

ICAT

Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons

*An overview*

Key activities and achievements of ICAT

On the occasion of  
the First Meeting of Principals of the Inter-Agency Coordination  
Group Against Trafficking in Persons  
2 May 2018

NOTE:  
This document has not been formally edited.

# Introduction

**The Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT)**<sup>1</sup> is a policy forum mandated by the UN General Assembly to improve coordination and cooperation amongst UN entities and other relevant international organizations to facilitate a holistic and comprehensive approach to preventing and combating trafficking in persons, including protection and support for victims of trafficking. As a coordination mechanism, ICAT held its first meeting in 2006, and was formalized thereafter by General Assembly resolution 61/180.

On 2 May 2018, ICAT will meet for the first time at principal level. This occasion provides an opportune moment to reflect on the key achievements of ICAT to date, over a decade since it was founded. To this end this Report provides an overview of ICAT's primary accomplishments. In doing so, the intention is also to assist in determining ICAT's priority actions going forward as well as on how to better promote its objectives and activities.

## Key activities and achievements of ICAT: establishing ICAT's added-value

ICAT is mandated to enhance cooperation and coordination amongst the UN and other international organizations that share broad expertise and complementary mandates relating to preventing and combating trafficking in persons, and protecting its victims.

Operating initially as a platform for exchange of information, experiences and good practices on anti-trafficking activities, ICAT has over the years developed into a functioning policy forum, with a marked increase in its activities and outputs since 2012. ICAT's increased productivity has been driven by a specific coordination mechanism – the ICAT Working Group<sup>2</sup> – through which active ICAT agencies produce collective work and outputs in the name of ICAT.

As a direct result of the increased engagement of its members, ICAT has advanced a jointly developed and agreed programme of work, increased cooperation and enhanced coherence among its members, ensuring the UN system increasingly addresses key issues on trafficking in persons with one voice.

Overall, ICAT promotes cohesive policies aimed at providing:

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<sup>1</sup> As of April 2018, ICAT is currently composed of 23 organizations: Council of Europe (CoE), Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), United Nations Department of Political Affairs (DPA); United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO); International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO); International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD); International Police Cooperation Organisation (INTERPOL); International Labour Organization (ILO); International Organization for Migration (IOM); Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR); Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect; Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS); United Nations Development Program (UNDP); United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI); United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC); United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women); and World Bank.

<sup>2</sup> The ICAT Working Group currently consists of the Council of Europe (CoE); International Labour Organization (ILO); International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD); International Organization for Migration (IOM); Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR); Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC); United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).

- A comprehensive, coordinated and holistic approach to human trafficking, which is gender and age-sensitive and grounded in a human rights based approach;
- The alignment of anti-trafficking interventions conducted by the UN and other international organizations with the standards set by international instruments;
- The effective and efficient use of resources, drawing on the comparative advantage of the respective agencies; and
- Stronger linkages with existing inter-agency forums, such as the OSCE Alliance against Trafficking in Persons, and other mechanisms that promote regional and national ownership, as well as SDG initiatives in support of combating trafficking.

### **Coordination of activities: addressing relevant actors with a single voice**

A key objective of ICAT is to improve the coordination of counter-trafficking activities at a global and regional level. In doing so, the ICAT Working Group has sought to develop, wherever possible, coordinated positions in addressing specific situations or developments and disseminating these positions as required.

ICAT has made continuous efforts to engage with other coordination mechanisms<sup>3</sup> and relevant stakeholders outside the Group, including States and civil society organizations, through public events, release of joint statements, and relevant commemorative dates on issues related to trafficking in persons. In this respect, ICAT works to gather resources and best practices identified by all organizations within the ICAT framework, and builds upon them to elaborate joint publications and policy positions.

As a recent example, ICAT provided the expert support to enable a preparatory multi-stakeholder hearing in June 2017 of the co-facilitators of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the Appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

### **Assistance to Member States: strengthening inter-governmental processes**

In accordance with its mandate,<sup>4</sup> ICAT works for a comprehensive, coordinated and holistic approach to trafficking in persons and assists Member States in their counter-trafficking efforts, notably through the promotion of existing resources, and sharing information, experiences and good practices. In doing so, ICAT facilitates, wherever possible, requests both from and to UN organizations and entities for information concerning trafficking in persons, and technical assistance.

As a recent example, ICAT provided a well-received [submission](#) on the Appraisal of the [UN Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons](#). Many of the recommendations contained in the ICAT submission were integrated in the [Political Declaration on the Implementation of the UN Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons](#) (A/Res/72/1), making the Plan of Action more victim-centered and informed by the combined expertise and experience of the ICAT membership. States for instance reiterated in the Political Declaration the need for improved data collection and analysis of

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<sup>3</sup> The United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT), launched in March 2007 by ILO, OHCHR, UNICEF, UNODC, IOM and the OSCE, ran until 31 December 2014. It offered access to expertise, knowledge and innovative partnerships to combat human trafficking. Extensive engagement between UN.GIFT and ICAT took place, notably to discuss UN.GIFT – ICAT coordination.

<sup>4</sup> See in particular ECOSOC Resolution 2006/27. *Strengthening international cooperation in preventing and combating trafficking in persons and protecting victims of such trafficking*, op. 16; and United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 61/180. *Improving the coordination of efforts against trafficking in persons* (A/RES/61/180), op. 15.

trafficking in persons, disaggregated by sex, age and other relevant factors, including the form of exploitation, an issue identified as a priority by ICAT to strengthen evidence based and informed advocacy, policy development and programming.

ICAT has also provided [an expert contribution](#) to the negotiations on the Zero Draft of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. The joint statement offers a number of suggestions for consideration by Member States in their discussions going forward, addressing particularly Objective 10 "Prevent and combat trafficking in persons in the context of international migration". The statement also encourages States to refer to ICAT's jointly developed tools and policy guidance to assist in the political negotiations going forward.

## **ICAT publications: sharing expertise, experience and knowledge to improve counter trafficking initiatives**

ICAT publications and policy papers draw on the combined expertise and operational experience of all ICAT members, and provide crucial guidance for evidence-based responses to trafficking. These multi-agency, common positions also facilitate coherence in messaging at public events and other policy *fora* informing member states, UN offices, civil society and media. ICAT has regularly produced policy papers since its inception, which have been well received and perceived as reliable sectorial tools for stakeholders and practitioners.

In 2010, ICAT issued [An Analytical Review, 10 years on from the adoption of the Trafficking in Persons \(TIP\) Protocol](#). The paper outlined key issues at the core of the anti-trafficking debate, focusing on what had been effective in anti-trafficking efforts, as well as those areas that required attention and systematic revision in terms of approach. The paper was presented on the occasion of a side event during the Fifth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime; representatives from ICAT member organizations highlighted the gaps and recommendations made in the areas of prevention, protection, prosecution and partnerships. Since then, the paper has been disseminated via various tools (including publication on ICAT and UN.GIFT websites, and incorporation in background documentation for subsequent meetings).

In 2011, the ICAT Working Group agreed to strengthen the policy development aspect of its mandate through a series of papers on issues that had surfaced as challenges to anti-trafficking efforts. Prioritized issues were identified through active consultations and review of prior anti-trafficking interventions. The ICAT policy series continues to provide an opportunity for ICAT members to coordinate on identifying the key challenges in the fight against trafficking in persons and assistance to its victims, promoting common strategic priorities and fostering greater policy and programmatic coherence among all actors.

Each policy paper examines a key issue identified by members of the Group as a critical challenge for the international community to address in the fight against trafficking persons in the second decade following the adoption of the TIP Protocol. The following papers have been produced:

- [The International Legal Frameworks concerning Trafficking in Persons](#) (October 2012). This paper characterizes key related elements of the anti-trafficking response, such as the perception of trafficking as a criminal justice issue, divergence in national laws, or the abundance of international legal instruments. The paper then highlights features that still require development, including a mapping of relevant bodies and law, the collection of case

law, and the exploration of the complementarity between international instruments. It concludes by recommending a number of prioritized actions to bring to bear provisions and legal obligations from different bodies of law and legal instruments that are relevant to the task of preventing human trafficking, protecting victims, and prosecuting perpetrators.

- [Preventing Trafficking in Persons by Addressing Demand](#) (September 2014). This paper maps out the dimensions of demand that fosters all forms of labour exploitation, highlights strategies that can be used to address demand, and proceeds to identify concrete steps that can be taken by different actors to effectively reduce this demand.
- [Providing Effective Remedies for Victims of Trafficking in Persons](#) (January 2016). This paper examines the right to effective remedies for victims of trafficking in persons under international law, the scope of its application, and the challenges that arise. It provides practical recommendations for improving access to remedies for victims of trafficking in persons.
- [Pivoting toward the Evidence: Building effective counter-trafficking responses using accumulated knowledge and a shared approach to monitoring, evaluation and learning](#) (December 2016). This paper critiques existing approaches to evaluating the impact of anti-trafficking measures and responses, identifies gaps in current efforts and make recommendations towards improving the evaluation of anti-trafficking interventions.

### **ICAT Issue Briefs: providing coherent guidance on policy issues**

ICAT has also published a series of more succinct guidance material (referred to as ICAT Issue Briefs) on key issues. These Issue Briefs touch upon topical issues and recent developments in trafficking in persons' contexts and patterns. Through them, ICAT participates in shaping international and national responses to the emergence of new challenges.

- The [Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants](#) Issue Brief (October 2016) pinpoints the key differences and commonalities between the two phenomena, and stresses the importance of applying a rights-based approach to both.
- The [Trafficking in Persons in Humanitarian Crises](#) Issue Brief (June 2017) assesses how humanitarian crises not only intensify existing trends of trafficking in persons but can also lead to new forms of trafficking.
- [The Gender Dimensions of Human Trafficking](#) Issue Brief (September 2017) assesses the root causes and risk factors of trafficking in persons, and why trafficking disproportionately affects women and girls. It also includes considerations regarding male trafficking victims, and ultimately provides recommendations for a gendered approach to prevention and response to trafficking.
- The [Trafficking in Persons and Refugee Status](#) Issue Brief (September 2017) clarifies the relationship between refugee status and trafficking in persons across a number of situations, and provides recommendations on what states can do to ensure that victims of trafficking have access to international protection as refugees where they need it.
- The [Trafficking in Persons and the Sustainable Development Goals](#) Issue Brief (forthcoming, May 2018) looks at the context specifically related to the three targets related to trafficking in

persons. It analyzes how these are interlinked, how they are connected with other SDG's addressing poverty, rule of law, migration, labour issues and education, and ultimately draws attention to the efforts that are already ongoing for Member States to pave the way in accomplishing these goals.

## **ICAT Toolkit: putting evaluation at the heart of informed trafficking responses**

In recognition of the fact that many trafficking interventions are not based on evidence or experience, and a lack of investment in evaluating the effectiveness of common counter-trafficking activities, ICAT members developed a toolkit to assist in better designing and evaluating anti-trafficking work. To ensure the toolkit aptly reflected the current state of evaluation practice in the field of trafficking in persons,<sup>5</sup> UNODC held an Expert Group Meeting in Vienna on 4-5 July 2016.

The result was the [Toolkit for guidance in designing and evaluating counter-trafficking programmes](#), which helps ensure that accumulated knowledge in counter-trafficking and related sectors is better reflected in the design and evaluation of new programmes, therefore leading to improved evidence based anti-trafficking interventions. It contains an accessible and easily employable set of tools that practitioners can use to put sectoral learning to work and improve their counter-TIP programmes. These tools are intended to help strengthen programme design, inform planning for evaluation, and create formative and summative learning. The goal is to lead to more effective programmes that, together with their evaluation, contribute to further building the evidence base of “what works” to respond effectively to trafficking in persons.

Part I of the Toolkit provides a general overview of counter-trafficking programming design issues, and highlights the value of (a) drawing on behaviour change and good practice and (b) considering the potential for interventions to, negatively, displace rather than reduce trafficking – an important issue for prevention programmes and prosecutorial responses. It provides an overall starting point for the design of counter-trafficking interventions, outlining a series of user-friendly questions to help map the specifics of individual trafficking patterns and identify the most appropriate set of responses.

Part II elaborates on seven types of common counter-trafficking activities:

1. Raising awareness of trafficking risks and responses;
2. Improving livelihoods as an alternative to risky migration;
3. Strengthening the legal framework on trafficking in persons;
4. Building criminal justice capacity to respond to trafficking in persons;
5. Promptly and accurately identifying and referring trafficked persons;
6. Providing support and durable solutions for trafficked persons; and
7. Developing national plans of action against trafficking in persons.

For each of these types, the Toolkit contains (a) a brief discussion of lessons learned; (b) a set of questions aimed at assisting in programme design; and (c) a non-exclusive set of possible indicators for measuring progress in responding to TIP.

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<sup>5</sup> See supra - Policy Paper [Pivoting toward the Evidence: Building effective counter-trafficking responses using accumulated, knowledge and a shared approach to monitoring, evaluation and learning](#) (December 2016).

## **Briefings and side events: facilitating dialogue with partners and states on ICAT activities**

ICAT organizes regular briefing sessions and events to present ICAT's work, disseminate its policy guidance tools and invite exchange and engagement with a range of stakeholders concerning the prevention and addressing of trafficking in persons.

Over the years, in addition to holding internal consultations among member agencies, ICAT has made an effort to reach out to the broader anti-trafficking community and in particular to the Member States of the UN, by strategically aligning its traditionally biannual consultations with high level events, such as sessions of the Human Rights Council and the Open-Ended Working Group on the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. This supports engagement of Member States to the UN in ICAT processes, and creates additional opportunities for all to share lessons learnt.

ICAT also hosts regular briefings that focus on, and incorporate different aspects of, trafficking in persons. For example, in January 2015, members of the ICAT Working Group hosted a consultative briefing for Permanent Missions at United Nations headquarters in New York on ICAT's work and priorities for 2015 and beyond. At the consultative briefing, the Group shared its intention of holding such events on a regular basis in future. In March 2016, ICAT briefed the International Dialogue on Migration that took place in New York. A similar briefing event was held in March 2017 on the role of ICAT for the appraisal of the UN Global Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons and the work of ICAT on the evaluation of anti-trafficking responses.

Additionally, several ICAT side events to inter-governmental conferences/gatherings have been held to inform focused policy dialogues. Recent examples of such events include:

- An ICAT Side Event on “*Human Trafficking, Modern Day Slavery and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda*”, jointly organized during the 8th Session of the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, with the Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACNUS) and the Group of Friends Against Trafficking in Persons (October 2016); and
- An ICAT Side Event on the “*The Political Declaration to the GPA: the Way Forward*”, organized during the High-Level Meeting of the Plenary of the General Assembly for the Appraisal of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, during which ICAT presented on proposed activities to support Member States in their implementation of the Political Declaration to the GPA (September 2017).

## **Reports to the General Assembly: ICAT as a source of information on trafficking patterns and flows**

A key priority for ICAT is to facilitate contributions from the UN system for reporting to the General Assembly on implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Human Trafficking, and on patterns and flows of trafficking in persons at the national, regional and international levels, on which UNODC reports biennially (A/Res/64/293).

Such reporting is also a key feature of the ICAT communication strategy, and assists in raising the awareness among Member States on the role of ICAT and its members in responding to trafficking in persons.

### **World Day against Trafficking in Persons: combining forces to improve awareness**

ICAT has marked the World Day against Trafficking in Persons held on 30 July each year through targeted advocacy messaging. For example, for the World Day on 30 July 2015, an advocacy video was prepared by ICAT in which the principals of eight ICAT organizations came together to issue a statement, urging more to be done to help the millions of trafficking victims. For the World Day in 2016, ICAT and its constituent agencies drew attention to the factors that increase people's vulnerability to trafficking in persons, including in the context of large movements, when people are forced to mass-migrate due to conflict, natural disasters and other push factors. An [ICAT statement](#) was released on this occasion.

### **Web Page: making ICAT expertise easily accessible**

In order to promote ICAT's visibility, a dedicated website (<http://icat.network>) was launched in July 2016 with the purpose of making key information more accessible to Member States. The website provides easy access to ICAT's key publications and guidance materials to a larger audience.