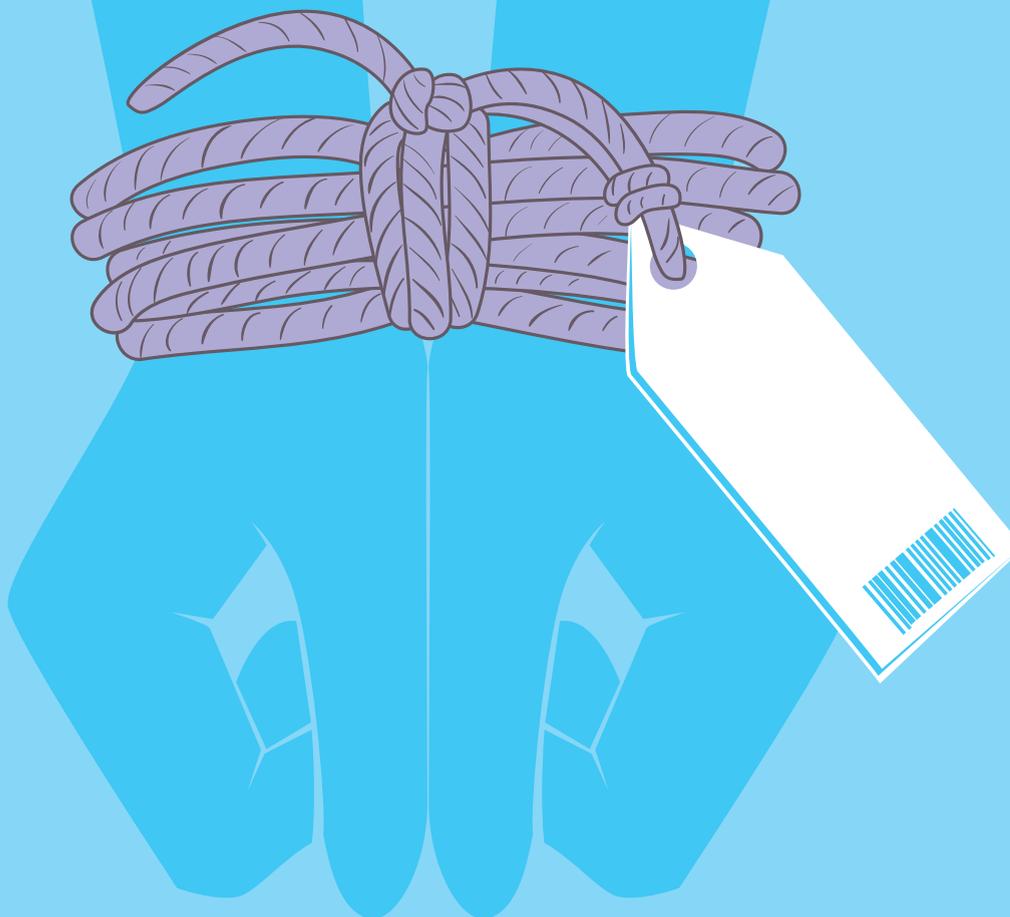




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United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



Trafficking in Persons in the SADC Region: Analysis Report: 2017-2021

UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON DRUGS AND CRIME

TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS IN THE SADC REGION: ANALYSIS REPORT: 2017–2021



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INTRODUCTION

Trafficking in persons (TIP) poses a challenge to the South African Development Community (SADC) countries. This report gauges the problem at a sub-national, national and regional level by analysing data gathered between 2017 and 2021. The report identifies critical aspects of trafficking in persons in the region, how well the SADC *Regional Trafficking in Persons Data Collection System* works and how it could be improved, and propose recommendations towards strengthening the response to the crime in the SADC member states.

BACKGROUND

The study is a joint effort between the SADC and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) under the Regional Programme (2013-2023) entitled “Making the Southern African Development Community Safer from Crime and Drugs”. The UNODC Regional Programme covers the 16 member states of SADC: Angola, Botswana, Comoros, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. It aims to support the member states in responding to challenges related to organized crime, security, effectiveness and integrity of criminal justice systems, drug abuse and HIV/AIDS, through strengthening capacities at the national level and promoting regional cooperation, in line with the priorities and needs of the countries concerned.

It is under these two framework, that the SADC Regional Trafficking in Persons Data Collection System was developed in 2014 as a collaborative effort between the SADC Secretariat and UNODC. The system was titled *SADC Regional Trafficking in Persons Data Collection System*. It was developed to support member states in collecting national statistics and information on trafficking in persons in a coordinated manner and to have it analysed for regional policy and programmatic actions to counter trafficking in persons. To date the Regional Trafficking in Persons Data Collection System has been rolled out to 15 out of 16 SADC member states. This includes setting up national data hubs¹, linked to the SADC-UNODC-regional data hub, as well as conducting training for users of the system. While the foundation has been laid, the effort may be expanded based on previous and current experiences with the system. This analysis compliments research findings of the SADC Regional Trafficking in Persons Data Collection System – Accomplishments, Challenges and the Way Forward report published in 2021.²

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1. See: *Current Use of the System*, on p. 31 in *Section II* of this report.
 2. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2021, Regional Anti-Trafficking in Persons Data Collection System in the SADC Region: *Accomplishments, Challenges and the Way Forward*

REPORT STRUCTURE

The report is structured around three main sections:

The **first section** will chart the scope of trafficking in persons in the region through data from interviews conducted with stakeholders, academic literature on the topic and by extrapolating relevant information from court case summaries. The section specifically analyses the flows, profile(s) and modus operandi of trafficking networks, victims and exploitation and national responses to the crime. The section will also include statistics on trafficking in persons from the SADC member states to grasp tendencies across the region between 2017–2020.

The **second section** will investigate the information gathering processes by looking at how crimes of trafficking in persons are reported and used in the SADC reporting system. This section will take its point of departure in previous reports and fieldwork carried out by the research team among users of the system.

The **third section** presents the key messages of the report and will provide new recommendations based on identified issues. The project findings will be used to inform the countering, response and prevention process related to trafficking in persons.

The report will thus produce 1) information and evidence for decision makers to facilitate appropriate and informed decision-making and implementation of counter-TIP measures, 2) information for SADC member states to inform their anti-trafficking in persons response and 3) recommendations towards an improved *SADC Regional Trafficking in Persons Data Collection System*.

Methodology

Court case analysis

Court cases shared with UNODC from the ROSAF, SHERLOC and GLOTIP databases constitute one of the primary empirical foundation for the analysis of the project. The court case material ranges from short court case summaries to longer appendixes and documents on the judicial processes and hearings. The material contains information about the perpetrators, the victims, and the nature of the trafficking in persons in the different countries as well as descriptions of the crime. The court case summaries vary in length and level of detail, and some provide extensive empirical evidence of specific trafficking encounters.

Statistical analysis

The project includes a statistical analysis of the total court cases registered in the system. Between 2017 and 2021, 484 court cases across the majority of SADC member states have been registered. This data covers prosecution of trafficking in persons, detected victims by member state, detected victims by sex and by member state, perpetrator by form of exploitation and perpetrator recorded in member state by sex. The data is submitted by member states to the SADC secretariat and reflects administrative records on trafficking in persons at the national level.

Literature Review

Literature from academic peer reviewed journals, international organisations and national institutions working on trafficking in persons have been utilized to inform the project throughout the research process, as well as to triangulate empirical findings with scientific research. In doing so, the project ensures state of the art research on trafficking in persons by working with and through current research on the topic.

Expert consultations and fieldwork

To map the different stages of the anti-trafficking in persons initiatives and to grasp how interventions on trafficking in persons work and how these processes are informed on a technical level, interviews with national experts were carried out throughout the research project by doing fieldwork. Interviews have been conducted with prosecutors, social workers, law enforcement, investigators and victims.



SECTION I

TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS IN SADC: TRENDS, PATTERNS AND FLOWS

Trafficking in persons is a serious human rights and criminal justice issue across the Southern African region. Female and child victims are the most affected groups by trafficking in persons, but a significant number of adult males and boys are exploited too.³ Victims are mostly trafficked for sexual exploitation, forced labour and labour exploitation.⁴ Children are more likely to be trafficked in low-income countries, and in the SADC region, they have been trafficked and exploited as vendors in markets and on the streets, on farms, mines and quarries and on plantations.⁵ Trafficking of children often involves the guardians or accomplices who coerce children or parents directly to give their children up. Traffickers deceive families caught in difficult circumstances and persuade them with promises of better futures. Research shows that both parents, siblings and friends of families may be involved in trafficking in persons of children.⁶

Evidence from the SADC region show that a large number of victims of trafficking are nationals foreign to the region. These trafficking victims do not have legal permission to work or stay in the country of exploitation and face extra layers of vulnerability.⁷ In these cases, traffickers deceive victims by promising better employment possibilities and upward social mobility abroad. The traffickers procure fraudulent documentation to facilitate the trafficking of the victim into the destination country and then force the victim into complying by threatening them with going to authorities and reporting them as illegal migrants.⁸ In other cases where the victims come as regular migrants, traffickers may confiscate their passports and other identification documents in strategies of control.⁹

Traffickers continue to target victims who are disenfranchised, vulnerable, marginalized or in difficult circumstances. Climate change has played a role in the displacement of people in the SADC region through natural disasters such as floods and cyclones ravaging the settings where people live. Furthermore, due to the continued prevalence of the COVID-19 health crisis, it appears that the problem has become worse as due to surges in unemployment.¹⁰ People are desperate for work and are thus more likely to compromise with regard to employment possibilities. In that sense, people have become easier targets for traffickers deceiving victims into forced labour under the guise of employment. The pandemic has also problematized the finalization of

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3. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*; Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 11 2022; Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 11 2022.
 4. See: Forms of Exploitation, on p. 19 in Section I of this report
 5. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*; Interview with key informant, Western Cape, South Africa, March 10 2022; Interview with key informant, Eastern Cape, South Africa. March 11 2022.
 6. Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 11 2022.
 7. Interview with key informant, Mbabane, Eswatini, March 14 2022.
 8. Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 11 2022; Interview with key informant, Mbabane, Eswatini, March 14 2022.
 9. Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 11 2022.
 10. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*.

ongoing trafficking in persons court case matters, prolonging cases and straining victims of trafficking further as the matter goes on unresolved.¹¹

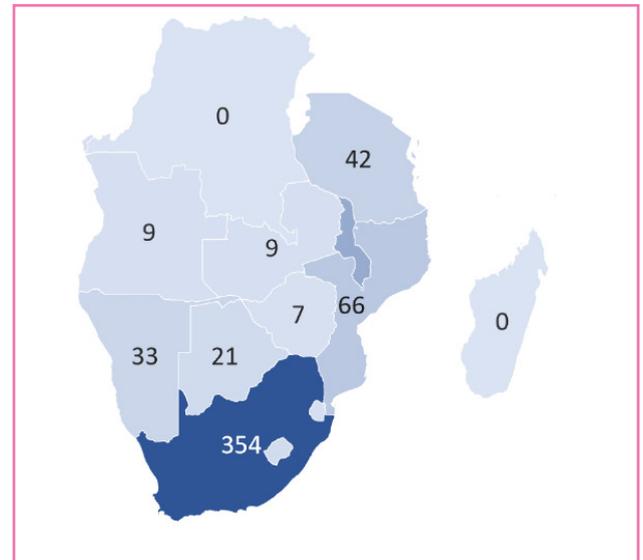
Flows

Victims of trafficking in persons flow between the SADC member states. Evidence suggest that the major flows between the member states is from Mozambique, Lesotho, Eswatini, Zimbabwe and Zambia and into South Africa, however, victims are also trafficked between the other countries.¹² Victims from other African regions such as East Africa and the Horn of Africa Region also find themselves in the SADC member states. These people are found in places such as the Dzelaka Refugee Camp in Malawi where they are vulnerable to trafficking in persons.¹³

In some instances, the flow of victims involve migrants who move between countries or from rural to urban areas in search of upward social mobility, and people who are trafficked from the outset, either across borders or from rural to urban areas and often across regions.¹⁴ In cases of transnational organized criminal groups engaged in trafficking in persons, victims are transported between regions in order to easier maintain control of their movement.¹⁵ In these cases, the victims do not know where they are or may not know the local language and culture, making it more difficult for them to escape.

The people who migrate between countries are vulnerable to trafficking in persons and the exploitation that follows. Interviews reveal that recruiters work across borders and encourage desperate and disenfranchised people to go to other countries, promising them better education and employment possibilities.¹⁶ In some cases, traffickers have accompanied victims across the borders by travelling along or otherwise facilitated their regular or irregular migration journey. Traffickers who accompany victims across borders may hide in plain sight as guardians of the victims they transport. When the traffickers do not accompany their victims, they arrange for transportation to one side of a popular border crossing such as Beitbridge, between South Africa

Figure 1.0.1: Detected Victims of Trafficking in Persons by Member State, 2017-2020



Source: UNODC Presentation of National Data Reported to the SADC Secretariat.

11. Interview with key informant, Mbabane, Eswatini, March 14 2022.
12. Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 11 2022.
13. Interview with key informant, Lilongwe, Malawi, April 26 2022.
14. Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 11 2022.
15. Interview with key informant, Northern Cape, South Africa. March 10 2022.
16. Interview with key informant, Western Cape, South Africa. March 11 2022.

and Zimbabwe, and when the victim crosses the border, they are met by other traffickers who take them to where they are to be exploited.¹⁷ Border control officers do not distinguish between undocumented migrants and victims of trafficking, leaving the victims in difficult positions as they may be helped or punished by authorities depending on how they are seen. Furthermore, border control officers lack training in screening for victims of trafficking in persons or do not have the judicial prerequisites to act on suspicious behaviour. As one border officer recalls:

“If they come here and are led by a guardian or someone else, then how can we stop them if they are not illegal migrants, but have passports and documentation?”¹⁸

Some borders are porous and traffickers and victims may cross the borders through the bush or at nightfall where they are hard for authorities to detect. Victims have also been trafficked into the SADC member states from other regions, such as South and East Asia, from countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh Thailand and China.¹⁹ These victims are deceived into thinking that they will get proper employment in one of the SADC member states.

Traffickers and Modus Operandi

The traffickers in the region are comprised of both individual traffickers and transnational organized criminal groups. The *Modus operandi* of the traffickers, the way they strategize, operate and do trafficking, varies.²⁰ These actors have different levels of organizational structures but have roughly been divided into two categories: groups that meet the definition of transnational organized criminal groups operating domestically or transnationally, and opportunistic traffickers that operate alone or in cooperation with a few other traffickers.²¹

Trafficking operations are organized around recruitment agencies, organizations or companies looking for employees, and employ different strategies to recruit and exploit victims.²² Evidence shows that the victims of trafficking are traded, bought and sold as commodities in trafficking networks. This occurs both in small and large scale operations, or when individual traffickers sell their victims into smaller or larger trafficking operations.²³

There are clear operational differences between transnational organized criminal groups and individuals engaged with trafficking in persons with regard to how they operate, however, a clear pattern across these differences is the relatively high number of

17. Interview with key informant, Western Cape, South Africa. March 11 2022.

18. Interview with key informant, Limpopo, South Africa. May 6 2022.

19. Lesotho. CR.1939/2011; Interview with key informant, Mbabane, Eswatini, March 14 2022.

20. The structure of human trafficking: Lifting the bonnet on a Nigerian transnational network, Campana, 2015, p.4.

21. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*.

22. Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 11 2022.

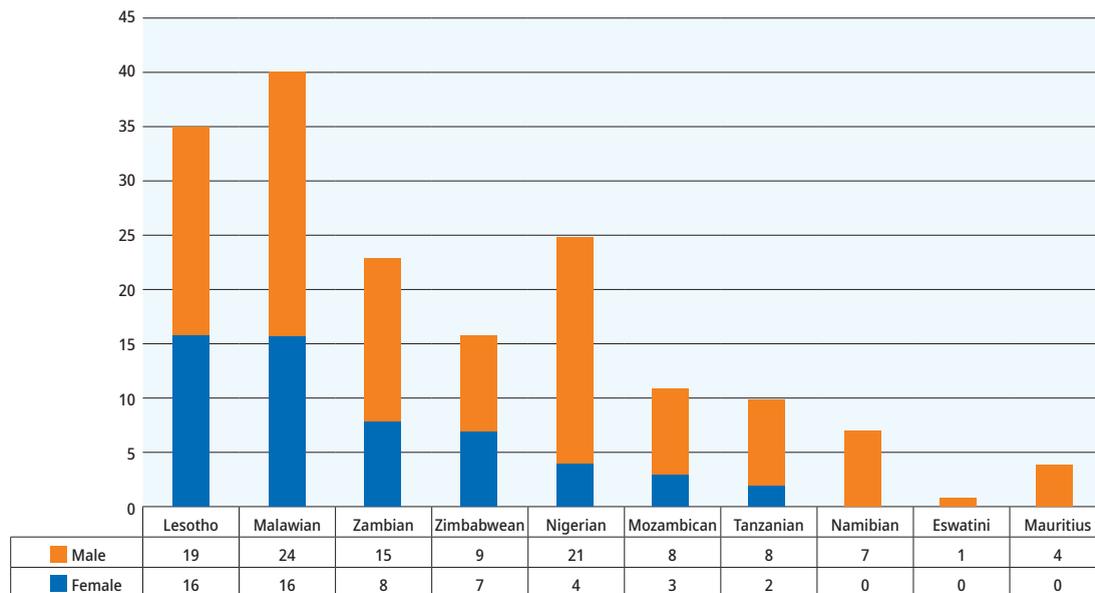
23. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*.

individuals involved in trafficking in persons.²⁴ This collaboration varies from simple to advanced partnerships that benefit from the social, cultural and political circumstances they operate in, both within and between countries. Regardless of the operational differences, the consequences for the victims remain the same: they get lured into and trapped in systematic exploitation schemes for prolonged periods of time.²⁵

Profile of the Traffickers

The transnational organized criminal trafficking in persons groups are dynamic in nature and have varied organisational arrangements, however, often without clear hierarchical structures of power.²⁶ Court cases hint at the transnational organised criminal groups working from afar, through small-scale opportunist traffickers that carry out the recruitment and facilitation of trafficking in persons operations. These small-scale opportunists and low-level recruitment operators make up most of the registered case material. They live in either the country of origin, along the travel route or in the country of destination and have different roles. Some work together in formal arrangements, recruiting or transporting victims from one place to another, and then hand them over to other low-level recruiters in a type of facilitation network before the victims reach their end destination and are forced into exploitation.²⁷

Figure 1.0.2: Perpetrator Recorded in Member State by Sex, 2017-2020 (N=172)



Source: UNODC Presentation of National Data Reported to the SADC Secretariat.

24. Interview with key informant, Western Cape, South Africa. March 11 2022; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*.
25. Interview with key informant, Northern Cape, South Africa. March 10 2022.
26. Interview with key informant, Western Cape, South Africa, March 10 2022; Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 11 2022.
27. Interview with key informant, Northern Cape, South Africa. March 10 2022; Interview with key informant, Western Cape, South Africa. March 11 2022.

In most of the registered cases, the gender composition of the traffickers is divided evenly between male and female perpetrators. In most criminological findings in the literature, crime is mostly committed by male perpetrators, however, due to the highly gendered dimensions of trafficking in persons, the perpetrators are both male and female and fulfil different roles. When it comes to sexual exploitation, it is often so-called 'madams', a type of organizer, who manage the sex work of trafficking in persons victims, just as female traffickers find themselves in recruitment roles as it is easier for them to gain the trust of potential victims.²⁸ Taken together, the case material reveal how most traffickers are opportunists who seek to exploit the vulnerability of potential victims for their own benefit, however, the type and prevalence of the exploitation committed show how trafficking is a highly gendered crime.

Individuals and Groups Involved in Trafficking in Persons

Transnational organized criminal groups and individuals involved in trafficking in persons in the SADC member states work in dynamic relations. Small-scale criminal groups and low-level individual traffickers work in opportunistic ways and have various but distinct responsibilities.²⁹ This suggests that trafficking networks are mostly construed as opportunistic networks and individuals working together loosely rather than in set hierarchical arrangements, and that the traffickers who enter into these networks have different relations to each other.³⁰ These categories will be covered in the following.

28. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2009, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*.

29. Interview with key informant, Western Cape, South Africa, March 10 2022; Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 11 2022.

30. The structure of human trafficking: Lifting the bonnet on a Nigerian transnational network, Campana, 2015, p.4.

When it comes to sexual exploitation, it is often so-called 'madams', a type of organizer, who manage the sex work of trafficking in persons victims, just as female traffickers find themselves in recruitment roles as it is easier for them to gain the trust of potential victims.



Organizers

One of the most prominent roles in trafficking networks is the organizer. This role varies depending on context, however, case material suggest that they have some level of authority and pull the strings with regard to recruiters and the facilitation of trafficking in persons crimes.

The data suggests that the organizer is a dynamic position and that the organizer may act as the facilitator and the receiver of trafficking victims for exploitation purposes. In smaller or lone trafficking operations, the organizer acts as the facilitator, transporter and harbourer of the victims. In these cases, the organizer may target victims for purposes of sexual exploitation or forced labour, as with case example one and two, respectively.

Traffickers who act as organizers often hold key positions within transnational criminal networks involved in trafficking in persons. The organizer plans the acquisition and exploitation of trafficking victims through recruiters who answer to them, either informally as external partners or formally by way of affiliation to the same criminal groups.

Case material reveals that the organizer is a dynamic role ranging from a person with responsibility over the entire trafficking operations to more peripheral roles. While some are positioned as leaders, others exhibit less authority and power and are limited to a lower position in relation to other traffickers.³¹

CASE EXAMPLE(S):

In a case from Lesotho, the organizer acted as the receiver of the trafficking victims. The individual [from Lesotho] held a certain level of authority as a teacher and used this power to persuade students to look for women who would be inclined to accept employment abroad [In South Africa]. Five young women were led to the teacher, who, in turn, deceitfully explained to them how they would get there and what work they would be doing; an offer they excitedly accepted. When they arrived at the destination, however, they were sold into sexual exploitation. In another case from Zambia, the organizer, a Congolese adult woman, promised the relatives of five children that they would get better education in Zambia. When a deal was made between the trafficker and the relatives, the woman arranged for transportation and entered Zambia illegally, and upon arrival to the destination, she put the five children to work in her business, selling commodities and food.

In a third case from Lesotho, a Chinese woman was trafficked from China to Lesotho by Chinese traffickers for sexual exploitation. In this instance, the roles of the organizer, recruiter and facilitator were inhabited by different people, however, the traits of the organizer remain the same; with a certain authority, the Chinese organizer instructed his affiliates with carrying out the crime. The Chinese organizer was in control of the entire trafficking process and were also able to facilitate the recruitment of the victim and profit from their exploitation in Lesotho.

31. Lesotho. Rex V. Joalane Tsoana. (CR:372/12); Zambia. The People vs. Maputa Muzara. SSV111/2014; Lesotho. CR.1939/2011; Interview with key informant, Mbabane, Eswatini, March 14 2022.

Recruiters

The recruiter is the trafficker who knowingly or unknowingly recruits victims for purposes of exploitation. A common trait for the recruiter is that they answer to the organizer or some other authority within trafficking networks, however, some recruiters think they are legitimate employment agents and may not know that the work they are carrying out for trafficking networks is with the intent and outcome of exploitation.³²

As evidenced in the data, recruiters can be individuals that engage with their community in an established manner and have regular and licit ways of securing employment. The recruiter may also be someone that victims trust, such as a friend or family, or by way of being from the same town or community.³³ Often times, the recruiter is not fully aware of the illicit activity or intent of the organizers of trafficking in persons, mistaking their arrangements as simply organizing irregular travel or facilitating employment abroad. In these cases, the intent of the trafficking organizers is obscured or hidden from the recruiters, who then are tasked with carrying out simple tasks such as setting a relative up with an organizer or transporter or some other relatively basic activity. Recruiters can also be renowned members of their community, such as political authorities or religious leaders, leveraging on their status in the community to coerce the trafficking and exploitation of victims.³⁴ In other instances, such as with transnational organised criminal groups, the role of the recruiter has distinct responsibilities in an often clearly defined criminal hierarchy. This occurred in a case in Malawi, where the trafficking recruiters, working for a transnational criminal group, used deceptive means for the trafficking of multiple victims from different places for the purpose of selling them to perpetrators coercing them into forced labour.³⁵ Recruiters may also use their social, cultural, or political position or capital in a community to coerce victims into trafficking. In a case from Namibia, a trafficker recruited two minor girls by abusing his position of power and their vulnerability and forcing them into sexual exploitation.³⁶

Multiple instances of so-called “loverboy cases” have also been reported.³⁷ In these cases, male traffickers will romance potential female victims for months and years, building up a trusty relationship, before trafficking them into sexual exploitation or forced labour.³⁸ Some cases have revealed how loverboys employ actors as friends and family members to make their romance act

CASE EXAMPLE(S):

In one case, a group of five brothers ran a church in a rural area, using a female recruiter to deceive female victims to go to church in pursuit of salvation. When the victims arrived at the church, they were sexually exploited by the group of brothers. In another case, a priest in an urban centre used a female recruiter to deceive young female girls to go to his church. In the church, the priest groomed the girls and sexually exploited them. These cases reveal how religious authorities use their status to coerce victims into sexual exploitation.

32. Seychelles. *S v. Alam*. CO 67/2016. [2018] SCSC 946; Mozambique. Muiambo and Mahvahve.

33. Seychelles. *S v. Alam*. CO 67/2016. [2018] SCSC 946.

34. Interview with key informant, Eastern Cape, South Africa, 11 March 2022; Mozambique. Muiambo and Mahvahve.

35. Malawi. *Republic v. Bandawe, Banda and Yosiya*.

36. Namibia. *S v Lukas*.

37. Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 10 2022; Interview with victim, Pretoria, South Africa. March 9 2022.

38. Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 10 2022.

seem genuine.³⁹ Loverboys act as both recruiters for larger trafficking operations, however, evidence reveals that the loverboy traffickers also can be a small group of male traffickers trying to earn money through sexual exploitation. A witness of the loverboy strategy recalls:

“He was my boyfriend of two years. He told me he wanted to meet up, and I thought ‘fine’ because he was my boyfriend. He changed plans because he told me he was tired, and then requested a taxi to pick me up. It took me far away, to some house. It was hot inside the house, and two girls were sitting there. He said ‘these are my girls’. Then he told me I have to sleep with his clients so I can get money to go back home. I did this, and he said I am going to work for him, and I am not going back home.”⁴⁰

Female sex workers also work as recruitment traffickers for the criminal groups that engage in sexual exploitation through brothels.⁴¹ In these cases, the female recruiter will tell their community members how well they are doing through sex work. What the potential victims do not know is that the female recruiter has been sexually exploited by traffickers for years before being promoted to recruiter. After encouraging potential victims to go willingly to the brothel with them, the victims are sexually exploited by force.⁴² Traffickers also recruit victims by enlisting drug dealers as recruiters. In these cases, the drug dealers will target vulnerable population areas where they sell drugs for little to no monetary gain. When the victim gains an addiction, the drug dealers demand they pay for the drugs they have consumed by means of sexual exploitation or forced labour.⁴³

Brokers

Brokers, also known as facilitators or intermediaries, are individuals involved in trafficking operations that either facilitate the trafficking of victims or provide other specialized services, such as procuring fraudulent identification documents for travel or help arrange the transportation of victims. Brokers are, as opposed to recruiters, often located along trafficking routes, where they either provide transportation, accommodation or facilitate the necessary resources needed for successful transportation and exploitation of the victims. While these needs can be fraudulent documents, court case evidence point to a myriad of different material services provided by brokers, such as providing special clothing like wigs for child victims to secure the feasibility of the trafficking operations.⁴⁴ They also arrange means for private transportation or provide tickets for public transportation and secure accommodation in hotels or safe houses for long destination travel. Brokers work dynamically and may have arrangements with multiple traffickers at the same time. In one case, a woman was paid for the transfer of two

39. Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 10 2022.

40. Interview with victim, Pretoria, South Africa. March 9 2022.

41. Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 10 2022.

42. Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 10 2022.

43. Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 10 2022.

44. Malawi. State v. Retina Chiyenda.

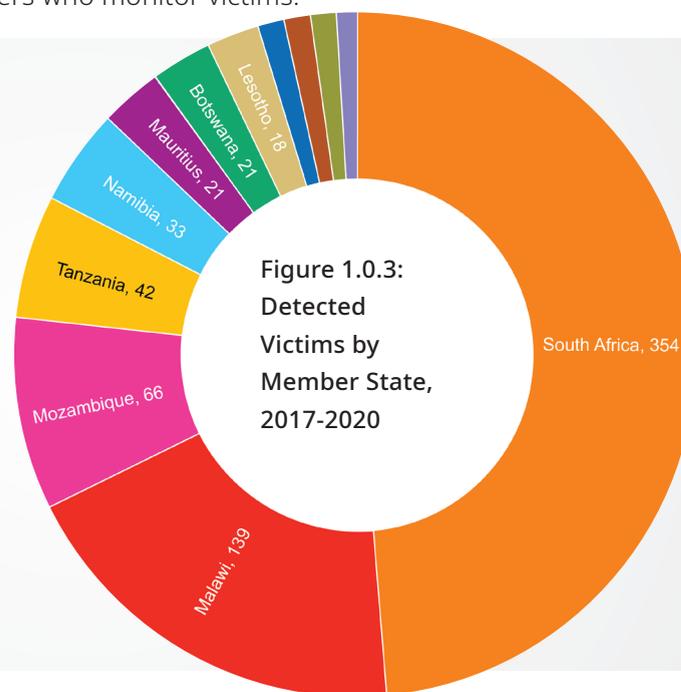
children to a trafficker for the purpose of sexual exploitation.⁴⁵ The sole task of the woman was for the transfer of the children, however, brokers may position themselves in ways where they carry out sole activities in a chain of multiple different brokers who take over. Brokers may negotiate seemingly favourable labour conditions to potential victims. These labour brokers target especially disenfranchised people who are desperate for work, and promise them pay for working in sectors such as agriculture.⁴⁶ Evidence points to labour exploitation of victims once they get there, where they in some cases are denied pay and are put in debt bondage through drug addictions procured by traffickers.⁴⁷

Enforcers

Enforcers are the traffickers who, during the phase of exploitation, serve as guards who keep watch over victims in captivity and make sure that victims comply.⁴⁸ Interviews with victims reveal how enforcers guard the entrances to brothels where victims are sexually exploited and make sure that the victims cannot escape.⁴⁹ Some cases have also revealed how enforcers accompany and monitor victims when they are absent, tracking and keeping watch as a mechanism of control.⁵⁰ Some cases have also revealed how law enforcement officers serve as enforcers who monitor victims.⁵¹

Victims

A common denominator for the victims of trafficking in persons across the SADC member states is the state of disenfranchisement or desperation that has overcome most victims prior to trafficking and exploitation. This makes the victims easier targets for traffickers, however, anyone can become a victim of trafficking in persons. Males, females and children are all trafficked for different exploitation purposes, but the trends and patterns between the victim profiles vary.



Source: UNODC Presentation of National Data Submitted to the SADC Secretariat

45. Namibia. *S v Pretorius*. CC 2/2018. [2020] NAHCMD 507.

46. Interview with key informant, Western Cape, South Africa. March 10 2022.

47. Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 10 2022.

48. Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 10 2022; Interview with victim, Pretoria, South Africa. March 9 2022.

49. Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 10 2022; Interview with victim, Pretoria, South Africa. March 9 2022.

50. Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 10 2022.

51. Interview with victim, Pretoria, South Africa. March 9 2022.

Profile of Victims

Women

Women are among the most vulnerable to trafficking in persons, and are trafficked into sexual exploitation and labour exploitation such as domestic work or the fishing and agriculture industry.⁵² Among these, the most common type of trafficking and exploitation of women in the SADC member states is still that of trafficking into sexual exploitation. In an interview conducted at a shelter for victims, a female victim recalled that she was sold into sexual exploitation by her boyfriend of two years.⁵³ A second victim recalled that she went out to drink with a friend she trusted. The boyfriend of the friend kept buying the two of them alcohol and they both managed to persuade the victim to go to his house, where she was injected with drugs and transported to an unknown location where she was sexually exploited along with 39 other girls.⁵⁴ This pattern suggests that not only do traffickers target female victims in marginal or vulnerable positions, they also leverage trust, romance and engage in emotional blackmail of the victims in order to coerce them into trafficking networks where they are exploited indefinitely.

Female migrant workers are also vulnerable to trafficking in persons. Women who migrate for labour or social mobility often experience labour market segmentation, being overrepresented in a few low-paid occupations and industries, often with difficult working conditions and little or no possibility for upward social mobility.⁵⁵ As such, female migrants tend to dominate the clothing and garment industries and care industries such as domestic work, nursing and childcare. The women who migrate as domestic workers and entertainers often form a highly vulnerable and easily exploited group due to lack of schooling, mastering of the local language and social isolation experienced in these jobs.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the unequal power relations between males and females and employers and domestic workers also contribute to reinforcing immobility in the labour market as well as making them vulnerable to trafficking in persons.⁵⁷ What might begin as a seemingly normal job may turn into cases where female victims are exploited for their labour by not being paid by their employers. These factors make female workers in difficult social positions highly vulnerable to trafficking in persons.

Males

Adult males are targeted by traffickers for purposes of labour exploitation or forced labour exploitation. Most cases of male trafficking victims are concerned with mainly servitude and slavery in agriculture, mining or textile sectors or for domestic work.⁵⁸

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52. Methodological Challenges in Research with Trafficked Persons: Tales from the Field. In *International Migration* 43(1-2): 35-54; Introduction. *Life Interrupted*. Duke University Press Books. Brennan, Denise. 2005, 2014; Interview with key informant, Western Cape, South Africa. March 10 2022; Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa. March 9 2022; Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 8 2022.
 53. Interview with victim, Pretoria, South Africa, March 9 2022.
 54. Interview with victim, Pretoria, South Africa, March 9 2022.
 55. Issues in Research on Women, International Migration, and Labour. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 5 (1): 1-26. Lee, Sharon M. 1996.
 56. Issues in Research on Women, International Migration, and Labour. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 5 (1): 1-26. Lee, Sharon M. 1996.
 57. Thinking Policy Through Migrant Domestic Workers' Itineraries. *American Behavioural Scientist* Vol. 64(6): 859-877. Parreñas, Rhacel S. & Silvey, Rachel. 2020.
 58. Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 9 2022.

Traffickers target towns and areas where there are homeless people and unemployment is high. In South Africa's Western Cape, there have been cases where unemployed males have been trafficked for labour exploitation on farms. In these cases, the traffickers promise their victims competitive wages and opportunities to live on the farms, however, once the victims are at the farms, the traffickers withhold payment and give them drugs instead.⁵⁹

In some cases, traffickers force their victims to live in nearby cumbersome scrapyards. Many of the male victims in the SADC member states are trafficked transnationally. Traffickers pose as genuine employment agents looking for male employees to carry out work in the above-mentioned sectors. They coerce male victims by suggesting that work and living opportunities are better where they come from, and when the victims agree, they are either directed to or smuggled irregularly to the destination of the traffickers.⁶⁰ If the victims protest and the traffickers begin to lose control over the victims, they report the victims to the authorities as irregular migrants and start the recruitment process over again by looking for new victims.

Children

Recent trafficking in persons data on flows in the region suggest that the rural-to-urban trafficking of children is on the rise, as more and more children are trafficked from rural households to urban centres.⁶¹ Previous studies have identified unaccompanied or abandoned children as among the most vulnerable actors in urban centres and they stand out as an exceedingly pressing social issue in developing countries.⁶² While this critical issue has received little academic attention, case evidence from the SADC member states reveal clearly the severity of the problem. In most cases, children are trafficked by family members and relatives who are financially struggling or vulnerable in other ways. In the Western Cape in South Africa, a case revealed how a family was being paid by a trafficker for purposes of sexual exploitation.⁶³ In this case, an old male mining employee from the same rural area bought the child from her parents for forced marriage and sexual exploitation.⁶⁴

Transnational organized criminal groups also target children for trafficking. Traffickers looking for children target specifically poverty stricken areas such as townships or rural areas where the possibilities of social mobility are few.⁶⁵ In these areas, traffickers will deceive or coerce families to give up their children, promising them better possibilities in cities or elsewhere. Evidence has also shown that traffickers kidnap or pick up children who are lost and transport them to different regions or countries where they

59. Interview with key informant, Western Cape, South Africa, March 10 2022.

60. Interview with key informant, Mbabane, Eswatini, March 14 2022.

61. Interview with key informant, Western Cape, South Africa, March 10 2022.

62. Feltarbejde blandt børn: metodologi og etik i etnografisk børneforskning. Gulløv, Eva, Højlund, Susanne. Kbh.: Gyldendal. 2003; Life Paths of Urban Children and Youth in Comparative Perspective. *Childhood* 3 (3): 375-402. Blanc et al. 1996; Conflict in the Neighborhood: Street and Working Children in the Public Space. Aptekar, Lewis and Behailu Abebe. *Childhood* 4 (4): 477-490. 1997; Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood; With a New Introduction. James, Allison, red. Classic ed. Routledge Education Classic Edition Series. London: Routledge. 2015.

63. Interview with key informant, Western Cape, South Africa, March 10 2022; Interview with key informant, Eastern Cape, South Africa. March 11 2022.

64. Interview with key informant, Eastern Cape, South Africa, March 11 2022.

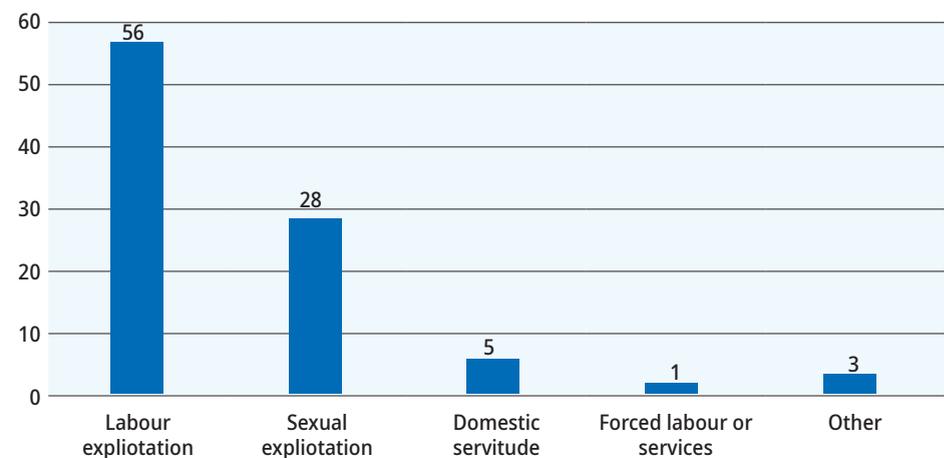
65. Interview with key informant, Western Cape, South Africa, March 10 2022.

may not know the language.⁶⁶ Since the children do not know where they are, where to go or even what time it is, they stay with the traffickers out of uncertainty and fear.⁶⁷ They are then sexually exploited or exploited for forced labour as domestic workers, beggars, food vendors or on farms.⁶⁸ One of the main issues to trafficking of children is that the victims cannot consent, but act on instructions by their guardians and traffickers, making it easier for traffickers to control and exploit the vulnerability of children.⁶⁹ Many of the urban centres in the SADC member states are domestic and transnational migration destinations, and stand out as spaces of possibility for those whose life chances are few and far between. In this perspective, the plight of trafficking victims in the SADC member states stand out not only as a worrying phenomenon, but illuminates how the search for better lives and social mobility becomes entwined with criminal economies and predatory trafficking networks.

Forms of Exploitation

The registered cases delineate the different types of exploitation the victims face across the SADC member states. The exploitation that victims endure in trafficking networks take a significant toll on the victims, and the consequences of this physical and psychological harm is severe.⁷⁰ The below graph shows the number of perpetrators by form of exploitation. Across the SADC member states, most traffickers exploit victims for labour exploitation and sexual exploitation, followed by domestic servitude, forced labour and or other services.

Figure 1.0.4: Perpetrator by Form of Exploitation, 2017-2020



Source: UNODC Presentation of National Data Submitted to the SADC Secretariat

Sexual Exploitation

Sexual exploitation is one of the most common types of exploitation in the SADC member states.⁷¹ The victims of sexual exploitation are often adult females or children who may be either sexually exploited for sex work at brothels or victims who are sold off by relatives in dire economic situations. Sexual exploitation involves severe physical and psychological abuse, where female victims

66. Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 9 2022.

67. Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 9 2022.

68. Interview with key informant, Western Cape, South Africa, March 10 2022.

69. Interview with key informant, Western Cape, South Africa, March 10 2022.

70. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*; Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 11 2022; Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 11 2022.

71. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*; Interview with key informant, Western Cape, South Africa, March 10 2022; Interview with key informant, Eastern Cape, South Africa, March 11 2022.

are kept in captivity and forced to do sex work for traffickers.⁷² Evidence have revealed how these victims, besides being sexually exploited, are punished physically and forced to live in remote and secluded places. Some cases have revealed how forced abortions take place when the female victims become pregnant and how they have been killed if they have refused to comply with traffickers.⁷³

Forced labour

The type of exploitation that is most common in the region is that of trafficking in persons for forced labour, where traffickers deceive their victims to travel willingly to some destination before they are exploited.⁷⁴ This type of exploitation is where the traffickers force their victims to do different kinds of labour, such as domestic work, in the mining sector, agriculture work or work as vendors, keep them captive and refuse to pay them. Traffickers use different means to maintain control of their victims for purposes of forced labour exploitation, as it is necessary for traffickers to keep their victims from escaping once they have begun exploiting them. In that sense, most cases of exploitation in the region begin with the victim being deceived by the traffickers in the recruitment and transportation phases, and when they enter the exploitation phase, coercion, violence and drug abuse occur to maintain control of the victims.⁷⁵ In cases of trafficking for forced labour, domestic workers find themselves trapped in trafficking networks with every aspect of their lives under the traffickers control, rendering them invisible and unprotected.⁷⁶ In a case from Eswatini, a couple recruited and transported a victim from Nigeria to Eswatini for purposes of exploitation by deceiving the victim and promising her that she would be enrolled in a tertiary institution in Eswatini.⁷⁷ The victim was put to work in the traffickers business, selling wares and jewellery and performing domestic tasks at their residence. Her phone and passport was confiscated, and she was not enrolled in a tertiary institution as promised. Furthermore, the traffickers abused her physically by assaulting her with the intention of doing grievous bodily harm. Evidence suggests that the contents of this case are common in cases of small-scale trafficking. Trafficking networks often work under the guise of genuine employers, recruitment agents or families seeking employees to fill vacant positions in various businesses, companies, organisations and sectors, and may promise victims favourable salaries or education in return. This practice leads victims into trafficking networks where they are exploited in different ways. In that sense, opportunity and exploitation are intimately connected for the victims who fall prey to trafficking in persons crimes.

72. Interview with victim, Pretoria, South Africa. March 9 2022.

73. Interview with victim, Pretoria, South Africa. March 9 2022.

74. Breaking Bondages: Control Methods, "Juju," and Human Trafficking, Marcel van der Watt and Beatri Kruger, 2019; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*; Interview with key informant, Western Cape, South Africa, March 10 2022; Interview with key informant, Eastern Cape, South Africa. March 11 2022.

75. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*; Relationships between suspects and victims of sex trafficking: Exploitation of prostitutes and domestic violence parallels in Dutch trafficking cases, Maite Verhoeven and others, 2015.

76. Oxfam International 2020. Time to Care: Unpaid and underpaid care work and the global inequality crisis.

77. Eswatini. Rex versus Ifeoma Adigwe-Dike and Amechi Kenechukwu Dike.

Other forms of Exploitation

Debt bondage

Debt bondage is common in trafficking networks in the SADC region; a strategy they often employ to subject the victims and keep them in exploitation indefinitely. One type of debt bondage is where victims are recruited by drug dealers who provide them with drugs.⁷⁸ After they have gotten addicted, the victims are sexually exploited or are exploited for forced labour. The victims build up debt to the traffickers by consuming drugs, and they pay off this debt by doing the traffickers bidding. In some cases, traffickers have deceived victims to go to their house or some other location where they have injected them with drugs against their will. In other cases, the victims come willingly after they have become addicted.⁷⁹ Some victims who have escaped the traffickers eventually go back to them out of their own will because they are addicted to the drugs. In that sense, the victim will rather endure exploitation than be without the drugs provided by the traffickers. As a prosecutor recalls:

“A victim was trafficked in 2017. She escaped and then went back to the traffickers in 2020. She then escaped again in early 2021. That was a very massive investigation, because we could not rely on our victim. There were too many inconsistencies to the story. Very often, the victims become addicted to substances, and then of course they go back to the traffickers. Or they go back to the environment where they got the drugs from, and then they get trafficked again. Every time they go back and get re-trafficked, the credibility of the evidence is less.”⁸⁰

The more addicted the victim is to drugs, the less credible they become. This occurs due to the addiction and trauma they endure while with the traffickers. The credibility of the victims is difficult to ascertain due to their drug addiction, rendering it more difficult for national response teams and social workers to help the victims.⁸¹ Issues of debt and drug bondage are intertwined in the sense that drug bondage is debt bondage, since victims owe the traffickers money for the drugs they are provided with, and since they cannot repay the traffickers, they are exploited instead. With debt bondage, traffickers deceive victims into believing that the victim owe the traffickers money for the services they have provided for the victim, such as providing fraudulent identification document (ID), transportation, housing, etc. These schemes act as effective means of control in cases of trafficking, since debt bondage is a perpetual scheme that lasts indefinitely, rendering the trafficker in full control of the victim.⁸² Matters are complicated further as the fear and psychological abuse of being stuck in these bondage schemes burden the victim in such ways that they may elect to stay loyal to the traffickers, either willingly or through desperation.⁸³

78. Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 10 2022.

79. Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 10 2022.

80. Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 10 2022.

81. Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 10 2022.

82. Breaking Bondages: Control Methods, “Juju,” and Human Trafficking, Marcel van der Watt and Beatri Kruger, 2019.

83. Beyond Borders, Human Trafficking from Nigeria to the UK, Myriam Cherti, Jenny Pennington and Peter Grant, 2013.

Organ Removal

Stakeholders have reported how victims are trafficked for organ removal in the SADC member states, however, there are fewer cases of trafficking for organ removal compared to other forms of exploitation.⁸⁴ In cases where victims are trafficked for purposes of organ removal, doctors affiliated with traffickers or traffickers with medical affinity perform operations on victims, removing critical organs like kidneys to provide for customers looking to buy critical organs. In cases of organ trafficking in African countries, traffickers have used medical clinics and language services of hospitals to translate between recipients of organs and the recruited victim being exploited.⁸⁵ This type of trafficking and exploitation is highly difficult, and when compared to other types of exploitation there are few cases of organ removal, as it requires a complex trafficking strategy. The trafficking operation for organ removal requires the recruitment of healthy victims, performing professional surgery to remove the organs and storage and transportation of the organs.

Albino victims are also being kidnapped for trafficking of organs in the SADC countries.⁸⁶ Unlike other forms of organ exploitation where the purpose is transplantable organs for recipients in need of medical aid, the trafficking organs in cases with Albino victims is for use as magical trinkets and enchanted potions.⁸⁷ One of the key enablers of this type of trafficking in the SADC countries is by way of the local authority of rural chieftains and the belief in traditional religions in rural milieus.⁸⁸

Forced Marriage

Women and children are especially vulnerable to forced marriage.⁸⁹ In these cases, victims are forced into marriage by their parents or guardians in exchange for money.⁹⁰ The victims of this type of exploitation suffer as they have no control over their own destiny before or after being trafficked into a forced marriage.⁹¹

Forced Begging

In cases of forced begging, case material from the SADC member states show that children are trafficked between countries and counties for purposes of forced begging.⁹² In these cases, children are placed on streets to beg for money for the traffickers.⁹³ The victims are transported to different countries and counties in order for the traffickers to easier maintain control of their movement.⁹⁴

84. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*

85. Trafficking in Human Beings for the Purpose of Organ Removal, INTERPOL, 2021, p. 12.

86. Interview with key stakeholder, Lilongwe, Malawi. April 2022.

87. Albinism in Africa: A Proposed Conceptual Framework to Understand and Effectively Address A Continental Crisis, Mark P Mostert and Martha M Weich, 2017.

88. Interview with key stakeholder, Lilongwe, Malawi. April 2022.

89. Interview with key informant, Eastern Cape, South Africa, March 11 2022.

90. Interview with key informant, Eastern Cape, South Africa, March 11 2022.

91. Interview with key informant, Eastern Cape, South Africa, March 11 2022.

92. Interview with key informant, Western Cape, South Africa, March 10 2022.

93. Interview with key informant, Western Cape, South Africa, March 10 2022.

94. Interview with victim, Pretoria, South Africa. March 10 2022.

OTHER FORMS OF ABUSE AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Interviews with key stakeholders and victims of trafficking in person reveal the severity of the harm the victims endure. A female victim of sexual exploitation was deceived by a friend into going out with her and her boyfriend, not knowing that they were both traffickers. They got the victim intoxicated, and after a while, they brought her to a house where they promised the victim that they would continue their party:

“As soon as I entered the house, they [the traffickers] injected me, and I fell asleep. Early in the morning, there was a girl [another victim] who came to me. She said to me: ‘welcome to hell. You are here to sell your body’.”⁹⁵

The victim ended up being sexually exploited for years before she finally escaped. During the time at the brothel, she was subjected to severe physical and psychological abuse, substance abuse, being held against her will and sexually exploited.⁹⁶

“They kept on injecting me. They took photos of me for online sex trading. And then the men came and bought me and the other girls. I fell pregnant at one time, and a doctor who was working with the Nigerians [traffickers] came in about the baby, to perform an abortion. Some girls wanted to run away, but they killed them in front of us. They chopped them into pieces... Even the police officers used to come in to sleep with us... This girl I became friends with, they killed her, and then they made us eat her liver.”⁹⁷

The victim is now living in a social care house where she is slowly recovering from the trauma she endured, however, future prospects remain dubious. The victim lives under a victim protection program removed from her relatives, and while she has expressed joy at the help she receives in the social care house, her new life is plagued with uncertainty and loneliness, as she cannot contact her family due to security concerns.⁹⁸ This case highlights how the intersection between vulnerability and exploitation leads to severe harm that continues after the exploitation phase, where victims continue to suffer as their lives continue to be affected by the existence of trafficking networks, even in exile.

Rehabilitation and Re-integration

Besides medical care and assistance, NGO's and social organizations are the primary institutions in rehabilitation and recovery of victims in the SADC member states. These institutions provide a safe haven away from the trafficking networks where victims can engage in their hobbies and recreational work. However, the victims at these shelters are also removed from their families as part of witness and victim protection programmes, and some cases highlight how this puts increased stress on the victims, as they are removed from their near relatives. Evidence suggests that the rehabilitation processes are slow and underfunded. This results in victims not getting the necessary care they need for recovery as judicial processes drag out.

95. Interview with victim, Pretoria, South Africa. March 9 2022.

96. Interview with victim, Pretoria, South Africa. March 9 2022.

97. Interview with victim, Pretoria, South Africa. March 9 2022.

98. Interview with victim, Pretoria, South Africa. March 9 2022.

Some studies have highlighted how there is a lack of attention to trafficking studies concerned with what happens after the victims are freed from the trafficking predicament.⁹⁹ Much literature on trafficking describes rehabilitation as a difficult process often entailing shame, stigma, and debt, as well as mental health issues such as trauma and stress, challenging the assumption that victims of trafficking enter into their local communities and old habits upon being freed from trafficking in persons.¹⁰⁰ These feelings are often caused by a discrepancy in the expectations of migration and employment opportunities and the realities of the outcome which more often than not is that migrants have been trafficked or exploited have not been able to accumulate savings and pay off the debts they have inherited through trafficking in persons.¹⁰¹ Migrants who become victims to trafficking in persons often face many of the same challenges returning home as before migrating, as the social and economic obstacles they try to overcome by migrating have not disappeared or been ameliorated during their migration but have remained or worsened.¹⁰² For migrants, returning home therefore rarely marks the end of a linear migration trajectory, but rather is another phase in the migration cycle as returnees often enter into re-migration where they are once more vulnerable to trafficking in persons.¹⁰³

National Responses

Multiple institutions work to combat trafficking in persons at a national and regional level. The national response(s) to trafficking in persons vary between SADC member states. Most member states have institutions that work against trafficking in persons, such as: law enforcement and first responders, labour, justice, immigration and home affairs departments, institutions for priority crime investigations, national prosecution authorities, social development organizations, gender equality agencies and specific task teams at both national and regional levels comprised of key personnel from the listed institutions, etc.¹⁰⁴ These task forces work proactively by creating awareness in specific communities or areas where trafficking in persons have been identified as a prevalent issue.

National prosecution authorities in SADC member states such as South Africa and Mozambique work closely with regard to matters of trafficking in persons, however, issues with regional the national cooperation and response are still prevalent. Data suggests that the direst issue pertaining to trafficking in persons across the SADC member states is the reporting of and legal responses to trafficking in persons crimes. Evidence show that magistrate courts and high courts across the region have issues

99. Moving forward – Life after trafficking. Brennan, Denise and Plambech, Sine. In *Anti-Trafficking Review* 10: 1-2. 2018.

100. Forced to leave? The discursive and analytical significance of describing migration as forced and voluntary. 44 (6): 981-998. Erdal, B., Marta and Oeppen, Ceri. In: *Journal of Ethnic and Migration studies*. 2018; Operational indicators of trafficking in human being. International Labour Organization. 2009; No Place for Me Here: The challenges of Ethiopian male return migrants. Danish Institute for International Studies 2020.

101. Deportation Stigma and Re-migration. Schuster, Liza & Majidi, Nassim. In: *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 31(4): 635-652. 2015; Operational indicators of trafficking in human being. International Labour Organization. 2009.

102. Vulnerable *Here* or *There*? Examining the vulnerability of victims of human trafficking before and after return. In *Anti-Trafficking Review* 10: 34-52. Pasche, E., Skilbrei, M., Plambech, S. 2018; No Place for Me Here: The challenges of Ethiopian male return migrants. Danish Institute for International Studies 2020;

103. Precarity Chains: cycles of domestic worker migration from Southeast Asia to the Middle East. In *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*: 1-15. Silvey, Rachel & Parreñas, Rhacel. 2019;

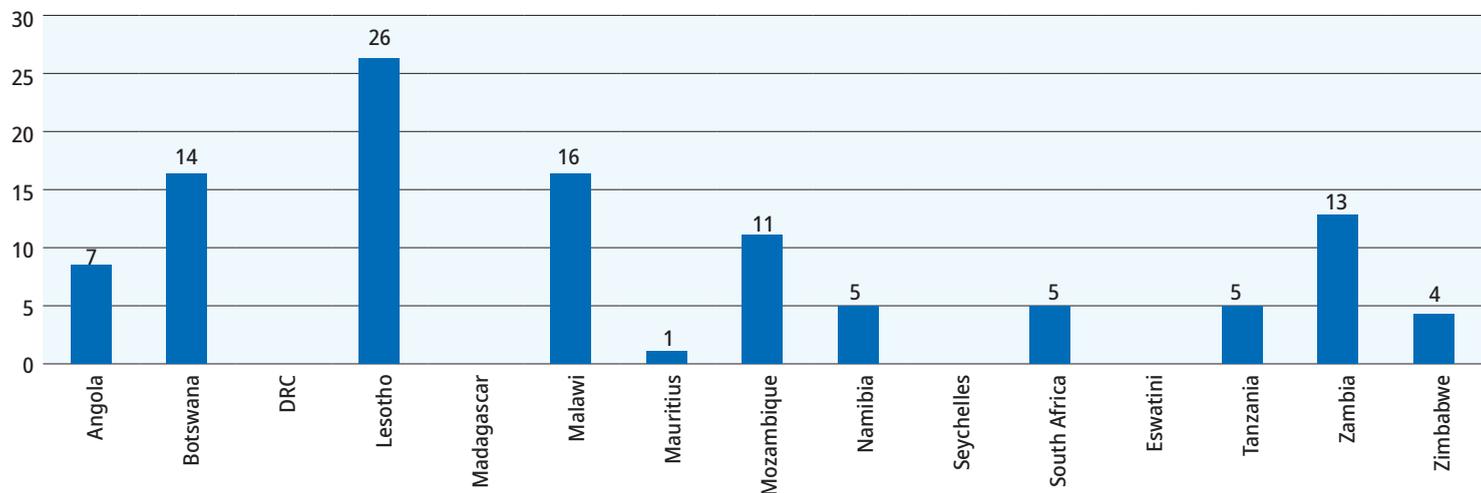
104. Interview with key informant, Northern Cape, South Africa. March 11 2022.

processing cases, handling witness and victim protection and that law enforcement and social services have trouble upholding meaningful witness and victim protection programmes, leading to the dismissal or postponement of dozens of trafficking court cases and the perpetrators avoiding legal justice and imprisonment.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, evidence have shown that there is a lack of resources in the border regions in the SADC member states, making it difficult for practitioners to intercept traffickers and victims crossing borders.¹⁰⁶

Prosecution

The number of perpetrators prosecuted for trafficking in persons vary between the SADC member states, and reflect the severity of the issue within the different states as well as the level of effectiveness of criminal justice systems in combatting trafficking in persons.

Figure 1.0.5: Number of Perpetrators Prosecuted for Trafficking in Persons, 2017-2020



Source: UNODC Presentation of National Data Submitted to the SADC Secretariat

For countries such as Eswatini, according to national stakeholders, an average of three cases per year is a lot, however, prosecuted cases do not reflect the severity of the trafficking in persons issue, as the prosecution processes are often prolonged or postponed entirely for various reasons.¹⁰⁷ Prosecution in the various SADC member states is done by offices of public prosecution, through

105. Interview with key informant, Mbabane, Eswatini, March 14 2022; Zambia. Nyasa Nicole Mulumbilwa, Hussie Salimo, Justine Muftafela, and Abswe Samuel Ikengelo vs. The People of Zambia; CAZ Appeal/No. 154/155/156/157/2018; Lesotho. Rex V. Joalane Tsoana (CR:372/12); Lesotho. CR.1939/2011; Lesotho. REX V. Yoseph Girmay Tesfagaber, Adanech Beru Woldegioregis.

106. Interview with key informant, Mchingi, Malawi, April 27 2022.

107. Interview with key informant, Mbabane, Eswatini, March 14 2022; Zambia. Nyasa Nicole Mulumbilwa, Hussie Salimo, Justine Muftafela, and Abswe Samuel Ikengelo vs. The People of Zambia; CAZ Appeal/No. 154/155/156/157/2018; Lesotho. Rex V. Joalane Tsoana (CR:372/12); Lesotho. CR.1939/2011; Lesotho. REX V. Yoseph Girmay Tesfagaber, Adanech Beru Woldegioregis.

either lower courts (such as Magistrate courts) or higher courts in the respective countries. Stakeholders in prosecution have reported how the case processes move forward at slow paces.¹⁰⁸ There are a number of issues as to why prosecution is slow, such as defenses changing, judges resigning or other technical difficulties that delays the finalization of court matters. There have been reports of cases from 2018 which still remain to be concluded in court.¹⁰⁹ Stakeholders report that despite COVID-19 delaying matters, the court case has still dragged out too long, hinting at several judicial issues, straining the toll on the victims who have to endure the matter for several years.

Investigation

The investigation process of trafficking in persons cases involve multiple national and regional stakeholders working together in joint efforts to undertake investigative trafficking in persons responses.¹¹⁰ At a national level, various police departments carry out operations such as conducting police surveys, doing roadblocks where screening for victims and traffickers occur, as well as doing police raids on specific targets once trafficking in persons operations have been identified and confirmed.¹¹¹ The police work in close cooperation with other national institutions in the various SADC countries such as immigration and public prosecution departments. Stakeholders coordinating the investigative efforts have reported a number of challenges with proactive investigation of trafficking in persons.¹¹² One of the main challenges is lack of training of law enforcement units in picking up signs of trafficking in persons during their day-to-day work. One stakeholder has reported how the trafficking in persons cases they have encountered pre-exploitation happened by coincidence and not because of targeted efforts.¹¹³ This issue is problematised further by traffickers utilizing specific avoidance tactics, such as keeping a low profile, using fraudulent documents that can be difficult for authorities to spot without proper training, as well as victims being coerced into playing along with the traffickers.¹¹⁴ There have also been issues of irregular exchanges and arrangements at border crossings, where traffickers have succeeded in bribing border control authorities.

108. Interview with key informant, Mbabane, Eswatini, March 14 2022.

109. Interview with key informant, Mbabane, Eswatini, March 14 2022; Zambia. Nyasa Nicole Mulumbilwa, Hussie Salimo, Justine Muftafela, and Abswe Samuel Ikengelo vs. The People of Zambia; CAZ Appeal/No. 154/155/156/157/2018; Lesotho. Rex V. Joalane Tsoana (CR:372/12); Lesotho. CR.1939/2011; Lesotho. REX V. Yoseph Girmay Tesfagaber, Adanech Beru Woldegioregis.

110. Interview with key informant, Mbabane, Eswatini, March 14 2022.

111. Interview with key informant, Mbabane, Eswatini, March 16 2022.

112. Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 10 2022.

113. Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 10 2022.

114. Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 10 2022; Zambia. The People vs. Moses Chama, 2SP/E//198/09.

Awareness Raising

Awareness raising is one of the key proactive measures in the response to trafficking in persons in SADC member states. During awareness campaigns, task force member teams will visit a community for five days where they train community volunteers to identify signs of trafficking in persons, do door-to-door campaigns and invite specific community members to come and talk about the issues they have in their community. When visiting these communities, members of the task force team ask individuals questions such as “What is your understanding of trafficking?” and “Is it happening in this area?” Law enforcement units are trained by national authorities to better identify child exploitation when they encounter it. Community development workers make sure that the people in their community know their rights, look for signs of exploitation and make sure that community members relay information about signs of trafficking in persons if they encounter it.

Victims Assistance

Various institutions and procedures are at place in each of the SADC member states to secure victim assistance. Most member states work with a type of risk assessment procedure where evidence is looked over by investigators, prosecutors and social workers.¹¹⁵ In matters of risk assessment, these key stakeholders assess and identify the potential risks the victim is vulnerable to and then whatever services that may need to be provided and a plan is put into place related to the individual assessment of each case. The services provided are shelter, meals and medical care and attention, and then there is the security aspect. In Eswatini, once victims have been identified, police are effected for security.¹¹⁶

A number of challenges has been identified with regard to victim assistance. Some victim's experience difficulty in remaining in shelters, as they do not want to leave their old life behind.¹¹⁷ Due to the nature of the shelter and security concerns regarding victims, the shelters often require victims to leave their old lives behind. This strains the victims, and they suffer since they are lacking fundamental family support and the psychological assistance required to deal with this predicament.¹¹⁸ In one case, a victim at a shelter tried to go home to her family, however, before she reached her destination, the traffickers who had exploited her found out of her intentions. When she arrived at the family residence, she found a note at the front door with a threat scribbled onto it.¹¹⁹ The victim immediately fled back to the shelter where she was accepted back in. This case reveals how traffickers may stalk their victims for purposes of re-exploitation or severe harm including murder.

115. Interview with key informant, Mbabane, Eswatini, March 14 2022.

116. Interview with key informant, Mbabane, Eswatini, March 14 2022; Interview with key informant, Mbabane, Eswatini, March 16 2022.

117. Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 10 2022.

118. Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 10 2022.

119. Interview with key informant, Pretoria, South Africa, March 10 2022.

Besides medical care and assistance, NGO's and social organizations are the primary institutions in rehabilitation and recovery of victims in the SADC member states. These institutions provide a safe haven away from the trafficking networks where victims can engage in their hobbies and recreational work. However, the victims at these shelters are also removed from their families as part of witness and victim protection programmes, and some cases highlight how this puts increased stress on the victims, as they are removed from their near relatives. Evidence suggests that the rehabilitation processes are slow and underfunded. This results in victims not getting the necessary care they need for recovery as judicial processes drag out. Some studies have highlighted how there is a lack of attention to trafficking studies concerned with what happens after the victims are freed from the trafficking predicament.¹²⁰ Much literature on trafficking describes rehabilitation as a difficult process often entailing shame, stigma, and debt, as well as mental health issues such as trauma and stress, challenging the assumption that victims of trafficking enter into their local communities and old habits upon being freed from trafficking in persons.¹²¹ These feelings are often caused by a discrepancy in the expectations of migration and employment opportunities and the realities of the outcome which more often than not is that migrants have been trafficked or exploited have not been able to accumulate savings and pay off the debts they have inherited through trafficking in persons.¹²² Migrants who become victims to trafficking in persons often face many of the same challenges returning home as before migrating, as the social and economic obstacles they try to overcome by migrating have not disappeared or been ameliorated during their migration but have remained or worsened.¹²³ For migrants, returning home therefore rarely marks the end of a linear migration trajectory, but rather is another phase in the migration cycle as returnees often enter into re-migration where they are once more vulnerable to trafficking in persons.¹²⁴

120. Moving forward – Life after trafficking. Brennan, Denise and Plambech, Sine. In *Anti-Trafficking Review* 10: 1-2. 2018.

121. Forced to leave? The discursive and analytical significance of describing migration as forced and voluntary. 44 (6): 981-998. Erdal, B., Marta and Oeppen, Ceri. In: *Journal of Ethnic and Migration studies*. 2018; Operational indicators of trafficking in human being. International Labour Organization. 2009; No Place for Me Here: The challenges of Ethiopian male return migrants. Danish Institute for International Studies 2020.

122. Deportation Stigma and Re-migration. Schuster, Liza & Majidi, Nassim. In: *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 31(4): 635-652. 2015; Operational indicators of trafficking in human being. International Labour Organization. 2009.

123. Vulnerable *Here* or *There*? Examining the vulnerability of victims of human trafficking before and after return. In *Anti-Trafficking Review* 10: 34-52. Pasche, E., Skilbrei, M., Plambech, S. 2018; No Place for Me Here: The challenges of Ethiopian male return migrants. Danish Institute for International Studies 2020;

124. Precarity Chains: cycles of domestic worker migration from Southeast Asia to the Middle East. In *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*: 1-15. Silvey, Rachel & Parreñas, Rhacel. 2019;



SECTION II

Considerable efforts have been put into enhancing the data collection on trafficking in persons in the SADC region in the past decade. The *Regional Trafficking in Persons Data Collection System* is part of this effort and is a platform to provide member states with the knowledge and means to securely collect data on trafficking in persons and encourage cooperation among state practitioners to better analyse and share relevant insights, trends and patterns on trafficking in persons. Based on the previous report, SADC Regional Trafficking in Persons Data Collection System – Accomplishments, Challenges and the Way Forward and on fieldwork among practitioners of the system, this section investigates the information gathering processes by looking at how crimes of trafficking in persons are reported and used and what challenges practitioners of the system experience.

HISTORY OF THE SYSTEM

The Regional Trafficking in Persons Data Collection System was established in 2014 as part of a collaborative initiative between the UNODC, the SADC Secretariat and the SADC member states. With the assistance of IOM and the Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Co-operation Organization (SARPCCO) I-24/7, the system was first piloted in Eswatini and Lesotho. The experiences with this rollout were shared with SADC member states at a Regional Training of Trainers on Data Collection and Database Management in South Africa. This meeting introduced SADC member states to the regional database and marked the beginning of the rollout to 11 of the 16 SADC member states between early 2015 and 2017. The rollout was comprised of capacity building among end users of the system in the respective SADC member states, as well as providing the necessary equipment such as computers for the capturing of trafficking in persons data. These years introduced Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe to the system.

RATIONALE OF THE SYSTEM

The rationale of the system was to provide a solution to the challenges of limited, validated statistical data on trafficking in the SADC member states. Furthermore, the data collection system was intended to address the proposal to develop a Regional Management Information System on trafficking in persons as outlined in the Ten-year SADC Strategic Plan of Action on Combating Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2009–2019). Finally, the system was to provide a platform and link for Regional Cooperation in addressing issues of trafficking in persons.

This was the point of departure for the national and regional anti-trafficking action and defined the minimum requirements with regard to prevention and protection, advocacy and awareness raising, integration, rehabilitation and repatriation and investigation and prosecution. It also highlighted the importance of regional coordination and cooperation. Lastly, Article 20 of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development implores State Parties to establish harmonized data collection systems to improve overall data collection. The importance of the Collection, exchange and analysis of information on the nature of organized crime is asserted in Article 28 of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC):

1. “Each State Party shall consider analysing, in consultation with the scientific and academic communities, trends in organized crime in its territory, the circumstances in which organized crime operates, as well as the professional groups and technologies involved.
2. State Parties shall consider developing and sharing analytical expertise concerning organized criminal activities with each other and through international and regional organizations. For that purpose, common definitions, standards, and methodologies should be developed and applied as appropriate.
3. Each State Party shall consider monitoring its policies and actual measures to combat organized crime and making assessments of their effectiveness and efficiency.”

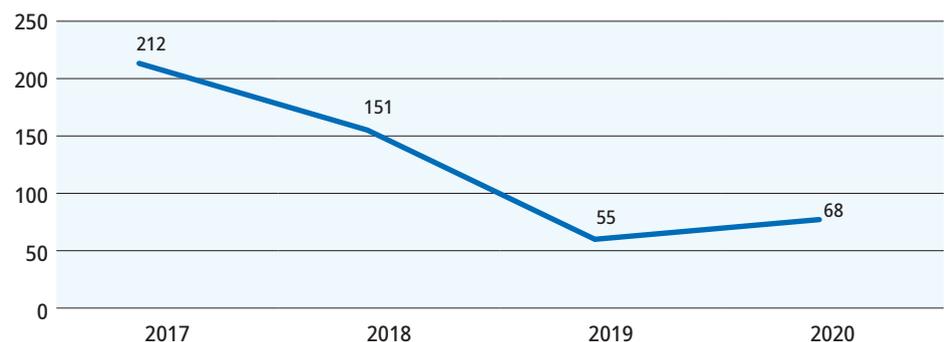
Trafficking in persons demands considerable efforts with regard to the collection, exchange and analysis of information. Standardized statistical data on indicators such as the number of identified victims, convictions or capacity building activities help document the initiatives taken to evaluate progress over time. This process is crucial when it comes to determine the resources and steps needed to sustain and expand certain efforts or to compare activities between stakeholders across the region.

CURRENT USE OF THE SYSTEM

The SADC Regional Anti-Trafficking in Persons Data Collection System operates at three levels: sectoral, national, and regional. The system works through a combination of document-based and digital data collection. The system is paper-based at the sectoral level, where local stakeholders carry out interviews with victims of trafficking by using standardized forms. These are then forwarded to users at the respective national hubs where the information is entered into the digital system before being forwarded to stakeholders at the regional level. Data may be captured in an offline system if the available national infrastructure allows it. This offline system synchronizes the data when an internet connection is established.

Some SADC member states are facing issues with the technical aspects of the data collection system and are not using it optimally, if at all. The local and national cooperation of institutions and organizations working on trafficking in persons issues also differs between member states. In some instances, this further problematizes the understanding of trafficking in persons issues and the data capturing modalities, as these are not necessarily standardized between local and national authorities and the data collection system as a whole.

Figure 1.0.6: Total Number of Cases Recorded in SADC Member States, 2017-2020



Source: UNODC Presentation of National Data Submitted to the SADC Secretariat

Between 2017 – 2020 a total of 484 cases of trafficking in persons were recorded in the SADC Regional Trafficking in Persons Database. In 2017, 212 cases from nine SADC member states were registered in the database, however, 130 of these cases were registered in South Africa alone. In 2018, 151 cases were registered in 11 SADC member states decreasing to 55 cases from eight member states in the regional database. In 2020, the number rose again to 66 cases from eight member states.

The total number of cases recorded in the SADC member states have decreased between 2017–2020, likely due to an increased focus on trafficking in persons within the SADC member states. More countries have developed specific laws prohibiting trafficking in persons crimes, and sources suggest that trafficking in persons have become a heightened political priority in recent years.

WHAT IS BEING REPORTED ON – THE INDICATORS

The interview forms used by practitioners considers all factors as they are outlined in the Palermo Protocol, namely 1) Victim Profile, 2) Trafficking Process, 3) Investigation, 4) Prosecution and 5) Victim Assistance. The forms used to interview victims of trafficking by practitioners take their point of departure in these five points, sorted into four forms:

- case interview form for assistance
- case interview form for investigation
- case interview form for prosecution
- case interview form for trafficking process

These forms are separated as to the type of practitioner doing the interview of the victim of trafficking, and as such, the indicators vary between the forms. They all capture background information on the victim: name(s), sex, language, ID type and ID number, age, country and place of birth, citizenship, address, last place of residence, race, interview date and interview location, as well as a field for additional remarks, should the practitioner find it relevant. Aside from background information, the forms vary depending on the type practitioner conducting the interview, i.e. a social worker, a law enforcement officer, a prosecutor, etc. The case interview form for assistance covers the types of assistance offered to the victim of trafficking, such as if legal, medical, financial assistance has been provided and how. The case interview form for investigation is concerned with the criminal investigation aspect of the trafficking case. This is done by filling out a section of bullets that focus on if any investigation has been conducted and what the trafficker's relation to the victim and to organized crime is like. The case interview form for prosecution focuses on the judicial proceedings of the trafficking cases. The form investigates what the status of the case is, what the verdict is, which trial court the case is enrolled in, etc. The case interview form for trafficking process traces the personal and socio-economic situation of the victim prior to and throughout the process of the trafficking incident, as well as the type(s) of exploitation the victim have suffered. All forms end with a row for further remarks where the practitioner can provide final comments if so deemed necessary.

CHALLENGES WITH THE SYSTEM

Issues with the technical aspects of the system

In some SADC member states, the system has not been working for years due to technical or infrastructural issues. The computers provided for recording cases of trafficking in the system have become outdated and are not working optimally, and some practitioners have reported that they have experience prolonged wait times with technical assistance. In some instances, the system is still paper based instead of being digital, either by way of new and working computers or a more efficient and easy-to-use app-system. This hinders the integration and operationability of the system from sector to sector and country to country.

In one country, a practitioner reported that the system has not worked for four years and that they are still awaiting technical assistance. The way data is collected, especially on a sectoral and national level, vary between member states. Furthermore, different institutions within each member state have their own traditions with regard to data collection, further complicating how data is collected, understood and processed through the different levels and into the regional data collection system. Some practitioners from member states such as Mozambique have reported how the system is less attuned to them due to it being built for anglophones first and then translated to accommodate others.

Issues with the general understanding of trafficking in persons

Interviews with stakeholders have revealed that the general understanding of trafficking in persons at each level (sectoral, national and regional) also vary between member states. In some instances, trafficking in persons are mislabelled as sexual offenses. While sexual exploitation is a consequence of many trafficking in persons cases, it is not the same as a sexual offense on a judicial or social level. Additionally, due to the nature of the issue, it is difficult for practitioners to distinguish between cases of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants, and between irregular and undocumented migrants and victims of trafficking. While these issues and categories share many similarities and have many of the same indicators, they are fundamentally different and warrant different understandings and approaches to tackling the issues associated with them. The line between smuggling, migration and trafficking is obfuscated due to victims of trafficking oscillating between positions as migrants, refugees, being unemployed, etc. to victims of trafficking. Furthermore, the line between categories such as victims of trafficking and other issues such as gender-based violence often overlaps. In that sense, trafficking cannot be comprehended meaningfully in a vacuum but must be understood with regard to how it connects with other issues such as economic equity, labor conditions and cultural circumstances and by way of other themes such as smuggling and migration and gender based violence. In that sense, trafficking issues are relegated to what has been termed the trafficking-smuggling-migration continuum, due to the elusive, overlapping, and blurry nature of each these issues. It is this understanding of trafficking in persons as a societal issue with a particular focus on the underlying social logic, forms and formations that is lacking. The understanding of trafficking in persons as an issue and social phenomenon also vary between stakeholders dealing with the problem. This discrepancy compromises the ways in which data is captured and used in *The Regional Trafficking in Persons Data Collection System*.

Issues with roll-out and use of the system

The regional data collection system is not fully rolled out in all the SADC member states. The Union of Comoros became a full member of the SADC at the 38th Summit of Heads of State and Government in August 2018 in Windhoek, Namibia. Two years later, The Union of Comoros ratified the Palermo Protocol, however, they have not yet joined the SADC *Regional Trafficking in Persons Data Collection System*.

In the countries where the system has been implemented, key stakeholders have revealed that more coordination among practitioners is needed and that data collection and analysis has been sporadic. Furthermore, they agreed that better collation and harmonization of available data is needed in order to understand the flows of trafficking and victims and to better respond to these challenges.

The first instance of data collection on trafficking in persons often begin with law enforcement, courts and victim service providers and the ways in which data is collected or lack thereof strongly influence the quality of information available for study and exchange. This is particularly pronounced with regard to the judicial systems of some of the SADC member states. In some of these instances, the lower courts such as Magistrate Courts do not capture or transcribe in detail the judicial proceedings of the on-going and resolved trafficking in persons cases. It is only in instances where cases are appealed to higher courts that detailed recording and transcription occur. The consequences of this is that relevant data on trafficking in persons on a national level is lost.



SECTION III

The response to trafficking in persons in the SADC region has been strengthened considerably in the past years due to national and regional initiatives carried out by the member states. The *Regional Trafficking in Persons Data Collection System* has been key in continually assessing the issues with trafficking in persons and in evaluating how and where to allocate resources to combat the issue. However, trafficking in persons prevail as a human rights and criminal justice issue and more resources and training is needed to successfully rid the SADC region of trafficking in persons.

CONCLUSIONS AND KEY MESSAGES

- Opportune criminals and transnational organized criminal groups are involved in trafficking of victims in the SADC member states as well as to and from other regions such as South and East Asia. Victims are trafficked domestically, transnationally or regionally.
- Multiple perpetrators are involved in the trafficking of victims. The crimes are perpetrated by traffickers working together in organized groups and more fluid and opportune constellations. The transnational organized criminal groups are often engaged in other types of criminal activity. They are based across the SADC member states and along trafficking routes and have recruiters and various intermediaries in different countries where they find victims to exploit.
- Traffickers target victims that they exploit in various ways. The types of exploitation include: sexual exploitation, labour exploitation and forced labour, illegal adoption and the removal of organs. The different forms of exploitation demand distinct types of organization of the trafficking operation and specialised roles of the traffickers involved. All forms of exploitation have severe consequences for the victims involved, such as severe physical and psychological abuse.
- Traffickers operate by deceiving victims and promising them education, employment or some other form of social mobility. During the transportation phase, they hide the identities of victims by procuring fraudulent travel and ID documents.
- Traffickers work to trap their victims in perpetual debt bondage schemes as a means of control and to easier coerce them into exploitation.
- Traffickers ensure control of their victims by appealing to local authorities, traditional beliefs and customs. They do so by working together with local authorities such as chieftains or priests who use their authority to recruit victims for exploitation.
- The exploitation and vulnerability of victims lead to severe harm that continues after trafficking, where victims continue to suffer as their lives continue to be affected by the existence of trafficking networks, even in exile.

OPERATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Greater capacity building to strengthen the response to trafficking in persons. Law enforcement, investigators, border control officers and social workers need more support to effectively combat traffickers and help the victims of trafficking in persons. Better coordination of capacity allocation would be beneficial to strengthen the response to trafficking in persons issues where it is needed most.

- Trafficking in persons is a transnational issue and need to be dealt with in such a way for it to be eliminated effectively. Enhancing the already fruitful cooperation between SADC member states in combatting trafficking in persons. Some member states have had great success in sharing data and cooperating in responses to trafficking in persons. Standardizing these initiatives and sharing what kind of cooperation that works well between member states could greatly help in reducing the prevalence of traffickers in the region.
- Better screening processes at airports and border crossings and the necessary judicial prerequisites to accommodate this. Stakeholders have revealed how lone male traffickers can transport a high number of female victims through airports and border crossings around the SADC member states without issue as they have proper ID documents. More attention is needed in order to address how judicial loopholes such as these can be resolved.
- More focus on trafficking flows and porous border crossings. Traffickers and victims cross borders between SADC member states. This occurs mostly during nightfall and in the bush where there are no guarded border posts. Effective strengthening of borders between border posts and better screening of migrants within borders can reduce the prevalence of this issue.
- A greater focus on information campaigns and information on trafficking in persons. As it is now, practitioners are conducting valuable information campaigns in areas that are especially vulnerable to trafficking in persons, however, a more structural approach to the spread of information on trafficking in persons is needed. In order to do this, information campaigns should be integrated into different institutions such as schools, workplaces, etc.

STRUCTURAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- More general training and education for practitioners on trafficking in persons as a societal issue with a point of departure in the underlying social logic, forms and formations of trafficking in persons. The training should be standardized in order to pursue and assert knowledge equity in the ways in which trafficking in persons issues are understood by practitioners.
- Greater practical and judicial understanding of the migrant-smuggling-trafficking continuum and how this influences the lives of victims of trafficking. Evidence have shown how victims oscillate between positions as vulnerable migrants and victims of trafficking. Depending on the context they find themselves in, they may be treated as irregular and undocumented migrants and thus prone to punishment instead of being seen as victims of exploitation at the hands of traffickers and provided with care and aid. A better understanding of the victim's position is needed in order to provide the necessary response to both traffickers and victims.
- Updated unilateral legislation on trafficking in persons to reflect current trends and patterns and state of the art research on the topic. This could create precedence for practitioners on the ground to easier differentiate between trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants and where they overlap, as well as between categories such as victims of trafficking in irregular migration.
- Setting up a permanent research initiative to qualitatively assess and evaluate the response to trafficking in persons in a continuous manner. Such a research initiative could support the already ongoing quantitative work being done through the Regional Trafficking in Persons Data Collection System by identifying trafficking in persons trends such as flows and driving factors that are hard to capture through a quantitative system.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE REGIONAL TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS DATA COLLECTION SYSTEM

- The data collection system needs to be fully rolled out in the remaining SADC member states in order to assure a coordinated response to the transnational issue that is trafficking in persons.
- Expanding the technical capacity of the data collection system and the technical capacity of reporting officers through additional training, new and updated hardware and more swift technical support infrastructure.
- In order to sustain greater sustainability of the system, an institutionalization of the training into existing national institutions and training schools would be beneficial.
- A transition from the paper-based system to a digital solution at all levels of the system. This could be in the form of an app-based approach that works on both phones, tablets and computers for a more streamlined and user-friendly infrastructure. This would also ensure greater reach of the system to more practitioners as well as retain higher upkeep of the system for longer periods of time, as the technical downtime would be reduced. If users are to access the system through an app-based platform, an expansion of the security of the system needs to happen. This could be done by enabling two-factor authentication for authorized users of the system.
- A standardized and more streamlined structure of information, especially between practitioners on the ground and up through the system. Information on trafficking in persons should also be captured and forwarded in lower courts in instances where this is not already the case. This will assure more valid information as well as a better base for comparison and insight into what exactly is happening on ground level.
- An update to the system that allows for a better and smoother graphical user interface, where users of the system can see in real time the statistical trends and patterns on trafficking in persons. This change could enhance the operationability of the system and also encourage the users of the system by showing that the things they report work and that it matters.
- An expansion of the system to include data on smuggling of migrants or gender based violence where it overlaps with trafficking in persons. As documented in this report, victims oftentimes oscillate between positions as migrants, smugglers and victims of trafficking as well as victims of gender based violence. As this is a factor on the ground level, it should be integrated into the system and accommodated for.
- An expansion of the data collection system forms to accommodate for more event-based and qualitative information. As mentioned in the report: SADC Regional Trafficking in Persons Data Collection System – Accomplishments, Challenges and the Way Forward from 2021, the quantitative information in the system often comes at the expense of a better understanding of the lives of the trafficked victims it is ultimately supposed to benefit. A greater emphasis on qualitative information would greatly enhance the continuous flow of information of the social logic, driving factors, forms and formations of trafficking in persons issues and could greatly inform targeted responses to these issues.

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