HIGHLIGHTS

AN INTERVIEW WITH OLIVIER ONIDI

CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESPONSES TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MIGRANT SMUGGLING

EDUCATION FOR JUSTICE IN BANGLADESH

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FOREWORD: AIMÉE COMRIE

It’s my pleasure to introduce the first GLO.ACT newsletter from the 2nd phase which showcases some of the ways in which we are working alongside our partners to strengthen the response to two of the most challenging transnational organized crimes: trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants.

Building on the community of practice which was set in motion in the first phase of GLO.ACT (2015-2019), GLO.ACT assists governmental authorities and civil society organizations in targeted, innovative and demand-driven interventions: sustaining effective strategy and policy development, legislative review and harmonization, capability development, and international cooperation. With our partner, IOM, GLO.ACT is also strengthening coordination and referral mechanisms and assisting civil society organizations in protecting victims and vulnerable migrants. We aim to deliver a comprehensive intervention and most importantly, respond to our counterparts’ needs.

Drawing on a rigorous consultation and engagement process, both in the capitals and in Vienna with the support of the Permanent Missions of GLO.ACT partner countries, the GLO.ACT team was able to advance on several innovative lines of work towards a more effective criminal justice response to TIP and SOM at the national and regional level. The focus remains on improving the quality of the criminal justice response, and not only the quantity of investigations and prosecutions, and stresses mentorship as a key modality for deepening partnership and yielding long term and impactful results. In this issue you will find snapshots of our team in action. In as much as possible we seek to move outside of the capitals and identify hotspots or strategic entry points at the provincial and district levels.

Another strategy of GLO.ACT in its second phase is to promote women leaders in addressing TIP and SOM. Through the establishment of the Gender Champions network, GLO.ACT is working with a core group of women and men dedicated to promoting women’s professional advancement in the criminal justice, government and civil society spheres through networking, capacity building and mentorship. Professional women sometimes feel isolated and disempowered and the Women’s Network seeks to counter this, by consolidating shared experiences, building bridges and forging synergies in the fight to tackle two horrific crimes.

It is worthy to note that the progress made was achieved despite project implementation taking part during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and in highly volatile and complex political and security environments in many of the target countries.

With the COVID-19 pandemic affecting most countries around the world, we cannot ignore its impact on the most vulnerable, including victims of trafficking, victims of abuses in the context of migrant smuggling and people at risk of victimization and exploitation. Analysis is ongoing as we speak but the team on the ground have all witnessed increased vulnerability for those already at risk.

I would like to extend our appreciation to the European Union, our donor, including all of the counterparts that we exchange with on a weekly basis - colleagues at the European Commission’s Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development, the Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs and with the EU Delegations in our partner countries. We have timed this newsletter to coincide with the EU’s Anti-trafficking day - 18th October – an opportunity to reflect on our EU-UN partnership, our progress thus far and key priorities going forward.
MEET THE TEAM

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Since May 2016, Olivier Onidi is Deputy Director-General of the Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME) at the European Commission with particular responsibility over security. In this capacity, he oversees the activities in the fields of terrorism and violent extremism, organized crime, cybersecurity, information systems and innovation. He also headed the Secretariat of the European Commission’s Task Force for the Security Union. Since March 2020, he is also the EU Anti-trafficking Coordinator.

His last assignment was Deputy Director-General of DG HOME with the specific task to coordinate the Commission-wide work related to the Central Mediterranean Route in the context of the refugees’ crisis. Previously, he was Director for the European Mobility Network within the Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE), responsible for the development of the Trans-European Transport Network infrastructure, the implementation of the Connecting Europe Facility funding instrument and for the creation of a Single European Rail Area.

Prior to this, he was Director for Innovative and Sustainable Mobility, in charge of transport security, clean and urban transport, intelligent transport systems and road safety. Olivier Onidi also worked as Deputy Head of Cabinet of the Energy Commissioner, Mr Günther H. Oettinger, as Head of Unit for air transport services, aviation safety and environment and was Head of the Satellite Navigation System programme - GALILEO. Olivier Onidi holds Master’s degrees in international economics, European Studies and Business Administration.
Mr. Onidi, the November 2019 UNGA Third Committee Resolution on Improving the Coordination Efforts against Trafficking in Human Begins includes a ground-breaking reference to the mandate of the EU Anti-trafficking Coordinator. In your own words, how would you describe the role of the EU ATC?

A: This role supports the implementation of the European Commission’s anti-trafficking objectives including via improving coordination and coherence, to avoid duplication of effort and cooperate with relevant stakeholders within and outside the EU. The European Union’s anti-trafficking action tackles trafficking in human beings as a particularly serious or organized crime in relation to other initiatives, such as the EU Security Union Strategy and with links to migration and other policy areas.

What motivates you in your daily efforts to counter trafficking in human beings?

I oversee security policies as a Deputy-Director General of the Directorate-General Migration and Home Affairs at the European Commission, including the area of organized crime and trafficking in human beings since May 2016 and I am deeply concerned about this phenomenon. Patterns and trends with regard to victims have not changed. Traffickers continue targeting the most vulnerable people, including women and children. Trafficking for sexual exploitation, a horrific crime, is a form of violence against women and girls, persists within the European Union, with other grave violations of people’s rights, including trafficking for labour exploitation, for exploitation of criminal activities, forced begging, for organ removal. Traffickers’ adapt their operational methods swiftly. In this field, a European Union action with cross-border dimension has enormous added value. This is the case in the joint cooperation of national authorities, including law enforcement and judicial bodies with support of EU agencies, such as Europol and Eurojust, civil society and international organizations. Trafficking offences are against our core values, these are grave violation of fundamental rights, while criminals take enormous profit from the exploitation of their victims. Acting as EU Anti-trafficking Coordinator from March 2020 means a unique opportunity to contribute to the change coming, as the European Commission currently develops its new EU strategic approach towards the eradication of this crime.

An aspect of the EU ATC role is to improve coordination and coherence among EU institutions, EU agencies, Member States and international actors. What does this look like in practice?

Since the 2012-2016 EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in human beings, with the 2017 Communication laying down concrete follow up actions to this Strategy, one priority of the European Commission was to enhance coordination and cooperation among key actors for policy coherence. Coordination and cooperation takes place in the established framework, including the EU network of National rapporteurs and equivalent mechanisms, the EU Civil Society Platform against Trafficking in human beings, via the coordination meetings of the 10 EU agencies who signed the joint statement of commitment in 2018 to work together and the inter-service group of European Commission services in relation to other EU policies, such as employment, development, humanitarian aid, neighbourhood policy, external dimension, justice, victims’ rights, mobility and transport, health, statistics to name a few. The European Commission works closely with the Council, the European Parliament and international partners. The upcoming Third progress report of the European Commission is an excellent example how cooperation and coordination works in practice, as it takes into account the extensive contributions and relevant documents from the stakeholders. It was indispensable that the anti-trafficking work in this framework is not interrupted by the pandemic and we have continued ensuring coherence and consistency via our virtual meetings. I am proud that even under the changed circumstances we were able to seek valuable input from the relevant networks for the new strategic approach of the European Commission against trafficking in human beings, and in addition via the United Nations and via EU delegations outside of the EU.

What are the most recent developments with regard to EU policies on trafficking in human beings that we should all know about?

Recent EU strategic developments address trafficking in human beings as an EU priority. The new EU Security Union Strategy sets among the main priorities to protect Europeans from organised crime, including trafficking in human beings and foresees further actions in the context. In line with the Security Union strategy, partnerships between the EU and non-EU countries should be stepped up to counter trafficking as common threats.

The recent Communication of the European Commission on the new Pact on Migration and Asylum highlights how trafficking in human beings links to migration, asylum procedures and reception centres. Women and girls at risk may become victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation or other forms of gender-based violence. The early identification of potential non-EU victims is essential and will be further addressed in the new strategic approach towards
the eradication of trafficking in human beings. Women and girls form the large majority of victims of trafficking in human beings and are trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation. Trafficking offences have devastating effects on the victims due to the nature, circumstances, duration and consequences. The recent EU Gender Equality Strategy and Victim Right Strategy take this into account. The European Commission will present soon its third report on the progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings, with the latest analysis on the evolution of the criminal phenomenon, assessment of result of anti-trafficking action within the EU and comprehensive data on the victims, perpetrators and the criminal justice response for tailor made policy decisions.

I would like to highlight the ongoing important work carried out by law enforcement in relation to the EU Policy cycle for organized and serious international crime 2018-2021, also known as the European multidisciplinary platform against criminal threats (EMPACT). Operational cooperation brings tangible results under this framework, illustrated in numerous successful joint actions leading to disrupting and dismantling organized crime groups involved in trafficking in human beings.

We know that COVID-19 has exacerbated and brought to the forefront the systemic and deeply entrenched economic and societal inequalities that are among the root causes of human trafficking. What are the EU priorities in ensuring that we continue to protect the most vulnerable and leave no one behind?

Member States, civil society organizations, international organizations and EU agencies have rung the alarm on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, including a potential increased demand for labour and sexual exploitation. Concerns pointed to the most vulnerable people in particular women and children being at even higher risk in particular when it comes to exploitation in domestic circumstances. The crime became less visible. Internet and social media is further abused by criminals at the detriment of victims. Trafficking victims need continued assistance and support. While the economic and social circumstances have been changing, to eradicate the crime we must continue focusing on the perpetrators: the traffickers, the exploiters; the abusers; the users. In this context, holding perpetrators accountable increases deterrence. To support the work of law enforcement and civil society in this context the upcoming calls for proposal for Union grants under the Internal Security Fund-Police and Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund are also planned to be dedicated to responses to the pandemic.

The EU Anti-Trafficking Day was established by the European Commission in 2007 and is marked on 18 October of every year. What do you perceive as the main purpose of this day?

The EU Anti-Trafficking Day reminds us that women and girls, men and boys continue to be trafficked and exploited in the European Union for criminal profits. It reminds us of a continued need for action against traffickers, exploiters, profit makers and abusers. I am pleased to see the many initiatives organised throughout the EU. The Commission will join these efforts this year by publishing two studies, which were key actions of the 2017 Communication: the study on the economic, social and human costs of trafficking in human beings and the study on reviewing the functioning of Member States’ National and Transnational Referral Mechanisms. We will present the findings of the Third progress report of the European Commission at a high level event on 21 October co-organized with the German Presidency, with the participation of Commissioner Ylva Johansson and Members of the European Parliament, in the framework of the joint meeting of the EU network of national rapporteurs and equivalent mechanisms and EU Civil society Platform against Trafficking in human beings.
to trafficking in human beings are identified. In addition, it is important to increase the number of female officials as integral parts of national efforts to combat trafficking and to ensure overall greater coordination and cross-border cooperation.

Ultimately, the desired outcome of the project is that traffickers pay for the heinous crimes that they have committed and are brought to justice. The project brings in focus the gendered dimension of the crime, aiming to protect victims and vulnerable migrants, and above all, aim at contributing to preventing and combatting trafficking in human beings at regional level.

1 Representatives of EU Member States
2 Participants from over 100 civil society organisations within the EU and beyond
3 Cepol, Eurofound, Eurojust, European Asylum Support Office, Europol, European Border and Cost Guard Agency, European Institute for Gender Equality, Europol, eu-Lisa, European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drugs Prevention, Fundamental Rights Agency
About GLO.ACT Bangladesh

The Global Action against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants - Bangladesh (GLO.ACT - Bangladesh) is a four-year joint initiative by the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) being implemented in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and in parallel to GLO.ACT Asia and the Middle East. GLO.ACT-Bangladesh builds on a global community of practice set in motion in GLO.ACT 2015-2019 in 13 partner countries across Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America.

Through targeted, innovative and demand-driven interventions, the project aims to support the Government of Bangladesh and civil society organizations to more effectively fight the crimes of human trafficking and migrant smuggling across the country. The project works on developing evidence-based information on trafficking and smuggling patterns and trends, legislative review and harmonization, capability development of criminal justice actors, and international cooperation. The project also provides direct assistance to victims of human trafficking and migrants in vulnerable situations through the strengthening of identification, referral, and protection mechanisms.

This project is funded by the European Union.

Our 5 Pillars of Intervention

- Developing evidence-based information on patterns and trends to enhance understanding of TIP and SOM
- Legislative assistance
- Capacity building
- International cooperation
- Victim assistance and protection, and assistance to migrants in vulnerable situations
A recent report by UNODC demonstrates that the COVID-19 pandemic has indeed done much to highlight the existing vulnerabilities of people at risk of human trafficking and smuggling, making UNODC’s work in assisting countries with strengthening their criminal justice response to these crimes all the more relevant. In June 2020, UNODC and IOM jointly organized an online national consultation with the aim to specifically address the country’s criminal justice response to Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants in times of COVID-19 and beyond. The event was organized in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs.

Mia Seppo, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh, opened the consultation webinar to 100 participants by highlighting the importance of turning commitments into actions through a unified approach. Touching upon the recent tragic killing of 26 Bangladeshi migrants in Libya in May 2020, Ms. Seppo explained that “the COVID-19 world has further magnified the inequalities and vulnerabilities, and Bangladesh has had to pay the tragic toll on more than one occasion.” Meanwhile, Maurizio Cian, Head of Cooperation, Delegation of the European Union to Bangladesh reminded participants that, “human trafficking has no place in Europe or anywhere else in the world.”

Summarizing the key facets of a strong criminal justice response, Masud Bin Momen, Foreign Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, noted that “safe and regular migration, as well as the dignified return of migrants, is the priority of the Government of Bangladesh. The focus lies therefore on prevention, victim identification, and protection, as well as on investigation, prosecution and adjudication of human traffickers and migrant smugglers.”

The webinar builds upon a previous consultation held with members of the Counter-Trafficking in Persons Technical Working Group established under the Bangladesh United Nations Network on Migration. The recommendations issued at the conclusion of this consultation formed the starting point of the discussions at the webinar:

- Analysing and responding to the impact of COVID-19 on Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants;
- Enhancing understanding of the different dimensions of the crimes and implementing policies accordingly;

Ratification of the Protocol would encourage a more effective national response to combating both Trafficking in Persons...
and Smuggling of Migrants whilst simultaneously ameliorating Bangladesh’s capacity to render justice to the victims. During the live webinar several participants advocated for its ratification, noting that this would be a decisive step to complement the government’s ongoing efforts.

The importance of a human rights and gender-sensitive approach was similarly reiterated by several speakers, including Nasima Begum, Chairman of the National Human Rights Commission who said: “Human rights must be at the centre of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Inclusive measures aimed at protecting the rights and health of the whole population, including all migrants and trafficked persons, regardless of their migration status, are urgent and necessary.”

Md. Golam Sarwar, Secretary, Law and Justice Division, Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, referred to the recent initiative of using virtual courts to prosecute trafficking crimes as an example of prioritising human rights and access to justice during the COVID-19. Mr. Sarwar stated that “the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs is always ready to take part in any actions, measures to combat human trafficking and migrant smuggling.”

Following an introduction to GLO.ACT-Bangladesh by UNODC’s and IOM’s project coordinators, that highlighted that at the core of GLO.ACT’s approach is partnerships and effective joint programming, members of UNODC outlined the essential role research plays in understanding the factors and impacts of trafficking and smuggling.

The importance of using such research proactively and cooperating in an international context are both critical aspects of a strong criminal justice approach. Challenges in the criminal justice response in the absence of Smuggling of Migrant legislation and training were summarized by GLO. ACT’s Regional Advisor and key policy issues and considerations on human trafficking and migrant smuggling formed the basis for a lively discussion amongst all participants. Addressing the webinar, Abu Bakr Siddique, Additional Secretary, Public Security Division, Ministry of Home Affairs, Bangladesh, said, “Bangladesh has placed high priority on the protection of migrants’ rights and interests both at home and abroad.” Encouraged by the motivation of both the high-level speakers and participants during the webinar, the GLO.ACT team are intent on supporting Bangladesh in achieving this.

The consultation paved the way forward: the suggestions and recommendations voiced by participants now guide GLO.ACT-Bangladesh in producing a strategic position paper. This paper will look at the criminalization of Smuggling of Migrants and protection of vulnerable migrants in line with the United Nations Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air. It will also consider how existing laws and policies could be used, in the interim, to strengthen criminal justice measures against smuggling and trafficking networks. Lastly, the paper will also outline future capacity-building training, thereby supporting those who need protection now more than ever.
Roles were reversed recently in Bangladesh where 45 participants including university lecturers, professors and deans from 25 public and private universities gathered online to learn about the crimes of human trafficking and migrant smuggling. The academics from the fields of law and criminology attended a two-day workshop, which was led by UNODC to introduce the relevant modules in its Education for Justice series (E4J).

E4J facilitates teaching on global issues such as organized crime, human trafficking and migrant smuggling and universities are encouraged to incorporate the materials in their curriculums.

Professor Md. Rahmat Ullah, Dean of the Faculty of Law at the University of Dhaka, which co-organized the event, says such tools “fuel human development”. “They support future generations who pass through universities as students but eventually become investigators, advocates, prosecutors and judges.”

UNODC experts discussed the importance of the UN’s Protocols against human trafficking and migrant smuggling and explained their role in assisting countries to implement the provisions in these international treaties. The legal definitions of these crimes and their differences and similarities were also highlighted, as well the need for transnational cooperation to prevent and prosecute cases.

Mahdy Hassan, UNODC National Project Coordinator for GLO.ACT-Bangladesh, says the workshop was a “success”, “achieved its objectives” and plans are already underway to work closer with the participating universities. “It was the first time this group of university professionals had been brought together to focus on teaching about human trafficking and migrant smuggling.” “Now these academics have a better understanding of how they can use the E4J materials to educate their students about these crimes,” adds Mr Hassan.

Almost every region in Bangladesh is affected by human trafficking and migrant smuggling.

The country is a source, transit, and destination country for the trafficking of men, women, and children, predominantly for the purpose of forced labour, sexual exploitation and domestic servitude – within the country and abroad. The global demand for low-skilled workers, coupled with limited access to safe, regular migratory routes, lead Bangladeshis to use the services of migrant smugglers.

Before the development of the E4J modules, a comprehensive and global overview of human trafficking and migrant smuggling had been lacking in most university curricula. To address this gap, more than 100 academics from universities worldwide collaborated with UNODC to develop the University Module Series. It is now expected that the
participating universities in Bangladesh will develop and update their curricula to incorporate the series, which is based on best practises, international standards and includes real cases studies.

Dr Parvez Sattar, an Assistant Professor from the Department of Law at Independent University Bangladesh, was one of the workshop’s participants. “For over two decades, I’ve been professionally and academically involved in the topics of human trafficking and migrant smuggling. I’ve benefitted tremendously from this workshop, especially in terms of how to approach teaching on these issues,” he says. “In addition, I got the chance to update my knowledge on the subjects, since a lot has happened in the recent past and continues to happen, especially due to the initiatives of UNODC.”

Fellow participant, Professor Abu Zayed Mohammad, Dean of the Faculty of Law, Northern University Bangladesh, says one reason he took part was “to network with like-minded individuals and institutions and explore ways to collaborate”. Speaking about the input from the UNODC crime prevention and criminal justice officers, he says: “It was a unique experience to listen to experts who are at the forefront of knowledge on human trafficking and migrant smuggling.”

Mohammad Golam Sarwar, Lecturer and Student Advisor, Department of Law, University of Dhaka who also participated in the event explained that following the event, he will now incorporate the learning into his teaching methods and curriculum. He also confirmed that he will write and research more based on the knowledge he has gained.

GLO.ACT-Bangladesh is now creating a network with the participating faculty members and the universities where they teach. This move was welcomed by Professor Sadeka Halim, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Dhaka. “I’m pleased that one of the main objectives of the event was to build bridges between the teachers, so they could follow up with one another in an individual capacity regarding the E4J modules.”

“UNODC is a global leader in fighting transnational crimes that destroy so many lives and livelihoods. I remain committed to educate the young to ensure a better tomorrow,” she says.
NEXT ISSUE COMING OUT IN 2021

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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