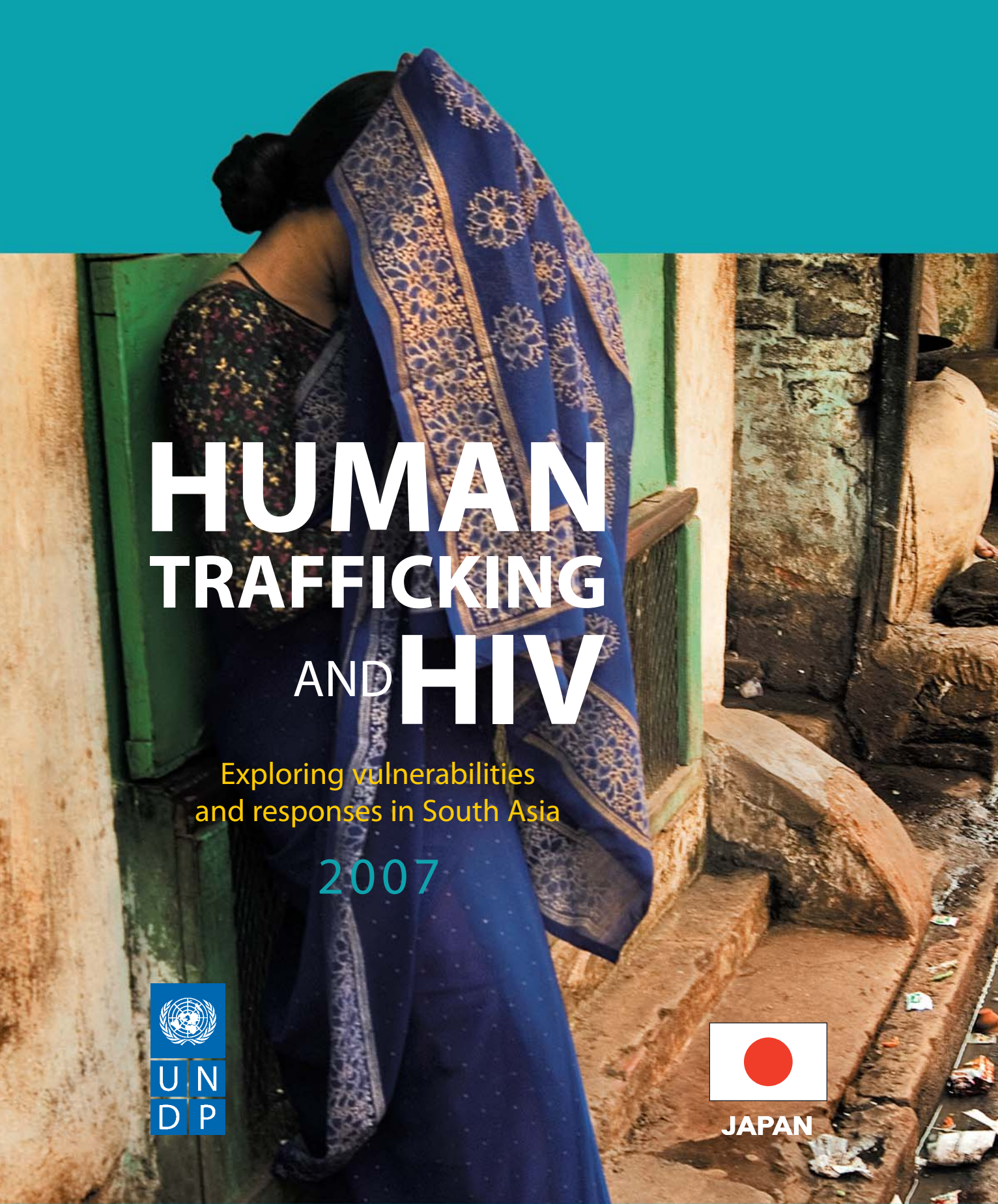

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND HIV

Exploring vulnerabilities and responses in South Asia

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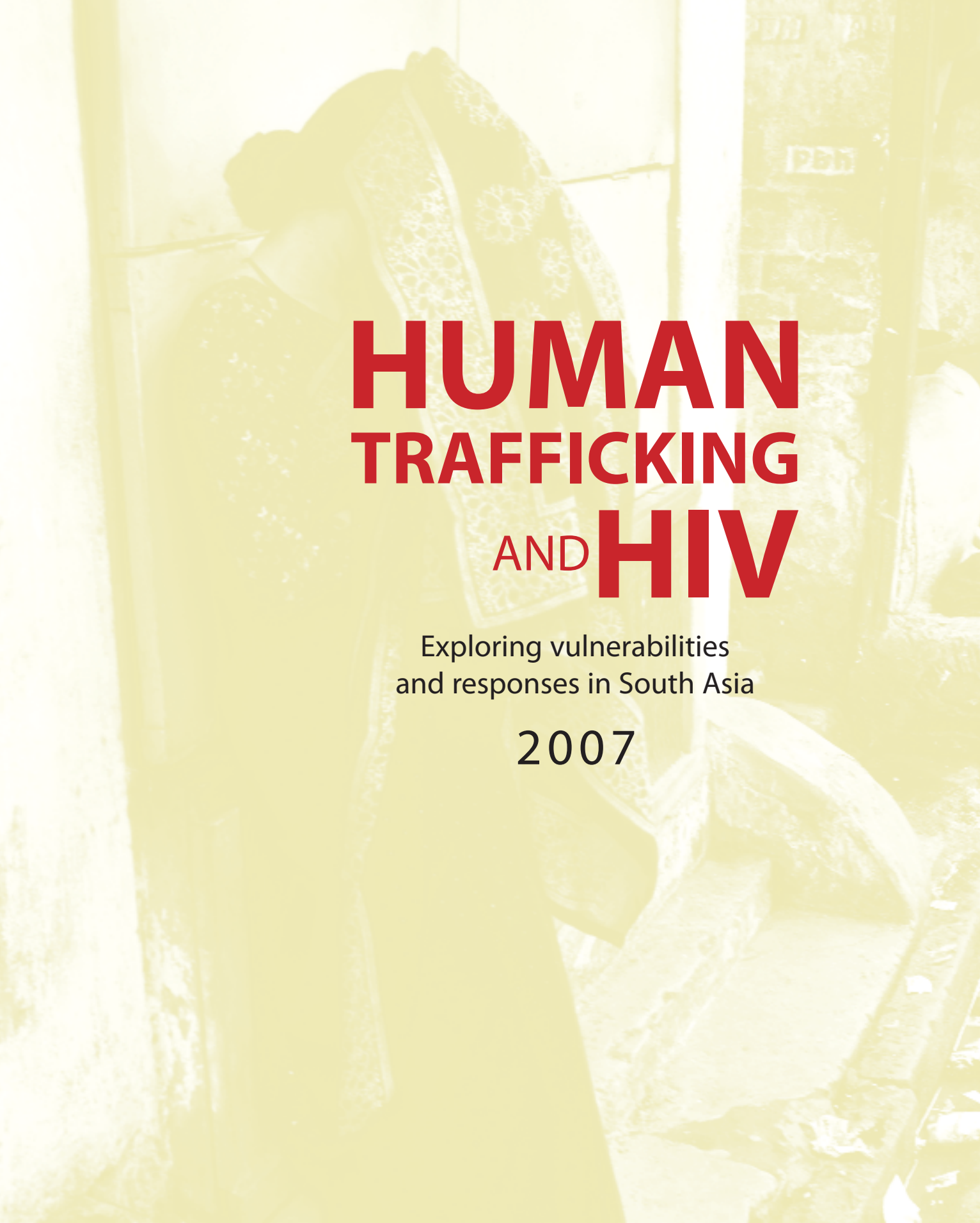

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ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
ARV	Anti-retroviral medicine
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
FSW	Female sex worker
FTZ	Free trade zone
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
IDP	Internally displaced person
IDU	Injecting drug user
IEC	Information, education and communication
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MSM	Men who have sex with men
MSW	Male sex worker
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PLHIV	People living with HIV
PPP	Purchasing-power parity
RAS	Rapid assessment study
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
STI	Sexually-transmitted infections
U.A.E	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP RCC	United Nations Development Programme – Regional Centre in Colombo
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

FOREWORD

HIV/AIDS and human trafficking threaten human security and human development. Millions of women and girls have been trafficked across borders and within countries in recent years, making human trafficking a global industry that generates an estimated five to seven billion U.S. dollars each year. It is estimated that 300,000 to 450,000 people are trafficked within Asia each year, of which more than half take place in South Asia. Women and children, particularly girls, are trafficked within country boundaries, to other countries within the region and across regions and continents beyond South Asia. The growing trafficking problem in South Asia has been recognised and has become a serious concern over the last decade.

However, the links between human trafficking and HIV/AIDS have only been identified fairly recently. Neither HIV/AIDS nor human trafficking have been integrated or mainstreamed adequately, either at policy or programmatic level. This is despite the fact that HIV and human trafficking share many causal and consequential factors, including gender inequalities, poverty, lack of economic opportunities for women, stigma and discrimination, rights violations and a life without dignity. The dual vulnerabilities of women and girls in the region to trafficking and HIV demand urgent attention.

One of the fundamental weaknesses in explaining and exploring the linkages between trafficking and HIV is a lack of adequate data. This is attributable to the historical absence of a systematic approach to examining dual vulnerabilities, the highly sensitive nature of both issues and the strong stigma attached both to survivors of trafficking and to people living with HIV. The mixture of these intricate and delicate factors has deterred efforts to examine critically and act proactively on these two closely-intertwined issues in the region.

In an effort to reduce the dual vulnerabilities of trafficking and HIV among women and girls through greater understanding of the issues and the current state of play in the region, the UNDP RCC convened a Rapid Assessment Studies (RAS) in six South Asian countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The RAS highlights the magnitude, dimensions, causes, consequences and key interventions on HIV/AIDS and human trafficking. The emphasis was on exploring the linkage of the two issues and mainstreaming at different levels of interventions – policy, legislation and programming. A compilation of findings from the RAS is presented in this publication, which highlights the critical links between the two issues and the paucity of data and concerted efforts to address the two together. A number of areas of convergence and joint initiatives have also been identified and recommended.

We hope this publication will inspire policymakers and key stakeholders to explore further the links between human trafficking and HIV/AIDS and of initiatives addressing the two in a coherent, integrated and sensitive manner at local, national and regional levels.

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