



Concept Note | Regional Thematic Meeting

Caribbean Region | Trafficking in Human Beings and Smuggling of Migrants

Georgetown, Guyana | 12 - 14 March 2019



Background

In 2010, the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States and the European Union (EU) launched the **ACP-EU Dialogue on Migration and Development** (hereafter referred to as the “Dialogue”). During the subsequent years, the parties focused their discussions on various priority areas: remittances, readmission, visas, trafficking of human beings (THB) and smuggling of migrants (SoM).

In 2012 and for THB and SoM in 2015, concrete **recommendations** on these areas were adopted by the ACP-EU Council of Ministers. Specifically, the Dialogue’s Recommendations on THB and SoM identify concrete areas of cooperation in order to tackle both phenomena in a spirit of shared responsibility. The operational conclusions resulting from the ACP-EU Dialogue on these topics are wide ranging and comprehensive. The main content of them can be summarized as follows:

- strengthening THB and SoM laws and supporting their effective implementation;
- ensuring victim identification and protection as well as a victim-centred, human rights-based, gender-sensitive approach;
- raising awareness of THB and SoM among all key stakeholders;
- promoting cross-border and international cooperation among countries of origin, transit, and destination;
- improving data collection cooperation to support evidence-based policies and concrete actions; and
- dismantling criminal networks through financial tracking and tackling corruption among public officials as well as prosecuting traffickers and smugglers to prevent impunity.

Since the setting of the ACP-EU Dialogue, new developments have occurred in the global context of migration and development, namely the adoption of the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**¹ in 2015 and the process leading up to the adoption of the **Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)**² in December 2018. In both cases THB and SoM are contemplated and addressed. Target 8.7 of the SDGs encourages the renewal of national and global commitments to combating all forms of human trafficking and protecting victims of it, while Targets 5.2 and 16.2 specifically address trafficking and exploitation of women and children. Target 10.7 on reducing inequalities calls to facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies, hence broadly encompassing counter-trafficking and counter-smuggling. Guided by the SDGs, the GCM aims to address all aspects of international migration through a comprehensive coordination framework; it dedicates two specific objectives to SoM and THB, namely Objective n. 9: Strengthen the transnational response to smuggling of migrants, and n. 10: Prevent, combat and eradicate trafficking in persons in the context of international migration.

Often SoM is linked to development as by-product of uneven or under-development in origin countries. Lack of livelihoods, low salaries, limited education opportunities, and inadequate service provision are identified as some of the push-factors that contribute to people migrating irregularly. Thus, an often-relied upon strategy to address irregular migration is through development interventions that are geared towards addressing the ‘root causes’.

The impact of irregular migration on development is in fact a complex and controversially discussed topic.³ Some research suggests that for poorer migrants, irregular migration can provide a positive, private return

¹ 2030 Agenda – Sustainable Development Goals: http://www.migration4development.org/sites/default/files/en_sdg_web.pdf

² GCM final draft – July 2018, Retrieved from https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/180711_final_draft_0.pdf

³ GFMD, *Addressing Irregular Migration through Coherent Migration and Development Strategies: Background Paper*, (2011).

to income and livelihood improvements. However, irregular status is associated also with a range of disadvantages and vulnerabilities, including the risk of trafficking, that often compromise migrants' rights, entitlements, and the rate of return that they achieve from the migration process.⁴ In the case of trafficked persons, negative human development outcomes are common considering the exploitation and violence these individuals experience.

The ACP-EU Migration Action: its work on Trafficking in Human Beings and Smuggling of Migrants

The ACP-EU Migration Action was conceived as a Programme aiming at providing concrete implementation to the Dialogue's recommendations by a) delivering on-demand Technical Assistance (TA) to ACP governments and ACP Regional Organizations; and b) disbursing grants to Non-State Actors (NSAs).

Soon after the endorsement of the Dialogue's recommendations on THB and SoM, the Action started supporting ACP and therefore also Caribbean governments' initiatives aimed at improving their legislative frameworks and capacity in implementing counter-trafficking and counter-smuggling policies. These topics were amongst those that raised great interest from ACP governments wishing to benefit from TA in the framework of the Action⁵. More specifically, overall the Action has received seventy-four (74) requests from ACP Governments or Regional Organizations, out of which sixty-two (62) were approved for implementation. Over a third of them (28) are on the topic of THB and/or SoM. In the Caribbean region, the Action has supported seven (7) of these requests on THB and SoM and has also funded the implementation of two NSA projects in the same subject area (in the Dominican Republic and in Haiti).

Besides offering TA to ACP governments and Regional Organisations and grants to NSAs, the Action collects and disseminates information with the aim of learning and exchanging good practices. This is done via multiple initiatives such as the organization of thematic seminars like the most recent one organized in the framework of the Dialogue and titled *Seminar on Trafficking in Human Beings - Women and Children* (Brussels, Belgium in June 2018). Another relevant event was the technical exchange *Peer-to-Peer meeting on THB and SoM* which took place in Georgetown, Guyana in March 2017. This meeting informed the production in 2018 of the Action's publication "*Trafficking in Human Beings and Smuggling of Migrants in ACP Countries: Key Challenges and Ways Forward*".

It is in the framework of this component that this regional thematic meeting is organized.

Focus on the Caribbean

THB and SoM are both global phenomena affecting all countries, including ACP and EU member states. They are often fuelled by growing economic inequalities, environmental crises, armed conflict, political instability, persecution and the search for a better life. A globalized economy, fostering demand for cheap labour and offering images of a better life, coupled with increasingly stringent migration control and limited options to migrate regularly make migrants resort to smugglers and render them vulnerable to traffickers – many of them becoming victims of human rights violations, including severe forms of physical, sexual and psychological violence. Criminal networks behind the related crimes are multibillion dollar businesses, constantly diversifying and changing their modus operandi, thereby making it harder for authorities to trace them and bring them to justice. Their scale is hard to quantify reliably, and figures are seldom comparable.

⁴ UNDP, *The Impact of Irregular Status on Human Development Outcomes for Migrants. Human Development Research Paper*. Rachel Sabates-Wheeler (2009).

⁵ Up to November 2018 the Action has received 28 requests on the topics of THB and SoM out of a total of 74 requests.

While numbers of estimated victims of trafficking worldwide vary, they are reported as being in the millions and constantly on the rise; the most recent estimates indicate more than 40.3 million victims of trafficking worldwide⁶.

Throughout history, migration has played a major role in the Caribbean region, having an impact on each country in different ways. Currently, several trends have emerged in the region, shaping the migration flows within the Caribbean: from political instability to violence and from economic factors to climate change. The Caribbean faces its own challenges to guarantee that migration from, to, and within the region is done through well-managed migration policies, including counter-trafficking and counter-smuggling efforts.

The region has become a major transit point for irregular migration flows from other parts of the world (South and Central America, Asia and Africa). Despite the lack of reliable statistics on irregular migration in the region, it is believed to occur on a large scale, possibly exceeding the level of regular migration. Specifically, major border security risks in the Caribbean are linked to activities conducted by transnational criminal organizations, and specifically trafficking of drugs and guns. Although smuggling of migrants is not yet identified as a major area of concern by officials of Caribbean countries⁷, research shows that this crime is becoming more prevalent: in 2014 and 2015 approximately 14.-18.000 Caribbean migrants were smuggled into Mexico and then into the United States. This activity generates revenues estimated to USD 100 – 120 million each year⁸.

Irregular migration and smuggling of migrants have negative security implications both for the receiving countries as well as for the migrants, as smuggled persons frequently face an increased risk of being trafficked. The Caribbean region, being a diverse region of transit, and oftentimes a migration corridor to the United States and Canada, is affected by human trafficking and countries have undertaken several efforts and initiatives at different levels to curb it. However, gaps and needs still exist in multiple areas including legislation and legal frameworks, inter-agency coordination, identification and prosecution, data collection and information sharing, capacity building for involved personnel, victims' assistance and protection, and awareness raising.

Many countries in the Caribbean have made concerted efforts, including the development of counter-trafficking policies and increased investment in traveller identification systems. Although efforts to combat transnational organized crime at the national level are essential, the complexity of the networks can be challenging for individual Caribbean countries, where there is limited capacity to implement comprehensive responses. In the Caribbean, greater efforts to enhance capacities across countries to combat illegal activities and detect irregular migration are spearheaded by CARICOM IMPACS, which engages in collaborative security strategies and centralizes the region's security management framework, with the goal of exercising a collective approach to address security issues of CARICOM Member States⁹.

Additional regional cooperation efforts have taken place in the framework of regional dialogue, under the Caribbean Migration Consultations (CMC). In April 2018, Trafficking in Persons (TiP) unit leaders of 13 countries and territories gathered for the [First Workshop of the CMC Counter-trafficking Network](#).¹⁰ Several

⁶ Alliance 8.7, *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage*, Geneva: ILO & Walk Free Foundation (2017).

⁷ IOM, *Migration Governance in the Caribbean*, San José (2018).

⁸ UNODC, *Global Study on Smuggling of Migrant*, New York (2018).

⁹ Retrieved from <https://caricom.org/about-caricom/who-we-are/institutions1/caricom-implementing-agency-for-crime-and-security-impacs>

¹⁰ Retrieved from <https://caribbeanmigration.org/events/first-workshop-caribbean-migration-consultations-counter-trafficking-network>

recommendations resulted from the workshop, including the need for standardized data formats and tools, technical assessments of countertrafficking data needs and gaps, and standardized agreements for cooperation on victim care and assistance.

IOM, at the governments' request, created an online portal for engagement of CMC participants and stakeholders, that operates through thematic networks established through meetings and other online engagements. This portal offers the potential for continuity of discussions, information sharing, project development, and cooperation.¹¹

However, there is still a lot of work to be done to form a comprehensive regional response on the basis also of reliable and comparable data on both phenomena, which is currently scarce. In the framework of the work of the Action, many countries cited the need to share good practices and, specifically, to increase data collection at regional level. They also acknowledged that in the region widespread constraints hindering the application of effective strategies remain present especially in the areas of border management, national security and the identification and protection of migrants in vulnerable situations.

Tackling the issues of THB and SoM is also a priority of the *Joint Caribbean-EU Partnership Strategy on crime and security (2012)*, specifically under its Theme IV dedicated to crime and security, with a focus on strengthening regional cooperation and capacity building in areas such as policing, judicial processes, intelligence sharing, etc.; equally, the root causes behind criminal activities and their social impact need to be addressed.

Regional Thematic Meeting: objectives and expected outcomes

The themes of the Regional Thematic Meeting stem out of the areas of cooperation identified within the context of the ACP-EU Dialogue, the Action's work in the Caribbean region and other relevant regional dialogues such as the CMC.

The objective is to provide a dedicated platform for Caribbean stakeholders and beneficiaries of the Action to: exchange information and experiences on policy implementation with regards to counter-trafficking and counter-smuggling of migrants; discuss challenges related to specific contexts; and to identify region-relevant good practices, notably innovative practices resulting from implementation of the demand-driven TAs under the ACP-EU Migration Action.

The Regional Thematic Meeting will inform the production of a *Regional Thematic Report* on the topic of THB and SoM, with the aim of providing an overview of the achievements of the Action in the specific region, through examples and good practices of relevant Action's activities. This Report will be specifically addressed to ACP governments, EU institutions, regional actors (such as Regional Organizations), International Organizations, and civil society. It will contain an analysis of the main challenges to be addressed at regional level, as to further boost the implementation of the recommendations of the Dialogue and to stimulate continued regional cooperation beyond the implementation period of the ACP-EU Migration Action.

¹¹ Retrieved from <https://caribbeanmigration.org>

Meeting format and participation

The Regional Thematic Meeting on Trafficking in Human Beings and Smuggling of Migrants in the Caribbean will be held in Georgetown, Guyana, from 12 to 14 of March 2019.

The meeting will bring together the Actions' national counterparts in the Caribbean region, representatives from Regional Organizations, International Organizations, Non-State Actors, the EU and IOM Regional/national officers.

The meeting will comprise of several plenary and workshop sessions, which will be facilitated by experts in THB and SoM and will feature presentations by the beneficiaries of the Action, policy makers and migration experts. The meeting will also incorporate the representatives of the Counter-trafficking Network of the CMC, following up on its first meeting in 2018. Dedicated sessions to the CMC process will ensure that discussions and collaboration originating within this process are extended and can benefit the Action's government focal points and other participants to the Regional Thematic Meeting. The meeting format is meant to be highly participative, so there will be a lot of space for exchange among participants. Break-out sessions will allow for in-depth and more technical discussions on issues arising from the thematic focus on THB and SoM.

Further reading

- [Trafficking in Human Beings and Smuggling of Migrants in ACP Countries: Key Challenges and Ways Forward](#) (ACP-EU Migration Action thematic publication, 2018)
- [Final Report of the First Meeting of the Caribbean Migration Consultations Counter-Trafficking Network](#) (IOM, 2018)
- [Migration Governance in The Caribbean: Report on the Island States of the Commonwealth Caribbean](#) (IOM Regional Office for Central America, North America and the Caribbean, Report, 2018)