are increasingly being used to traffic and exploit children, with this issue becoming a more prevalent during Covid-19. Children working in sex work, agriculture and fishing industries appear to be at highest risk of exploitation.

Although labour laws are largely successful in preventing child labour in Tier 1 industries, children are still at risk of labour exploitation in the lower tiers of the supply chain. A lack of understanding of labour laws means that few enterprises hire anyone under the age of 18, which drives children into dangerous and exploitative employment in informal sectors. Whilst there are several programmes and practices contributing to the prevention of child trafficking and labour exploitation across different industries<sup>41</sup>, barriers and bottlenecks remain.

Covid-19 has reduced cross-border trafficking to China and increased the number of families in poverty, which in turn has led to increased risk of trafficking internally. Covid-19 has made businesses more reliant on

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<sup>32</sup> Interview with NGO, Feb 15 2022.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with NGO, Feb 15 2022.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with IO, Feb 2021.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with NGO, Feb 23 2022.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with NGO, March 16 2022.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with business, Mar 4 2022.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Child Labour Expert, Mar 10 2022.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with NGO, Feb 21 2022.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with NGO, Feb 23 2022.

<sup>41</sup> For example: [IOM's CREST Programme | IOM Viet Nam.](#)

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outsourcing work to lower tier supply chains, where the risk of child labour exploitation is higher. However, some businesses are developing processes to employ children aged 15-18 safely, which reduces vulnerability to exploitation.<sup>42</sup>

Based on the findings from this research, there are a number of steps that could be taken by government, civil society and businesses to support the prevention of child trafficking and exploitation. These include:

- MOLISA, MoJ and UNICEF to strengthen the child protection system and legal framework for child protection, with particular focus on child protection in the context of migration, ensuring collaboration and capacity building across relevant government ministries;
- MOLISA and Viet Nam statistics office to develop an internationally recognised measure and set of indicators for child trafficking and labour exploitation in the context of migration, with support from UNICEF;
- UNICEF and National Government to support local government, NGOs and community leaders to increase public awareness of the risks to children from migrating for labour and other reasons without a parent or caregiver, particularly in rural areas and areas with high rates of poverty.
- MOLISA to develop national knowledge of labour laws, particularly in relation to the types of *light works* suitable for youth workers in the labour code for minors, with a focus on building knowledge in the business sector;
- MOLISA and CCRB to raise awareness of the role that businesses can take in the reduction of child trafficking and exploitation and promoting best practices for preventing child trafficking and labour exploitation, supporting decent labour for young workers and promoting and implementing Children's Rights and Business Principles (including fair working condition policies, supplier audits, child rights labour risk assessments etc.);
- MOLISA and CCRB / Business Associations to support capacity building for the business sector to promote safe employment for children, such as supporting the: development of policies that promote fair working conditions; auditing of suppliers; child rights and labour risk assessments; development of policies to support youth workers and provision of skills training for youth workers;
- MoET, MoL and Business Associations to work together in developing vocational and skilled-worker training to support the employment of youth in the *light works* jobs listed as suitable within the labour code for minors, promoting this training in areas where there are high rates of school dropout and poverty and in rural areas;
- UNICEF to promote cooperation between government ministries, NGOs and businesses to support capacity building and the promotion of safe and decent employment opportunities for young workers and the development of training for skills training for employed youth;
- MOLISA to make Tier 1 businesses responsible for ensuring that their supply chain adheres to the labour code on minor workers, including the development of a monitoring framework for Tier 1

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<sup>42</sup> Interview with Child Labour Expert, Mar 10 2022.

businesses to monitor child labour in supply chains and the enforcement of such monitoring processes;

- All stakeholders to advocate for the allocation of more fiscal resources to labour inspectors to prevent and reduce child labour in lower tier industries (i.e. financing the inspection of Tier 2 and 3 Industries), and in specific industries in which child trafficking has been noted as particularly prevalent (fishing, domestic labour);
- Increase the support available to child trafficking victims, and build capacity within MOLISA to provide effective support to trafficking victims, including through social work and case management training;
- Government, NGOs and business associations to support and encourage businesses to reduce the risk of child trafficking by supporting parents through parenting support programmes, providing adequate wages and providing support towards childcare arrangements;
- MoJ to strengthen legal provisions to address rising online violence, exploitation and trafficking, particularly through social media platforms; and
- Government, UNICEF and NGOs to raise awareness of the risk of online recruitment of children for the purposes of trafficking, and supporting the development of programmes to educate and build resilience among children and communities with regards to the risks and best practices for social media use for the prevention of child trafficking through online recruitment.

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## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 Background and rationale

This report presents the findings of an in-depth case study on children affected by migration in Viet Nam, particularly exploring drivers and risks of child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration. In undertaking the study, a business lens was adopted, examining exploitation across different labour industries and the role of businesses as drivers of exploitation for migrant children.

This case study is part of a regional situation analysis of children affected by migration in ASEAN states, commissioned by UNICEF East-Asia and Pacific Regional Office (UNICEF EAPRO), through its European Union-UNICEF co-funded programme, ‘Protecting children affected by migration in Southeast, South and Central Asia’ (2018 – 2022). It is anticipated that this research will inform efforts within ASEAN to support children affected by migration, including the implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on the Rights of Children in the Context of Migration (2019) and the Regional Plan of Action (2021) for its implementation. This study is one of a series of six in-depth case studies across different ASEAN countries which aim to explore, in a localised, contextualised and in-depth manner, the various ways in which children may be affected by migration.

This study was designed and implemented by Coram International, in partnership with UNICEF Viet Nam and UNICEF EAPRO. Primary data collection was conducted by the national research partner, Pham Quang Nam. The secondary data analysed in this report was drawn from a previous study conducted by Coram International, in partnership with UNICEF Viet Nam and the United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK), which was designed to contribute to existing knowledge and evidence on the prevalence of child trafficking in Viet Nam (funded by the UK Home Office Child Trafficking Protection Fund).<sup>43</sup>

Child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration takes multiple forms in Viet Nam. Children are trafficked both internally and externally for a range of purposes, including forced or exploitative labour, child marriage and sexual exploitation and baby trafficking.<sup>44</sup> Research indicates that the prevalence rate of child trafficking in Viet Nam is as high as 5.6 per cent.<sup>45</sup> The trafficking of girls, particularly in the H’Mong community, for the purposes of marriage and forced marriage occurs both within Viet Nam and from Viet Nam into neighbouring countries, particularly China.<sup>46</sup> The trafficking of children, both boys and girls, for the purpose of sexual exploitation and sexual exploitation in prostitution also occurs across borders to countries such as Cambodia, China and Lao PDR, and internally, particularly to hotspots such as Ha Noi, Ho Chi Minh City, Quang Ninh, Khanh Hoa, and Da Lat.<sup>47</sup> Further, children are trafficked within Viet Nam for the purposes of forced or exploitative labour. It has been noted that “*children’s migration, independently or along with*

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<sup>43</sup> K. Apland and E. Yarrow, *Casting Light in the Shadows – Child and Youth Migration, Exploitation and Trafficking in Viet Nam*, Coram International, 2019.

<sup>44</sup> Blue Dragon, *What makes people vulnerable to human trafficking?* Nov 2021.

<sup>45</sup> K. Apland and E. Yarrow, *Casting Light in the Shadows – Child and Youth Migration, Exploitation and Trafficking in Viet Nam*, Coram International, 2019.

<sup>46</sup> Jordana, A. D., *Situational Analysis on Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia*, World Vision International, 6 February 2017, p 13-14. <https://www.wvi.org/end-violence-against-children-east-asia-region/publication/situational-analysis-child-early-and>; Blue Dragon Children’s Foundation, *Human Trafficking and Traffickers in Vietnam: An analysis of the nature of trafficking and the profile of traffickers in Vietnam based on information from court cases*, July 2021.

<sup>47</sup> ECPAT, *Vietnam: status of action against commercial sexual exploitation of children*, 2011; UNICEF, *An Analysis of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Selected Provinces and Cities of Viet Nam*, 2011.

*parents [...] is usually associated with poorly paid or hazardous jobs for children.*"<sup>48</sup> Children who migrate alone from rural to urban areas are particularly vulnerable to trafficking for prostitution and labour exploitation.<sup>49</sup>

There are a range of negative outcomes evidenced for child trafficking victims and children who have experienced exploitation in the context of migration. Children working within factories and other labour settings are at risk of physical injury and exposure to hazardous working conditions that are detrimental to physical and mental health and development.<sup>50</sup> Children who are trafficked for sex work are at risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted infections as well as pregnancy and experience of physical violence.<sup>51</sup> Research indicates that victims of child trafficking also have a high prevalence of mental health problems and low wellbeing.<sup>52</sup> They also experience stigma on their return home after being trafficked and may face rejection on return to their families because they are perceived to bring dishonour upon their relations.<sup>53</sup> Children who have spent time out of school as a result of migrating for employment are also likely to be stigmatised by peers on reintegration into education,<sup>54</sup> particularly if they have fallen behind educationally.

In 2020, the Vietnamese government reported only 32 identified child trafficking victims.<sup>55</sup> The low level of reported trafficking is not, however, an indicator of a low level of occurrence. Research indicates child trafficking for marriage, sexual exploitation and exploitative labour is a far more common occurrence than the figures depict. Definitional challenges in international law (i.e. the Palermo Protocol) and definitional challenges and ambiguity in Vietnamese national human trafficking laws have been noted as a potential barrier to the identification of child trafficking victims.<sup>56</sup> Additionally, whilst the second National Child Labour Survey 2018 indicated that 5.4 per cent of the 5-17 year old population in Viet Nam was classified as in child labour, with 2.7 per cent of the child population working in hazardous labour,<sup>57</sup> there is limited understanding of child labour in the context of migration.

Child trafficking is a legal term that refers to "*the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or for other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of*

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<sup>48</sup> UNICEF, *Situation analysis of children in Viet Nam 2016*, Ha Noi, 2017, p 217.

<sup>49</sup> UNICEF, *An analysis of the commercial sexual exploitation of children in selected provinces and cities of Viet Nam*, 2011; UNICEF, *The Apparel and Footwear Sector and Children in Vietnam*, 2017, p.5.

<sup>50</sup> ILO, Vietnam General Statistics Office and MoLISA, *Viet Nam National Child labour Survey 2018: Key Findings*, 2020

<sup>51</sup> Vijayarasa, R., *The State, the family and language of 'social evils': re-stigmatising victims of trafficking in Vietnam*, Culture, Health & Sexuality, Vol 12, 2010; Stöckl et al. *Trafficking of Vietnamese women and girls for marriage in China*, Global Health Research and Policy, vol 2, 2017; UNICEF, *An analysis of the commercial sexual exploitation of children in selected provinces and cities of Viet Nam*, 2011.

<sup>52</sup> Rafferty, Y., *The Impact of Trafficking on Children: Psychological and Social Policy Perspectives*, Child Development Perspectives, 2:1, 2008; K. Apland and E. Yarrow, *Casting Light in the Shadows – Child and Youth Migration, Exploitation and Trafficking in Viet Nam*, Coram International, 2019; Stöckl, H., Kiss, L., Koehler, J. et al., *Trafficking of Vietnamese women and girls for marriage in China*, Global Health Research and Policy, 2: 28, 2017, p 4. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41256-017-0049-4>.

<sup>53</sup> CEOP, *The trafficking of women and children from Vietnam*, 2011; Office of Senator Thanh Hai NGO, *Vietnam Human Rights Report, 2015: Events of 2014*, 2015.

<sup>54</sup> Kneebone et al., *Child Labour & Migration: From Hue to Saigon, Vietnam*, 2013. Available at: <https://www.bluedragon.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Child-Labour-Migration-Monash-University-2014.pdf>

<sup>55</sup> US Department of State, *2021 Trafficking in Persons Report: Vietnam* <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/vietnam/>.

<sup>56</sup> K. Apland and E. Yarrow, *Casting Light in the Shadows – Child and Youth Migration, Exploitation and Trafficking in Viet Nam*, Coram International, 2019.

<sup>57</sup> ILO, *Viet Nam National Labour Survey 2018*, p. ix.

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*deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control of another person for the purposes of exploitation.”<sup>58</sup>* It should be noted that force or coercion is not required to be established for trafficking in children to occur.

In 2019, Coram International worked with UNICEF Viet Nam and the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MoLISA) in Viet Nam to conduct a comprehensive study on the prevalence, causes, patterns and trends of child trafficking.<sup>59</sup> The study utilised a novel, mixed methods design to try and overcome some of the challenges associated with identifying and measuring child trafficking. This included the development of a framework of ‘indicators’ which could be used to identify whether a child had experiences of coercion, violence or exploitation in the context of (independent) migration, indicative of trafficking.<sup>60</sup> According to findings from the study, an estimated 5.6 per cent of children in Viet Nam had experiences indicative of, or consistent with, child trafficking(). While the majority of cases (92.3 per cent) were identified as occurring within the context of internal migration, it was estimated that 0.4 per cent, or one in every 250 children in Viet Nam, may have experiences indicative of trafficking in the context of cross-border migration.

Whilst research has identified the prevalence and impact of child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration, there are significant gaps in knowledge in relation to drivers of this phenomenon. Understanding the drivers of child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration is essential for targeted prevention, although, to date, there is limited evidence of the drivers of child trafficking other than that of poverty.<sup>61</sup>

This research sought to fill knowledge gaps and develop an in-depth, contextual understanding of drivers of child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration in Viet Nam beyond the indicator of poverty, in addition to understanding the evolving landscape of child trafficking (particularly in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic). This research adopted a business lens, to understand business as a driver of child trafficking and the practices being implemented to prevent and provide protection for victims of child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration. The research employed a mixed-methods design, gathering insight through a desk review, analysis of secondary quantitative data and primary qualitative interviews to address research questions.

## 2.2 Research questions

The research aimed to address the five following research questions:

1. What are the drivers of child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration beyond poverty?
2. What factors influence young people’s attitudes and perceptions towards migration, and how are these linked to child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration?
3. How do risks and experiences of child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration differ across different labour industries?
4. What role do businesses play as drivers of child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration and how have businesses been responding to child protection needs (particularly in informal sectors)?

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<sup>58</sup> Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000) (The Palermo Protocol), Article 1.

<sup>59</sup> K. Apland and E. Yarrow, *Casting Light in the Shadows – Child and Youth Migration, Exploitation and Trafficking in Viet Nam*, Coram International, 2019.

<sup>60</sup> For full list of indicators, see, *Ibid*, pps. 21-23.

<sup>61</sup> K. Apland and E. Yarrow, *Casting Light in the Shadows – Child and Youth Migration, Exploitation and Trafficking in Viet Nam*, Coram International, 2019.



5. How have child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration, associated protection risks and access to protection support evolved over the last three years (particularly during Covid-19)?

### 1.3 Scope

The focus of this study is on child trafficking and labour exploitation in the context of migration. Children affected by migration will be considered to be victims of human trafficking where they fall within the legal definition of trafficking; a legal category that results in special protections under international law. Child trafficking is also a child protection risk and can be considered, in some cases, to be a driver of migration.

### 3.4 Definition of key terms

This case study uses the following understandings of key terms and concepts:

**'Children affected by migration'** (CABM) is a broad umbrella term that encompasses children (those aged under 18 years)<sup>62</sup> who move or have moved within their country of origin, or across the border into another State, temporarily or permanently. This includes children who migrate voluntarily or involuntarily, whether as a result of forced displacement due to national disaster or conflict, or for economic, social, educational or cultural reasons; or individually or to accompany parents who have migrated internally. It also includes children affected by the migration of a parent / parents ('children remaining behind').<sup>63</sup>

**'Child protection'** is the prevention and response to *"all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse"*<sup>64</sup> against persons under 18 years of age.<sup>65</sup> This includes an examination of the types of protection risks to which children affected by migration may be exposed and the response of child protection systems and services to these risks.

**'Child trafficking'** is a legal term that refers to *"the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or for other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control of another person for the purposes of exploitation."*<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> This is in accordance with international definitions of childhood, in particular, as set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 1. It should be noted that in the domestic law of some ASEAN States, such as Thailand, children who have attained majority through marriage are not included within the definition of 'child' in the Child Protection Act 2003. In addition, in some domestic laws, such as the Philippine Republic Act 7610 a child over the age of 18 who cannot fully take care of himself because of a physical or mental disability or condition is included within the definition of a child.

<sup>63</sup> Joint General Comment No. 3 (2017) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and No. 22 (2017) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the general principles regarding the human rights of children in the context of migration, CRC/C/GC/22 16 November 2017, para. 9. See also UNDESA which defines an international migrant as anyone who changes his or her country of usual residence 1 United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (1998). Recommendations on Statistics on International Migration, Revision 1. Sales No. E.98.XVII.14; and International Organization for Migration: *Who is a migrant?* [www.iom.int/who-is-a-migrant](http://www.iom.int/who-is-a-migrant), accessed 6 April 2021.

<sup>64</sup> Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 19(1); UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 13 (2011), The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence, 18 April 2011, CRC/C/GC/13 (CRC GC No. 13 (2011)), para 4.

<sup>65</sup> This is in accordance with Article 1 of the CRC.

<sup>66</sup> United Nations, Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Protocol).

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However, it should be noted that force or coercion is not required to be established for trafficking in children to occur.

## 5 Methodology

The study utilised a mixed methods approach, using quantitative and qualitative data to obtain an in-depth, contextual understanding of the drivers of child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration in Viet Nam and address the core research questions. The study involved analysis of secondary quantitative data from a previous child trafficking report<sup>67</sup>, in addition to primary qualitative data collection.

### 3.1 Data collection methods and sampling

#### 1.3.1 Desk Review

First, a desk review was undertaken, including relevant UN reports, academic articles and news articles available in English related to drivers of child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration in Viet Nam. The findings from this desk review are presented in the Background and context section within the findings section.

#### 1.3.2 Primary Data Collection

A total of 30 semi-structured Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted with key stakeholders within government ministries, NGOs and UN partners. Additionally, a small number of interviews were conducted with business leaders / employers. Qualitative data was collected by the national research partner. KIIs were conducted in Vietnamese, and were then transcribed and translated into English.

The aim of these interviews was to gather updated knowledge on the situation of child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration. Interviewees were asked to share their insights into drivers of trafficking beyond poverty and changes in the landscape of child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration and protection and support services (questions 1 and 5). For the business lens, questions focused specifically on business as a driver of child trafficking, actions businesses are taking to prevent and protect children from trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration, and opportunities for improvement and reform in this area (question 4).

#### *Sample*

A total of 30 interviews were conducted with 27 organizations (for a full list of participating organizations, see Appendix 7.1). The sample was selected purposively, whereby key informants were selected in partnership with UNICEF based on their expertise and ability to provide insight to the core research questions.

#### 1.3.3 Secondary data analysis

The Coram International team analyzed quantitative data previously collected by Coram International on child trafficking in Viet Nam.<sup>68</sup> To build on the knowledge base gathered in the original research, the data was analyzed to understand drivers of child exploitation in the context of migration beyond poverty (question 1), in addition to differences in drivers and experiences of child exploitation in the context of migration across different labour industries (question 3).

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<sup>67</sup> K. Apland and E. Yarrow, *Casting Light in the Shadows – Child and Youth Migration, Exploitation and Trafficking in Viet Nam*, Coram International, 2019.

<sup>68</sup> K. Apland and E. Yarrow, *Casting Light in the Shadows – Child and Youth Migration, Exploitation and Trafficking in Viet Nam*, Coram International, 2019.

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Rather than examining the presence of a child trafficking indicator (as in the original trafficking report),<sup>69</sup> this study focused on examining the drivers of children’s experiences of exploitation in the context of migration, namely sexual, physical and emotional violence, wage exploitation and exploitative hours. This nuanced approach enabled the development of in-depth, contextualized understanding of the broader drivers of exploitation in the context of migration for children, including key demographics such as age, ethnicity, education, gender and wealth, in addition to children’s perceived agency in migration.

Data was then examined to understand whether the key drivers of child exploitation in the context of migration are also the drivers of attitudes towards migration for children and young people who have not yet migrated (question 3). The aim of this analysis was to provide insight into the circumstances associated with more positive views towards migration, which make children more likely to migrate and, therefore more vulnerable to exploitation.

Where relevant, findings in relation to drivers of trafficking identified in the original child trafficking report (i.e. drivers of the presence of a child trafficking indicator) are highlighted in text boxes throughout the findings section.

### *Sample*

For the present study, the majority of analyses were conducted on individuals who had migrated before the age of 18 (N=166), to understand predictors of violence and exploitation and factors related to industries in which the children worked. To understand factors relating to attitudes towards migration and to develop a further understanding of the drivers of trafficking, analyses were also conducted on the sample of children and young people who had not previously migrated (N=3,333).

## 3.2 Data analysis

Analysis of quantitative data was conducted in Stata using a range of inferential analysis techniques, depending on the research questions. Analyses included multiple regression, logistic regression, one-way ANOVA, Chi<sup>2</sup> and T-tests.

For qualitative data, thematic analysis was conducted to draw out the key themes relating to the research questions. All qualitative data was coded and analyzed using NVivo software.

## 3.3 Verification and validation

This report underwent two rounds of verification and validation. As a first step, UNICEF EAPRO and key stakeholders (including representatives from Country Offices) provided written feedback on a first draft of the report. Coram International made necessary amendments to the report, before then undergoing the second phase of validation. This phase of validation involved the presentation of key findings from the case study to the UNICEF Viet Nam country office and stakeholders, including NGOs who participated in the research. The validation meeting was held remotely over Zoom. Following the meeting, any final amendments based on feedback during the validation meeting were implemented to the report.

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<sup>69</sup> K. Apland and E. Yarrow,  *Casting Light in the Shadows – Child and Youth Migration, Exploitation and Trafficking in Viet Nam*, Coram International, 2019.

### 3.4 Ethics

The research project was carried out in compliance with UNICEF's *Ethics Charter and Guidance for Ethical Research Involving Children*,<sup>70</sup> Coram International's *Ethical Guidelines for Field Research with Children* and recent guidance relating to data collection during Covid-19.<sup>71</sup> The team developed a detailed ethical protocol for the research (attached at Annex 7.1), and a full ethical review was carried out for the research by Coram's external review board, with approval obtained prior to the commencement of the data collection.

### 3.5 Limitations

The table below provides a summary of the limitations of this study and the steps taken by Coram International to mitigate these limitations.

Constraints/ Limitations	Mitigating Strategies
<b>Covid-19 outbreak and remote data collection</b>	<p>The Covid-19 outbreak put significant constraints on data collection and travel, limiting the international research team's ability to collect data face to face, and the ability of the national researchers to travel to other provinces. Additionally, the Covid-19 pandemic and resulting restrictions impacted on the availability of participants, particularly at the sub-national levels. At the national level, participants were interviewed remotely and occasionally struggled with unstable internet and phone line connections, frustrating opportunities to carry out interviews remotely. There are some limitations to collecting qualitative data remotely; technical and connectivity issues have the potential to interrupt the interview, and it can be more difficult for the interviewer to build a 'rapport' with the participant, which may have discouraged the participant from sharing freely and openly, ultimately decreasing the quality of the data collected. In order to mitigate these impacts, the team has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitored the situation on a continuous basis, in order to inform decisions regarding travel and any necessary amendments to data collection procedures;</li> <li>• Carried out national data collection through virtual means;</li> <li>• Where face to face data collection was conducted, Covid-19 safety measures were put in place; and</li> <li>• Ensured robust training, mentoring and supervision of national consultants through virtual connection.</li> </ul>
<b>Potential reporting bias and recall bias.</b>	<p>Professional stakeholders may have selectively revealed or suppressed information, hoping to 'look good' rather than to present the realities of their work. To mitigate against reporting bias, the research team emphasised the</p>

<sup>70</sup> Graham, A., Powell, M., Taylor, N., Anderson, D. and Fitzgerald, R. *Ethical research involving children* (2013), UNICEF Innocenti: Florence.

<sup>71</sup> Berman, G., *Ethical considerations for evidence generation involving children on the COVID-19 pandemic* (2020), UNICEF Innocenti: Florence, DP 2020:01; The Market Research Society, *MRS Post-Covid-19 lockdown guidance: undertaking safe face-to-face data collection*, 14 July 2020.

	anonymity and confidentiality of the research to stakeholders, in order to encourage honest, transparent responses.
<b>Reliance on secondary data</b>	Due to Covid-19 restrictions and the wealth of previously collected quantitative and qualitative data on child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration in Viet Nam, a core component of this case study was the analysis of pre-existing data (collected 2017-2019). This limits the extent to which new areas of interest could be explored, and may mean that current issues and patterns are not reflected in the quantitative. This limitation was mitigated by KIIs involving discussions around any developments and changes in observed child trafficking issues over the last three years, in addition to including relevant new literature in the desk review. This enabled new data to be triangulated with existing quantitative data to ensure that the same issues remain prevalent, in addition to enabling the identification of any new emerging issues.
<b>Sample size of migrant children in secondary data.</b>	The total sample size of migrant children in the current study was N = 166. For this reason, when disaggregating the data by different group characteristics, in some instances, the small sample size made it difficult to draw meaningful comparisons, and increased the likelihood of a type II error (noted in the findings section, but particularly in relation to child disability). Additionally, for some analyses, the assumption of equal variances was violated; however, the impact of this on the interpretation of results was mitigated by implementing non-parametric and more robust, conservative analyse methods, where necessary to enable interpretation of results.

## 6 Background and Context

This section sets out the findings of the comprehensive review of data and literature on child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration in Viet Nam, derived from a synthesis and analysis of available literature relating to the core research questions.

### 1.4 Drivers of child trafficking and exploitation

#### 4.1.1 Poverty

Limited economic opportunities and high unemployment in the rural areas of Viet Nam remain the main drivers of internal migration flows to industrialised and urbanised towns and cities, as poorer agricultural communities migrate to find employment.<sup>72</sup> Research has documented instances of exploitative and debt bonded labour with young people having to pay back their traffickers for money given to their families.<sup>73</sup> Families participate in trafficking of daughters for the purposes of marriage in exchange for goods, payment in kind or an agreed 'bride price', which tends to be higher for younger girls, who are typically considered more desirable.<sup>74</sup> Research conducted by Coram International on child trafficking found that children in the lowest wealth quintile were five times as likely to have an indicator of child trafficking than children in the highest wealth quintile, and 2.4 times as likely to have experienced force or exploitation in the context of migration.<sup>75</sup> Poverty is an ongoing problem with a study from 2006 finding that 8 out of 10 Vietnamese girls trafficked to Cambodia for the purpose of sex work were sold by family members for economic survival.<sup>76</sup>

#### 1.4.2 Ethnicity and cultural practices

There are some examples demonstrating that ethnicity and /or cultural practices of certain ethnic groups can drive trafficking and exploitation. For instance, Blue Dragon has reported that ethnic minority children are 3 times more likely to be trafficked than Kinh persons.<sup>77</sup> However, there is limited evidence to suggest that ethnicity alone places children at increased risk of trafficking and exploitation. Research conducted by Coram International shows that, whilst children from ethnic minority groups are more likely to have an indicator of child trafficking, this association is diminished after accounting for wealth, suggesting that poverty remains the main driver for the vulnerability of ethnic minority children to trafficking and exploitation.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Kneebone et al., *Child Labour & Migration: From Hue to Saigon, Vietnam*, 2013 <https://www.bluedragon.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Child-Labour-Migration-Monash-University-2014.pdf>.

<sup>73</sup> Stöckl, H., Kiss, L., Koehler, J. et al., *Trafficking of Vietnamese women and girls for marriage in China*, *Global Health Research and Policy*, 2: 28, 2017, p 4. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41256-017-0049-4>.

<sup>74</sup> K. Apland and E. Yarrow, *Casting Light in the Shadows – Child and Youth Migration, Exploitation and Trafficking in Viet Nam*, Coram International, 2019.

<sup>75</sup> U.C. Davis, *An analysis of human trafficking for sexual exploitation in Vietnam and a comprehensive approach to combating the problem*, 2009.

<sup>76</sup> K. Apland and E. Yarrow, *Casting Light in the Shadows – Child and Youth Migration, Exploitation and Trafficking in Viet Nam*, Coram International, 2019.

<sup>77</sup> Childwise, *Who are the Sex Tourists in Cambodia?* 2006, p.8.

<sup>78</sup> Blue Dragon, *What makes people vulnerable to human trafficking?* November 2021, p.23.

<sup>79</sup> K. Apland and E. Yarrow, *Casting Light in the Shadows – Child and Youth Migration, Exploitation and Trafficking in Viet Nam*, Coram International, 2019.



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### 1.4.3 Familial obligation and desire to support families

The obligation for children to support families financially can also play a role in the trafficking of children in the context of poverty and financial hardship. Some children willingly migrate for the purposes of marriage out of a desire to help their family's financial circumstances.<sup>79</sup> Filial obligation is also a driving factor for children migrating for employment in Viet Nam. In one study, the majority of adolescents reported *"the only reason they were able to endure their work hours and the complexity of city life was their desire to improve their parents' lives."*<sup>80</sup> Female labour migration is also increasing in Viet Nam as a result of easing of social stigma; adolescent girls are increasingly being encouraged to *"act against their own longer-term interests"* to benefit their parents' economic situation.<sup>81</sup>

### 1.4.4 Trauma and family relationships

Violence and trauma within the family can be a contributing factor in children's decision to migrate, putting them at risk of exploitation. In Viet Nam, for example *"many child victims of sexual exploitation report being driven from their homes due to physical violence, family and household dysfunction, drug abuse and domestic violence and are forced to migrate to another region of Viet Nam to start a new life."*<sup>82</sup> Reduced parental care has also been evidenced as a risk for child trafficking; previous research on child trafficking in Viet Nam found that children from single parent households and households in which the head was not a parent were at increased risk of experiencing an indicator of child trafficking.<sup>83</sup>

### 1.4.5 Attitudes, norms and beliefs

Attitudes, beliefs and norms about independent child migration can drive child trafficking and labour exploitation in the context of migration. One study on children who migrated for labour from Hue to Ho Chi Minh found that parents' views on child labour were influential in the decisions to allow children to migrate for labour purposes.<sup>84</sup> This research found widespread acceptance of child labour migration due to the potential for increasing the family's income, decreasing children's educational financial burdens on the family, improved life chances for children (experience, income and opportunities for job advancement), and the norms of unpaid child labour within family businesses. For many families who viewed child migration favourably, parents were unaware of the risks associated with child labour.<sup>85</sup> Conversely, in the cases where parents did not send children away to engage in labour, an awareness of the dangers of child labour was cited as a key reason for this decision. A lack of knowledge of the risks of trafficking has also been cited as a risk factor for trafficking for women in pursuit of labour opportunities in Viet Nam.<sup>86</sup> The belief that migrating can

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<sup>79</sup>Kneebone et al., *Child Labour & Migration: From Hue to Saigon, Vietnam*, 2013. Available at: <https://www.bluedragon.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Child-Labour-Migration-Monash-University-2014.pdf>.

<sup>80</sup> Jones, N. et. al, *Falling between the cracks: How poverty and migration are resulting in inadequate care for children living in Viet Nam's Mekong Delta*, ODI, December 2014, p 3.

<sup>81</sup> Jones, Nicola et al., *Falling Between the Cracks: How Poverty and Migration are Resulting in Inadequate Care for Children Living in Viet Nam's Mekong Delta*, ODI, December 2014, p 3.

<sup>82</sup> Loan, L. H, Thanh, V. T. L, & Maternowska, M. C., *Applying the child-centred and integrated framework for violence prevention: A case study on physical violence in Viet Nam*, *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies*, 13:sup1, 2018, p 43. DOI: 10.1080/17450128.2018.1476749.

<sup>83</sup> K. Apland and E. Yarrow, *Casting Light in the Shadows – Child and Youth Migration, Exploitation and Trafficking in Viet Nam*, Coram International, 2019, p.44.

<sup>84</sup> Kneebone et al., *Child Labour & Migration: From Hue to Saigon, Vietnam*, 2013. p.49.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Van Nguyen et al. *Human Trafficking in Vietnam: The Issues and Responses of the Vietnamese Government*, *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change*, 2020, 13(7).

improve life chances has further been shown to be linked to risk of child trafficking: in the previously mentioned Viet Nam child trafficking report: 23.7 per cent of children who had experienced an indicator of trafficking reported that their primary reason for migrating was the pursuit of education.<sup>87</sup>

## 1.5 Businesses as drivers of child trafficking and labour exploitation

### 4.2.1 Trafficking and exploitation in different industries

Child trafficking and labour exploitation in the context of migration in Viet Nam occurs across a range of industries. Much of the focus on identifying, preventing and supporting victims of child trafficking has historically been in the context of sexual exploitation, and the majority of court cases relating to children are concerned with sex trafficking, particularly among girls.<sup>88</sup> However, research indicates that the highest number of children experience indicators of trafficking in labour industries. Children were most likely to have indicators of trafficking in the services industry (15 per cent of young people with indicators of trafficking), followed by the manufacturing, garment and agriculture industries.<sup>89</sup>

While overall rates of trafficking were found to be equal for boys and girls, previous research by Coram International showed that boys are more likely to experience trafficking in agriculture and manufacturing industries, whereas girls are more likely to have experiences indicative of trafficking in the garment industry and in sex work.<sup>90</sup> Research conducted by UNICEF also indicates that child labour exploitation in the context of migration is a particular issue in the footwear and apparel sector in Viet Nam.<sup>91</sup> Adolescents use false identity documents (including the documentation of older siblings) to obtain work in factories where policies prohibiting the employment of anyone under the age of 18 are in place, putting them at risk of exploitation. This is particularly common amongst adolescents who migrate from rural to urban areas, either alone or to join parents, and the use of false documents means that it is difficult to ascertain the scale of the phenomenon.<sup>92</sup>

The prominence of tourism in Viet Nam has also led to the development of a sex tourism industry, with international tourists engaging in the sexual exploitation of children. Research conducted by UNICEF indicates that over three quarters of sex trafficked children are abused by foreign ‘customers’ in Viet Nam<sup>93</sup>, although more recent evidence suggests that the majority of cases of child sexual exploitation are committed by nationals (though it should be noted, this evidence forming the regional perspective is derived from evidence in Cambodia and the Philippines, not Viet Nam).<sup>94</sup> This research also noted the occurrence of Vietnamese teenage girls in the town of Hekou, China, close to the Viet Nam border, being sexually exploited by nationals in China who migrate for the purpose of exploiting “young, exotic, beautiful and cheap [Vietnamese]

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<sup>87</sup> K. Apland and E. Yarrow, *Casting Light in the Shadows – Child and Youth Migration, Exploitation and Trafficking in Viet Nam*, Coram International, 2019.

<sup>88</sup> Blue Dragon Children’s Foundation, *Human Trafficking and Traffickers in Vietnam: An analysis of the nature of trafficking and the profile of traffickers in Vietnam based on information from court cases*, July 2021.

<sup>89</sup> K. Apland and E. Yarrow, *Casting Light in the Shadows – Child and Youth Migration, Exploitation and Trafficking in Viet Nam*, Coram International, 2019. p.48

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> UNICEF (2017) *The Apparel and Footwear Sector and Children in Vietnam*, p.5.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> UNICEF, *An analysis of the commercial sexual exploitation of children in selected provinces and cities of Viet Nam*, 2011

<sup>94</sup> ECPAT, *Global Study on Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism, 2016*, p.42. Available at: <https://ecpat.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Global-Report-Offenders-on-the-Move.pdf>

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women”<sup>95</sup>, indicating that children who have migrated across the border are vulnerable sexual exploitation by internal tourists.

### 1.5.2 Businesses and child trafficking

Businesses play a key role in driving and providing protection from child trafficking and labour exploitation. For example, labour laws and policies within the formal garment manufacturing sector mean that labour among children under the age of 15 years in this context is rare (due to the only role within garment manufacturing included in the prescribed list of light work being permitted for children under the age of 15 is “Cutting threads, sewing buttons, sewing button holes and packing hand-woven products into boxes”)<sup>96</sup>, with many international buyers prohibiting the hiring of anyone under the age of 18 years.<sup>97</sup> However, the raising of the age, while intended to be protective has had perverse results. The high intolerance of child labour in formal sectors at the same time as a lack of vocational, educational or work opportunities for adolescents under the age of 18 years has meant that children are increasingly likely to seek employment in the informal sector<sup>98</sup> where they are at increased risk of exploitation, particularly in the lower tiers of the apparel and footwear supply chains.

The difficulty of obtaining official migration papers also contributes to increasing vulnerability and leads children to migrate without papers, or with forged documents, limiting them to unofficial and less well paid employment opportunities across informal garment, manufacturing and services sectors.<sup>99</sup> Common forms of child labour exploitation in informal sectors include street hawking, begging, forced labour in the garment and construction industries, labour in domestic family homes, and exploitation in privately run rural gold mines,<sup>100</sup> as well as selling lottery tickets, serving as sale assistants, sorting scrap metal, working in restaurants or processing food, wood or rubber.<sup>101</sup> Girls are particularly vulnerable to trafficking for the purpose of domestic labour. A recent report published by the IOM notes that domestic labour is often unregulated or poorly regulated and occurs in private spaces.<sup>102</sup>

### 1.5.3 Best practices for the prevention of child trafficking and exploitation in business

Viet Nam is one of the 25 pathfinder countries within Alliance 8.7, the global partnership dedicated to reaching SDG 8.7 (i.e., to eradicate forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and child labour). The 2020-2021 Viet Nam pathfinder report outlines the activities undertaken by businesses and the government and highlights progress made towards eradicating child trafficking and child labour (including in the context of migration). These activities include: child labour forums with key business stakeholders; training to improve capacity to identify, prevent and provide support to trafficking victims; community and school outreach programmes on safe migration and trafficking prevention to students in high-risk areas; community awareness

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<sup>95</sup> ECPAT, *Global Study on Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism*, 2016, p.58

<sup>96</sup> MoLISA, *Circular elaborating some articles of the labor code on minor workers*, 12 November 2020 (document provided by UNICEF, Vietnam).

<sup>97</sup> UNICEF (2017) *The Apparel and Footwear Sector and Children in Vietnam*, p.5.

<sup>98</sup> UNICEF (2017) *The Apparel and Footwear Sector and Children in Vietnam*, p.5.

<sup>99</sup> Jones, N. et. al, *Falling between the cracks: How poverty and migration are resulting in inadequate care for children living in Viet Nam’s Mekong Delta*, ODI, December 2014, p 36.

<sup>100</sup> Kneebone et al., *Child Labour & Migration: From Hue to Saigon, Vietnam*, 2013.

<sup>101</sup> Jones, N. et. al, *Falling between the cracks: How poverty and migration are resulting in inadequate care for children living in Viet Nam’s Mekong Delta*, ODI, December 2014.

<sup>102</sup> IOM, *Supporting brighter futures, Young women and girls and labour migration in South-East Asia and the Pacific*, 2019.

raising on the risks of child labour; the development of a trafficking hotline application on the popular social media platform, 'Zalo'; the ratification of the ILO Convention 105 on forced labour, and; revisions to the Labour Code expanding the scope of regulations in the informal sector (where child labour primarily occurs) and the inclusion of a chapter on minor workers.<sup>103</sup>

Recognising the importance of businesses in preventing child labour exploitation and respecting child rights more broadly, UNICEF has been working in strategic partnership with the Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI)'s Office for Business Sustainable Development (SdforB) on the project 'Promoting Children's Rights and Business Principles among Enterprises in Viet Nam' since 2017, which involves engaging with the business community in Viet Nam to promote responsible business for children, with the aim of strengthening corporate knowledge, capacity and commitment to respect and support children's rights, in accordance with the Children's Rights and Business Principles,<sup>104</sup> through advocacy, assessments/research, awareness raising and capacity building.<sup>105</sup> Within this work, UNICEF and VCCI's SdforB have focused on the promotion of child rights in relation to child labour in the apparel and footwear industry.

NGOs and IOs are implementing programmes in Viet Nam to improve knowledge of child trafficking within businesses. For example, IOM implements a programme called CREST (Corporate Responsibility in Eliminating Slavery and Trafficking<sup>106</sup>) to address trafficking and exploitation in business operations and supply chains. CREST provides training to enterprises on supply chains, assessments and audits, to inform businesses about trafficking and modern slavery. By providing the training and tools for businesses to develop recruitment systems, these programmes aim to help businesses work with suppliers and subcontractors to ensure there is no child labour in supply chains.

### 4.3 The impact of Covid-19 on child trafficking and exploitation

Initial reports suggest that the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in decreased employment opportunities (and resulting loss of income), restrictions on movement / strict Covid-19 containment measures, and other socio-economic stressors, which have increased the vulnerability of children to trafficking, particularly for children in rural areas and ethnic minorities.<sup>107</sup> Due to lost economic opportunities during Covid-19, there has been a decrease in the number of children attending school and an increase in children migrating from rural to urban areas and becoming children living in the street.<sup>108</sup> A high proportion of children have also been experiencing violence as a result of economic stress and social isolation due to Covid-19.<sup>109</sup> A rapid assessment conducted by UNICEF in 2020 indicated that school closures had increased levels of child labour and that financial

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<sup>103</sup> Alliance 8.7, *Vietnam: Annual Pathfinder Progress Report, May 2020 – April 2021*, 2021.

<sup>104</sup> UNICEF, *UN Global Compact & Save the Children, Children's Business Rights and Principles*. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/vietnam/media/2271/file/Children's%20Rights%20and%20Business%20Principles.pdf>.

<sup>105</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/vietnam/responsible-business-children>, accessed 19 October 2021.

<sup>106</sup> [IOM's CREST Programme | IOM Viet Nam](#)

<sup>107</sup> Plan International and Save the Children., *Because we Matter: Addressing Covid-19 and violence Against Girls in Asia-Pacific Policy Brief*, 2020. p 8. [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/PI\\_STC\\_BecauseWeMatterPolicyBrief-FINAL.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/PI_STC_BecauseWeMatterPolicyBrief-FINAL.pdf); US Department of State, 2021, *2021 Trafficking in Persons Report: Vietnam*. Available at: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/vietnam/>.

<sup>108</sup> KII with UNICEF Viet Nam focal point, February 2021.

<sup>109</sup> UNICEF, *A Rapid Assessment on Violence against Women and Children (VAWC) as an Impact of Covid-19*. 2020, pps. 28-31.

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difficulties as a result of loss of employment had led to an increase in child marriage.<sup>110</sup> Research has found that at least 36 per cent of girls who did not return to school after Covid-19 had married during school closures, and that increases in poverty had led to a high proportion of boys not returning to school, instead seeking out employment.<sup>111</sup> The UNICEF rapid assessment also noted that migrant children were particularly vulnerable to the impacts of Covid-19. Increases in poverty due to Covid-19 have been notably linked to increases in child labour in the construction industry in urban areas.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> UNICEF, *Covid-19 Rapid Assessment: Social assistance needs of children and families affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in Viet Nam*, December 2020. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/vietnam/media/8336/file/Rapid%20Assessment%20on%20social%20assistance%20needs%20of%20children%20and%20families%20affected%20by%20the%20COVID-19%20pandemic%20in%20Viet%20Nam%20.pdf>

<sup>111</sup> Blue Dragon, *Back to School: Collaborative and holistic campaigns to prevent child trafficking*, 2021. Available at: <https://www.bluedragon.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Back-to-School-Report.pdf>.

<sup>112</sup> UNICEF, *Rapid assessment on the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 on children and families in Viet Nam*, August 2020.

## 7 Findings

This section outlines findings from primary qualitative data collection (KIs) and secondary analysis of quantitative child trafficking data collected for the original child trafficking in Viet Nam report by Coram International.<sup>113</sup> Findings are presented for the five core research questions set out above.

### 5.1 Drivers of child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration beyond poverty

This section outlines findings in relation to drivers of child exploitation in the context of migration. As mentioned in the methodology, the original report focused on factors that were associated with whether or not children had an indicator of child trafficking (binary yes / no trafficking variable). The present report presents findings in relation to *the forms* of exploitation/violence that children experienced when they migrated (sexual, emotional and physical violence, wage exploitation and exploitative hours) amongst the 166 children in the sample who migrated without a parent/caregiver before the age of 18. The intention is to provide an in-depth, contextualised understanding of the drivers of exploitation in the context of lone child migration, and not just whether or not there was an indicator of trafficking. The box below provides a recap of drivers of child trafficking that were identified in the original child trafficking report.<sup>114</sup>

Recap of original child trafficking report - drivers of child trafficking:

- Overall, the percentage of children in Viet Nam with an indicator of child trafficking is 5.6 per cent.
- Children in the lowest wealth quintile were 5 times more likely to have an indicator of child trafficking than respondents in the top quintile.
- There were no overall gender differences in indicators of child trafficking.
- Children with indicators of child trafficking were significantly less likely to have been living in a household headed by a parent than those without indicators of trafficking (chi square,  $p < .05$ ).
- A higher percentage of respondents with a child trafficking indicator were living in single parent households, particularly in households where the single parent was male (chi square,  $p < .05$ ).
- Household size was associated with child trafficking indicators, with each additional household member increasing the odds of a respondent demonstrating indicators of child trafficking by 10 per cent (logistic regression,  $p < .05$ ).
- Economic vulnerability was the strongest predictor of whether or not children had an indicator of child trafficking; while ethnicity and rurality were initially associated, these diminished after accounting for wealth. Findings concluded that children in poverty are more vulnerable to trafficking and more likely to pursue economic opportunities and enter high risk arrangements or agreements, due to having fewer alternative options.

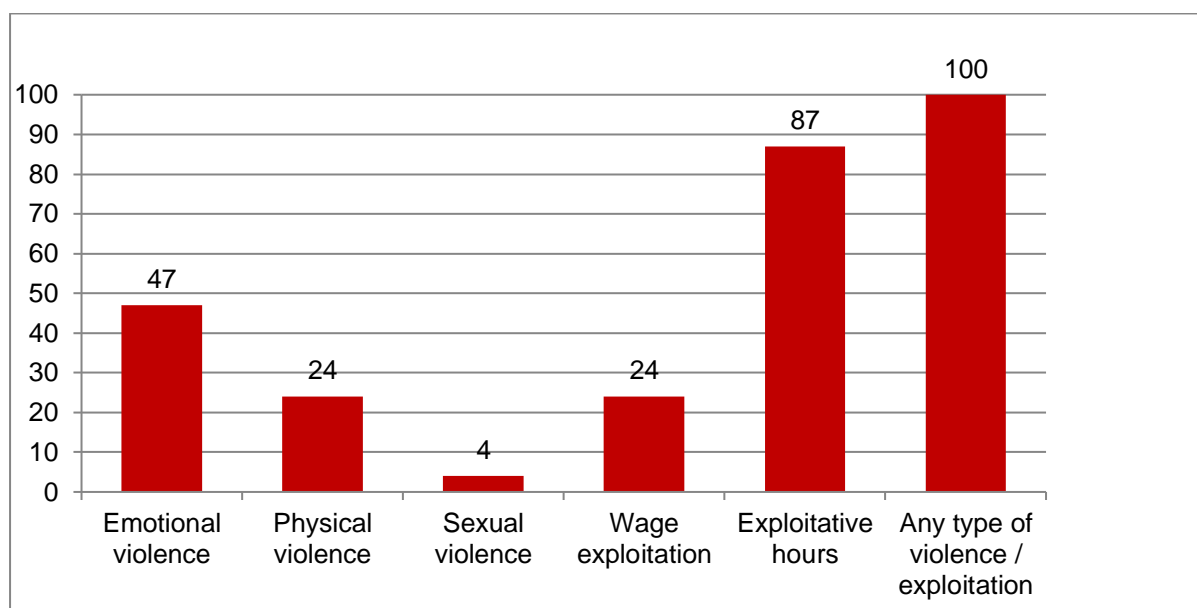
The graph below provides a breakdown of the number and percentage of children who migrated without a parent/caregiver and experienced violence or labour exploitation. In summary, 100 per cent of children

<sup>113</sup> K. Apland and E. Yarrow, *Casting Light in the Shadows – Child and Youth Migration, Exploitation and Trafficking in Viet Nam*, Coram International, 2019.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

experienced some form of exploitation when they migrated, with the highest percentage (87 per cent) experiencing exploitative hours, and the lowest percentage experiencing sexual violence (4 per cent). These findings indicate that any child who migrates without a parent is highly vulnerable to exploitation.

Figure 1: Percentage of migrant children experiencing violence or exploitation (N = 166)



#### 1.5.4 Demographic drivers of exploitation in the context of migration

To develop an in-depth contextual understanding of drivers of child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration beyond poverty, data was analysed to examine any relationships between experiences of violence and labour exploitation and key demographic characteristics, including wealth, age, gender, education, rurality, ethnicity and disability amongst children who migrated without a parent/caregiver before the age of 18.

Children with disabilities were identified as extremely vulnerable to exploitation in the context of migration. Of the total sample of children who had migrated, N = 7 (4 per cent) had either a physical or mental disability. Of these children, all experienced some form of physical violence, emotional violence and exploitative hours when they migrated. These findings demonstrate that disability is a key driver of child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration. However, due to the small sample size of children with disabilities who had migrated, disability was not included as a demographic driver of exploitation in the following analyses.

Different demographic characteristics were drivers of children's experiences of exploitation when they migrated. Wealth was the only clear factor linked to emotional violence, with children in families with higher wealth experiencing emotional violence less frequently (regression,  $p < .05$ ). Ethnicity was linked to experiences of physical violence, with ethnic minority children experiencing more frequent physical violence (regression,  $p < .01$ ); specifically, H'Mong children experienced physical abuse most frequently (one-way ANOVA,  $p < .01$ ). Additionally, children living in rural areas were significantly more likely to experience wage exploitation than children in more urban areas (regression,  $p < .01$ ). Finally, while the overall sample size for children experiencing sexual violence makes it difficult to draw meaningful conclusions, analyses indicated that girls experienced more frequent sexual exploitation than boys (regression,  $p < .05$ ).



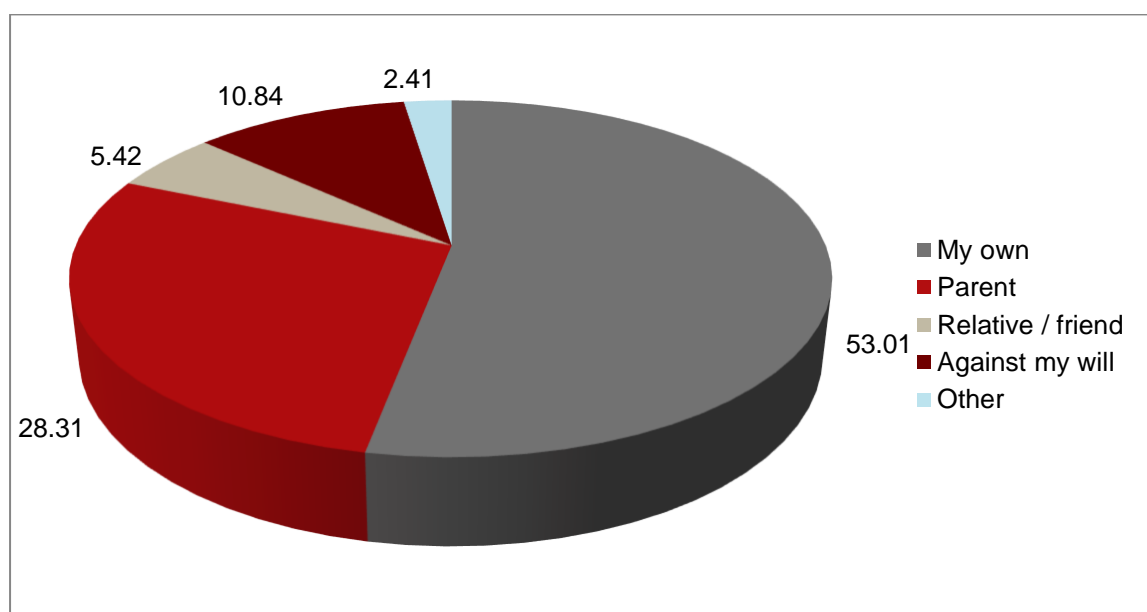
### 1.5.5 Agency in migration and experiences of abuse and exploitation

To understand wider home contexts beyond demographics as drivers for exploitation in the context of migration, data was analysed to understand whether children’s agency in migration and recruitment dynamics (decision making and migration arrangements) were linked to experiences of exploitation for children who had migrated.

Fifty-three per cent of children reported that it was their own decision to migrate. Children who reported that it was their own decision to migrate experienced less frequent physical abuse than children who reported that it was not their own decision (T-test,  $p < .05$ ). Children who were taken against their will were also more likely to have experienced both physical and emotional abuse compared to when children or their parents made the decision for children to migrate (one-way AVOVA,  $p < .001$ ).

These findings indicate that child agency can be a somewhat protective factor in experiences of exploitation in the context of migration. Interestingly, children in ethnic minority groups were less likely to report that it was their decision to migrate (logistic regression,  $p < .05$ ). There was a trend for children with lower education (i.e. on a scale from no education [1] to graduate school [8]) ( $p < .07$ ) and wealth ( $p < .06$ ) to report that it was not their decision to migrate. Therefore, findings suggest that these factors may indirectly drive exploitation through their impact on child agency in migration.

Figure 2: Percentage of child migrants reporting decision migrate



Further relating to children’s agency in migration, there were some notable differences in children’s experiences of abuse based on who had arranged the child’s migration. Children who arranged their own migration experienced less emotional violence compared to all other arrangements (one-way ANOVA,  $p < .001$ ). Where migration was arranged by a romantic partner or neighbour, the child experienced more frequent physical violence than if migration was organized by the child him or herself or a family member (one-way ANOVA,  $p < .001$ ). Ethnic minority children were more likely to have their migration arranged by a neighbour than by themselves or a family member (one-way ANOVA,  $p < .001$ ), with H’Mong children being most likely to have their migration organized by a neighbour. These findings show that when children have less agency in their migration, they are more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

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Overall, findings suggest that multiple demographic factors beyond wealth contribute to child trafficking and experiences of exploitation in the context of migration. Ethnic minority groups are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, with these groups being more likely to experience some form of violence and exploitation when they migrate and have less agency in their migration (which also increases likelihood of experiencing exploitation and abuse). Data trends also indicate that children with lower levels of education may also be vulnerable to exploitation in the context of migration, due to having less agency in their migration.

These findings were supported by key informant interviews. While the majority of informants indicated that poverty is a primary driver for trafficking, several highlighted that education, rurality and ethnicity are also risk factors. Several key informants stated that, often, children from poorer households are unable to complete their education and have fewer educational prospects, either because they cannot pay school fees or afford additional related costs, and therefore more often need to seek employment from a younger age to support their family:

*“Trafficking happens more in poor provinces. Children cannot go to high school and have no prospects for decent livelihoods at home. They are networked with those who already migrated (I am speaking about trafficking to Europe) who encourage people at home to follow their footsteps to change their lives. They take an enormous debt of 35-40 thousand USD to go to Europe (the UK), and have to repay while they are working there. Sometimes they spend their whole life to repay the debt.”<sup>115</sup>*

Poverty and ethnic minority status were also highlighted as interlinked as drivers of trafficking:

*“Children experiencing poverty are of course vulnerable to trafficking. The ethnic dimension of trafficking is quite clear: ethnic minorities are 3 times more likely to be trafficked, and H’Mong people are 14 times more likely to be trafficked than Kinh (Vietnamese majority group) people. Poverty and ethnic minority status are often linked. Ethnic minority people tend to be poorer than Kinh [people], and H’Mong people are among the poorest in Viet Nam. Children living in poor agricultural lands, with limited livelihood opportunities at home, are vulnerable. Those children are also more likely to drop out from school. Ethnic minority girls in mountainous areas are also more vulnerable to child marriages.”<sup>116</sup>*

Several key informants also provided insight as to how other family circumstances can drive trafficking. Some mentioned that children from single parent families are more at risk of trafficking (which is linked to lower wealth), whilst others highlighted that orphan children are particularly vulnerable. Others mentioned how children of migrant parents are also more at risk of trafficking: children who remain behind when parents migrate have lower levels of care and are at increased risk of neglect, and are therefore more at risk of exploitation and trafficking. Children who migrate with their parents are also at risk of exploitation, particularly labour exploitation if they cannot be enrolled in a local school or find it difficult to adapt to their new environment.

Children who are living in families in which family violence is high or who are experiencing neglect are also at increased risk of trafficking. Children experiencing these conditions are driven to migrate and seek a better life to escape the harmful situation at home:

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<sup>115</sup> Interview with an IO, Feb 25 2022.

<sup>116</sup> Interview with an NGO, Feb 15 2022.

*“Beside the poverty factor, family situation affects children’s vulnerability to trafficking and labour exploitation. Children who live in violent families, where parents are fighting each other, they are stressful. They don’t want to live with their families and want to go to other places in hope of having a better life. Some children have conflicts with their parents and decide to leave their houses. Other children might be entangled early in love, or disappointed by love, and this propels them to go.”<sup>117</sup>*

### 1.5.6 Online recruitment of children for the purpose of trafficking

Several key informants indicated that the internet is increasingly being misused for the facilitation of child trafficking. With children having greater access to social media, this provides a new platform through which recruiters can approach, befriend, groom and subsequently traffic children. Around 60-70 per cent of parents who call the Viet Nam child trafficking hotline report that their child has been trafficked through deception on social media.<sup>118</sup>

*“More and more children are now using social media, which means that the risk for trafficking has increased significantly. Traffickers use social media to attract, trick, deceive and recruit victims and connect them with criminal gangs abroad and in Viet Nam. This trend will get more popular in the coming time. Smartphone social media apps are becoming increasingly sophisticated and secure, this creates additional hurdles in the process of tracking and collecting evidence for law enforcement agencies.”<sup>119</sup>*

Several informants noted that social media provides an easier means through which traffickers can recruit victims, because they no longer have to meet them in person, and can pose as different individuals (for example police or a love interest) to deceive victims, or can advertise appealing job opportunities to encourage migration for labour, and then move children into exploitative labour. An NGO provided one example of a case of cross-border trafficking into exploitative labour through social media:

*“Young boys and girls were tricked to Cambodia to work in casinos and gambling centers. Their task was to lure Vietnamese people to come in to play. The traffickers advertised in social media about jobs in online games. Young people did not have enough information and wanted to try. They met with their traffickers and were transported to Cambodia without a passport. As they entered the casino building, they were locked and forced to work. If they refused because they did not want to cause harm to other Vietnamese, they were beaten and forced to achieve a certain turnover. This is a form of trafficking.”<sup>120</sup>*

In summary, there are multiple drivers of child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration. Whilst poverty is a key underlying driver, children in ethnic minority groups, those living in more rural areas and children with lower levels of education are at risk, with these factors often being interlinked. Additionally, children experiencing family violence or neglect are particularly at risk of trafficking and exploitation, as are children who have migrated with parents. Finally, online social media platforms are increasingly being used to recruit children for the purpose of trafficking and exploitation.

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<sup>119</sup> Interview with an NGO, Feb 15 2022.

<sup>120</sup> Interview with Government, Mar 21 2022.

<sup>119</sup> Interview with an ASEAN-ACT, Mar 8, 2022.

<sup>120</sup> Interview with an NGO, Feb 28 2022.

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## 5.2 Knowledge and attitudes as risk indicators for child trafficking and exploitation

In addition to demographic and family situational drivers of child trafficking outlined above, several key informants indicated that one of the main factors contributing to trafficking is a lack of knowledge and awareness of the risks of migrating alone without a parent or caregiver amongst children:

*“Children are vulnerable because they don’t have knowledge and skills to protect themselves. Children are easier targets of manipulation and deceit. Children from poor households are under additional pressure for early school drop-out, and early working. They start finding employment while having insufficient knowledge to find a decent job.”<sup>121</sup>*

Positive views towards migration and lower awareness of the risks of migration are likely to increase children’s likelihood of future migration. The finding that all 166 children in the sample for quantitative analysis who migrated without a parent/caregiver experienced at least one form of violence / exploitation while migrating demonstrates the high risk of exploitation of children who migrate.. It is therefore important to understand factors which make children more likely to migrate without a parent/caregiver and use irregular migration routes, to support the prevention of unsafe migration. To develop further understanding of the role that attitudes and knowledge play in child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration, quantitative data was analysed to understand differences in children and young people’s attitudes towards migration amongst children who have not previously migrated (N=3,333). Key demographic factors that were evidenced as drivers of exploitation in the context of migration throughout section 5.1 were examined as predictors of attitudes towards migration (age, gender, education, ethnicity, rurality, wealth), in addition to other child situational factors (such as whether they were a child worker and child wellbeing).

Specific attitudes that were examined included: children’s desire to migrate internally or abroad; perceptions of migration for work or marriage as empowering; knowledge of the risks of migrating for work or marriage, and reported likelihood of considering migrating irregularly (i.e. without documents) or through informal means. Multiple regression was used to examine the relative contribution of each demographic and situational factor for each attitude, meaning significant associations represent drivers after accounting for wealth.

### 5.2.1 Demographic predictors of knowledge and attitudes towards migration

Younger children were more likely to report that they would like to migrate internally or abroad ( $p < .001$ ), view migrating for work as more empowering ( $p < .001$ ) and were more likely to consider irregular migration routes ( $p < .01$ ). However, there was no apparent link between age and views towards migration for marriage. Overall, younger children may be more vulnerable to trafficking, particularly for the purposes of labour, given their reported increased likelihood of migrating for the purposes of labour (and the already-established link between migration without a parent or carer [i.e. unsafe migration] and experience of exploitation in the quantitative sample) and using irregular migration routes (which also place children at more risk of exploitation).

Children and young people living in more rural areas also had a lower perception of risk in terms of migrating for work or marriage ( $p < .001$ ), and reported that migrating is more empowering, both for work ( $p < .01$ ) and marriage ( $p < .05$ ). Children living in more rural areas were also more likely to consider using irregular migration routes ( $p < .01$ ). Together, these findings suggest that children in rural areas are more vulnerable to trafficking

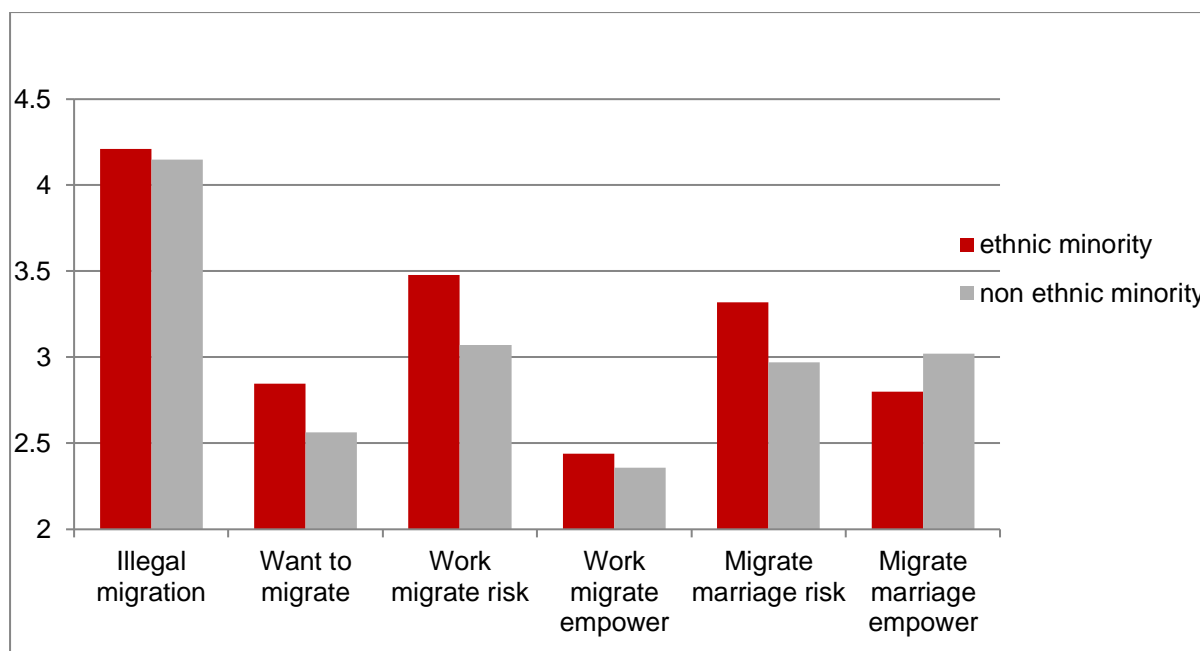
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<sup>121</sup> Interview with an NGO, Feb 21 2022

and exploitation in the context of migration, due to a lack of knowledge of the potential risks of migrating or consideration of the dangers of irregular migration.

Interestingly, children and young people in ethnic minority groups were less likely to want to migrate, had a higher perception of the potential risks of migrating for the purposes of marriage and labour, saw migrating for work as less empowering than non-ethnic minority groups, and were less likely to report that they would consider illegal migration routes ( $p < .001$ ), suggesting overall, that children in ethnic minority groups are more aware of the risks of migrating for labour purposes. Conversely, ethnic minority groups saw migrating for marriage as more empowering ( $p < .001$ ). This may be linked to cultural norms surrounding child marriage amongst ethnic minority groups, particularly H'Mong communities. Findings further support results outlined in the previous section that suggest ethnic minority children have less agency in their migration. While research shows that ethnic minority groups are disproportionately vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation (which is not limited to trafficking for marriage), this is not due to a lack of knowledge of the risks of migrating.

Figure 3. Attitudes towards migration for ethnic minority and non-ethnic minority groups (lower score = more positive attitudes)



Education was not linked to attitudes towards migration. This suggests that, while lower levels of education have been linked to higher risk for child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration (without a parent/caregiver), this is not necessarily due to less educated children viewing migration as more positive or being less aware of risks. This supports the previous finding that children with lower levels of education have less agency in their migration. The trafficking risks for children with lower levels of education may be as a result of increased risk of forced migration or the involvement of others in the process of migrating, rather than individually motivated migration.

Overall, findings suggest that the same demographic characteristics that are linked to increased risk of exploitation for children who migrate without a parent/caregiver are also drivers of more positive views towards migration and likelihood of using irregular migration routes amongst children and young people who have not migrated (and thus, put children at increased risk of future trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration), particularly age, ethnicity and rurality. These are therefore key factors to consider in efforts to promote the safe migration of children and prevention of exploitation.

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### 5.2.2 Home circumstances as drivers of attitudes towards migration

Findings show that children's home circumstances, particularly in relation to their responsibilities, are linked to attitudes towards migration. Children who report that they are responsible for domestic work report a higher desire to migrate, after controlling for age and ethnicity ( $p < .01$ ). Additionally, non-migrant children who are defined as child workers (i.e. are child labourers working exploitative hours and experiencing wage exploitation without migrating, or are child domestic workers or child carers within their home) are significantly more likely to report that they would consider irregular migration ( $p < .05$ ) after controlling for age, rurality and ethnicity. This suggests that children already involved in some form of labour within the home or nearby are at increased risk of trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration. Children who are already exposed to work may be desensitised to the dangers of child labour, or may wish to seek a life away from where they are already engaged in exploitative labour.

### 5.2.3 Wellbeing and relationships as drivers of attitudes towards migration

Attitudes towards migration were examined in relation to emotional wellbeing (including feeling depressed, anxious, isolated, low self-esteem), relationships with others and the receipt of care. Interestingly, children who had more positive relationships with others and reported that they had their care and relationship needs met, were more likely to want to migrate ( $p < .001$ ) and perceived migrating for labour as more empowering ( $p < .001$ ). Conversely, children with lower emotional wellbeing perceived migration for marriage and labour as riskier ( $p < .001$ ). Despite this, children with lower emotional wellbeing ( $p < .01$ ), poorer relationships with others ( $p < .001$ ) and those who reported that their care needs were not being met were significantly more likely to report that they would consider irregular migration routes ( $p < .001$ ).

These findings support research that suggests that, often, children have agency in their decision to migrate, and that a desire to support the family and community can be an empowering prospect for children and young people.<sup>122</sup> Concerningly, findings also indicate that children with lower wellbeing, poorer relationships with others and those who are experiencing neglect are driven to seek out irregular, more dangerous means of migration to escape their home situation, ultimately making them more vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking.

### 5.2.4 Attitudes towards migration for past migrants with indicators of child trafficking

Finally, data was analysed to understand differences in attitudes between children and young people who had migrated and did or did not have an indicator of child trafficking. Children with an indicator of trafficking reported a lower desire to migrate (T-test,  $p < .01$ ). However, indicators of child trafficking were not linked to any other attitudes towards migration, meaning that children who have experienced indicators of child trafficking do not see migrating as less empowering or riskier, and are not deterred from migrating through irregular means. This suggests that, overall, past experience of child trafficking may not prevent children from future migration, leading to potential risk of future exploitation in the context of migration.

Findings demonstrate that the multiple factors which drive child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration (without a parent/caregiver) are also predictive of knowledge and attitudes towards migration amongst children and young people who have not migrated. General patterns showed that younger children and those in more rural areas have more positive attitudes towards migration and are less aware of the

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<sup>122</sup> K. Apland and E. Yarrow, *Casting Light in the Shadows – Child and Youth Migration, Exploitation and Trafficking in Viet Nam*, Coram International, 2019, p.37.

dangers of lone child migration, putting them at greater risk of exploitation. Ethnic minority groups see migration as more dangerous and are less likely to want to migrate or consider irregular migration, which supports the narrative that this group of children, in particular, have little say in whether or not they migrate without a parent/caregiver. Children who are already child workers have, perhaps surprisingly, more positive views towards migration than those who are not working. In addition, children with low emotional wellbeing and poor family relationships or experiences of neglect are more likely to consider irregular migration routes, supporting past research that indicates that child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration is driven by children seeking to escape difficult home circumstances.

### 5.3 Child trafficking and labour exploitation in different industries

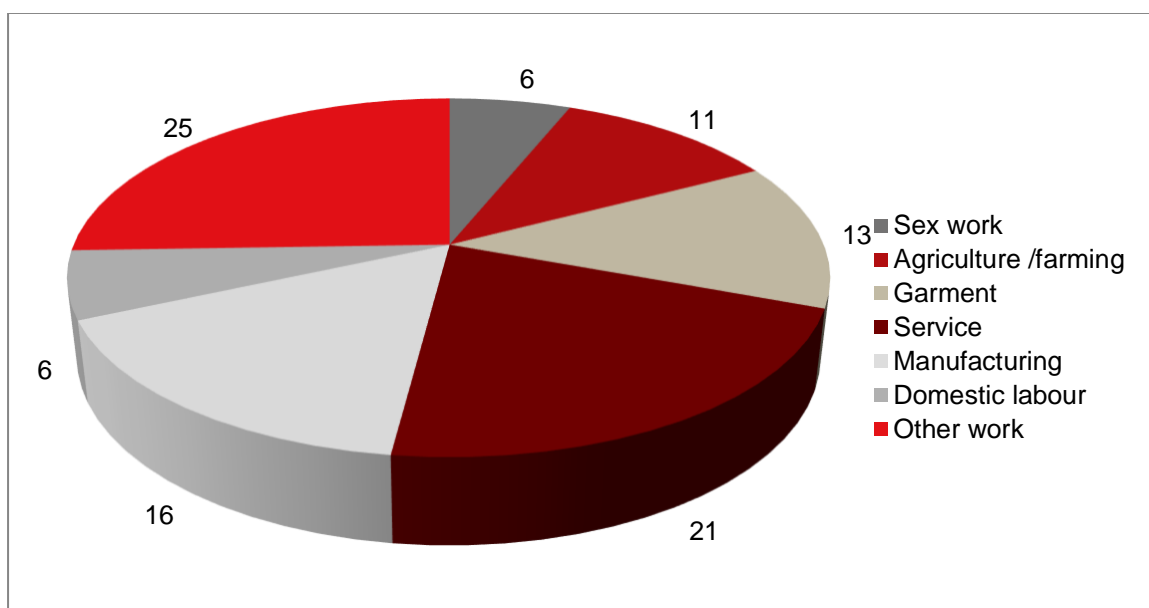
This section outlines findings on children’s experiences of exploitation while migrating to work in different industries, and drivers of child trafficking and exploitation for each industry.

#### 5.3.1 The prevalence of exploitation in different labour industries

To develop an in-depth, contextualised understanding of the situation of migrant children across different labour industries, data was analysed to compare experiences of exploitation across the different industries in which children worked when they migrated. Differences in wellbeing and attitudes towards migration amongst children who worked in different industries and any demographic factors and characteristics associated with children who had worked in particular industries in the context of migration were also examined.

A total of N = 125 (75 per cent) of child migrants reported working in an industry when they migrated. The figure below shows the percentage distribution of the industries in which children worked when migrating. Only one child reported that they worked in the fishing industry, so this was combined with agriculture.

Figure 4: Percentage of child migrants in each labour industry





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As previously mentioned, 100 per cent of children who migrated without a parent experienced some form of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, or labour exploitation (in instances where children worked; wage exploitation or exploitative hours), meaning there is risk of exploitation in all industries (i.e., 100 per cent of the 125 children who worked in an industry when migrating without a parent/caregiver experienced some form of abuse or labour exploitation). Overall, there were no differences in children's experiences of physical abuse across different industries. However, there were significant differences in experiences of emotional violence, with children working in the sex and agriculture industries experiencing the most frequent emotional violence ( $p < .03$ ). There were also significant differences in children's reported safety, with children feeling least safe in the sex work industry ( $p < .01$ ). Children were most likely to experience wage exploitation in the service industry ( $p < .05$ ).

Data was analysed to understand the wellbeing and knowledge and attitudes towards migration of children who have worked in different industries in the context of migration. Whilst it is difficult to ascertain cause and effect in these associations, findings can provide some insight into the experiences of children who migrate without a parent/caregiver. Children who worked in manufacturing reported a higher desire to migrate (either for labour or marriage purposes), while children who worked in agriculture or fishing were least likely to want to migrate ( $p = .08$ ). Additionally, children who worked in agriculture or fishing when they migrated viewed migrating for work as less empowering than those who worked in other industries ( $p < .05$ ). These children also reported significantly lower emotional wellbeing compared to the service and domestic industries ( $p < .05$ ). The findings indicate that children may have the most negative experiences when migrating and working in agriculture industries compared to other industries.

These findings align to an extent with comments provided by key informants. Whilst, overall, key informants referred to labour exploitation in all of the above-mentioned sectors, several highlighted that children are particularly vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation in agriculture. Informants referred specifically to children who migrate to work on farms and plantations being at risk. Several also mentioned that children are vulnerable to exploitation in rattan and sea grass production. The garment industry was also commonly referenced by key informants.

Whilst only one child migrant in the current sample worked in the fishing industry, over a third of key informants referred to the fishing industry as one in which children are vulnerable to exploitation. Given the number of informants who mentioned the fishing industry, this might suggest that child labour in the fishing industry has become more prevalent. One key informant noted that boys are particularly vulnerable to exploitation in the fishing industry. Key informants indicated that knowledge of child trafficking and exploitation in the fishing industry has increased amongst government and non-government service providers and key stakeholders over the last few years, which is a positive step and one that will hopefully lead to support for and the future prevention of trafficking of children in the fishing industry. Interestingly, the previous analysis of the quantitative data showed that young people working in the fishing industry were the least likely to have received support upon their return home.<sup>123</sup> There are programmes specifically supporting victims of child trafficking in the fishing industry, such as the ILO's "Ship to Shore" programme, implemented in collaboration with IOM and UNDP, which aims to strengthen the legal, policy, and regulatory frameworks in fishing and seafood processing sectors, promote safe and secure working environments for migrant workers,

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<sup>123</sup> K. Aplan and E. Yarrow, *Casting Light in the Shadows – Child and Youth Migration, Exploitation and Trafficking in Viet Nam*, Coram International, 2019, p.71.

and empower workers, families and communities to promote and exercise their rights in Viet Nam and other countries in Southeast Asia.<sup>124</sup>

Two particular industries with high risk of child trafficking and labour exploitation which were not captured in the quantitative data but were mentioned during key informant interviews are the handicraft and mining industries. Handicraft businesses are often family enterprises and this makes it difficult to monitor the extent of child labour exploitation, because they are small and ‘hidden’. The same applies to small, illegal mining operations often hidden in forests. Several key informants pointed out that it is likely that a portion of children who fell within the ‘other’ category of the quantitative survey may have worked within the mining industry:

*“Some children migrate to work in illegal mining, especially gold mining. Illegal mining activities often take place in remote areas, deep in the forest, protected by organized crimes. The issue is so very sensitive that local authorities don’t want to deal with.”<sup>125</sup>*

### 5.3.2 Drivers of trafficking and exploitation in different industries

Data was analysed to understand associations between core demographic factors and child labour in different industries.<sup>126</sup> However, it should be noted that a limited sample size for each industry once data had been disaggregated increases the likelihood of a type II error (i.e. a non-significant result for two factors which are in fact related) due to lack of statistical power, so a lack of associations in this sample should be interpreted with caution, and do not necessarily mean that these factors do not contribute to trafficking in different labour industries.

Recap on drivers of child trafficking in labour industries from the original child trafficking report:

⇒ Boys were more likely to have an indicator of trafficking in agriculture and manufacturing industries, whereas girls were more likely to have experiences indicative of trafficking in the garment industry and in sex work.

There was limited evidence of any demographic factors driving migration to particular labour industries; only gender significantly predicted industries, with girls being more likely to work in the sex industry, and boys being more likely to work in agriculture/fishing and manufacturing ( $p < .05$ ). There was no evidenced relationship between industry and ethnicity, education, age or rurality.

Key informants highlighted gender differences in trafficking to different industries. Many highlighted that boys are more likely to be exploited in labour industries, whereas girls are more likely to be trafficked for marriage or in sex industries. Others stated that boys are more likely to be trafficked into mining, agriculture and fishing industries, whereas girls are more likely to be exploited in domestic and service industries:

*“Girls migrate from rural provinces (Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, Hue, and Mekong Delta provinces) to urban centres (Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh city). Besides sexual exploitation, they can fall victims of labour*

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<sup>124</sup> ILO, Ship to Shore Programme <https://shiptoshorerights.org/vn/>

<sup>125</sup> Interview with IO, Feb 25 2022.

<sup>126</sup> One-way ANOVA was conducted to explore demographic and child characteristic differences in industries, and where assumptions of equal variance were indicated, Kruskal-Wallis was implemented.

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*exploitation as household maids, working in restaurants, small garment workshops, informal business, massage parlours, karaoke bars, or forced to work as prostitutes.”<sup>127</sup>*

Others noted that education and wealth are linked to increased risk of child labour and exploitation in informal industries. KIs also provided several insights to the role of business in trafficking in different industries, discussed in detail in the following section:

*“We must be aware that in poor provinces the proportion of students not continuing high school education (15-18 years of age) is quite high. In the Mekong Delta, for example, this proportion is around 40 per cent. If they can’t work in factories, then they will work in bars, restaurants, on the streets, in the informal sector, without employment contracts and insurance. Their working conditions thus are precarious, and they have high risks of exploitation and trafficking.”<sup>128</sup>*

## 5.4 The role of businesses in child trafficking and labour exploitation in the context of migration

This section outlines findings from KIIs, demonstrating a range of ways in which businesses play a role in both driving and preventing the trafficking and labour exploitation of children, providing contextual insight into how and why businesses can resort to exploitative child labour. Please note that, while some of the findings below refer broadly to child labour exploitation, given the above evidence indicates many instances of child labour exploitation in the context of migration, these issues are directly relevant to children who migrate for the purposes of labour.

### 5.4.1 The successful prevention of child labour in large enterprises through labour laws

Many informants noted that no child labour exists in large (Tier 1)<sup>129</sup> businesses, due to the successful enforcement of child labour laws, both by the Government and international brands. Large businesses undergo auditing, which means these businesses must show that they comply with regulations, including the prohibition on children working illegally or under exploitative conditions. Additionally, many international brands have strict child labour regulations that Tier 1 businesses must comply with to maintain their contracts:

*“Big businesses have professional recruitment and training processes, so it’s much less likely that child labour occurs there. Companies producing for international brands have to comply with customers’ requirements through codes of conduct and regular audits, so they don’t have child labour exploitation.”<sup>130</sup>*

### 5.4.2 A lack of child labour law enforcement in lower Tier industries

One of the key findings from interviews aligns with findings outlined in the desk review which indicate that child labour laws are not enforced within lower tier industries, resulting in vulnerability to hidden exploitative child labour.<sup>131</sup> While Tier 1 factories abide by regulations, they often outsource production and rely on lower

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<sup>127</sup> Interview with IO, Feb 25 2022.

<sup>128</sup> Interview with child labour expert, Mar 10 2022.

<sup>129</sup> Tier 1 refers to enterprises at the top level of the supply chains, often including international corporations.

<sup>130</sup> Interview with IO, Mar 8 2022.

<sup>131</sup> UNICEF, *The Apparel and Footwear Sector and Children in Vietnam*, 2017, p.5.

tier supply chains, in which laws are not monitored or controlled to the same extent. As one key informant stated:

*“Policies mostly target the formal sector, leaving the informal sector unregulated. This is a very big policy gap. Monitoring, inspection and worker protection activities focus mostly on the formal sector.”<sup>132</sup>*

This means that, while child labour is very rare within large enterprises, trafficking and exploitative child labour remains an issue for children in lower tiers of the supply chain. The limited monitoring and failure to comply with labour regulations within lower-level supply chains was noted as one of the key barriers to being able to ensure the prevention of exploitative child labour by many stakeholders.

Tier 3 and 4 businesses in the supply chain are often small, informal family businesses. Within these small businesses, there is limited understanding of what constitutes child labour, and it is challenging for bigger brands and Tier 1 companies to monitor these small businesses. Several key informants noted that labour laws are only successful at preventing child labour in large businesses and factories, but do not prevent child labour in informal sectors:

*“Tier 3 and Tier 4 suppliers can be households in rattan and sea grass products, or tiny workshops with 5-10 sewing machines in garment production. Brands have not extended their monitoring that far. There are brands that pay attention to the whole supply chain, but even they could not implement activities to eliminate child labour throughout the supply chain. Usually Tier 3, 4 or 5 businesses are family-based. For example, a farmer establishes a workshop, then calls his neighbours and relatives to work. One time I went to a workshop with 5 sawing machines for wood processing; all workers there were relatives of the owner. Reaching those businesses is very difficult.”<sup>133</sup>*

Additionally, while some brands encourage Tier 1 businesses to regulate their suppliers in the lower tiers, there is no legal obligation or incentive for businesses to monitor child labour in their suppliers and, indeed, good reason not to do so where suppliers are in high demand. One business noted that, whilst they have codes of conduct with their suppliers to try to prevent exploitative child labour, pressures to maintain their business often results in reluctance to enforce the standards:

*“[\*Business\*] also signs a code of conduct with the suppliers as required by the brands, but we haven’t monitored their compliance. We cannot be too strict to our suppliers, because the number of potential suppliers in Viet Nam is quite limited. Each party needs to be mindful not to be too demanding. At the present, we have no plan to enforce labour standards in our supply chain.”<sup>134</sup>*

To counter this attitude, NGOs and IOs are implementing programmes in Viet Nam to improve knowledge of child trafficking within businesses, such as the aforementioned CREST programme, which provides training to enterprises on supply chains, assessments and audits, to inform businesses about trafficking and modern slavery.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Interview with IO, Feb 25 2022.

<sup>133</sup> Interview with corporate social responsibility expert, Mar 4 2022.

<sup>134</sup> Interview with business, Mar 1 2022.

<sup>135</sup> [IOM's CREST Programme | IOM Viet Nam.](#)

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### 5.4.3 Challenges prosecuting employers who break child labour laws

The existence of legislation prohibiting trafficking or exploitation of children does not, of course, mean that the law is implemented. Key informants reported that few labour trafficking cases result in prosecution, due to inadequate resource provision and the complicated procedures for prosecuting those who exploit children. For example, if someone reports a case of child labour to the 111 trafficking hotline, the hotline will notify labour inspection, who in turn will notify child protection officials. However, child labour departments do not have the same level of budget as dedicated to other forms of trafficking, such as sex trafficking<sup>136</sup>, and most referrals are not acted upon.

*“The legal provisions dealing with labour exploitation are inadequate. To start a criminal investigation for this offence, the perpetrator must be discovered and fined. Law enforcement agencies cannot criminally prosecute a perpetrator of labour exploitation as a first approach. There are not many cases or trials for labour exploitation. Detection of violations by businesses and then dealing with those violations face big difficulties. The labour inspectorate is staffed quite thinly, the number of enterprises is vast, and labour exploitation is not an issue of priority in labour inspections.”<sup>137</sup>*

Difficulties in prosecuting those who exploit children means that individuals and small businesses can continue to exploit children with confidence that they will not be prosecuted. The lack of action also dissuades others from reporting cases when they become aware of them. As a result, children remain vulnerable to child trafficking and labour exploitation, particularly in smaller, informal industries.

### 5.4.4 Poor understanding of labour laws amongst businesses and law enforcement

One of the key themes across key informant interviews was that many businesses do not understand labour laws. Many reported that businesses are not aware that children under the age of 18 are able to work, or are unclear on the regulations that need to be in place for children aged 15-18 to work. Businesses often fear that hiring children aged 15-18 will put them at risk of violating child labour laws, so do not hire anyone under the age of 18. Some noted that business leaders lack knowledge of laws relating to child labour or the child trafficking landscape, and have a limited interest in understanding child rights or labour laws beyond the instructions imposed by clients:

*“It is common that factories have a narrow view on corporate social responsibility, they see it as charity actions, not an integral part of their business.”<sup>138</sup>*

One of the key barriers to knowledge of labour laws amongst enterprises is a lack of information on the laws by those with responsibility for enforcing the law. One business director stated that, often, small business lack access to the support available to larger businesses (such as membership of business associations like the Viet Nam Textiles and Apparel Association), and mentioned that inspectors and auditors do not assist businesses with learning about child labour laws, which is contributing to the lack of knowledge and resulting in continued child labour exploitation:

*“The labour inspection comes only to detect violations and impose a fine. They know the laws but they don’t help companies understand and comply with them. They should come to each business like ours*

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<sup>136</sup> Interview with child labour expert, Mar 10 2022.

<sup>137</sup> Interview with IO, Mar 8 2022.

<sup>138</sup> Interview with NGO, Feb 28 2022.

*and guide the directors what they should do. Instead, they just want to make money and don't explain the laws to us. This is why child labour still exists, because responsible agencies do not come to explain the laws, only to come to threaten, take the fines and then leave.”<sup>139</sup>*

One particular challenge contributing to the lack of knowledge of labour laws is poor communication of recent changes in the Labour Code that allows children aged 15-18 to work in certain industries and perform certain forms of labour that were previously prohibited. The Labour Code of 2012 stipulated that young workers were not allowed to work on industrial sewing machines, as this was regarded as heavy work that was unsuitable for under-age workers. However, the new Labour Code removes the language of “heavy, toxic and hazardous occupations”, instead stating young workers may be employed for work that does not negatively affect their physical and mental health. As a result, the legal hurdle has been removed for young workers to do many kinds of work, particularly in the garment sector; notably, the Circular elaborating some articles of the Labor Code on Minor Workers explicitly outlines a list of allowed work for minors, which includes “Cutting threads, sewing buttons, sewing button holes and packing hand-woven products into boxes”.<sup>140</sup> However, several key informants noted that bottlenecks remain with regard to the awareness of new policies among enterprises, local labour inspection agencies and brand auditors, meaning many children aged 15-18 remain excluded from working in factories carrying out light work that is explicitly allowed in the Labour Code on Minor Workers. One business interviewed indicated their lack of awareness of change in labour laws, stating that they are unable to hire young workers due to the law listing jobs within the garment industry as hazardous:

*“The labour law in Viet Nam regards works in the garment sector as heavy and hazardous. Ironing requires a worker to stand 8 hours a day, sewing is listed as heavy. Other works, for example thread cutting, are done now by machines, not humans. If the law does not change, then it's difficult to hire young workers...If the list of young and hazardous works is not revised, it's difficult to find jobs for young workers.”<sup>141</sup>*

Closely linked to this, many businesses will choose not to hire anyone below the age of 18 due to a perception that the regulations relating to youth labour as too difficult to implement. Setting up a system that is suitable to recruit young workers and ensuring regulations are met is expensive for businesses. One child labour expert noted that it is particularly difficult to promote a model supporting legal youth labour in the North of Viet Nam where there are few young people available for youth work, as fewer children in this area drop out from school. While it is undoubtedly positive that a high number of children remain in school, focus needs to be placed on supporting youth who leave school early and would benefit from safe work.. Additionally, one business noted that they are concerned that, if they were to hire children, this would result in more frequent inspections, or that there are barriers to employment, such as parental consent:

*“Our concern is whether procedures for hiring juvenile workers are difficult or not. Will parents agree for them to work and sign employment contracts on their behalf? Do we have to meet some requirements? Will the labour inspection come frequently to inspect us? We know from our experience working with people with disabilities that we face administrative hurdles and difficulties in obtaining our tax and other incentives.”<sup>142</sup>*

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<sup>139</sup> Business director, Mar 21, 2022.

<sup>140</sup> MoLISA, *Circular Elaborating some articles of the Labour Code on minor workers*, 12 November 2020 (document provided by UNICEF Viet Nam).

<sup>141</sup> Interview with Business, Mar 4 2022.

<sup>142</sup> Interview with Business, Mar 7 2022.



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A number of key informants pointed out that providing safe employment for children from the age of 15 can be beneficial to children, and a lack of opportunities for these young people can result in them being forced to find or be trafficked into more exploitative labour. Current labour laws, whilst intending to prevent exploitative child labour, may have had the opposite effect of indirectly pushing children into labour and exploitation within informal sectors. Several noted that labour conditions are safer for children in factories, and when they cannot obtain this form of employment, they can end up working on the streets (for example, selling lottery tickets) or working in informal domestic and service industries. As one KI stated:

*“As far as young workers are concerned, some companies are afraid of recruiting them. Without opportunities for a job in the formal sector, those young workers are pushed to the informal [sectors], working in bars, restaurants with high risks of exploitation. Those young workers no longer go to school. Factories complain about labour shortage, but they don’t recruit young workers. Policy for hiring young workers is up to brands too. Some brands accept young workers, with conditions as stipulated in the labour law, but some brands don’t accept workers below 18 years old. It’s common that one factory in Viet Nam produces for two and more brands. In this case, the strictest requirement will prevail, meaning that young workers are denied employment there.”<sup>143</sup>*

There is evidence that programmes implemented by NGOs are improving awareness of child labour laws amongst businesses. One business reported that their appointed General Manager for Corporate Sustainability Compliance participates in many projects and trainings relating to child trafficking and labour exploitation, including a project with UNICEF and the Centre for Child Rights and Business (CCRB).<sup>144</sup> Another business indicated that they have recently attended a training provided by UNICEF and the CCRB, which has led to an increased understanding of child labour laws. As a result, this business is now preparing a system for child workers and predicts that they will be in a position to hire children aged 15 and over within a year.<sup>145</sup>

However, while programmes aiming to increase knowledge of child trafficking and labour laws and businesses’ capacity to employ children safely are available, there are barriers to enterprises utilising these resources. These programmes have limited funding, and many enterprises are not willing to pay for the training on child labour, particularly if they do not see child labour as a primary concern or priority.<sup>146</sup>

#### 5.4.5 Businesses exploiting children for “cheap labour”

Several other factors arose when asking about the role of businesses in child trafficking and labour exploitation in Viet Nam. Firstly, several key informants noted that one of the key reasons individuals will illegally hire children is because child labour is cheaper than adult labour. One of the key incentives for employers to hire children is that, not only can they pay them a lower wage, but as the employment is illegal, the employer does not have to pay taxes or social and health insurance for the child.<sup>147</sup>

Additionally, key informants noted that children are easier to threaten and control than adults, meaning they can be more easily hired for dangerous and hazardous work, such as illegal mining and fishing. Additionally,

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<sup>143</sup> Interview with NGO, Feb 28 2022.

<sup>144</sup> Interview with Business, Mar 4 2022.

<sup>145</sup> Interview with business, Mar 7 2022.

<sup>146</sup> Interview with Business Association, Feb 24 2022.

<sup>147</sup> Interview with IO, Feb 25 2022.



one key informant noted that children are better able than adults to carry out certain tasks, including handicrafts, due to being physically smaller and therefore finding the nature of the work easier.<sup>148</sup>

#### 5.4.6 Business requirements for skilled labour excluding youth from employment

Low levels of education and a lack of easily accessible vocational training is a further big barrier to children accessing safe, legal employment. Where businesses require skilled workers, but are unwilling or unable to provide the necessary training for young people (particularly to those who have left education early to seek employment), children are pushed to seek employment in lower skilled jobs in informal industries, which puts them at higher risk of exploitation.

There are, however, emerging practices: businesses are providing training to young people to enable them to obtain non-exploitative, legal employment. A particularly good example is a programme being implemented by the Swedish furniture brand, IKEA, in partnership with the Centre for Child Rights and Business. Together, they are supporting young workers aged 15-17, training them to be able to do the work required in their factories. As the IKEA representative that was interviewed stated:

*“The programme aims to provide stable and decent employment for young workers in the 15-17 age bracket. Those kids either don’t want to continue their education or can’t continue. We don’t encourage children to start working early, but the reality is that some children stop their education at an early age. If they have stable and decent employment in the formal sector, they don’t have to work in the informal sector, which entails greater risks of exploitation.”<sup>149</sup>*

Other informants also highlighted examples of employers in typically exploitative industries, such as fishing, promoting safe employment of youth:

*“There are good examples/practices of employing child workers. I know some fish processing factories hiring young workers for works that ensure their health, safety and development. The Garment 10 Company has a training school that provides skill training for young workers, including those living with disabilities. The company hires children of the workers, paying proper attention to those young workers and ensuring appropriate works and working hours as stipulated by laws.”<sup>150</sup>*

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<sup>148</sup> Interview with NGO, Feb 21 2022.

<sup>149</sup> Interview with business leader, Feb 28 2022.

<sup>150</sup> Interview with Business Association, Feb 24 2022.

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### Best practice in business example<sup>151</sup>

Within Viet Nam, the work being carried out by IKEA is seen as a positive example for developing policies and practices to support safe labour for children aged 15-18. They have “people and planet” policies, which involve working with suppliers to create fair working conditions through the supply chains. One of the main focus areas of these policies is respecting child rights, including child labour laws. IKEA have auditors who conduct on-site visits to suppliers and assess suppliers’ own policies on child labour before entering into business contracts. IKEA commissioned the Centre for Child Rights and Business (CCRB) to undertake a child rights and labour risk assessment within the supply chains for their member businesses, and have developed communication campaigns to raise awareness of child labour in communities. IKEA then used the findings from these assessments to implement new practices to reduce child labour, including supporting parents to send their children to school, supporting childcare in communities, revising wage structures to address financial barriers to education, and working with local authorities to improve education infrastructure.

A further IKEA programme involves supporting factories to develop recruitment policies that include young workers (aged 15-18) and organizing communication activities within factories to make adult workers aware of youth workers and equip them to be mentors to these workers. An additional programme component is learning and training modules for youth workers in literacy and computer skills, reproductive health and anti-harassment. The pilot for this project was conducted in partnership with the CCRB with 150 young workers, with 130 of these workers still in employment. An impact assessment of this pilot showed that it can reduce social disparity and combat child trafficking and labour exploitation, and is now being implemented in IKEA factories and supply chains worldwide.

IKEA are keen to share this model with other businesses in Viet Nam to create more awareness on child labour and how to prevent it.

#### 5.4.7 Children using false documentation

In some cases, employers are not aware that they have employed children, as children use false identification to pose as adults to gain employment. As noted above, whether children are able to succeed in securing employment using false identity documents is largely dependent on the ability of recruiters and employers to identify false documents and reject child applicants. One key informant commented that children in poorer areas have often not been registered at birth, but when requiring identity documents for employment may intentionally give the wrong date of birth to make themselves appear older than they actually are.

*“Some children falsify their documents to go abroad for work. How can they do that? Because in poorer areas parents did not apply for birth certificates immediately after their children were born. Therefore, data kept at the commune level, which issues birth certificates, are often inaccurate. Sixteen-year-old kids can ask commune officials to certify that they are adults, and sometimes certain payments can help.”<sup>152</sup>*

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<sup>151</sup> Interview with business, Feb 28 2022.

<sup>152</sup> Interview with IO, Mar 8 2022.

#### 5.4.8 Business' role in reducing child trafficking risk through support programmes for parents

As noted above, children remaining behind when parents migrate are at risk of trafficking due to neglect or lack of monitoring and guidance, while children who migrate with parents often end up outside of the education system (alt: out of school) and in child labour. Businesses can, and a number do, play a crucial role in reducing the risk of child trafficking by supporting parents, through parenting support programmes, adequate wages and childcare facilities.

The CCRB implements a programme supporting migrant parents, with a particular focus of training on parenting skills. The training targets parents who have migrated for work and have left their children behind. Different components of the training include reducing feelings of guilt towards leaving children behind and teaching parents how to maintain good communication with their children and support children's education, which in turn motivates the child, when they cannot be physically together. These kinds of programmes are important to help ensure that children remaining behind (noted as a driver for child trafficking risk) remain supported and able to stay in education, which in turn can prevent child labour and exploitation in the future.<sup>153</sup>

One business reported that they have childcare facilities on site to allow parents to work whilst knowing their children are cared for safely and not at risk of exploitation.<sup>154</sup> It was also noted that factories (particularly those funded by foreign investment) have good practices to support migrant parents, including childcare allowances and other charitable projects tied to the businesses.<sup>155</sup>

### 5.5 Changes in child trafficking and exploitation (including due to Covid-19) and support in place for victims

#### 7.5.1 Border closures changing the landscape of trafficking

One of the consequences of the outbreak of Covid-19 in 2020 was the closure of Viet Nam's border. This brought with it a reduction in the trafficking of children for the purposes of sex tourism, due to the reduction in overall tourism<sup>156</sup>, and a sharp decline in the number of child trafficking victims to China, from 12 in 2019 and 11 in 2020 to just 2 in 2021.<sup>157</sup> Some NGOs noted that children are still being trafficked abroad through illegal routes,<sup>158</sup> or that trafficking across borders has shifted to different countries, such as Lao PDR and Cambodia.<sup>159</sup> Others stated that border closures have not led to a reduction in children being trafficked, rather the form of trafficking has changed: children are now more likely to be trafficked internally to informal service industries, such as karaoke bars, rather than externally.<sup>160</sup> This difference may in part be due to the different groups of children / areas in which NGOs work, but overall indicate a shift in the form of child trafficking, while both internal and international trafficking have remained prevalent.

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<sup>153</sup> Interview with Centre for Child Rights and Business, Mar 16 2022.

<sup>154</sup> Interview with business, Mar 1 2022.

<sup>155</sup> Interview with business, Feb 28 2022.

<sup>156</sup> Interview with IO, Mar 8 2022.

<sup>157</sup> Interview with MOLISA, Mar 21 2022.

<sup>158</sup> Interview with NGO, Feb 28 2022.

<sup>159</sup> Interview with NGO, Feb 15 2022.

<sup>160</sup> Interview with NGO, Feb 15 2022.

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### 7.5.2 Increased poverty and family difficulties driving child trafficking and exploitation

One common theme amongst key informants was that Covid-19 has led to an increase in poverty for many families, due to businesses having to close factories during lockdowns, resulting in job losses. Because of this, children have dropped out of education to find employment, and in particular, children have migrated from rural areas to cities for work.

A further impact of Covid-19, according to some key informants has been an increase in domestic violence. The Centre for Women's Development reported that they have seen a significant increase in the number of calls relating to domestic violence and trafficking (80 per cent increase in 2020 from 2019, and an additional 140 per cent increase in 2021 from 2020).<sup>161</sup> As noted above, greater violence and conflict in the home is a driver, as children migrate to escape their situation, making them vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation.

### 7.5.3 Labour shortages and increased outsourcing driving child labour exploitation

A further change making more children vulnerable to labour exploitation as a result of Covid-19 has been the change in business models. Businesses have been increasingly outsourcing parts of their production to meet Covid-19 regulations, such as social distancing. Businesses have had to employ a lower number of individuals within their factories and outsource more of their production to meet order requirements for brands.<sup>162</sup> Additionally, many migrant workers who were forced to return to rural areas during Covid-19 lockdowns have not returned to cities or their previous factory jobs, resulting in a shortage of workers. This has led to small, informal businesses being utilised more frequently at lower levels of the supply chains, which (as discussed in the previous section) puts more children at risk of exploitative labour:

*"Because of Covid, factories do not have enough workers, so they outsource parts of their production to subcontractors. These businesses do not have a business license and they might hire child labour (less than 15 years old). It is cheaper to use child labour."*<sup>163</sup>

However, some noted that the labour shortage has resulted in larger businesses adapting to employ more children aged 15-17 in order to increase the pool of available workers, meaning that Covid-19 is leading to an increase in youth employment in accord with child labour laws. This is a positive step in reducing child labour exploitation, as the more children who are employed safely and legally by large businesses, the fewer will seek labour in informal sectors, thus reducing the number of children at risk of exploitative labour:

*"Labour shortage after Covid is quite acute. During Covid, workers went back home. Those who migrated to the South returned to the North. They preferred to find employment closer to their homes and not return to the South. Therefore, labour needs in the South are high. Factories are now changing their policies to recruit workers in the 15-18 age bracket. They are developing training programmes and management systems to accommodate those workers. Awareness of the brands on young workers has been improved."*<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Interview with NGO, Feb 23 2022.

<sup>162</sup> Interview with NGO, Mar 16 2022.

<sup>163</sup> Interview with business, Mar 4 2022.

<sup>164</sup> Interview with Child Labour Expert, Mar 10 2022.

#### 7.5.4 Increased recruitment of children for the purpose of trafficking

Key informants indicated that the recruitment of children for the purpose of trafficking has been more prevalent during Covid-19. During lockdowns, children spent more time online, particularly on social media platforms. This has put children at increased risk of being exploited by individuals who hide their identity and use social media platforms to recruit children for trafficking (as well as increasing risk for online sexual exploitation).

*“Technology helps children and young people learn (especially during Covid lockdown) and find employment opportunities. But technology also facilitates connection between traffickers and their victims. They can easily befriend with a potential victim, learn about their needs (for example finding a job) and then deceive him/her. The easiest victims are those who have never heard about trafficking.”<sup>165</sup>*

However, technology was also seen as being beneficial during Covid-19, enabling many children to remain in education remotely and access reliable resources (thus reducing risk of migration for work purposes and resulting exploitation risk), in addition to allowing NGOs to continue supporting trafficking victims, for example through the provision of remote counselling.<sup>166</sup> One key informant also noted that increased online activity amongst children and adults alike during Covid-19 increased opportunities to expose people to communications regarding the dangers of child trafficking, which has resulted in increased awareness of trafficking, and in turn, increased reporting of incidences:

*“The issue of child trafficking is getting more attention of the society and the Government. People’s awareness on the issue is better too, as a result of various communication activities. Before, if their children went missing for a few days, parents did not care, but now, they immediately report to the authorities. Reporting cases is also much easier and quicker now. The number of channels for reporting suspected cases of trafficking and supporting survivors has also been increased.”<sup>167</sup>*

## 8 Conclusions and recommendations

Findings from the desk review, survey on children and youth in Viet Nam and key informant interviews with experts in the field of child trafficking and labour exploitation indicate that there are multiple drivers for trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration. These include age, gender, rurality, education, family violence, child neglect and ethnicity, with these factors often being interlinked. Online social media platforms are increasingly being used to lure children into trafficking and exploitation. Key demographic and child characteristics are also linked to more positive attitudes towards migration and lower perceptions of risks of migration amongst children who have not migrated, particularly younger children, those in more rural areas, and ethnic minority groups. In addition, child workers are more likely to consider irregular migration routes.

Children working in sex, agriculture and fishing industries are at highest risk of exploitation, though there are noted gender differences in experiences of trafficking and exploitation (with girls more at risk of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and trafficking and exploitation in domestic labour industries, while boys

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<sup>165</sup> Interview with NGO, Feb 21 2022.

<sup>166</sup> Interview with NGO, Feb 23 2022.

<sup>167</sup> Interview with Human Trafficking and Child Protection Expert, Feb 15 2022.

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are at greater risk in fishing, manufacturing and coal mining industries). Children in poverty are particularly vulnerable to exploitation in informal sectors.

There are a number of factors driving child trafficking and labour exploitation in businesses: although labour laws are largely successful in preventing child labour in Tier 1 industries, children are still at risk of labour exploitation in the lower tiers of the supply chain. A lack of understanding of labour laws also means that few enterprises hire anyone under the age of 18, the result of which is to drive children into dangerous and exploitative employment in informal sectors. Whilst there are several programmes and practices that are contributing to the prevention of child trafficking and labour exploitation across different industries<sup>168</sup>, barriers and bottlenecks remain.

Covid-19 has changed the landscape of child trafficking in several ways, such as reducing cross-border trafficking to China and increasing the number of families in poverty, which in turn has led to more children dropping out of education to seek employment. Covid-19 has also led to labour shortages, meaning businesses are reliant on outsourcing work to lower tier supply chains, where the risk of child labour exploitation is higher. However, some businesses are starting to adapt and develop programmes and processes to employ children aged 15-18 safely, which reduces vulnerability to exploitation.<sup>169</sup> More children have been spending increased time online, providing opportunities the recruitment of children online for the purpose of trafficking. However, this has also provided the opportunities for NGOs to increase communication and dissemination of information on child trafficking risks and provide support for trafficking victims.

Based on the findings from this research, there are a number of steps that could be taken by government, civil society and businesses to reduce child trafficking and exploitation. These include:

- MOLISA, MoJ and UNICEF to strengthen the child protection system and legal framework for child protection, with particular focus on child protection in the context of migration, ensuring collaboration and capacity building across relevant government ministries;
- MOLISA and Viet Nam statistics office to develop an internationally recognised measure and set of indicators for child trafficking and labour exploitation in the context of migration, with support from UNICEF;
- UNICEF and National Government to support local government, NGOs and community leaders to increase public awareness of the risks to children from migrating for labour and other reasons without a parent or caregiver, particularly in rural areas and areas with high rates of poverty.
- MOLISA to develop national knowledge of labour laws, particularly in relation to the types of *light works* suitable for youth workers in the labour code for minors, with a focus on building knowledge in the business sector;
- MOLISA and CCRB to raise awareness of the role that businesses can take through concrete measures such as human rights due diligence in the reduction of child trafficking and exploitation and promoting best practices for preventing child trafficking and labour exploitation, supporting safe and decent

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<sup>168</sup> For example: [IOM's CREST Programme | IOM Viet Nam](#).

<sup>169</sup> Interview with Child Labour Expert, Mar 10 2022.

labour for young workers and promoting the Children's Rights and Business Principles (including fair working condition policies, supplier audits, child rights labour risk assessments etc.);

- MOLISA and CCRB / Business Associations to support capacity building for the business sector to promote safe employment for children and young people, (i.e. capacity building to support business to: develop policies that promote fair working conditions; carry out auditing of suppliers; conduct child rights and labour risk assessments; develop policies to support young workers and provide skills training for young workers);
- MoET, MoL and Business Associations to work together in developing vocational and skilled-worker training to support the employment of youth in the *light works* jobs listed as suitable within the labour code for minors, promoting this training in areas where there are high rates of school dropout and poverty and in rural areas;
- UNICEF to promote cooperation between government ministries, NGOs and businesses to support capacity building and the promotion of safe employment opportunities for children and the development of training for skills training for employed youth;
- MOLISA to make Tier 1 businesses responsible for ensuring that their supply chain adheres to the labour code on minor workers, including the development of a monitoring framework for Tier 1 businesses to monitor child labour in supply chains and the enforcement of such monitoring processes;
- All stakeholders to advocate for the allocation of more fiscal resources to labour inspectors to prevent and reduce child labour in lower tier industries (i.e. financing the inspection of Tier 2 and 3 Industries), and in specific industries in which child trafficking has been noted as particularly prevalent (fishing, domestic labour);
- Increase the support available to child trafficking victims, and build capacity within MOLISA to provide effective support to trafficking victims, including through social work and case management training;
- Government, NGOs and business associations to support and encourage businesses to reduce the risk of child trafficking by supporting parents through parenting support programmes, providing adequate wages and providing support towards childcare arrangements;
- MoJ to strengthen legal provisions to address rising online violence, exploitation and trafficking, particularly through social media platforms;
- Government, UNICEF and NGOs to raise awareness of the risk of online recruitment of children for the purposes of trafficking and supporting the development of programmes to educate and build resilience among children and communities with regards to the risks and best practices for social media use for the prevention of child trafficking through online recruitment.



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## 9 Appendices

### 7.1 Ethical protocol

The research will be guided by UNICEF's Procedure for Ethical Standards, Evaluation and Data Collection and Analysis,<sup>170</sup> and recent guidance relating to data collection during Covid-19.<sup>171</sup> This protocol sets out how these guidelines will be applied in the context of the research project. It will set out the ethical issues that are likely to arise in the course of the study and how these issues will be managed and, in particular, will consider how the impacts and risks of the research will be managed in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

#### 7.1.1 Harm / benefit analysis

A fundamental principle of ethical research with human participants is 'do no harm'. This means that the welfare and best interests of participants are the primary considerations guiding the design of the methodology and data collection methods.

UNICEF's and Coram International's ethical guidelines require a consideration of whether the research needs to be done, if children need to be involved in it, and, if so, in what capacity. An analysis of potential harms of the research on participants is required, along with an assessment of the benefits of the research. Strategies are required to ensure that distress to participants is minimised.

#### ***Benefit analysis***

The justification and rationale for the research is set out in the study's inception report. In summary, the main objective of the research is increase understanding of drivers and impacts of migration for children in the ASEAN region. This research specifically focuses on understanding drivers of child trafficking in Vietnam, and the role of businesses in protecting children from trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration. The research will inform efforts within ASEAN to support children affected by migration. The research is timely: ASEAN has recently adopted the Declaration of the Rights of Children in the Context of Migration. This research is therefore crucial to supporting the implementation of this declaration and the rights of children to be protected from the impacts of migration be realised.

There is a significant lack of knowledge relating to factors beyond poverty that drive child trafficking and labour exploitation in the context of migration in Viet Nam, and a particular lack of understanding of the role of businesses in the exploitation of migrant children in the informal labour sector. In order to strengthen child protection and support services for victims of trafficking and prevent trafficking and labour exploitation in the context of migration, it is important to produce robust evidence on drivers and factors that lead to children being trafficked and exploited in the labour industry. This research also seeks to understand: factors underpinning children's attitudes and perceptions towards migration (that may increase risk for trafficking),

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<sup>170</sup> UNICEF, *Procedure for Ethical Standards, Evaluation and Data Collection and Analysis*, 1 April 2015, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/media/54796/file>.

<sup>171</sup> Berman, G., *Ethical considerations for evidence generation involving children on the COVID-19 pandemic* (2020), UNICEF Innocenti: Florence, DP 2020:01; The Market Research Society, *MRS Post-Covid-19 lockdown guidance: undertaking safe face-to-face data collection*, 14 July 2020.

how risks and experiences of child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration differ across different labour industries; the role that businesses play as drivers of child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration and how businesses have been responding to child protection needs (particularly in informal sectors), and; how child trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration, associated protection risks and access to protection support have evolved over the last three years (particularly during Covid-19).

The research will involve the analysis of existing quantitative and qualitative data, in addition to primary qualitative data collection, in the form of key informant interviews with relevant stakeholders across government agencies and NGOs. These methods have been selected as this research is an in-depth case study; Coram International have previously collected a high quantity of data relating to child trafficking and labour exploitation in the context of migration, and analysing this data minimises the duplication of data relating to these issues, in addition to minimising risks associated with COVID-19 (due to the high number of cases, many restrictions remain in place. Key Informant Interviews are essential to understand any changes in patterns and emerging issues relating to child trafficking and understanding in the role of businesses, both in driving and protecting children from trafficking.

### ***Harm analysis***

Front-line professionals and experts could face risks to their employment should it be discovered that they have expressed views that are contrary to dominant social norms, values and beliefs. However, this risk will be mitigated through carrying out individual interviews with experts and professionals where there are sensitivities (i.e., not FGDs) and through following strict anonymity and data protection protocols (see below). Key informant interviews will discuss issues relating to child trafficking broadly. It is unlikely that questions will cause significant harm, as they do not relate to personal traumatic experiences. However, topics of conversation may be deemed sensitive and elicit emotional responses from key informants.

### ***Harm minimisation strategies***

It is important to ensure that all necessary measures are taken to minimise physical and emotional harm to participants and to researchers. The following strategies will be used to minimise harm and ensure the meaningful participation of children, parents / carers, professionals and experts in the research.

#### **7.1.2 Selection and training of researchers**

All researchers have necessary qualifications, knowledge and considerable experience carrying out data collection with professionals, government representatives, youth, children, families and community members, including on sensitive topics. The national research consultant has been recruited on the basis of their knowledge or experience of the child protection systems in place in Viet Nam and extensive experience in conducting research relating to these topics.

International researchers have all undergone criminal history checks and all researchers, including the national researcher, are required to sign a code of conduct as part of the contracting process.

Researchers will all be involved in an orientation session prior to the pre-testing of tools and data collection. This will be led by the Team Leader / International Experts and will cover the purpose and aims of the research, ensuring familiarity with the data collection tools and training on the ethical protocol and tools.

#### **7.1.3 Pre-testing tools**

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The data collection tools, along with the ethical tools (information sheets) will be piloted on a small sample of research participants in Viet Nam, in order to test the understanding and utility of the tools and their cultural appropriateness, allowing for tools to be adjusted before data collection commences.

#### **7.1.4 Recruitment of research participants**

Front-line professionals will be selected on the basis of them having an existing role in relation to the protection and support of victims of child trafficking and labour exploitation in the context of migration, and will therefore already be known to the community in this capacity.

#### **7.1.5 Design of data collection tools and data collection approaches and processes**

Throughout interviews, researchers will be led by the 'do no harm' principle, which requires that the data collection be considered secondary to the need to avoid harm to research participants. Data collection involves key informant interviews only.

Where it is clear that the interview is having a negative effect on a participant (e.g., the participant breaks down, becomes very quiet and withdrawn, becomes shaky etc.), the researcher will be advised to suggest stopping the interview. Researchers will consult with UNICEF Vietnam to identify an appropriate referral service should key informants report distress and the need of support.

In order to reduce the risk of stress or harm to participants:

- Data collection tools have been designed in a manner that avoids direct, confronting questions, judgement and blame. They have also been developed to ensure that they are relevant to the cultural context. Pre-testing these tools will ensure that they are relevant and appropriate and that they avoid confronting or culturally insensitive questions.
- Interviews will finish on a 'positive or empowering note' through asking questions about what would improve the situation of victims of child trafficking and what could be done to prevent trafficking and labour exploitation for migrant children. This will help to ensure that participants do not leave the interview focusing on any traumatic topics discussed.

#### **7.1.6 Ensuring the safety of participants and researchers**

It is currently expected that interviews with key informants will be conducted remotely. Researchers will communicate with participants to ensure that they are in a private but central location during the virtual interview, including NGO offices. However, where preferable for participants, interviews may be carried out where participants are located in their households. All data collection will take place in daylight hours.

Coram International will take measures to support the mental wellbeing of researchers. Coram has a Mental Health First Aid focal point within its staff and researchers will be provided with the opportunity to de-brief with the manager of the research project or member of staff responsible for supervising data collection. Researchers will be sign-posted to counselling services if required.

#### **7.1.7 Informed consent and voluntary participation**

Researchers will ensure that participation in research is on a voluntary basis. Researchers will explain to participants in clear language that participants are not *required* to participate in the study, and that they may

stop participating in the research at any time. Researchers will carefully explain that refusal to participate or terminate the interview at any point will not result in any negative consequences. Incentives will not be provided to participants in order to ensure that participation in the research has not been induced. However, where transport costs are incurred, they will be reimbursed. These matters are set out clearly in the study's participant information sheet. Participants will be clearly advised that their participation or lack of participation in the study will not lead to any direct benefits or sanctions / removal of benefits.

All key informants will be required to give positive informed consent in order to participate in the study. Researchers will use information forms in all interviews, sending these forms prior to the interview, and talking through the information sheet at the start of the interview to ensure participants are aware of the research and expectations for the interview before questions commence. The researchers will obtain verbal consent; consent forms will not be used due to not being carried out in person, minimising the work required for busy key informants to participate (e.g., printing / scanning / returning forms via email or post). Interviewers will make a note of whether consent has or has not been given. The information provided will outline the study and ethical protocol, along with the contact details of the interviewer, should they have any concerns or wish to provide additional information following the interview. The information form explains, in clear, appropriate language, the nature of the study, the participant's expected contribution and the fact that participation is entirely voluntary. Researchers will be advised to talk participants through the information form and ensure that they understand it. The information sheet will be provided to key informants in English, but will be translated to Vietnamese if key informants do not speak English. Participants will also be advised that the information they provide will be held in strict confidence (see below).

In addition to seeking consent from individual participants, it is important to seek the support of the relevant Government Ministries / Departments. In order to achieve this, letters will be sent to the key Government Departments along with key NGOs (where necessary). The letters will explain the purpose and nature of the study and the purpose of the data collection, and requests assistance from these institutions to access research participants. This will be coordinated by the UNICEF Viet Nam Country Office.

#### **7.1.8 Anonymity and data protection**

The identity of all research participants will be kept confidential throughout the process of data collection as well as in the analysis and writing up study findings. The following measures will be used to ensure anonymity:

- Interviews will take place remotely in a secure, private location (where possible, in a room within a service provider's office / government office etc.) which ensures that the participant's answers are not overheard;
- Researchers will not record the name of participants and will ensure that names are not recorded on any documents containing collected data, including on transcripts of interviews;
- Researchers will delete electronic records of data from laptops immediately after they are sent to Coram International (in a password-protected and secure SharePoint account);
- Coram International will store all data on a secure, locked server, to which persons who are not employed by the Centre cannot gain access. All employees of Coram International, including volunteers and interns, receive a criminal record check before employment commences;
- Transcripts will be saved on the secure server for a period of three years and will then be deleted; and

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- Research findings will be presented in such a way so as to ensure that individuals are not able to be identified.

All participants will be informed of their rights to anonymity and confidentiality throughout the research process, verbally and in information sheets. All efforts will be made to avoid gathering information that may result in a compromise to participant confidentiality; in any cases where this is not possible, participants will be informed. This may occur where, in a particular, named setting, the background information relating to a participant may make it possible for them to be identified even where they are not named. Researchers will then ask participants whether they wish to have this information removed from any published report of findings (e.g., location, specific job title etc.). However, the interview topics are not particularly sensitive as they will not relate to specific incidents or cases and will focus on generalised issues facing children in relation to trafficking and exploitation in the context of migration and gaps in legal and operational frameworks in the child protection system, and how this impacts the work of their agency / team. The physical or professional risks to participants are therefore minimal.

It is noted that interview transcripts will be typed or hand written in real time (where possible, interviews will be carried out with two researchers – one conducting the interview and another recording notes from the interview). Audio recording will not be used as this could be intimidating and may lead to participants feeling unable to communicate freely and provide more authentic information.

#### **7.1.9 Protection from Covid-19-related risks**

Due to current COVID-19 restrictions, it is anticipated that interviews will be conducted remotely. However, should restrictions in Viet Nam ease and allow for face-to-face data collection, key informants will be provided the opportunity for interviews to be conducted in person, should they prefer. The following measures will be put in place in order to protect researchers and participants from Covid-19 infection.

##### ***Vaccination***

It is noted that the national researcher is fully (double) vaccinated.

##### ***Participant Recruitment: screening***

When researchers have determined participants are suitable and willing to participate in face-to-face data collection, they will undertake screening questions to establish whether participants:

- are experiencing any flu-like and/or COVID-19 symptoms;
- have been diagnosed with COVID-19;
- have been in close contact with any individuals experiencing any flu-like and/or COVID-19 symptoms;
- have been in close contact with any individuals diagnosed with COVID-19;
- are shielding or caring for individuals vulnerable to COVID-19;
- are defined as either Clinically Extremely Vulnerable or Clinically Vulnerable;

- are content and confident to participate in face-to-face data collection, specifically any activities in which they may be asked to engage e.g., group activities with other participants in a central location; and
- have any specific concerns regarding participating in face-to-face data collection.

Participants who respond to screening questions which indicate they have Covid-19, have a high risk of infection and/or are shielding or caring for individuals vulnerable to Covid-19 and/or are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable will not be recruited for face-to-face data collection.

Researchers will ensure that, when recording responses to screener questions, no inferences are made to the actual health of participants. Researchers are not health professionals. The screening questions are to be used to reduce potential risk to others involved in research (including research participants and researchers).

Researchers will be informed that they must inform participants that if their health situation changes between the time of recruitment and face to face data collection they can no longer participate.

Participants will be provided with a telephone number, website, email, and contact address which participants can contact if they become infected with Covid-19 between recruitment and participating in any face-to-face data collection exercises. This information will be included in the information sheet.

Researchers will inform participants of the implications of participating in any face-to-face data collection, specifically any contact tracing applications and actions required which apply to the country where face to face data collection is being undertaken.

#### ***Preparations for Face-to-Face Data Collection***

During face-to-face data collection, the researcher will:

- Position themselves in a location where they are able to adhere to social distancing requirements (i.e., position themselves 1.5 metres away from persons);
- Ensure participants adhere to social distancing requirements (i.e., position chairs 1.5 metres apart);
- Carry tissues and sanitary wipes and throw away in a bin any which are used – ask participants to use hand sanitiser on entering and leaving the interview room when applicable;
- Avoid touching their nose, mouth or eyes;
- Avoid any physical contact such as shaking a participant's hand;
- Be aware that asking individuals to participate in research may cause unnecessary stress and concern and to take steps to offer assurances to mitigate such concerns; and
- Wear a face mask, face shield and provide the same to participants.

The researcher will be required to sign an undertaking that they will comply with these requirements, along with other ethical requirements as part of the contracting process.

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The researcher will ensure that if there has been a time delay between recruitment and data collection, the screening questions to establish Covid-19 risk are repeated before face-to-face data collection commences. The researcher must ensure that any participants whose screener responses raise concerns are asked to withdraw from the data collection activity and/or re-directed to completing the activity via an alternative data collection method e.g., online, telephone.

All information sheets and other materials shared during interviews will be done in a way to reduce risk of infection, including:

- Supplying sanitary cleansing wipes to clean data collection support materials;
- Cleaning data collection support materials before and after being handled by participants;
- Producing data collection support materials in a durable material which is easy and effective to clean; and
- Providing instructions on how to handle and transfer materials to and from participants e.g., putting information on the ground, garden walls (as appropriate depending on the environment) and stepping back in accordance with social distancing requirements to allow participants to retrieve information.

As noted above, the researcher will provide participants a telephone number, website, email, and contact address which participants can contact if they become infected with Covid-19 following a face-to-face data collection exercise.



## 7.2 Full list of KIIs

Organization	Type	Date
<i>Anonymous</i>	NGO	Feb 21 2022
ASEAN ACT	IO	Mar 8 2022
Bitis Footwear	Business	Mar 1 2022
Blue Dragon	NGO	Feb 15 2022
Center for Social Work – Community Development Research and Consultancy	NGO	Feb 28 2022
Centre for Child Rights and Business	NGO	Mar 16 2022
Centre for Women and Development, Information and Counselling	NGO	Feb 23 2022
Child Labour Expert	Independent Consultant	Mar 10 2022
Child Protection and Anti Human Trafficking Expert	Independent Consultant	Feb 15 2022
Corporate Social Responsibility Expert	Independent Consultant	Mar 4 2022
Drug and Crime Bureau, Command of Border Guard	Government	Feb 23 2022
Enablecode	Business	Feb 28 2022
Human Rights Institute	Government	Mar 2 2022
IKEA	Business	Feb 28 2022
International Labour Organization	IO	Mar 25 2022
International Organization of Migration	IO	Feb 22 2022
Li & Fung	Business	Mar 4 2022
MOLISA Department of Child Affairs	Government	Mar 21 2022
Pacific Links	NGO	Feb 28 2022
REACH	NGO	Feb 25 2022
Samaritan's Purse	NGO	Feb 21 2022
Save the Children	NGO	Feb 24 2022
UNDP UN-ACT	IO	Feb 25 2022
Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry – Bureau of Employers' Activity	Business Association	Feb 24 2022
Viet Nga	Business	Mar 21 2022
We Edit	Business	Mar 7 2022
World Vision	NGO	Feb 23 2022