

Jointly Organized By:



**IKMAS Seminar Series 1/2023**

# Conducting A Systematic Literature Review on ***Migrant Workers Policy and Vulnerability to Labour Trafficking in Malaysia***

**WEDNESDAY  
1 MARCH 2023**

**10AM-1130AM (KUALA LUMPUR)  
9PM-1030PM (WASHINGTON)**

IKMAS Seminar Room,

Overview of SLR Training by

**DR MICHAELLE TAUSON**  
INDEPENDENT CONSULTANT

Sharing of SLR Findings by

**DR ANDIKA AB WAHAB**  
IKMAS  
UNIVERSITI KEBANGSAAN MALAYSIA

Moderated by

**DR NOR SUZYLAH SOHAIMI**  
UUM-ITS (RESEARCH INSTITUTE  
FOR INDONESIA, THAILAND & SINGAPORE)

## **Event overview**

The Institute of Malaysian and International Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (IKMAS, UKM), together with the Centre for Research in History, Politics and International Affairs (SPHEA, UKM) and UUM-Research Institute for Indonesia, Thailand and Singapore (UUM-ITS) will jointly organise the IKMAS Seminar Series 1/2023 titled "Conducting A Systematic Literature Review on [\*Migrant Workers Policy and Vulnerability to Labour Trafficking in Malaysia\*](#)."

## **Objectives**

The main objective of this seminar is to share technical knowledge and findings derived from the conduct of a systematic literature review (SLR) on the complex interplay between Malaysia's policy design and implementation, and migrant workers' vulnerability to labour trafficking.

## **Target Participants**

This seminar aims to attract participation from the academic community working in the field, or intersecting subjects such as labour migration, labour trafficking, human rights and other forms of transnational organised crimes in the region. This includes undergraduate and post-graduate students, university lectures and fellows, and policy analysts from other research agencies. The seminar is also open for other stakeholders, including members of civil society organisations, grassroots communities and international organisations whose works and mandates centred around the elimination of labour trafficking.

## **Outcome**

Increased awareness and technical knowledge among scientific community and graduates on the use of scientific methods such as SLR in view of stimulating evidence-based discourse on labour trafficking and migrant workers' vulnerability. Further, it is hoped that further research areas and potential collaboration are explored.

## **Language**

The medium of the webinar would be in both English and Malay

## **Event Schedule**

Time	Session
10:00 - 10:10	Welcome Statements by:  Prof Dr Sufian Jusoh, Director of IKMAS, UKM
10.10 - 1015	An overview of Systematic Literature Review (SLR) Training for Scholars / Researchers by:  Dr Michaelle Tauson, Independent Consultant
10:15 - 10:45	Sharing of the SLR on " <i>Migrant Workers Policy and Vulnerability to Labour Trafficking in Malaysia</i> " by:  Dr Andika Ab. Wahab, Fellow, Institute of Malaysian & International Studies (IKMAS), UKM.  Moderated by Dr Suzylah Sohaimi, UUM-Research Institute for Indonesia, Thailand, and Singapore
10.45 - 11.20	Question and Answer (Q&A) Session  Moderated by Dr Suzylah Sohaimi, UUM-Research Institute for Indonesia, Thailand and Singapore
11.20 - 11.30	Closing Statements by:  Prof Dr Zarina Othman, Centre for Research in History, Politics and International Affairs (SPHEA, UKM)

# ***Migrant Workers Policy and Vulnerability to Labour Trafficking in Malaysia: Lessons and Gaps from Existing Literature***

## **Summary**

Since 2018, with the first change of the federal government after 60 years of independence, Malaysia has seen notable policy shifts in labour policy. These include amendments of employment and social protection regulations, as well as the strengthening of the national action plan in addressing trafficking in persons and establishment of a dedicated national plan to eliminate forced labour. All of which aimed to further strengthen national efforts to protect the vulnerable migrant workers and strengthen their access to justice and remedies. Despite these efforts, actual cases and allegations of labour trafficking continue to emerge. This suggests complex interactions between such policy shifts and labour trafficking cases in the country.

Research question: Against this backdrop, the conduct of this systematic review aims to unpack the following main research inquiry: how does Malaysia's policy regarding migrant workers contribute to their vulnerability to labour trafficking? To respond to this main research inquiry: we further asked: (i) what makes migrant workers vulnerable, (ii) do the current regulatory and policy reforms address such vulnerability, and (iii) what hinders Malaysia's efforts to eliminate migrants' vulnerability to labour trafficking.

Methodology: This literature review aimed to examine and interpret the existing body of literature, identified through internet searches using two databases, namely, (i) Google Scholar, and (ii) Scopus. A number of key search terms were used in the search strategy, and hits were screened using a list of inclusion criteria. From the total of 3,225 relevant articles identified from both databases, this study included and reviewed only 21 of them.

Findings and Conclusion: Undoubtedly, the past several years have seen positive commitments made by the Government of Malaysia to address labour trafficking and forced labour, including regulatory reforms with the aim to strengthen workers' protection and access to remedies. However, we found that stronger legislation does not always or necessarily result in increased protection of labour trafficking victims. Effective protection of victims is dependent on a range of complex factors, including effective access to legal representation, remedies, and the ability of frontline enforcement personnel to exercise their duty and to apply humanistic judgement when dealing with vulnerable victims. Further, with an overwhelming lack of public support and migrant agency, there is little incentive for increased protections.

## Short Biography



**Michaelle Tauson** has been working as a practitioner and researcher in the fields of international development and humanitarian assistance for 16 years, in the areas of human trafficking, refugee studies/forced migration, and international education/education in emergencies. Michaelle has worked for international organizations and donors such as UNICEF, UNESCO, World Food Programme, USAID, and Save the Children in countries in North America, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America. She holds a PhD in human wellbeing from the Institute of Development Studies, at the University of Sussex and a master's in economics from the Korbel School of International Studies, at the University of Denver.



**Andika Wahab** holds a Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology and International Relations from the National University of Malaysia (UKM) and currently serves as the Head of Centre for West Asian Studies at the Institute of Malaysian and International Studies (IKMAS), UKM. His research fields include labour migration, forced migration and labour standards in the business sector. He is a member of the Global Business and Human Rights Scholars Association (GBHRSA) and Nepal-Malaysia Corridor Advisory Board to the Migration for Development and Equality (MIDEQ). He is an accredited Fair Labor Association (FLA) monitor for labour standards compliance in supply chains. He is an alumnus of the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (RWI) Asia Human Rights Research Initiative in 2019.



**Nor Suzylah Sohaimi** is currently a Senior Lecturer (Urbanisation & Regional Development) at the Department of Planning and Property Development, School of Government, Universiti Utara Malaysia and serves as the Director of Research Institute for Indonesia, Thailand & Singapore (UUM-ITS). She is the editorial board of the Journal of Governance and Development, and article reviewers for some journals. Nor Suzylah received a doctorate degree in Built Environment from the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) and a master's degree in urban development and Management from Universiti Teknologi MARA. Her research interest focuses on regional development, sustainability, social housing, and human settlement.