

# MAPPING MIGRANTS AND OTHER DISPLACED POPULATIONS' HEALTH CHALLENGES – BRIDGING GAPS IN ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES

Healthy Migrants in Healthy Communities

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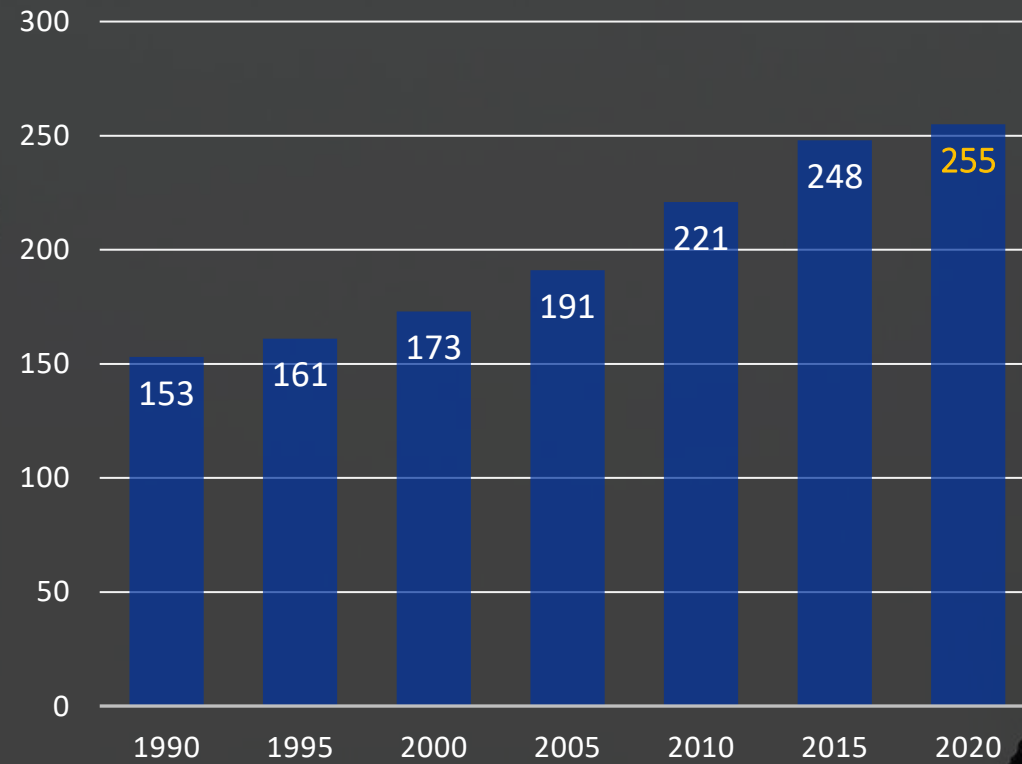
A large crowd of people, many with backpacks, is gathered on a road. In the background, there are mountains under a hazy sky. The scene appears to be a migration route.

## Who is a migrant?

“...a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons”.

*The IOM Glossary on Migration*

## Number of international migrants (in millions)



- 48% girls and women
- 13% children below 18 y/o
- 11% between 15 and 24 y/o
- 71.2M IDPs  
62.5M due to conflict and violence  
8.7M due to disasters



# HEALTH VULNERABILITIES OF MIGRANTS

A photograph of a person sitting on the side of a white truck trailer. The person is wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt, grey pants, and red sneakers. They have a large black backpack with a red strap on their back. The person is leaning forward, looking down at something in their hands. The truck trailer has large black tires and metal components. The background is a bright, slightly overcast sky. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark grey rectangle containing text.

## The Right to Health

Core international instruments relating to *human rights*, recognize the right to health of everyone, including migrants:

“The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being”

Constitution of the World Health Organization, July 1946

A man wearing a white cap and a light-colored button-down shirt stands in the center of the frame. He is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. Behind him is a large, out-of-focus crowd of people, mostly men, in what appears to be an indoor setting with blue and green walls. The lighting is somewhat dim, and the overall tone is serious.

## True or False?

Migrants and migration harm public health:

- Are migrants carriers of diseases?
- Are migrants a burden to health systems?

A photograph of two women in a room with blue walls. The woman in the foreground is wearing a green feathered headdress and a blue patterned top, holding a baby wrapped in a yellow and green patterned cloth. The woman in the background is wearing a yellow headscarf and a yellow top, looking to the right. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark rectangle containing text.

## Myths

- Migrants are carriers of disease
- Migrants are a burden to health systems

Extensive reviews have revealed **little evidence** of systemic association with migration and **public health security threats** from communicable diseases spreading to host communities

A photograph of a person carrying a large, light-colored bundle on their head, walking through a crowd of other people, likely migrants, in an outdoor setting. The person is wearing a purple shirt and a grey jacket. The background shows other people and a dirt path.

## Reality

- It is often **young, diverse, healthy people** who migrate, so in many cases, migrants have better health than host communities
- **Conditions surrounding** the migration process make migrants **more vulnerable**



A photograph of a man and a young child sitting inside an orange tent. The man is wearing a grey Adidas cap and a colorful patterned shirt. The child is wearing a dark t-shirt with a graphic. They are sitting on a patterned blanket. The tent is set up outdoors, with a building visible in the background.

## Barriers to access health services

Beyond **legal status**, numerous barriers such as **language differences**, **financial limitations**, or challenging **working and living conditions** profoundly influence an individual's ability to access healthcare and maintain positive health status



Anti-migrant sentiment, stigma, discrimination and xenophobia, which can lead to *decreased physical, mental and social health* e.g.:

- Increased vulnerability to violence and harassment
- Decreased access to health and other social services as well as employment
- Altered health seeking behavior

## Harsh environmental conditions


- Particularly the high temperatures that all too frequently result in **exhaustion** and **dehydration**
- Risk of **hypothermia**, **burns**, **drownings**





Many travelling by foot have insufficient food and water, flimsy shoes and little protection from the sun

- Tired, **swollen** and **blistered** feet are among the biggest challenges
- Frequent **skin** and **soft tissue** infections, **parasites**

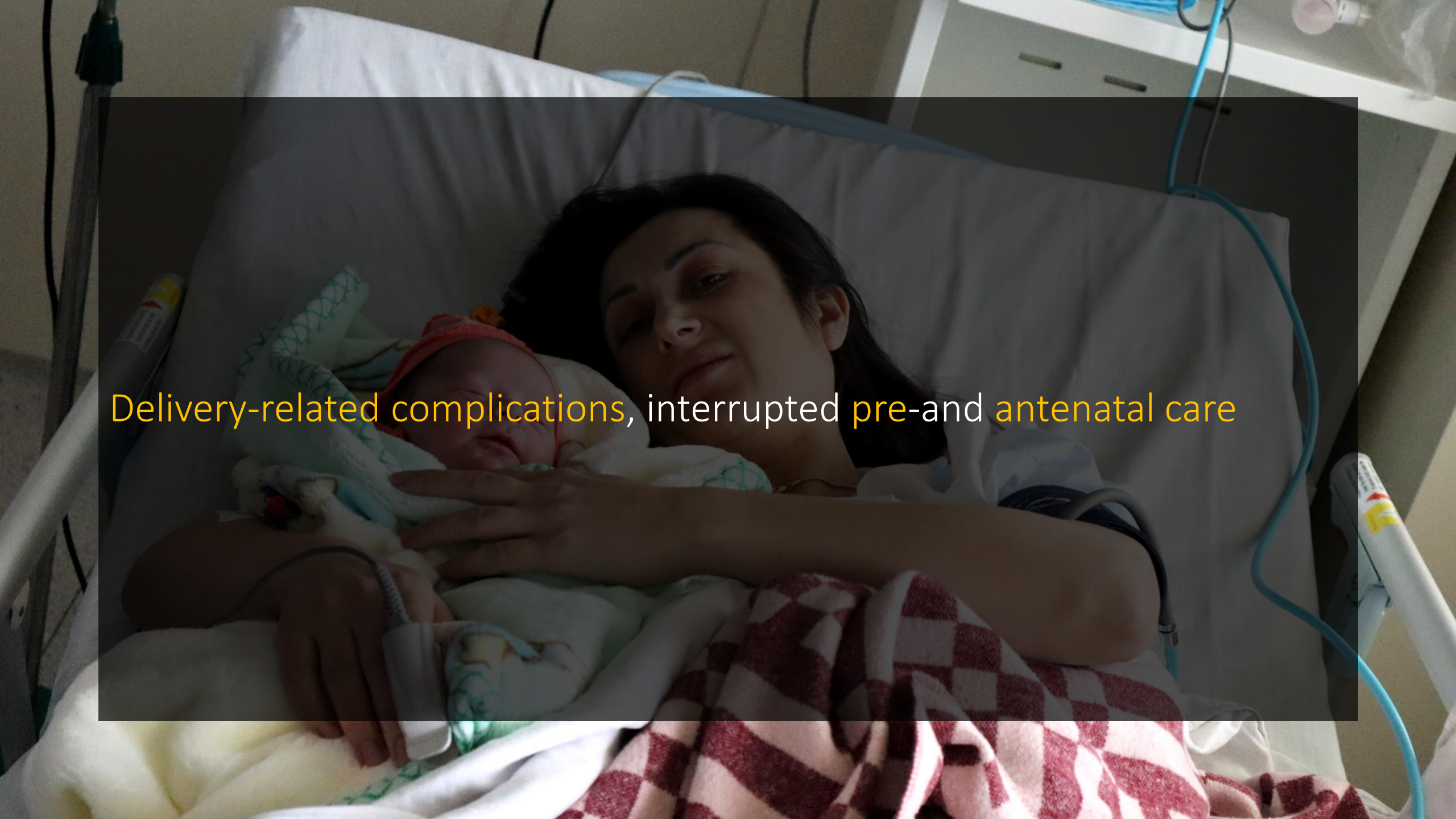


Inadequate access to **food** and **water**, **sanitation** and other basic services, which increases their risk of **communicable diseases**, particularly **measles**, and **food-** and **waterborne diseases**

A photograph showing the interior of a simple, possibly temporary, shelter. The walls are made of mud or plaster and are dark. The floor is sandy and uneven. In the foreground, a child is climbing a wooden frame. In the background, another child stands near a doorway, looking out. The lighting is low, with light coming from the doorway, creating a somber atmosphere.

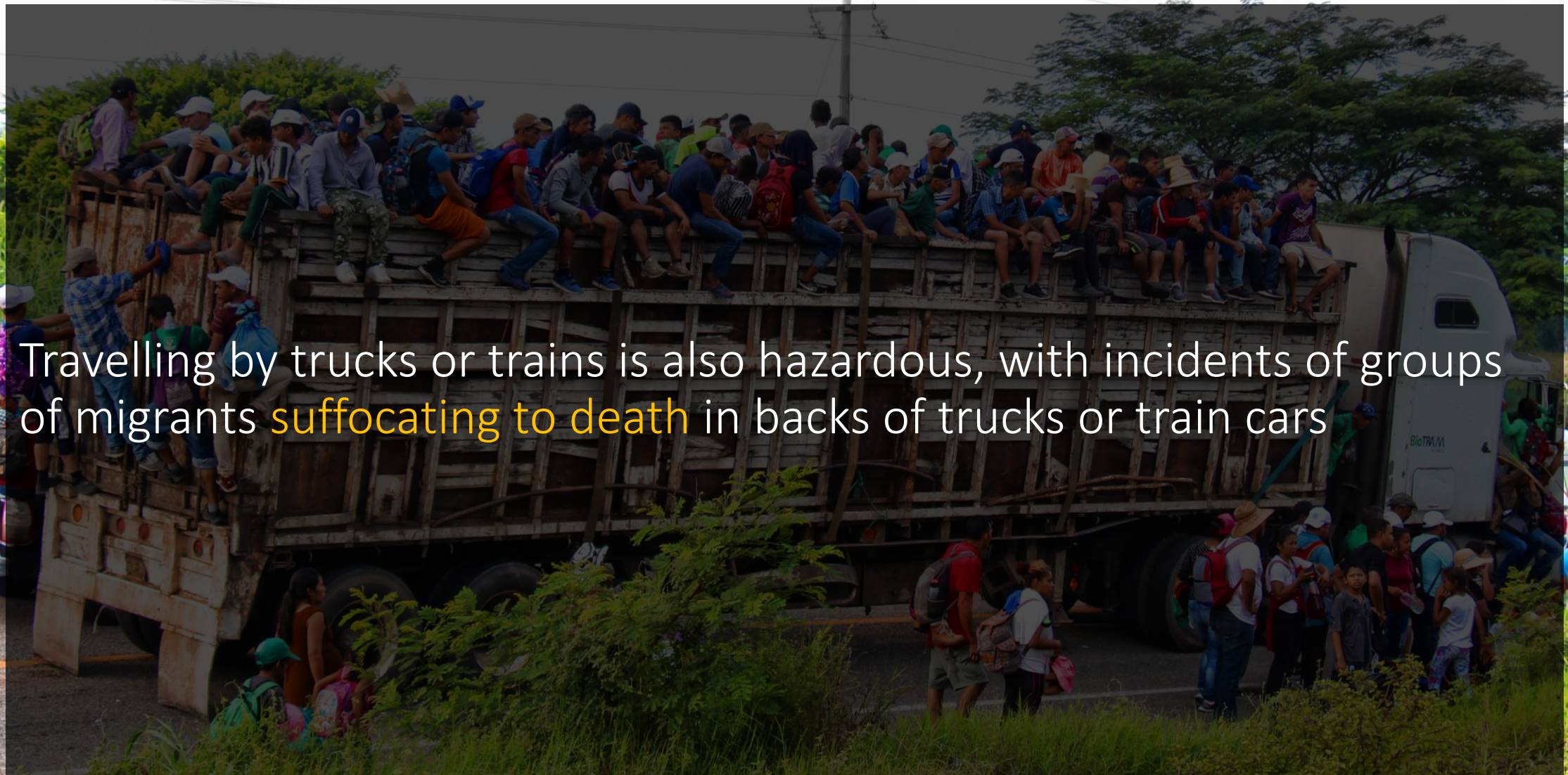
Children and elderly people who have been forced to migrate are especially vulnerable to **malnutrition** and related illnesses, and may have come from settings where **immunisation** programmes were sub-optimal

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- Vulnerable to lack of **life-sustaining medicines** – particularly older people
  - **Continuity of treatment**

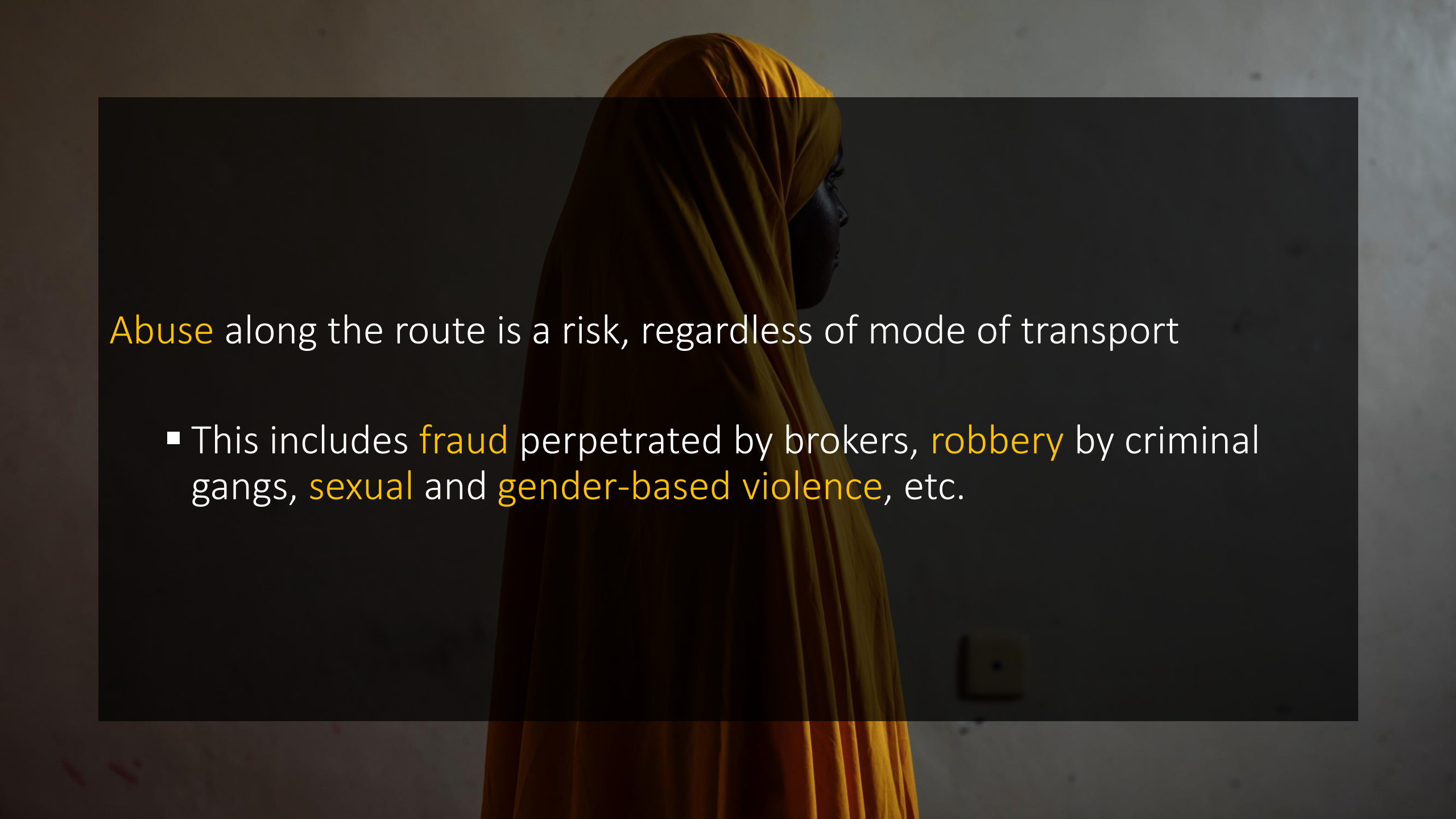
A photograph of a woman lying in a hospital bed, holding a newborn baby. The woman has dark hair and is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The baby is wearing a pink hat and is wrapped in a white blanket. The woman is wearing a red and white checkered blanket. The background shows a hospital room with a white bedsheet and some medical equipment. The text "Delivery-related complications, interrupted pre-and antenatal care" is overlaid on the image in yellow and white font.

Delivery-related complications, interrupted pre-and antenatal care





Travelling by trucks or trains is also hazardous, with incidents of groups of migrants **suffocating to death** in backs of trucks or train cars



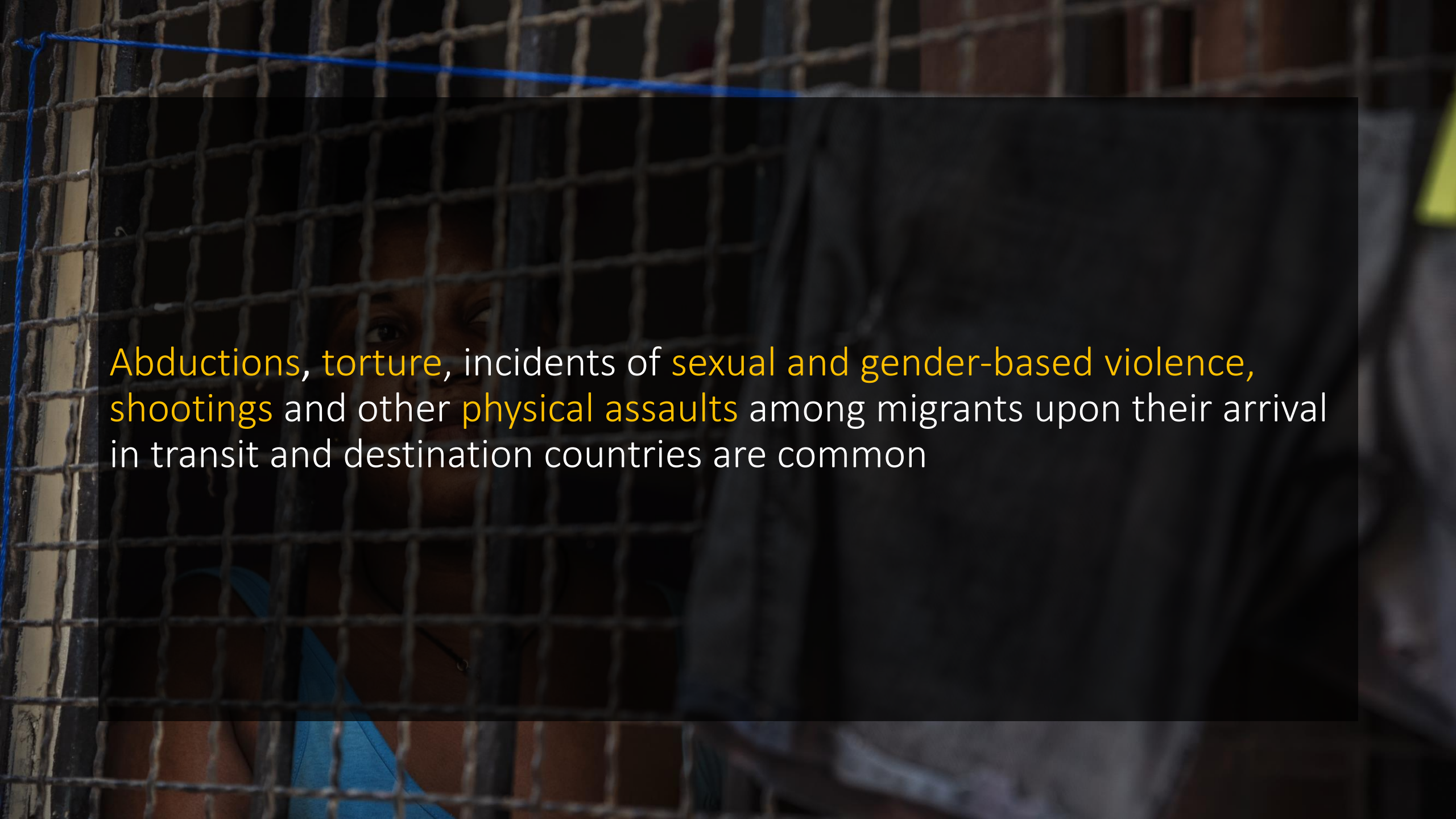
**Abuse** along the route is a risk, regardless of mode of transport

- This includes **fraud** perpetrated by brokers, **robbery** by criminal gangs, **sexual** and **gender-based violence**, etc.

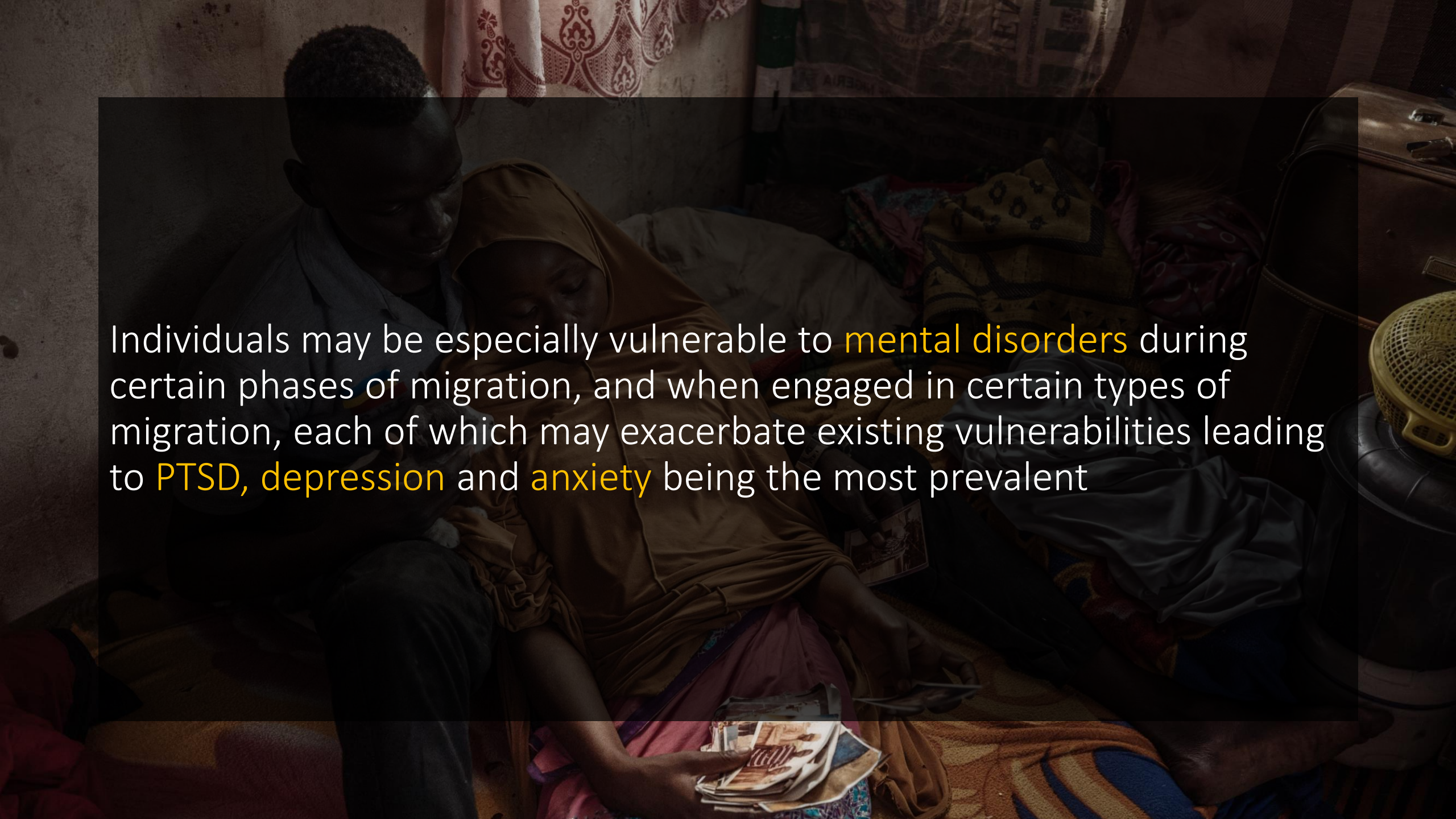


**Injuries** from torture, violence and accidents (e.g., gunshot wounds, fractures, dislocations, penetrating injuries, head trauma)

- Personnel at health facility in a detention center in country XY report that **lacerations from rape, damage to the hands from hanging a person by the thumbs and burns all over the body from cigarettes and molten plastic** were the most common injuries among migrants

A close-up photograph of a person's face, partially obscured by a metal mesh fence. The person has dark hair and is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting an indoor setting with some structural elements. A blue rope is visible at the top left, attached to the fence.

Abductions, torture, incidents of sexual and gender-based violence, shootings and other physical assaults among migrants upon their arrival in transit and destination countries are common

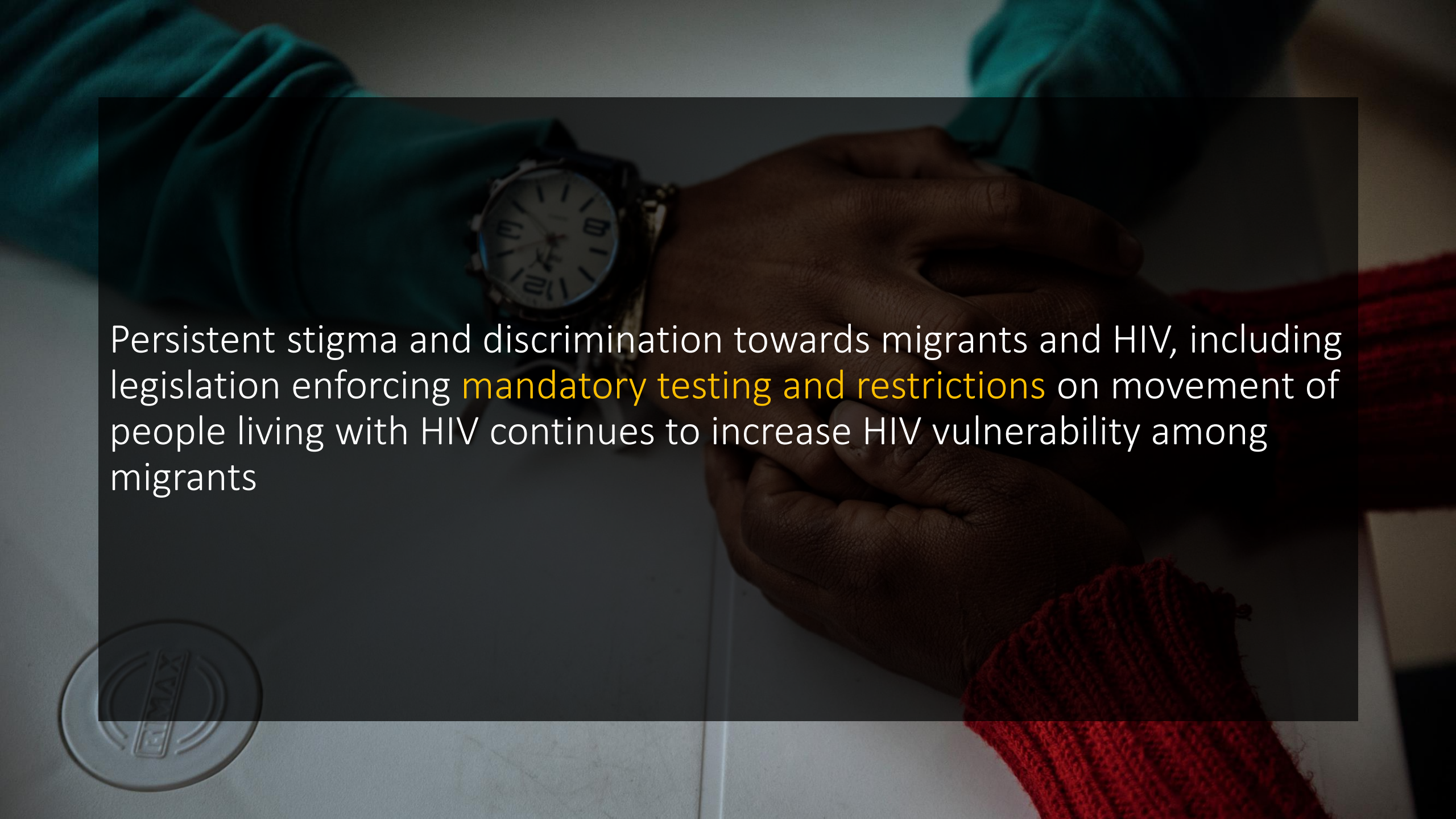
A photograph of a man and a woman sitting on a bed in a dimly lit room. The man is on the left, looking down at a stack of papers held by the woman on the right. The woman is wearing a headscarf and a long dress. The room appears to be a simple, possibly temporary, living space with patterned curtains and a metal container in the background.

Individuals may be especially vulnerable to **mental disorders** during certain phases of migration, and when engaged in certain types of migration, each of which may exacerbate existing vulnerabilities leading to **PTSD, depression** and **anxiety** being the most prevalent

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a white t-shirt and a backpack, is walking outdoors. The background shows a green wall with some text and a blue sky with clouds. A semi-transparent dark grey box is overlaid on the image, containing text and a list.

Migration **does not automatically equal HIV vulnerability** and not all migrants are at increased risk of HIV due to their mobility

- In many **contexts** migrants are exposed to a unique set of sociocultural, economic and environmental factors that makes them more vulnerable to HIV
- Lack of access to health services, information and environments that are conducive to engaging in high-risk behavior

A close-up photograph of two hands clasped together. The hand on the left is wearing a silver-toned watch with a white face and black numerals. The hand on the right is wearing a red, textured knit sleeve. The background is a light-colored surface with a faint circular embossed logo in the bottom left corner. A semi-transparent dark grey rectangular box is overlaid on the image, containing white text.

Persistent stigma and discrimination towards migrants and HIV, including legislation enforcing **mandatory testing and restrictions** on movement of people living with HIV continues to increase HIV vulnerability among migrants



Instead of resisting migration,  
let's organise it

François Crépeau (2015),  
UN special rapporteur on the  
human rights of migrants