

# Regional Conference of ECOWAS States on Ending Human Trafficking 2023 *Report*



ECOWAS COMMISSION  
COMMISSION DE LA CEDEAO  
COMISSÃO DA CEDEAO



**A TOOLKIT FOR  
CRAFTING A WAY FORWARD**

**APRIL 2023  
FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE**





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# Executive Summary



The outcomes of the conference, whether found through commitments made within the keynote statements, the Freetown Roadmap, or discussions arising from the key thematic sessions showed impressive commitment and leadership in tackling TIP. This was exemplified by the conference's hosts, Sierra Leone, who shared throughout the conference, the progress they made in the fight against TIP and officially launched the Sierra Leone National Referral Mechanism on Victims of Trafficking by Honourable Minister Madam Baidu Dassama, Ministry of Social Welfare. This came after a series of national events that included the ratification of Sierra Leone's new Anti-human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Law (2022) and that of the ECOWAS Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters (2022), the launch of a national hotline and the launch of a national data platform to mainstream and harmonise data collection with an emphasis on amplifying the 4Ps.

Whilst legal reform was recognised as crucial, the sentiments throughout the conference were that good laws and policies alone cannot address the challenge of TIP. In most countries within ECOWAS and beyond, international laws and policies have been translated into National Action Plans. The ECOWAS Regional Action plan emphasises the importance of data collection, criminal justice capacity building, enhanced regional cooperation and strengthened prosecution. In deliberating on these considerations through the lens of the 4Ps, delegates identified challenges, opportunities, and recommendations. These were underlined by an emphasis on building capacity of local research partners, institutions, and more optimal and innovative use of technology.

Data collection, management, and analysis to ensure informed strategies in addressing TIP, was stressed in most discussions and statements. Key discussions stressed the need for multi-disciplinary and multi partner task forces, collective efforts for capacity building with an emphasis on ethical data processing. Further investment in the provision of early warning and credible information collection contributing to the identification of vulnerable people and communities was identified as imperative to increase the potential of needed, timely, and accurate interventions.

In identifying opportunities for the prevention of TIP, emphasis was placed on innovative approaches to awareness and education raising, synergising traditional, community-based approaches complemented with strategies benefiting from technological advancements. From his Excellency President of Sierra Leone Retired Brigadier Maada Bio's opening key statement, push factors were positioned as central to the conversation in ensuring a concerted effort in reducing the vulnerabilities that create a conducive environment to TIP. Strategies discussed during the 2-day conference referred to school and community-based education, training of community leaders in identifying and responding to TIP issues, parent/guardian specific outreach work, and capacity building and strategic positioning of community structures in the fight against TIP. Speakers emphasised the identification of community organisations and the power they have in the fight against TIP. This complemented with a concerted effort to tackle and engage on the push factors creates an environment where risk is reduced and/or mitigated.

Engaging survivors effectively and in meaningful ways was emphasised during the various sessions. Enhanced support that ensured dignified services, access to livelihood opportunities and access to legal support was stressed. Case studies of effective shelter management and survivor reintegration approaches were shared identifying the successes of tailored psychosocial support. Speakers stressed that a process of diagnosis should define the kind of psychosocial support needed for each survivor as their unique experiences and potential responses need to be factored in the design of any intervention.

In terms of rehabilitation, diversity of options and activities were accentuated with a stress on in-built safeguarding considerations. Protection was referred to in relation to prosecution. Examples of victims waiting hours for support services and telephone calls was described as having an impact on mindset and survivor motivation to access further support services. Recommendations were made for trained social service provision at police stations, hospitals and other first point of care facilities.

Discussions and recommendations focused on toughening law enforcement and judiciary responses emphasising the need for perpetrators to be prosecuted. Where traffickers are met by the full force of the law and forced to pay for their crimes, TIP would become a risky and expensive enterprise for criminals. To achieve this, recommendations were made around building the capacity of criminal justice systems through victim centred and informed approaches. Recommendations discussed were conscious of challenges around prosecution and the complex web of TIP that cannot be discussed without considering the impact of smuggling of migrants, the role of family, friends and relations, the lack of identification of perpetrators, and the ill-equipped national systems to support victims and hold international criminals accountable.

In conclusion, irrespective of whether it is recommendations, opportunities or challenges that were raised, it was recognised that TIP is a global problem that requires a global coalition. Given the nature of the world's interconnectedness and porosity of borders, there is a need to build networks to ensure resounding successes in the fight against trafficking. This conference report has been presented to achieve just that. By providing delegates the opportunity to delve into discussions they may not have been able to access and resources that would enable them to delve deeper in areas of interest with links to the speakers, their organisations and resources, the conference report aims to act as a resource bank to allow delegates to expand their knowledge base and partnerships in combating trafficking.



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# Background & Concept

## BACKGROUND & CONCEPT

While global poverty rates are trending downwards, the number of people living in poverty in developing countries has increased because of population pressure and the contraction of economies around the world. In Sub Saharan Africa, along with numerous threats exacerbated by increasing poverty rates, conflict, and the impact of climate change on largely poor agriculture-based communities, this has prompted urban migration from rural areas in search of better economic opportunities and safety, making individuals increasingly vulnerable to trafficking. This is especially pertinent in West Africa where economic and physical insecurities continue to create an enabling environment for trafficking.

The complex web of TIP cannot be discussed without considering the impact of smuggling of migrants on increasing the threat of human security in Sub Saharan Africa. While smuggling and human trafficking are distinct, many of the same risks create the conditions for both to thrive. While the Regional Conference of ECOWAS States on Human Trafficking was designed with the vision of a focus on trafficking, emerging initiatives in the region are calling for an integrated approach to addressing both migrant smuggling and trafficking given the overlaps in their root causes and strategies to address both scourges. While their legal definitions are different, practitioners and policy makers recognise that the two are inextricably linked and as such, an integrated and streamlined approach must be adopted to address the evolving reality.

*Globally, about 50% of detected victims were trafficked for sexual exploitation, however, in Sub Saharan Africa, most detected victims were involved in forced labour.*

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Global Report on Trafficking in Persons (2020) an economic need was considered the most significant “push” factor in trafficking and migrant smuggling. Globally, about 50% of detected victims were trafficked for sexual exploitation, however, in Sub Saharan Africa, most detected victims were involved in forced labour. The UNODC Report also noted that domestic responses to these trends are far from adequate due to underfunding and weak detection mechanisms. Actions are often fragmented with key stakeholders such as the private sector, who are critical stakeholders in disrupting the labour supply chains, are not engaged effectively. This compounded with the

proliferation of the use of social media and the internet to recruit youth has left some domestic and regional laws grappling with attempts to catch up to respond to these alarming trends. There is a clear need for government entities to invest more in the use of tools, especially in the cyber space to prevent and detect trafficking.

With this backdrop in mind, the objectives of the Regional Conference of ECOWAS States on Human Trafficking were to:

- ✔ Share experiences and promote knowledge sharing amongst ECOWAS countries on the challenges and opportunities in the implementation of their respective action plans within the context of their existing domestic, regional, and international laws.
- ✔ Strengthen political buy-in at the highest levels of government on anti-trafficking policy development and implementation.



- ✓ Identify opportunities to strengthen regional coordination mechanism, in areas such as data collection and sharing to improve on the detection of trafficking and the provision of support to survivors and create and adopt a roadmap for implementation.
- ✓ Explore opportunities and network to bolster regional protocols and procedures in awareness raising, prevention, prosecution, engagement with survivors and survivor groups/networks and aftercare for victims.

### **WHY SIERRA LEONE?**

Since 2018, Sierra Leone has dedicated more financial and human resources to combatting trafficking which has resulted in increased detection of survivors and an increased focus on the prosecution of perpetrators. This is in line with the Human Capital Development (HCD) flagship project of the Government of Sierra Leone. The HCD portfolio seeks to not only build human capital through investments in health, agriculture, and education, it also incorporates human security and a rights-based approach to enhance the protection of citizens in the pursuit of better and safer economic opportunities.



In this direction, Sierra Leone's new Anti-Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Law was ratified in 2022 which increased the penalties and punishment for trafficking perpetrators and smugglers and calls for new funding mechanisms and structures to intensify the fight. In the same year, Sierra Leone ratified the ECOWAS Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, intended to facilitate cross border law enforcement anti trafficking efforts. 2022 also marked the year Sierra Leone held its first national conference with the theme "Strengthen National Frameworks and Stakeholder Networks to Stop Modern Day Slavery". The results of this conference included:

- ✓ The launch of a National Hotline.
- ✓ Identification of strategies to implement a more community centric-approach to prevention, identification, and integration.
- ✓ The launch of a National Data Platform to mainstream and harmonise data collection across relevant entities.



## Resource Bank

[Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime](#)

[Sierra Leone's Human Capital Development Flagship Portfolio, 2020](#)

[The Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act, 2022, Sierra Leone](#)

[ECOWAS Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters](#)



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# Opening Statements

## STATEMENT BY HONOURABLE MINISTER MADAM BAINDU DASSAMA



Honourable Madam Baidu Dassama, Minister of Social Welfare in Sierra Leone, greeted and welcomed Excellencies and all guests and participants on behalf of GoSL. Minister Dassama stressed the importance of the conference as a milestone event and a product of a coordinated effort between GoSL, ECOWAS and APRIES and thanked all international partners for their continuous support in fighting trafficking in persons in the region. The ECOWAS conference is part of regional approach to eradicate TIP by enhancing cross country coordination and comes only a year after the National Conference on Trafficking in Persons was held in Sierra Leone.

Ongoing political commitment of the SL Office of the President, and relevant ministries of Information and Communications and Ministry of Finance are reflected in an ongoing public campaign for raising awareness against TIP and establishment of the anti-trafficking agency in Sierra Leone that followed the signing of Anti-human trafficking and Migrant Act 2022.

Recent activities of the GoSL include a meeting between Anti-trafficking taskforce members of Sierra Leone and Guinea, reported as a hot spot region for illegal immigration, and the sub-regional technical meeting between MRU member states of Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia, and Ivory Coast, all for the purpose of strengthening the cooperation and coordination in the fight of TIP, prevention victim protection, case investigation and prosecution.

## STATEMENT BY DR. DAVID OKECH SPEECH, CENHTRO AND APRIES DIRECTOR

Dr. Okech is Professor at the University of Georgia School of Social Work and founder of the Center on Human Trafficking Research & Outreach (CenHTRO) and the African Programming and Research Initiative to End Slavery (APRIES). Dr. Okech's research interests are around the use of evidence to inform policies and programs that effectively enhance the overall well-being of human trafficking survivors and reduce trafficking. Dr. Okech Director of the MSW Program between 2013-19 and Director of Global Engagement at the at the UGA School of Social work between 2014-2017. His works have been published in Behavioral Medicine, Social Science and Medicine, International Social Work, and Child and Youth Services among other journals. Prior to become a professor, he worked with vulnerable children and youth in Kenya for more than 7 years. Dr. Okech serves in the research boards of various human trafficking organizations across the globe.



Your Excellency Retired Brigadier Dr. Julius Maada Bio, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone.  
First Lady of the Republic of Sierra Leone, Madam Fatima Maada Bio.  
Honorable Dr. Mohamed Juldeh Jalloh, Vice President of the Republic of Sierra Leone and Chairman of this Conference.  
Madam Frances Piagie Alghali, Minister of State, Office of the Vice President.  
Mr. Mark Forstrom, US Department of State, Office to Combat Trafficking in Persons,  
Mr. Christopher Gascon, Regional Director, International Organization for Migration  
Representatives from ECOWAS Secretariat,  
Government of Sierra Leone Officials,  
US Embassy in Sierra Leone, Survivors, and other dignitaries from government, INGO, NGO, CBO, and the religious community.  
Ladies and gentlemen; all protocols observed.

It is my honor to be among you on this auspicious occasion. Congratulations to the Government of Sierra Leone for hosting this ECOWAS Conference! The African Programming & Research Initiative to End Slavery at the University of Georgia's Center on Human Trafficking Research & Outreach (CenHTRO) exists to reduce the prevalence of trafficking across the globe, with a special focus on sub-Saharan Africa. We are a collaboration between the University of Georgia in the US and the University of Liverpool in the UK. We use data to inform counter-trafficking interventions and policies. We believe in the Collective Impact and operate as a backbone organization for numerous research and programming organizations across the continent.

Here in Sierra Leone, we are focused on reducing Child Trafficking in four provinces and in Senegal, we are focused on sex trafficking in the Kedougou region.

In Zambia and Malawi, we are focused on labor trafficking in six districts.

At the ECOWAS, our new project aims to reinforce the capacity of the ECOWAS Anti-TIP Unit and member states to reduce the prevalence of human trafficking in the region. Our goals are to:

- Foster effective TIP data collection & data management in the criminal justice sector,
- Enhance regional cooperation and sharing of best practices,
- And strengthen TIP investigation & prosecution within and between 4 pilot ECOWAS Member States selected through assessments.

To meet these goals, we will facilitate the institutionalization of an updated ECOWAS master training curriculum and develop tools including standardized codes of conduct and investigative protocols, among other measures.

All our research has demonstrated that human trafficking here is not just a national issue, but indeed a regional issue. In Senegal for example, we are seeing that most victims in the gold mines are women from Nigeria, who get through Mali, where they get forged documents before entering Senegal. And human trafficking is not only a regional issue, it is also a development and security issue. Therefore, multiple systems and a holistic approach is required if we are to reduce the problem in the region. We have to focus at the multiple risk factors and facilitators of trafficking at the individual, family, community, national, and regional levels.

APRIES is excited to partner with the ECOWAS as well as the government of Sierra Leone in the efforts to address the problem in the region. We want to build the capacity of local research partners to conduct rigorous research that can help governments and service providers prevention, protection, and prosecution efforts. We want to support NGOs and other service providers to provide the best services to survivors through effective but locally nuanced monitoring and evaluation tools. I believe that this is the most efficient path in meeting the goals specified in this conference.

We are grateful to the US Department of State Office to Combat and Monitor Trafficking in Persons who are supporting our collaboration. We are very grateful to the government of Sierra Leone which has always been a strong and consistent partner for us. Again, thank-you very much and we look forward to making a difference in reducing human trafficking as we chart a way forward for deeper and effective cooperation in the region-together!

## STATEMENT BY MR CHRISTOPHER GASCON, IOM REGIONAL DIRECTOR



Your Excellency, Rtd. Brigadier Dr. Julius Maada Bio, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone,  
Your Excellency, Dr. Omar Alieu Touray, ECOWAS President  
Your Excellency, ECOWAS Chair and President of Guinea Bissau,  
Mr. Umaro Mokhtar Sissoco Embaló,  
Honorable Minister of Social Welfare of the Republic of Sierra Leone, Madam Baindu Dassama  
Dear Chargee d'affaires a.i. of the US Embassy in Freetown,  
Ms. Stephanie Bunce

Dear Director of Apries, Dr. David Okech,  
Honorable representatives of Government ministries, departments, and agencies from ECOWAS countries,  
Dear IOM and UN colleagues,  
Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,  
All protocols observed.

I am honored to be here today as the Regional Director of West and Central Africa of IOM-The UN Migration Agency and delighted in witnessing an event of this magnitude taking place here in Sierra Leone. I feel privileged to see all stakeholders united here, committed to the fight against human trafficking within the ECOWAS region.

My appreciation and thanks to Sierra Leone's Vice-President office and ECOWAS for their leadership in organizing this conference and for inviting IOM who actively contributed to the organization of this event. Thanks also to APRIES for supporting the government in such an important event to discuss counter-trafficking realities across the ECOWAS countries.

Lastly Allow me also to thank IOM's donors namely the Migration Multiparter Trust Fund (MPTF) the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) funding the "Africa Regional Migration Program" and France's Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, that contributed to this event. Without their trust and support, IOM could not work closely with governments in responding to priorities related to counter-trafficking.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Trafficking in Persons (TIP) matters have enjoyed significant attention and action at the highest level of Government in the Republic of Sierra Leone our hosts, which has contributed to the increased awareness on TIP issues and effective prosecution of perpetrators. The government of the Republic of Sierra Leone took an important decision in drafting the ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MIGRANT SMUGGLING ACT of 2022 approved by Parliament.

In that sense allow me on behalf of IOM to congratulate The Honorable Minister of Social Welfare in Sierra Leone for her leadership in combating human trafficking, in always being committed to the cause and for the recently appointed Executive Director of Anti-trafficking Taskforce of the Republic of Sierra Leone for leading anti-trafficking coordination across the country.

This Conference is also an example on the key role that ECOWAS can play in coordinating actions among Member States and giving them policies and tools for the implementation at national level. I wish to thank ECOWAS for its commitment to working together with IOM to achieve collective solutions.

IOM takes a comprehensive approach to addressing human trafficking, based on the 3P paradigm (Prosecution-Prevention-Protection). Respect for human rights, the physical, mental and social well-being of the individual and his or her community, and the sustainability of our actions through institutional capacity development and partnerships are key to our work.

Over the past 20 years, we as IOM-the UN Migration Agency have learned that combatting trafficking in persons requires comprehensive approaches and strong partnerships with Government, UN agencies, Civil Society and NGOs to make tangible progresses in combatting and preventing human trafficking.

Since 1994, IOM and its partners have provided protection and assistance to close to 100,000 Victims of Trafficking (VoTs) worldwide. Trafficking in human beings is a reality that needs international attention and protection measures.

Another concrete example on data in 2017, IOM launched the Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative: first global, open-access data hub on human trafficking. The platform hosts not only data from IOM, but also victim case data from other anti-trafficking organizations, combined into one centralized, harmonized, and anonymized dataset.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to highlight that as per IOM sources 48% of irregular migrants in West and Central Africa embarking on dangerous pathways/journeys along the Central Mediterranean Route are at risk of exploitation and trafficking.

Between 2017 and 2022, IOM assisted over 5000 VoTs with voluntary return, mainly in the ECOWAS region (including 89% adults and 83% females). Nearly 76% of identified/referred of female VOTs are Nigerian nationals returning from Libya and Mali. Thanks to our direct assistance interventions our office in Sierra Leone could for example support over 220 VOTS in 2022 and 100 victims of trafficking in 2023.

Victims of trafficking returning to their homeland face additional challenges upon their return. In fact, most of them being breadwinners, and often supporting their families and communities while working abroad, their return often results in disappointment and stigma. It is essential we support dignified return and reintegration for these survivors, while also raising awareness among those at a risk – something IOM has been supporting over the past years, namely through awareness raising campaigns across Sierra Leone and the region.

Despite our collective efforts, some gaps need to be filled under upcoming programming. To enumerate a few:

- Sexual exploitation of women and girls (namely from Nigeria, exploited in Niger, Libya, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal...);
- Labor exploitation of women, boys and girls for domestic work (within the region, and in the Middle East...);
- Exploitation in traditional mining sites (Senegal, Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Niger). There are reliable indicators and testimonies of sexual exploitation, child labor and labor exploitation of miners;
- Children exploited in forced begging (talibé children in Senegal, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Mauritania, The Gambia...)

Victims of trafficking' stories are inspiring, as they show strength in expressing their distress, sharing their experiences and demonstrating their resolve to find dignified conditions. They are sometimes wake-up calls for us, UN agencies and operational partners and governments, as we need to vigorously advocate for operational solutions to tackle the issue.

Let me seize this opportunity to wish for all of us to continue working together on the fight against trafficking, and for the donor community to consider ways to fund programmes and support government and the national TiP taskforce efforts in that regard.

This Regional Conference is a timely opportunity to reflect and plan for actions to continue the joint fight towards ending Trafficking in Person within the ECOWAS region. IOM will continue to serve the strategic priorities of the national TiP taskforces, looking pragmatically at the 3 P paradigm to provide operational support.

Finally, let me commend the leadership of Sierra Leone's Office of the Vice President for convening this important event and wish fruitful exchanges and discussions to all participants and a pleasant stay in beautiful Salone as Sierra Leone is called in local Krio.

Thank you for your attention.

## STATEMENT BY MS. STEPHANIE BUNCE, DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION, US EMBASSY FREETOWN

Bio: Stephanie Bunce, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, began as Deputy Chief of Mission in Freetown in August 2022. Most recently, she was the Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Bujumbura, Burundi, from 2020 to 2022.

Throughout her diplomatic career, Stephanie has served in diverse domestic and overseas positions. From 2016 to 2018, she served in Washington, D.C., as the Director of the Bureau of Consular Affairs Leadership, Management, and Innovation Initiative. From 2013 to 2016, she served as Country Consular Coordinator for Mission Australia. Her previous assignments include Consular Section Chief in Sana'a, Yemen; Deputy Director of Consular Training at the Foreign Service Institute in Arlington, Virginia; and Deputy Consular Section Chief in Damascus, Syria. Additional overseas tours include Accra and Bucharest.

Stephanie is a 2019 graduate of the National War College in Washington, D.C. She holds a B.A. in history from James Madison University and was born and raised in the Washington, D.C., area.



Good morning, H.E President Julius Maada Bio, President of ECOWAS, H.E Dr. Omar Alieu Turay, Vice President Juldeh Jalloh, Madam First Lady, Honorable Ministers of Government, visiting heads of state and other international and regional guests, members of the diplomatic and consular corps, members of the fourth estate, ladies and gentlemen, all protocols observed. I feel very privileged to be with you all this morning to discuss how our countries can work together to end human trafficking.

I wish to commend H.E President Bio, Vice President Juldeh Jalloh, the Government of Sierra Leone, and the ECOWAS Secretariat for hosting this regional conference. The Government of Sierra Leone has made tremendous strides in addressing trafficking, holding its first-ever national conference on human trafficking in February last year. In July, President Bio signed into law the Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act 2022, a landmark piece of legislation to replace the Anti-Human Trafficking Act of 2005. The government also launched a national hotline for reporting trafficking crimes. These are all important steps in the fight against human trafficking.

We know that fighting trafficking in persons is a challenge we all share and cannot face alone. Traffickers don't respect borders and real solutions rely on broad, cross-border partnerships among governments with the support of international and regional organizations. Better coordination between local, regional, and international partners is essential to protect victims, prosecute traffickers, prevent trafficking from occurring in the first place.

This is why the U.S. government has committed \$9.6 million to help fight child trafficking and child labor in Sierra Leone. This work is being led by the African Programming & Research Initiative (APRIES) at the University of Georgia in collaboration with Conflict Management and Development Associates, World Hope International, and the UNODC. Last year, our partner APRIES conducted what we believe



is the largest household mixed-methods survey in Sierra Leone. To date, it has covered 4,000 households in Kenema, Kailahun, Kono, and Kambia.

The U.S. government has also demonstrated a commitment to addressing this threat within West Africa by committing over \$32 million in foreign assistance to ending trafficking, including supporting evidence-based interventions on human trafficking through the 'Program to End Modern Slavery' in Nigeria, Senegal, as well as here in Sierra Leone.

As we continue this global partnership to end human trafficking and modern slavery in all its forms, there is still the need to mobilize public support in all our countries to see that strong legislation is enforced to end trafficking. We look forward to doing that together. Thank you.

It is now my privilege to introduce the United States' Ambassador-at-Large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons Cindy Dyer. Ambassador Dyer leads the United States' global engagement to combat human trafficking and supports the coordination of anti-trafficking efforts across the U.S. government. While she regrets she could not join us in person today, Ambassador Dyer has sent recorded remarks, which we will now share with you.

## STATEMENT BY CINDY DYER, AMBASSADOR-AT-LARGE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, OFFICE TO MONITOR AND COMBAT TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

Bio: Cindy Dyer serves as the United States Ambassador-at-Large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons and leads the Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. In December 2022, the Senate unanimously confirmed her, and President Biden appointed her, to lead the United States' global engagement to combat human trafficking and support the coordination of anti-trafficking efforts across the U.S. government.

Ambassador Dyer is a human rights advocate and lawyer with three decades of experience working at the local, national, and international levels to prevent and respond to human trafficking, sexual assault, and domestic violence.

She earned her Bachelor's degree from Texas A&M and her J.D. from Baylor Law School.



Good morning, Excellencies and distinguished participants in this important conference. My name is Cindy Dyer, and as the United States Ambassador-at-Large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, I head the office at the U.S. Department of State that leads the United States' global engagement to combat human trafficking and supports the coordination of anti-trafficking efforts across the U.S. government.

I am deeply honored by the opportunity to address conference participants. I would first like to thank President Bio [Bee-oh] and Vice President Jalloh [JAH-low] for your leadership on this issue and hosting us today. We are thrilled by your participation in this conference and look forward to continued cooperation to combat human trafficking.

I would also like to recognize and thank the Member States of ECOWAS and the ECOWAS Secretariat. Human trafficking is a shared global challenge, and we are grateful for the partnership with leaders from across the governments of West Africa, ECOWAS, and civil society, many of whom are participating today.

The gathering of so many stakeholders is a unique moment. I urge you all to seize this opportunity. We often speak of partnership as the "fourth P" that is critical to the success of anti-trafficking efforts under the 3P framework, including the prosecution of traffickers, the protection of victims, and the prevention of human trafficking. We appreciate your ongoing commitment to progress – including through the soon to be updated regional action plan for ECOWAS.

I want to touch on a few key anti-trafficking themes in my remarks this morning. First, engaging survivors in meaningful ways is critical to establishing effective victim-centered and trauma-informed

anti-trafficking policies and strategies. The Biden-Harris Administration has prioritized these types of efforts in our own anti-trafficking work. Last December, for example, the U.S. Congress passed new legislation making the U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking – comprised of survivors of human trafficking – a permanent entity.

Meaningful engagement means collaborating with survivors in all aspects of anti-trafficking efforts, as well as prioritizing survivor leadership of those efforts whenever possible. It also means compensating them for their time, including through employment in anti-trafficking organizations.

Similarly, we all have a responsibility to ensure victims and survivors have appropriate and adequate access to protection services.

Quality protection services are crucial to a comprehensive response to combating human trafficking. This involves proactively identifying victims and ensuring a wide array of protections are available that are victim-centered and trauma-informed.

Partnership among different sectors of the anti-trafficking community offers an opportunity for all of us to work together to protect victims, especially those from vulnerable or under-identified communities. For example, men and boys are often not thought of as trafficking victims, and as a result many countries do not have trafficking shelters that can accommodate them; we must ensure that we are providing protection to *all* survivors.

Holding traffickers accountable is paramount in our efforts to sustainably address this crime, but we cannot do so effectively without an adequately trained criminal justice sector. Our law enforcement officials, prosecutors, and judges require comprehensive and consistent training on human trafficking, including in proactively identifying and interacting with victims in a trauma-informed and victim-centered manner.

Trafficking victims should have the choice whether to participate in law enforcement proceedings, and when they do, have access to appropriate victim-witness assistance, including psychosocial, legal, and shelter resources.

In our annual Trafficking in Persons Report, we have seen a decrease across the globe in the number of prosecutions, a trend borne out recently in the UNODC 2022 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, where globally prosecutions declined and convictions steeply declined, a phenomenon observed across criminal justice efforts and accelerated by the pandemic. It is essential that all governments hold traffickers accountable for their crimes.

Prevention efforts are equally important in combating human trafficking. We must directly address the tactics of human traffickers.

Since my time as a prosecutor in Dallas, Texas, the United States has made significant strides in developing both local and national level task forces. This reflects the need for a comprehensive multidisciplinary approach to combat this crime.

National level task force agencies collaborate to advance our National Action Plan, and regularly gather, including at the Cabinet level, to advance policies and promote action.

Strong state and local level task forces can share best practices, promote holistic approaches, and coordinate on detecting, investigating, and prosecuting human trafficking crimes and supporting survivors.

In all these areas, the Department of State's TIP Office is committed to working with the Member States of ECOWAS to support your efforts. Our office has currently committed over \$32 million worth of foreign assistance in the region.

Of note, the TIP Office has signed Child Protection Compact (CPC) Partnerships with Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire. These partnerships are multi-year commitments with governments to achieve shared objectives to combat child trafficking in all its forms.

My office also supports evidence driven programming in Nigeria, Senegal, and Sierra Leone through our Program to End Modern Slavery. These projects seek to improve the effectiveness of anti-trafficking interventions by collecting baseline data. We appreciate the efforts of one of our implementers of this program, the Center for Human Trafficking Research and Outreach, in co-hosting today's event with the Government of Sierra Leone.

We are deeply committed to engaging with both government and civil society stakeholders in the region to support and strengthen anti-trafficking responses. As my boss, Secretary of State Tony Blinken, has said, human trafficking is a global problem that requires a global coalition to confront it. I want to again thank the Government of Sierra Leone for inviting me to say a few words to start the conference this morning. I look forward to visiting many of you in your home countries in the future. Through the power of partnerships, together we can improve services for survivors, include their voice and expertise, and hold human traffickers accountable.

Thank you.

## STATEMENT BY ECOWAS PRESIDENT HIS EXCELLENCY, DR. OMAR ALIEU TOURAY



His Excellency, ECOWAS President, Dr. Touray expressed his gratitude to the GoSL for inviting ECOWAS to co-organise the conference under the leadership of the Vice-President's Office in Sierra Leone.

Dr. Touray stressed that one of the key challenges facing West Africa today is insecurity that is driven by terrorism, unconstitutional change of government, armed rebellion, environmental crisis, and organised crime. Human Trafficking is one facet of these insecurities driven by organised crime and recent studies indicate that out of 3.5 million victims of trafficking, a higher proportion exist in the Western Africa region, most of them being trafficked in the subregion or their own countries, where children represent the most affected group. In that context, ECOWAS considers the fight against human trafficking as a moral and humanitarian obligation and has implemented policies and plans of action that seek to combat human trafficking in the region. Legal and institutional frameworks that support ECOWAS actions include international, continental, and regional instruments such as the Palermo Protocol, ECOWAS Common Approach to Immigration and other protocols that refer to the movement of persons and states' mutual assistance in criminal matters.



Dr Touray concluded that albeit these frameworks seek to address both domestic and transnational dimensions of the crimes of human trafficking, they cannot be effective without platforms that strengthen coordination and cooperation in the region, such as the ECOWAS Conference.

**KEYNOTE STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR. JULIUS MAADA BIO, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE, AT THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE OF ECOWAS STATES ON ENDING HUMAN TRAFFICKING. FREETOWN, 25<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2023**

Excellency, Dr. Omar Alieu Touray, ECOWAS President,  
The Honourable Vice President,  
Madam First Lady,  
The Honourable Speaker of Parliament,  
Your Lordship, the Chief Justice of Sierra Leone,  
Honourable Members of Parliament,  
Ministers of Government,  
Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps,  
Ambassador Cindy Dyer, Ambassador-at-Large to Monitor  
and Combat Trafficking in Persons,  
Stephanie Bunce, U.S. Embassy Charge d'Affaires,  
Dr. David Okech, Director of APRIES,  
Mr. Christopher Gascon, Regional Director, IOM,  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Good morning:



I am delighted to be part of this gathering of ECOWAS Member States and partners to foster deeper regional cooperation and coordination in the fight against trafficking in persons. This history-making conference is crucial because it underlines the importance of illustrating and appreciating the magnitude of the problem, mobilising all key actors, and galvanising collective action that keeps pace with the evolving nature of human trafficking.

No doubt, traffickers and trafficking networks are becoming more sophisticated and harder to detect. Previous speakers have indicated that they are deploying technology and using unethical business models and illicit financial flows to evade law enforcement. Global economic uncertainties occasioned by COVID-19, the geopolitical conflict that has destabilised global economies, the consequences of climate change, localised and cross-border conflicts, increasing poverty and unemployment rates, have all complicated our difficult efforts to develop and implement comprehensive action.

The trends in our sub-region are alarming. Our youth, who will drive that inclusive and sustainable future we aspire to, constitute the highest proportion of identified victims. I am informed that according to the most recent UNODC report on human trafficking in sub-Saharan Africa, most victims are trafficked into forced labour. Of that cohort, the majority are children who are trafficked from rural to urban areas within their countries of origin and across ECOWAS countries, as beggars, for sexual exploitation, or into forced labour at mine sites.

These trends in human trafficking also show the inextricable link between human trafficking and migrant smuggling -- the latter being a major facilitator of human trafficking. This is a major challenge in Sierra Leone, where many young persons go on what is called “temple runs.”

Putting all these trends into context, I note that our countries in the sub-region, at one time or the other, are countries of origin, transit, or destination. The porous nature of our borders, especially the unmanned border crossings, are key weak points in our regional border-control architecture. Trafficked persons may move across several ECOWAS countries to destinations in Europe, the Middle East, and beyond.

With the support of the ECOWAS Commission, sub-regional countries are working to strengthen domestic frameworks to combat human trafficking, to develop the regional plans of actions, and to formulate the legal architecture to bolster cooperation among states. This conference will seek to build on those gains.

The key recommendations agreed upon here will inform the next iteration of the ECOWAS Plan of Action against human trafficking. As leaders in the sub-region, our priorities are clear. First, we want to bolster education and awareness raising at the community level on prevention. Secondly, we want to protect survivors by providing services in a dignified manner when they are identified. These include livelihood opportunities to restore hope and legal redress. Thirdly, we want to ensure that perpetrators of human trafficking are prosecuted to make it a risky and expensive enterprise for these criminals.

Within those guideposts, I believe that this conference can be an opportunity to explore how leveraging deeper cooperation could amplify our actions in all those three foregoing areas.

So, drawing on the expansive wealth of knowledge and expertise at this conference, I am confident that we can map out significant pathways on how to foster cooperation, share experiences on best practices, and discuss how to scale and replicate those actions both at the national and regional levels.

To my mind, the roadmap we develop here will be reflective of our aspirations to cultivate partnerships within and across borders, to amplify our efforts by leaning on the private and humanitarian sectors, and to concretise how governments can work with other governments to address human trafficking.

This conference also presents boundless opportunities to collaborate across the region on information sharing, victim identification, and the provision of services to survivors. It is also an opportunity to strengthen the regional referral system, and to intensify the roll out of the ECOWAS Biometric ID system that will facilitate the safe movement of people across ECOWAS.

My Government is championing this effort to shed light on human trafficking in the sub-region because of the lessons learned in the implementation of our efforts to quell trafficking in persons since I took office in 2018. First, we have focused on creating an simplified, holistic, and enabling legal environment for rights-based issues like human trafficking to be addressed by the whole-of-Government. We realised early on the critical need to dismantle the siloed approach to addressing Trafficking in Persons.

We have instead built a strong rights-based social protection framework that is upheld by an ecosystem of laws spanning from the amended Sexual Offences Act of 2019, the Anti-human Trafficking (TIP) and

Migrant Smuggling Law of 2022 that replaced and repealed the old law, to the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act of 2022. The Minister has also indicated that I unveiled the toll-free 134 Anti-Human Trafficking Hotline or FREEDOM LINE for use as a tool in victim referral and protection.

The Minister has also indicated that we now have Anti-Trafficking-in-Persons Taskforces in all the sixteen districts across the country. This is in addition to the National Anti-Trafficking-in-Persons Task Force Secretariat which now becomes a government sub-vented agency under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Welfare.

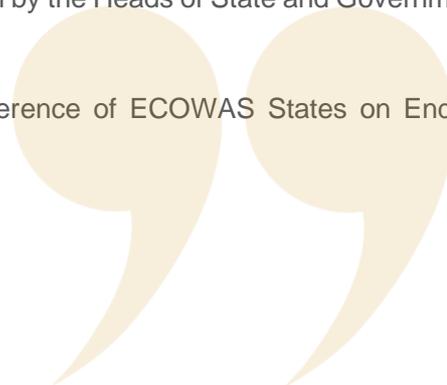
This focused approach allows us to better resource the fight against human trafficking in Sierra Leone, especially in the areas of prosecution and the provision of victim services, especially for women.

I recognise that criminalising and prosecuting trafficking in persons is insufficient to significantly tackle this menace. With sustained human capital development gains especially for young persons and women, I believe we can reduce the push factors for trafficking in persons including chronic vulnerability and poverty. We have therefore focused on harnessing Sierra Leone's greatest potential, its people, especially its youthful and female population thereby creating opportunity. We must make a coherent effort across the sub-region to uproot entrenched socio-economic factors that exacerbate vulnerabilities in our communities.

Human trafficking, as every speaker has indicated this morning, is complex and multifaceted, and our solutions must tackle the problem with equally considerate actions that will ensure that these invisible criminal networks are dismantled. We must also build resilient and robust structures within communities to prevent human trafficking.

I am hopeful that the deliberations over these two days will chart a way forward for deeper cooperation among ECOWAS States. I look forward to the endorsement of the conference roadmap by the participating ECOWAS Member State Ministers and its adoption by the Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS.

With these remarks, I now formally open the Regional Conference of ECOWAS States on Ending Human Trafficking, 2023. I wish you all fruitful deliberations.





Regional Conference of  
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A TOOLKIT FOR CRAFTING  
A WAY FORWARD

# National (Sierra Leone) Referral Mechanism on Victims of Trafficking Launch

## NATIONAL (SIERRA LEONE) REFERRAL MECHANISM ON VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING LAUNCH

The Honourable Minister Madam Baindu Dassama officially launched the National Referral Mechanism on Victims of Trafficking in Sierra Leone.

Central to the process of anti-trafficking management and intervention is the effective operationalisation of a National Referral Mechanism (NRM) that provides a step-by-step procedural structure to be followed by all Anti-Trafficking in Persons (ATIP) institutions and groups in their day-to-day management of potential cases of trafficking – victim identification and rescue as well as protection (including rehabilitation, reintegration, case investigation and prosecution). Therefore, at the core of the fight against human trafficking stands the institutionalisation of NRM Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) whose goal is to provide guidance for effective action by all ATIP service providers in ensuring protection and assistance to victims of trafficking. Implementation of these SOPs will enhance better coordination and accountability in the identification, assistance, referral, case management, rehabilitation, and reintegration of VoTs in Sierra Leone.

### Objectives of the NRM are:

1. Ensure effective coordination among ATIP partners in the referral pathway for victims of human trafficking.
2. Provide a step-by-step structure for case management of VoTs.
3. Ensure that all compliance standards provided within ATIP legislation and policies are met in the identification, rescue, protection, rehabilitation, and reintegration of VoTs.
4. Establish clear guidelines of roles and responsibilities for all ATIP partner institutions in the referral process.
5. Manage institutional cooperation between and among state and non-state actors within the NRM process.
6. Ensure transparency and accountability by all stakeholders in the day-to-day operations of the NRM.

The implementation of the NRM must be within the boundaries of the general guiding principles that are grouped under those:

- **Concerning victims**
- **Concerning implementation of the NRM**
- **Concerning Child Victims**
- **Concerning End Users.**

The NRM is a national cooperative framework. Through it, governmental institutions fulfil their international and domestic obligations to protect and promote the rights of victims of trafficking, as well as to coordinate their efforts in a strategic partnership with civil society organisations (CSOs), survivor representatives and private sector actors. The latter should play an active role in the implementation of the NRM by delivering services to victims and serving as an advisory group.

The NRM is highly relevant for all institutions undertaking case management of VoTs within the referral pathway, as it provides standards for identification and rescue, protection and assistance, rehabilitation and reintegration, as well as case investigation and prosecution.

## MINISTERIAL ROUNDTABLE AND CONFERENCE ROAD MAP



The Ministerial RoundTable was a closed session focused on reviewing the Roadmap on Enhancing the Combat of Trafficking in Persons in the ECOWAS Region. The Round Table Discussion was opened by His Excellency (HE) the Vice President of Sierra Leone, Dr Mohamed Juldeh Jalloh who relayed the work being done in Sierra Leone since 2018 addressing TIP and explained that all activities have been centred on enhancing the country's 4 Ps- Prevention, Protection, Prosecution and Partnerships. HE Dr Juldeh Jalloh identified that there have been multiple gains on a national level on protection and prosecution with an emphasis on building capacity across sectors and more prominently the passing of the Sierra Leone Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act, 2022. These achievements are a result of the government's realisation that whatever effort is being made at a national level must be complemented at a regional level. The emphasis has to be on expansion of best practice and collaborative approaches across the region.

The Honourable Vice President, Dr Mohamed Juldeh Jalloh explained that the emphasis of the gathering is in diving into the contents of the proposed Roadmap. The hope is that it would be adopted and find itself in the ECOWAS Action Plan. His Excellency stressed that given the nature of ECOWAS Member States' interconnectedness and the porosity of the borders, there is a need to strengthen and build networks to ensure resounding successes in the fight against TIP. Special thanks were reiterated to Commissioner, Department of Human Development, Professor Fatou Sow Sarr for working alongside Sierra Leone in bringing such developments.

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Commissioner Professor Fatou Sow Sarr's opening statement amplified Member State responsibilities in taking up the challenge to address issues affecting their communities collectively. The Commissioner reiterated her hope that ECOWAS Members can continue to share their experiences as effects of TIP go beyond national borders. Given the commitment and the presence of each Minister and Ministerial Representative, the emphasis, the Commissioner stressed, has to be on recommendations. In reference to the Roadmap, the Commissioner described its richness and expressed special thanks to Sierra Leone for the work invested so far. Congratulations were relayed to Sierra Leone and especially to His Excellency the President of Sierra Leone, Retired Brigadier Dr Maada Bio, for scaling and amplifying issues related to TIP. Other countries were also commended for their active participation and special thanks were extended to Mauritania, presented by Honourable Minister of Justice, Mr Sidi Cheikh Ahmedou, who are working on the frontline of this phenomenon. The Commissioner ended her statement by reassuring attendees that ECOWAS is committed to this role and recognises the role each and every one of them plays in these activities and commends them for the work done on the ground. The emphasis was that any recommendations or next steps agreed on, ECOWAS will provide their full support in moving these recommendations forward.

Following the Welcome remarks, Mr Olatunde Olayemi from the ECOWAS Department of Human Development and Social Affairs, presented the Draft Roadmap for the Enhanced Combat of Trafficking in Persons in the ECOWAS Region. He introduced the presentation by identifying that Combating TIP is a priority for ECOWAS and its fifteen member states. The ECOWAS Common Approach on Migration states that "combating human trafficking is a moral and humanitarian imperative". In 2001, he relayed, Heads of ECOWAS states adopted the initial plan of action to combat trafficking in persons, and since then, the Commission has supported member states in capacity building support for the development of National Plans, the establishment of National Taskforces and in conducting compliance assessments of the legislation of Member States in line with the UN Trafficking Protocol. His presentation provided information for discussion on:



## ECOWAS Instruments on TIP

- 1 The Palermo Protocol and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- 2 Key Drivers of TIP in the ECOWAS region.
- 3 Human Tracking Pathways in the ECOWAS Region.
- 4 The ECOWAS Trafficking in Persons Programme.
- 5 ECOWAS Timeline of Selected TIP Policies and Activities.
- 6 ECOWAS Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons 2018-2022.
- 7 Theory of Change in the Combat of TIP.



### Did you know?

The ECOWAS Vision 2050 aspires to a “...fully integrated community of peoples, living in a peaceful and prosperous region with strong institutions and respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, striving for inclusive and sustainable development...”

## ATTENDEE INPUT

### IVORY COAST

Honourable Minister Madam Mysee Belmonde Dogo, Minister of Solidarity and the Fight Against Poverty described TIP as an issue very dear to the heart of His Excellency Mr Alassane Ouattara, President of Cote d'Ivoire, and the office of Prime Minister Patrick Jerome Achi. She explained that Cote d'Ivoire recognises that this phenomenon goes beyond the country and emphasised the need to work together to synergise and chart on the most appropriate course.



In reference to the roadmap, Minister Dogo recognised the nine (9) measures and wanted to place emphasis on the following necessary strategies:

- Strengthening of prevention approaches.
- The importance of school level activities in raising awareness.
- Seeking funding to support referral systems.
- Development of a holistic strategy.
- Harmonisation of data collection systems.
- Extension of fundraising strategies across the region.

### BURKINA FASO

Honourable Minister Madame Nandy Some Diallo, Minister of Solidarity, Humanitarian Action, National Reconciliation, Gender, and Family, commended all participants for gathering for this important occasion and extended thanks to ECOWAS. The Honourable Minister's feedback requested an expansion of the Roadmap context by using examples from across the region as opposed to Sierra Leone specific examples. She shared that



women and children are particularly at risk in Burkina Faso and that the Roadmap should particularly amplify the security situation and the impact on women and children. In addition, the following questions were raised for consideration in finalising the roadmap:

- What is the mechanism for implementation of the roadmap and how will it be defined?
- How can we ensure monitoring approaches are implementable?
- How can improve data collection and increase ease of sharing?



## LIBERIA

Honourable Minister of Labour, Councillor Charles Gibson, identified the lack of a clear funding component within the roadmap. His experience is that most ECOWAS countries have serious challenges funding TIP activities and sees an important next step, once roadmap is adopted, the development of a budget that can be used to identify needs and develop a fundraising plan. In the case of Liberia, financing of Human Trafficking activities has grown but certainly not at the rate necessary. The roadmap should be complemented by the identification of a clear structure where all Member States can feed and share information.



## TOGO

Ministerial Representative, Mr Mohamed Salak Hamah, Director of Legal Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs wanted to draw attention to the fact that cross border activities have particularly increased the vulnerability of children. He raised that albeit not specifically addressed in the roadmap, corruption is an underlying factor resulting in many of the challenges experienced in tackling TIP and should be addressed. States should not only be punishing the traffickers but those who facilitate their movement. In addition, Director Hamah stressed that the roadmap is currently focusing on traditional forms of trafficking. More should be done to integrate non-traditional approaches as technology is playing a major role in TIP both in the movement of people and in the engagement with children through social media and the internet.



## GUINEA

Ministerial Representative, Permanent Secretary (PS) Roger Yassin Klonon, identified that this is an apt time for the development of the roadmap as Guinea embarks on a reconstruction phase. As these issues are recognised within ECOWAS, they can in turn be integrated within Guinea's own transformation strategy. Currently Guinea is in the process of enacting a law against TIP. PS Klonon identified the importance of professionalising the fight against human trafficking through training at multiple levels so key stakeholders are equipped to deal with this phenomenon. A suggestion offered was the development of a specific TIP curriculum for educational institutions. PS Klonon stressed that although the laws exist that prohibit exploitation, there is not adequate punishment. These issues exist but are not addressed.





## MAURITANIA

Honourable Minister of Justice, Mr Sidi Cheikh Ahmedou commended the roadmap and the effort that took place to develop it albeit he remains perplexed at the effort put in and the link between good practices and the porous border reality. Honourable Minister Ahmedou stressed the need for ECOWAS countries to continue synergising with non-ECOWAS countries to learn and realise potential ideas for collaboration and best practice implementation. Mauritania is keen to be part of this momentum, presented in the roadmap, and wants to be part of it although they are outside the ECOWAS region.



## NIGER

Ministerial Representative, TIP Focal Person, Mr. Ousmane Mamane, stressed that the high-level commitment should be leveraged on. Mr. Mamane suggested that the roadmap be called the “Freetown Commitment”. In sharing the recent achievements of Niger, Mr. Mamane, referred to the set-up of the National Agency for the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and the National Coordination Commission and the development of the National Action Plan centred around the 4 Ps critical for Niger, a transit country, sharing borders with Liberia, Mali, and Algeria. Biggest challenge identified by Mr Mamane remains to be coordination and cooperation, addressed by Niger through the signing of agreements with Nigeria and Mauritania but there needs to be more done to ensure all key stakeholders at national level are engaged and an emphasis on international collaboration, especially for those who have transnational characteristics.



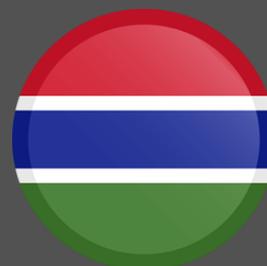
## SIERRA LEONE

Honourable Minister of Social Welfare, Madam Baidu Dassama Kamara relayed her experiences in hearing stories daily that continue to haunt her. Honourable Minister Dassama, shared experiences working at grassroot level with paramount chiefs in addressing issues of informal adoption, commonly referred to in Sierra Leone as “men pekin”. She stressed the need to amplify initiatives related to informal adoption and TIP.



## GAMBIA

Honourable Dauda Jallow, Attorney General and Minister of Justice stressed the need for a comprehensive study of legislation within the region with the outcome of enabling ECOWAS countries to develop a model that can be replicated and applied in a more standardised manner across the region. This would ensure no gaps that can be manipulated or approached opportunistically by traffickers. He added that the sharing of lessons learnt, case studies and best practice would be helpful. There is a need for the set-up of a dedicated database that would be accessible by Member States to enable them to be kept abreast of developments related to TIP.



**Key responses from ECOWAS Department of Human Development and Social Affairs identified the following:**

- National task forces are working well providing reports that enable for better tracking of improvements related to TIP and providing knowledge on transnational integration of victims. There is room for improvement but not as a result of a lack of enthusiasm or commitment but rather due to lack of financing.
- There is a possibility of expanding the reference to corruption in the roadmap, but it is important to, in turn, define the nuances of how to deal with it.
- ECOWAS has a strong coordination approach and the same coordination systems will be used for the roadmap as it is integrated into the action plan.
- A funding strategy will be integrated within the statement of commitment. This can support Member States in the implementation of components of the roadmap.

Commissioner Professor Fatou Sow Sarr identified that discussions can be summarised as stressing the importance of generating knowledge, involving partners, political commitment, and development of funding plans. Commissioner Sarr stressed the need for ECOWAS Member States to start prioritising funding their own priorities with the emphasis on “being able to take care of ourselves”. After relaying some of ECOWAS’ many contributions in relation to infrastructure developments, such as those related to access to electricity, Commissioner Sarr emphasised that feasible objectives can result in tangible successes. Using the example of the Sierra Leone Government’s political commitment, she stressed that such commitment could ensure issues are addressed proactively otherwise there is a risk to generations to come. Traffickers are changing methods whilst administrators are using traditional methods. There is a need to move faster and anticipate their moves. Confirming ECOWAS commitment to integrate feedback and continue to act in the best interests of Member States, Commissioner Sarr ended her statement.

At the end of the session, Ministers, and Ministerial Representatives for attending member states were asked to confirm their commitment to the roadmap. Through a unanimous vote all confirmed their commitment. Updates to the roadmap were enacted and presented to them the following day.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of April 2023 the roadmap, formally named as the FREETOWN Roadmap on Enhancing the Combat of Trafficking in Persons in the ECOWAS Region, was adopted, and read to delegates as it was signed by attending minister. The full document can be found in Annex 1

## Resource Bank

[ECOWAS Revised Treaty](#)

[Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace Keeping and Security \(1999\)](#)

[The ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework \(Regulation SC/REG.1/01/08\)](#)

[ECOWAS Child Policy 2019-2030](#)

[Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime, General Assembly Resolution 55/25](#)

[Sustainable Development Goals](#)



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# Knowledge Sharing Sessions

## LESSON LEARNED

**Lessons learned Groups A and B:** Experience sharing amongst ECOWAS countries on the implementation of their respective TIP Action Plans

At separate sessions in English and French, National representatives from ECOWAS countries shared the lessons learned on the implementation of their respective TIP action plans in relation to 4Ps (Prosecution, Protection, Prevention and Partnership) and challenges their countries faced in the process.

### Key points on Prevention

“Prevention” key best practices discussed referred to:

- i. Establishment of watchdog communities and parents focused training with an emphasis on educating children on best strategies to detect potential perpetrators of human trafficking.
- ii. Implementation of SOPs that specify the roles of stakeholders in anti-trafficking activities.
- iii. Establishment of free hotlines for reporting human trafficking cases.
- iv. Emphasis on strengthening interventions through multi-pronged and focused communications campaigns that integrate social media, radio, and TV campaigns.
- v. The need to offer free and inclusive education and establish mechanisms to ensure children stay at school.
- vi. Need to promote access to free professional and vocational training for youth who are prone to be victims of trafficking such as those who are out of school and/or are unemployed.
- vii. Proclamation of a national anti-trafficking day.
- viii. Any and all mechanisms must be supported with logistical enhancement and capacity building initiatives that would ensure the established infrastructures to adequately respond to victims’ needs.

### Key points on Protection

In regard to “Protection” considerations, participants agreed that national financial and budget limitations are the main reasons for the lack of protection, inadequate healthcare and social welfare, limited sheltering capacities and lack of other mechanisms of support for Victims of Trafficking. Reference was specifically made to a limited presence of shelters and recent increase in male victim numbers. This put in focus a lack in infrastructures and mechanisms to respond to their needs and poor integration mechanisms of Victims of Trafficking that are inconsiderate of gender, cultural nuances and stereotypes they face in their communities.

### **Key points on Prosecution**

In relation to “prosecution” considerations, the following were noted:

- Most of the countries have specific laws and regulations that define anti-trafficking mechanisms.
- Participants reiterated the importance of the ongoing training of judicial and law enforcement personnel that are dealing with TIP cases.
- Proper witness support mechanisms must be established to encourage victims to testify in courts. At the moment, most victims do not file reports because of ineffective procedures and stigmatisation they face.
- Some best-case practices include the development of training modules that target the judiciary including court officers, magistrates and judges who are mostly involved in TIP cases.
- The existence of cyber-crime units in certain countries has been seen as additional support to counter-trafficking mechanisms.
- Introduction of judicial units focused on cross-border crimes and special force units for TIP perpetrators are presented as a targeted response to combat TIP cases.

### **Key points on Partnerships**

ECOWAS Representatives acknowledged the importance of partnership in combating trafficking in persons at every level. Many countries signed or are in the process of signing bilateral agreements and MOUs with respective neighbouring countries to strengthen cooperation and coordination of anti-trafficking cross-brooder activities. Participants reported on coordinated activities between anti-trafficking task forces, civil society, IOs and NGOs and other stakeholders combating human trafficking at national level. These activities include regular quarterly meetings between governmental and non-governmental representatives to assess the implementation of objectives and make recommendations.

All participants agreed that regional cooperation and coordination based on agreements and protocols will be more effective if there are mechanisms that monitor their implementation.

The challenges they are facing in the implementation are similar and include:

- Lack of a centralised database on trafficking in persons and lack of safe houses for Victims of Trafficking.
- Limited strictness in the application of agreements and laws, especially non-binding agreements,
- Lack of funding.



The sessions were concluded with an emphasis on the following recommendations:

- There should be a detailed assessment of the trends of human trafficking in the region that would feed into national and regional action plans.
- There should be a Fundraising Activity Plan focused on strengthening anti-trafficking mechanisms.
- All countries should make necessary amendments in order to step up punishment mechanisms for TIP perpetrators. Parents who are directly involved in child trafficking should be held accountable before the law as well.
- Countries should develop strategies to fight the corruption of law enforcement agents on national border crossings.
- Need to ensure regular quarterly meetings between governmental and non-governmental representatives to assess the implementation of activities and arising recommendations.
- National Referral Mechanisms must be put in place to support the work of anti-trafficking agencies.
- There is a need to strengthen regional cooperation and coordination with bilateral agreements and MoUs between bordering countries.



## **CHILD TRAFFICKING- EMERGING TRENDS AND ROBUST SOLUTIONS**

### **Name of Session:**

Child trafficking: Emerging trends and the identification of robust solutions to reverse these trends

### **Session Moderated by:**

Sia Lajaku-Williams, Programmes Consultant, CenHRTRO/APRIES

Sia Lajaku-Williams has almost two decades of experience managing and overseeing the implementation of child protection, education, and child labour programs in and around Sierra Leone. She currently works as National Project Coordinator with the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Sierra Leone, and also provides Safeguarding and Programming support to various local and international NGOs in Sierra Leone. Throughout her career, Sia Lajaku-Williams has served groups of vulnerable children and young people within Sierra Leone and understands the legislative framework and systems that support the effective implementation of NGO programmes in the country.

### **Panelists**

#### **1. Dr David Okech | Director, CenHTRO and APRIES**

Dr. Okech is Professor at the University of Georgia School of Social Work and founder of the Center on Human Trafficking Research & Outreach (CenHTRO) and the African Programming and Research Initiative to End Slavery (APRIES). Dr. Okech's research interests are around the use of evidence to inform policies and programs that effectively enhance the overall well-being of human trafficking survivors and reduce trafficking.

Dr. Okech was Director of the MSW Program between 2013-19 and Director of Global Engagement at the UGA School of Social work between 2014-2017. His works have been published in Behavioural Medicine, Social Science and Medicine, International Social Work, and Child and Youth Services among other journals. Prior to become a professor, he worked with vulnerable children and youth in Kenya for more than 7 years. Dr. Okech serves in the research boards of various human trafficking organisations across the globe.

<https://linktr.ee/cenhtro>

#### **2. Ms. Nassima Clerin | Regional Protection Specialist, IOM Regional Office for West**

Nassima Clerin has been the Regional Protection Specialist for West and Central Africa at IOM's regional office since August 2019. Prior to that, Nassima worked for IOM in Belgium, Mauritius, Chad and Tunisia on Return and Reintegration, Labour Migration, Diaspora engagement and Community Stabilization. In Tunisia she also worked for Expertise France, running a programme supporting the Mobility Partnership EU – Tunisia.

<https://rodakar.iom.int>



### **3. Reverend Martha Priscilla Gbenga-Chigozie | National Coordinator, Standing Against Trafficking in Person and Migrants Smuggling in Sierra Leone IOM Regional Office for West and Central Africa**

Rev. Martha Priscilla Gbenga-Chigozie is the initiator and national coordinator of Standing Against Trafficking in Persons and Migrants smuggling in Sierra Leone (SATPAMS-SL) and the National Coordinator for West Africa Coalition Against Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (WACTIPSOM). She has been involved in gender, security, peace, and community development for close to 30 years. She has served in various capacities and spent 18 years as a volunteer, dedicating her service to humanity, regardless of status, religion, tribe, or race.

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## **SESSION BACKGROUND**

Developing effective responses and improving the strategies relating to the prevention of child trafficking is a major challenge for countries across West Africa. Child trafficking involves different forms of exploitation including, but not limited to forced labour for domestic work mainly affecting young girls, hazardous work in sectors such as mining and agriculture, and debt bondage associated with hereditary slavery practices (ILO Global Estimates, 2022). Anti-trafficking sits at an intersection of different policy issues and priorities, such as child protection, education, welfare, and migration/mobility. This means priorities for policy and practice are complex with sometimes contradictory impacts on those children directly affected, and implications for outcomes in the short and longer-term.

Reducing child trafficking requires improved understanding of what works based on high quality research and evaluation. The objectives of the session were to facilitate discussions around existing research, explore the current state of knowledge regarding child trafficking across ECOWAS and the potential for enhancing collaboration based on research and/or experience across member states.

## **PANEL DISCUSSION**

The session included Dr. Okech's presentation on the largest-scale mixed methods community-based case-study on child trafficking of children aged 5-17, conducted in Eastern and Western Sierra Leone from 2017-2023. The study covered around 4,000 households in a 5-year project funded by the US Department of State, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. Currently in its finalisation stage, the report presents evidence on prevalence, and policy gaps with the aim of informing new programming to reduce child trafficking in Sierra Leone.

Some of the key findings:

- The overall rate of child trafficking in the Eastern Province among households sampled, based on direct prevalence estimates, is 33% (children aged 5-17).
- The highest rates are found in Kono (45.7%), Kailahun (32.9%) and Kenema (26.6%)
- The overall rate of child labour is 36.2% in the Eastern Province, mainly in sectors of fishing,



- 19.26% of child trafficking victims across the Eastern province experienced force, fraud or coercion while being trafficked.
- The most vulnerable population are children between 12-17 who have lost one or both parents and children who are not enrolled in school.
- There is a very small difference in children's trafficking ratio based on gender.

Ms. Clerin confirmed that IOM fieldwork and data collection on the ground corroborates Dr. Okech's presentation. Data shows that 53% of refugees are children and that there are 5 million internally displaced children in Western and Central Africa.

With regards to child trafficking, the findings show:

- More than half of the victims of trafficking are being held against their will.
- Child trafficking is often closely related to sexual exploitation of women and girls, domestic work and labour exploitation and child forced begging.
- There are indications that exploitation in traditional mining sites include sexual exploitation of children but there is need for further research and data collection and IOM is open to cooperation with APRIES in this regard.

Rev. Gbenga-Chigozie stressed that child trafficking continues to be an overwhelming issue in ECOWAS countries, including Sierra Leone. Children are usually being trafficked from rural areas to the urban areas and/or from urban areas to mining sites and other provinces.

The drivers that underline child trafficking include:

- Lack of social safety nets for different communities, poverty, conflict, climate change, rural and urban migration.
- Poor parenting and 'men pekin' is present in the region and Sierra Leone and is based on giving away children to relatives or family friends based on verbal agreements.

Dr Okech emphasised that there are gaps in the current services offered to victims of trafficking and that survivors are often unable to get assistance from both formal and informal systems during or after the trafficking experience. This increases their vulnerability to re-trafficking.

In order to address gaps in protective services and improve prevention mechanisms, the recommended activities are:

- Training on prevention of child trafficking for parents and caretakers.
- Increased efforts in building a community-oriented approach that includes paramount chiefs and setting up critical structures.
- To improve Family Support Units and investigate child trafficking cases. At the moment, World Hope Organisation is the only one that offers shelters for victims in Sierra Leone.
- Capacitate law enforcement and judiciary agencies and create training manuals for incoming staff and ensure refresher courses.
- To raise the standards of media reporting by building capacity and expertise of journalists in reporting on child trafficking.

To be able address trafficking in persons effectively, Ms Clerin recommends that member states focus on:

- Strengthening of the application and implementation of national legislation and international multilateral and bilateral agreements.
- Supporting national anti-trafficking units through different mechanisms to reach international protection standards.
- Capacity building initiatives focused on improving assistance to victims and survivors.
- Disseminating the information on rights of the child to all stakeholders.
- Advocacy to end child detention and developing alternative solutions.
- Work on offering alternative care solutions for victims who cannot or do not wish to return home.

Rev. Gbenga-Chigoize explained that her experience shows that although national and international legal instruments are in place, they are not sufficient to address child trafficking in Sierra Leone. To tackle the problem effectively, it must be addressed at all levels and communities must be part of the process. Strategies recommended include:

- Effectively addressing poor parenting and understanding the crucial role that the family and the community play in preventing child-trafficking.
- Identifying and supporting the role that schools and teachers need to play in raising awareness within their communities, together with religious leaders and community chiefs. It is the responsibility of all community members to provide a safe environment for children.
- Better coordination of data collection across the region in order to ensure sharing of findings and best practices.
- More funding to support anti-trafficking programs and initiatives.

## **ATTENDEE INPUT**

- i. Strategies around addressing child trafficking issues should be expanded to include other vulnerable groups such as children who act as guides for blind people or assist those with disabilities. They do not go to school and are often abused and exploited and are unable to exercise their basic rights.
- ii. It is imperative to raise awareness about the dangers of social media through school counselling; students are often lured into trafficking by fake scholarship offers and other online ruses.
- iii. Parents, whose unfortunate circumstances led them to give up care of their children to others, should be advised to request formal agreements, do occasional unannounced visits, and let their children know they still have parental support. These conversations should reach the remote areas of Sierra Leone.
- iv. To consider the impact of geographical differences and language barriers on understanding the term of human trafficking among community members. It is often difficult to define and translate human trafficking in local languages in the region.
- v. To be systematic in anti-trafficking initiatives, considering it is a global and long-term struggle that is interrelated with a number of socio-economic and political issues.



## **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- i. Evidence-based research is essential in providing evidence on prevalence and policy gaps that must be addressed to ensure a reduction in child trafficking in the region.
- ii. All strategies around prevention and protection of children against trafficking must be inclusive of parents and community representatives, especially those around raising awareness of child trafficking.
- iii. Better coordination in sharing best practice and strengthening advocacy for child protection in local languages and capacity building of all stakeholders involved in child trafficking cases.
- iv. Improved care solutions for victims of child trafficking and establishing alternative solutions for victims who do not wish to return to their communities.

## Resource Bank

[Center on Human Trafficking Research and Outreach- Publications and Newsletters](#)

## **CYBER ENABLED TRAFFICKING- NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AND PARTNER STRENGTHENING**

### **Name of Session:**

**Cyber Enabled Trafficking: Practices and Tools to Strengthen the Response of National Governments and Partners**

### **Session Moderated by:**

**Kamal Touré**, Project Coordinator, Cyber Crime, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

### **Panelists**

**1. Ms. Mariama Yormah | National Cybersecurity Coordinator, Ministry of Information and Communications, Sierra Leone**

Mariama S. Yormah is the National Cybersecurity Coordinator in Sierra Leone, a position created by the country's 2021 Cybersecurity and Crime Act. Before she was appointed as the Head of the National Cybersecurity Coordination Centre, she served as a Senior ICT Officer of the Ministry of Information and Communications from 2013 till 2018, when she was promoted to an ICT Manager with cybersecurity as an added responsibility. During this period, she played a significant role in developing the country's cybercrime legislation and institutional framework needed to adequately fight cybercrimes and enhance the nation's cybersecurity maturity level. She also served as one of the key resource persons in developing Sierra Leone's 2021-2025 Cybersecurity Strategy and the review of the 2016 Cybersecurity Policy.

<https://mic.gov.sl>

**2. Mr. Rasheed Olatunji | Assistant Director Research and Programme Development, National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons, Nigeria**

Rasheed Olatunji is an Assistant Director in the Research and Programme Development Department of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) in Nigeria. He joined the Agency in the year 2010 as a Principal Data Officer. His first task was the development of comprehensive data capturing templates for all data generating departments and units of the Agency. That marks the beginning of the Agency hosting TIP data on its website.

He was also member of the taskforce committee that produced the training curriculum and modules on human trafficking in Nigeria from 2015 – 2017. He also participated in the development of several policy documents which included:

- a. Protocol for Identification, Safe Return, and Rehabilitation of Trafficked Persons.
- b. National Action Plan on Human Trafficking in Nigeria 2022 – 2026.
- c. Minimum standards for service providers rendering assistance to trafficked persons in Nigeria.
- d. Review of the National Policy on Protection and Assistance to Trafficked Persons in Nigeria.



**3. Mr. Olusola Ogutunde | Regional Cyber Specialised Officer, Cybercrime Directorate, AFJOC Project, INTERPOL Regional Bureau, Cote d'Ivoire.**

Mr. Olusola is responsible for providing support to law enforcement agents from 16 West African countries on all cyber related issues.

[Interpol Côte D'Ivoire](#)

## **SESSION BACKGROUND**

Trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants offer lucrative business opportunities for organized criminal groups. With the development and advancement of modern technologies and the ever-expanding role of the Internet, it is essential that law enforcement agencies, particularly those specializing in cybercrime, maintain an up-to-date understanding of how criminals are using technology to commit trafficking and smuggling crimes and how organized criminal groups use increasingly sophisticated technologies to evade detection.

Tackling the linkages between trafficking in persons, smuggling of migrants and cybercrime requires a commitment to the development and adaptation of modern technologies to counteract, detect, investigate, and prosecute cyber-based offending. However, State authorities must be mindful that, addressing trafficking in person and smuggling of migrants' issues poses sometimes challenges related to the respect of the rights of migrants and victims. While technology can help criminal organize groups to organize human trafficking and smuggle migrants, it can also be used to track and counter these same crimes. For the purposes of this discussion, the focus should be on a spectrum of solutions including those that can be adapted in low technology environments.

The session aimed to bring together actors working on human trafficking issues and smuggling of migrants to discuss their experiences, including practical tools, techniques, opportunities, and solutions that have been used to strengthen the fight against trafficking.

## **PANEL DISCUSSION**

After an initial introduction of key terms, Mr Touré presented the panellists with a series of questions to guide their presentations.

Cyber Dependent Crimes are offences where the technology itself is the target and can only be committed using a computer, computer networks or other forms of information communications technology. These include the use of malware, hacking or illicit intrusion into networks.

Cyber Enabled Crimes are traditional offences that are now facilitated by the use of technology; trafficking in persons is an example at hand.

### ✓ How have technological practices facilitated the trafficking and smuggling of migrants?

Ms. Yormah explained that technology can be used for both good and evil. That said, it has become a lot easier to commit crime through the use of technology and mobile devices are currently one of the simplest, yet most effective facilitators. Some examples that were referred to during her input included:

- WhatsApp end-to-end encryption and the challenges it poses for law enforcement in tracking communication. Sex workers in Sierra Leone have moved into WhatsApp to advertise and facilitate access to clients.
- The ease of installing tracking devices on phones has made it easier for traffickers and smugglers to control victims.
- Social media platforms create ease of access to potential victims, grooming and, in turn, recruitment.

Mr. Olatunji, further expanded by referring to online platforms generally being a source of concern in the increasing vulnerability of people. He mentioned how dating sites have increasingly become pathways to recruiting victims. This has been complemented with the use of highly sophisticated technologies that have enabled for better quality and a further reach of fake documents, the increasing use of cryptocurrency, which is difficult to track, and the use of Virtual Private Networks (VPN) to add security and anonymity to users; examples of the many developments in the space shifting the dynamics related to TIP and Migrant Smuggling.

### ✓ How do cyber-crimes investigations facilitate the path of countering human trafficking with the view of arresting suspects?

Mr. Ogotunde stressed the importance of being a step ahead of the criminals. INTERPOL is made up of close to 300 seconded officers from all over the world, with eighty nationalities of staff. This kind of structure is created to cater for response. Within the dark web on a daily basis, criminal intelligence analysts and researchers interact and pretend to be part of criminal organisations to get the information needed that would help law enforcement officers tackling TIP in various countries get access to the information they need to inform their approaches and decisions. In Singapore, INTERPOL has a close relationship to private sector players, such as Facebook which have internal law enforcement units within their organisations predominantly resourced with former or retired police officers. This interaction, collaboration and international inter-connectedness has resulted in a series of success a recent example being a joint Cote d'Ivoire, Algeria, and Tunisia operation where 3000 victims were rescued, and 200 traffickers arrested.

## ✓ What are the tools being used to counter-trafficking?

Mr. Olatunji referred to a series of Nigeria specific examples. These included:

- Emphasis on developing data analysis tools that build a comprehensive database that can be cross agency and interlinked to better share valuable information and data analysis outcomes that would contribute to the fight against TIP.
- XRY Complete- Mobile device forensic software which is only licensed to law enforcement agencies and is an all-in-one mobile terminal forensic software that supports more than 13,000 models and can extract data including but not limited to, restoring deleted data, timeline display of extracted data and acquisition of physical/logical data of mobile terminals.
- Social Media to develop pathways for awareness creation and investigation.
- The use of the Bank Verification Number (BVN) in Nigeria which is an 11-digit unique identity for each individual across the Nigeria banking industry. This enables for better monitoring of accounts and income.

That said, Mr. Olatunji stressed the space to continue to do more and especially the need to set up border security technological tools such as drones.

## ✓ What are the challenges in using such technologies?

Although Ms Yormah referred to some of the comments mentioned regarding encryption and the use of VPN and proxy servers, Mr. Ogotunde explained that challenges significantly differ from country to country. There are countries who are significantly more sophisticated than others. He encouraged countries to know what capabilities exist internationally, what can be offered and look for ways to collaborate and benefit. Cote d'Ivoire, for example, is sophisticated in operational activities with no help from INTERPOL. Although there are challenges, especially in West Africa, international tools and advancements can be reached through strategic partnerships with more advanced nations.

## **ATTENDEE INPUT**

- i. Currently there are attempts by criminal networks to evade national financial systems. Lots of departments exist that allow for multiple layers of investigation where there are questions raised around financial movement but there is a need to synchronise data to ensure financial transactions are integrated within data templates.
- ii. In Sierra Leone, there is ease of access to SIM cards and there is work being done to ensure a National Identification Number is linked to SIM card registration.
- ii. There is an increasing prevalence of online recruitment taking place via job portals, Facebook, and Instagram. More should be done to investigate the companies who are profiting from such activities and are essentially selling people under the guise of recruitment.
- v. Each INTERPOL member country hosts an INTERPOL National Centre Bureau (NCB) which is gateway to activities at a national level. This connects their national law enforcement with other countries and with the General Secretariat.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- i. It is essential that law enforcement agencies maintain an up-to-date understanding of how criminals are using technology to commit trafficking and smuggling crimes.
- ii. Tackling the linkages between trafficking in persons, smuggling of migrants and cybercrime requires a commitment to the development and adaptation of modern technologies to counteract, detect, investigate, and prosecute cyber-based offending.
- ii. Advancement in tools accessible to law enforcement is increasingly prevalent. Where countries have challenges and/or limitations, there should be a concerted effort to partner and collaborate as cyber-crime is a borderless crime.
- v. More education needs to take place within the ECOWAS region to educate the public on cyber-crimes and associated legislation. Strategies must ensure rural access to such information.

## Resource Bank

[Sierra Leone, Cyber Security and Crime Act, 2021](#)

[Sierra Leone National Cyber Security and Data Protection Strategy 2017-2022](#)

[National Action Plan on Human Trafficking in Nigeria 2022-2026](#)

[Trafficking in Persons \(Prohibition\) Enforcement and Administration Act, 2015](#)

[African Cyberthreat Assessment Report Cyberthreat Trends- Outlook by the African Cybercrime Operations Desk](#)

## ROLE OF DATA IN STRENGTHENING THE RESPONSE TO TRAFFICKING

### Name of Session:

**The role of data in strengthening the response to human trafficking: opportunities for replicating and scaling**

### Session Moderated by:

**Mark Forstrom**, Deputy Senior Coordinator, U.S. Department of State | Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons

**Email:** [ForstromMA@state.gov](mailto:ForstromMA@state.gov)

**US State Dept | Trafficking in Persons Office**

Mark Forstrom serves in the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking (TIP Office) as the Deputy Senior Coordinator for the International Programs (IP) Team with broad oversight of the office's bilateral programs, Child Protection Compact Partnerships, a more than \$55.0 million (USD) investment, and the Program to End Modern Slavery, a \$175.0 million (USD) initiative, which aims to support transformational programs that seek to achieve a measurable and substantial reduction of the prevalence of modern slavery in targeted populations in specific countries or regions. In his role as the Deputy Senior Coordinator Mark also works closely with others, including other USG funders, to shape and develop the TIP Office's overall funding strategy, including the oversight of more than \$240.0 million (USD) in active foreign assistance funding in 2023.

Immediately prior to joining the TIP Office (in 2007), Mark work as Congressional aide on Capitol Hill. And before that he worked for several years as an attorney in private practice in the State of Washington.

Mark received a B.A. in Politics and Government from the University of Puget Sound (Tacoma, Washington, USA). He also received a Law Degree (J.D.) from the University of Puget Sound (Tacoma, Washington, USA).

## **Panelists**

### **1. Alex Balch**

- [Professor of Politics at the University of Liverpool, Director of Research at the Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre \(MS-PEC\)](#)
- [Associate Director of APRIES \(African Programming and Research Initiative to End Slavery \(APRIES\)\)](#)

His research focuses on the relationship between evidence, politics and policy in the fields of immigration and anti-trafficking. He has worked with a range of government and non-government organisations on research projects and regularly contributes to public debates.

Alex has led several multi-country projects examining the effectiveness of different approaches in addressing exploitation. He was Principal Investigator for the Anti-Slavery Knowledge Network (AKN) 2017-2022, funded through the UK's Global Challenges Research Fund by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). The AKN funded a number of sub-awards across different African countries featuring research into creative, community-based methods, safeguarding practices, and equitable partnerships. His most recent projects include the development of an international network of researchers to examine the meaningful engagement of people with lived experience in policy and programming, funded by the UK's Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office.



## **2. Haja Ramatulai Wurie | Research Consultant/Think Tank in the African Programming and Research Initiative to End Slavery (APRIES) Sierra Leone.**

With over 10 years of experience conducting development-focused research for decision-making and practice, Haja has a multidisciplinary approach to her work. She has conducted research on a variety of national issues in Sierra Leone over the course of her career through a gender, equity, social justice and inclusivity lens, generating evidence that has fed into government policy and donor strategies for building resilient, responsive and transformative systems. Furthermore, she promotes community involvement at all stages of the research process in order to prevent unintended consequences associated with policy implementation, thus increasing the sense of ownership and leadership among community members.

## **3. Teresa Botella | Policy and Liaison officer at the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and focal point for ECOWAS, based in Abuja, Nigeria.**

As Liaison officer to ECOWAS Ms. Botella supports the Commission and its Member States to integrate migration and human rights approach in their different policies and actions.

With over 15 years of experience in the private and public sector, in Europe, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East, she has worked at the International Organization for Migration since 2007.

Ms. Botella's knowledge and skills in the theme of migration are diverse, and include migration policy and governance, labour migration and ethical recruitment, integration and social cohesion, development, gender and migration, as well as the protection of migrants and especially vulnerable categories such as unaccompanied and separated children and victims of trafficking.

In her former position as Head of Programmes in Morocco, it is worth highlighting the support given to the creation of the Inter-ministerial Commission on Counter Trafficking, as well as to the creation of the African Observatory on Migration.

<https://www.iom.int/>

### **IOM focal points for inquiries on data and Counter Trafficking**

Laursen Stine : [slaursen@iom.int](mailto:slaursen@iom.int)

Galez Davies Claire Emilie [cgalez@iom.int](mailto:cgalez@iom.int)

## **4. Sira Balde | Associate Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer (Niamey Declaration), based in Dakar, Senegal.**

Sira is the focal point for the Niamey Declaration within the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The Niamey Declaration is a ministerial level declaration that was adopted by 18 countries of origin, transit and destination to improve coordination and operational efficacy in the fight against trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants.

Sira is a jurist with experience upholding human rights and facilitating victim centred criminal justice in Africa and North America. Sira joined UNODC's Regional Office for West and Central Africa in 2019, where she worked on improving access to justice for women in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Senegal, prison reform and promoting international cooperation in criminal matters through the West African Network of Central Authorities and Prosecutors (WACAP).

<https://www.unodc.org>

**5. Mr Frederick Akwetey Lokko | Programme Officer at the Human Trafficking Secretariat of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection in Ghana.**

He has been working in the Human Trafficking Secretariat for the past 5 years. He is part of the team that collates data for the compilation of the US TIP report and the ECOWAS TIP report. Mr. Lokko has knowledge and skills on issues of human trafficking, child labour, forced labour and labour migration. In his position in the Human Trafficking Secretariat, he has made input into the National Plan of Action for the elimination of Human Trafficking (2022 – 2026) which is being implemented and a variety of policy documents such as Ghana's National Labour Migration Policy, the Gender Policy, Ghana accelerated action against worst forms of child labour strategic framework (2022 – 2026) and the Inter Sectoral Standard Operating Procedures (ISSOP) amongst others.

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**6. Dehunge Shiaka | Executive Director, Anti-Trafficking in Persons Task Force Secretariat, Ministry of Social Welfare, Sierra Leone.**

Mr. Dehunge Shiaka is a former School Teacher and newspaper editor. He served briefly as UNICEF Information Officer in Sierra Leone before joining the Civil Service. In the Civil Service, he served as Monitoring and Evaluation Officer in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security before moving to the Ministry of Social Welfare where he rose to be the Director of Policy, Planning and Research and thereafter promoted to the position of Deputy Chief Director. Mr. Shiaka is currently the Executive Director, Anti-Trafficking in Persons Task Force Secretariat. He is a Justice of the Peace (J.P), and holds a Master of Science in Agricultural Extension with a focus on rural sociology and Communications.

## **SESSION BACKGROUND**

The effective use of data is often identified as a key recommendation to enhance the fight against human trafficking. The ability of national Governments to collate credible and accurate data across a multitude of institutions along the TIP chain can be an important tool to identify victims, investigate and prosecute perpetrators. Additionally, the targeted provision of services for the survivors by social service providers and law enforcement agencies also requires good data especially in resource constrained environments.

The purpose of this session was to highlight the critical role that data plays in combating trafficking, especially to prevent, protect, prosecute, and build partnerships. It spotlights solutions that have been effective in some ECOWAS Countries and explores how these solutions can be transplanted within the contextual framework of other ECOWAS countries with varying levels of technological advancement. The session aimed to explore opportunities for regional data sharing by shedding light on the readiness amongst ECOWAS Member States and the legal frameworks that would need to be in place to enhance regional cooperation.

## PANEL DISCUSSION

On behalf of the main funder, the US State Department Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, the Moderator opened the session by expressing the appreciation for all the efforts and hard work the panellists and their organisations are dedicating to end human trafficking.

Ms. Balde stated that the Niamey Declaration was adopted by 18 countries in 2018/19 to improve coordination and operational efficacy in the fight against trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants along central and western Mediterranean routes. The signatory countries committed to implement 21 recommendations related to improving legal frameworks, optimising, and articulating the missions of the different stakeholders, improving judicial cooperation and strengthening national operational tools such as data collection efforts.

UNODC works with countries to collect data on trafficking victims and publishes a global report annually that is based on desk research (that includes assessment of alignment between international and national laws and agreements on trafficking), and field work, such as questionnaire-based interviews with all relevant stakeholders (governmental and non-governmental institutions, service providers, victims of trafficking etc.)

Based on UNODC annual global report on anti-trafficking, Ms Sira Balde elaborated on challenges that UNODC faces in West Africa:

- Lack of coordinated and reliable data on victims of trafficking from the West African region but also at international level.
- Data collection on human trafficking court cases in the West African Region, where judges often do not draft court decisions.
- Data collection and methodology in the field work. Although digital questionnaire forms and excel sheets are shared with national counterparts, the numbers collected in the last one, in September 2022, over a three-month period, did not allow for representative analysis. The questions were left unanswered and the answers often vague, imprecise, or unrelated to the reporting period.
- Lack of systematic data collection methodology and practices and unresponsiveness from the government agencies.
- Lack of coordination at the national level between agencies that are legally mandated to fight TIP and legal aid providers to victims in trafficking which often prevents victims from receiving support from existing mechanisms.
- Many persons do not see themselves as victims or have suspicions in the abilities of authorities to protect them. This leads to non-identification of victims and their revictimization and invisibility.

Ms. Balde presented the opportunities that can address the challenges and are based on the best practices that could mitigate data collection constraints:

- Creation of multi-partner and multi-disciplinary task forces which would bring together all ministries concerned with data collection efforts.



- Creation of multi-partner and multi-disciplinary task forces which would bring together all ministries concerned with data collection efforts.
- UNODC member states to assist further in data collection including carrying out support field missions and organising bilateral and multilateral preparatory meetings.
- Capacity building regarding substantive knowledge on data processing.
- Opportunities for more focused and predicted data analysis.
- Provision of early warning and credible information collection which would lead to timely and accurate intervention.
- Identification of vulnerable people and their communalities.

Ms. Botella pointed out that together with member states and relevant actors, IOM has established a global and collaborative data hub that presents worldwide collected data on migration and trafficking.

The challenges that IOM is experiencing are not only limited to data collection but include challenges in data analysis and dissemination:

- Identification of TIP cases and victims during the data collection phase.
- Lack of capacity in services related to the protection of victims. Qualified interviewers and a sensitive approach to the interview process are essential to ensuring the privacy and respect of the victims.
- Non systemic approach during the process of data collection and lack of ownership of the data across the relevant agencies at governmental level.
- Decentralisation in data collection. Data is mainly collected in paper form, and it is important to ensure secured and centralised platforms and to limit responses to requests from official servers and agencies only.
- Non comparable data in the dissemination phase due to lack of rationale behind the data or lack of proper data analysis.
- Stakeholders' capacity in data interpretation and presentation.

Mr. Shiaka was asked to elaborate on how the government of Sierra Leone considered the data collection and other information requirements while working on development of National Referral Mechanism. Mr Shiaka emphasised that the purpose of the National Referral Mechanism is to serve as the guidelines for the stakeholders at all stages of anti-trafficking activities, from identifying the victims of trafficking to providing them with adequate protective services.

The National Referral Mechanism encompasses a separate assessment tool to identify victims that is based on a unique code allocation to protect victims' identity. Social workers from all governmental agencies that are involved in anti-trafficking efforts, will receive training on optimal use of the tool.

In addition, the agency created separate data forms based on questionnaires for identification of victims of trafficking. The agency works closely in cooperation with World Hope

International social workers who collect data at the shelter and also introduced investigation mechanisms on how to distinguish the victims of trafficking at the shelter. The agency updates the data entries on victims of trafficking on an annual basis and in that process, it also relies on the information provided by ECOWAS.

As their main challenge in data collection, Mr Shiaka points out the difficulties that stem from a paper-based database that relies on the use of excel sheets.

Mr. Lokko Akwetey was asked to provide concrete examples of data collection systems that could help the government of Ghana complete the work on data collection of human trafficking cases effectively.

Mr Lokko Akwetey explained that the government of Ghana first started implementing a traditional approach to data collection, but they soon realised that this was not effective for cases of human trafficking. This is because agencies in Ghana have specific roles and decentralised databases that are not exclusively focused on human trafficking data collection.

To tackle this problem, The Ghana Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protections, in cooperation with UNICEF, have established the Social Welfare Information Management System (SWIMS) that gives social workers access to innovative tools to efficiently manage and refer cases related to social protection of children in Ghana.

In cooperation with IOM, the Ministry also worked on establishing the information system that would be the main database on human trafficking.

Another initiative is the Ghana National Household Registry, which seeks to collect socioeconomic data on members of households and act as a tool to assist in social protection programs to identify, prioritise and select households living in vulnerable conditions in Ghana communities.

The main challenges in implementation of the data collection systems are:

- The information systems mentioned are not rolled out nationally yet.
- The deadlines for data collection often have to be extended when stakeholders do not revert with forms and templates as agreed.
- More capacity building about data gathering, focused on the relevance of the information and the specifics of each case, is needed.
- There is a need to invest in data management structures.
- Management Information systems are currently not interconnected.
- Data helps us identify gaps which can then be used to inform the policy makers on the measures and determine their short to long term strategies.
- Initiatives such as that of the National Referral Mechanism help us to be proactive and identify potential victims of trafficking. Unfortunately, in relation to data the responses appear more reactive.

Ms. Haja R. Wurie and Prof. Alex Balch were asked to elaborate how they as researchers use data to help generate evidence and programming in their interventions.

Prof Balch stressed that researchers with access to data have numerous possibilities of generating useful information within the scope of imagination. Even partial data can help researchers present clever statistical methods and estimations of prevalence that relate to identification. There are a lot of opportunities for researchers if there is access to administrative data that open ways not only to estimation and identification, but also comparative data analysis.

Challenges as a researcher:

- Lack of data availability is a common frustration of researchers. Governments often have to be persuaded to share data due to power dynamics around the ownership of the data.
- Unlike other fields of research, such as climate change, Human trafficking is not particularly an old area of research and that implies lack of consensus amongst scientists with regards to priorities around statistical data or effects of collected data. There is a perceived contradiction between data gaps and data abundance that is exacerbated by lack of clarity in prioritisation in data collection on human trafficking among scientists.
- Ethical challenges in data collection. Human trafficking involves human beings that are experiencing trauma caused by exploitation. Often protection of victims may be the reason for denied access to data, especially if the process of data collection was not ethical and considerate to victims. Such sensitive data cannot just be extracted from victims without offering them background information on purpose of data collection.
- Lack of sustainable processes that will endure the change of time. Many platforms and databases that have been created change from year to year because of the shifts in consensus on how human trafficking should be measured or defined.

Ms. Wurie added that top-down and bottom-up approaches in data research are equally important, although governments tend to seek standardisation in data collection.

In that respect, Ms Wurie stressed some key points:

- Definition of human trafficking is different and varies from one context to another.
- The focus should be on creating nuances. More data is good only if it is relevant, reliable and of good quality.
- Data research must be conducted with communities and not for communities if it is to be sustainable. Sustainability cannot be achieved unless communities become partners in the process and are part of the solution.
- Standardisation is useful in data comparison of cross cutting issues in ECOWAS region that help determine national policies and set paths of the policy implementation.
- Data helps us identify gaps which can then be used to inform the policy makers on the measures and determine their short to long term strategies.
- Initiatives such as that of the National Referral Mechanism help us to be proactive and identify potential victims of trafficking. Unfortunately, in relation to data the responses appear more reactive.

## **ATTENDEE INPUT**

Audience raised the question of data protection and duration of preservation of data by stakeholders who have access to databases on cases of human trafficking.

Panellists explained that institutions use secure platforms for databases while the time limit for preservation of data differs from 5 to 10 years and often depends on funders or donors' individual requests for data preservation.

## **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- Lack of coordination in data management can be addressed with further support of international partners in capacity building of all parties involved in data collection efforts.
- Data Management processes must be interconnected, sustainable and ethical towards the victims of trafficking.
- Communities play a crucial role in providing high quality data that can reduce policy gaps in human trafficking.

## **Resource Bank**

[The Counter Trafficking Data Collaborative](#)

[Human Trafficking Data Standards Tools](#)

*Note (The new report and tool on standardized data for countries will be available soon and published in the CTDC platform)*

[IOMs E-Campus self-paced e-learning course](#)

<https://www.ecampus.iom.int/enrol/index.php?id=715>

[UN The Inter Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons](#)

[An Analysis of Flow Monitoring Survey Data on Migration Flows in and Through West and Central Africa](#)



[Report on IDP and Modern Slavery](#)

[DTM Mobility and Vulnerability Data](#)

[Counter trafficking in emergencies: information management guide](#)

[Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage](#)

[Economic Shocks and Human Trafficking Risks: Evidence from IOMs Victims of Human Trafficking Database](#)

## APPROACHES TO SURVIVOR LEGAL REDRESS, RETURN AND REINTEGRATION

### Name of Session:

Approaches to Survivor Legal Redress, Return and Reintegration: Best Practice and Opportunities

### Session Moderated by:

Ms. Nassima Clerin, Regional Protection Specialist, IOM Regional Office for West and Central Africa

### Panelists

#### **1. Aruna Jalloh | Desk Officer, Transnational Organised Crime Unit (TOCU), Ministry of Justice, Sierra Leone**

Aruna Jalloh graduated from Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra in 2011 with a bachelor's degree (LLB Hons.). He was called to the Bar in November 2012 by the Council of Legal Education, Sierra Leone. He practiced law as a private legal practitioner up to December 2015 and between January 2016 to September 2016, he worked as Consultant Prosecutor in the Prosecutions Division, Law Officers' Department courtesy of Access to Security and Justice Programme (ASJP) in order to reduce backlog cases in the High Court of Sierra Leone. He was appointed as State Counsel in the Law Officers' Department in October 2016 after his contract with ASJP had ended. He prosecutes homicide, financial, sexual and gender-based violence offences in the Magistrate and the High Courts; proffer legal opinion/legal advice in respect criminal investigations conducted by the Sierra Leone Police for the consideration of the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice and the Director of Public Prosecutions. Between July 2016 and November 2021, he was the resident State Counsel and Customary Law Officer for the Northern Province of Sierra Leone (i.e., Bombali, Tonkolili, Koinadugu, Falaba, Karene, Portloko and Kambia Districts) where he was responsible for criminal persecutions, review of Local Court judgments and transfer of Local Court cases. In November 2021 he was recalled to the Headquarters in Freetown, and he is currently the desk officer in respect of all Transnational Organised Crime Unit (TOCU) Case and Enquiry Files forwarded to the Attorney General and Minister of Justice and the Director of Public Prosecutions for legal advice by the Sierra Leone Police.

<https://jsco.gov.sl/partners/>

#### **2. Miriam Fullah | Protection Manager, World Hope International**

Miriam Fullah has served as World Hope International's Trafficking-in-Persons Protection Manager and Case Management Coordinator since 2012. She was trained as a teacher by the Milton College of Education and Technology at the University of Sierra Leone. Miriam also holds a Diploma in Social Work and Psychological Care from the Institute of Public Administration and Management.

Prior to joining World Hope, Miriam worked at the Youth Readiness Intervention Project from Harvard University and before that, at the Center for Victims of Torture. She also worked four years at Handicap International, Sierra Leone, as a Psychosocial Counsellor.

<https://worldhope.org/about-us/our-team/miriam-fullah-2/>



**3. [Alessandro Rabiosi](#) | Regional Project Director, Regional Project to Support the fight against Human Trafficking in the States of the Gulf of Guinea, Expertise France.**

<https://www.expertisefrance.fr/fiche-projet?id=726413>

**4. [Alhaji Koleh Yillah](#) | Co-Founder and Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Self Help and Development Everywhere (SHADE) Sierra Leone.**

Alhai has been a development worker for many years with various organizations and has been working on trafficking issues since he set up a shelter in Kambia with an organization called Self Help and Development Everywhere (SHADE-SL). He is a Co-Founder of SHADE-SL and is currently serving in the capacity of Chairman of the Board of Trustees of SHADE-SL.

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100080795794664>

**5. [Franklin R Dolo](#) | Field Program Coordinator, International Development Organisation-IDLO, Liberia.**

Franklin R. Dolo is a development sector professional who stands at the intersection of policy research and development practice. He is currently the Programme Lead for the IDLO Program in Liberia and coordinates the delivery of interventions in Liberia and the Mano River Basin in partnership and collaboration with a range of partners and stakeholders.

Mr. Dolo has over twelve (12) years' experience working on development issues in Liberia, India, and Indonesia; with expertise in the planning, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of projects and programs for bilateral and multilateral development partners including the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the International Finance Corporation (IFC), and United Nations (UN) agencies. His work in international development spans across sectors and has focused on trafficking-in-persons, governance, rule of law, and sustainable economic growth.

<https://www.idlo.int/where-we-work/sub-saharan-africa/liberia>

## **SESSION BACKGROUND**

Legal redress is a critical component of survivor recovery, and best practices involve ensuring that legal systems are accessible, responsive, and accountable to survivors. This includes ensuring that legal systems are gender-sensitive and designed to meet the specific needs of survivors, including access to legal aid, interpretation services, and psycho-social support. Best practices also involve creating legal frameworks that prioritize the rights of survivors, such as criminalizing gender-based violence, providing legal protection for refugees, migrants, and displaced persons, and ensuring that survivors have access to compensation and reparations

Safe and dignified return and sustainable reintegration are an indispensable part of a comprehensive approach to migration management. Assisted voluntary return (AVR) programmes aim to support migrants who are unable or unwilling to remain in host or transit countries and wish to return to their countries of origin. They may be stranded migrants in host or transit countries, irregular migrants, regular migrants, asylum seekers who decide not to pursue their claims or who are found not to need international protection, and migrants in vulnerable situations, such as victims of trafficking, unaccompanied and separated children, or migrants with health-related needs.

Return and reintegration is therefore a critical part of the recovery process: best practices involve ensuring that return is voluntary, safe, and dignified, and that returnees have access to basic services such as healthcare, education, and clean water.

The session aimed at bringing together actors promoting a holistic approach that prioritises the rights and needs of survivors through legal redress, return and reintegration with an emphasis on discussing experiences; including practical tools and techniques that have been used in their respective practices.

## **PANEL DISCUSSION**

Ms. Fullah was specifically asked about World Hope International's (WHI) activities in Sierra Leone that emphasised a holistic support programme for victims of TIP and the challenges and opportunities that survivors are facing in terms of their re-integration into society. Ms. Fullah explained that WHI ensures a thorough family and community assessment is conducted to ensure people feel accepted and supported in the communities they may wish to return. This assessment with an understanding of the individual's needs, is used to identify whether support mechanisms exist within the community. If the assessment results are satisfactory, reintegration into the community can commence. Support during re-integration can vary. Some approaches mentioned, included:

- Provision of reintegration packages- these can be in the form of grants.
- Long term support plans can be developed- these can be a year-long or more subject to the individual's needs and are usually developed through partnerships to ensure a holistic care approach.
- Where there is a lack of community acceptance, threats and/or other potential areas of risk identified, long-term care outside the community may be needed.

Some challenges experienced have been around community acceptance and ease of integration, these are rare circumstances but do exist. A pattern noticed is also resulting dependency on the organisation after support with the expectation that there will always be support. When it comes to legal redress, communities are in some cases silent, especially where some perpetrators are either relatives of victims or from within the community.

Mr. Yillah was asked to share SHADE's experiences in providing psychosocial support and explained that in SHADE's care there are currently 18 survivors being supported, a mix of both adults and children. He identified that psychosocial support services can be a neglected area in the communities they operate. Survivors are predominantly referred to their centres via either Family Support Unit or the Ministry of Social Welfare. They act as a transit centre accepting predominantly referrals from

predominantly referrals from Kambia where children are intercepted on the way to Guinea. SHADE's approach is to diagnose the kind of psychosocial support needed for each survivor; their unique experiences and their responses to the situations they are in must be factored in the design of any intervention. In terms of rehabilitation, SHADE ensures a diversity of activities are utilised with specific safeguarding considerations.

Mr. Dolo shared IDLO's primary focus on ensuring access to justice and rule of law is maintained. His own work focuses on human trafficking and supporting government in making the necessary associated strides. In the last year, over 100 abused female workers from Oman, were repatriated to Liberia. Although the repatriation was a success, the experience identified the lack of victim informed personnel supporting the process. The Liberian Government did not have safe homes that could support these victims and now more intentional attempts are taking place within Liberia to create and develop the necessary support structures.

Mr. Jalloh's input corroborated Mr. Dolo's and emphasised a challenge in currently accessing victims to ensure legal accountability. He stated that it is also imperative that rights are central to any mechanisms where both the rights of the suspects and abused persons are recognised. Mr Jalloh stressed that the way forward must ensure a strengthening of regional structures and the need for financial support in enhancing criminal investigations and prosecutions.

Mr. Rabiosi, in describing his work with the Regional Project to Support the fight against Human Trafficking in the States of the Gulf of Guinea, explained that the strategy is to have national mechanisms that can coordinate all support related services. There is a clear gap and need to improve on the services provided to ensure better collaboration between police, prosecutors, judges, etc. Indeed, there has been regional level successes and achievements in Togo and Benin, for example but there is a need for a more intentional inclusion of protection in relation to prosecution. Currently, for example, victims can be waiting hours for telephone calls to be made to victim support services and/or their families. This time has a detrimental impact on the mindset and the support services both needed and accessed after. Mr Rabiosi explained the need for support services within police stations where victims, who may not be able to understand the language of the police, are able to access the support needed to facilitate their experiences. This integrated support approach is currently supported by Expertise France in Guinea.



## **ATTENDEE INPUT**

- Training of judges, prosecutors and social workers needs to be holistic and collaborative with all parties involved to ensure knowledge sharing, clarity of roles and understanding of the victim support journey.
- A deep dive into the data is needed to ascertain the unique experiences of fostered and/or illegally adopted children, their increasing vulnerabilities and the support mechanisms needed both from a prevention and protection perspective.
- Locations of Reintegration and Support Centres must be kept confidential to protect both staff and survivors.
- Ideally support facilities should be developed tailored plans that are holistic and invested. Clinical Care Assessment Tools, such as those who measure level of trauma and identify readiness, should be integrated.
- In supporting victims, the emphasis should be on the quality of the experience and services rendered as opposed to the quantity of people that go through them.

## **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- Victim reintegration approaches should not be limited in scope and/or nature but should be individually designed based on the context.
- Sustainability of impact of reintegration approaches must be at the forefront of design with an emphasis on avoiding dependency and/or long-term expectations.
- Psychosocial support services need to be strengthened and made more accessible especially in rural communities.
- Training of personnel interacting and providing front line support to victims of trafficking must ensure victim informed and victim sensitive approaches.
- A rights-based approach to interacting with both perpetrators and victims is necessary throughout the prosecution process.



## Resource Bank

[Ouagadougou Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, Especially Women and Children As adopted by the Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development, Tripoli, 22-23 November 2006](#)

[Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime 55/25 of 15 November 2000](#)

[H.R.3244 - Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000](#)



## COMMUNITY CENTRIC APPROACHES TO PREVENT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

### Name of Session:

Community Centric Approaches to Prevent Human Trafficking

### Session Moderated by:

Dehunge Shiaka, Executive Director, Anti-Trafficking in Persons Secretariat

### **Panelists**

#### **1. Mohamed Yusifu-Koroma | Human Trafficking Prevention Manager, World Hope International**

Mohamed is currently working for World Hope International (WHI) as Human Trafficking Prevention Manager. Prior to attaining that position, he worked for WHI as Legal Aid Coordinator, providing legal support to survivors of human trafficking. His current role at WHI involves working with community people to prevent human trafficking across Sierra Leone. Mr Koroma leads WHI's effort in empowering community people so that they can identify signs of trafficking and prevent it and respond efficiently and appropriately to trafficking incidents.

<https://worldhope.org/tag/sierra-leone/>

#### **2. Lucy Turay | Activist, Survivor and Founder of Domestic Workers Advocacy Network (DoWAN)**

Lucy's activism is guided by and highlights the struggles of black women and working-class communities across the globe. She describes the Kefala System as modern-day slavery and committed to raising awareness to prevent women being trafficked into domestic servitude. DoWAN is committed to advocating for the rights and dignity of migrant domestic workers.

<https://www.facebook.com/people/Domestic-Workers-Advocacy-Network-DoWAN/100082032811302/>

#### **3. Aboubacar Sidike Camara | President of Guinea's National Committee for the Fight against Trafficking in Persons of Guinea-Conakry and Legal Advisor to the Minister for the Advancement of Women, Children and Vulnerable Persons.**

In both of these capacities, Aboubacar essentially coordinates all actions to combat human trafficking in Guinea. The National Committee for the Fight against TIP brings together state actors and civil society actors to mobilise technical and financial partners around projects for the prevention of trafficking and care for victims. Among the National Committee's partners are International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), Expertise France, the European Union, UNODC, Embassy of the United States of America- Guinea and ECOWAS, to mention a few. Aboubacar acted as the Guinea Focal Point of the 1980 United Nations Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction and recently led the development and adoption of the law on fight against human trafficking and related practices.

## **SESSION BACKGROUND**

Human trafficking is a pervasive issue that requires a collaborative and multifaceted response. Non-traditional partners can also play a crucial role in building more resilient anti-trafficking responses through a community centric approach. This approach entails identifying and working with community leaders, members and structures, local organisations, to provide education, training and develop strategies to prevent trafficking. It also involves creating safe spaces for vulnerable individuals, such as women and children, who are at risk of being trafficked ([ILO World Employment Social Outlook Report 2016](#)). Interventions developed and centered around the community can be tailored to the specific needs of different communities and should involve the active participation of community members to be effective.

The overall objective of this session is to discuss the role of communities in preventing trafficking, best practices for community-centered approaches, and explore ways to build effective partnerships to combat trafficking.

## **PANEL DISCUSSION**

Mr. Koroma described some of the work that he conducts in his capacity with World Hope International in community engagement. He emphasised the need for sustainably designed interventions as work at community level is not for an indefinite period. The activities he described included:

- Community leader training specifically targeting paramount chiefs with the objective of training them on how to identify and respond to human trafficking.
- Working with existing community structures such as the Child Welfare Committee, set up by government, to respond to TIP at community level.
- Provide support to ensure any national trainings are cascaded within communities to the appropriate focal points.
- Empower local leaders to develop and cascade bylaws that address TIP at community level.
- Establish and empower school clubs at district level where school club members are trained and participate in awareness raising activities at school level.

Ms. Turay shared her personal experiences around the Kefala system in the Middle East. She described how her work in Sierra Leone is primarily focused on prevention where she has formed mother clubs linked to Village Savings and Loans Associations in the agricultural sector to improve livelihoods and provide alternatives to reduce risks related to migrant smuggling and TIP. Ms. Turay and DoWAN also target marketplaces for outreach work whilst working with bigger organisations both nationally and internationally with an emphasis on supporting advocacy initiatives against exploitation of workers.

Mr. Camara stressed the importance of community centric approaches where there is an emphasis on communities benefiting from preventative action. For communities to benefit from national activities against TIP, they must be involved and brought on board from the outset. Sharing the example of the roll out of the Community Strategy for Community Mobilisation with the Aim of Ending Trafficking in Persons (2020), Mr. Camara articulated the approach used at the time which included:



- Identification of community organisations and mobilisation of community actors utilising their existing systems, structures, and level of influence to ensure a successful roll out.
- Worked alongside the Network of Traditional Communicators who had extensive expertise and networks in communicating locally.
- Worked alongside the Guinea Domestic Workers' Association and benefited from their referral mechanisms and community awareness campaigns.

Mr. Camara stressed that communities must feel they own the fight and organisations should serve as the interface between CSOs and donors to ensure access to financial and technical assistance where necessary.

## **ATTENDEE INPUT**

Some of the key challenges working with communities are:

- Heightened financial expectations. This is being addressed through increased community education.
- Access to funding is directed in the majority of cases towards bigger organisations.
- A lot of activities are unsustainable, and funding is project bound. There is a need to invest in sustainable community relays.
- The persistence of harmful cultural practices such as those of sending children away to be taken care of by someone else continues to increase vulnerabilities of certain communities.

## **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- There is a need to be intentional about the integration of community-based individuals and organisations in countering TIP.
- TIP needs to be integrated within all local development plans and communities must be central to and feel that they own the fight against TIP.

### **Resource Bank**

[International Child Abduction - Hague Convention 1980](#)

[“Until we Win”: Domestic Workers’ Relentless Fight Against Exploitation](#)

## **LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS TO BUILD MORE RESILIENT ANTI-TRAFFICKING RESPONSES**

### **Name of Session:**

Leveraging partnerships

### **Session Moderated by:**

**Modeste Krah**, Regional Project Manager, Expertise France

Modeste Krah is regional Project Manager with Expertise France for the regional project to support the fight against human trafficking in the Gulf of Guinea for 6 countries: Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria and Togo.

From 2019 to 2022, Modeste was the National project Manager for Côte d'Ivoire. He helped the National anti-trafficking Committee for the development of national referral mechanism for the protection of victims of trafficking and the national anti-trafficking action plan for 2022-2025.

Prior to Expertise France, Modeste was Research officer and TIP focal person with the Ministry in charge of Solidarity of Côte d'Ivoire, he supported the operationalization of the National anti-trafficking committee Secretariat.

Modeste holds a Masters degree in Humanitarian Studies from Felix Houphouet Boigny University in Côte d'Ivoire.

Modeste KRAH is an Officer of the National Merit Order of Solidarity of Côte d'Ivoire.

<https://www.expertisefrance.fr>

## **Panelists**

- 1. Rev. Martha Priscilla Gbenga-Chigoize | National Coordinator of Standing Against Trafficking in Persons and Migrants smuggling in Sierra Leone (SATPAMS-SL) and the National Coordinator for West Africa Coalition Against Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (WACTIPSOM).**
- 2. Dr. Kondoh Kandale | Director General of Child Protection/President of the National Commission for the Fight against Trafficking in Persons (CNLTP).**
- 3. Ivanka Hainzl | Anti-Trafficking Specialist, International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), Vienna, Austria.**

Ivanka Hainzl is working as an Anti-Trafficking Specialist at the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). She is part of the organisation's Anti-trafficking Programme, and she is based in the Headquarters in Vienna, Austria.

ICMPD set up a dedicated Anti-Trafficking Programme in 2002, shortly after the signing of the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC). Today, the Programme has expanded its activities to over 65 countries by implementing over 90 projects and actions and publishing over 70 publications, research studies and articles.



Ivanka Hainzl is part of the Programme for half of its 20 years of existence. Currently, her professional focus is capacity-building projects targeting the national anti-trafficking stakeholders, as well as the development and implementation of various national anti-trafficking policy frameworks. She drafted reports and provided input on the development and assessment of the implementation of various national referral mechanisms, standard operating procedures for referral of victims, national anti-trafficking strategies and action plans in countries in South-Eastern Europe, Central Asia and most recently in West Africa. In the last 4 years, her professional focus has been the regional anti-trafficking cooperation between the ECOWAS member states.

Prior to ICMPD, Ivanka Hainzl was serving as Senior expert to the Secretariat of the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, within the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria. For 6 years, she was implementing anti-trafficking projects at CARE International Bulgaria and the NGO Animus Association Foundation/LaStrada Bulgaria.

Mrs. Hainzl holds MA in Clinical and counselling psychology, and she has extensive training and experience in providing psychological and social support to victims of violence, incl. TIP victims.

Email: [ivanka.hainzl@icmpd.org](mailto:ivanka.hainzl@icmpd.org)  
<https://www.icmpd.org>

#### **4. Reuben Lewis | Policy Consultant, CenHTRO Think Tank Sierra Leone**

Reuben Lewis is a policy consultant with the CenHTRO Think Tank in Sierra Leone and lectures at the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies at Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone.

As a consultant, he has worked with national, regional, and international institutions on issues of migration, human trafficking, border management and peacebuilding. Lewis helped draft Sierra Leone's National Migration Policy and conducted research on human trafficking and irregular migration in West Africa. In addition, he is the country lead expert for the development of a new national referral mechanism for the protection of victims of trafficking in Sierra Leone and the finalization of a cooperation framework agreement with Guinea on TIP matters with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). His previous posts include the European University Institute in Florence, Italy, and the Hiroshima Peacebuilders Center in Japan. He holds a PhD from the graduate school for International Development and Cooperation, Hiroshima University in Japan.

<https://cenhtro.uga.edu>

## SESSION BACKGROUND

Human trafficking is a complex and multifaceted network traversing many borders which makes it difficult to combat especially where cooperation and coordination amongst stakeholders that are responsible for prevention, protection and prosecution is limited. Partnerships are critical to addressing the resource constraints faced by governments across the pillars of prevention, protection, and prosecution and truly extends the reach of interventions and actions to strengthen the fight.

The session focused on how different types of partnerships have been effective in addressing human trafficking in ways that traditional structures alone have not been able to and how best practices can be amplified and replicated in other contexts.

## PANEL

Mr Kraah opened the session by reading the panellists' biographies and then asked the panellists to explain the idea behind cooperation agreements.

Mr Lewis explained that cooperation framework agreements can be an agreement between two contracting parties, institutions or groups who are willing to cooperate in certain issue areas. Cooperation and partnership are interrelated concepts and are reflected in the collaboration of multiple actors who jointly engage in implementation of certain agreements.

Key issues of cooperation have evolved in the last decades within the regional subsystem of West Africa. In the 1990s, ECOWAS brought together sister countries in a convention to promote mutual assistance on criminal matters that covered illegal immigrants smuggling and human trafficking.

The convention laid the foundation for cooperation across and between ECOWAS member states. In 2006 ECOWAS decided to develop a multilateral framework cooperation agreement of Western and Central Africa to combat Trafficking in Persons that later expanded and put focus on the need for intergovernmental cooperation.

Since then, various countries have established their own agreements with the most recent engagement between the Mano River Union countries to discuss issues of human trafficking. The conference was focused on:

- How best to develop structures for cooperation.
- How best to coordinate the activities around crime investigation.
- How to develop tools of early warning and improve cross border crime management.

However, the next steps must be towards practical implementation of the cooperation framework agreements. One currently in progress is between Agencies for Trafficking in Persons of Guinea and Sierra Leone supported by ICMPD and focused on aspects of coordination, case management, investigation, monitoring, joint border control and cross border patrol control activities between two countries.

The main challenges in the implementation stem from the fact that the agreements are not legally binding, and that administrative culture and implementation of rules and regulations around human trafficking and border security varies from country to country.

#### Recommendations:

- Administrative culture and implementation of rules and regulations around human trafficking and border security varies from country to country which affect agreement implementation
- Language barriers should be tackled systematically by training bilingual staff.
- There is a need to establish sustained processes of cooperation and constant systems of interaction between the parties of agreement.

Ms. Hainzl, stressed the importance of the topic and explained how ICMPD is supporting the implementation of anti-trafficking actions in the countries of West Africa at national and regional level, particularly of ECOWAS Commission. In the past 5 years, ICMPD did several assessments looking into the regional trends on TIP and, very importantly, the existing TIP-related gaps in cooperation mechanisms, especially in terms of victims' support.

The research ICMPD did in cooperation with Expertise France has identified 2 regional and 27 bilateral or multilateral anti-trafficking agreements between the countries in the ECOWAS region. The ICMPD report shows that there is a great understanding among the countries of how beneficial a functional cooperation framework can be.

Therefore, there are significant efforts put by the countries to both revisit and revive already existing but non-functional official agreements or to develop and establish new ones. This effort is often driven by a concrete identified problem between two or more countries and a governmental will to address this problem efficiently.

A number of challenges that were highlighted included

- The actual implementation of the signed agreements is often challenged. The agreements are used either partially or not used at all. From the 12 analysed agreements in the framework of the assessment report prepared for Expertise France, the research found that four are operational, two are partially implemented, and five are not operational (one document is a political declaration without operational references).
- Often, there is a discrepancy between policy and practice, the non-implementation can largely be attributed to the fact that no steps are taken to operationalize the agreed measures. This leaves the agreements at the level of a policy document. In some cases, the agreement is not translated further into an actual plan of actions or is not harmonised and further translated into the national anti-trafficking policy framework, thus rendering it non-functional.
- Lack of an assigned budget for the actual implementation of the agreements is one of the most commonly reported challenges. It is very important that the implementing authorities have a realistic plan about the funding of actions from the moment of negotiating and drafting the cooperation framework.
- Need for additional institutional capacity to implement the agreements because TIP is not necessarily a priority for the ministries and the governmental institutions concerned. In the majority of cases, responsible personnel are overwhelmed with (other) tasks and their turnover is high. This brings difficulties in the handover and the follow-up on already implemented initiatives.
- There are administrative challenges related to the difference in the administrative organisation of the institutions in charge of TIP in different countries, as well as a language barrier that presents a serious challenge in the coordination of any kind of bilateral activity.

- There are administrative challenges related to the difference in the administrative organisation of the institutions in charge of TIP in different countries, as well as a language barrier that presents a serious challenge in the coordination of any kind of bilateral activity.

Dr Kondoleh, President of Child Protection Agency Togo, shared the Togolese experience by referring to child trafficking cases of Togolese children in Gabon. While the agreement with Gabon helped reduce the numbers significantly, the identification of the victims remains a challenge. Data collection and analysis processes are not completed adequately and children from other countries are often returned to Togo without any data on their country of origin. Another example is the bilateral agreement between Burkina Faso and Togo where they faced challenges due to the recent global health crisis (COVID-19) when feedback was individually collected from partners and data was not coordinated or corroborated between them.

Rev. Chigozie focused on presenting opportunities for non-traditional partners and how they can assist in building more resilient anti trafficking responses.

In her experience, non-traditional partners are mostly informal partners that are not registered and are based in communities where they are recognised and act as influential members of the community. They are capable of addressing the issue independently if they are provided with the right information and are not limited in their actions as formal partners. Unlike formal organisations, non-traditional partners have extensive reach across the country and are amongst work committee members, tribal heads, youth, and women groups of the communities.

Rev. Chigoize pointed out that trafficking in persons is a lucrative and well-organised business and the safety of activists is also on the line due to their exposure. SATPAMS-SL works closely with their non-traditional partners with little resources and in most remote communities. Their approach is to cascade the information in a simple and concise way in local languages to their partners. They rely on long term partnerships with partners from the civil, public, and private sector.

#### **Steps forward must be around:**

- Capacity building which can effectively support the 4 Ps of prevention, protection, collaboration, and prosecution.
- All components around prosecution must be strengthened: investigation, court proceedings and imprisonment sentences.
- Meaningful networking and engagement with both traditional and non-traditional partners to address human trafficking effectively is needed.
- Engagement of community representatives in a meaningful way and to ensure continuity and sustainability of their activities around human trafficking.
- Creating agreements that will include plans of action that will be financially secured from the start.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the agreement must be part of it.
- Room for revising the agreements in light of their effectiveness and of new trends in anti-trafficking responses.
- The establishment of Regional Referral Mechanism as a part of the ECOWAS plan of action against human trafficking supported by ICMPD.

## ATTENDEE INPUT

The Q/A session raised an issue of perceptions around uncooperative partners which has obstructed efforts made towards the achievement of common goals. One recommended approach was to strengthen direct communication with national representatives and focal points.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The implementation of agreements is limited due to discrepancies between policies and practices, inadequate monitoring and evaluation, lack of planned funding and insufficient institutional capacities to implement the agreements.
- Capacity building efforts must aim to support all 4 Ps (prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnerships) and stakeholders and key actors at all levels, especially in communities.
- The agreements must be revised and updated in light of their effectiveness and new trends in anti-trafficking responses.

## Resource Bank

ICMPD (2022), Baseline Assessment of National, Regional and International Referral Mechanisms for the Protection of Trafficked People and Related Frameworks on Crimes against the Person in the ECOWAS Member States and Mauritania.

[English](#) | [French](#) | [Portuguese](#)

ICMPD (2021), Developing and Monitoring National Anti-Trafficking Response - A Practitioner's Guide

[\(English\)](#)

[ICMPD Anti-Trafficking Programme website](#)

ICMPD (2021) Assessment of Transnational Cooperation Practices and Mechanisms in the Gulf of Guinea Countries in the Fight against Trafficking in Persons commissioned by Expertise France and conducted by ICMPD

[English](#) | [French](#)

## GENDER DIMENSION OF TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

### Name of Session:

**The Gender Dimension of Trafficking in Persons: Sharing of Best Practices to Address Victims of Human Trafficking**

### Session Moderated by:

**Christos Christodoulides**, Head of IOM Sierra Leone

Christos Christodoulides, Head of Office of IOM Sierra Leone since July 2022 brings along over ten years of migration management experience in areas such as “mainstreaming” migration into sectoral planning including substantive work on the establishment of national migration policies, programme management related to facilitated migration, migration and development, counter-trafficking, diaspora engagement, assisted voluntary return, migration health, and assistance for vulnerable migrants. Christos Christodoulides worked within several IOM Missions across Africa (including Morocco, and Mauritania where he also acted as officer in charge of the Mission, two short-term assignments in Somalia and Niger, and Djibouti).

Prior to joining IOM in 2012 Christos worked for the Embassy of the Republic of Cyprus in Paris, the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations in New York, and The United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Mr. Christodoulides is a national of Cyprus and Germany and studied International Politics at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London and holds a Master’s degree from Sciences Po Paris in International Affairs-International Security.

<https://www.iom.int/countries/sierra-leone>

## **Panelists**

### **1. His Excellency Ambassador Rashid Sesay | Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Sierra Leone to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), India and Bangladesh**

Based in Abu Dhabi, UAE, Ambassador Sesay represents the interests of the people of Sierra Leone in the countries under his portfolio, ensuring strong bilateral and diplomatic relationships, providing consular services, and promoting international relations on certain areas of government, such as economic cooperation on trade and investment, development, health, education, tourism and culture. In addition to his diplomatic functions, Ambassador Sesay is also currently a member of the Board of Directors of Counterpart International, a US based non-profit working in more than 20 countries helping people build better lives and more durable futures.

Prior to his current position, Ambassador Sesay had a long career in international and community development. Driven by his long-standing commitment to sustainable economic development and social progress, he was Director of Programs for Africa and Asia at Heifer International, based in Arkansas in the USA, an organization where he worked for 11 years. He was actively involved in the design and implementation of Heifer International’s operational policies, strategies, and development initiatives, with particular focus on global issues relating to food security, climate



from the Development Assistance Coordination Office (DACO), in the Office of the Vice-President of Sierra Leone. As Poverty Coordinator at DACO, he was actively involved in the preparation and implementation of the country's Poverty Reduction Strategy and ensured that all donor and NGO activities within the country were aligned with government's development priorities.

<https://www.slembassy>

## **2. Fatmata Sorie | Barrister and Solicitor, Sorie & Bangura Solicitors and Active Member of Legal Access through Women Yearning for Equality Rights and Social Justice (LAWYERS) Sierra Leone**

Fatmata Sorie is a Barrister and Solicitor in the Republic of Sierra Leone and an Attorney in the State of New York. She holds a Master's degree (LL.M.) in International Comparative Law from the George Washington University (2004), an LLB (Hons) from the University of Sierra Leone and is a women's rights advocate.

She is the managing partner of Sorie & Bangura offering a full range of services in civil and criminal law including litigation, mergers and acquisitions, corporate law, preparing and negotiating contracts and agreements, banking, mining, energy law, employment, and labour law, etc.

She is the immediate past Chairperson of Legal Access through Women Yearning for Equality Rights and Social Justice (L.A.W.Y.E.R.S) – an organisation providing pro bono (free) legal services and support to vulnerable women and the girls who have been victims of sexual and gender-based violence; protecting, promoting, and advocating for their rights. She also commits her time to seeking legal and institutional reforms

<https://www.sorieandbangura.com/>  
Email: [fsorie@sorieandbangura.com](mailto:fsorie@sorieandbangura.com)

## **3. Nadia Rasheed | United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Country Representative, Sierra Leone**

Nadia joined the UNFPA Sierra Leone Country Office on the 16<sup>th</sup> of May 2022 and brings with her to the UNFPA a wealth of management experience, including on health, gender and development issues. She represented UNDP in partnerships with other UN organizations, managed interagency programmes and provided advisory support to UNDP Country Offices and national partners. Before joining UNFPA, she was the UNDP Deputy Resident Representative in India.

Prior to her last appointment in India, Nadia was the Team Leader for the UNDP Regional Health and Development Team for Asia and the Pacific from 2014 to 2018. She also served as UNDP Deputy Country Director ad-interim in Sri Lanka in 2018. From 2009 to 2014, she was the global Practice Manager for the HIV, Health, and Development Practice at UNDP Headquarters in New York. She was also, from 2005 to 2009, global Policy Specialist on HIV in the Bureau for Development Policy at UNDP.

Nadia previously worked with the UNDP Human Development Report Office, and with UNDP and other organizations on capacity development and gender equality issues.

Ms. Rasheed holds an undergraduate degree in Economics from the London School of Economics, and a master's degree in International Affairs from Columbia University.

<https://sierraleone.unfpa.org/en/representative-sl>

#### **4. Vani Saraswathi | Editor at Large and Director of Projects, Migrants Rights Organisation**

Vani Saraswathi is the Editor-at-Large and Director of Projects, Migrant- Rights.org and the author of *Stories of Origin: The Invisible Lives of Migrants in the Gulf*. The book is an anthology of reporting from seven origin countries over a period of three years.

Vani moved to Qatar in 1999, working with several local and regional publications, and launching some of Qatar's leading periodicals during her 17- year stint there. During her stay in Qatar she, along with likeminded people, mobilised a grassroots community to help migrants in distress.

Since 2014, in her role with Migrant-Rights.org she reports from the Gulf states and countries of origin. She also organises advocacy projects and human rights training targeting individual employers, embassies, recruitment agents and businesses in Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and UAE, working with nationals and long-term residents in these countries with a special emphasis being on the experiences of female migrants, including domestic workers. Much of her advocacy effort is geared towards mainstreaming issues facing female migrant workers.

She contributes as an expert commentator on issues related to human rights in the GCC for various international publications and at international forums, including various UN forums, and contributes to various international publications.

Migrant-Rights.org is a one of its kind bi-lingual content-based advocacy platform that focusses on the GCC states and the corridors of migration, Asia & Africa.

[www.migrant-rights.org](http://www.migrant-rights.org)

## **SESSION BACKGROUND**

Trafficking in Persons is a human rights violation that affects the lives of millions of women, girls, men, and boys. Women and girls make up the largest share of identified VoTs, accounting for 62% of the total VoTs in Sub-Saharan Africa however, men and boys are also victims of different forms of trafficking. The disproportionate effect of trafficking on women and girls can be linked to factors such as gender inequality, gender-based violence, discriminatory laws, and gender-blind policies, and conflict, post-conflict settings and humanitarian crises. Gender stereotypes and stereotypical constructions of masculinity can undermine the provision and acceptance of necessary assistance and protection services for male VoTs.

Responses to trafficking in persons need to ensure a human rights/survivor-based approach and gender/age-sensitive approach which responds to the tailored needs of women, girls, men, and boys as different groups with specific needs. Analysing the gender dimension of trafficking in persons can

lead to the development of more robust policies and prevention strategies which address the root causes and risk factors that increase the vulnerability of women, girls, men, and boys while also focusing on the provision of adequate support and comprehensive services to all VoTs.

This session brought together actors responding to the gender dimensions of trafficking in persons to discuss their experiences, including practical tools and techniques that have been used to address to the gender specific needs of VoTs.

## PANEL

Mr. Christodoulides opened the session by identifying key considerations that should act as a backdrop to some of the session's discussions. IOM has recently assisted over 5000 victims of trafficking within ECOWAS- 89% adults and 83% of them being female victims. Locally, women and girls present 65% of all trafficking victims, 95% of which have been victims of sexual exploitation. Despite the harrowing statistics regarding the experiences of girls and women, it is important not to forget male victims of trafficking. There are structural factors that increase the vulnerabilities of each group depending on the context. An intentional and concerted effort needs to take place to bridge the research gap to enable for more informed interventions when it comes to data, gender, and human trafficking. Sustainable Development Goal 5 recognises trafficking women as a form of violence against women that must be ended.

Ms. Rasheed introduced her comments by recognising that any discussion must be considerate of the complexity of trafficking. There are deep interlinkages that mean that women and girls face higher risks and vulnerabilities. The data is clear, as per the session's introduction, as well as numerous sources, that the majority of victims of trafficking are women and girls. Distinctions include:

- Women and girls being trafficked predominantly for sexual exploitation and domestic servitude.
- Men being trafficked for forced labour predominantly within the agriculture, mining, construction, and fishing sectors.

Root causes related to poverty, inequality, instability, and conflict all have a strong interplay with gender. On average, women have fewer opportunities than men in accessing opportunities in general, and employment opportunities specifically, which creates for a higher pressure for them to migrate and take job offers that may be fraudulent or exploitative; in turn putting them at greater risk.

Traditional gender norms perpetuate harmful norms making both men and women vulnerable. The impact of trafficking on men can be hidden due to these same norms. Men may not recognise their vulnerabilities, may not acknowledge that they have been victimised and are, in turn, less likely to seek help. They can also face shame and stigma in various different ways, more pertinently where they are victims of sexual exploitation. To address these issues and recognise the differing impacts, there is a need to understand these interlinkages and ensure that approaches to supporting survivors are gender sensitive. Ms. Rasheed emphasised that in all counter trafficking work being done, there should be a focus on the most vulnerable; those who are facing intersecting vulnerabilities.

When questioned on the challenges relating to addressing root causes and risk factors that increase the vulnerabilities of women and girls, Ms. Saraswathi, explained that she is currently functioning within a restricted CSO space in the Gulf. In such a space, her organisation is ending up carrying out direct relief work. The laws and systems of the Gulf countries, she described, create a dynamic of forced labour even

where regular migration and recruitment is the activity. Work permits, for example, link people to entities and there is a difficulty in leaving workspaces without being criminalised for questioning an employer and the working relationship with them. The laws and processes predominantly maintain power with the employer. Recruitment processes are convoluted with multiple middlemen and, she described, it is difficult to have anybody take responsibility for the rights and wellbeing of individuals. Women, from her experience, are predominantly recruited for domestic work where they are highly isolated, further increasing their vulnerability.

Ms. Saraswathi identified that men in construction and agriculture roles are equally vulnerable. Those recruited in the retail sector tend to have more freedom of movement due to the client facing nature of their roles. That said, all employer-employee relationships in the Gulf countries, she implied, have elements of forced labour. The Gulf Cooperation Council countries have not made attempts to reform the associated laws and because freedom of association is criminalised, there are no unions advocating for worker rights. This compounded with poor attitudes towards African workers has put many workers of African origin in an extremely risky and vulnerable situation.

Barrister Sorie was asked to comment on best strategies of supporting victims based on her experiences. Her explanation referenced the reality of many returnees who only realised they were trafficked upon their return to their countries of origin. The emphasis becomes on their integration and on justice, but this becomes extremely complicated in light of the number of people they interact with, the pseudonyms that they are provided and the inability to distinguish between those who helped and those who exploited them. Having left on the search of greener pastures, only to return and realise they were manipulated, leaves them embarrassed, ashamed and in some cases, rejected by their communities who may not believe their experiences. This can be even more damaging when they are re-stigmatised in all re-integration and/or prosecution interactions where they are asked to constantly relive and relay their stories. Barrister Sorie explained that in Sierra Leonean society there is a lack of understanding around psychological trauma which can further isolate those experiencing it.

Barrister Sorie expanded her input by explaining that implementation of support services remains a problem in Sierra Leone. The Family Support Unit deals with Gender Based Violence broadly but it is a large mandate for a poorly financed and poorly equipped unit. Some of the challenges are that confidentiality is missing, there is a lack of and/or non-existent halfway or safe houses. The majority of victims tend to be thrown back into society where their vulnerabilities are further exploited. She identified that the emphasis of the work needs to be done in relation to education, institutional strengthening, and re-integration services.

The final set of panel input came from H.E. Ambassador Sesay who identified that in his capacity, he receives no less than 5 human trafficking related complaints daily. By virtue of his close location to Oman, he also supports on issues affecting Sierra Leoneans in Oman. He stressed that the only way this can be addressed is through collaborative, deliberate and concerted efforts. In the UAE, the establishment of the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking, with its emphasis on the 5 Ps (the fifth being promotion) is approaching addressing TIP through international cooperation. H.E. Ambassador Sesay recognised the work of the IOM in supporting in the repatriation of Sierra Leoneans and shared his close collaboration with the Ministry of Labour as they develop a clear MOU related to Sierra Leoneans working abroad.

## ATTENDEE INPUT

- There is a challenge in repatriating individuals especially when some people do not wish to be repatriated.
- Prosecution can be difficult in the absence of any clear contracts between governments and/or employers-employees in the recruitment of foreign workers.
- The experiences of domestic workers are exceptionally unique, especially in Gulf Cooperation Council for the Arab States (GCC), where individuals cannot leave the house of their employers.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- In the discussion of gender considerations, the experiences of men must be considered. Traditional gender norms perpetuate harmful norms making both women and men vulnerable.
- There is a need for a gender sensitive approach, cognisant of intersecting vulnerabilities, to supporting TIP survivors.
- Education, institutional strengthening, and re-integration services should be a priority.

## Resource Bank

### [Migrants Rights- Ghana Case Studies](#)

<https://www.migrant-rights.org/2023/04/everyone-is-involved-but-no-one-is-responsible/>

<https://www.migrant-rights.org/2023/04/ill-prepared-and-uninformed-ghanaian-women-risk-it-all-for-jobs-in-the-gulf/>

### [Kafala Infographic](#)

### [UAE National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking](#)

### [The Gender Dimensions of Human Trafficking- Inter Agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking in Persons](#)

## AN ASSESSMENT OF REGIONAL TOOLS AND PROTOCOLS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING

### Name of Session:

An assessment of regional tools and protocols to promote coordination in the fight against human trafficking: weaknesses and opportunities

### Session Moderated by:

Olatunde Olayemi, Program Officer Trafficking in Person, ECOWAS

## Panelists

### 1. Rasheed Olatunji | Assistant Director, NAPTIP, Nigeria

Rasheed OLATUNJI is an Assistant Director in the Research and Programme Development Department of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) in Nigeria. He joined the Agency in the year 2010 as a Principal Data Officer. His first task was the development of a comprehensive data capturing templates for all data generating departments and units of the Agency. That marks the beginning of the Agency hosting TIP data on its website.

In the course of his duties, he has participated in several migration dialogues between European Union and Nigeria.

He was a member of the taskforce committee that produced the training curriculum and modules on human trafficking in Nigeria from 2015 – 2017.

He also participated in the development of several policy documents which included:

- a. Protocol for Identification, safe return and rehabilitation of trafficked persons
- b. National Action Plan on Human Trafficking in Nigeria 2022 – 2026
- c. Minimum standards for service providers rendering assistance to trafficked persons in Nigeria
- d. Review of the National Policy on Protection and Assistance to Trafficked Persons in Nigeria; to mention but a few.

<https://naptip.gov.ng>

### 2. Dr. Kondoh Kandale | Director General of Child Protection/President of the National Commission for the Fight against Trafficking in Persons (CNLTP)

<https://www.cnltp.org>

## **SESSION BACKGROUND**

The session gave an overview of existing regional tools and protocols in the ECOWAS region focused on coordination in the fight against human trafficking. It gave an insight into how existing practices and tools at national level feed into regional mechanisms and explored opportunities to bolster the national and regional procedures in raising awareness, prevention, prosecution, and aftercare for victims.

## **PANEL DISCUSSION**

Mr Olayemi opened the session by introducing the panellists and giving an overview of the tools for coordination in the ECOWAS region. The ECOWAS plan of action for combating Trafficking in Persons, over a decade ago, was a foundation for the establishment of anti-trafficking units at national level and a pathway to strengthen political support at regional level on anti-trafficking policy development and implementation.

Mr Olayemi then asked the panellists to share their experience of regional coordination at both ECOWAS and African Union levels and reflect on the experience of annual review mechanism and annual review meetings and how that has impacted on the support their agencies received from ECOWAS and other partner organisations.

Furthermore, Mr Olayemi asked the panellists to share their opinion on how effective these instruments have been at the operational level in their efforts to combat trafficking in persons.

Mr Olatunji pointed out that the ECOWAS agreement encourages member countries to foster cooperation through bilateral or multilateral agreements. Nigeria has signed MoUs with the Republic of Niger, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso and Mali that improved their mutual efforts in combating trafficking in persons.

The MoUs were the basis for regular technical working group meetings between Nigeria and those countries that enhanced their mutual cooperation in issues of extradition of identified traffickers. In the next technical working group meeting, Nigeria will look at the possibility of developing a work plan with their counterparts in Gambia.

At national level, Nigeria relies on recommendations from ECOWAS plan of action as reference for developing their mechanisms such as the annual national consultative forum that provides national stakeholders, the platform to share their best practices and challenges in the fight against human trafficking. Nigeria has 24 State Task Forces that are led by the Ministry of Justice and co-chaired by the NAP TIP State Commander while NAP TIP has presence in 29 Nigerian states. At zonal level, NAP TIP has promoted coordination meetings between governmental agencies and institutions and encouraged them to develop their own work plans in consonance with the national action plan 2022-2026 on human trafficking.

In relation to return and reintegration, the Nigerian national action plan went a step further beyond ECOWAS agreements by establishing the protocol for identification, safe return and rehabilitation of victims of trafficking. In that respect, national law enforcement agencies have developed their own SOPs that foster the coordination of their responses and set their roles and responsibilities. Additionally, there are internal NAT TIP SOPs that focus on coordination between offices that are involved in investigation of human trafficking cases and the prosecution.

Additionally, there are internal NAT TIP SOPs that focus on coordination between offices that are involved in investigation of human trafficking cases and the prosecution.

When it comes to the annual review mechanism, Mr Olatunji pointed out the challenges around delays in reporting, outreach, data collection and analysis and requested that ECOWAS focal points leave sufficient time frames to member states to prepare and submit the reports. It is essential that those reports contain correct information and thorough analysis so that they can feed into ECOWAS policies and mechanisms against human trafficking.

Mr Kondoh gave an overview of the national mechanisms in place in Togo and pointed out that the government focused on strengthening cooperation at grass root level. Currently Togo has 170 anti-trafficking units in almost all communities spanned across national, regional and district level. Each unit has several key players that work effectively on the ground. For example, parents have been engaged to contribute by funding different activities focused on raising awareness, while gender programmes involve empowering women in their consultative role in combating trafficking in persons. Their partners from UNICEF office in Togo were recently interested in conducted monitoring exercises focused on sharing best practices.

Mr Olatunji recommends that ECOWAS invests in evidence-based research and capacity building.

## **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- National action plans should take into consideration the recommendation of ECOWAS plan of actions when developing their own mechanisms against human trafficking.
- Through the established agencies and network of actors, member states should seek to establish effective mechanisms to combat human trafficking beyond ECOWAS agreements.
- ECOWAS should enhance the annual review mechanism by investing more in capacity building of actors involved in data collection and reporting.



Regional Conference of  
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Charting a way forward for deeper cooperation  
amongst ECOWAS States to end human trafficking

A TOOLKIT FOR CRAFTING  
A WAY FORWARD

# Presentation of the Key Points from MRU Sub- regional Technical Expert Meeting, in Sierra Leone, March 2023

The Speaker gave an overview of MRU that was initially created by member states of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire in Malema in 1973 with a mandate to promote Economic Development and Regional Integration, Peace and Security and Institutional Development and Social Development in the region. The invitation to MRU last sub-regional technical expert meeting was extended to all participants, with the technical and financial support of IOM.

At that meeting, the member states agreed on the following objectives:

### Strategic Objective 1

Contribute to improve regional governance and cooperation between participating Member States in combatting trafficking in the region including prevention, protection of victims of trafficking (VoTs), and prosecution of perpetrators.

### Strategic Objective

Review the progress and shortcomings in the implementation of International, regional, and national policy commitment in the fight against Human trafficking in the region at all levels.

### Strategic Objective

Contribute to strengthening coordination and cooperation in the fight against human trafficking in the region.

The participants discussed five thematic areas and next steps of action for each them with the goal to enhance the countries' ability to combat trafficking in persons.

#### **1. TIP in the Region and National Commitments**

- Need for regular exchange meetings between MRU countries.
- Strengthening the sub-regional anti-trafficking mechanism.
- Need for Government run shelters as alternatives.

#### **2. Regional Cooperation Mechanisms for the Prosecution of Traffickers**

- Capacity building of criminal justice actors.
- Strengthen the rule of TiP Law.
- Foster and promote regular and operational sub-regional TiP cluster.
- Develop a common prevention message.

#### **3. TIP Impacts on Regional Security: G5 Sahel Experience**

- MRU should set up a TiP strategy on 4Ps.
- Create a structure/framework within MRU for resource mobilization.
- Improve data collection on cross border TiP.

#### **4. CSOs Network and Regional Response Efforts**

- Create inclusive and integrated temporary shelters.
- Ensuring the assistance provided is victim centred.

#### **5. Children on the move and Regional Intervention**

- Ratify the relevant conventions and enacting domestic legislation.
- Regularly share data and statistics between government and CSO.

## COUNTRY RECOMMENDATIONS

The countries of Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea presented their key recommendations for participating countries at the MRU Meeting.

### Cote

- The need to strengthen criminal justice actors, including mechanisms for the protection of victims and witnesses during legal proceedings.
- Strengthening the sub-regional anti-trafficking mechanism.
- Capacity building of criminal justice actors.
- Foster and promote the establishment of a regular and operational sub-regional working group on information and communication technologies.
- Provide adequate protection for VoTs and witnesses during prosecution proceedings.
- Create a structure/mechanism for resource mobilisation.
- Strengthen the MRU by establishing a TIP unit for information exchange and coordination.

### Liberia

- Ensure the active participation of the media in disseminating information on TIP messages.
- Strengthen data collection and coordination with other MRU Countries.
- Provide training for CSO on the provision of services to VoTs.
- Develop an information management system (MIS) for TIP cases.
- Periodic experience sharing workshop amongst MRU judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement officers.

### Sierra

- MRU to establish or designate an officer to coordinate member states interventions, mobilize resources for the implementations of counter trafficking activities, policies in the sub-regional framework.
- Harmonisation of assessment tools for use in the identification of presumed victims of human trafficking within the sub-regions.
- Establishment of a shelter for male victims of trafficking.
- Harmonised laws to ensure joint investigation and prosecution of human trafficking offences among MRU states.
- Convene annual anti-trafficking technical meetings involving MRU states to assess progress on implementations of sub-regional policies and framework, including national action plan.
- MRU should develop a sub-regional data platform on trafficking in persons to track progress and inform policy making and program interventions.

### Guinea

- Support national anti-trafficking committees in the implementation of their action plans.
- Create a framework for consultation between the various committees.
- Create a framework for periodic consultation between the actors of the criminal chain on trafficking in persons at the level of the Union.
- Create within the Mano River Union a special unit to fight against trafficking with focal points in each country.
- Develop joint projects between Mano River member countries in the fight against trafficking in persons.
- To popularize the legislative and regulatory texts on trafficking in persons.



To achieve all the above, it is essential that Mano River Union Secretariat fully plays its sub-regional coordination role:

- By promoting cooperation between Member States through the establishment of an information exchange platform and an MRU sub-regional strategy.
- By reactivating and strengthening technical capacities to fight against human trafficking.
- By strengthening MRU/ECOWAS cooperation in the fight against human trafficking.

It is of vital importance that the member states continue their efforts to fight against human trafficking by focusing on:

- Prevention, awareness, and law enforcement.
- Bilateral and multilateral cooperation.
- Job creation for youths.
- Empowerment of women and girls.

In addition, all international and national partners, NGOs, and the media must strengthen their support and actions to accompany Member States in their fight against human trafficking.



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A TOOLKIT FOR CRAFTING  
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# Summary Statements



TRANSCRIPT OF VIDEO MESSAGE FROM UN SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE  
OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN, DR.  
NAJAT MAALLA M'JID

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends.

The urgency of reinvigorated and well-coordinated action to tackle the crime of child trafficking has been strongly highlighted over these two days. Despite many actions undertaken, the scale of child trafficking remains an overwhelming concern worldwide and, in this region. Too many children are trafficked within and across borders for forced labor, sexual exploitation, forced begging, illegal adoption, recruitment in criminal activities and are in armed and violent extremist groups.

The pandemic's impact, ongoing conflicts, climate crisis, food insecurity, growing inequalities and poverty and the huge force displacement in the region, made the risks even higher for trafficking in children.



Against the backdrop of increasing vulnerabilities and growing demand for child trafficking, protection systems and cross-border coordination remain weak and insufficient, allowing traffickers to buy, sell and exploit children and continue to generate profits.

Excellencies, dear friend, ending this crime against children cannot wait. Our approach to combating child trafficking needs to be revisited by discouraging demand, addressing children's vulnerabilities and reducing supply to effectively disrupt the business model of trafficking.

This means investing in national and cross-border child protection systems that are accessible to all children, independently of their status. Decreasing drastically risks of trafficking and ending impunity for traffickers through strengthening legislation and policies and improving capabilities for criminal investigation involving ICTs and financial institutions, enhancing information, sharing and mutual legal assistance, enacting legislation and policies that make businesses accountable and oblige them to carry out human rights due diligence in businesses' operation and supply chain.

Excellencies, friends of ECOWAS Road Map adopted during this conference provides concrete guidance and tools to put an end to this crime against children as promised in agenda 2030 and African agenda 2040 and 2063 We must act better and faster to translate this roadmap into concrete action. IN my capacity as co-chair of the UN interagency coordination group against trafficking, I would like to affirm our commitment to deepen our partnership with ECOWAS including by extending ICAT membership and jointly advocating and supporting activities addressing trafficking in persons with a particular focus on ending child trafficking.

Thank you for your attention.

**STATEMENT FROM MR. KAMAL TOURE, PROJECT COORDINATOR FOR  
CYBERCRIME, UNODC ON BEHALF OF DR. AMADO PHILIP DE ANDRÉS,  
UNODC REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE.**

Your Excellency, Dr. Mohamed Juldeh Jalloh Vice  
President of the Republic of Sierra Leone

Members of the government

Distinguished guests and delegates in your ranks, grades  
and qualities,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of Dr Amado Philip de Andrés, UNODC  
Regional Representative, Regional Office for West and  
Central Africa



***I would like to Thank*** ECOWAS TIP Secretariat, the Government of Sierra Leone, and the Center on Human Trafficking Research and Outreach, for organizing this Regional Conference of ECOWAS States on Ending Human Trafficking.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is honored to have been invited to participate in this regional conference, to seek out common solutions to this global and widespread crime that uses men, women and children for profit and that greatly affects our region of West Africa.

The organized networks or individuals behind this lucrative crime take advantage of people who are vulnerable, desperate or simply seeking a better life. UNODC strives for the eradication of these crimes through the dismantling of the criminal networks that trade in people and the conviction of perpetrators of trafficking in persons.

***I would also like to Congratulate*** ECOWAS for the ongoing efforts to counter TIP in the region and reiterate UNODC's support to ECOWAS, and in particular the TIP Unit, in the development of its new ACTION PLAN AGAINST TIP among other areas of required technical assistance, particularly regarding harmonization of legislation, criminal justice response to TIP and regional cooperation in criminal matters.

***We Salute joint initiatives*** like the APRIES project that collect data on trafficking in persons, which not only enable our member states to make informed decisions which shape policy and legislative changes but also allow all of us to track emerging trends and patterns related to TIP to promote greater regional and international cooperation and coordination in our anti-TIP actions.

***We Encourage*** ECOWAS to increase data collection through regular and coordinated monitoring cycles of the workplan implementation progress as it relates to TIP.

***I would like to Reiterate*** the importance of taking stock of progress made so far in the regional fight against TIP and ***encourage*** ECOWAS to evaluate the implementation of the previous ACTION PLAN AGAINST TIP 2018-2022 in view of the development of a new evidence-based, costed and achievable multi-year ACTION PLAN AGAINST TIP based on the results of the evaluation.

UNODC is supporting ECOWAS countries in developing and implementing their ACTION PLAN AGAINST TIP. the latest ACTION PLAN AGAINST TIP was adopted in Burkina Faso in March 2023 with UNODC's support and we reiterate our willingness to support member states, should they need our support.

**We Welcome** the possibility of establishing a stronger UNODC-ECOWAS cooperation to conduct specific research on TIP in the region and strengthen coordination and operational efficiency.

**we** hope that Sierra Leone and other countries of the Gulf of Guinea will join the **Niamey Declaration adopted by 18 countries** of origin, transit and destination of migrants to improve coordination in the fight against TIP and SOM.

Information and experience sharing around good practices to counter TIP implemented by Member States is very important as it allows a better and coordinated response. We would like to Encourage ECOWAS to organize regular experience-sharing meetings with member states to discuss best practices, challenges and priority areas related to TIP in the region. UNODC's will be ready to support such meetings.

ECOWAS has a strategic importance in facilitating a conducive environment for regional cooperation, information exchange and coordination and the meeting of common goals.

**It's my pleasure to Thank** ECOWAS once again and **congratulate them** for a fruitful and well-organized conference.

## **CLOSING STATEMENT BY HONORABLE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE, DR. MOHAMED JULDEH JALLOH**

It was clearly articulated that his Excellency wants to move this country forward within the context of Human Capital Development and we see our work in addressing Trafficking in Person as that of that vision of His Excellency. We did a lot at the national level. We have been able to improve legislation. We were able to build capacity. We were able to improve prosecution. But we realised that with all these efforts at the national level to be relevant and to create the kind of intended impact that we desire as a country and as a region, those efforts need to be plugged into the wider regional dynamics and this conference, this ECOWAS Regional Conference, was being essentially around that vision, around that dream and we are very happy that we have come that far as these two days have been very exciting.



I am personally happy that the Government of Sierra Leone in collaboration with APRIES, IOM and US state department was able to develop such a platform to amplify our efforts to fight human trafficking. The conference will not have been possible without your support, and I want to thank you very much.

We are also have heartened by the participation of ECOWAS Ministers and their representatives from Niger, Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, Togo, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Gambia, and Liberia. Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, let me also recognise the immense support of ECOWAS on all fronts to deliver this conference which has resulted in the Freetown Roadmap that has been signed here today. This roadmap, distinguished ladies, and gentlemen, is another tool in the regional toolkit to improve regional coordination and ensure that we can enhance our efforts to prevent, protect, and prosecute and build more strategic partnerships.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I also want to recognise the effort of all the delegates who came to this conference to participate in this lively and all-important conversation on trafficking in persons. It is your efforts that will continue the fight against trafficking. I also want to take the opportunity to thank the organising committee starting from the Minister of Social Welfare, Madam Baidou Dassama, the Commissioner of ECOWAS and all those colleagues at ECOWAS, APRIES and within the Sierra Leone organising committee, I want to thank you personally and on behalf of the president and the government and people of Sierra Leone.

It has been a great opportunity for the government of Dr Julius Maada Bio to host such an important and vital conference. We look forward to the implementation of the roadmap and a robust monitoring and evaluation mechanism to ensure that we can achieve the results of our joint interventions in the coming years, months, and days. I hope that our international delegates have enjoyed our beautiful coastal city of Freetown, Sierra Leone, and hope that we will always be in your memories as we work together to end Human Trafficking. It is all of our fight that requires our collective action to make the difference, especially to our children and generations to come.



Regional Conference of  
ECOWAS States on Ending  
Human Trafficking 2023  
Charting a way forward for deeper cooperation  
amongst ECOWAS States to end human trafficking

A TOOLKIT FOR CRAFTING  
A WAY FORWARD

# Annex 1- Conference Roadmap



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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>ARM</b>	Annual Review Meeting
<b>ASR</b>	Annual Synthesis Report
<b>ATP</b>	Anti-Trafficking Programme
<b>DDF</b>	Demand Driven Facility
<b>DDR</b>	Disarmament, Demobilization and Rehabilitation
<b>ECOWAS</b>	Economic Community of West African States
<b>FMM</b>	Free Movement of Persons and Migration in West Africa Project
<b>HCD</b>	Human Capital Development
<b>HSCSD</b>	Human Security and Civil Society Division
<b>ICMPD</b>	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Persons
<b>IHL</b>	International Humanitarian Laws
<b>MoU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>NFPs</b>	National Anti-Trafficking Focal Points
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>NRM</b>	National Referral Mechanism
<b>NTF</b>	National Task Force
<b>OCWAR-T</b>	Organised Crime: West African Response to Trafficking Project
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>PoA</b>	Plan of Action
<b>RCAPPP</b>	Regional Crime against the Person Prevention Policy
<b>RNNI-TIP+</b>	Regional Network of National Focal Institutions against Trafficking in Persons Plus
<b>RRM</b>	Regional Referral Mechanism
<b>SoM</b>	Smuggling of Migrants
<b>SOP</b>	Standard Operating Procedures
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>TIP</b>	Trafficking in Persons
<b>ToT</b>	Training-of-Trainers
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<b>UNTOC</b>	United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime
<b>WACAP</b>	West African Network of Central Authorities and Prosecutors
<b>WAN/RAO</b>	West African Network for Protection of Children

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Combating Trafficking In Persons is a priority for the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its fifteen Member States. The ECOWAS Common Approach on Migration states that “Combating human trafficking is a moral and humanitarian imperative”.

In 2001, the Heads of State of ECOWAS adopted the initial Plan of Action to combat trafficking in persons, and since then, the Commission has supported Member States in the areas of capacity-building, support for the development of National Plans of Action and establishment of National Task Forces, and conducting compliance assessments of the legislation of Member States in line with the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, amongst other activities.

### 1.1 Background to the Freetown Conference

The Republic of Sierra Leone has made significant progress in the fight against Trafficking in Persons and is setting its sights on supporting regional coordination as an imperative and force multiplier towards successful implementation of National Action Plans. Since 2018, the country has dedicated more financial and human resources to combatting TIP which has resulted in increased identification of survivors and prosecution of perpetrators. This is in line with the Human Capital Development (HCD) Flagship Project of the Government of Sierra Leone. The HCD Portfolio seeks to not only build human capital through investments in health, agriculture, and education, but also incorporates human security and a rights-based approach to enhance the protection of citizens in the pursuit of better and safer economic opportunities.

In line with this approach, Sierra Leone’s new Anti-Human Trafficking (TIP) and Migrant Smuggling Act was ratified in 2022 which increases the penalties and punishment for trafficking perpetrators and smugglers and calls for new funding mechanisms and structures to intensify the fight. In the same year, the ECOWAS Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, intended to facilitate cross-border law enforcement anti- trafficking efforts was ratified. Also, in 2022, Sierra Leone held its first National Conference on TIP with the theme “Strengthening National Frameworks and Stakeholder Networks to Stop Modern Day Slavery”, which achieved many results including the launch of a national hotline, identification of strategies to implement a more community-centric approach to prevention, identification, and integration, and the launch of a national data platform to mainstream and harmonize data collection across relevant entities. It is anticipated that the Data Platform for instance could be modelled by other Member States in the sub-region with the goal of creating a regional data platform to better detect trafficking, provide services to victims, and support evidence-based policymaking along the entire chain.

In the face of growing inequalities fuelled by the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath, rising inflation, the Ukraine-Russia crisis, climate change and general global uncertainties; an increase in trafficking in persons is an imminent concern. In sub-Saharan Africa, along with the issues of poverty, conflict and the impact of climate change on largely poor agriculture-based communities, prompting rural to urban migration of persons searching for better economic opportunities and safety; and increasing the vulnerability of these individuals to human trafficking. Economic and physical insecurity continue to create an environment conducive for the thriving of the phenomenon of human trafficking in West Africa.

Against this backdrop, the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone, collaborating with the ECOWAS Commission, and support from the African Programming and Research Initiative to End Slavery (APRIES, funded by a cooperative agreement with the United States Department of State) and International Organization for Migration (IOM) organised the Regional Conference for ECOWAS Member States to share lessons learned in the implementation of their respective TIP Action Plans to improve protection, prevention, prosecution, and partnerships in the fight against TIP. The Conference sought to provide a platform for cross learning and towards arriving at key value-added interventions in enhancing the implementation of the ECOWAS Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and National Action Plans. It also has sought to strengthen cooperation amongst Member States in the combatting Trafficking in Persons.

## 1.2 Ecowas Instruments on Trafficking in Persons and Related Matters

In recognition of the obstacle human trafficking presents to achieving the Vision 2050 of a:

**'...fully integrated Community of peoples, living in a peaceful and prosperous region, with strong institutions and respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, striving for Inclusive and sustainable development...'**

The ECOWAS Commission has developed and driven the implementation of a number of normatively based legal, policy and strategy instruments in combatting human trafficking. These include foundational instruments of ECOWAS itself, instruments specifically focused on the subject of human trafficking and those that focus on related areas of risk and vulnerability to victimization.

- ECOWAS Revised Treaty: Article 58 committing Member States to measures to safeguard and consolidate relations conducive to the maintenance of peace, stability and security within the region.
- The Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-keeping and Security (Articles 2, 3, 16, 40,42 and 46), focused on the realization of the basic principle of protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms and the observance of the rules of international humanitarian laws.
- The Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-keeping and Security (Articles 2, 3, 16, 40,42 and 46), focused on the realization of the basic principle of protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms and the observance of the rules of International Humanitarian Laws. Also covers the guarantee of children's rights, prescription for special laws against child trafficking and child prostitution and laws and regulations on child labour, etc.
- The ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (Regulation SC/REG.1/01/08) in Articles 56, 57, 58, 69, 81, 82 and 93 also mandates the work of the ECOWAS Commission with respect to human rights and the rule of law.
- The ECOWAS Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (latest has been from 2018 -2022 and the evaluation of its implementation and its review is currently ongoing).
- ECOWAS Policy on Care and Protection of Victims of Trafficking in Persons 2010.
- ECOWAS Guidelines for Protection, Care and Support to Witnesses 2013.
- The ECOWAS Child Policy and Strategic Plan of Action (2019-2030).
- ECOWAS Strategic Framework on National Child Protection Systems Strengthening to Prevent and Respond to Violence, Abuse and Exploitation of Children and its Implementation Guidelines (2017).

- ECOWAS Plan of Action on Implementation of International Humanitarian Laws (2019 – 2022).
- ECOWAS Regional Action Plan (RAP) on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and Forced Labour 2023.

### **1.3 The Palermo Protocol and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

Out of the 17 SDGs, Trafficking in Persons is specifically mentioned in three Targets under three goals, namely: 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and 16 (Peace Justice and Strong Institutions). However, many other SDG targets and goals are relevant to addressing trafficking in persons, a problem with deep roots in developmental inequities including issues related to poverty, problems with the educational system, child labour, abuse and exploitation, gender inequality and discrimination, irregular migration and drivers such as, the effects of climate change and conflicts; amongst several other causes. Specifically:

Target 5.2 advocates for the elimination of all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

Target 8.7 calls for taking immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 to end child labour in all its forms.

Target 16.2 calls for ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.

It is to be noted that trafficking in persons is a multifaceted issue cutting across human rights, rule of law, migration, labour, inequality, anti-corruption, education, gender, violence, and conflict issues. As a result, progress against many of the other targets in the SDGs will contribute to preventing and eliminating human trafficking globally.

The targets in Goal 5 (Gender Equality) will have a strong impact through the elimination of violence against women and girls as well as Target 5.3 specifically; the elimination of harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage. In parallel, the focus on strengthening the protection and value of paid domestic work, granting women equal access to economic resources and ensuring full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making is likely to increase the overall resilience of women and girls against vulnerabilities and situations leading to exploitation, including human trafficking.

Targets under Goal 8 will also have a positive impact in addressing many of the underlying conditions that lead to situations of trafficking and forced labour. These targets focus on increasing access to decent work, reducing unemployment, improving labour rights and promoting safe working environments, as well as economic growth. As many situations of human trafficking can begin as a search for work or as a decision to migrate abroad prompted by a lack of opportunities at home and regular avenues by which to migrate, this Goal has the potential to address one of the largest, systemic factors that creates vulnerability to trafficking in the first place, that is lack of access to

decent work through regular channels. This is further supported by Target 10.7 (Reduced Inequalities) which calls for States to “facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well managed migration policies”.

Further progress on combatting human trafficking will come through Goal 16’s targets to strengthen rule of law, reduce corruption, develop effective and accountable institutions, and ensure a legal identity, including birth registration for all. Lack of birth registration markedly increases an individual’s vulnerability to trafficking, as well as excluding them from accessing social and community support mechanisms.

Beyond these goals, the outcomes of Goal 4: Quality Education and Lifelong Learning Opportunities for all will address key factors contributing to vulnerability to trafficking faced by many in the region. Target 4.3 and 4.4 both call for increases in technical and vocational education and skill development for employment for youth and adults. This is highly relevant as a lack of economic resources or a low/incomplete level of education is likely to increase the risks that individuals are unable to access regular channels to migrate, and therefore may pursue irregular migration channels that may lead to exploitation and trafficking.

Finally, Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals, Targets 17.18 and 17.19 both call for enhanced capacity to collect, manage and analyze data, and will contribute to improving monitoring and accountability of action against human trafficking.

Trafficking in persons is a prominent concern especially in countries where the rule of law is weak. The [Palermo Protocol](#) supplementing the United Nations Convention on Trans-national Organized Crime (UNTOC), adopted on 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2000 by the UN General Assembly Resolution 55/25 is more than two decades old and other various anti-trafficking legislations exist, but the crime still remains on the increase. Target 16.3 calls to [“Promote the rule of law at the National, Regional and International levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.”](#) These goals specifically address human trafficking and call for ECOWAS countries to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, forced labour, and modern slavery.

Clearly to achieve anti-trafficking goals, all stakeholders in the ECOWAS space need to collaborate in improving upon and expanding the current regime of prevention and response initiatives at the levels of basic, intermediate and immediate causes in eliminating trafficking in persons.

## 2. HUMAN TRAFFICKING PATHWAYS IN THE ECOWAS REGION

ECOWAS Member States have distinctive features related to TIP. The factors that influence TIP in the region are complex and intertwined. The main factors driving human trafficking include:

- i. **Socio-economic Factors:** In order to escape poverty, individuals undertake risky journeys to countries with promises of better paying jobs. There is also significant migration from rural to urban areas in search of better employment opportunities. In most instances victims find themselves trapped in forced and deplorable labour conditions.
- ii. **Migration Realities:** Almost all countries in West Africa experience cross-border trafficking in persons. Children are mostly trafficked in West Africa for begging and other forced labour. Additionally, the well-established migration routes to Europe and the Middle East create rife conditions for exploitation because those that undertake these journeys have resorted to clandestine means to enter these destination countries making them more susceptible to be abused.
- iii. **Armed Conflict:** In areas where there is conflict, individuals experience heightened insecurity making them more vulnerable to exploitation largely due to worsening socio-economic conditions. These individuals are at risk of forced labour and women especially are more vulnerable to sexual exploitation. In addition, human trafficking is typically not considered a direct consequence of crisis. This misplaced assumption, coupled with the fact that counter-trafficking efforts are not necessarily understood as an immediate life-saver in crisis, often hampers the humanitarian response to human trafficking cases, particularly in terms of identification of and assistance to victims.
- iv. **Climate Change Risks:** The impact of climate change such as flooding, soil erosion, desertification and other catastrophic events can force people to leave their homes in search of livelihoods to survive. Climate related risks also erode the resilience of communities who may be forced to migrate in search of land for example which may put them in conflict with other communities or the need to find alternative livelihoods leaves them vulnerable. It can destroy cultural identities, practices and other distinct features of a group of people creating the rife conditions for trafficking and other forms of exploitation.

## 3. ECOWAS TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS PROGRAM

The ECOWAS Trafficking in Persons Coordination Unit was created by decision of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS in the Republic of Benin in 2001 to implement the Counter Trafficking Program of ECOWAS. This was pursuant to implementation of the ECOWAS Initial Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons and the ECOWAS Heads of State Declaration on Trafficking in Persons. In 2018 with the reorganization of the ECOWAS Commission, the TIP Unit was absorbed into the new Division of Human Security and Civil Society; also responsible for Child Protection and Child Rights, Emergency Protection and Gender Based Violence and Women Peace and Security in the Directorate of Humanitarian and Social Affairs under the Department of Human Development and Social Affairs.

The Program in 2006 conducted compliance assessments of the 15 Member States to ensure that Member States' legislative frameworks were in compliance with the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons, with the outcome of the Compliance Assessments including review and passage of trafficking in persons legislation in Member States; also leading to the establishment of National Task Forces on trafficking in persons and adoption of National Action Plans to combat trafficking in persons.

Subsequently, the Program has continued to develop and implement Plans of Action at the regional level for the combat of trafficking in persons and, in their implementation, support Member States development and implementation of National Action Plans, establishment of Task Forces in Member States and in broad capacity building and training programmes.

The Program is also responsible for monitoring the implementation of the ECOWAS Plan of Action on Trafficking in Persons by ECOWAS Member States through the Annual Review Mechanism (Network of National Focal Points comprised of institutions responsible for leading counter trafficking efforts in Member States). The first Annual Synthesis Report (ASR) providing a comprehensive picture of Member States' implementation of the ECOWAS TIP Plan of Action was compiled by ECOWAS in 2008, based on a systematic Reporting Template; reports were compiled every year since, with the exception of 2017 and 2020 (due to the compilation of a Trafficking in Persons Baseline Report by the Organized Crime in West Africa – Response to Trafficking Program – OCWAR–T; Trafficking in Persons Component, implemented by the ICMPD, with overall supervision from the ECOWAS Commission).

A new reporting template was instituted, based on the current iteration of the ECOWAS Plan of Action and has been the basis for reporting since 2018. The Annual Synthesis Reports and the Annual Review Mechanism/Network of Focal Points continues to serve as a core basis for the monitoring and evaluation of Member States' actions, enables peer review and cross learning by Member States based on experience sharing and serves to facilitate collaborative and realistic planning and improved programme effectiveness. The ARM serves as the basic tool for realization of the ECOWAS mandate in coordination of counter trafficking in persons actions and 'supervision of implementation' of the plans of action (to use the language of the Declaration of Heads of States in the Initial Plan of Action of ECOWAS). Operationally, technical support initiatives to specific member states based on this permanent capacity, have been implemented and are being implemented in Member States including: Sierra Leone, Senegal, Cape Verde, Nigeria, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, The Gambia, Niger and Burkina Faso. The ASR also serves as the basis for coordination with partner organizations in addressing capacity needs identified in Member States.

### ECOWAS Timeline of Selected TIP Policies and Activities

YEAR	DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY
2001	Initial ECOWAS Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons (2002-2003) (adopted)
2005	TIP Unit officially established at the ECOWAS Commission
2006	Joint ECCAS/ECOWAS Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children in West and Central Africa (adopted)
	Multilateral Cooperation Agreement to Combat Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, in West and Central Africa, concluded with ECCAS
2007	Fourth ECOWAS Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons (2008 – 2011) (adopted)
2008	ECOWAS Common Approach on Migration (adopted)
2009	Regional Policy on Protection and Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in Persons in West Africa (adopted)
2010	Strategic Plan of Action for the Combat of Trafficking in Persons in West Africa for 2010-2013 (adopted)
2007 - 2022	ECOWAS Annual Review Meetings on Trafficking in Persons in West Africa and production of Annual Synthesis Reports per year
2015 - 2019	Implementation of the Free Movement and Migration in West Africa Project (FMM) Trafficking in Persons Component, including the Direct Demand for Funding support component to Member States
2017	Adoption of the ECOWAS Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons in West Africa (2018-2022)
2019 - Date	Implementation of the Organized Crime in West Africa – Trafficking Response (OCWAR-T) Trafficking in Persons Component



**ECOWAS  
TIPS**

Selection and design of the actions were largely based on the systematic prioritisation, planning, monitoring and evaluation integral to the Annual Review Mechanism with the Annual Synthesis Report (ASR) as its core instrument.

#### **4. THEORY OF CHANGE IN THE COMBAT OF TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS**

The combat of trafficking in persons by the ECOWAS Commission is based on the following cause/effect analysis:

- i. The critical requirement for improvements in basic conditions in society including social protection and overall human capital development, including effective social risk management, in addition to investments in life-skills education; for effective combat of TIP and related forms of victimization (this is a basic condition that should be continuously prioritized and results in this area should be accelerated). The Commission also fully recognises the factor of fragility, conflict and violence as a basic factor in some societies and factors this into its response posture.
- ii. Strengthening law enforcement and integrating and coordinating the 'protection' sector which includes law enforcement and social service agencies (integrating and harmonizing methodologies where possible, setting benchmarks and aggressively pursuing changes) create the required momentum in improving the context within which TIP and other victimization occurs.
- iii. There must be synergies between approaches which are dedicated or specialized in relation to the combat of human trafficking and more general or wider protection strategies that address offences that victimize women, children and other specific categories.
- iv. The ECOWAS Commission continues to implement the 4 Ps approach (prevention of human trafficking, protection of victims, prosecution of traffickers and partnerships) as the best approach in addressing human trafficking in the region.
- v. ECOWAS acknowledges and responds to complex protection interactions and cause/effect realities, providing several layers of intervention with the possibility of preventing situations from deteriorating into human trafficking (a protection web).
- vi. ECOWAS shall maintain regional oversight capacity in relation to protection and human security in general and to specific thematic areas in particular, including the combat of human trafficking, violence against children, sexual and gender-based violence, civilian protection in general etc. This will be in collaboration with technical and financial partners.
- vii. Cross-border collaboration and engagement is critical in creating conditions (especially in border areas) with respect to cross-border trafficking and in the direct combat of human trafficking within the wider context of mixed-migration movements.

#### **5. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE OF THE ROADMAP**

The Strategic Objective of the Roadmap is to contribute to the attainment of human security in the region.

#### **6. KEY STRATEGIC MEASURES**

The following measures are aligned with the 4 Ps Strategy subscribed to by ECOWAS: prevention, protection of victims, prosecution of traffickers and partnerships. As this Roadmap will accompany the ECOWAS Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, the emphasis on the strategic measures identified in the Roadmap is on addressing a limited number of critical basic causes, advancing a 'TIP Plus' approach which links human trafficking and related forms of criminal victimization and evincing a link to systemic protection concerns; and a specialist response to the phenomenon of human trafficking.

### **6.1. Measures Addressing Basic Causal Factors**

1. Identify and address the root causes at the origin of trafficking in persons (TIP), including cultural and gender norms, that allow human trafficking to flourish and weaken the social protections of women, children and groups targeted by criminal networks (such as gender discrimination, child exploitation, corruption of the traditional fostering system etc.) in a concerted manner. These will help Member States to develop human rights, gender and child-sensitive evidence and context-based solutions that will improve the prevention of these crimes.
2. Focus on effective implementation of the ECOWAS Child Policy and Strategic Plan of Action (2019-2030), the ECOWAS Child Protection Strategic Framework (5 Key Priority Areas and 10 Systems Strengthening Pillars), the ECOWAS Regional Action Plan on Elimination of Child Labour and Forced Labour, Roadmap on Preventing and Responding to Child Marriage, the ECOWAS Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons and the Plan of Action on International Humanitarian Law (amongst other relevant Instruments).
3. Ensure that all persons enjoy the right to legal identity by implementing critical measures in relation to Birth Registration and Vital Statistics, maintaining Civil Registers, addressing Statelessness and taking further measures, as might be appropriate, with respect to at risk populations such as refugees and IDPs. Urgently ensure the roll out of the ECOWAS Biometric ID Card Initiative and other complementary measures to aid in effective border management and protection of vulnerable persons moving within the ECOWAS space.
4. Implement strategies to build the resilience of the most vulnerable groups through the identification of risk factors such as poverty, family instability, physical and sexual abuse at community level and the provision of appropriate social risk management interventions that focus on prevention through awareness raising and strengthening social protections including the right to education, access to basic health care and psychosocial support etc.
5. Sign and operationalise the Roadmap agreed upon during the ECOWAS In-Country High Level Advocacy, Coordination and Capacity Building of Multi-Stakeholders and Establishment of the ECOWAS Protection and Human Security Integrated Coordination Mechanisms (ECO-PHSICM) in the Member State, as may be applicable.

### **6.2. Systemic Responses to Trafficking in Persons Linked to Related Protection Concerns**

1. Full elaboration and implementation of the Trafficking in Persons Plus concept (which seeks to look beyond the immediate causative factors of TIP but also to those other factors that reduce the protection of the people and increase their vulnerabilities to become victims of TIP) at both regional and national levels, integrating human rights-based response measures to human trafficking with other criminal justice, social workforce and regulatory initiatives and responses to protection risks and victimization; including vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence, violence against children and related victimization.



2. Implementation of the ECOWAS Guidelines on Protection, Support and Assistance to Witnesses in Trafficking in Persons Cases and related protection situations, including in situations of violence against children, sexual and gender-based violence and criminal victimization of other vulnerable persons.
3. Strengthening of the capacity of criminal justice practitioners, including law enforcement and judicial officials to detect, investigate, prosecute and adjudicate TIP and related offences, and protect victims, including through training standardization, improvements in curricula and joint initiatives (joint investigations, joint police operations) to dismantle trafficking networks in the region.
4. Enhancing regional cooperation frameworks between criminal justice practitioners, including law enforcement and judicial officials of ECOWAS Member States to ensure the effective investigation and prosecution of human trafficking cases, including through reinforced cross-border police operations, judicial cooperation and mutual legal assistance; inter-agency cooperation should be promoted at both regional and national levels.
5. Addressing the issue of child begging and street children, including through the establishment of channels and protocols for safe return and reintegration, in accordance with the principle of the best interest of the child, in situations where international return is required.
6. Responding effectively to the linkages between the crimes of illegal child adoption, baby selling, corruption of the process of fostering (both formal and informal) and child exploitation and trafficking.
7. Promoting local community frameworks and structures for child protection especially outside main cities and urban areas and a focus on sensitization on child protection risks and vulnerabilities and strengthening surveillance initiatives.
8. Development of the social workforce including through ensuring harmonized minimum standards for curricula and ensuring appropriate numbers and distribution between urban and rural areas, within the social workforce.
9. Implementation of the ECOWAS Child Protection Strategic Framework and Implementation Guidelines, especially with regards to 'auxiliary' social workforce personnel, including 'community child protection' actors, to augment formally certified social workers.
10. Passage of legislation on child online sexual exploitation and strengthening response capacities of ECOWAS and Member States.
11. ECOWAS to compile relevant protection and human security Instruments for ease of reference by Member States functionaries and other stakeholders; also, to consider the development of a Protection and Human Security Handbook as a central body of knowledge and standardization of concepts and response measures to critical protection concerns.



12. Safeguarding measures to be reinforced for accompanied and unaccompanied children moving either within national borders or across international borders should be considered for implementation.
  - i. It should be noted that the ECOWAS Support Procedures and Standards for the Protection and Reintegration of Vulnerable Children on the Move and Young Migrants adopted in collaboration with the International Social Service/West African Network for the Protection of Children (ISS/WAN) provide a basis for cross border assistance by actors and should be fully implemented.
13. Responses to the phenomenon of children recruited and exploited by armed groups (including Disarmament, Demobilization and Rehabilitation – DDR, trauma informed counselling and intervention planning etc.) should be strengthened at both regional and national levels through appropriate engagement between child protection actors and peace and security actors, including security forces and criminal justice practitioners.

### **6.3. Trafficking in Persons Specialist Response Measures**

1. Accelerated implementation of the ECOWAS Policy on care and protection of victims of trafficking in persons strengthening the regional referral system.
2. Adequate focus on responding to trafficking in persons in emergency contexts, including conflict related trafficking in women and children and vulnerability exacerbated by displacement.
3. Entry into bilateral agreements by Member States where necessary (where existing multi-lateral agreements may be insufficient) and operational level agreements to enhance cooperation. It should be noted that these operational agreements are not binding by international law but can support the enhanced implementation of international treaties, etc.
4. Strengthen cross-border coordination to provide comprehensive assistance to victims in countries of origin, transit and destination and effectively implement the Regional Referral Mechanism instituted by the ECOWAS Commission.
5. Strengthening National Referral and Care Mechanisms as well as SOPs for identification, referral and protection of victims, including establishment and improvement of shelters within the wider National Referral Mechanisms. Also, focus on adequate funding, training of personnel and representation in remote areas and improving on monitoring of the implementation of victim support interventions, including in remote or rural areas.
6. Ensure the effective communication of protection standards and engage in social mobilization and advocacy to address negative social practices such as child begging, the use of children as domestic servants, child labour etc.
7. Ensure adequate provision of mental and psychosocial health assistance and reintegration support for victims of trafficking in persons.

8. Conduct research at the regional level on the existing systems of data collection, organization and sharing on trafficking in persons with a view to further streamline and improve the data management processes at national, regional and international levels.
9. Establishment of Compensation and Reintegration Funds for victims of trafficking in persons in ECOWAS Member countries

## **7.0 COORDINATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

Trafficking in persons is a complex phenomenon requiring inter-sectoral cooperation. Coordination of the efforts of varied actors including law enforcement, Ministries of labour, the social service workforce, civil society, immigration and border management, health authorities, local government, ministries of gender and ministries of foreign affairs, to name a few organizations, is key. Traditionally this has been accomplished by the work of governmental focal points coordinating National Task Forces (NTFs) in implementing National Plans of Action (NPOA) and implementing National Referral Mechanisms (NRMs).

Coordination, monitoring and evaluation will apply the laid-out principles and be based on the structures and practices in the ECOWAS Plans of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and other instruments, including the Policy on Care and Protection for Victims of Trafficking in Persons and the Guidelines on Protection, Care and Support to Witnesses. The Strengthening of the Regional Referral Mechanism (formalization of already existing cross-border measures for engagement by actors including the Network of Member States Focal Points and the Annual Review Mechanism and Meeting with a focus on the Annual Synthesis Report (ASR)) will be further pursued. This will necessarily include existing bilateral and multilateral agreements and engagements between Member States, including operational level agreements between anti-human trafficking institutions of Member States.

The architecture laid out above is supported by the coordinated actions of ECOWAS partner organizations in supporting Member States in line with their clearly evidence attributed plans and priorities and cross border actions to combat human trafficking.

Internally within the ECOWAS Commission, the Counter Trafficking in Persons Unit of the Division of Human Security and Civil Society, within the Directorate of Humanitarian and Social Affairs will continue to coordinate with other Units of the Division with reinforcing mandates, i.e. the Emergency Protection Program (focused on advancing international humanitarian law, protection of vulnerable mixed migrants, protection of refugees and IDPs, addressing sexual and gender based violence etc.), Child Rights, Protection and Child Labour Unit and Women, Peace and Security Program. Beyond the Division, the coordination within the Directorate between the HSCS Division and sister divisions including the Humanitarian Affairs and Social Affairs Division shall remain a priority; as shall coordination with external Divisions and Directorates (Regional Peace Keeping, Rule of Law, the ECOWAS Youth Development Centre, ECOWAS Gender Development Centre) etc.



Regional Conference of  
ECOWAS States on Ending  
Human Trafficking 2023  
Charting a way forward for deeper cooperation  
amongst ECOWAS States to end human trafficking

A TOOLKIT FOR CRAFTING  
A WAY FORWARD

# Annex 2- Delegate List

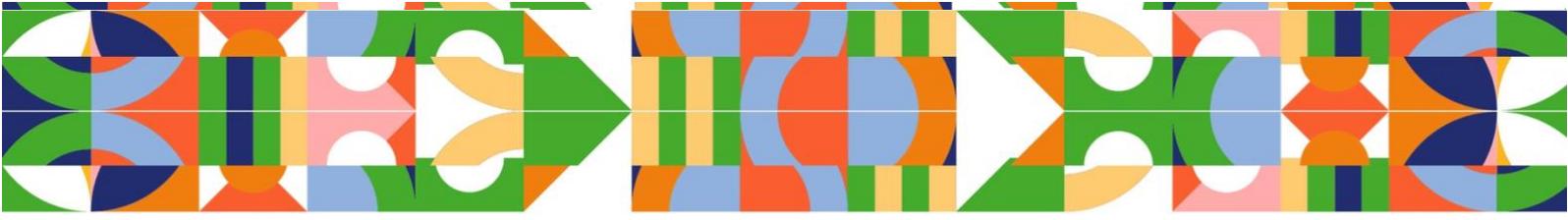
NAMES OF ORGANISATIONS	WEBSITE
<b>International Organisations</b>	
US Department of State - Office to Combat and Monitor	<a href="https://www.state.gov/persons/#:~:text=The%20TIP%20Office%20is%20responsible,Act%20(TVPA)%20of">persons/#:~:text=The%20TIP%20Office%20is%20responsible,Act%20(TVPA)%20of</a>
ECOWAS	<a href="https://ecowas.int/">https://ecowas.int/</a>
Mano River Union	<a href="https://www.mru.int/mru-landing-page/">https://www.mru.int/mru-landing-page/</a>
United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)	<a href="https://www.unicef.org/">https://www.unicef.org/</a>
United Nations Development Program (UNDP)	<a href="https://www.undp.org/">https://www.undp.org/</a>
United Nations Women (UNWOMEN)	<a href="https://www.unwomen.org/en">https://www.unwomen.org/en</a>
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)	<a href="https://www.unfpa.org/">https://www.unfpa.org/</a>
United Nations Organization on Drugs and Crime	<a href="https://www.unodc.org/">https://www.unodc.org/</a>
Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)	<a href="https://www.fao.org/home/en">https://www.fao.org/home/en</a>
International organisation for Migration (IOM)	<a href="https://www.iom.int/">https://www.iom.int/</a>
West African Coalition against TIP and SOM(WACTIPSOM)	<a href="https://www.wactipsom.org/">https://www.wactipsom.org/</a>
World Bank	<a href="https://www.worldbank.org/en/home">https://www.worldbank.org/en/home</a>
World Health Organization	<a href="https://www.who.int/">https://www.who.int/</a>
GOAL	<a href="https://www.goalus.org/">https://www.goalus.org/</a>
World Hope International	<a href="https://worldhope.org/">https://worldhope.org/</a>
African Programming and Research Initiative to End	<a href="https://apries.uga.edu/apries/about_apries/">https://apries.uga.edu/apries/about_apries/</a>
Save the Children	<a href="https://www.savethechildren.org/">https://www.savethechildren.org/</a>
World Vision	<a href="https://www.wvi.org/">https://www.wvi.org/</a>
World Food Program	<a href="https://www.wfp.org/">https://www.wfp.org/</a>
Defence for Children International	<a href="https://defenceforchildren.org/dci-sierra-leone/">https://defenceforchildren.org/dci-sierra-leone/</a>
<b>Governmental Organisations - Sierra Leone</b>	
The Government of Sierra Leone	<a href="https://psru.gov.sl/gosl-portal">https://psru.gov.sl/gosl-portal</a>
State House	<a href="https://statehouse.gov.sl/">https://statehouse.gov.sl/</a>
The Office of the Vice President Sierra Leone	<a href="https://vicepresident.gov.sl">https://vicepresident.gov.sl</a>
Sierra Leone Investment Board	<a href="https://www.slib.org">https://www.slib.org</a>
Sierra Leone TIP Task Force Representatives	
Sierra Leone Family Support Unit Representatives	
The Department of the Freetown City Council	<a href="https://fcc.gov.sl/council-administration/">https://fcc.gov.sl/council-administration/</a>
Sierra Leone Directorate Crime Services	<a href="http://www.police.gov.sl/crime-services/">http://www.police.gov.sl/crime-services/</a>
Interpol Representatives	<a href="https://www.interpol.int/Who-we-are/Member-countries/Africa/SIERRA-LEONE">https://www.interpol.int/Who-we-are/Member-countries/Africa/SIERRA-LEONE</a>
National Youth Commission Sierra Leone	<a href="http://www.nationalyouthcommission.sl/contactus.html">http://www.nationalyouthcommission.sl/contactus.html</a>
National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA)	<a href="http://www.nacsa.gov.sl/">http://www.nacsa.gov.sl/</a>
National Commission for Persons with Disabilities	<a href="https://ncpd.gov.sl/">https://ncpd.gov.sl/</a>
Human Rights Commission Sierra Leone	<a href="http://www.hrc-sl.org/">http://www.hrc-sl.org/</a>
National Commission for Children	
Sierra Leone Compact Development Unit Staff (SLODU)	

Central Bank of Sierra Leone	<a href="https://bsl.gov.sl">https://bsl.gov.sl</a>
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Diplomatic/Consular Organisations	
Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt	<a href="https://www.egyptembassy.org/location/sierra-leone/">https://www.egyptembassy.org/location/sierra-leone/</a>
High Commission of the Republic of Gambia	
High Commission of the Republic of Ghana	<a href="https://freetown.mfa.gov.gh/">https://freetown.mfa.gov.gh/</a>
Embassy of the Republic of Guinea	
Embassy of the Republic of Liberia	
Embassy of the Republic of Libya	
High Commission of the Federal Republic of Nigeria	<a href="https://nigerianhighcommission-sle.org/">https://nigerianhighcommission-sle.org/</a>
Embassy of the People's Republic of China	<a href="http://sl.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/">http://sl.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/</a>
Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran	<a href="https://freetown.mfa.ir/en/photoslider3/2080">https://freetown.mfa.ir/en/photoslider3/2080</a>
Embassy of the Republic of Lebanon	<a href="http://freetown.mfa.gov.lb/freetown/english/home">http://freetown.mfa.gov.lb/freetown/english/home</a>
High Commission of India	<a href="https://www.hcifreetown.gov.in/">https://www.hcifreetown.gov.in/</a>
Delegation of the European Union	<a href="https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/sierra-leone_en?s=119">https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/sierra-leone_en?s=119</a>
Embassy of France	<a href="https://www.consul.info/en/embassy-france-freetown">https://www.consul.info/en/embassy-france-freetown</a>
Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany	<a href="https://freetown.diplo.de/sl-en">https://freetown.diplo.de/sl-en</a>
Embassy of Ireland	<a href="https://www.dfa.ie/irish-embassy/sierra-leone/">https://www.dfa.ie/irish-embassy/sierra-leone/</a>
Embassy of the Republic of Turkey	<a href="https://www.consulate-info.com/consulate/17621/Turkey-in-Freetown">https://www.consulate-info.com/consulate/17621/Turkey-in-Freetown</a>
High Commission of the United Kingdom	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/world/organisations/british-high-commission-freetown">https://www.gov.uk/world/organisations/british-high-commission-freetown</a>
Embassy of the United States of America	<a href="https://sl.usembassy.gov/embassy/freetown/">https://sl.usembassy.gov/embassy/freetown/</a>
Embassy of the Republic of Cuba	
Commonwealth and Foreign Development Office	
Private/Public Sector Organisations	
Fourah Bay College	<a href="https://usl.edu.sl/">https://usl.edu.sl/</a>
Njala University in Freetown	<a href="https://njala.edu.sl/">https://njala.edu.sl/</a>
Milton Margai	<a href="https://www.mmtu.edu.sl/">https://www.mmtu.edu.sl/</a>
University Students	
Freetown Secondary School Pupils	
Sierra Leone Bar Association	
Scaling Up Nutrition	<a href="https://scalingupnutrition.org/sun-countries/sierra-leone">https://scalingupnutrition.org/sun-countries/sierra-leone</a>
Sierra Leone Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative	<a href="http://www.sleiti.gov.sl/">http://www.sleiti.gov.sl/</a>
Conflict Management and Development Associate	<a href="https://cmda-sl.org/">https://cmda-sl.org/</a>
Shade Sierra Leone	
Sierra Leone Labour Congress (SLLC)	
Trade Union Representatives	

SOS Global Investments Sierra Leone Limited	
Public Private Partnership Unit	<a href="https://ppp.gov.sl/">https://ppp.gov.sl/</a>
Marampa Mines	<a href="https://marampamines.com/">https://marampamines.com/</a>
Sierra Rutile	<a href="https://sierra-rutile.com/">https://sierra-rutile.com/</a>
Orange	<a href="https://www.orange.sl/">https://www.orange.sl/</a>
Africell	<a href="https://www.africell.sl/about-us/find-us/">https://www.africell.sl/about-us/find-us/</a>
<b>Civil Society Organisations and NGOs</b>	
Foundation for Advocacy and Literacy Development	<a href="https://ffaldorganization.webs.com/">https://ffaldorganization.webs.com/</a>
TEDEWOGA	
Humanity United	<a href="https://humanityunited.org">https://humanityunited.org</a>
AMNeT	<a href="http://amnetonline.org/">http://amnetonline.org/</a>
Advocacy Network against Irregular Migration (ANAIM)	<a href="https://dvocacynetworkag20.wixsite.com/mysite/about">https://dvocacynetworkag20.wixsite.com/mysite/about</a>
Domestic Workers Advocacy Network (Makeni)	<a href="https://dowanunite.wordpress.com/">https://dowanunite.wordpress.com/</a>
Love Justice	<a href="https://www.lovejustice.ngo/sierra-leone">https://www.lovejustice.ngo/sierra-leone</a>
Merit Sierra Leone	
Domestic Helpers	<a href="https://namati.org/network/organization/domestic-helpers-organization/">https://namati.org/network/organization/domestic-helpers-organization/</a>
Don Bosco	<a href="https://donboscofambulsl.org/">https://donboscofambulsl.org/</a>
Plan International	<a href="https://plan-international.org/sierra-leone/">https://plan-international.org/sierra-leone/</a>
Save the Children	<a href="https://sierraleone.savethechildren.net/">https://sierraleone.savethechildren.net/</a>
Women's Forum	<a href="https://www.womensforumsl.com/">https://www.womensforumsl.com/</a>
50/50 Group	<a href="http://fiftyfiftysierraleone.org/">http://fiftyfiftysierraleone.org/</a>
National Youth Coalition	
Children's Forum Network	
Purposeful Production	<a href="https://wearepurposeful.org/">https://wearepurposeful.org/</a>
CEDI	
Do Bold	<a href="https://www.dobold.org/reports/mapping-her-journey-recommendations-sierra-leon">https://www.dobold.org/reports/mapping-her-journey-recommendations-sierra-leon</a>
Inter-Religious Council	
Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ)	<a href="https://slaj.sl/">https://slaj.sl/</a>
Social Workers Association Sierra Leone	<a href="https://socialworkerssl.org/">https://socialworkerssl.org/</a>
Campaign for Good Governance	
Institute for Governance Reform	<a href="http://igrsl.org/">http://igrsl.org/</a>
Center for Accountability and Rule of Law	
Organisation Legal Access through Women Yearning for Equality and Social Justice (L.A.W.Y.E.R.S)	
Rainbow Initiative	<a href="https://rainboinitiative.org/">https://rainboinitiative.org/</a>
Protect Us Kids Foundation	
EduAid Sierra Leone	<a href="https://www.educaid.org.uk/">https://www.educaid.org.uk/</a>

Women and Girl Child against Irregular Migration	
Women's Forum	<a href="https://www.womensforums.sl/">https://www.womensforums.sl/</a>
<b>Media Representatives</b>	
Sierra News Agency (SLENA)	<a href="https://slena.gov.sl/">https://slena.gov.sl/</a>
Concord Times Newspaper	<a href="https://slconcordtimes.com/">https://slconcordtimes.com/</a>
Premier News	<a href="https://www.premiermedia-sl.com/about-us/">https://www.premiermedia-sl.com/about-us/</a>
Awareness Times newspaper	
Awoko	
Global Times	<a href="https://globaltimes-sl.com/">https://globaltimes-sl.com/</a>
Calabash	
Gleaner	
Standard Times	
AYV Newspaper	<a href="https://ayvnews.com/">https://ayvnews.com/</a>
Politico	<a href="https://politicosl.com/">https://politicosl.com/</a>
Epic Radio	<a href="https://www.myeponline.co/">https://www.myeponline.co/</a>
A-Z Newspaper	<a href="https://a-zsl.com/">https://a-zsl.com/</a>
98.1 FM	<a href="https://radiodemocracy.sl/">https://radiodemocracy.sl/</a>
Capital	<a href="https://www.capitalradio.sl/">https://www.capitalradio.sl/</a>
Afri Radio	
Citizen Radio	
Culture Radio	<a href="http://www.cultureradiosl.org/">http://www.cultureradiosl.org/</a>
Sky Radio	
BBC Media Action	<a href="https://dataportal.bbcmediaaction.org/site/countries/sierra-leone/">https://dataportal.bbcmediaaction.org/site/countries/sierra-leone/</a>
BBC SL Correspondent	
Radio Maria Sierra Leone	<a href="https://www.radiomaria.sl/">https://www.radiomaria.sl/</a>
Redeemer TV	
AYV TV	<a href="https://ayvnews.com/">https://ayvnews.com/</a>
SLBC	<a href="https://www.slbc.gov.sl/">https://www.slbc.gov.sl/</a>



# Regional Conference of ECOWAS States on Ending Human Trafficking 2023



ECOWAS COMMISSION  
COMMISSION DE LA CEDEAO  
COMISSÃO DA CEDEAO

