



GPC GLOBAL PROTECTION FORUM 2021 THEMATIC EVENT

Digital technology and anti-trafficking action in crises: a practice view on opportunities and challenges

Tuesday 26 October 2021, 16:00 – 17:30 CET

Rational/purpose

Trafficking in Persons (TIP) is a crime and grave human rights violationⁱ of enormous scale and prevalent in peace as well as conflict and disaster areasⁱⁱ. The GPC Anti-Trafficking Task Team (ATTT), with its partners, is supporting the integration of robust anti-trafficking responses at a strategic level in cluster operations and promotes knowledge exchange and partnerships at the operational level.

Since 2014, the development and use of technology tools to counter trafficking, facilitate cooperation, reach survivors and address their needs has grown exponentiallyⁱⁱⁱ. The intersection of digital technology and anti-trafficking work has received considerable interest by policy makers^{iv}, the private sector^v and academia^{vi}. Recently, the results of a stock-taking of the landscape of existing technology tools to counter trafficking have been published in the report *Leveraging innovation to fight trafficking in human beings: A comprehensive analysis of tech tools* (OSCE and Tech Against Trafficking, 2020). Most of the tools are found to be developed and used in the global north, while considerable vulnerabilities exist among internally displaced populations in humanitarian crises contexts in the global south. Transferring knowledge across contexts, raising awareness and communication between practitioners on the ground and experts have been included into recommendations across the publications. At an operational level, awareness of existing technologies in other contexts, related challenges, including the misuse of technology by traffickers, and opportunities will support stakeholders in the humanitarian field to leverage tech and push the boundaries to the advantage of persons in need. At the same time, expectations of tech 'solutions' need to be adjusted to reflect local contexts and needs and any form of data collection and sharing must appropriately align with safeguarding protocols.

In this event, we will bring together experts from the private sector, the UN and civil society and humanitarian practitioners, including local partners, to exchange knowledge on where we stand, discuss current challenges and possible opportunities and enhance understanding of the needs in the field.

Expected Outcome

- Raise awareness of the exiting tech tools to counter trafficking, opportunities, challenges and limitations, as well as the abuse of technology regarding the crime of trafficking.
- Disseminate knowledge and information that can be useful to direct investment into and leverage technology to prevent the exploitation of people in crises and protect victims of trafficking.
- Inspire network-building and contribute to communication between experts in information technology and those working on the ground to counter trafficking in IDP contexts.



Format/Content of the Event

This will be a virtual webinar format in plenary with opening remarks, an introduction into current human rights discussions at the intersection of technology and trafficking, followed by short presentations by technical experts on the results of a mapping of technology tools and local humanitarian practitioners on their experiences with tech and trafficking in the field. The session will be closed by the GBV AoR.

Presenters and participants will exchange knowledge about existing possibilities and issues and discuss opinions about opportunities and concerns related to tech tools to counter trafficking in crises. Translation/interpretation for French and Spanish will be provided.

Speakers/Moderator/ technical donor partner

Session Moderator: William Chemaly, UNHCR Global Protection Cluster Coordinator

Opening remarks: Grace Forrest, Walk Free Foundation

Panel:

- Prof. Siobhán Mullally, Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children: guiding principles for the use of tech to counter trafficking
- Hannah Darnton, Associate Director BSR, Tech Against Trafficking: The opportunities and challenges of tech solutions: results from the comprehensive analysis of tech tools 'Leveraging innovation to fight trafficking in human beings'
- Mayerlín Vergara Pérez, Fundación Renacer: Tech and anti-trafficking work in Colombia

Plenary – questions and comments from the participants

Closing remarks: GBV AoR

Wrap up: Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children



Background Reading

End Notes:

ⁱ Trafficking is defined in Art. 3(a) of the [Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children](#), supplementing the [United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime](#) (2000).

ⁱⁱ There are no exact numbers about the scale of trafficking but research and evidence show that the ‘market’ is active globally and generates profits at a range of an estimated \$ 150 million per year (ILO (2014) *Profits and Poverty: The Economics of Forced Labour*. Geneva: ILO. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/publications/profits-of-forced-labour-2014/lang--en/index.htm>). Conflict and disasters have been documented and recognised as exacerbating the risk of trafficking for civilians. The GPC ATTT has conducted a study into all active protection clusters in 2017 with the result that 66% reported TIP as a current risk, with associated phenomena – forced recruitment and forced labour (72% of operations) also on the rise (GPC Anti-Trafficking Task Team (2018) *Anti-Trafficking in Humanitarian Responses*. Geneva: GPC, <https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/assets/files/anti-trafficking-in-humanitarian-responses.pdf>. See on specific factors exacerbating the risk of trafficking in crisis IOM (2015) *Addressing human trafficking and exploitation in times of crisis*. Geneva: IOM. <https://publications.iom.int/books/addressing-human-trafficking-and-exploitation-times-crisis-evidence-and-recommendations-0>).

ⁱⁱⁱ OSCE Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Tech Against Trafficking (2020) *Leveraging innovation to fight trafficking in human beings: A comprehensive analysis of technology tools*. Vienna: OSCE, p. 23. Available at: <https://www.osce.org/cthb/455206>.

^{iv} Europol is monitoring and analysing the use of technology by perpetrators, e.g. in Europol (2016) *Situation Report: Trafficking in human beings in the EU*. The Hague: Europol. The Inter-Agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking has summarised trends and formulated recommendations for stakeholders in ICAT (2019) *Human Trafficking and Technology: Trends, Challenges and Opportunities*, Issue Brief No. 7. Available at: [human trafficking and technology trends challenges and opportunities web.pdf](#). ILO and Walk Free are looking into more effective documentation of trafficking and the use of modern technology in ILO, IOM, Walk Free Foundation (2017) *Global Estimate of Modern Slavery*. Geneva: ILO. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_575479.pdf and Walk Free (2020) *AI Against Modern Slavery. Digital insights into modern slavery reporting – challenges and opportunities*. Australia: Minderoo Foundation. Available at: [20210428-digital-insights-into-modern-slavery.pdf \(walkfree.org\)](#).

^v See e.g. Wilton Park (2017) *The role of digital technology in tackling modern slavery*. WP1546. Available at: [Wilton Park Meeting: The Role of Digital Technology in Tackling Modern Slavery - United Nations University Institute in Macau \(unu.edu\)](#) and OSCE Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Tech Against Trafficking (2020) *Leveraging innovation to fight trafficking in human beings: A comprehensive analysis of technology tools*. Vienna: OSCE. Available at: <https://www.osce.org/cthb/455206>.

^{vi} In particular since 2020 a number of relevant articles have been published : Edge, D., Yang, W., Lytvynets, K., Cook, H., Galez-Davis, C., Darnton, H., and White, C. (2020) ‘Design of a Privacy-Preserving Data Platform for Collaboration Against Human Trafficking’, Cornell University, [arXiv:2005.05688v2 \[cs.HC\]](#); Erikson, J., and Larsson, O. (2020) ‘How platforms facilitate collaboration across organizational boundaries: fighting human trafficking in Sweden’, *Policy Sciences*, 53, pp. 181-203. Available at: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11077-020-09371-6>; Milivojevic, S., Moore, H., and Segrave, M. (2020) ‘Freeing the Modern Slaves, One Click at a Time: Theorizing human trafficking, modern slavery, and technology’, *Anti-Trafficking Review*, 14, pp. 16-32. doi: <https://doi.org/10.14197/atr.201220142>; Montasari R., Jahankhani H. (2021) ‘The Application of Technology in Combating Human Trafficking’, in Jahankhani H., Jamal A., Lawson S. (eds.) *Cybersecurity, Privacy and Freedom Protection in the Connected World*. Advanced Sciences and Technologies for Security Applications. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-68534-8_10.