

CARIBBEAN REGIONAL FORUM

Demystifying
Human
Trafficking in the
Caribbean
Context: *The
Intersection of
Culture and Human
Trafficking*

DATES: MAY 20-22, 2024
LOCATION: KINGSTON, JAMAICA



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FREEDOM FROM SLAVERY FORUM SERIES



The Freedom from Slavery Forum was established in 2013 to gather anti-slavery leaders worldwide to create a space to merge, create partnerships, discuss promising practices, and develop a shared agenda for action. Participants have built relationships and prioritized actions in advocacy and collaboration with other sectors. In 2021, a series of Regional Forums supplemented the annual Global Forum. The 2022-2023 series took place online and in person, providing opportunities to increase access and ensuring grassroots ideas and voices were amplified within the movement. In 2024, the European Forum also became a separate entity, resulting in 7 forums held throughout the year: three in-person forums (North America, Caribbean, Europe) and four online forums (Latin America, Asia, Africa, and MENA). The series will conclude with the Global Forum in 2025.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE FORUMS



The objectives of the Regional Forums are **to explore and define critical strategies for local engagements, identify the best approaches to revitalize the movement, increase resilience and resistance to modern slavery, and determine how these engagements may inform the global synergies**. The Forum is a collegial space to unite stakeholders and strengthen the anti-modern slavery movement. The panels and workshops discuss opportunities, challenges, practices, strategies, and actions to eradicate modern slavery in the regions.

CARIBBEAN REGIONAL FORUM



The Caribbean Regional Forum, held from May 20-22, 2024, at Pegasus Hotel in Kingston, Jamaica, brought together stakeholders under the theme, *Demystifying Human Trafficking in the Caribbean Context: The Intersection of Culture and Human Trafficking*.

Kingston, Jamaica

May 20-22, 2024

Demystifying Human Trafficking in the Caribbean Context: The Intersection of Culture and Human Trafficking

The Caribbean Regional Forum was convened in person in Kingston, Jamaica, and co-hosted by the Office of the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons (ONRTIP). The theme for the Caribbean Forum was "Demystifying Human Trafficking in the Caribbean Context: The Intersection of Culture and Human Trafficking." The Forum served as a call to dismantle the trafficking networks that have entrenched themselves by exploiting historical, cultural, and socioeconomic dynamics. Forum attendees embarked on a mission to demystify the complex and often hidden operations of human trafficking within the Caribbean through the lens of culture, which influences factors such as gender inequality, the demand for commercial sex, ethnic values, and the mistrust by local communities of law enforcement. It also hinders effective collaboration between state and non-state actors to address deep-rooted social challenges.

The agenda and expected outcomes were developed in consultation with ONRTIP and an External Planning Committee comprising survivors, UN agencies, academics, indigenous peoples, and persons with disabilities.

The 2024 Caribbean Regional Forum set clear objectives to tackle human trafficking in the Caribbean. The Forum aimed to highlight how trafficking occurs within the region and beyond (where Caribbean nationals may be victims or perpetrators) and to foster a greater understanding of how the Caribbean's own history and social practices may contribute to this issue. It also looked closely at what makes individuals in the Caribbean susceptible to traffickers and the methods traffickers use to exploit vulnerable people.

To maximize opportunities for discussion and knowledge-sharing among participants, each day comprised a mixture of panels, workshops and facilitated discussions. Time was also allotted for networking, which allowed participants to learn more about their local and regional colleagues in the movement.



THE PLANNING OF THE FORUM

While Free the Slaves serves as the Forum's secretariat, we were not the sole actors involved in planning the event. We would like to express our gratitude to all members of the external committee without whom this event would not have been successful.

- **Charmaine Gandhi-Andrews** – Azanique Development, Trinidad and Tobago
- **Dr. Cherisse Francis** – St. Mary's University UK, Barbados
- **Coleen Morris** – Office of the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, Jamaica
- **Diahann Gordon Harrison** – Office of the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, Jamaica
- **Dr. Jason Haynes** – Birmingham Law School UK, St. Vincent and the Grenadines
- **Kristie van de Wetering** – Beyond Borders, Haiti/Canada
- **Lisette Reyes** – United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Dominican Republic
- **Merphilus James** – Disabled People's International North America and the Caribbean, Saint Lucia
- **Neil Bacchus** – Indigenous Peoples Commission, Guyana
- **Rene Baptiste** – Soroptimist International Caribbean Network, St. Vincent and the Grenadines
- **Sandra Christie Brown** – Finding Your Light Foundation Inc., Jamaica/USA
- **Tameisha Udosen** – Office of the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, Jamaica

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE FORUM



To explore the various forms of human trafficking that occur within the Caribbean and how Caribbean people are trafficked outside of the region.



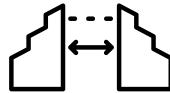
To explore how Caribbean history, cultures, and norms perpetuate the exploitation of its people.



To examine the key factors that increase the vulnerability of people within the Caribbean region and how traffickers operate to exploit these vulnerabilities.



To highlight and examine current anti-trafficking approaches within the Caribbean region, lessons learned, and areas for improvement.



To highlight critical gaps within the Caribbean region that increase the vulnerability of certain groups and exacerbate conditions for survivors;



To identify practical solutions to improve human trafficking prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnership in the region, considering the existing critical gaps.



To develop actionable steps to inform national and regional approaches for policymakers, law enforcement, the judiciary, and CSOs to address human trafficking.



Day One

Day 1 of the Forum delved into the complexities of human trafficking in the Caribbean, examining its various forms, the cultural and historical factors that enable it, and the profiles of both victims and traffickers.



OBJECTIVES



Understanding how the region's unique social dynamics contribute to exploitation.



Identifying the factors that increase vulnerability.



Exploring how traffickers manipulate these conditions for their advantage.



OVERVIEW OF SPEAKERS

- **Bukeni Waruzi** – Free the Slaves, USA
- **Diahann Gordon Harrison** – National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, Jamaica
- **Sylvie Bertrand** – UNODC Regional Representative, Canada/Bolivia
- **Amanda Ackbarali-Ramdial** – CariSECURE 2.0 Project, UNDP, Trinidad and Tobago
- **Hon. Juliet Cuthbert-Flynn** – M.P. Ministry of National Security, Jamaica
- **Davina Durgana Ph.D.** – Free the Slaves, USA
- **Prof. Verene Shepherd** – University of the West Indie, Jamaica
- **Pro Vice-Chancellor Sandra Maynard** – University of the West Indies, Jamaica
- **Adriana Oropeza** – UNODC
- **Dr. Cherisse Francis, Ph.D.** – St. Mary's University, UK, Barbados
- **Elizabeth Thomas Hope, Ph.D.** – University of the West Indies, Jamaica
- **Karen Carpenter** – University of the West Indies, Jamaica
- **Insp. Kemisha Gordon** – Jamaica Constabulary Force, Jamaica
- **Oliver Profitt** – IOM Caribbean, Guyana



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WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION



The Forum's opening session highlighted the complex challenges of addressing human trafficking in the Caribbean. Bukeni Waruzi, the Executive Director of Free the Slaves, emphasized the importance of tackling trafficking at local, regional, and global levels, focusing on cultural factors and incorporating the insights of those with lived experiences.

Mrs. Diahann Gordon Harrison described the Caribbean as a melting pot of diverse cultural practices that can sometimes perpetuate trafficking, emphasizing the need for practical and collaborative solutions among local stakeholders. Sylvie Bertrand reinforced that even a single trafficking victim is one too many, advocating for solid prevention measures, evidence-based policies, and legislative frameworks alongside better coordination and ongoing training. Amanda Ackbarali-Ramdial urged participants to confront trafficking collectively, calling for advanced forensic techniques, trauma-informed procedures, and active community engagement while aligning all efforts with the Sustainable Development Goals. Minister Juliet Cuthbert-Flynn highlighted how culture and systemic inequalities contribute to trafficking and stressed the need for a multifaceted approach, enhanced community outreach, and comprehensive legislative updates to combat this issue effectively.



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"Prevention is the best investment, not only in financial terms but also in human terms. By discussing it, we can exchange crucial information that is key to developing public policies based on in-depth knowledge and evidence. This way, our actions can be targeted, and, above all, victim centered." – Sylvie Bertrand - UNODC Regional Representative, Canada/Bolivia

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Multi-level Approach to Trafficking

Bukeni Waruzi stressed the importance of addressing human trafficking at local, regional, and global levels, integrating cultural factors and insights from survivors.

Cultural Influence in the Caribbean

Diahann Gordon Harrison highlighted that the Caribbean's diverse cultural practices can sometimes perpetuate trafficking, calling for practical, collaborative solutions among local stakeholders.

Victim-Centered Focus

Sylvie Bertrand emphasized that even one victim is too many, advocating for prevention, evidence-based policies, stronger legislative frameworks, and ongoing training for better coordination.

Forensic Techniques & Trauma-Informed Practices

Amanda Ackbarali-Ramdial urged collective efforts against trafficking, focusing on advanced forensic methods, trauma-informed procedures, and active community engagement aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Systemic Inequalities & Cultural Factors

Minister Juliet Cuthbert-Flynn pointed out how systemic inequalities and cultural factors contribute to trafficking, stressing a multifaceted approach, enhanced outreach, and updated legislative measures.

KEYNOTE SPEECH



Following the opening remarks, day one of the Forum sessions began with a keynote speech by Professor Verene A. Shepherd. In her speech, she provided a historical overview of human trafficking in the Caribbean, emphasizing the relevance of history in understanding contemporary issues. She discussed the Transatlantic Slave Trade, highlighting how slavers kidnapped Africans and transported them to the Caribbean, with British legislation against trafficking in 1807 marking a turning point. However, trafficking persisted under other colonial powers. Professor Shepherd reviewed the devastating impact of chattel enslavement, noting that poverty, weakened family structures, and cultural norms drive trafficking today. She stressed the importance of learning from history to avoid repeating its horrors. Shepherd called for teaching history at all educational levels, intensifying efforts to catch and punish traffickers, increasing job incentives, and rehabilitating both victims and perpetrators. Additionally, she urged for public recognition of those lost through this tragic crime, emphasizing the need to preserve their memory through memorial sites and reparation efforts for descendants of enslaved Africans.



"Yet the phenomenon of human trafficking persists in modern societies—smaller in scale, yes, but no less heinous and disruptive to the lives of victims and their families. It is as if we have not learned any lessons from chattel slavery." – Verene A. Shepherd - University of the West Indie, Jamaica

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Legislation Alone is not Enough

Despite early anti-trafficking laws, exploitation persisted under other colonial powers, demonstrating that systemic issues require comprehensive solutions.

Poverty and Family Instability Drive Trafficking

Today's trafficking is often rooted in socioeconomic vulnerabilities, making targeted support and poverty alleviation crucial.

Education as Prevention

Teaching the history of human trafficking at all educational levels is essential to build awareness and prevent the repetition of historical injustices.

FOLLOWING THE NUMBERS: LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE DATA IN THE REGION



The keynote speech was followed by a panel discussion on "Following the numbers: Lessons learned from the data in the region" by Cherisse Francis, Attorney at Law & Researcher on Trafficking in Persons, Adriana Oropeza of UNODC, and Oliver Profit, the National Project Officer at IOM Guyana. The Panel discussed how the current data collection and analysis methods in the Caribbean are insufficient to combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP) effectively. They identified this as one reason the region is often underrepresented in global reports, and while the US TIP Report covers Caribbean countries, inconsistencies persist, driven by the 4Ps framework (Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, and Partnership). Mistrust in authorities hinders victim self-identification, leading to gaps in data, particularly on domestic and familial trafficking. Interestingly, many detected traffickers in the Caribbean are middle-aged females, highlighting complex dynamics in the region. Recommendations include incorporating anecdotal data from informal sources like sex workers to better inform interventions, even if not included in official statistics. Regional data trends show high levels of child exploitation and forced labor, with women and girls accounting for over 50% of detected victims. Additionally, migration patterns in the Caribbean, characterized by negative migration and increasing intra-regional movement, create vulnerabilities to trafficking, particularly for working-age adults and women. Addressing these issues requires improved data tools such as the Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative (CTDC), Migrant Management Operational System Applications (MIMOSA), and Migration Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS), stressing the need for improved information-sharing mechanisms and enhanced data protection strategies.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Insufficient Data Collection and Analysis

Current data methods in the Caribbean are inadequate for effectively combating Trafficking in Persons (TIP), resulting in underrepresentation in global reports.

Barriers to Victim Identification

Mistrust in authorities hampers victim self-identification, particularly in domestic and familial trafficking cases, creating data gaps. Including anecdotal data from informal sources, such as sex workers, can better inform interventions, even if not reflected in official statistics.

Impact of Migration Patterns

Migration trends in the Caribbean, including net negative migration and increased intra-regional movement, create heightened vulnerabilities, particularly for working-age adults and women.

Need for Enhanced Data Tools

Improved data tools and platforms like CTDC, MIMOSA, and MIDAS are essential for better tracking and sharing of information alongside strengthened data protection strategies.



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"Regarding data, Caribbeans are often subsumed within the Americas, Latin America, or Central America. So, when trying to find data, separating the Caribbean from other regions is challenging, affecting funding. Because we are part of these larger groups, much of the money for anti-trafficking capacity building doesn't flow our way. Funders won't send the money if they can't see the need due to a lack of data or information. But we can't provide the data or information without the money, creating a self-perpetuating cycle." – Cherisse Francis, Ph.D.

FACILITATED DISCUSSION: THE INTERSECTION OF CARIBBEAN CULTURE AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING



A facilitated discussion on the intersection of Caribbean culture and human trafficking by Dr Karen Carpenter, Ph.D, followed the panel discussion. - Head/Senior Lecturer, Institute for Gender and Development Studies, University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, Jamaica. The facilitated discussion explored how Caribbean culture intersects with human trafficking, highlighting factors like migration, sports trafficking, and familial exploitation. Key points included the culture of transactional sex in Guyana, where migrants and economically vulnerable groups are particularly at risk. In St. Lucia, child trafficking is linked to poverty in high-tourism areas, with familial exploitation almost normalized. Trinidad faces challenges from high demand for commercial sex, including the trafficking of Venezuelan women and children. The discussion also touched on the potential benefits and challenges of decriminalizing sex work, with differing opinions on whether it would improve conditions for sex workers or exacerbate trafficking. Corruption and lack of infrastructure raised concerns about the region's readiness for such a cultural shift. The conversation emphasized the need for better-equipped law enforcement, with sting operations being an essential tool, and questioned the effectiveness of existing laws if prosecutions are not happening.



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"In Jamaica, and likely elsewhere, one of the cultural triggers for human trafficking is the economic reality many young women face. After putting themselves through college, they often struggle to find jobs that align with their qualifications, which becomes a driving factor in their vulnerability to trafficking." – Karen Carpenter, Head/Senior Lecturer - University of the West Indies

KEY TAKEAWAYS



Gaps in Law Enforcement and Prosecution

The need for better-equipped law enforcement and more effective implementation of sting operations was emphasized, alongside concerns over the lack of prosecutions under current anti-trafficking laws.

Cultural Norms Shape Trafficking Patterns

Migration, familial exploitation, and attitudes toward prostitution significantly influence how human trafficking manifests across Caribbean countries.

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WORKSHOP: UNDERSTANDING THE TRAFFICKERS



The above discussion was followed by a crucial workshop on Understanding the Traffickers facilitated by Detective Inspector Kemisha Gordon. The Workshop delved into identifying who the traffickers are in the Caribbean region and the vulnerabilities they exploit. The session provided an overview of human trafficking in Jamaica, including data from the Anti-Trafficking in Persons (A-TIP) Vice Squad, which has been operational since 2006. The discussion covered the motivations behind trafficking, noting that many traffickers come from poverty-stricken backgrounds and exploit vulnerabilities such as unemployment, disability, age, and undocumented status. The workshop also examined the types of trafficking and how traffickers often operate unnoticed in plain sight. Key Jamaican legislation and its amendments were reviewed, particularly sections detailing who qualifies as traffickers, noting that anyone, including intimate partners, can be involved. The importance of reporting suspected cases was emphasized, even when there is uncertainty. Participants discussed factors like community culture, mental health issues, and addiction that make victims more susceptible to trafficking. The session underscored that traffickers often appear non-violent and blend into communities, making them difficult to detect.



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"Human Trafficking is one of the most lucrative forms of criminal business. Unfortunately, traffickers are not of any particular race, gender, or sexual orientation. They could be your family, partner, or stranger. However, a lot of traffickers were often poverty-stricken before becoming traffickers"
– Det. Insp. Kemisha Gordon,
Jamaica Constabulary Force

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Profile of Traffickers

Many traffickers in the Caribbean come from impoverished backgrounds and exploit vulnerabilities such as unemployment, disability, age, and undocumented status.

Types of Trafficking

Traffickers often operate unnoticed in plain sight, targeting individuals through a variety of methods, and can include intimate partners and people within the community.

Reporting Importance

The workshop highlighted the critical need to report suspected cases of trafficking, even when there is uncertainty, to aid in identifying and disrupting trafficking networks.

Trafficker Behavior

Traffickers often appear non-violent and blend into communities, making them difficult to detect and requiring enhanced vigilance from the public and law enforcement.



WORKSHOP: CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL CONNECTIONS WITHIN AND BETWEEN THE CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES

At the same time Dr. Elizabeth Thomas Hope of the Mona Campus, University of the West Indies examined how cultural practices, and historical legacies contribute to trafficking in the region. The session explored how factors like poverty, community morals, and family structures influence vulnerability to trafficking. Participants discussed the role of poverty beyond economics, highlighting the importance of community support in preventing exploitation. The Workshop also touched on the exploitation of children through labor and sexual relationships driven by economic needs, as seen in places like Barbados and Belize. Cultural practices that protect criminals, particularly high-level offenders who support their communities economically, were discussed as barriers to addressing trafficking. The session emphasized the need for better public awareness and education on trafficking, noting gaps in knowledge, especially in schools and inner-city areas. The discussion concluded by stressing the need for stronger laws, policies, and community resilience to combat trafficking in the Caribbean, alongside civil society efforts to bolster vulnerable communities.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Cultural and Historical Influence

Poverty, community morals, and family structures can either increase or build resilience to vulnerability to human trafficking across the Caribbean.

Child Exploitation

Economic needs drive child labor and sexual exploitation in the Caribbean

Gaps in Awareness

Lack of public awareness, especially in schools and inner-city areas, hinders anti-trafficking efforts.

FACILITATED DISCUSSION: ARE WE REALLY “ONE CARIBBEAN” WHEN APPROACHING TIP?



The first day of the Forum concluded with a facilitated discussion led by Mrs. Amanda Ackbarali-Ramdial (UNDP) and Mrs. Andreina Briceno Ventura Brown (La Casita Hispanic Cultural Centre) on whether Caribbean countries are united in combating Trafficking in Persons. The discussion highlighted significant gaps in collaboration and information sharing across the region. Participants examined the lack of a harmonized, region-wide approach, noting that Caribbean nations often work in silos, which weakens their collective response to TIP. The conversation revealed that despite shared cultural ties, there are limited resources and a lack of standardized legal frameworks, unified public campaigns, and effective information-sharing systems. Challenges include inconsistent political will, competition between countries, inadequate policy frameworks, and failure to recognize TIP as a significant issue in some jurisdictions. The quiz activity underscored that many Caribbean countries lack specialized units, legislation, and training to combat TIP effectively. The session concluded with a call to action for regionalization, urging governments to move beyond mere compliance with external reports and to adopt a coordinated, collaborative approach. It emphasized the importance of consistent messaging, education, and the need for increased resources and support services to address trafficking in a unified manner across the Caribbean.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Lack of Regional Coordination

Caribbean countries often work in silos, leading to weakened collective responses and gaps in collaboration to combat human trafficking.

Absence of a Harmonized Framework

Despite shared cultural ties, there is no standardized legal framework, public campaigns, or information-sharing systems to address TIP across the region.

Recognition Gaps

- Some jurisdictions do not prioritize TIP as a significant issue, impacting resource allocation and enforcement.

Lack of Specialized Units

Many Caribbean nations lack dedicated TIP units, legislation, and training to respond effectively to trafficking.

REGIONAL CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED ON DAY ONE

Socioeconomic Vulnerabilities

Human trafficking in the Caribbean is often driven by socioeconomic factors, making targeted support and poverty alleviation essential for effective prevention.

Insufficient Data Collection

Inconsistent and inadequate data collection methods across the region hinder the effectiveness of anti-trafficking strategies, leading to gaps in understanding the full scope of trafficking.

Victim Mistrust and Self-Identification

Mistrust in law enforcement, especially in cases of domestic and familial trafficking, prevents victims from self-identifying, complicating efforts to grasp the issue's true scale.

Law Enforcement and Prosecution Gaps

There is a need for better-equipped law enforcement and more effective sting operations, with concerns raised over the lack of prosecutions under current anti-trafficking laws.

Influence of Poverty and Family Structures

Poverty, community morals, and family dynamics significantly contribute to vulnerability to human trafficking throughout the Caribbean.



PROPOSED SOLUTIONS FOR DAY ONE

01. Targeted Poverty Alleviation

Implement programs that provide economic support, employment opportunities, vocational training, and microfinance to at-risk communities with high trafficking vulnerabilities.

02. Improved Access to Social Services

Enhance access to essential services like education, healthcare, housing, and welfare programs to address the socioeconomic factors driving human trafficking.

03. Community-Based Resilience Programs

Promote programs that challenge harmful social norms, advance gender equality, and empower local leaders to advocate against trafficking.

04. Centralized Data Collection System

Continuing to educate the public about the role of technology and the ethical use of technology in addressing human trafficking.

05. Training for Data Management

Train law enforcement, NGOs, and social workers on proper data collection, management, and reporting to improve tracking and understanding of trafficking cases.

06. Trauma-Informed Survivor Services

Provide accessible trauma-informed services, counseling, and support groups for survivors, independent of law enforcement involvement.

Day Two

Day two explored anti-human trafficking approaches in the Caribbean, covering policy and legislation, victim identification and referral systems, public-private partnerships, and cross-border collaborations. The objective was to evaluate current strategies, highlight successes, and identify areas for improvement. Discussions aimed to strengthen response mechanisms and enhance coordination among stakeholders for a more effective regional approach to combatting human trafficking.





OVERVIEW OF SPEAKERS

- Shauna Trowers – Ministry of National Security in Jamaica
- Diahann Gordon Harrison – National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, Jamaica
- Dr. Jason Haynes – Birmingham Law School UK, St. Vincent and the Grenadines
- Dr. Cherisse Francis – St. Mary's University, UK, Barbados
- Mario Cardero Vejar – UNODC's Regional Office for Central America and the Caribbean
- Neil Bacchus – Indigenous Peoples' Commission, Guyana
- Lissette Reyes – Project Officer, UNODC
- Amber Sherwood – Human Trafficking Institute, Belize
- Charmaine Gandhi-Andrews – Consultant, Azanique Development
- Oliver Profitt – National Project Officer, IOM, Guyana
- Detective Inspector Kemisha Gordon – Jamaica
- Davina Durgana Ph.D. – Free the Slaves, USA

KEYNOTE SPEECH



The second day of the Forum opened with a keynote speech from Ms. Shauna Trowers, Chief Technical Director at the Ministry of National Security in Jamaica, who spoke on behalf of Ambassador Alison Stone Rooft, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of National Security & Chairman of the National Task Force Against Trafficking in Persons (NTFATIP). Ms. Trowers emphasized the importance of the "Five Pillars" (Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, Partnership, and Policy) in combating human trafficking. She stressed the need for cross-border collaboration, comprehensive policies aligned with international standards, and a specialized task force to combat human trafficking. Ms. Trowers highlighted the importance of strengthening legal frameworks, raising awareness, particularly among vulnerable groups, improving victim identification and support, and fostering partnerships to enhance anti-trafficking efforts.



"To meet the needs of survivors, we know well it requires collaboration between governments, civil society, and international partners." Ms. Shauna Trowers – Ministry of National Security in Jamaica

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Comprehensive Policy Alignment

Policies should be aligned with international standards to ensure consistency and efficacy in combating human trafficking.

Strengthening Legal Frameworks

Enhancing legal mechanisms is essential for prosecution and victim protection.

Awareness and Victim Support

Focus on raising awareness among vulnerable groups and improving victim identification and support services.

Partnerships for Impact

Building stronger partnerships is vital to amplify anti-trafficking initiatives and resource mobilization.

PANEL DISCUSSION: EXPLORING RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN COUNTER - HUMAN TRAFFICKING POLICY AND LEGISLATION IN THE REGION



The keynote speech was followed by a panel discussion moderated by Mrs. Diahann Gordon Harrison titled Exploring Recent Developments in Counter-Human Trafficking Policy and Legislation in the Region. The panelists, including Jason Haynes, Cherisse Francis, and Mario Cordero Vejar, commended Guyana's new laws covering transnational crimes and emphasizing victim restitution and non-punishment for trafficking-related crimes. The panelists discussed best practices, including establishing national rapporteurs, specialized human trafficking judges, and consistent training, as seen in The Bahamas. However, challenges like inconsistent enforcement, limited resources, and siloed approaches persist in the region. The Panel stressed the need for improved collaboration, formal NGO involvement, and comprehensive data collection. The panelists emphasized strengthening interagency cooperation and enhancing regional integration as crucial for more effective anti-trafficking efforts.



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“An intercultural approach is crucial because we cannot fully grasp what is happening without it. The people who understand the situation best are those living in the country. By sharing knowledge, we can develop what I call a 'global perspective,' which blends global and local experiences. Combining these insights allows for a more refined understanding, helping us not only to approach the issue better but also to determine how to move forward.” – Mario Cordero Vejar, UNODC’s Regional Office for Central America and the Caribbean

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Guyana's Progressive Laws

Commended for addressing transnational crimes, emphasizing victim restitution and non-punishment for trafficking-related crimes.

Best Practices

Highlighted the importance of national rapporteurs, specialized trafficking judges, and consistent training (e.g., in The Bahamas)

Collaboration and NGO Involvement

Stressed the need for better collaboration, formal NGO involvement, and comprehensive data collection to tackle trafficking more effectively.



SUCCESSFUL IDENTIFICATION AND REFERRAL OF VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS



After the Panel, participants joined a workshop focused on the Successful Identification and Referral of Victims of Trafficking in Persons. It was led by Mr. Neil Bacchus, CEO of Guyana's Indigenous Peoples' Commission. Mr. Bacchus highlighted the importance of well-trained, compassionate staff and strong government support in victim identification and referral systems. Key challenges discussed included the overburdening of social workers, the lack of a formal follow-up system, and the need for more synergy between police and prosecutors. The role of NGOs in providing long-term psychosocial care was emphasized, as the government often lacks resources for sustained victim support. The workshop also stressed the need for a victim-centered approach, greater collaboration among countries, and addressing legislative gaps to improve conviction rates.



"We need to ensure that we have well-trained compassionate workers who are knowledgeable about identifying victims" – Neil Bacchus, Indigenous Peoples' Commission, Guyana

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Challenges

Key issues include overburdened social workers, the absence of a formal follow-up system, and insufficient synergy between police and prosecutors.

The role of NGO

Highlighted the critical role of NGOs in providing long-term psychosocial support, as governments often lack resources for sustained victim care.

Collaboration and Legislative Gaps

There is a need for greater international collaboration and addressing legal gaps to improve conviction rates.

EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION AMONG STATE AND NON-STATE ACTORS TO COMBAT TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

The second workshop, Effective Collaboration among State and Non-State Actors to Combat Trafficking in Persons, emphasized the importance of broad cross-sector collaboration, as outlined in the Palermo Protocol. Facilitator Ms. Lissette Reyes of the UNODC highlighted challenges such as resource constraints, knowledge gaps, and legal barriers that hinder information sharing between states and civil society. She stressed the need for a clear institutional framework with designated focal points to streamline coordination. The workshop discussed Operation Turquesa, an international cooperation effort against human trafficking, and suggested engaging the private sector, especially in labor trafficking cases, through corporate social responsibility initiatives. The workshop highlighted successful examples of collaboration between state and non-state actors in the Dominican Republic, such as partnerships with Western Union (which enabled monitoring of suspicious financial transactions), travel and tourism agencies (which helped identify potential trafficking through travel patterns), and companies with CCTV access at ports (which provided crucial surveillance to detect trafficking activities). These collaborations showcased how integrating private sector resources can significantly enhance anti-trafficking efforts. At the end of the Workshop, participants suggested including stakeholders from the fishing industry and the Food and Agriculture Organization in anti-trafficking efforts.



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"Embedded in the Palermo Protocol is the aspect of collaboration and cooperation, which means that any work we do to free trafficking victims can only happen if we work together. There is a significant difference between superficial cooperation and meaningful collaboration." – Lizzette Reyes, Project Officer, UNODC

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Cross-Sector Collaboration

Emphasized the need for broad collaboration between state and non-state actors, following the Palermo Protocol, to effectively combat trafficking.

Private Sector Engagement

Demonstrated successful private sector partnerships in the Dominican Republic, such as:

- Western Union for monitoring suspicious financial transactions.
- Travel and tourism agencies for identifying trafficking patterns.
- CCTV collaboration at ports for surveillance.

Expanding Stakeholder Involvement

Suggested involving fishing industries and the Food and Agriculture Organization to broaden anti-trafficking efforts.



BEST PRACTICES IN THE APPLICATION OF THE NON-PUNISHMENT PRINCIPLE



The workshops were followed by a facilitated discussion on the non-punishment principle, led by Ms. Amber Sherwood, Country Director of the Human Trafficking Institute in Belize. It emphasized the importance of ensuring that trafficked individuals are not prosecuted for offenses committed as a direct result of their trafficking situation. The session highlighted the need for clear legal frameworks that provide immunity, especially in immigration-related offenses. Sherwood also cited international treaties like the Palermo Protocol as foundational guides to the non-punishment principle. Participants reviewed their countries' Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Acts, identifying gaps in knowledge, inconsistencies in legal interpretation, and challenges in applying non-punishment principles. Best practices included defining who determines a person's status as a trafficking victim, expanding the principle's application beyond immigration offenses, and developing screening processes for law enforcement. The goal is to ensure comprehensive justice for trafficking victims through the practical and consistent application of the non-punishment principle.



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"The non-punishment principle should not be confused with the idea of decriminalizing certain types of crimes, as these are two separate concepts. The non-punishment principle states that trafficked persons should not be subject to arrest, charges, detention, prosecution, or penalized in any way for illegal conduct committed as a direct consequence of being trafficked." – Amber Sherwood, Human Trafficking Institute in Belize

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Protection from Prosecution

Trafficking victims should not be prosecuted for offenses committed as a direct result of their trafficking situation, emphasizing the need for clear laws providing immunity, particularly in immigration-related cases.

International Guidance and Legal Consistency

The Palermo Protocol and other international treaties were cited as guidelines for implementing the non-punishment principle, but gaps in knowledge, inconsistent legal interpretation, and varying applications across countries' Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Acts were identified as barriers to effective enforcement.

Following Financial Trails

Engaging the private sector (e.g., Western Union) to track suspicious financial transactions was recommended as a strategy to disrupt trafficking networks.

Role of social media

The rise of social media has created new channels for traffickers to exploit, making digital awareness and prevention strategies critical.



- At the heart of every criminal case is the issue of culpability
- Foundations of Non-Punishment Principal in Common Law
 - Defense of Duress
 - Defense of Necessity
- Modern day understanding of Trauma Bond
- Definitions under Palermo Protocol for victims under 18, they cannot legally consent to the acts in question.
- For adults, coercion as means of trafficking.

RESPONDING TO CROSS BORDER TRAFFICKING IN THE CARIBBEAN REGION



This session was followed by a panel discussion on cross-border trafficking in the Caribbean region, moderated by Mrs. Charmaine Gandhi-Andrews. The panel highlighted the issue of human smuggling, particularly from Venezuela to Trinidad and Tobago, with fraudulent documents being a common method smugglers use. Lissette Reyes from the TRACK4TIP Initiative emphasized the UNODC's efforts to expand its work into the Caribbean, stressing the need for legislation specific to human smuggling in the region and capacity-building to support these initiatives. Detective Inspector Kemisha Gordon addressed the issue of corruption, noting that while there is no empirical evidence of official complicity in human trafficking in Jamaica, there is a known link between Gogo clubs and trafficking activities. She also discussed the challenges law enforcement faces in gaining the trust of victims, who are often controlled through manipulation and fear. The panel also underscored the importance of following financial trails to combat trafficking, with recommendations to engage private sector entities like Western Union. Oliver Profit of the IOM highlighted the challenges posed by social media, which has created new avenues for traffickers, and the need for increased awareness, particularly in airports, to help identify and protect victims. The panel concluded with calls for stronger coordination, sustained action, and a unified regional approach to combat cross-border trafficking in the Caribbean effectively.



"Some of the challenges we encounter are that we are not partnering enough, and there is not enough sharing of intelligence between states. This is a challenge because we want to know who the players are." – Detective Inspector Kemisha Gordon, Jamaica Constabulary Force

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Human Smuggling and Document Fraud

A major issue is the smuggling of Venezuelans to Trinidad and Tobago using fraudulent documents, highlighting the need for legislation specifically targeting human smuggling.

Corruption and Complicity

There is no empirical evidence of official complicity in human trafficking in Jamaica, but connections between certain businesses (e.g., Gogo clubs) and trafficking are concerning. Victim trust in law enforcement remains low, often due to manipulation and fear imposed by traffickers.

UNODC's Regional Expansion and Capacity Building

The TRACK4TIP Initiative is expanding efforts in the Caribbean, emphasizing the need for targeted legislation and capacity-building to support anti-trafficking initiatives.



BUILDING A MOVEMENT NARRATIVE



Day 2 of the Caribbean Regional Forum concluded with participants contributing to the Building a Movement Narrative document. This unified framework aims to galvanize the anti-trafficking movement. The narrative development process is integral to the 2024-2025 Freedom from Slavery Forum series, designed to foster open discussion, feedback, and collaborative refinement of the draft narrative. Feedback gathered from these sessions will be incorporated into subsequent drafts, culminating in the presentation of the final narrative at the 2025 Global Freedom from Slavery Forum. Participants requested more engagement opportunities to contribute to this crucial document.



"The goal of the anti-trafficking movement's narrative is to establish a globally recognizable story similar to that of climate change. This aims to generate the public, political, and economic will necessary to take the actions needed to end modern slavery and human trafficking." – Bryon Lippincott, Free the Slaves

KEY TAKEAWAY

Learning from other Movements

Participants discussed the importance of movement narratives, such as how the climate change narrative has helped influence policy in many countries.

REGIONAL CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED ON DAY TWO

Inconsistent Application of the Non-Punishment Principle

Gaps in knowledge, inconsistent legal interpretation, and varying applications of the non-punishment principle across countries' Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Acts create legal challenges for victim protection.

Legislative Barriers to Collaboration

Legal obstacles hinder effective information sharing and collaboration between state agencies and civil society, weakening coordinated anti-trafficking efforts.

Low Conviction Rates

Low conviction rates are attributed to legislative gaps, insufficient coordination between police and prosecutors, and inconsistent law enforcement across the region.

Victim Mistrust in Law Enforcement

Victims often mistrust law enforcement, especially when traffickers manipulate them through fear, making it difficult to secure their cooperation.

Limited Government Resources

Government agencies lack the resources and capacity to provide long-term support to victims, placing the burden of sustained care on NGOs.

Social Stigma and Low Public Awareness

Social stigma and a lack of public awareness obstruct efforts to prevent trafficking and identify victims, reducing the effectiveness of intervention strategies.



PROPOSED SOLUTIONS FOR DAY TWO

01. Non-Punishment Principal Training

Implement clear guidelines and provide training for law enforcement to prevent the criminalization of trafficking victims for offenses committed during their exploitation.

02. Strengthen Cross-Border Collaboration

Establish joint task forces and formal agreements for cross-border data sharing and joint anti-trafficking operations.

03. Ongoing Training for Legal Professionals

Provide continuous training for law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges on identifying trafficking, handling cases, and adopting victim-centered approaches.

04. Comprehensive Victim Support Centers

Set up dedicated centers where victims can access legal aid, psychosocial support, and safe shelter without fear of law enforcement involvement.

05. Robust Social Safety Nets

Develop strong social safety nets, including child protection services, family support programs, and community development initiatives to reduce vulnerabilities to trafficking.

06. Regional Working Groups

Form regional working groups of state and non-state actors to align anti-trafficking strategies, share resources, and monitor progress.

Day Three

Day 3 of the Forum focused on identifying gaps in the Caribbean's anti-trafficking efforts and creating a plan of action. The focus was on addressing vulnerabilities that increase risks for specific groups and hinder support for survivors. Practical solutions were discussed to improve prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnerships across the region. Participants aimed to develop actionable steps to guide national and regional strategies involving policymakers, law enforcement, the judiciary, and civil society organizations in effectively combating human trafficking.





OVERVIEW OF SPEAKERS

- Charmaine Gandhi-Andrews – Consultant, Azanique Development
- Diahann Gordon Harrison – National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, Jamaica
- Merphilus James – Disabled People's International North America and The Caribbean
- Dr. Jason Haynes – Birmingham Law School UK, St. Vincent and the Grenadines
- Stacy-Ann Smith – Pursued International Foundation, Jamaica
- Sandra Christie Brown – Finding Your Light Foundation, Jamaica/USA
- Shamere MacKenzie – Sun Gate Foundation, USA
- Mario Cordero Vejar – UNODC
- Justice Lisa Palmer Hamilton – Supreme Court, Jamaica
- Rukiyah Brown – Independent Consultant on Counter Trafficking in Persons, Jamaica
- Dr. Sandra Maria Anderson-Spencer – Love Gardens Ministries International, Inc., USA
- Fernando Garcia-Robles – IACHR Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Human Rights Specialist
- Dalaina May – Dark Bali, Indonesia

KEYNOTE SPEECH: EXPLORING RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN COUNTER-HUMAN TRAFFICKING POLICY AND LEGISLATION IN THE REGION



The Forum's last day was opened with a keynote speech by Charmaine Gandhi-Andrews, Consultant at Azanique Development. She provided a comprehensive overview of the first two days of the Forum and set the stage for the discussions on day three. She highlighted the importance of understanding the role of culture in human trafficking, noting that cultural practices can both aid and hinder anti-trafficking efforts. In her keynote speech, she emphasized the need for an action-oriented approach that profoundly understands and respects cultural nuances within the Caribbean region. She called for overcoming regional and cultural biases, such as the perceived divide between Jamaicans and Trinidadians, to foster unity and collaboration. By addressing these cultural obstacles and avoiding the tendency to operate in silos, the Caribbean can present a united front against traffickers who exploit the region's vulnerabilities.



"The legacy of slavery and emancipation has shaped everything in the Caribbean: our storytelling, our music, our architecture, and the rituals of day-to-day life. We can use culture as a tool in our prevention practices, as history is relevant to what is happening today." – Charmaine Gandhi-Andrews, Consultant

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Cultural Impact on Trafficking

It is important to understand and navigate cultural nuances because cultural practices in the Caribbean can either aid or hinder anti-trafficking efforts.

Overcoming Regional Biases

Cultural and regional biases, like perceived divides between Jamaicans and Trinidadians, need to be overcome to foster unity and collaboration in anti-trafficking initiatives.

Unified Regional Front

A call for the Caribbean to avoid working in silos and instead present a coordinated, united response against traffickers who are exploiting regional vulnerabilities.

PANEL DISCUSSION: HUMAN TRAFFICKING GAPS WITHIN THE CARIBBEAN.

UNIDENTIFIED SYSTEMIC FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE CARIBBEAN



The keynote speech set the stage for a panel discussion on Human Trafficking Gaps within the Caribbean: Unidentified systemic factors contributing to human trafficking in the Caribbean. Moderated by Rukiyah Brown, Independent Consultant on Counter Trafficking in Persons, the Panel comprised Diahann Gordon Harrison (National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, Jamaica), Merphilus James (President, Disabled People's International North America & The Caribbean Inc.), Dr Sandra Maria Anderson-Spencer (Founder of Love Gardens Ministries International, Inc.) and Shamere McKenzie (Chief Executive Officer, Sun Gate Foundation). In her presentation, Dr. Sandra Maria Anderson-Spencer talked about understanding the powerful imprint of attachment trauma. She discussed the deep psychological impacts that trafficking has on victims. She argued that recovery requires more than initial rescue; it needs a "second rescue" addressing trauma's neurological and physiological effects. She emphasized that true recovery involves confronting these deep-rooted issues in supporting survivors through their complex healing journey. The panel also explored various forms of trafficking, including sexual exploitation, forced labor, domestic servitude, and the exploitation of people with disabilities. Merphilus James highlighted the lack of awareness among first responders and the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in accessing support. The discussion also touched on the importance of including survivor voices in policy development and the need to address cultural barriers, particularly regarding male victims. The session concluded with a focus on preventing re-victimization and the potential for rehabilitation of traffickers, emphasizing that with the right interventions, even those who have exploited others can be redeemed.



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"We must develop programs that guide individuals from being victims to becoming survivors, and ultimately to a state defined by their own choices. This is crucial because each person defines their own journey. Shelters can be effective when the right programming is in place."
– Shamere Mackenzie, Sun Gate Foundation.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Attachment Trauma

Trafficking victims often suffer from deep psychological trauma that extends beyond initial rescue. A "second rescue" is necessary to address the neurological and physiological impacts of trauma. True recovery involves confronting long-term trauma and supporting survivors through their complex healing journey.

Gaps in Awareness and Support

There is a lack of awareness among first responders about the specific needs of trafficked individuals, particularly those with disabilities, who face unique barriers to accessing help.

Inclusion of Survivor Voices

Survivors' insights are critical for effective policy development and should be included in discussions and decision-making processes to ensure that interventions are relevant and empowering.

FACILITATED DISCUSSION: A DEEPER EXPLORATION OF THE SYSTEMIC CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE CARIBBEAN



Following this, forum participants broke into groups to further explore the systemic contributing factors to Human Trafficking in the Caribbean. Led by Dr. Jason Haynes, they discussed critical gaps in legislation and intervention efforts. They highlighted the lack of legal frameworks and awareness regarding persons with disabilities who are at higher risk, especially during crises. Often, their devices are used to smuggle guns and drugs. He stressed the need for grassroots education on trafficking in persons (TIP) and better data collection on disabled victims to inform interventions. Panelists questioned the region's preparedness to identify trafficking victims during major events, acknowledging gaps despite the presence of specialized units and frameworks. They also discussed the challenges of identifying male victims, particularly LGBTQI individuals, who face cultural stigma, fear of retaliation, and a macho culture that discourages emotional expression. Participants also discussed the potential for rehabilitating traffickers, noting that many were once victims of their environment, and with the right intervention, they can be redeemed. The session underscored the need for systemic change, awareness, and support for vulnerable populations.



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"In Haiti, people with disabilities are vulnerable to forced begging, sexual labor, and the smuggling of weapons and drugs. There is a significant gap in data regarding people with disabilities and human trafficking, as agencies do not disaggregate data on individuals with disabilities. We urge organizations, first responders, and statisticians to disaggregate their data collection, as this is essential for informing targeted interventions." – Merphilus James, President, Disabled People's International North America & The Caribbean Inc.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Gaps in Legislation and Awareness for Vulnerable Groups

The Caribbean region lacks comprehensive legal frameworks and awareness efforts that address trafficking risks for persons with disabilities. Their vulnerabilities often go unnoticed, and in some cases, their assistive devices are exploited to smuggle drugs and guns.

Need for Grassroots Education

A call was made for grassroots-level education on human trafficking to raise awareness in communities and among vulnerable groups. This approach would empower communities to recognize and report signs of trafficking.

Challenges in Identifying LGBTQI and Male Victims

Due to cultural stigma that discourages vulnerability, male and LGBTQI victims remain hidden and underreported. Fear of retaliation further complicates identification and assistance for these groups.



WORKSHOP: WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE? PREVENTION



This workshop session focused on developing practical prevention strategies for human trafficking in the Caribbean, building on the vulnerabilities and systemic gaps previously discussed. Facilitated by Stacy-Ann Smith (Founder of Pursued International), the group brainstormed layers of protection and resources needed for prevention efforts. Key points included the need for consistent public awareness, trauma-informed care training, and culturally relevant campaigns. It was emphasized that awareness should highlight the full spectrum of abuse, avoiding stigmatization or unrealistic portrayals of victims. The session concluded by emphasizing policy changes, collaboration, and prioritizing impactful actions for effective prevention.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Consistent Public Awareness

Emphasis was placed on the need for sustained public awareness efforts that cover the full spectrum of abuse, avoiding stigmatization and unrealistic victim portrayals.

Trauma-Informed Care Training

Training in trauma-informed care is essential for those working with trafficking survivors to provide appropriate and sensitive support.

Culturally Relevant Campaigns

Prevention campaigns should be tailored to the cultural context of the Caribbean to resonate effectively with local communities.

Policy Changes & Collaboration

The session highlighted the importance of policy reform and collaboration among stakeholders to address systemic vulnerabilities.

Prioritizing Impactful Actions

Participants concluded that prioritizing actions with the most potential for impact is crucial for effective prevention efforts.

WORKSHOP: WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE? PARTNERSHIP

In this Workshop, facilitators Cherisse Francis, PhD, and Christopher Reckford emphasized the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration to combat human trafficking in the Caribbean. While anti-trafficking laws place responsibility on the state, participants acknowledged that a lack of trust in government institutions necessitates broader involvement from various sectors.

Participants were encouraged to think creatively about which stakeholders—beyond law enforcement—should be involved in identifying, preventing, and prosecuting trafficking crimes. They discussed the need for modernizing outreach, especially to younger audiences, through partnerships with technology companies to gamify programs and create smartphone apps. Simplifying reporting processes and enhancing public awareness by producing engaging content were also highlighted as vital steps.

The facilitators stressed that effective partnerships must occur on multiple levels: community, national, and regional. A significant barrier identified was the tendency of civil society organizations in the Caribbean to operate in silos rather than forming networks or coalitions, unlike in Latin America, where civil society coalitions are more successful in securing funding for anti-trafficking initiatives. This session concluded with a SWOT analysis to assess the current state of partnerships in the region and identify areas for improvement.



KEY TAKEAWAYS



Multi-Sector Collaboration is Essential

Effective anti-trafficking efforts require engagement beyond law enforcement, including civil society, the private sector, and technology companies.

The lack of trust in government institutions means that broader stakeholder involvement is necessary to build a robust response.

Leveraging Technology for Outreach

To modernize anti-trafficking outreach, facilitators suggested gamifying programs, developing smartphone apps, and using engaging digital content to reach younger audiences, making information more accessible and relatable.

Need for Networked Civil Society

A significant barrier to collaboration is that Caribbean civil society organizations often operate in silos, unlike their Latin American counterparts who work in coalitions, securing better funding and impact.

WORKSHOP: WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE? PROSECUTION



In the prosecution workshop, facilitators Mario Cordero Vejar from UNODC and Justice Lisa Palmer Hamilton of the Jamaican Supreme Court (a former prosecutor of trafficking in person cases) explored ways to improve prosecution in human trafficking cases in the region.

Mr. Vejar led participants through an exercise, highlighting the steps in the investigation and prosecution processes. Various case scenarios were discussed, showing significant delays in prosecutions, with many cases from 2019 to 2023 still unresolved.

Participants examined the steps involved in prosecuting a trafficking case, from investigation to sentencing, identifying challenges like chain-of-custody issues, the need for prosecutor-led investigations, and the importance of the law to protect victims' rights. There was also a discussion on the admissibility of expert witnesses and the use of child hearsay in certain jurisdictions. The group emphasized trauma-informed interviewing skills and the importance of building relationships with victims. They also discussed the psychological impact of trauma, which can affect victims' recollection of events, stressing the need for understanding by the court. Sentencing was another focus, noting that prosecutors should better present aggravating factors to ensure appropriate penalties for traffickers.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Victim-Centered Approach

Justice Lisa Palmer Hamilton emphasized that victims are at the core of trafficking cases. Prosecution efforts should respect their dignity, with trauma-informed interviewing and a focus on building trust and relationships with survivors.

Challenges in Case Resolution

Participants highlighted significant delays in prosecutions, with many cases from 2019 to 2023 still pending. These delays hinder justice and prolong the trauma experienced by victims.

Streamlining the Prosecution Process

Identified bottlenecks in the prosecution steps need to be addressed, with recommendations for standardized procedures, better training, and cross-border collaboration to reduce case delays and improve conviction rates.

Steps in Prosecution

Participants examined the prosecution process, identifying key challenges such as chain-of-custody issues, the necessity for prosecutor-led investigations, and adhering to legal procedures to protect victims' rights.

Trauma-Informed Interviewing

There was a strong emphasis on trauma-informed interviewing techniques, recognizing that trauma affects victims' recollections of events, which must be considered in court proceedings.

WORKSHOP: WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE? PROTECTION

This Workshop focused on practical strategies to improve the protection of human trafficking survivors in the Caribbean. Facilitators Sandra Christie Brown and Shamere McKenzie emphasized shifting cultural mindsets to stop victim-blaming, believe in survivors, and protect children. They highlighted the importance of trauma awareness, understanding brain development, and involving families in support efforts. The session stressed targeted public awareness campaigns and integrating anti-trafficking training into staff orientation in sectors like education and hospitality. Participants called for consistent year-round training, more robust legal frameworks, and improved victim support services like multilingual hotlines. They also underscored the need for local task forces, regional collaboration, and economic empowerment initiatives for survivors to break the cycle of exploitation.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Cultural Shifts and Trauma Awareness

To better support survivors, there is a need for cultural shifts that stop victim-blaming and a commitment to protect children. This should be complemented by a deep understanding of trauma and the involvement of families in the recovery process.

Local Task Forces and Regional Collaboration

The Workshop underscored the importance of creating localized task forces to tackle trafficking at the grassroots level. Collaboration between countries within the Caribbean is crucial to sharing data, strategies, and resources.

Public Awareness and Training

Targeted public campaigns and integrating anti-trafficking training into sectors like education and hospitality are vital. Participants emphasized the need for consistent year-round training.

FACILITATED DISCUSSION: DEVELOPING ACTION PLANS FOR PREVENTION, PROSECUTION, PROTECTION AND PARTNERSHIP



During this session, Lissette Reyes, Project Officer for the TRACK4TIP Initiative, guided participants in developing action plans using the 4Ps (Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, and Partnerships). In the Workshop, she encouraged the sharing of information among stakeholders and collaboration with government and civil society.



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"It's crucial that those who work on national action plans share their knowledge with the public. We must encourage collaboration with governments and civil society, expressing the desire to be involved and informed about what is happening." – Lizzete Reyes, Project Officer, UNODC

WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE CARIBBEAN REGION?



The Forum's final session titled What's Next for the Caribbean Region? aimed to establish robust anti-trafficking prevention initiatives that shift cultures and norms and galvanize support for a regional survivor-informed counter-trafficking coalition. During the session, Dalaina May from Dark Bali spoke about her work in Indonesia, where they helped organize CSOs that were previously working independently at the community and island levels into a cohesive national coalition. She highlighted the challenges of working across diverse islands with different governance systems, languages, and cultures, drawing parallels with the Caribbean region. Fernando Garcia Robles from IACHR/OAS discussed the organization's mapping exercise of CSOs fighting human trafficking across the Americas. They completed this for Spanish-speaking countries in 2023 and now focus on English-speaking nations. He invited participants and CSOs to the virtual launch of the IACHR's English-speaking Civil Society Dialogue Network in May 2024.

Toward the close, Forum participants confirmed Free the Slaves' plan to collaborate with regional stakeholders in forming a cross-border, cross-sector regional coalition to combat human trafficking. On July 31st, the Caribbean Coalition Against Trafficking In Persons (CCATIP) was launched.



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“The value of collaboration I think, is very simple; we actually get stuff done, our action moves forward, and in a way that is much faster.” – Dalana May, Dark Bali, Indonesia

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Formation of a Regional Coalition

The Forum emphasized the importance of creating a regional survivor-informed counter-trafficking coalition for the Caribbean.

Lessons from Indonesia

Dalaina May from Dark Bali shared experiences from Indonesia, where diverse community organizations were united into a national coalition despite differences in governance, language, and culture, providing a relevant model for Caribbean nations.

Action Plans for the 4 Ps

Lisette Reyes led participants in developing action plans around Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, and Partnerships to address human trafficking in a coordinated and systematic manner.

Cross-Border Collaboration

The session focused on regional unity and cross-border, cross-sector collaboration to shift cultural norms and build stronger anti-trafficking prevention initiatives.



REGIONAL CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED ON DAY THREE



Cultural and Regional Barriers

Cultural practices and regional biases in the Caribbean hinder collaboration and unity in anti-trafficking efforts, making it difficult to address the issue collectively.



Lack of Awareness Among Service Providers

First responders and service providers lack proper awareness of the specific needs of trafficked individuals, particularly persons with disabilities and LGBTQI individuals.



Exclusion of Survivor Insights in Policy Development

Survivors' experiences and insights are often not included in policy development, leading to interventions that fail to fully address their needs.



Inconsistent Application of the Non-Punishment Principle

There is a lack of consistent understanding and application of the non-punishment principle for trafficking victims across the Caribbean, creating legal barriers to their protection and justice.



Siloed National Efforts

Countries in the region tend to work in isolation rather than collaborating, limiting the effectiveness of regional anti-trafficking efforts.



Resource Constraints for NGOs and Victim Support Organizations

Limited resources prevent NGOs and victim support organizations from providing sustained psychosocial care for trafficking survivors, hindering long-term recovery.



PROPOSED SOLUTIONS FOR DAY THREE

01. Training Programs with Cultural Sensitivity

Develop training programs for anti-trafficking practitioners, law enforcement, and service providers that incorporate cultural nuances and regional dynamics for more effective intervention.

02. Trauma-Informed Care for Frontline Workers

Strengthen the capacity of frontline workers to provide compassionate, trauma-informed care that addresses the complex mental health needs of trafficking survivors.

03. Survivor Inclusion in Policy Development

Ensure survivors have advisory roles in national and regional anti-trafficking bodies so their lived experiences shape policy decisions.

04. Legal Protection for Victims

Implement clear legal frameworks that protect trafficking victims from prosecution, especially for offenses committed as a result of their exploitation, such as immigration-related violations.

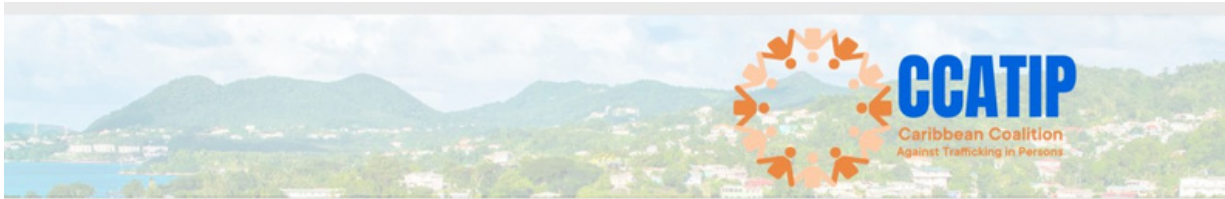
05. Regional Collaboration and Information Sharing

Establish a regional network to facilitate information sharing, coordinated responses, and best practice exchanges among countries.

06. Increased Funding for NGOs

Advocate for greater financial support from governments and international donors to enhance the capacity of NGOs providing essential services to trafficking survivors.

OUTCOMES OF THE FORUM



The creation of the Caribbean Coalition Against Trafficking in Persons

Recording of the launch event



ACTION STEPS



01. Enhance Collaboration

Overcome regional and cultural divides to foster unity among Caribbean nations in combating human trafficking. Focus on cross-border, cross-sector partnerships to strengthen collective efforts.



02. Cultural Awareness

Address cultural practices that contribute to trafficking. Incorporate local customs and cultural dynamics in the region's anti-trafficking strategies, ensuring culturally sensitive solutions.



03. Comprehensive Survivor Support

Prioritize trauma-informed care and "second rescue" efforts that address the deep psychological and neurological effects of trafficking on survivors, ensuring long-term rehabilitation and healing.



04. Inclusive Policy Development

Include survivors' voices in creating policies to ensure a survivor-centered approach. Special attention should be given to persons with disabilities and male victims who are often overlooked.



05. Strengthen Legal Frameworks

Address gaps in legislation and prosecution processes, including case delays and protection of victims' rights. Prosecutors should be better equipped to handle trauma-informed interviews and present aggravating factors in court.

ACTION STEPS



06. Public Awareness & Education

Launch regionally unified awareness campaigns, including digital materials, grassroots education, and school-based curricula that are culturally relevant and effectively reach vulnerable groups.



07. Capacity Building

Provide consistent training for law enforcement, first responders, and the hospitality sector. Foster a year-round effort to train stakeholders beyond just international observance days.



08. Form National & Regional Coalitions

Support the creation of coalitions at both national and regional levels, like the Caribbean Coalition Against Trafficking in Persons (CCATIP), to enhance coordination and collective action.



09. Technology Integration

Utilize modern technology to create engaging and accessible reporting mechanisms, like mobile apps, and to make public awareness campaigns more effective and engaging, especially for younger audiences.



10. Economic Empowerment

Focus on economic opportunities and empowerment initiatives for survivors to break the cycle of exploitation and prevent re-victimization.

PARTICIPANTS EVALUATION

Up to 85 people in person attended the Forum in person and about 112 people online for 3 days, discussing the theme "Demystifying Human Trafficking in the Caribbean Context: The Intersection of Culture and Human Trafficking." The Forum sought to build a proactive anti-trafficking community. Participants discussed how traffickers benefit from various historical, cultural, and socioeconomic dynamics to exploit victims. The objectives were to highlight how human trafficking occurs within and beyond the Caribbean, identify vulnerabilities and methods traffickers use to exploit them, pinpoint weaknesses in regional responses, and develop more effective prevention, protection, and justice models.

"I enjoyed The Networking with people who are in a similar post in other jurisdictions." – Anonymous

"I was able to connect with other participants from other organizations here in Jamaica and other participants in other Caribbean countries along with the Attorney from Florida." – Anonymous

"I am now connected with partners from Trinidad and Guyana." – Anonymous

"The ability to socialize and interact with experts from across the region. The team was welcoming and very knowledgeable and the information sharing was top tier." – Anonymous



"I formed new connections that could turn into future partnerships and collaborations; also deepened connection with previous connections to discuss potential collaborations" –
Anonymous

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