

The measuring and monitoring of human trafficking

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to discuss the difficulty of measuring and monitoring of human trafficking within the context of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The challenges that come with monitoring an invisible crime such as human trafficking within the SDG context are due to the fact that the indicators pertaining to human trafficking fall into the category of “difficult to define and collect” type of data. This paper sheds light on these measuring difficulties and makes recommendations how to overcome them.

Design/methodology/approach – The methodology used is a policy analysis drawing on secondary literature and surveys and interviews with victims of human trafficking reported in publicly available documents. Comparative analysis also draws on laws and institutional agreements and treaties on human trafficking developed by governments, international organizations and regional organizations.

Findings – The different ways that have been proposed to collect and analyze data on trafficking victims highlight the complications of monitoring trafficking in both national and global contexts in situations where human rights violation and crime are situated at the nexus of the poverty, injustice, development and weak institutions. The paper brings to the attention of the international community that the current SDG indicators are inadequate for measuring human trafficking and need to be urgently improved.

Originality/value – This paper makes new contributions to the study of human trafficking in the context of the SDGs and proposes seven points of future action in order to create intersectoral linkages and better data collection in order to gain a fuller picture on human trafficking.

Keywords Measurement, Regulations, Human trafficking, Monitoring, SDGs, SDG indicators

Paper type Research paper

The context – SDGs and its transformative agenda

In September 2015, as a follow-up to its Millennium Development Goals (2000), the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 70/1, titled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” Resolution 70/1 introduced the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), created with the aim to “end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all” (Sustainable development goals – United Nations, 2017). The 17 goals encompass all aspects of sustainable development, including ending poverty and hunger, ensuring quality education and gender equality, reducing inequalities and ensuring sustainable business practices and taking care of the environment (Yiu and Saner, 2014).

In particular, the 2015 Resolution 70/1 clearly stated in paragraph 27 that:

We will eradicate forced labour and *human trafficking* and end child labour in all its forms. (p. 8, italic added)

This determination was subsequently translated into SDG Target 8.7, i.e., “Take 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 end child labour in all its forms” (p. 20, *italic added*).

To measure progress in implementation toward achieving the 2030 Agenda, a global indicator framework was developed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs). As a practical starting point, this global indicator framework was subsequently agreed by members at the 47th session of the UN Statistical Commission held in March 2016. The 2016 Report of the Commission, which included the global indicator framework, was then taken note of by ECOSOC at its 70th session in June 2016.

A total number of 230 indicators were identified by the IAEG-SDGs and formed an integral part of the SDGs for monitoring purpose. Referring to the prior experience of MDGs (2000-1015), this global framework of indicators could be used to accelerate the transformation process of the 2030 Agenda at the global, national and community levels. A review of the SDGs would shed light on where and how to kick off the change intervention.

Human trafficking and its place in the SDGs and its Genesis

Defining human trafficking (also known as trafficking in persons (TIP)) has been a legally complex task, and in most circles, multiple definitions and conceptions exist. For the purpose of this paper, we will be using the general definition provided by the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime in its 2016 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, which is adapted from the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children and outlines three components (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2016, p. 14):

- (1) the ACT of recruiting, transporting, transferring, harboring or receiving a person;
- (2) by MEANS of, e.g., coercion, deception or abuse of vulnerability; and
- (3) for the PURPOSE of exploitation.

Human trafficking therefore includes, but is not limited to: forced labor, forced marriage and forced begging; the removal of organs; child soldiers; the selling of children; and sexual exploitation. Though these practices generally have their own national and international legal definitions, the definition for trafficking is generally broader and can be applied in more circumstances. For example, while forced labor requires coercion or threat of punishment, victims can be considered to have been trafficked through the use of other means, such as abuse of power or position of vulnerability (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2016, p. 16). In addition, due to the UN Trafficking in Persons Protocol, States parties have other obligations to victims of trafficking, such as providing for their physical safety and privacy, and giving access to remedies (UNODC, 2000: Articles 6–8). Thus, TIP will be used in this broader context to assure victims of all its variant forms are adequately represented.

It is important to note that while the definition of trafficking does not require moving victims out of the country; however, most detected cases involve more than one country, and 57 percent of the detected victims reported to the UNODC from 2012 to 2014 crossed at least one international border (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2016, p. 41). A clear link can be observed between illegal migrations and trafficking. In these times of increased mobility and global connectivity, we must keep in mind the systemic vulnerabilities and risks. Human trafficking has always existed, but now well-established illegal migration flows and routes, as well as the vulnerable situations of most migrants, make trafficking and exploitation more widespread. From 2012 to 2014, UNODC reports that 63,251 victims were detected in 106 countries (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2016, p. 23). However, many countries declined to report data, some of which, like the Gulf States, are known to have high levels of human trafficking. This report also only covers detected victims.

The ILO's Global Estimates of Modern Slavery report estimates that there are currently 25m victims of forced labor (including sexual exploitation) and 15m victims of forced marriage worldwide (International Labour Organization, 2017a, p. 5).

As observed above, TIP is not a new phenomenon, but it is a new crime, in the sense that it has only gained global attention in the past 20–30 years, and in many places, it has only recently been legislated against. UNODC notes that in 2003 only 33 countries had national legislation concerning trafficking, while in 2016 that number had risen to 158 (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2016, p. 12). The most important international development on the legal status of human trafficking came in 2000 when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the “Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children” (also often referred to as the Palermo Protocol). The protocol created the international legal definition of TIP and outlines provisions for the protection of victims and the prosecution of perpetrators, as well as the obligation of States parties to introduce national trafficking legislation. The protocol entered into effect in December 2003 after receiving the required 40 ratifications, and to date, 192 countries are parties to the protocol.

The main mechanism for enforcing the protocol would be through the International Court of Justice for states to bring claims against other states. There could also be a possibility for individuals to bring claims against states in regional human rights courts, but there is no legal basis for that in the protocol itself, meaning that the most vulnerable parties in the case of TIP often do not have a legal vehicle to enforce the protocol in cases in which the state is responsible for trafficking. In addition, many countries have made reservations on paragraph 2 of Article 15 of the protocol by exercising the flexibility provided by paragraph 3. They are as follows:

Any dispute between two or more States Parties concerning the interpretation or application of this Protocol that cannot be settled through negotiation within a reasonable time shall, at the request of one of those States Parties, be submitted to arbitration. If, six months after the date of the request for arbitration, those States Parties are unable to agree on the organization of the arbitration, any one of those States Parties may refer the dispute to the International Court of Justice by request in accordance with the Statute of the Court. (Paragraph 2, Article 15, Palermo Protocol, 2000, p. 7)

Each State Party may, at the time of signature, ratification, acceptance or approval of or accession to this Protocol, declare that it does not consider itself bound by paragraph 2 of this article. The other States Parties shall not be bound by paragraph 2 of this article with respect to any State Party that has made such a reservation. (Paragraph 3, Article 15, Palermo Protocol, 2000, p. 8)

This opt-out clause provided the leeway for the states to abdicate their responsibility in remedying this severe human rights violation and thus reduce the enforceability of this protocol and create loopholes in eradicating this crime. Some of the major sending and receiving countries of human trafficking registered their reservations on the potential censure of an international judiciary body.

In addition to being a significant issue in the field of human rights, human trafficking also has major implications in the realm of development. While many developed countries have large populations of trafficked persons, the majority of victims come from developing or least developed countries. Poverty and lack of opportunity in their places of origin are key “push factors” that motivate migration and leave people vulnerable to exploitation. The protocol recognizes the connection between vulnerability and TIP and encourages states to reduce these “push factors” that can lead to exploitation (Challenges in Protecting Vulnerable Populations, 2016). Human trafficking and the vulnerability of populations to exploitation could thus be considered as symptoms of underdevelopment.

This was recognized by the United Nations in drafting the SDGs. Human trafficking is mentioned in the targets for Goal 5, Gender Equality; Goal 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth; and Goal 16, Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

However, despite that place of prominence, there is only one indicator to measure progress on human trafficking in the context of sustainable development. Indicator 16.2.2 reads:

The number of victims of *human trafficking* per 100,000 population, by sex, age and form of exploitation. (Italic added)

Indicator 16.2.2 is classified as a tier II indicator by the United Nations (Tier Classification for Global SDG Indicators, 2017). The clear emphasis on providing disaggregated data for the indicator is promising, and this is one of many indicators that can be more easily translated to the monitoring process, but it is disappointing that despite being specifically mentioned in the targets for three of the SDGs, human trafficking (Table I) only has one indicator dedicated to tracking its progress. In addition, the complex and highly international nature of the crime makes it very difficult to collect accurate data for the above-mentioned indicator.

Challenges involved in monitoring human tracking and its indicator

Inadequate data

The difficulty in collecting data on human trafficking was recognized in the metadata description of indicator 16.2.2. It states that the “numerator of this indicator is composed of two parts: detected and undetected victims of trafficking in persons” (Metadata 16.2.2, 2017). Currently, the data on detected victims are reported by countries to the UNODC through an annual questionnaire submitted to the agency in Vienna (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2017, Annex I). However, the data for many countries are incomplete: for example, some of the countries that are not party to the trafficking protocol do not report victims of all the types of trafficking that the protocol defines. Additionally, in the annexes of UNODC’s Global Report for 2016, the organization notes that many countries did not submit completely disaggregated data, often not including any other information besides age and sex – and sometimes not even those (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2017, Annex I).

What is sound about indicator 16.2.2 is that it basically requires “continuous data collection,” and at the minimum of “up-to-date record-keeping.” However, by far the most challenging aspect of monitoring data on human trafficking is the number of undetected victims. Currently, the metadata for indicator 16.2.2 notes that “methodology to estimate the number of undetected victims is currently underdevelopment: some methods have been identified, but further testing is needed to produce a consolidated and agreed

Goal	Target	Indicator
5: Gender Equality	5.2: “Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation”	None specified for the portion related to trafficking
8: Decent Work and Economic Growth	8.7: “Take 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 2,025 end child labour in all its forms”	None specified for the portion related to trafficking
16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions	16.2: “End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children”	16.2.2: “The number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population, by sex, age and form of exploitation”

Table I.
Current noteworthy
monitoring practices

upon approach” (SDG Indicators – SDG Indicators Metadata, 2017). Extrapolating from existing data about detected victims is not statistically valid for a number of reasons. First, detection is not dependent upon the number of victims, i.e., there is no direct relationship between existence and detection; just because there is a larger number of victims does not mean there will be a larger number of detected victims – the same is also true for the reverse. Detection levels could vary due to increased or decreased law enforcement capacity or changes in legislation. Second, law enforcement could have a greater capacity to detect victims of a certain type of exploitation; that does not mean that there are more of those types of victims, just that it is easier to detect them. Trying to interpret wider trends from a limited set of data with the number of composite factors that human trafficking has is problematic.

No established or universally accepted methodology

However, it is more problematic that there is no recognized method to estimate the number of undetected victims of trafficking. More than two years into the SDGs agenda, there should be established methods of collecting data for indicators at this point in time if we are serious about achieving the goals. This is an issue across all of the SDGs and their indicators, as evidenced by the tier classification system and the prevalence of tier III indicators. In an ideal world, we would have gone into the 2030 Agenda without any tier III indicators, or indicators with difficult to execute or nonexistent measuring mechanisms. The time taken to develop the indicators means we are losing years of data that could have been used to monitor implementation over a longer period of time. This is especially true for trafficking.

There have been a number of proposed methods to collect data on the undetected victims of TIP (Table II). The International Labour Organization (ILO) report Global Estimates of Modern Slavery, which estimates global levels of forced labor (including sexual exploitation) and forced marriage, details one such method. In compiling the report, they designed 54 surveys and interviewed more than 71,000 people in 48 countries about their and their families’ immediate experiences with forced labor and forced marriage (International Labour Organization, 2017a, p. 11). It also used IOM data to aid in its estimate of trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. As detailed in their methodology report, the subjects were selected to be a representation of the civilian, non-institutionalized population over 15 years old. The ILO noted that they interviewed people across the geographic area of the country, in rural and urban situations (International Labour Organization, 2017b, p. 49).

The survey method of the ILO does its job in allowing for a widespread coverage of the world and estimating a general figure. Its emphasis on disaggregated data (it includes age and sex, as well as whether those exploited were in forced labor or forced marriages) is important and a good example to follow when monitoring human trafficking in the future.

Table II.
Current methods of collecting data on victims of trafficking and related offenses

Organization/state	Method	Which data?
International Labour Organization (ILO)	National representative surveys of over 71,000 people	Forced labor and forced marriage, extrapolated based on representative data and disaggregated based on age and sex
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)	National Reporting	Trafficking, detected victims only
Cruyff, van Dijk and van der Heijden using the Netherlands as example	Multiple Systems Estimation	Capture-recapture to estimate undetected victims of trafficking

However, the method has a number of limitations, some of which are acknowledged by the organization. First, the organization states that it had limited access to the Arab States, where it is believed that there are large amounts of trafficking and forced labor (International Labour Organization, 2017b, p. 79). Thus, it provides an incomplete picture and likely underestimates the final amounts. It also notes that the report is only an estimate of two forms of TIP (International Labour Organization, 2017b, p. 84).

However, the biggest problem for using this survey method to track the implementation of SDG 16.2 through its indicator 16.2.2 is the amount of time and investment required to provide a strong, reasonably accurate estimate. The ILO has only released two other Global Estimates reports, in 2005 and 2012. The data for the 2017 report were collected from 2012 to 2015, and it then took two additional years to process. The SDGs do not have this luxury of time, so we must find an alternative method that allows for reasonably accurate estimates in shorter periods of time, though this could be a possibility for a globally scaled review every five years.

Another method that is currently under consideration is multiple systems estimation (MSE). The idea for this mechanism comes from the classic capture-recapture method, which was developed by biologists to measure animal populations in specific areas. As Cruyff, van Dijk and van der Heijden note, the “quintessential concept” for estimating animal populations is credited to Danish Biologist Johannes Petersen. Petersen used a net to catch 100 fish in a lake and then tagged and released them back into the lake. Sometime later, he came back to the lake and used the net to catch another 100 fish. The number of fish that appeared in both samples gives a way to estimate the total number of fish in the lake. If there was a lot of overlap, then there are not much more than 100 fish in the lake. If there are 20 tagged fish in the second net, then one could estimate that there are about 500 fish in the lake, because each fish would have about a one in five chances of being caught (Cruyff *et al.*, 2017).

Since then, this method has been used to estimate the size of hidden human populations by using two different recording systems or lists, such as police records or assistance organizations, to calculate overlap in prostitutes in Oslo, or drug addicts in Scotland (Cruyff *et al.*, 2017). However, this can be problematic because often these lists are not completely independent. The solution proposed is to use multiple lists and recording systems instead of just two to eliminate this error. For example, countries could use data from local law enforcement, border police, NGOs and federal authorities to calculate overlap and from that estimate the number of undetected victims of human trafficking. This is MSE.

The obvious limitation of MSE is that it requires countries to have the capacity to detect and keep reliable records of victims of human trafficking. Many countries do not have one reliable such system of records, let alone multiple. As human trafficking is often a symptom of underdevelopment, it is the countries with the most victims that generally have the least capacity to conduct MSEs. However, for those countries that do keep reliable records across systems, MSE can be an invaluable tool for providing reasonably accurate, disaggregated data (as victims could be sorted by type of exploitation and average age) in a less intensive process.

Corruption and human trafficking

Political leaders may make pronouncements but in reality little is done to measure trafficking and to take enforcement action against those engaged in it. The parallel is corruption when leaders openly make commitments to root it out but little is done, especially when those engaged in corruption are connected to the political leadership.

Corruption should be considered a big obstacle to gaining information as officials responsible for gathering information (and possibly enforcement) may be easily bribed by those responsible for trafficking. Scholars have researched corruption and its links to weak

governance system and detrimental impact on society in general and on human trafficking in particular as analyzed and discussed by Jon Quah (2007, 2013, 2015) a leading expert on corruption and ways to combat corruption.

Focusing on corruption and human trafficking in the employment chains, Barnett (2017) listed the following opportunities of government involvement in the trafficking process, namely:

- bribes to reveal or sell information on victims;
- provision of forged documentation on labor brokers (identity papers, visas and work permits);
- bribes to accept forged documentation or documentation purchased from the black market; and
- bribes to border-crossing officials during transportation.

Research results on corruption and human trafficking have been made available by Transparency International and OECD. The publication by Transparency International (2011) is entitled “Breaking the Chain: Corruption and Human Trafficking” discusses the main forms of human trafficking ranging from prostitution, debt bondage, forced or bonded labor and contractual servitude while the OECD (2016) publication titled “Trafficking in Persons and Corruption: Breaking the Chain” offers a set of guiding principles on how to combat corruption related to TIP.

Governments are also making important efforts to detect and deter traffickers. For instance, the Singaporean Government created a taskforce which aims to develop a holistic perspective on the TIP situation and implements Whole-of-Government strategies to combat TIP (2012).

In regard to measuring corruption and human trafficking, the US Department of State’s Office monitors and combats TIP and publishes regional maps using a tier system to rank countries according to their actions against human trafficking. Countries are evaluated according to a tiers system consisting of the following criteria.

Tier 1. Countries whose governments fully meet the Trafficking Victims Protection Act’s (TVPA) minimum standards.

Tier 2. Countries whose governments do not fully meet the TVPA’s minimum standards, but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards.

Tier 2 Watch List. Countries whose governments do not fully meet the TVPA’s minimum standards, but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards and:

- (1) the absolute number of victims of severe forms of trafficking is very significant or is significantly increasing;
- (2) there is a failure to provide evidence of increasing efforts to combat severe forms of TIP from the previous year; and
- (3) the determination that a country is making significant efforts to bring itself into compliance with minimum standards was based on commitments by the country to take additional future steps over the next year.

Tier 3. Countries whose governments do not fully meet the minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so.

Some countries have taken a further step and created convention to regulate TIP at a regional level such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN, 2015).

Participation in combatting TIP also includes private sector organizations such as banks and commercial associations. A very innovative and meaningful example originated in the Netherlands.

Maria van Dijk, Head of Environmental, Social and Ethical Risk and Policy at ABN AMRO bank in the Netherlands, has also devised an innovative way for banks and the financial sector to participate in the detection of victims and the eradication of trafficking. She notes that “The truth of the matter, though, is that human trafficking is all about making lots and lots of money. And that’s where banks come in. Once this money finally filters through into the economy, an opportunity exists to identify the traffickers” (van Dijk, 2016). In a blog post for the bank, she identified three major challenges for banks in tracking down human traffickers by following the money: the level of traceability of the funds, online anonymity and banks’ obligation to respect clients’ right to privacy (van Dijk, 2016).

However, she believes that it will take engagement from stakeholders in many key areas to tackle the problem of trafficking. The bank works with agencies like the Dutch Border Police to better understand “which routes are used to reintroduce dirty money into the economy, in which sectors human trafficking is most prevalent and what financial behaviour is commonly associated with it” (van Dijk, 2016). The exchange of information between banks and law enforcement agencies (to the extent it is legal under existing privacy laws) allows for better and faster investigations. In addition, van Dijk (2016) emphasized in her blog post that as they learn more about patterns of money transfer that are typically associated with trafficking, such as “rapid succession of small cash deposits which add up to a large amount,” they can begin to better identify potential traffickers. Adriaan van Dorp, ABN AMRO’s Director of Security and Intelligence Management, noted in the bank’s 2016 Human Rights Report:

Our contribution to the fight against human trafficking includes: (1) raising awareness so our relationship managers and clients can recognize the warning signs and red flags of human trafficking, (2) conducting (supply chain) research together with our sector bankers, external stakeholders and experts to identify misconduct, and (3) improving intelligence sharing based on data analysis and expertise. This does not mean that we simply report an increasing number of suspicious transactions to the authorities. Instead, we use a holistic and targeted approach that has real impact (p. 13).

Integrating many sectors into the fight against human trafficking, particularly sectors that have the power and influence that many banks possess, is critical to raise awareness for the problem and gain a better understanding of the “overall picture of abuses across entire chains” (van Dijk, 2016). At the end of her blog post, van Dijk (2016) correctly highlights that “this is a joint problem, one for which we have a shared responsibility.” Recognizing this is critical to moving forward.

Ways forward

As previously observed, most states do not have the capacity to collect data on all of the SDG indicators at this time. In a world in which states may have to prioritize the targets and indicators they monitor, why should the issue of human trafficking be one of the priorities to place emphasis on? This question is of particular poignancy when one takes into consideration the competing claims on the limited domestic resources and when human trafficking is not heavily focused on throughout the SDGs.

The importance of monitoring TIP is precisely because it receives so little focus, both in the SDGs and in general law enforcement practices. Human trafficking is an “invisible crime” – it is not like homicide or robbery in that it is relatively easy to know when it has occurred. There is no true way to definitively say how many victims of human trafficking there are per 100,000 (as defined in SDG indicator 16.6.2) unless it will be possible to identify sufficient numbers of individual victims to make an informed estimate. It is because of this intangibility that human trafficking deserves much greater attention and calls for innovative ways in monitoring and measuring the occurrences.

Public awareness education and/or campaign

One way to improve the situation is to raise public awareness. Doing so could help law enforcement officers and regular people to understand the wide reach that trafficking has attained and enable the general public and “designated agents” to take better steps in identifying and assisting victims and consequently in preventing it from happening.

Eradicating poverty and underdevelopment for all

In addition, as human trafficking is often a symptom of underdevelopment due to factors that push people to migrate and fall prey to the traffickers, it could work as an important proxy indicator to assess how the unintended impact of underdevelopment affects individuals and their choices. Although it would be hard to make a direct causal link between developments, migration and trafficking based on hard evidence, still this particular malaise reveals the unfinished business of inclusiveness where individuals could thrive in different forms without resorting to exploitation or “slavery.”

Keeping human trafficking on the policy radar requires both political intention and hard evidence. Often this is a major issue confronting the developing countries. Lacking of resources and channels to effectively collect data of the “traditional” Tier 1 indicators is already a challenge, weak institutional capacity would prevent countries to venture into Tier 2 or Tier 3 data collection, human trafficking included. Therefore, new ways of doing things or institutional innovation is imperative in getting actionable information based on sound data for all tiers.

Possible actions proposed

- (1) Making the reporting to UNODC a mandatory exercise.

While MSE could be incredibly useful, contextualization and deployment of this methodology to capture the fuller extent of human trafficking might be out of reach for quite a few countries. However, this is not an excuse for countries to neglect their duty in reporting data on detected victims. In order to facilitate monitoring and bring about a “whole” system solution, countries should be obliged and encouraged to report their disaggregated data on detected victims to UNODC on a monthly basis so the organization can gain continuous insights on the implementation of target 16.2. Countries who do have the necessary capacity to perform MSE or even dual systems estimation should also report that data on a yearly basis (so as to eliminate the possibility for error that comes with shorter time periods):

- (2) Capacity building to enable the states to better integrate dispersed and disconnected data from a multi-sector perspective (nexus approach).

This would require the strengthening of local and federal law enforcement institutions in line with goal 16 in general, through the provision of seminars to help officers to better identify victims of trafficking, and implementing technologies that could be used to create more efficient and accurate records:

- (3) Capacity building to enable citizen engagement in the detecting and reporting of human trafficking victims. Such reporting could be based on the use of traditional methods as well as methods making use of social media and information technology.

It would also necessitate measures to increase awareness of the issue in local populations so states can have greater civil society and NGO interest in trafficking. NGOs will then be able to collect their own data that can be compared to law enforcement data to conduct MSEs. While this capacity building is taking place, there should be a sort of “indicator for the indicator,” or a special indicator adjusted for the practice of monitoring, that details the number of countries that can provide disaggregated data (age, sex and form of exploitation)

and estimations for both detected and undetected victims of trafficking. This also serves as a way to measure how well-equipped states are to identify and assist victims – also another possible indicator for monitoring:

- (4) Deployment of mobile and social technology for data collection and connectivity.

In addition, perhaps the prominence of smartphones even in developing and least developed countries calls for a self-reporting mobile application. Though there would be problems of connectivity, especially if victims cross international borders, it could be a method of calculating state-sponsored or corporate-sponsored victims of human trafficking that usually go unreported. An accessible mobile app would encourage state and corporate responsibility and give victims a way to identify themselves using disaggregated data like age, sex and location. Such an application could take a form similar to that of MicroBenefits' "Company HQ" application, a mobile grievance reporting mechanism that allows employees to report human rights violations in supply chains (Worker Voice – Company IQ, 2017). For any system that is decided upon, it is important that it be accessible to anyone with one click, data on the SDGs are a public good and should be treated as such. We need to go beyond the work that National Statistical Offices do to provide data for citizens that is transparent and easy to understand:

- (5) Institutionalizing a global review mechanism focusing on human trafficking.

In parallel to these processes, there should be a review system similar to the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review in place for states to go into greater detail about their efforts to recognize and reduce human trafficking within and around their borders. The UN SDG High-Level Political Forum and countries' Voluntary National Reviews are not sufficient for two main reasons: the HLPF focuses on only a few of the SDGs each year; and the Voluntary National Reviews are, as the name implies, voluntary. While it is important for countries to actively choose to engage in the Sustainable Development Agenda and it is a good thing that so many countries have chosen to submit VNRs in the past two years, it is equally important that all countries be subject to the same measures, as we need all countries to cooperate in order to achieve the SDGs.

This review mechanism would be an instrument for states to discuss the measures they have taken to combat human trafficking, improve identification capacities and improve capacities for data collection and analysis on national and local levels. Its more detailed nature would allow for other states to ask questions and for states to exchange best practices about how to implement target 16.2. It would also allow for countries that have not yet been able to implement MSEs or that have poor record and data collection systems to elaborate on their progress and the perceived human trafficking situation in their countries. It is important that we do not neglect the review component – we should strengthen it and make it more interactive by also providing opportunities for multi-stakeholder engagement in the issue:

- (6) Creating a one click knowledge platform that gathers all existing databases and knowledge on human trafficking. Such a platform could offer links and be interactive when feasible and appropriate with other institutions such as UNODC, US Government Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, the Singaporean inter-agency taskforce against TIP, the OECD and Transparency International as well as other organizations combatting TIP.
- (7) Engaging non-traditional actors in this space such as the financial and banking sector who indirectly implicated in the money transfer and laundry schemes of the traffickers. A pioneering example involving Dutch private sector banks and financial institutions is described above.
- (8) Through the work of the IAEG-SDGs, it will be also important to make sure indicators associated with the relevant SDG Goals and Targets, e.g., 5.2 and 8.7, are connected to

ensure cross-sector and cross-agency coordination and coherence. Mechanisms such as cross-sector taskforce on human trafficking could mitigate the risk of “falling between gaps” and the silo thinking of respective custodian of each SDG.

- (9) In order to enforce laws and treaties countering human trafficking, it would be very useful and timely to create a specialized anti-human trafficking agency with multi-stakeholder membership consisting for instance of governments demonstrating positive track record of fighting TIP as well as NGOs working in this field. It would be useful to give such an agency an autonomous status to limit blocking or negative interference by governments who are not willing to effectively combat TIP in their countries.

Conclusion

Review is a useful practice because it often allows for deeper engagement, but only if it is transparent, inclusive and participatory. We can use monitoring as a springboard for these characteristics to improve the review practices for the SDGs in general and for human trafficking in particular. Though the SDGs are interrelated, it is not unreasonable to suggest that each goal or target might need its own specific form of monitoring and/or review, beyond what is outlined in Resolution 70/1. This would most likely mean more work for the international community, but the SDGs were not meant to be easy, otherwise, we would have accomplished them already.

Though human trafficking is an invisible crime, it is important that we find ways to monitor it in order to achieve the SDGs. As it is often a symptom of a broader problem of underdevelopment, trafficking levels could be an indication of many other issues related to the SDGs. The importance of collecting accurate and comprehensive data on victims of trafficking must be stressed upon states in order for to achieve meaningful progress on its eradication. A method for estimating the number of undetected victims must also be established and standardized across states and regions to allow for comparison and analysis. This paper suggests that the MSE mechanism would be the most useful and efficient way of doing so, despite its unique requirement for many organizations to keep records of detected trafficking victims.

For those countries that do not have the capacity to conduct these estimations, the international community must engage in capacity building activities to raise awareness of the issue on the regional, national and local levels. Law enforcement officers should be better educated on how to identify and deal with the problem, and local organizations to aid victims should also be established. These efforts will eventually enable states to be able to conduct MSEs. The joint review and reporting process currently being used in the Paris Climate Accord Transparency Framework could also work as a method for the implementation of SDG target 16.2. States, in addition to reporting data and estimations about detected and undetected victims should be subject to review where they can explain and be questioned upon both the data submitted and the practices being undertaken to combat trafficking. In addition, we must continue to push for more comprehensive indicators that are easily measured, particularly for SDG 5 and 8, which both have eliminating trafficking in their targets but have no indicator in place to track its progress.

The first step to tackling trafficking is defining the extent of the problem. In order to address the needs of victims and combat trafficking across the globe, it is imperative to know the facts. Thus, monitoring should be the next step taken toward the implementation of SDG target 16.2 in association with Targets 5.2 and 8.7 in order to facilitate discussion on practices to improve the situation and see the continuous progress of efforts to fight trafficking. Only then will the international community be able to truly address this issue.

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