

# THE ROLE OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS) IN COMBATING TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

In 2015, the leaders of all the UN's Member States agreed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – a set of universally applicable commitments to be achieved by the year 2030. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their 169 associated targets are ambitious in scale and address five broad areas of critical importance: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership. As an overarching principle, the Goals posit that States have a collective interest and responsibility to ensure that the most vulnerable people and populations – including migrants and refugees – are not left behind by economic, social and environmental progress.<sup>1</sup>

Out of the 17 SDGs, trafficking in persons is specifically mentioned in three targets under three goals: 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and 16 (Peace Justice and Strong Institutions). However, many other SDG targets and goals are relevant to addressing trafficking in persons, an issue deeply rooted in development issues at-large including poverty, education, child labour, abuse and exploitation, gender inequality and discrimination, migration and the effects of climate change. This issue brief provides an explanation of these three specific targets as well as several other SDGs relevant to addressing trafficking in persons, and makes recommendations about what States can do to achieve them by 2030.

## WHAT DO THE SDGS SAY ABOUT COMBATING TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS?



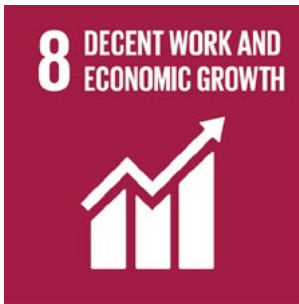
**Target 5.2** advocates for the **elimination of all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.**

Trafficking in persons disproportionately affects women and girls; 71% of all victims detected worldwide are female. The 2016 UNODC Global Report on Trafficking estimates that 51% of all detected trafficking victims are women, and 20% of detected victims are girls. Females are often trafficked for sexual exploitation, but also for sham or forced marriages, forced begging, domestic servitude, forced labour in agriculture or catering, in garment factories, and in the cleaning industry. Trafficking for sexual exploitation is considered one of the most prevalent forms of trafficking, along with trafficking for labour exploitation, and both are reported nearly everywhere across the globe.<sup>2</sup>

The indicator agreed to measure this Target is 5.2.2: *Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence.*

<sup>1</sup> Report of Peter Sutherland, Special Envoy on Migration to the General Assembly, 13 February 2017 <https://goo.gl/yuzs65>

<sup>2</sup> UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2016* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.16.IV.6)



**Target 8.7** calls for taking immediate and effective measures to **eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking** and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of **child labour**, including **recruitment and use of**

**child soldiers**, and by 2025 to **end child labour** in all its forms.

According to the 'Global estimates of modern slavery: Forced labour and forced Marriage', produced by the ILO and Walk Free Foundation in partnership with IOM, 25 million people were victims of forced labour and 15 million were victims of forced marriage in 2016. One in four victims was a child, and children represented 18% of those subjected to forced labour exploitation.<sup>3</sup>

These stark figures underscore the need for accelerated progress against exploitation, including trafficking and forced labour in the lead up to the 2030 target date, as well as the worst forms of child labour by 2025. They also highlight the accompanying need for improved statistics on trafficking in persons and forced labour to guide, monitor and evaluate efforts in this regard.

The indicator agreed to measure this target is: 8.7.1: *Proportion and number of children aged 5-17 years engaged in child labour, by sex and age.*



**Target 16.2** calls for **ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.**

According to the 2016 UNODC Global Report, after women (51%), children remain the second largest

category of detected victims of trafficking across the world. In 2016, UNODC estimated that almost three quarters of child trafficking victims are girls, and of all trafficking cases globally, 20% of detected victims

were girls, and 8% were boys. The Global Report also noted that children appear to comprise larger shares of detected victims in the least developed countries.

The indicator agreed to measure this Target is: 16.2.2: *Number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population, by sex, age and form of exploitation*

## HOW DO THE OTHER SDG TARGETS CONTRIBUTE TO COMBATTING TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS?

Trafficking in persons is a multifaceted issue cutting across human rights, rule of law, migration, labour, inequality, anti-corruption, education, gender, violence, and conflict issues. As a result, progress against many of the other targets in the SDGs will contribute to preventing and eliminating human trafficking globally.

The targets in **Goal 5 (Gender Equality)** will have a strong impact through the elimination of violence against women and girls as well as **Target 5.3** specifically; the elimination of harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage. In parallel, the focus on strengthening the protection and value of paid domestic work, granting women equal access to economic resources and ensuring full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making is likely to increase the overall resilience of women and girls against vulnerabilities and situations leading to exploitation, including human trafficking.

Targets under **Goal 8** will also have a positive impact in addressing many of the underlying conditions that lead to situations of trafficking and forced labour. These targets focus on increasing access to decent work, reducing unemployment, improving labour rights and promoting safe working environments, as well as economic growth, in particular in the least developed countries. As many situations of human trafficking can begin as a search for work or as a decision to migrate abroad prompted by a lack of opportunities at home and regular avenues by which to migrate, this Goal has the potential to address one of the largest, systemic factors that creates vulnerability to trafficking in the

<sup>3</sup> ILO, *Global estimates of modern slavery: Forced labour and forced marriage, 2017*

first place: lack of access to decent work through regular channels.

This is further supported by **Target 10.7 (Reduced Inequalities)** which calls for States to “facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies”. Through this goal, States acknowledge that strengthened migration management systems and the expansion of safe, orderly and regular migration pathways can reduce the need for dangerous and irregular movements that can expose migrants and refugees to violence, abuse and exploitation.

Further progress on combatting human trafficking will come through **Goal 16’s** targets to strengthen rule of law, reduce corruption, develop effective and accountable institutions, and ensure a legal identity, including birth registration for all. Lack of birth registration markedly increases an individual’s vulnerability to trafficking, as well as excluding them from accessing social and community support mechanisms. The response to human trafficking across almost all countries is led by law enforcement, in coordination with other state and non-state institutions. Strengthening the capacity of these institutions to detect and combat trafficking, as well as to work in partnership with other stakeholders, is integral to making an impact on the ground.

Beyond these goals, the outcomes of **Goal 4: Quality Education and Lifelong Learning Opportunities for all** will address key factors contributing to vulnerability to trafficking faced by millions globally. Goal 4’s focus on the global education system strongly complements the focus of both Goal 5 on Gender Equality and Goal 8 on Decent Work and Economic Growth. **Target 4.1** calls for all girls and boys to complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes. According to UNICEF’s Out-of-School Children initiative, 124 million children and young adolescents between the ages of 6 and 15 have either never started school or have dropped out.<sup>4</sup> Children who are not in school are more likely to be working or unable to access child protection and safeguarding mechanisms, making them more

vulnerable to trafficking.<sup>5</sup> **Target 4.3 and 4.4** both call for increases in technical and vocational education and skill development for employment for youth and adults. This is highly relevant as a lack of economic resources or a low/ incomplete level of education is likely to increase the risks that individuals are unable to access regular channels to migrate, and therefore may pursue irregular migration channels that may lead to exploitation and trafficking.

Finally, **Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals, Targets 17.18 and 17.19** both call for enhanced capacity to collect, manage and analyze data, and will contribute to improving monitoring and accountability of action against human trafficking.

## WHAT IS ALREADY BEING DONE TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS?

Sustained action against trafficking in persons has been on-going at the global level since the early 2000s. With the adoption of the SDGs, a number of initiatives have been launched to specifically support states to achieve the targets:

- ❶ The United Nations *Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons*, adopted in 2010, was the subject of a high-level appraisal at the UN in October 2017, where the SDG targets were reflected upon.
- ❷ Several UN agencies are working on data collection and measurement frameworks to help provide baseline and assess progress under SDGs 5.2, 8.7 and 16.2. For example, UNODC provided data on the extent of child trafficking globally in 2016 as part of the inaugural report on the SDGs as a stock-taking exercise. This was explicitly linked to Target 16.2, however available data can also be used to monitor elements of Targets 5.2 and 8.7.
- ❸ The 5.2 *Global Partnership on Ending Violence Against Women* is a multi-stakeholder group led by civil society organizations that calls on Member States, the United Nations and its agencies to adhere to their stated

<sup>4</sup> UNICEF, *Out-of-School Children Data Release 2015*

<sup>5</sup> IOM, UNICEF, *Harrowing Journeys: Children and youth on the move across the Mediterranean Sea, at risk of trafficking and exploitation*, 2017 <https://goo.gl/zEhSMg>

commitments to fully incorporate the language and goals of SDG target 5.2 in all efforts to end human trafficking, including in the *Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons*.

- ➊ *Alliance 8.7*, a global partnership to drive action to meet the commitments of Target 8.7, was launched in 2016. The *Alliance* provides a platform to align state plans and strategies with the goals and deadlines of Target 8.7, conduct research and share knowledge, identify innovative approaches and better harness available resources.
- ➋ The *Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children* is a global partnership focused on Targets 5.2 and 16.2, to build political will, strengthen collaboration between countries and drive action to tackle violence against children.
- ➌ The global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration: Guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the global compact for migration will address all aspects of international migration, including human trafficking across transnational borders.

#### WHAT IS ICAT?

The Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT) is a policy forum mandated by the UN General Assembly to improve coordination among UN agencies and other relevant international organizations to facilitate a holistic and comprehensive approach to preventing and combating trafficking in persons. ICAT was formally established in March 2007, pursuant to the United Nations General Assembly [Resolution 61/180](#). ICAT consists of 16 UN members and three Partner organizations, OSCE, ICMPD and the Council of Europe. The members of the ICAT Working Group are the ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNODC, and UN Women.

## WHAT MORE CAN STATES DO TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS?

These goals cannot be achieved without cooperation around a series of common principles between countries of origin, transit and destination, as well between a large range of stakeholders such as governments, civil society organizations, the private sector, and international organizations. An effective response is one which seeks to meet the targets explicitly focused on trafficking, at the same time as building links with and maximising the benefits from the broader range of SDGs addressing poverty, rule of law, migration, labour issues, education and gender inequality.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ➊ States and funding institutions should adapt project programming, strategic objectives and communication activities to reflect the commitments made in the relevant SDG targets.
- ➋ Identify opportunities to connect with other global partnerships and relevant regional platforms covering migration, human rights, gender, and law enforcement issues and include action against human trafficking in debates and actions.
- ➌ State and non-State responses to human trafficking should be gender and age sensitive.
- ➍ Increase the impact; avoid duplication and pool resources of anti-trafficking actions through harmonising national, regional and global research and capacity building initiatives addressing trafficking in persons.
- ➎ Ensure adequate collection of sex and age disaggregated data, including on migrant, stateless and refugee populations and support consistent reporting towards SDG targets and indicators.