

UNODC Submission to the Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons June 2024

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) welcomes the upcoming thematic report to be submitted to the 79th Session of the United Nations General Assembly by the UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, on *“trafficking and gender, peace and security.”*

As the guardian of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Trafficking in Persons Protocol), UNODC strives to advance efforts, globally, to counter human trafficking, and protect and assist trafficking victims and survivors, with full respect for their human rights. UNODC wishes to support the Rapporteur by responding to her call for inputs and in particular on the below points raised by the Rapporteur.

Mandatory trainings for peacekeeping personnel on trafficking in persons for all purposes of exploitation

- In terms of mandatory training for peacekeeping personnel, UNODC, in collaboration with the UN Department of Peace Operations, developed from 2019 to 2020 a comprehensive training manual to enhance the capabilities of individual police officers in the United Nations Police (UNPOL) deployed within the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in **Mali** (MINUSMA). This initiative was part of a broader effort to improve the identification and response mechanisms for cases of trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants.
- Additionally, UNODC facilitated the creation of a pool of MINUSMA trainers equipped to train their peers and national stakeholders on these critical issues. The training module on trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling was subsequently integrated into the induction programme for all newcomers, ensuring continuity beyond the project's completion. Consequently, an additional 140 MINUSMA police officers received training from this pool of trainers. These officers subsequently reported providing support and advice to Malian security forces in the identification and investigation of 12 potential trafficking in persons cases.

Design of gender sensitive responses and programmes on prevention, protection and recovery from conflict-related sexual violence, psycho-social and medical support services, which mainstream trafficking in persons

- The ongoing conflict in **Ukraine** has profoundly reshaped the country's political economy, impacting both licit and illicit trade routes, disrupting criminal organizations, and giving rise to new forms of informal and illicit exchanges at the frontlines and elsewhere. Legal pathways principally to the European Union for individuals fleeing Ukraine have effectively curbed the large-scale smuggling of migrants. The relatively low incidence of smuggling and subsequent irregular flows amidst the displacement of over five million people has significantly reduced vulnerability to trafficking in persons. Nonetheless, large-scale and complex movements of people correlate with heightened threats to personal safety, increasing their risk of exposure to crime, violence, and exploitation. Within Ukraine, there remains a critical need for continued support to enhance the identification, investigation, prosecution, and adjudication of trafficking in persons. In this context,

UNODC is aiding in the implementation of the UN Transitional Framework for Ukraine. This strategic document outlines the United Nations' support for the Ukrainian government's response to the war, delineating priority areas for the UNCT's assistance. The trafficking in persons programme aligns with the related UNODC mandate and assists Ukraine in fulfilling its commitments under the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, to which it is a signatory.

- As part of the current Joint Interagency Project (2023-2025) titled 'Strengthening National and Community-Based Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) Prevention and Response Mechanisms in **Ukraine** through a Survivor-Centred Multi-Sectoral Approach,' UNODC is collaborating with key partners to improve capacities for rights-based investigation and prosecution of trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation. This project, funded by the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, aims to improve the legal and healthcare services available to survivors of TIP for sexual exploitation through capacity building and technical assistance.
- In **Afghanistan**, UNODC, in partnership with the Youth Health Development Organization, has adopted a health-focused approach to prevent trafficking in persons. Recognizing the severe physical and mental health consequences of human trafficking, as well as the critical role of healthcare professionals in identifying, referring, and supporting victims, UNODC has facilitated the establishment of a Drop-in Center in Kandahar province. This center aims to strengthen the capacity of medical personnel to identify and refer victims of human trafficking and to improve the quality of life, health, and livelihoods of individuals at risk or affected by drug use, human trafficking, migrant smuggling, and other associated health and social issues.

Investigations and accountability for trafficking in persons and exploitation of natural resources and land dispossession and the nexus between trafficking in persons and militarization which address challenges, protection gaps and good practices

- UNODC's Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Section (HTMSS) has assisted the **State of Palestine** to respond to TIP since 2019. In 2022, HTMSS supported the Government of Palestine in conducting multistakeholder training sessions on trafficking in persons in Jericho and Ramallah. These sessions targeted investigators, prosecutors, judicial authorities, government officials, and other stakeholders providing support to trafficking victims, with a particular focus on women and girls subjected to sexual exploitation and domestic servitude. The aim was to enhance identification skills and promote cooperation around prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnership.
- Additionally, HTMSS recently assisted various countries in preparing their action plans against TIP. In 2023, for example, the section supported the government of **Burkina Faso** in drafting and validating their first national action plan against trafficking in persons (NAP/TIP). This plan includes measures to combat TIP, such as decriminalizing and protecting children recruited as soldiers or exploited by non-State armed groups. It also provides for legal and judicial assistance to children encountered during security operations, aiming to prevent their imprisonment and ensure their protection and access to basic rights.
- In 2023, HTMSS intensified its support to the **Ukrainian** and **Moldovan** TIP criminal justice authorities, focusing on capacity building and facilitating international cooperation to prevent and address TIP among highly vulnerable refugees and internally displaced persons due to the war in Ukraine. Over 100 prosecutors were trained, and multilateral meetings were held in Austria, the Netherlands, and Poland, involving prosecutors, judiciary, law enforcement professionals, civil society, and international organizations. The aim was to enhance the detection, investigation, and prosecution of human trafficking, as well as to improve the identification and referral of victims.



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This included capacity building and updating standard operating procedures (SOPs) for prosecutors combatting trafficking in persons under Article 149 of the Criminal Code, as well as an in-depth case-law analysis (2019-2023) to understand and better respond to the low number of convictions. Additionally, HTMSS plans to develop specific training programmes for the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine to help frontline officers detect trafficking in persons.

- Also in 2023, UNODC supported **Malawi's** Ministry of Homeland Security by conducting intelligence-led operations at the Dzaleka Refugee Camp, providing mentoring and operational case support on trafficking in persons. As a result of this, 87 victims of trafficking were identified and rescued by law enforcement in January and February 2024. Looking ahead, UNODC will continue to support the identification and referral of victims at the Dzaleka Refugee Camp throughout 2024. This ongoing support will include training faith leaders, law enforcement officers, and civil society members to raise awareness about TIP and enhance victim identification and referral efforts.
- From March 2020 to February 2024, UNODC also implemented a wide range of capacity-building programmes in **Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh**, to enhance the response of government agencies, humanitarian organizations, and civil society to the heightened risk of human trafficking among Rohingya refugees. In partnership with the Ministry of Home Affairs of Bangladesh, UNODC delivered specialized workshops for law enforcement officers, border officials, and prosecutors. These workshops equipped participants with the technical skills needed to handle and investigate trafficking in persons cases effectively, emphasizing victim-centered approaches in investigations and criminal justice processes. UNODC also participated in multistakeholder consultations to assess drug and crime trends, border management responses, and capacity needs. A total of 160 practitioners, including 40 women, benefited from these training sessions and consultations.
- In **Haiti**, UNODC is supporting the international community's efforts to curb the proliferation of criminal gangs undermining peace, stability, and security in the country. These gangs are involved in serious human rights violations, including kidnappings, sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking in persons, including for the recruitment of children into armed groups and criminal networks. To bolster the Haitian National Police, UNODC is procuring equipment to enhance their ability to contain criminal groups and will provide the unit mandated to counter human trafficking (POLIFRONT) with the skills and technical knowledge necessary to conduct intelligence-led operations against this crime.

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