

SADC Regional Trafficking in Persons Data Collection System Deployed

Pretoria, South Africa – 1 August 2019 – The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the SADC Secretariat in collaboration with the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development have deployed the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Regional Trafficking in Persons Data collection system to South Africa.

The deployment took place during commemoration of World Day Against Trafficking in Persons (TIP) on 30 July. A three-day workshop was organized from 30 July to 1 August 2019 for the National Inter-Sectorial Committee on Trafficking in Persons and the Provincial Trafficking in Persons Task Teams.

In South Africa, collection and analysis of data on trafficking in persons (TIP) are sporadic. Consequently, there is no reliable data on traffickers as well as TIP victims. Centralized, comprehensive data on TIP would support the government's policy response to better enforce TIP legislation. Gaps and limited knowledge on the identification of persons who are victims of trafficking or its perpetrators also hamper data collection.

One of the objectives of the deployment of the SADC Regional Trafficking in Persons Data Collection system to South Africa is to support the government to collect national data at country level in a coordinated manner. This would enhance understanding of the nature and extent of the crime, profile traffickers and victims, identify the types of exploitation and the trafficking in persons routes.

The Deputy Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development, Hon. John Jeffery, officially opened the workshop. He expressed concern over the absence of reliable data, a situation he said made it “extremely difficult to say, with absolute certainty, whether incidents of TIP are increasing or decreasing, and whether the current justice responses are being effective.”

The Deputy Minister said the lack of reliable data in turn, made it difficult for the government, to take appropriate policy decisions.

“Data collection tools make it possible to get a more complete picture of who the victims are, where they come from, where they are being trafficked to and for what purpose,” he said.

Mr. James Higgiston, Acting Deputy Chief of Mission, United States Embassy in the Republic of South Africa said: “The Regional trafficking in persons data collection system will not solve the problem of human trafficking in South Africa, but we believe it will increase dialogue between agencies in the criminal justice system.”

He welcomed the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Regional Trafficking in Persons Data collection system to South Africa.

“This tool represents a crucial step toward identifying perpetrators, protecting survivors and improving South Africa’s ranking in next year’s United States Global Report on Trafficking in Persons,” Mr. Higgiston said.

UNODC Regional Representative, OIC, Ms. Lindy Muzila said sound information and a solid base of evidence for policies were two of the most important things to fight the crime of trafficking in persons in the most efficient way possible.

“We simply need to know what it actually is we are dealing with,” she said and added: “Human trafficking happens in every country. It thrives in situations where the rule of law is weak, and people lack opportunities. Humanitarian crises and conflicts create an environment in which traffickers easily prey upon the vulnerable.”

One of the outcomes of the workshop was the successful uploading of South African trafficking in persons cases into the SADC Regional Trafficking in Persons Data Collection System. Furthermore, the appointment of provincial trafficking in persons data collection focal persons was another major outcome.

Workshop participants included staff of the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, members of the National Inter-Sectorial Committee for Trafficking in Persons (NICTIP), members of the Provincial Trafficking in Persons Task Teams (PTT), Civil Society Organizations, IOM and the United States Embassy in the Republic of South Africa.

