



UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

POST-REGM REPORT

REGIONAL EXPERT GROUP MEETING (REGM)

Fostering cooperation between the public and private sector to counter trafficking in persons in Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean

9–10 December 2020 | online



With the support of:



CONTENTS

BACKGROUND	3
REGM CONCLUSIONS.....	4
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNODC	4
A FEW KEY MESSAGES	5
THE REGM PROCEEDINGS	7
Day One	7
Day Two	9
Breakout Group 1 — Supply Chain	10
Breakout Group 2 — Technology	11
Breakout Group 3 — Financial Institutions	12
NEXT STEPS.....	14

BACKGROUND

On 9–10 December 2020, the UNODC Civil Society Unit (CSU) and the Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Section (HTMSS) held an online REGM on ‘**Fostering Cooperation between the Public and Private Sector to Counter Trafficking in Persons in Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean**’. The REGM involved over 60 participating experts from the Mexican, Central American and Caribbean region. Participants came from a range of organisations, which included governments, private sector companies, non-governmental organisations, and academic institutions, all with a vested interest in addressing human trafficking through stronger partnerships.

The purpose of the REGM was to facilitate focused, constructive, solution-oriented and critical discussions related to preventing and combating trafficking in persons through PPPs. Participants analysed the current challenges posed by trafficking to the private sector; exchanged good practices on how to better engage on human trafficking prevention and shared experiences on innovative approaches to addressing human trafficking at the country and/or regional level. This allowed for an opportunity to strengthen the engagement of the private sector in order to effectively support Member States’ implementation of the Trafficking in Persons Protocol of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC).

This REGM was part of a series of regional consultations forming part of the broader UNODC project “Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)”: Fostering Engagement with the Private Sector on the Implementation of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and its Trafficking in Persons Protocol’ (‘PPP Project’). Insights and recommendations will inform UNODC’s Compendium of best practices on successful PPPs, which will be launched in late 2021.





REGM CONCLUSIONS

- * Multi-stakeholder collaboration was crucial in order to improve our capabilities in preventing and countering TIP.
- * This REGM had allowed experts from a whole host of backgrounds and areas of expertise to come together with the underlying passion for and goal to try to effectively address human trafficking and this was reflected in both the plenary sessions and in the breakout group sessions.
- * Many good experiences had been shared and lessons learned. Everyone's knowledge base around what works and what doesn't in PPPs to address human trafficking had also been enhanced as a result of the REGM.
- * A key point coming from the REGM was that the protection of survivors of trafficking had to be a part of PPPs, where private sector could have an instrumental role in breaking the human trafficking cycle.
- * It was clear that technology, financial intelligence and coordination within the supply chain was needed as part of an effective anti-trafficking strategy and to form part of PPPs.
- * Participants were encouraged to fill out the Pre-REGM Questionnaire to help feed into further data for the UNODC Compendium on Promising Practices of PPPs to address human trafficking.
- * The third 2021 REGM focused on Asia was mentioned and participants were asked to inform their colleagues in the region for possible participation.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNODC

- * Facilitate more cooperation and trust-building between the private sector, NGO communities and governments and convene dialogues between multi-stakeholder groups.
- * Establish a clear share-point between governmental, private sector and civil society actors to improve information exchange and to assist in the prevention and countering of TIP.
- * Find solutions that addresses private sector data privacy concerns when balancing between protecting victims of trafficking on the one hand and consumer privacy on the other.



A FEW KEY MESSAGES



Kristian Hölge
UNODC

“All together we can start ending this crime that is happening right in front of us.”



Félix SANTANA
Ministry of Interior, Government of Mexico

“One of the main actions to face these complex crime phenomena is the alliance with other actors and CSOs, but particularly with the private sector and the community in general. It is necessary to share promising practices, information, experiences, and resources.”



Lourdes GUTIÉRREZ ORTÍZ MONASTERIO
UNODC

“There are different movements between borders, the vulnerability post-Covid and there is a need to look for work, which is why government and private sector have to be more alert. (...) The private sector also has the responsibility to identify these people.”



Esther GOETSCH
Truckers Against Trafficking

“It was an honor to be a part of UNODC’s Regional Expert Group Meeting and to see the growing successes across different industry sectors in building public-private partnerships to combat human trafficking. As an organization that has focused on mobilizing the private sector in the fight against human trafficking for the last 10 years, we are excited to see the UN bring the expertise of governments, non-profits, and private industry together to share these best practices as successful models for replication across industries and borders.”



Kerry LUCIO
CFATF

“The UNODC’s work on HT-focussed PPPs in Latin America and the Caribbean has the potential to reduce victims’ exploitation and suffering.”

“Effective implementation of the FATF Standards creates an enabling environment for successful and sustained PPPs.”



Barry MACKILLOP
FINTRAC

“We have seen through our public-private partnerships the real power of collective action in understanding and more effectively targeting the financial elements of some of society’s most heinous crimes. The support that we have received from institutions across Canada in relation to our flagship Project Protect, in particular, has allowed us to truly harness our financial intelligence to combat human trafficking in the sex trade at home and abroad. The stain of human trafficking can only be removed through the collective efforts of the global community and UNODC’s work in this regard is critical to our success and our ability to protect the most vulnerable members of our society.”



Stuart DAVIS
Scotiabank

“Countering trafficking in persons and assisting victims requires a coordinated effort of governments, law enforcement, non-profits, private industry and regulators. We have seen the success of such efforts in Canada through Project Protect and Project Shadow which both began with a hard look at typologies and simple partnerships. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) efforts to foster cooperation in Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean to combat these tragic crimes against humanity is a crucial component of needed change.”



THE REGM PROCEEDINGS

DAY ONE



The day started with some esteemed speakers providing opening remarks to commence the REGM.

Morgane Nicot of the HTMSS at UNODC began by emphasising the need to involve the private sector in addressing trafficking in persons and touched upon UNODC's PPP Project.

Félix Santana, Ministry of Interior, Government of Mexico followed by discussing Mexico's '*Grupo de Trabajo Forzoso*' (Forced Labour Group), which is run by the Commission and centred around multi-stakeholder coordination to provide reparations for victims of trafficking.

Kristian Hölge of the Liaison and Partnership Office in Mexico, UNODC, highlighted the importance of PPPs because 'even if there are good intentions, isolated actions have no impact' on addressing human trafficking.

Kirk Arthur, Public Safety and Justice, Microsoft, understood the challenges that private sector in addressing human trafficking, but saw technology as a multiplayer that should be used to tackle criminal networks and transnational organised crime.

Following the first panel session, **Billy Batware**, UNODC then presented the concept and methodology of the REGM, as well as the broader PPP Project, which would focus on PPPs as they relate to countering trafficking from within three areas: the **supply chain, financial and technology sectors**.

The second part of Day 1 involved a stimulating second panel session moderated by **Frank Haberstroh** of ODDO BHF, on the institutional legal and institutional framework and role, capacity and experience of organisations in preventing and combating trafficking in persons within the context of PPPs.

Speakers of this panel included **Lourdes Gutiérrez Ortíz Monasterio**, UNODC; **Barry MacKillop**, FINTRAC; Stuart Davis, Scotia Bank; Esther Goetsch, Truckers against Trafficking and Daniela Romero, Consejo Ciudadano.

Lourdes Gutiérrez Ortíz Monasterio outlined the PPP work that UNODC was doing in the region, such as providing free training to the hospitality industry in Panama. This work was part of the recognised Blue Heart Campaign that allowed red flags around trafficking to be raised early.

Barry MacKillop and **Stuart Davis** highlighted the value of financial intelligence in fighting human trafficking, including via Suspicious Transaction Reports (STRs). The two speakers discussed the successes and best practice they had with PPPs and announced the launch of Project Shadow, a PPP designed to combat online child sexual exploitation.

Esther Goetsch gave unique insight into the role Truckers against Trafficking (TAT) has as a convener of PPPs through their Coalition Build program, where they work with the transportation industry. Esther discussed their IOWA Motor Vehicle Enforcement Model, as well partnerships they have with the Mexican truckers industry through ‘*Guardianes del Asfalto*’

Daniela Romero, the final speaker, presented the work of *Consejo Ciudadano*. Daniela introduced participants to her organisation’s 24/7 hotline where specialised multilingual experts provided assistance in relation to human trafficking and which consequently has contributed to a number of trafficking investigations in Mexico.



DAY TWO



Anders Frantzen, UNODC and **Shavana Haythornthwaite**, UNODC opened the second day of the REGM. They provided a recap of Day 1 and informed participants of what they should expect during Day 2, including their own contributions to the following key questions:

1. What are the main challenges in creating PPPs to address trafficking in persons in the supply chain, financial institutions and the technology sector?
2. What do you believe are current best practices around PPPs to prevent and counter trafficking in persons? If you are able to, please try to draw on concrete and real-life examples of such PPPs from within your own area of work.
3. Based on the challenges and best practices, what lessons and recommendations are you able to make to ensure effective PPPs to prevent and counter trafficking in persons?
4. What role do you believe international organizations (such as UNODC) and civil society should have as far as PPPs to prevent and counter trafficking in persons are concerned?

Participants were then allocated to one of three breakout groups, each focusing on either the supply chain, the technology sector or financial institutions. The aim of the breakout sessions was to allow participants to dig deeper into how we implement PPPs to address human trafficking in a coordinated, sustainable and innovative manner. The sessions provided each participant an opportunity to discuss their own experience of PPPs, including on lessons learnt.

BREAKOUT GROUP 1 — SUPPLY CHAIN

KEY POINTS:

This breakout session focused on how PPPs could help to prevent and counter trafficking from within the supply chain. It began with a short presentation from Christian George from Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association (TTMA) and his organisation's experiences of PPPs on this topic. Other participants responded and contributed to the discussion.

- * There must be governmental and political support for PPPs to work.
- * There is a need for sustainable means to finance activities, particularly in periods such as the Covid-19 pandemic.
- * The fight against trafficking must include reaching marginalised communities in the region and raising awareness amongst the public and employers. Paris Lezama spoke of his organisation's collaboration with Google and Facebook where whatsapp was used to reach people without economic resources.
- * Citizen involvement was embedded in the anti-trafficking strategy in Puerto Rico, which seemed to work, particularly where it was part of the Ricky Martin Foundation. This proved that strategic communications and marketing was important.
- * Industry specific trainings are necessary to engage the private sector.
- * Companies need internal infrastructure to be able to work with law enforcement.
- * There is a need for cross-sectorial PPP's to understand how the private sector speaks, in order to attract citizens and the private sectors.



BREAKOUT GROUP 2 — TECHNOLOGY

KEY POINTS:

This session brought together participants from the technology sector to discuss how technology-based PPPs could help to prevent and counter TIP and what the challenges were in doing so. Guillermo Galarza from the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children presented his work on PPPs.

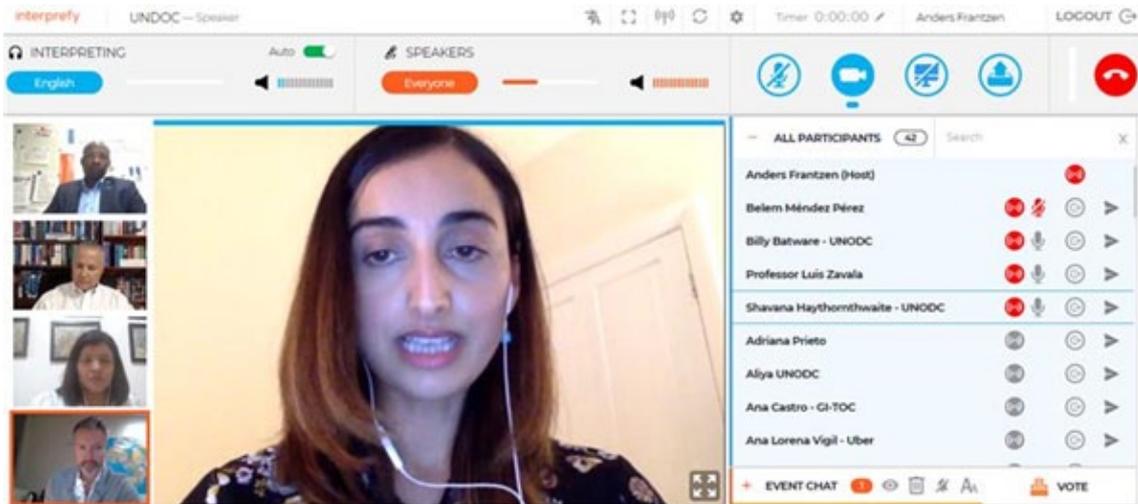
- * TIP is no longer a regional matter.
- * Technology can facilitate human trafficking, for example, children can be recruited online. However, technology is also a big part of the solution.
- * Law and regulation around human trafficking do not move as quickly as the rapid evolution of technology.
- * A challenge for technology companies is finding the balance between protecting their consumers and platform user privacy whilst also protecting the victims of trafficking.
- * Collaboration between private sector and civil society in Mexico was seen as to be best practice, as CSOs have a lot of expertise, contextual knowledge and ability to have wider reach of populations.
- * Work by Google Mexico in marginal areas where missing people were reported proved to be a position step.
- * It is necessary to use technology for awareness raising and education on the issue. For example, youtube could be used to promote materials on TIP prevention. Screening for victims on social media is required.
- * Private sector and NGOs must understand that public sector processes can take time. Understanding of different stakeholder positions is therefore required for successful PPPs.

BREAKOUT GROUP 3 — FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

KEY POINTS:

This session focused on the discussion of best practice and lessons learnt from within the financial sector on PPPs. **Kerry Lucio** from CFATF spoke about how CFATF creates a framework for PPPs to thrive. Barry Koch also shared his extensive experiences on PPPs to address TIP.

- * There should be a strong legal basis domestically for financial institutions to disrupt trafficking and to share information at a policy and operational level.
- * Informal economies (underground and cash transactions) are a problem when tackling TIP.
- * A starting point for jurisdictions is strong anti-money laundering or counter terrorist financing frameworks which can help with anti-trafficking efforts.
- * Countries are required to understand and identify their risk and to do that countries are required to bring all stakeholders (private, public and civil society) together to assess those risks posed by the crime of human trafficking and vulnerabilities of that economy to mend the risks, including through assessing how well they have executed the national risk assessment; was the process robust – were the necessary stakeholders engaged?; Was the private sector there?; was the result of the assessment communicated to the private sector to understand their risks and take mitigating measures.
- * PPPs must include an operational component such as investigations, as well as a communal component including services for victims.
- * The UNU (Financial Action) project announced at the General Assembly, the Survivor Inclusion Initiative within the Liechtenstein Initiative, as well as the Canadian model should serve to exhibit aspects of how PPPs could be transplanted into other jurisdictions.
- * UNODC should act as a coordinator and manager of PPP processes amongst investors, beneficiaries and technical experts
- * There is a need to assess how to ‘follow the money’ for the police to track financial transactions and find new ways for businesses to act together. This will provide a good opportunity for regulators to find their role in connecting law enforcement and financial institutions.



Shavana Haythornthwaite, UNODC concluded the day's proceedings.

All in all, the REGM had been an enormous success and participants expressed their desire to continue working with UNODC to sustain the fight against TIP and collaborate with each other further.



NEXT STEPS

- * A third REGM to foster cooperation between the public and private sector in Asia will be held in held on 24–25 March 2021.
- * A fourth REGM to foster cooperation between the public and private sector in Africa will be held in mid-2021.
- * A Compendium of Promising Practices on PPPs to counter and prevent TIP is currently being compiled for launch and publication in late 2021.
- * A new knowledge hub, named ‘WhatsOn’, is currently being created to enhance networking, coalition-building and to facilitate PPPs to address TIP. The Whatson platform will aim to serve as a knowledge hub for all relevant civil society, private sector and academic stakeholders working on issues related to countering transnational organised crime and corruption. It is expected that phase I of the knowledge hub will be ready for launch in March-April 2021. Initially, this will provide an easy-accessible overview of non-governmental stakeholders around the world, facilitating regional and/or thematical networks. Eventually, this will be built upon for a more interactive network in a phase II development, facilitating further ways for NGOs, academia and private sector to network and learn from each other on all areas related to UNTOC and UNCAC.





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