Promising Practices in Data Collection, Management, and Dissemination

Collection and analysis of data is imperative for governments to understand the manifestation of human trafficking within its borders and among its nationals abroad, to track progress towards anti-trafficking goals, and to innovate responses to trafficking in partnership with key stakeholders. Unbiased and comprehensive data is crucial to highlighting trends, informing decision-making on domestic policies and priorities, updating anti-trafficking legislation, and appropriately allocating resources, from the local to the national level. Governments should work to attain the necessary technological tools and create data infrastructure to effectively integrate data systems across government agencies, ensuring standardized and comprehensive collection and, as appropriate, integrate civil society datasets with confidentiality policies to protect survivors. While advanced software and database systems can be helpful, they are not essential to building informative data. Instead, consistency and usability across stakeholders, integration into existing administrative data systems, and security of victims’ identities are key.

When approaching data infrastructure, the following are important considerations:

- **Government ownership and stakeholder buy-in** are prerequisites for creating data collection infrastructure that will be fully adopted by all stakeholders, which is needed to build trafficking in persons data and integrate it within existing administrative data systems. All government agencies identifying and providing services to victims and investigating and prosecuting cases of trafficking should work to provide input on their current data practices, their interactions with victims and perpetrators, language accessibility for those collecting and entering data, and technology requirements to create adoptable systems. Incorporation of nongovernmental organization data should also be considered, while being cognizant of privacy, sensitive law enforcement information, and duplicative data from multiple agencies assisting the same victims or investigating the same cases. Methods of input should be considered for all contributors to ensure the system is usable in their daily workflows.

- **Uniform data** is necessary to combine data across agencies to compare trends internally and, when collaborating across borders, with other governments. IOM created international trafficking data standards for governments and civil society to promote uniformity across data collection systems and facilitate sharing across governments. These data standards can be found at [https://www.ctdatacollaborative.org/relatedresources/tools/htcds](https://www.ctdatacollaborative.org/relatedresources/tools/htcds). Governments may consider these guidelines to ensure robust and standardized collection and adoption of appropriate confidentiality standards.

- **Victim identification and protection data**, or data generated from agencies working directly with victims, is crucial to understanding the following: the effectiveness of victim identification efforts across sectors; the success of law enforcement investigations, awareness, and identification efforts for the protection of victims; and the quality and effectiveness of services provided by a country’s protection infrastructure. Victim identification and protection data is particularly challenging to collect and standardize given that strict confidentiality protocols must be followed to protect victims’ identities and avoid re-traumatization, and data collection and standardization efforts often span several government agencies and civil society organizations.
Disaggregating prosecution data is essential to understanding the effectiveness of anti-trafficking legislation. Since traffickers are sometimes charged, prosecuted, and convicted under other statutes, such as immigration or commercial sex-related offenses, it is key to properly classify the charges under which traffickers are convicted to assess the effectiveness and use of anti-trafficking laws to successfully prosecute sex and labor trafficking cases as trafficking in persons. Additionally, details about the crime, including the type of trafficking and demographic information of both traffickers and victims, should be collected to determine if there are gaps in application of anti-trafficking laws.

Hotline/helpline data, collected by both government agencies and civil society, also provide critical information on trafficking trends and the needs of victims through providing a mechanism to connect victims to services and funnel information to law enforcement. Hotline operators and civil society may assist victims who do not interact with governmental systems; however, given the necessary confidentiality of hotlines, the use of anonymized and aggregated data can make preventing duplication difficult when analyzing hotline data. Civil society and governments may have different thresholds for classification of victims. Also, victims may not provide consent, and aggregation may not be possible due to small numbers. For these reasons, close collaboration is needed to standardize and reconcile information and safeguard victims’ identities. Additionally, hotlines rely on public awareness, so their data may overrepresent certain populations. For this reason, hotline data cannot demonstrate prevalence, but can supplement other data sources to inform on trends and highlight gaps in services or accountability in investigations.

Finally, governments should facilitate and encourage independent research on trafficking trends. The academic community can often be a resource in establishing data collection systems, data governance, and data literacy campaigns. When governments share appropriate information with the academic community, it can result in new insights and further innovative responses to human trafficking.

COUNTRY EXAMPLES OF INNOVATIVE HUMAN TRAFFICKING DATA COLLECTION, MANAGEMENT, AND DISSEMINATION:

**Philippines:** The Government of the Philippines created the Integrated Case Management System, which is a single technology platform leveraged by several government agencies to address longstanding issues around interagency coordination needed to assist Filipino trafficking victims, who are often exploited outside the country, and to prosecute their traffickers.

**Uganda:** In partnership with an NGO, Uganda’s Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions developed the Trafficking in Persons Mobile App Platform, which collects and disseminates standardized data pertaining to human trafficking investigations and prosecutions, enabling government agencies to track suspected and convicted traffickers and trends in trafficking in persons.