Towards a more collaborative and evidence-based response to human trafficking and migrant smuggling:

GloACT NIGER

June 2022
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I do not know how I got to be a wahaya (slave) in Niger. I know I became one when I was only 10 years old and lived as one for 15 years. A man called Amola owned me and we lived in his family village. I was his only slave and my clothes set me apart from his four legal wives. They dressed decently, while my clothes barely covered me. He used to come to me at night in secret for sex. My workload was heavy. I had to fetch water for all the family. I had to fetch water for over 100 cattle. I had to hull and pound millet and sorghum for food. I had to provide firewood for the family. I often had to prepare everything for and during large community gatherings for up to 40 people that took place in the fields during the rainy season. I had to wash up, keep the courtyard clean, prepare all the beds and look after the children. These were my tasks until Amola died.

(GLO.ACT Hear their voices. Act to protect. 2017.
[http://unodc.org](http://unodc.org))
Addressing trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants in one action
Trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants are widespread, global crimes exploiting men, women, and children for profit. The organized networks or individuals behind these lucrative crimes take advantage of people who are vulnerable, desperate or seeking a better life.

**Trafficking in persons** is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of people through force, fraud, or deception, with the aim of exploiting them for profit. The elements of force, fraud or deception are not required in cases of child trafficking. Men, women, and children of all ages and from all backgrounds can become victims of this crime, which occurs in every region of the world. The traffickers often use violence or fraudulent employment agencies and fake promises of education and job opportunities to trick and coerce their victims.

**Sexual exploitation** | **Forced labour** | **Debt bondage** | **Domestic servitude**

**Organ removal** | **Forced begging** | **Child soldiers** | **Forced marriage**

**Smuggling of migrants** is the facilitation, for financial or other material gain, of irregular entry into a country where the migrant is not a national or resident. The purpose of the Smuggling of Migrants Protocol is “to prevent and combat the smuggling of migrants, as well as to promote cooperation among States Parties to that end, while protecting the rights of smuggled migrants” (Art. 2). In addition to the prevention, investigation and prosecution of smuggling offences, the Protocol applies to the protection of the rights of people who have been the object of smuggling offences. These complementary instruments both supplement the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC).

The criminals behind this highly profitable business seize the opportunity created by the need or desire of people to escape not just poverty and lack of employment opportunities but also natural disaster, conflict, or persecution. Smugglers sell illegal and dangerous services to desperate people and are often part of a well-organized, multi-national network. Violence, abuse, and the risk of exploitation are widespread traits of this crime. Many migrants die of thirst in deserts, perish at sea, or suffocate in containers.
Both crimes are defined in the Protocols that supplement the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC): Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air. While trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants are different crimes that require different responses in law, the two often intersect in complex ways, making it crucial to understand both crimes separately to alter the response accordingly when they intersect. Smuggling requires crossing of an international border, whereas trafficking in persons can also be domestic. The purpose of trafficking in persons is to exploit the victim and the victim is a person, whereas in smuggling, the purpose is the profit, and the state is the victim since its migration law was violated; the consent of the victim is not relevant in the case of trafficking whereas in smuggling, it is not even an element of the offense.
But these crimes also have certain intersections. For instance, the central experience of human rights abuses, and gender-based discrimination and violence suffered by those affected. In particular, in the context of mixed migration, victims of trafficking may exist among smuggled migrants, and smuggled migrants are acutely vulnerable to being trafficked or otherwise exploited. Smuggled persons may not have travel or residency documents, nor speak the language of the country in which they were smuggled, and they could be unsure of their rights in the new country. They may also require international protection and might not be able to return home. These conditions of vulnerability create an environment in which the smuggled person is more susceptible to exploitation and trafficking. For example, after an individual has been smuggled into his or her destination country, the smuggler may become a trafficker by imposing a condition of debt bondage on the individual, a practice similar to slavery. The smuggler may tell the individual that he or she owes a large amount of money for the “smuggling fee,” and that for the individual to pay off the debt he or she must work, live, and eat at a specific location designated by the smuggler. The individual may be charged for rent and food at a rate that makes the initial “debt” impossible to pay off. The individual is left in a state of debt bondage and thus becomes a victim of human trafficking.

Putting human rights and gender at the centre of the response to trafficking and smuggling strengthens the understanding of and capacity to confront these crimes in ways that acknowledge the distinctions and interrelationship between them. Having a human rights and gender equality approach that addresses both these crimes also aligns with UNODC’s mandate to support States to implement their obligations under the TIP and SOM and the UNTOC. Indeed, the protection of rights is one of the core purposes set out in Art. 2 of both Protocols with attention to human rights being evident throughout both instruments.
This is GLOACT
Niger
The Global Action to Prevent and Address Trafficking in Persons (TIP) and the Smuggling of Migrants (SOM) (GLO.ACT) was designed to support government authorities and civil society in developing and implementing comprehensive and strategic national counter-trafficking and counter-smuggling activities. A joint initiative between the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), GLO.ACT initially worked across 13 strategically selected countries namely, Belarus, Brazil, Colombia, Egypt, Kyrgyz Republic, Lao PDR, Mali, Morocco, Nepal, Niger, Pakistan, South Africa, and Ukraine. Together with the 13 countries, GLO.ACT planned and implemented its action through a prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnerships approach. From 2015 to 2019, GLO.ACT supported the development of more effective responses to trafficking and smuggling, including supporting victims of trafficking and vulnerable migrants through the strengthening of identification, referral, and direct support mechanisms.

Following four years of successful implementation in Niger, stakeholders decided that the country would benefit from further support in implementing targeted, innovative, and demand-driven interventions. The renewal of GLO.ACT intervention in Niger was approved. The renewed GLO.ACT intervention aimed at providing more direct mentorship at the national level, thus contributing to increasing national capacities while ensuring ownership and sustainability of good practices. Furthermore, the project sought articulation and complementarity with other field-led projects and initiatives such as WACAP, PROMIS, and the Sahel program, thus promoting synergies among different actors while avoiding duplication at national, regional, and international levels.

The objectives for the second phase of GLO.ACT Niger were:

- sustaining effective strategy and policy development against human trafficking and migrant smuggling;
- strengthening the criminal justice response to trafficking in persons and migrants smuggling; and
- deepening regional and trans-regional cooperation in criminal matters related to trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling.

In the framework of GLO.ACT Niger, the government strengthened its national strategy and policies against trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants, namely through:

Publishing the first National Report on trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants in Niger, covering information such as number of victims, smugglers identified, countries of origin, age groups, number of cases investigated, forms of exploitation, and cases prosecuted and adjudicated. The preparation of the report was done thanks to UNODC’s technical support and expertise to the National Agency against Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (ANLTP/TIM). UNODC built the Agency’s knowledge and capacities to prepare and establish a new method to collect and analyse data on trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants. The method is operational and was implemented for the first time in the 2019-2020 process of data collection resulting in the development of the first national report on TIP and SOM in the country.

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1 The West African Network of Central Authorities and Prosecutors (WACAP) is a UNODC initiative implemented with the support of the ECOWAS Commission and the ECOWAS Court of Justice. It is a network of focal points of the 15 countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS): Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d’Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo plus Chad and Mauritania which, following the adoption of the Bamako Declaration on Impunity, Justice and Human Rights in West Africa, agreed to take action to promote mutual legal assistance and develop a regional strategy to facilitate prosecution of persons involved in transnational organized crime.

2 The PROMIS (Protection of Migrants) project is a joint initiative developed by UNODC and OHCHR and funded by the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Republic of Italy, which aims to strengthen the capacity of West African countries to develop a human rights-based response to migrant smuggling as well as to respond effectively to human rights violations related to irregular migration.

3 Key results of the first National Report on trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants in Niger.
Signing a **Memorandum of Understanding on data collection and sharing** between the ANLTP/TIM and the Office of the Prosecutor, the National Gendarmerie and NGOs, allowing the exchange of data and information between these institutions.

Training of **45 prosecutors, judges, justice and police officers and 7 members of NGOs on how to collect and analyze administrative data** on trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants and on how to further disseminate such data. Trained experts are currently continuing with the data collection and sharing efforts.

Training of **32 diplomatic and consular staff** on their role to counter trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants.

Enhancing awareness of approximately **2,300 people from local authorities, border police, women and youth associations and approximately 250 university students** on trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants, how to see the indicators, how to prevent it, how to support the victims and referral mechanisms, in Niamey, border region of Niger and Mali in Tillabéry, and Zinder.

Facilitation of regular exchanges and a bilateral forum between **Nigeria and Niger**, with the participation of **criminal justice and immigration authorities**.
GLOACT Niger in Action

It was in multiple ways that GLOACT Niger addressed TIP and SOM. From sensitisation caravans at the land borders to awareness raising events with local stakeholders and training, GLOACT Niger helped the government to improve its responses to TIP and SOM. External factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the worsening security situation and instability in neighbouring countries, challenged project implementation, however with the support of project partners, the following activities were successfully implemented:
28-29 JUN 2022: GLO.ACT supported the ANLTP/TIM and the Statistic Department of the Ministry of Justice to deliver a workshop on human trafficking data collection, analysis, and dissemination to 20 participants from the regions of Dosso, Niamey, Tillabéry, Maradi and Diffa, in Dosso.

4-7 MAY 2022: GLO.ACT facilitated a Bilateral Forum to promote cooperation between Niger and Nigeria to enhance bilateral cooperation to counter trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants, with the participation of the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS), NAPTIP, ANLTP/TIM, Police, Magistrates and Prosecutors from Niger and Nigeria (17 participants), in Lagos, Nigeria.

29-30 MAR 2022: GLO.ACT assisted in the organization and implementation of an awareness-raising session in Tillabéry for over 50 participants from local youth and women’s associations, border control authorities, members of the media and commercial transportation companies, and traditional and religious leaders.

25-26 JAN 2022: GLO.ACT supported 23 participants from the ANLTP/TIM and the Statistic Department of the Ministry of Justice from the regions of Agadez, Tahoua, Konni, Arlit and Zinder to deliver a workshop on human trafficking data collection, analysis, and dissemination, in Agadez.

20 FEB 2022: GLO.ACT supported the ANLTP/TIM to finalize its first administrative national report on trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants covering the years of 2019-2020. The report provides data on trafficked persons and smuggled migrants identified, their countries of origin and age groups, forms of exploitation, as well as profiles of traffickers and smugglers. In addition, the report provides information on cases investigated, prosecuted and adjudicated.

18-20 JAN 2022: GLO.ACT supported the organization of a second training of a trainers’ workshop on data collection, analysis, and reporting techniques in Niamey attended by 13 participants, including members of the ANLTP/TIM, members of the Statistics Department of the Ministry of Justice and NGOs that are focal points in data collection from the regions of Dosso, Arlit, Zinder, Niamey and Konni.
13 DEC 2021: GLO.ACT supported the organization of an awareness-raising conference for approximately 250 students of Abdou Moumouni University in Niamey, on the dangers of TIP and SOM.

28 SEPT 2021: GLO.ACT accompanied ANLTP/TIM in the organization of the National Mobilization Day against Trafficking in Persons and Slavery in Niger, which took place at Ecole National de Santé Publique (ENSP) in Zinder and was attended by approximately 200 people.

23-25 SEPT 2021: GLO.ACT supported a mobile caravan and artistic performances to alert local communities in Niger to the risks related to TIP and SOM. The caravan travelled around six municipalities in the districts of Kantche (Douche, El Dawa, Mai Moujia and Matameye) and Magaria (Tinkim and Magaria). Approximately 2,000 people were reached, out of which 800 were children and 600 were women between the ages of 15-24 years.
**01-02 SEPT 2021:** GLO.ACT supports the organization of a training of trainers’ workshop, online and in Niamey, on data collection, analysis, and reporting techniques. The 13 participants included members of the ANLTP/TIM and members of the Statistics Department of the Ministry of Justice.

**13-14 JULY 2021:** GLO.ACT delivers a training workshop on human trafficking and migrant smuggling for diplomatic and consular personnel online and in Niamey. Out of the 17 participants, 6 women were from diplomatic and consular representations of: Burkina Faso, France, Germany, Ghana, Italy, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Spain, Sudan and the UK, as well as a representative of the EU.

**18-19 MAY 2021:** GLO.ACT supports awareness and sensitization activities for over 40 people including 8 women, on trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants, in Zinder.

**11-12 NOV 2020:** GLO.ACT facilitates a workshop with national and civil society actors on trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants data collection tools, in Niamey.

**28 SEPT 2020:** GLO.ACT supports ANLTP/TIM in the organization of Niger’s national day against TIP and facilitates the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on the collection and sharing of data on TIP and SOM in Niger by the Director General of ANLTP/TIM, the Prosecutor of Niamey, the Head of the National Gendarmerie and the representatives of three civil society organizations working to address TIP and SOM.

**25-27 AUG 2020:** GLO.ACT facilitated a consultation workshop for the development of TIP and SOM data collection and monitoring system with national and civil society actors, in Dosso.
28-29 JULY 2020: ANLTP/TIM and GLO.ACT held awareness raising event on TIP and SOM with over 50 local participants from youth groups, women’s associations, border control authorities, members of the media and commercial transportation companies from the border region of Niger and Mali, in Tillabéry.

16-17 JULY 2020: GLO.ACT delivered a workshop in Dosso on TIP and SOM to diplomatic and consular personnel (6 females and 9 males) preparing to be deployed abroad.

16-18 JUNE 2020: GLO.ACT and ANLTP/TIM met with a series of relevant national, international and non-governmental stakeholders to discuss the importance of defining a common approach to data collection, analysis and sharing to support the elaboration of evidence-based policies and interventions in the future.
Impact of GLOACT Niger
Better data for a better response

Trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants typically affect the most marginalized members of our communities. As such, these crimes are likely to be overlooked in most societies and typically hard to detect unless dedicated mechanisms are in place.

In 2010, the United Nations General Assembly requested UNODC “to collect information and report biennially, starting in 2012, on patterns and flows of trafficking in persons at the national, regional and international levels in a balanced, reliable and comprehensive manner, in close cooperation and collaboration with Member States, and to share best practices and lessons learned from various initiatives and mechanisms” (United Nations Global Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons). As a result, the UNODC has been issuing the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons (GLOTIP) on a biannual basis. UNODC has also engaged in data collection, research and information sharing to improve Member States’ capacities to combat migrant smuggling, as per the mandate given to UNODC by UN General Assembly Resolution A/73/186 (29.01.2019) to: “systematically collect data and information from Member States on migrant smuggling routes, the modus operandi of migrant smugglers and the role of transnational organized crime.”

Twenty years after the signature of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and the Protocols thereto, the international community is eager to assess the progress made in preventing and prosecuting this crime and protecting the victims. Increasing efforts are now dedicated to the identification of good practices and the lessons learned from these years of experience. Research now increasingly examines the impact of the counter-smuggling and counter-trafficking initiatives implemented so far, in order to inform more effective responses and contribute to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5, 8, 16).

These international commitments paved the way to a number of national and international initiatives aimed at preventing these crimes, ensuring more effective prosecution of the offenders and better protection of the victims. In 2020, 93 per cent of UN Member States criminalized all or most forms of trafficking in persons. In the same year, 148 out of 193 UN Member States collected official data on trafficking in persons and reported it to UNODC, showing a greater international commitment to the fight against trafficking. While comparable efforts have not yet been done for crime statistics on smuggling of migrants, a growing number of studies have shed light on the key characteristics of this crime in recent years.

National authorities who coordinate the data collection, analysis and reporting on crimes are uniquely placed to address the needs of their people and design effective responses.

When limited resources are available, data and analysis can inform more effective decision-making by ensuring a more effective allocation of financial and human capital.

Data collection structures also allow to capitalize on the existing knowledge by ensuring systematic dissemination of information and fostering collaboration and mutual learning practices across NGOs, law enforcement actors and criminal justice practitioners (among others). Prosecutors and criminal justice practitioners may have information about the traffickers’ profile and their modus operandi, the forms, and places of exploitation, as well as the specific socio-economic circumstances in which trafficking in persons happens which could be extremely beneficial for prevention and prosecution. National data and analysis mechanisms, including prevalence studies, are now essential instruments to document action taken, ensure accountability of government action, assess progress over time as well as the impact of counter-smuggling and counter-trafficking policies.
UNODC is supporting a growing number of countries in setting up national mechanisms for the collection and analysis of administrative data on TIP while contributing to the production of research studies on SOM along key routes.

Niger is one best practice in this regard. At the institutional level, a National Commission for the Coordination of the Fight against Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (CNCLTP/TIM) and a National Agency for the Fight against Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (ANLTP/TIM) have been set up.

While the CNCLTP/TIM develops national policies and strategies and evaluates their effective implementation, the ANLTP/TIM is the operational structure for the implementation of actions to prevent and combat trafficking in persons in all its forms and the smuggling of migrants in Niger. The ANLTP/TIM, in cooperation with the judicial and police authorities and other governmental and non-governmental bodies, shall periodically collect and publish information and statistics on trafficking in persons (Art. 6 of Ordinance No. 2010-86) and smuggling of migrants (Law No. 2015-36 to fight against smuggling of migrants), as follows:

- a) the number of arrests, prosecutions and convictions of traffickers for trafficking in persons or related offences;
- b) trafficking routes and main trends (countries of origin, transit);
- c) means of transport used;
- d) elements relating to border crossings in Niger (with or without fraudulent documents);
- e) number of national and transnational cases of trafficking;
- f) number of repatriations to or from Niger.

With the support of UNODC, Niger has made considerable progress on data collection, analysis and sharing. GLO.ACT supported the ANLTP/TIM to establish a whole new method for data collection & analysis, which contained four consecutive steps:

1. **Identification of governmental and non-governmental actors who collect data on trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants to raise awareness on the importance of contributing to the development of a national system;**
2. **Definition of the most relevant variables and indicators and drafting of a data collection tool;**
3. **Signature of a Memorandum of Understanding between the ANLTP/TIM and other organisations, compromising to collect and share administrative data on trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants, accordingly to the new drafted tool;**
4. **Training of staff members of the identified governmental and non-governmental organisations which are part of the national system, on trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants data collection, analysis and reporting technics.**

In addition to that, GLO.ACT Niger also supported the ANLTP/TIM to prepare its first national report on trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants covering administrative data from the years of 2019-2020. The process of data collection was however manual, since Niger does not yet have available an electronic system to support data collection and sharing. Through missions to the cities of Agadez, Arlit, Diffa, Dosso, Konni, Maradi, Niamey, Tahoua, Tillabéri and Zinder, the ANLTP/TIM managed to visit the High Courts and Courts of Appeal, meet with authorities...
and collect substantial data on trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants. Data was also collected with missions/visits to the Magistrates’ Courts of the cities of Abalak, Arlit, Boboye, Bouza, Dakoro, Doutchi, Filingué, Gaya, Guidan, Gouré, Keita, Kolo, Illela, Loga, Madaoua, Madarounpha, Magaria, Mainé Sarous, Matamey, Mayahi, Mirriah, Ouallam, Roundji, Say, Tanout, Tchizérine, Tera and Tessaoua. In addition, Regional and Departmental Directorates of National Police, the Brigades of the National Gendarmerie, the Regional and Departmental Directorates for the Promotion of Women and the Protection of the Child, civil society organizations and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) shared data concerning the identification and provision of assistance to victims of trafficking in persons. The report contains information about victims of trafficking, smuggled migrants and their country of origin and age group; traffickers, smugglers and their country of origin, age group and sex; number of persons investigated, prosecuted and convicted for trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants; methods more often employed for the act, means, and forms of exploitation.

Here is a summary of the most relevant results of the 2019-2020 National Report on trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants.

During 2019, 29 people were brought to justice, of which 65% were men and 35% women. During 2020, similar data was found: 33 people were brought to justice, of which 64% were men and 27% women. This demonstrates that in Niger, mostly men are involved in trafficking in persons (or are more often targeted by the criminal justice system as suspects, therefore investigated and brought to justice). Of these persons referred, more than 85% in both years were prosecuted. The most frequent offense in 2019 was sexual exploitation whereas in 2020, it was forced labour.

Regarding the smuggling of migrants, 122 perpetrators were referred in 2019 and 96 in 2020, of which almost 90% were prosecuted.

Of the cases of trafficking in persons investigated in 2019, less than half were tried, of which 93% of defendants were convicted to prison. In 2020, 34% of the cases were tried, of which 80% were convicted to prison.

As regards the smuggling of migrants, in 2019, 71 perpetrators were tried, of which 32 were convicted to serve a prison term. In 2020, 35 perpetrators were tried, of which 31 were convicted to serve a prison term.

Of the persons investigated for trafficking in persons in 2019, 18 were nationals of Niger and 5 were nationals of Nigeria. In 2020, 18 were nationals of Niger and 3 were nationals of Nigeria. Of the persons investigated for smuggling of migrants, the large majority were nationals of Niger (country of origin of most migrants smuggled as well in the same period).

The findings demonstrate that most victims of trafficking in persons identified in 2019 and 2020 were Niger nationals which were identified under exploitation in Niger. As for age group, in 2019, 67% were children between 13 and 17 years old, whereas 17% were children under 13 and 11% were adults over 25 years old. In 2020, children between 13 and 17 constituted 50% of victims identified, whereas 17% were children under 13 and 25% were adults over 25 years old.

Regarding smuggled migrants, the majority are nationals of Niger, trying to reach Saudi Arabia. In 2019, the age groups of 13-17, 18-25 and over 25s, represented respectively 32%, 48% and 20%, meaning the majority were between the ages of 18-25. In 2020, the age groups of 13-17, 18-25 and over 25s represented respectively 5%, 32% and 58%, which may demonstrate that, indeed, more children were smuggled in Niger in 2019, or larger efforts were made to identify smuggled children in that year.

Concerning the act employed, most of the trafficking in persons cases included harbouring, transportation and recruitment. As per means, the abuse of vulnerability and fraud were the most common in 2019 and 2020.
Multi-stakeholder engagement for greater understanding and sensitization

In 2021, GLO.ACT Niger supported a series of sensitization campaigns in cooperation with ANLTP/TIM. In May, UNODC together with local stakeholders held a series of awareness raising activities on TIP and SOM in Zinder, a city close to the border with Nigeria and an important hub for migrants. Information sessions were held for local authorities, youth and women’s associations, border control officials, members of the media and commercial transportation companies to discuss the concepts of trafficking and smuggling, present the relevant, national laws and the respective roles of stakeholders in supporting victims and smuggled migrants. The events aimed at bringing border staff together with local communities to build a relationship of trust and increase the scope for collaboration at an operational level.

In September 2021, a mobile artistic caravan was organized to alert community elders and grass-root organizations in the departments of Kantche and Magaria to the issues of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants. The areas located at the border with Nigeria, are situated along a main migration route. Many young people and women leave their villages to reach Algeria or Libya for better economic conditions. During their journey, they are highly exposed to the risks of being exploited by criminal networks. Nigerien authorities have made the fight against this phenomenon a government priority. However, many actors, predominantly local and traditional authorities and youth and border communities at large, have limited awareness about TIP and SOM. In order to engage the children, men and women, theatre, music and dance were used to educate people about the fact that TIP and SOM are criminal offences punishable by law. Members of the ALNTP/TIM participated on the Nigerien side to spread information and connect with the locals. The events attracted large crowds of people.
Involving diplomatic and consular staff in victim identification and referral

A second promising practice, which involves a series of relevant national and international partners, is that of engaging with embassy and consular staff on countering TIP and SOM. GLO.ACT in collaboration with the ANLTP/TIM trained soon to be deployed personnel at the Ministry with the objective to strengthen their capacity to identify and support Nigerien victims of trafficking and smuggled migrants through their diplomatic missions.

In July 2021, a training workshop on TIP and SOM took place for foreign diplomatic and consular staff accredited in Niger. The workshop was organized by GLO.ACT in collaboration with the Nigerien Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. The two-day event was attended by representatives of 17 African and European countries, namely Burkina Faso, France, Germany, Ghana, Italy, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Spain, Sudan and the UK, as well as a representative of the European Union (EU). Participants discussed mechanisms for international cooperation. They also reflected on their role in facilitating communication between relevant authorities and in supporting relevant authorities to manage TIP and SOM cases across borders.

Bilateral forum to promote cooperation between Niger and Nigeria on TIP and SOM

A bilateral forum to promote cooperation between Niger and Nigeria was held in Lagos, Nigeria, from 4 to 7 May 2022. Investigators and border police, prosecutors, and magistrates, representatives from the national agencies against trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants as well as civil society organizations from both countries participated in the event. The forum was jointly planned and organized by UNODC through its offices in Abuja, Niamey, and Vienna and implemented by combining resources from three projects, namely ‘GLO.ACT Niger’, ‘PROMIS Nigeria’ and ‘Strengthening evidence-based response to trafficking in persons and Smuggling of Migrants in Nigeria’. The Forum was supported by a group of interpreters, to enable presenters and participants to communicate easily with one another.

The bilateral forum was designed in a way that allowed for participants to directly engage with peers from their neighbouring country and learn from promising cooperative practices implemented in either of the two countries. Nigerian and Nigerien participants worked together to identify challenges affecting each professional group and highlighted possible solutions. National representatives also worked on an informal list of activities each country would implement in the six months following the bilateral forum.
After the final session of the bilateral forum, participants were invited to a study visit to the premises of the Nigerian National Immigration Service (NIS) in Lagos. There, participants were informed about the operations of NIS in its fight against smuggling of migrants. Nigerien participants were interested to learn more about the specific responsibilities of NIS, particularly in relation to the cooperation with other law enforcement agencies in Nigeria.

On the last day of the bilateral forum, another study visit was organized, this time to the Nigerian Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons’ (NAPTIP) shelter in Lagos. Participants were interested to see the facility where the victims of human trafficking were received, counselled, and given social support before being referred or re-united to their family. Participants engaged actively with the managers, psychological counsellors, and nurses at the premises as well as the head of NAPTIP’s investigation unit, who closely works with the shelter.
The way forward
The current geopolitical context and the challenges in better addressing TIP and SOM in Niger

West Africa is a fascinating region, culturally rich and diverse, naturally beautiful and with great potential. It also faces serious difficulties such as conflict and violence, deep poverty, demographic pressure, food insecurity and the impact of climate change, which are all causes and factor of internal and cross-border mobility got populations often in search of survival. The situation is only deteriorating by the day: the conflict in the Sahel, which started in 2012, has entered a new phase since 2020 and is spreading beyond the so-called tri-border area – the Liptako Gourma region, which joins Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger – including to the coastal countries - Benin, Togo, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea. In Mali, ECOWAS sanctions are adding to the combined effects of the economic recession due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the socio-political crisis which has led to an increase in vulnerability also in its neighbouring countries. Finally, the World Bank projects that up to 32 million people in West Africa could be forced to move internally by 2050 due to slow-onset climate impacts in response to water scarcity, declining crop and ecosystem productivity, and rising sea levels exacerbated by storm surges.

In Niger, the security situation is considerably worsening. The country is directly affected by climate change and it is in last place on the human development index. Niger’s HDI value for 2019 is 0.394— which places the country in the low human development category— positioning it at 189 out of 189 countries and territories. Low development leads to low human security and enhances vulnerabilities, including the risk to trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants.

In addition to serious geopolitical challenges in West Africa, several challenges more specific to the successful implementation of counter TIP and SOM activities persist, despite UNODC’s support and improvements of GLO.ACT Niger. The following observations are based on the experiences drawn from the implementation of GLO.ACT Niger activities over the past two and a half years:

**Lack of resources:** There is a great lack of resources in many areas of countering TIP and SOM in Niger. Border posts are understaffed, and there is limited necessary equipment. Data collectors are faced with electricity cuts and bad internet connection. Victim service providers are scarcely funded and badly connected both within the country as well as across borders.

**Insufficient support to victims of trafficking and smuggled migrants:** In Niger, places for trafficked persons and smuggled migrants to rest and/or receive adequate medical and psychosocial support are scarce. Particularly at the border, there is a lack of emergency reception centres. Mid and long-term shelters for trafficked persons and smuggled migrants are not supported or staffed adequately.

**Engaging with border communities:** Border communities are key to addressing TIP and SOM in Niger. They live along the vast border areas and often monitor what is happening in their proximity. Border police have described communities that collaborate, others that do not want to collaborate, some being accomplices, others unaware of the laws on TIP and SOM and others forced to leave their land due to conflict and violence, poverty, or climate change.

**Insufficient coordination and cooperation among actors within and across borders:** Good regional and international cooperation starts with good national inter-agency coordination. In Niger, coordination between the policy and the operational levels seems weak, as well as cooperation between operational actors. There are questions as to the specific roles and responsibilities of each actor, standard operating procedures, and the referral of cases. Regarding cooperation with neighbouring countries, more needs to be done to harmonize policies in the region, improve judicial cooperation and increase the support on offer to trafficked persons and smuggled migrants.

**Human rights and gender equality:** Given that the violation of human rights and gender-based violence are at the centre of many trafficking and smuggling experiences, human rights and gender equality need to be central
in the response to TIP and SOM. While they have been incorporated into some of the activities implemented in the past, a more structured approach is needed to make sure human rights and gender equality are key considerations in all future interventions.

**Coordination and cooperation between international organizations:** In Niger, there are a great number of international organizations and donors supporting the government in addressing trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants. While there is ample need for quality interventions, there is also a need for increased coordination and cooperation to avoid duplication of efforts.

**Data collection system:** Through GLO.ACT’s support to ANLTP/TIM, the agency was able to train a series of data collection specialists and to develop standardized questionnaires for further customization and use. Efforts need to be sustained and new partnerships on data collection formed. More effort needs to be made to share relevant data in a timely manner to the actors who need it to better respond to TIP and SOM.

**Development:** More attention should be devoted to the analysis of and response to the underlying social and structural inequalities that enable trafficking to persist. These could be inequalities linked to poverty, gender inequality, discrimination, and corruption. This requires States and institutional actors to acknowledge and address the crime in broader educational, socio-economic, development, humanitarian, and peace-building initiatives. This also includes applying a gender transformative approach that empowers women and girls and addresses harmful gender norms and gender inequalities that systematically exclude women and girls from equal opportunities and equal treatment. Furthermore, harmful gender norms can also prevent male victims from receiving the necessary assistance and accessing protection services. For more information, [icat_analytical_paper_2020_final_0.pdf](un.org)
Conclusion and proposed actions for moving forward

Preventing and addressing human trafficking and migrant smuggling in West Africa is a complex and continuous challenge as it involves protecting vulnerable persons in search of survival. Meanwhile, with the support of UNODC, within the framework of GLO.ACT, the government was able to:

1. Put in place a new method to collect and analyse data on trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants. The method is operational and resulted in the First National Report with administrative data on trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants, covering information such as number of victims, smugglers identified, countries of origin, age groups, number of cases investigated, forms of exploitation, and cases prosecuted and adjudicated.

2. Sign a MOU on data collection and sharing between the ANLTP/TIM and the Office of the Prosecutor, the National Gendarmerie and NGOs, allowing exchange of data and information between these institutions.

3. Train 45 prosecutors, judges, justice and police officers and 7 members of NGOs on how to collect and analyze administrative data on trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants and how to further disseminate such data.

4. Training of 32 diplomatic and consular staff on their role to counter trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants.

5. Enhancing awareness of approximately 2,300 people from local authorities, border police, women and youth associations and approximately 250 university students on trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants, how to see the indicators, how to prevent it, how to support the victims and referral mechanisms, in Niamey, border region of Niger and Mali in Tillabéry, and Zinder.

6. Strength regional and trans-regional cooperation in criminal matters related to trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants, with the facilitation of regular exchanges and a bilateral forum between Niger and Nigeria.

Based on the results achieved and recommendations of national stakeholders throughout project implementation, there are still needs and gaps that if fulfilled, will lead to even better responses to trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants in the region.

**Criminal justice responses to trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants enhanced, including through data collection:**

- Continuous support and improvement of the ANLTP/TIM data collection system, in coordination with law enforcement and criminal justice stakeholders. The objective is to integrate the ANLTP/TIM in the national system of data collection managed by the criminal justice stakeholders with the cooperation of INTERPOL, enabling the ANLTP/TIM to record its own cases/data in the same data base and to have access to the cases recorded by the police and the courts of justice.
- Promote further training of law enforcement and criminal justice stakeholders on how to register data on trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants in the existing national system.
- Promote further training of other stakeholders on how to use the new method for data collection on trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants and contribute to the national report. Continue carrying
out joint capacity-building activities, bringing together data collectors from law enforcement, judiciary, and non-governmental organizations to further improve data analysis, sharing between entities, reporting and dissemination of information.

- Promote Multi-stakeholder trainings and mock trials to train criminal justice actors and victim service providers together. By working through a TIP/SOM case, legislation becomes applicable, roles get clearer and cooperation among actors is enhanced. Mock-trials can be utilised in training within the country or across borders to enhance joint investigation and prosecution of cases.

**Regional and trans-regional cooperation in criminal matters promoted to enhance the exchange of information and the success of investigations and prosecutions in cases of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants in the region:**

- Promote the Liaison Magistrates Initiative to Niger and relevant countries in the region. This could even be done reciprocally with Magistrates from Niger first going to a specific country and a Magistrate from that country then visiting Niger for more sustained results.
- Promote bilateral meetings between law enforcement and criminal justice officers (e.g. police/police – police and prosecutors – prosecutors and judicial authorities) of key countries such as Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Libya, Mali and Nigeria.
- Promote the participation of key governmental and non-governmental staff in regional meetings of networks such as the West African Coalition Against Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (WACTIPSOM) to benefit from peer learning and the exchange of ideas across borders.

**Support and protection of victims of trafficking in persons and preventive actions promoted**

- Increase the number of people assisted and improve the quality of the interventions offered across Niger while funding victim service providers and civil society organizations to provide these services.
- Promote capacity building training on TIP and SOM for various sectors that provide support to victims of trafficking in persons and vulnerable migrants, such as the health sector and other service providers (including CSOs).
- Revise, revive and promote the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and update and disseminate the mapping of the institutions involved in the NRM to strengthen the national assistance and support system and enhance victims’ protection.
- Support the creation of a network of consular staff on TIP and SOM within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to facilitate the exchange of information and promising practices in preventing, identifying and assisting victims of trafficking and smuggled migrants stranded in foreign countries and seeking help from their representations abroad.
- Support communities along the border to become safe havens for trafficked persons and smuggled migrants, building on human rights and gender equality. This might involve working with communities, particularly women, to identify possible income generating activities that may benefit trafficked persons and smuggled migrants, as well as the broader border community. Activities may include: capacity building, emergency medical attention, food preparation, provision of housing and mobile phone charging stations. Border communities could also be trained to recognize the red flags signalling the work of organized crime groups and who to contact in case of suspicious activity.
Resources and further reading
What is the difference between Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants?

Quarterly Mixed Migration Report, West Africa, 4th Quarter 2021

Global TIP Report. UNODC. 2020

Global Study on the Smuggling of Migrants. UNODC. 2018

UNODC SOM Observatory


The Crime: Defining Human Trafficking (unodc.org)

GLOACT Niger project


Trafficking in Persons in the SADC Region: A statistical Report 2014-2016. SADC and UNODC. 2018


The impact of the Sahel conflict on cross-border movements from Burkina Faso and Mali towards Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana

Climate Migration in Africa: How to Turn the Tide.

For further information about the GLOACT Niger project, please contact GLO.ACT:

United Nations Office On Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
Vienna International Centre
Wagramer Strasse 5
A 1400 Vienna
Austria

Email: unodc-glo.act@un.org
Twitter: @glo_act