

FEATURED HUMAN STORIES

ON PARTNERSHIPS AGAINST ORGANIZED CRIME



United Nations
Office on Drugs and Crime



UNODC
Civil Society Unit

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Introduction

Organized crime enabled by corruption and cybercrime is a complex global challenge that undermines security, justice, development, and human dignity. Because these threats are transnational and constantly evolving, they require responses that go beyond government action alone and bring together civil society, academia, the private sector and communities.

Through its Civil Society Unit, UNODC supports this whole-of-society approach by fostering dialogue, building capacity, and creating opportunities for non-governmental stakeholders to contribute to the implementation of international frameworks, including the UN Convention against Transnational organized Crime (UNTOC), the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), and the United Nations Convention against Cybercrime.

This publication highlights the stories of organizations whose work shows what such cooperation looks like in practice. Their experiences demonstrate how partnerships, innovation and local action can turn international commitments into concrete change for communities. The stories featured in this publication were contributed by the respective organizations for publication on the UNODC [WhatsOn knowledge hub](#) during the period from August 2021 to April 2026.

What are human stories?

The Human Stories' series aims to spotlight the work of civil society organizations and other stakeholders contributing to the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), and the Convention against Cybercrime. In partnership with or empowered by UNODC Civil Society Unit, these stories highlight “everyday heroes” working on the frontlines to counter organized crime, corruption, and cybercrime around the world.

By focusing on real experiences from the field, Human Stories showcase how organizations and partners translate international frameworks into concrete actions that make a difference in communities. They provide a platform to share good practices, lessons learned, and innovative approaches developed by partners working in different regions and contexts.

Through these narratives, Human Stories aim to demonstrate the impact of collaboration between UNODC and civil society, experts, and institutions, and to highlight how these partnerships contribute to safer and more resilient communities - one action at a time.

By clicking on each title in the table of contents, readers will be directed to the respective full story.

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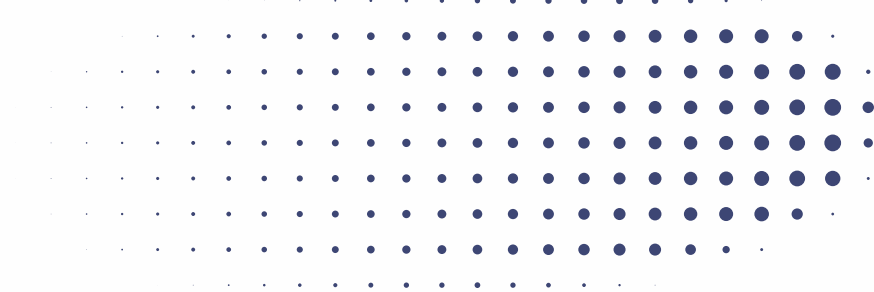
Responding to sexual exploitation and trafficking in Haiti through field partnerships

Rapha International and GI-TOC partnership: Responding to sexual exploitation and trafficking in Haiti.

Rapha International has partnered with the Global Initiative Against Transnational organized Crime (GI-TOC) to support women and girls in the wake of the recent earthquake in Haiti. Both organizations have participated in the Stakeholder Engagement for UNTOC (SE4U) trainings and serve as key partners in the SE4U project. As a result, they are well positioned to apply the lessons learned to advance the effective implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational organized Crime (UNTOC).

Through its Resilience Fund, GI-TOC provides financial support for organizations' field operations. Building on prior collaboration within various networks, GI-TOC and Rapha International established a strong foundation for partnership through their participation in the UNODC Stakeholder Engagement for UNTOC (SE4U) trainings. This collaboration led the organizations to join forces and launch projects in Haiti following the devastating earthquake in August 2021. **The initiative focuses on supporting women and girls who have experienced sexual exploitation or trafficking and were subsequently violently displaced from their communities, often forced to flee without their belongings.**

These efforts meet the short-term needs of survivors and seek to break the cycle of exploitation and inequality that has gripped marginalized communities for decades. **The projects assist trauma survivors with psychosocial and medical care, relocate displaced families, promote economic opportunities among female heads of households and seek to establish positive social norms within gang-affected neighbourhoods.**



Thirty women, each a head of household and member of a displaced family, are receiving income-generating support to reduce the underlying socio-economic vulnerabilities that can lead to further exploitation. Through this assistance, small businesses are being established, creating sustainable sources of income to help meet the basic needs of approximately 150 people.

Medical services provided to 30 young adolescent girls, who are survivors of sexual exploitation and trafficking, have been instrumental in addressing sexually transmitted diseases and women's health issues among the victims. These adolescent girls are also able to use trauma-coping mechanisms through psychosocial services. Meanwhile, community members and leaders have received training on building social norms that deter violence against girls and women as well as the recruiting of children into organized crime groups.

Both Rapha International and GI-TOC are members of the WhatsOn platform, a knowledge-sharing hub aimed at facilitating connection and engagement of relevant non-government stakeholders working to prevent and counter transnational organized crime and corruption conducive to organized crime. The platform facilitates sharing of information and greater collaboration among its members. Rapha International and GI-TOC's partnership had a positive impact on the particular situations of victims of sexual exploitation and trafficking and more broadly on combatting and preventing organized crime in Haiti and shows what can be achieved in areas with high crime rates and socio-economic fallout during the coronavirus pandemic.

Visit their [WhatsOn profile](#) or visit their [website](#).

Visit the [UNODC-Civil Society Unit's website](#) for training opportunities.



Driving an ecosystem approach to end sexual exploitation

In 2001, Equality Now was part of a coalition that advocated for the adoption of the Protocol to **Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children**, also known as the Palermo Protocol. Today, the organization is engaging in the Review Mechanism for the Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC).

Taking trafficking for sexual exploitation seriously

In Malawi, Equality Now is working in partnership with the local NGO **People Serving Girls at Risk (PSGR)** to advocate for the effective implementation of national laws on sex trafficking. Since 2022, both organizations have been jointly engaged in a strategic litigation case before the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, seeking to secure access to justice for a survivor of sex trafficking who was 16 years old when she was internally trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation.

Through this work, Equality Now and PSGR are also calling for the review and enforcement of relevant laws and policies to drive systemic change and improve outcomes for the many children affected by trafficking for sexual exploitation.

At the national level in Malawi, Equality Now and PSGR's role in the case includes monitoring how the investigation is being conducted, advocating for the allegations to be taken seriously by police and prosecutors, and tracking how the case is handled by the court.



By accompanying a case as it progresses through the criminal justice system from start to finish, Equality Now is not only providing important assistance to the survivor but is also closely observing how the case is handled by police, prosecutors and court officials. These observations can help identify areas for improvement, strengthen advocacy for other trafficking survivors seeking justice, and increase the likelihood of offenders being held accountable by the state.

An ecosystem approach:

Ending sexual exploitation requires political will and strong commitment from State actors. But this alone is not enough. Civil society organizations, survivors, and other key stakeholders also need a seat at the table, as each plays a different yet important role.

Likewise, while laws on trafficking in persons are essential to this work, they are not the only relevant instruments. Equality Now's work in Kenya and elsewhere points to the interlinkages between different sets of laws at the national level, including those relating to sexual offences, immigration, technology, and sex discrimination. In Kenya, Equality Now's work takes an ecosystem approach, working in an integrated manner and bringing together different sets of laws and actors.

This kind of expertise and work on the ground is fundamental for identifying best practices and gaps within a given justice system. Part of Equality Now's advocacy work is to call on governments to align national laws on trafficking in persons with international standards.

In 2024, Equality Now supported the International Association of Women Judges Kenya Chapter in developing a Judicial Benchbook on Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation, as a key strategy to improve the judiciary's capacity to adjudicate sex trafficking cases. Another way to strengthen this work among governmental and non-governmental actors is through the UNTOC Review Mechanism.

Tsitsi Matekaire from Equality Now took part in the 3rd Stakeholder Engagement for the Implementation of the Review Mechanism of UNTOC (SE4U) online self-paced course. This course is part of the SE4U project, which facilitates civil society engagement in the review process.



Tsitsi Matekaire had this to say:

“As an organization that specializes in anti-trafficking, we are familiar with the Palermo Protocol, but this course expanded on the entire United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Once I started to see the connections, I could really understand the Review Mechanism, its key players, and where we can fit in as civil society. Taking this course before the process has started in several regions gives us time to prepare at the country level.”

The Review Process is a multi-year process and covers the entire Convention, which is no simple task. Yet precisely because civil society is recognized as a relevant stakeholder in Resolution 9/1, wide consultations with civil society at the country level are encouraged.

“Sometimes from the outside one could simply point out what is not working. This is an opportunity to collaborate that will strengthen CSO relations with governments, which in turn may have an impact on accountability. The way the Review Mechanism is set up enables us to take the process forward and that is exciting!”

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated inequalities and highlighted the need for coordinated strategies to bring relevant stakeholders together during country-level review processes. Building on these lessons, Equality Now continues to develop approaches that promote collaboration among civil society, governments, survivors, and other relevant actors.

Today, trafficking is evolving. Technology-enabled exploitation is rapidly reshaping the landscape, while structural drivers such as inequality and discrimination persist. Equality Now is advancing an ecosystem approach that integrates prevention, online safety, survivor-centred justice, and accountability across State and private-sector actors.

As the UNTOC Review Mechanism progresses, it offers a key opportunity to embed this holistic, forward-looking model to better address and disrupt emerging forms of sexual exploitation.

For more on Equality Now visit www.equalitynow.org.
Visit Equality Now’s profile on WhatsOn [here](#).
Visit the [UNODC-Civil Society Unit’s website](#) for training opportunities.

Strengthening the fight against serious and organized crime in Pakistan



The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has been working in Pakistan for decades in close collaboration with the Government of Pakistan and civil society, with the aim of addressing development challenges, specifically related to drugs and crime. This kind of multistakeholder cooperation among UNODC, the Government of Pakistan and civil society brings about differentiated impacts on the ground. One such case is the Centre for Governance Research (CGR)-Pakistan – National Initiative against organized Crime (NIOC). This organization is taking a leading role in convening governmental and non-governmental actors for the engagement in the Review Mechanism of the UN Convention against Transnational organized Crime (UNTOC).

Former Federal Secretary for Narcotics Control and an expert at the Global Initiative against Transnational organized Crime (GI-TOC) Tariq Khosa from CGR-NIOC, has taken part in capacity building activities of the SE4U project that the UNODC's Civil Society Unit is implementing in collaboration with GI-TOC. CGR-Pakistan supports the Government of Pakistan's UNTOC review team through building a coalition of civil society organizations (CSOs)/non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working to prevent and combat organized crime in Pakistan. There is a trilateral partnership to support the engagement of non-governmental stakeholders from Pakistan in the review process, including through a Pilot Initiative: UNODC CSU; Vienna/Geneva-based GI-TOC; and the CGR-NIOC in Pakistan. The CGR-Pakistan's intention is to ensure that civil society is engaged as an active stakeholder in the UNTOC Review Process. **As part of non-governmental stakeholder's engagement in the UNTOC Review in Pakistan, Tariq Khosa and his colleagues are working closely with UNODC CSU and GI-TOC for active CSO engagement.**



Tools for engagement :

The sample letter to a government contained in the Guide for Civil Society which was developed by UNODC-CSU and GI-TOC has successfully been used by NIOC to establish contact with government officials responsible for the review process. Additionally, the “easy-to-understand questionnaire” developed by GI-TOC has proved to be a valuable entry point for civil society as it connects specific points of the self-assessment questionnaire with ‘on-the-ground’ issues such as rights for victims of trafficking. The initial meeting with UNODC in September 2021 was a success and there is a plan to follow up on that initiative to engage with the Government of Pakistan Focal Point, additional Director General of the Intelligence Bureau to offer civil society collaboration throughout the UNTOC Review Process. As part of this partnership, NIOC aims to organize a meaningful seminar or conference on forging an effective response of society and the state against serious and organized crime in Pakistan.

Playing in the big leagues :

The Centre for Governance Research (CGR)-Pakistan started as a small group of professionals in November 2019 to build civil society resilience against organized crime in Pakistan. Gradually they worked to make a difference at the national, regional, and global levels, something they achieved based on strong networks and alliances. The CGR-Pakistan has issued policy briefs, papers, and studies in various areas of organized crime such as drug trafficking, migrant smuggling, human trafficking, cybercrimes, terrorism financing and money laundering just to name a few. Another important milestone for Tariq Khosa and his team was to carry out a comprehensive study on Countering Religious Extremism in Pakistan. This was an important advocacy project that resulted in a move by the Government of Pakistan to work on a new National Counter Extremism Policy through the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA). Currently, Tariq and his team are working on a National Strategy to forge an effective society and state response to serious and organized crime in Pakistan. This will be the first-ever national strategy.

In conclusion, Tariq Khosa believes that their currency is trust and their vision is to make a difference against serious and organized crime in Pakistan. “We also want to promote international cooperation in the areas of criminal justice, law enforcement and the rule of law,” stressed Tariq Khosa.

See [NIOC profile on WhatsOn](#).

Visit the [UNODC-Civil Society Unit’s website](#) for training opportunities.



Advancing a survivor-centred approach to anti-trafficking law in Albania

Since 2004, **Different & Equal (D&E)**, a non-profit organization based in Tirana, Albania, has been providing high-quality reintegration services for victims of trafficking, exploitation and abuse, and contributed to improving the social and legal context, in which these abuses are happening. Other D&E activities include awareness-raising campaigns, capacity building, and outreach work to identify victims.

The survivor-centred approach :

Since their inception, **D&E has been practising the survivor-centred approach through their long-term reintegration programme.** The aim of D&E's multidisciplinary team composed of **social workers, psychologists, doctors, lawyers and care workers** is to put the rights and needs of each victim of trafficking at the forefront of all actions and ensure that each survivor is treated with dignity and respect. Besides that, the professional team provides **24-hour, seven-days-a-week services for survivors, including placement in accommodation as well as psychological, medical and legal support.** In addition to the assistance in improving living conditions, they provide vocational training, employment and other services until survivors can build new lives. Such an approach promotes recovery, reduces the risk of further harm and reinforces self-determination and successful reintegration back into society. This counts as one of the most important achievements for this organization.

Despite economic, political and social challenges, more than 70 per cent of survivors are successfully re-integrated into society in Albania. Among other positive programmes, the organization provides support and safety for children of survivors who also went through traumatic experiences and need healing and care. Eventually, survivors express their desire to be included in different projects and awareness raising activities that D&E organizes every year. They also bring their own ideas and initiate projects that can help other survivors, which is important for their path to recovery.


The D&E model of reintegration and economic empowerment for survivors of trafficking in Albania has the potential to be replicated elsewhere. The programme of reintegration lasts from two to five years depending on the case. Practising a survivor-centred approach means establishing a relationship with survivors that promotes their emotional and physical safety, builds trust and helps them to restore some control over their life, reduce the trauma and stabilise their emotional state.



The need for an anti-trafficking law in Albania :

The UN Convention on Transnational organized Crime (UNTOC) Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, also known as the Palermo Protocol, was ratified in Albania in 2002. "It was more like a regulated legal framework in aspects of the investigation, prosecution of criminals, than the legal framework for the protection of victims of trafficking, which was scattered in different social protection laws. We miss a comprehensive anti-trafficking law with a special focus on protection. I have seen the model law that UNODC published recently, that guides our approaches and efforts in lobbying for comprehensive anti-trafficking law in Albania," - recalls Mariana Meshi, Executive Director of Different & Equal.

D&E is a member of the National Referral Mechanism for victims of trafficking and has been working on the National Strategies and Action Plans for combating human trafficking for many years. Taking advantage of some positive steps towards increasing access to justice for victims of crime undertaken in the framework of justice reform, D&E insisted on the inclusion of the initiative for a special law focused on the protection of victims of trafficking in the National Action Plan against trafficking in human beings 2018 – 2020.



However, D&E faced resistance from some institutions to include this measure. They proposed to conduct an in-depth analysis on the need for the drafting of a specific law on the protection of victims of trafficking. Especially, in Chapter 1 of Prosecution activity 1. (a).6., the measure involving the “Establishment of an ad hoc group for conducting an in-depth analysis and evaluation on the need for a separate law focusing on protection of victims/potential victim of trafficking” has been provided (DCM no. 770, dated 26/12/2018). In order to implement this measure, in close cooperation with the Office of the National Coordinator against Human Trafficking (ONAC), Different & Equal led the process to conduct a study report on the need for an anti-trafficking law, which was published on October 2019. Based on this study report, some of the advantages of the special law focused on the protection of victims of trafficking were identified.

Last year, long-standing D&E efforts in improving legislation brought fruitful results, when the Albanian government approved the new National Action Plan against human trafficking that included measures to be accomplished within two years. It is confirmed that the initiative for the new law against human trafficking has been included in the new National Action Plan against Human Trafficking (2021-2023) as one of the main measures in the section of drafting and changing legislation.

D&E is currently waiting for the steps that will be taken by the Government institutionally to continue the process of drafting the new law.

Taking UNODC lessons forward :

The participation at the various training and workshops organized by the UNODC Civil Society Unit was helpful and insightful in order to gain the technical expertise and knowledge on combatting organized crime. It was also useful in terms of networking and connecting with other actors in the region and the world. “The participation in the UNODC course creates an opportunity for further engagement in the implementation of UNTOC. Civil society organizations should play the important role of watchdogs, otherwise, we cannot hope to make changes. **The SE4U training is a special project that helps us to identify entry points for monitoring government’s performance,”** stressed Stela Tanellari Caushi, Deputy Director and Manager of the reintegration programme for victims of trafficking, who took part in the third SE4U online self-paced course. This course helps to facilitate the engagement of civil society in the UNTOC review process.

Mariana Meshi adds: “We know that the government is trying to be on the same line with the international movement and changes, so I think this is a very good momentum for us and civil society to use it in our lobbying and advocacy efforts with the Government. The SE4U project is a very good guide when we finally can sit with the Government and other civil society organizations to draft the anti-trafficking law in Albania.”

Apart from the anti-trafficking law lobbying efforts, D&E is working on increasing the capacities of the professionals working in the anti-trafficking field, including law enforcement, social services, NGOs and others, establishing a good network inside and outside of Albania. D&E has embarked on a long journey to build up a society without trafficking, exploitation, abuse or discrimination where everyone’s rights are respected, and where everyone can pursue opportunities equally.

Visit Different & Equal’s profile on WhatsOn [here](#).
Visit the [UNODC-Civil Society Unit’s website](#) for training opportunities.

Mobilising a coalition to fight corruption in Namibia



On 15 February 2022, the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) launched a new anti-corruption project called Integrity Namibia. This three-year project aims to **build a national network amongst non-state actors, including civil society organizations (CSOs), labour unions, and the media with the aim of tackling corruption.** It will include the publication of research papers on legal and policy issues, and the establishment of an online reporting platform for whistle-blowers. Established in April 2001, IPPR aims to provide independent, analytical, critical yet constructive research on social, political and economic issues that affect development in Namibia.

“The first idea is that people must commit to trying to clear out or join the fight against corruption in their own sectors,” said Graham Hopwood, Executive Director of IPPR, based in Windhoek, Namibia. “We want to get the civil society organizations, the private sector companies, different authorities, and the media to join in the process of consultation and see how they could be involved and shape the coalition. We are starting with conferences around the country this May. We plan to cover most of the regions by the end of 2023. In 2024 we are planning to organize a national conference, where we will launch the coalition.”

INTEGRITY NAMIBIA



Taking The Fight Against Corruption To A New Level

15 February 2022

Integrity Pledges, Codes of Conduct:

With the three-year Integrity Namibia project, IPPR is seeking to focus on the roles that key bodies and sectors such as the media, courts, auditor general, civil society and the private sector can play in tackling corruption. Hopwood quoted [Afrobarometer survey in 2019](#) which showed that the public's trust in political institutions has declined sharply in Namibia, up to 20% decline in the case of trust in the courts of law. He stated that the growing sense of impunity in the country had to be met head-on.

“We look at the Integrity Pledges and Codes of Conduct that sectors and agencies have signed to commit to anti-corruption, and we will do our utmost to root out corruption in Namibia,” adds Hopwood. “We want to hold the government accountable and apply more public pressure based on effective research. Therefore, we want everyone involved in solving these issues together.”

This will involve a national mobilization campaign alongside a series of research-based interventions, including publications that will inform mobilisation work. **“We want to engage a broad range of CSOs, as well as professional associations, sports organizations, the media, editors and unions, to name a few.”**



Educating people to get involved:

IPPR is also drafting a parallel report on the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) implementation in Namibia for the UNCAC Coalition. ***“During the country visit of the second cycle, the peer reviewers from Canada and Ethiopia held a meeting with CSOs, facilitated by IPPR together with the Anti-Corruption Commission,” said Hopwood. “We were able to express our views, pointing to many of our concerns, including the non-enforced Whistleblowers Protection Act. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, our report was delayed. We’ve been interviewing people about the implementation of UNCAC. We will release it in a few weeks. Some progress has been made, though.”***

Finally, to address the lack of a formal functioning whistle-blower reporting system, IPPR will launch their own whistle-blower platform to receive reports of corruption and other wrongdoing in a confidential and secure manner. The Whistleblowers Protection Act 10 in Namibia was indeed enacted in October 2017, but it has not been fully implemented due to lack of funding. The law calls for the creation of a whistle-blower protection office and criminalises retaliation against journalists or witnesses who testify to misconduct and corruption.

At the same time, IPPR does not neglect its primary function as a think tank. They are very active in the media, with nearly 300 citations a year, in TV, radio, online or print. Graham Hopwood worked as a journalist and chief sub-editor for The Namibian, the country's main daily, from 1992 to 2004 and reflects on the changing nature of fighting corruption caused by the pandemic. “The Covid-19 pandemic made us move our meetings online, as we could not hold physical events. But we used Facebook Live and set up a YouTube channel, and with this, we can now reach hundreds of people. Our messaging seems to be effective: we had a big reaction to the launch of the Integrity Namibia project.” ***In conclusion, Graham Hopwood stresses that they are educating people to get involved in anti-corruption activities because, in this way, “people’s anger translates into positive action.”***

Visit IPPR’s profile on WhatsOn [here](#).

Visit the [UNODC-Civil Society Unit’s website](#) for training opportunities.

Empowering citizens to demand infrastructure transparency in Malawi



In March 2021, a multi-stakeholder initiative with 15 participating countries was launched under the Construction Sector Transparency Initiative (CoST), an infrastructure transparency project. This project was jointly implemented in Malawi, led by representatives of the government, the private sector and civil society organizations (CSOs). **This regional initiative aims to strengthen the capacity of CSOs to promote transparency and accountability in public infrastructure projects in Malawi.**

“Infrastructure projects are very technical undertakings, and not everyone is aware of what is really going on,” explains Jeff Kabondo, Governance Programme Manager at the African Institute of Corporate Citizenship (AICC), and National Coordinator for Integrity Platform, one of the organizations participating in the initiative. “Not everyone can understand the technicalities of procurement processes, and because of that, there is always a risk of compromising checks and balances, while certain details remain hidden. This can be a breeding ground for corrupt practices.”

In collaboration with a Washington-based organization Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF), CoST Malawi works to promote the disclosure of infrastructure project data in three regions of the country. Once the data is validated, it makes this data easy to understand through an assurance process and ensures that this information reaches citizens.



Building the capacities on infrastructure monitoring:

CoST Malawi also organizes trainings for CSOs in the country to monitor infrastructure deals and hold officials accountable. This project shows the added value of civil society actors in efforts to enhance transparency and combat corruption. CSOs were trained alongside engineers, journalists, and other experts to understand how the government undertakes procurement in building, works, services, and even, goods.

The array of stakeholders can understand what type of information they can use to bring to light infrastructure practices and potential risk areas. CoST Malawi conducted two series of trainings: three on advocacy using open data, one in each of the 3 regions of Malawi. Another series of trainings was on Public Procurement, targeting selected CSOs in each of the regions in the country. **More than 140 representatives of CSOs and procuring entities have already been trained.**

“The volunteers are very enthusiastic about the initiative because it is still new,” says Jeff Kabondo. “Open contracting is a new concept in the country. In the past, it was not easy to obtain information from the authorities. There has been a strong demand from CSOs for access to information.” The Public Procurement and Disposal of Assets Act was passed in 2017, in part due to growing public demand for transparency and accountability. “It took a long time for the law to be published and implemented, so there were doubts from the public sector and government. However, there is now a law that helps various sectors and CSOs engage with public officials whenever they need information about what the government is doing.”



A practical tool for open data:

The Malawi Chapter of CoST has also focused on developing an innovative platform that allows citizens to raise potential concerns and engage with key stakeholders on issues of transparency in public procurement projects. The portal called Information Platform for Public Infrastructure (IPPI) allows government departments to disclose and upload information on the various infrastructure projects they are undertaking. The public or interested stakeholders can find out what is happening in the project. For example, when it started, when it is expected to end, and how much money has been invested in the project.

They have developed this monitoring tool to identify issues that need to be addressed in order to tackle corruption risks within infrastructure projects. An amendment to the Public Procurement Act 2017 requires procuring entities to disclose information by law, including through the information portal. “We have reviewed the portal, tried to upgrade it, and made it more user-friendly for CSOs. We are also working to ensure that journalists and reporters can access the portal and use it effectively, without needing to become engineers,” adds Jeff Kabondo.

“This is useful because not every journalist knows the subject well. We must support them and promote investigative journalism so they can follow up on stories using the necessary information. People do not change just because there is a new law. Law enforcement, as well as CSOs that are part of the initiative, like us, are still trying to educate users about the importance of the new law.”

About CoST:

In 2008 Malawi joined the Construction Sector Transparency Initiative (CoST), after sharing the aspirations of the initiative which was initiated by the Department for International Development in 2007 drawing on the experience of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). CoST introduces the transparency and accountability concept to the construction sector and focuses specifically on public disclosure of information. The aim is to enhance the accountability of procuring bodies and construction companies for the cost and quality of public-sector construction projects.

About Integrity Platform ([Integrity Platform profile on WhatsOn](#)) :

Integrity Platform is an organization that was formed as a product of a project (National Integrity System Support – NIS project) implemented by the African Institute of Corporate Citizenship (AICC) and Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN). Its experience in the implementation of anti-corruption projects is relatively modest but has great potential to scale to larger projects based on the expertise available and the momentum gained during the initial NIS project. In recent years, IP has spearheaded advocacy on governance reforms towards strengthening the National Integrity System during which key governance institutions in government, business sector and civil society have been engaged.



Driving multi-stakeholder engagement on the cybercrime treaty

Two weeks of fruitful discussions took place in Vienna at the second session of the UN Ad Hoc Committee (AHC) to elaborate on a new convention on cybercrime. From 30 May to 10 June 2022, **representatives from governments, civil society and private sector exchanged views on novel ways for engagement and the prospects for multi-stakeholder coordination and engagement on cybercrime.**

The UN process working towards a comprehensive international convention on countering the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) for criminal purposes started in 2021. The hybrid format allowed participants from all around the world to contribute to the creation of a global treaty to counter the use of ICTs for criminal purposes.

This was the first meeting focused on the substance of the treaty, with discussions on criminalization, general provisions, and law enforcement. The cybercrime treaty discussions focused on the three main objectives: combating and preventing cybercrimes, promoting international cooperation and technical assistance. Meanwhile, on 13-14 June 2022 during the AHC's consultations with multi-stakeholders, the key discussions centred on international cooperation, technical assistance, preventive measures, and on the mechanism of implementation.



Voices from civil society and private sector:

During the session of the AHC on cybercrime, the contributions of non-governmental stakeholders were widely recognised. From ensuring accountability to protecting human rights, the role of civil society is crucial in the anti-cybercrime efforts. Carolina Botero Cabrera, the executive director of Fundación Karisma (Global Partners Digital) pointed out that civil society has a strong commitment to find how to increase capacity, learn more about cybercrime and the considered safeguards. In general, civil society wants to participate in the process to have their voices heard.

Gerson Nozea, Country Director from the Rapha International Haiti stressed the need to continue to engage with Member States to bring the perspectives of civil society into the forefront of this debate, as they are placed in the unique position to work with victims and assist government officials in all respective States to act on the ground.

Strong interventions by private sector at the second intersessional consultation of the Ad Hoc Committee called for an open and inclusive process for all civil society. The fight against cybercrime cannot be isolated from others. A multi-stakeholder approach can be an answer to many unresolved issues. **The worthwhile and sustained collaboration of governments, the private sector, experts and civil society organizations is the only way to address the challenges cybercrime poses to open and secure cyberspace on a national, regional and international level.**

The first draft of a new international convention on countering the use of ICTs could be ready by the end of this year. The discussions will not stop there, lessons will be continuously learnt, and best practices shared among various stakeholders. The third session of the Ad Hoc Committee will take place in New York from 29 August to 9 September 2022. Meanwhile, one of the platforms for further active discussions could be the online knowledge hub WhatsOn, which was created by UNODC and designed to bring together relevant non-governmental stakeholders (non-governmental organizations, academia and private sector) in the fight against transnational organized crime, corruption, and cybercrime.

Further Information:

[Video summary with civil society participation.](#)

[Official Secretariat website to AHC multi-stakeholder engagement.](#)

[UN Cybercrime negotiations – GI TOC report.](#)

[WhatsOn Knowledge Hub.](#)

[See Rapha International WhatsOn profile.](#)

Visit the [UNODC-Civil Society Unit's website](#) for training opportunities.

Strengthening citizen oversight and security monitoring in Mexico



The **COVID-19 pandemic** has intensified trends of organized **crime in Central America**. As a result, the exacerbated challenges allowed **organized criminal groups** to exploit the gaps left by governments' reallocation of resources. Tackling such a complex problem requires the **coordinated efforts of many actors**, including the private sector, academia, and civil society.

On April 27 2022, UNODC and the Government of Mexico launched the **first-ever Pilot Initiative**, which brought together representatives from government, civil society, academia and the private sector to identify areas for cooperation in the context of the implementation of **the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) review process**. One of the active participants of this initiative is the Mexico based NGO **Observatorio Nacional Ciudadano (ONC)**, that for the last 13 years, has been doing research on security and justice issues, to help understand and provide insights about what is happening with security issues and organized crime in Mexico. The organization uses this information to make recommendations for better design and implementation of public policy to support the Government in understanding the best practices, the challenges and how to overcome them to make Mexico a safer place. Following their participation in the Pilot Initiative, Observatorio Nacional Ciudadano participated in the first Constructive Dialogues on **Firearms and International Cooperation and Technical Assistance**, which was organized by UNODC in Vienna on 6 May 2022.



This was an opportunity to meet with various stakeholders and to exchange initiatives to combat organized crime, specifically illicit firearms trafficking. In his reflection on these two initiatives, Leonel Fernandez Novelo, Director of Advocacy in Public Policy at ONC noted that **working together with Mexican organizations at the national level, and with international organizations during the Constructive Dialogues in Vienna has been important to relate with other organizations and to understand the best channels to use when working with Government authorities.**

“Usually, it is challenging for national organizations and NGOs to work with governments. The series of meetings initiated by UNODC in Mexico was an important step in fostering exchange between government and non-governmental stakeholders. It was the first time that we could openly discuss difficult subjects and express our insights without the authorities feeling that we were attacking them, and without us feeling that they were closing doors,” says Leonel. At the first Constructive Dialogue on Firearms, Observatorio Nacional Ciudadano’s contributions focused on how particular national realities interrelate with the larger regional dynamics of transnational organized crime.

“The first problem in Mexico is the number of firearms illegally smuggled into the country. It was particularly important for us to talk with other stakeholders about this issue and present what is happening in Mexico,” recalls Novelo.

Achievements and real impact :

Back in 2009 and 2010, there was no centralized measuring of crimes in Mexico, and each of the 32 states was measuring crimes differently. There were no manuals or guides on how to measure crime, and how to understand the complexity of what was going on. The Observatorio Nacional Ciudadano led the organizing and systematising of statistics data as well as the measuring of crime rates at local and national levels. In 2015 they started measuring what is happening with crime at the local level and to understand the difference between the crime rates across 32 states and 2456 municipalities in Mexico, they started working with authorities, which became a lengthy process. As a result of their work, many local attorneys started applying standard guidelines on crime investigations and understanding how to measure crime for practical purposes. In total 17 out of 32 states in Mexico changed their systems for crime investigations. ONC has helped many victims of crime to begin legal processes with authorities and to better understand the steps to take for access to justice. The NGO has a national network of local observatories made up of 33 organizations.

It takes a network to defeat a network

Leonel Fernandez Novelo stresses that there is often no sense of community among government representatives and that there is a lack of collaboration with other stakeholders. “One particularly impactful moment came when we started addressing the political dimension of relations between NGOs and authorities, alongside the technical work with public servants,” says Novelo.

“Over time, they understood that NGOs want to help make Mexico a better and safer place, and they stopped seeing us in a negative light. It was also insightful for us because it opened up a different view of how NGOs and the Government can work together.”

Leonel believes that working together will help change things and counter organized crime. “We have to be a strong network of NGOs and governments to shut down the network of organized criminal groups,” he concluded.

Currently, the Observatorio Nacional Ciudadano is looking forward to participating in the Review Mechanism of UNTOC and promoting the involvement of local governments and organizations in responding to the Self-Assessment Questionnaire.

For more information about their work, visit [an interactive data platform to consult any kind of crime reported in Mexico, ONC Surveys, the biggest victimisation survey in Mexico, ONC Publications, Observatorio Nacional Ciudadano \(ONC\) profile on WhatsOn.](#)

Visit the [UNODC-Civil Society Unit’s website](#) for training opportunities



Leading the civil society anti- corruption movement in Kazakhstan

In 2022, UNODC together with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) met with the leaders and experts of the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) and other relevant national counterparts in Astana (Kazakhstan) to discuss ongoing cooperation on anti-corruption and civil society engagement. The UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) plays a significant role for state authorities in the development of recommendations and proposals. In recent years, ACA has achieved success in many areas, including asset declaration, criminalisation of corruption, whistleblowers protection. Further, ACA introduced a new legal term for whistleblowers to emphasise the positive aspect of the process –“разоблачитель” (debunker).

In the past few years, Kazakhstan went through a series of anti-corruption reforms and campaigns. Among the active Kazakh civil society representatives is the Republican public association “The All-national Movement Against Corruption “Zhanaru”. The NGO is one of the leaders in fighting corruption. **Chairman Mels Semgaliyev explained that the Convention, in particular those provisions related to the involvement of the non-governmental sector facilitate their work.** On the basis of Article 13 UNCAC, “Zhanaru” monitors state’s obligations in implementing the Convention. Since its establishment in 2013, the NGO conducted expert discussions regarding the national report draft on combating corruption and made proposals to state programs and strategic documents. The “Zhanaru” initiated innovations in the legislative process aimed at improving the effectiveness of anti-corruption laws in Kazakhstan.

Working together for one goal :

This year, “Zhanaru” launched a nationwide social project titled “Holding a Set of Events to Raise Anti-Corruption Awareness among Young People.” The project includes lectures, discussions, meetings with the media, master classes, discussions on youth problems with leaders of the regions and state bodies, coverage in mass media and social networks. Other activities to raise awareness include the creation of special anti-corruption videos, booklets, flyers, brochures and methodological recommendations, developing proposals and recommendations to state bodies. More trainings will be held to further sensitize officials and the public as well as forge more collaborations. Moreover, it is essential to solve the financial problems of non-governmental organizations engaged in combating corruption and ensure their economic sustainability.



Support from the state:

“Recently, the fight against corruption has become one of the urgent priorities on Kazakhstan’s agenda,” says Mels Semgaliyev. It is also a key component of the country’s major policy frameworks, such as Kazakhstan’s “Strategy 2050.” Following the example and momentum of UNCAC, state policies increasingly involve civil society in the implementation of the anti-corruption strategy. The country has introduced innovations such as “one-stop shops,” transforming bureaucracy into modern, “customer-centred” public services to combat petty corruption and other forms of corruption.

The President of Kazakhstan has repeatedly supported NGO proposals through the procurement of goods and services for communities and society, including analytical and research services provided by CSOs. The Anti-Corruption Agency meets regularly with representatives of non-governmental stakeholders, and “Zhanaru” has been given the opportunity to communicate proposals directly to senior leaders. Mels and his team regularly submit their proposals to Parliament, the Government, ministries and departments, provincial and local representative bodies, as well as all interested stakeholders.

They cooperate with the Civil Alliance of Kazakhstan and many other NGOs to support each other when their positions overlap. Their representatives have participated in public councils of the Agency for Counteracting Corruption, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Information and Public Development, as well as at regional and municipal levels. Lack of access to detailed information on budget spending at regional and national levels remains one of the key issues, Mels observed, as does the need to support the work of investigative journalists in the country.

Visit the profile of the All-National Movement Against Corruption ‘Zhanaru’ on [WhatsOn](#) or visit their [website](#).
Visit the [UNODC-Civil Society Unit’s website](#) for training opportunities.



Empowering young people to take action against crime and corruption in Uganda

In 2022, Barbara Nakijoba, a monitoring, evaluation and learning officer at NGO Uganda Youth Development Link (UYDEL), and a youth focal point for UNODC's SE4U project participated at the UNODC youth consultation, together with 60 other young leaders from all over the world, to discuss how youth and youth-led/focused organizations can better contribute to UNODC's global work on drugs and crime. The young leaders emphasized that it is crucial to make the involvement of youth in UNODC more diverse and accessible, including by offering easy to read materials and paid opportunities.

In the past few years, the international community has increasingly recognized that young people have a vital role to play in the decisions that affect us all. In September this year the UN General Assembly decided to establish the UN Youth Office as a dedicated office for youth affairs in the Secretariat.

As a WhatsOn member, NGO UYDEL is among the active Ugandan civil society organizations. When it was founded in 1993, UYDEL focused on drug abuse prevention in slum communities. However, over the years, the organization has adopted a more holistic approach to young people, taking into account the many other challenges they face daily, such as HIV/AIDS and criminal activity. UYDEL now runs several centres in Uganda targeted at youth aged 10-24 years who are vulnerable to exploitation and consequently to HIV/AIDS. The centres offer recruitment and assessment vocational skills training and rehabilitation services. To date, UYDEL has created over five thousand success stories.

One of the ways UYDEL has achieved this, is by **partnering with UNODC for the Line Up, Live Up initiative, a sports-based life skills training programme that aims to address risk factors associated with crime, violence and substance use.** The project has reached over 6000 young men and women.

"The initiative has promoted talent development not only for young men but also for young women. While communities previously said that they 'did not want girls to participate in sports because they would not get married', the initiative has encouraged communities to adopt a different attitude towards girls' participation in sports," says Barbara.



Only inclusive action can be successful :

“The Stakeholder Engagement for UNTOC (SE4U) project has really supported us by giving us a framework for the work that we do both as an organization and with our different partners,” reflects Barbara. It has become increasingly obvious that no organization alone can address organized crime. Instead, different sectors, governments and, especially, those working at the grassroots level must collaborate. She emphasizes that the high-level support from the SE4U project helps UYDEL convince other stakeholders at the national and international levels to collaborate with them. The benefits of such collaboration were especially noticeable during the COVID-19 pandemic, when UYDEL was overwhelmed by demand for services and decided to reach out to other organizations to work together and provide the best possible services for young people. Barbara concludes that “the SE4U project has helped us harness the power of working as a team, and it has also helped us ensure that our young people have access to justice.”

Collaborating with the SE4U project is a crucial part of UYDEL’s fundamental goal, namely to “ensure that we work with different partners and focus on holistic action.” This also involves “creating awareness to ensure that every person, even those working at the grassroots level, knows about human trafficking and transnational organized crime, what trends exist, how they can protect themselves from becoming victims and how they can become part of this movement.” Barbara stresses that the SE4U project is a great opportunity for NGOs, but she has also experienced challenges when trying to contextualise the SE4U concept and the possibilities it offers within a local context. These difficulties arise due to the interconnectedness of many issues on the ground, especially at the grassroots level, such as a lack of trained partners and the urban-rural political divide. Because of this, more work is still needed to make UN initiatives truly accessible.

This emphasis on accessibility also informed much of Barbara’s contribution at the Youth Consultation, where she strongly advocated for capacity-building among young people and greater involvement of youth at the grassroots level. Her aim was to broaden young people’s engagement with NGOs and local and national governments, ensuring that they can take ownership. Indeed, Barbara remarks that “a person without ownership cannot take action

Visit UYDEL’s WhatsOn profile [here](#) or visit their website [here](#).
Visit the [UNODC-Civil Society Unit’s website](#) for training opportunities.

Working collaboratively to fight corruption in Bosnia and Herzegovina



In 2023, several grassroots organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina were active in fighting corruption, one of them being Transparency International Bosnia and Herzegovina (TI BiH) a member of WhatsOn, which **has been trained by UNODC on the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)**. The organization was established in 2001 as an independent local chapter of Transparency International.

Emsad Dizdarević, Programme Manager of TI BiH, explains that TI BiH's activities and projects aim to address the challenges faced by ordinary citizens and other non-governmental stakeholders. At the same time, "the complex political situation creates difficulties for civil society cooperation," notes Dizdarević.

Together with national legislation, UNCAC provides legal guidance to address the challenges posed by corruption. The Regional Programme "Southeast Europe – Together Against Corruption (SEE-TAC)," launched and implemented by UNODC and the Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative and funded by the Austrian Development Cooperation, strengthens multi-stakeholder cooperation and responses to corruption-related challenges in the SEE region.



United Against Corruption :

Through activities such as monitoring, advocacy, and the establishment of a Legal Advice Centre, TI BiH provides legal assistance to the citizens and helps them to solve communication problems with public institutions. At the same time, civil society organizations (CSO) and private companies are approaching TI BiH to tackle the corruption risk emerging from public procurement related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Emsad Dizdarević, Programme manager of TI BiH points out the importance of working together with other CSOs in the country and in the region, as well as with different international actors, to create opportunities for improvement.

The Good Governance Initiative :

Together with international and local partners, TI BiH launched the Good Governance Agenda 2025, addressing governance challenges and offering a new approach to solving them. The Agenda presents a set of innovative anti-corruption measures. **“We are trying to increase the accountability of institutions, particularly in the field of public procurement, based on our experience and knowledge,”** emphasized Emsad Dizdarević. Some of the measures included in the Agenda refer to the implementation of systemic functional audits of the public sector in order to optimise it, the centralization of public procurement and the improvement of integrity in electoral processes and political parties.

Emsad Dizdarević believes that Bosnia and Herzegovina has the potential to become free of corruption, by working on promoting transparency, accountability and integrity.

Visit [TI BiH’s WhatsOn profile here](#) or visit their website [here](#).
Visit the [UNODC-Civil Society Unit’s website](#) for training opportunities.

Driving collaboration to counter organized crime and corruption through the WhatsOn multi-stakeholder hub



Organized crime and corruption are complex issues that require a comprehensive approach that involves not only government agencies but also non-governmental organizations, academia, and the private sector. It requires innovation and creativity on the part of all stakeholders to address these crimes. To facilitate networking, exchange of information and knowledge among non-governmental organizations, academia, and the private sector, **UNODC developed in 2021 an online platform for non-governmental stakeholders under the Stakeholder Engagement for UNTOC (SE4U) project - WhatsOn multi-stakeholder database and knowledge hub**. For interested governments, WhatsOn is a space where they can identify non-governmental stakeholders they can work with in fighting organized crime and corruption.

Two years later, WhatsOn has been further developed to include new interactive features to facilitate stakeholders' engagement, networking, and sharing. On occasion of the AHC's cybercrime 4th intersessional consultation, held on 6-7 March 2023 in Vienna, the UNODC Civil Society Unit (CSU) presented the WhatsOn Phase II.

Opening the launch event, Anders Frantzen from UNODC Civil Society Unit (CSU) explained that the new features will be a useful tool for relevant stakeholders to engage, network and share knowledge among each other on their important work in countering organized crime and corruption.

Currently, 446 members from 133 countries are registered on WhatsOn. CSU introduced the new interactive features, such as the WhatsOn Blog, Event Calendar, the new Focal Point administration function and profile management, and the WhatsOn Newsletter. The second phase of WhatsOn enables its members to connect and collaborate while providing access to UNODC resources and showcasing their impactful work, all combined in one place.



Usefulness for members :

During the event, existing members of the WhatsOn shared the benefits of the platform. Gerson Nozea, country director for Haiti of Rapha International, which is one of the featured organizations in the WhatsOn 'Impact stories', informed about their engagement with the SE4U project and trainings organized by UNODC CSU. This experience has helped Rapha International to engage with Member States and contributed to advance their UNTOC policy approach. A private sector perspective was provided by Horacio Pacheco from Auditoria DC, Argentina, a long-term member of WhatsOn who joined the platform after taking part in one of the SE4U trainings. The platform allowed the consulting, intelligence, and corporate strategies company to interact with NGOs anywhere in the world when they are working on transnational organized crime issues. Pacheco believes that the WhatsOn platform also benefits the SE4U regional network for the Americas in which Auditoria DC is currently a member along with another 22 organizations.

Finally, an academic account was presented by Eddy Nguiffeu from the University of Dschang, Cameroon, who stressed the importance of WhatsOn in their research work and mapping civil society organizations in Sub-Saharan Africa. **The platform offers great opportunities for academia, non-governmental organizations,** and the private sector to work together on many topics around organized crime and corruption, allowing them to improve collaborations through joint projects.

WhatsOn is a unique platform that brings together significant non-governmental stakeholders from all around the world, allowing them to collaborate in their efforts to identify and address the root causes of criminal activities, disrupt criminal networks, and protect communities from the harmful effect of organized crime and corruption. The second phase of WhatsOn will make these cooperation efforts more interactive and efficient, creating beneficial opportunities for all interested parties.



Strengthening local governance and migration support in Mexico

The monarch butterfly undertakes an annual migration of thousands of kilometres between Central and North America as part of its natural life cycle. While this migration involves movement across borders, it is fundamentally different from migrant smuggling or human trafficking, which are criminal activities involving the exploitation of vulnerable individuals for financial gain. The Mexican NGO Casa Monarca takes its name from the monarch butterfly. The organization, together with its partners, works tirelessly to protect the human rights of migrants, refugees, and internally displaced persons (IDPs), and to counter human trafficking and migrant smuggling.

Located in Monterrey, Casa Monarca provides humanitarian aid, civic education and academic research to protect migrants' human rights and serves as a first responder to meet urgent needs. "The NGO runs a shelter, provides meals and legal advice, and offers education on human rights and migration to raise awareness at the local level," explained Luis Eduardo Zavala, Executive Director of Casa Monarca, in April 2023.

With Mexico increasingly becoming a country of destination, transit, and return, organized crime has shifted its focus from drug trafficking to human trafficking and migrant smuggling. A central element of Casa Monarca's work is to emphasize the linkages between organized crime and forced migration, including migrant smuggling, human trafficking, forced recruitment, and extortion.



Partnership with UNODC:

Casa Monarca relies on strong partnerships with political stakeholders such as sub-national authorities, local communities, and trade unions, as well as international organizations, including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Since 2018, Casa Monarca has been partnering with UNODC and a wide range of actors to strengthen local migration governance.

In addition to regular meetings and consultations, Casa Monarca has contributed to UNODC's stakeholder engagement project against organized crime (SE4U). The organization recognizes the value of UNODC's multistakeholder approach, which brings together civil society and private sector actors to raise awareness and to better understand, from a civil society perspective, the state's obligations in implementing the UNTOC.

Central to Casa Monarca's work are the two additional protocols to the UN Convention against Transnational organized Crime (UNTOC) on trafficking and smuggling. According to Zavala, Casa Monarca has a strong influence at the local and municipal levels, helping authorities better understand international legal commitments and the importance of implementing UNTOC. These frameworks also serve as leverage to advance public policies that protect the human rights of migrants and refugees.

Education and awareness-raising are among the most critical aspects of Casa Monarca's work. Zavala explains: "Anyone who comes to our shelter as a volunteer should receive training on data related to migrants and refugees, as well as on human trafficking and smuggling, including the main elements of the protocols, in order to understand how public policy is implemented at the local level."

He further adds: "Casa Monarca builds strong relationships with local and state authorities to ensure they understand their obligations under UNTOC and their responsibility to create more effective systems to protect migrants. That is the most important part."

Casa Monarca's achievements include protecting migrants' human rights, building effective partnerships, and promoting education and awareness. At the same time, challenges remain in continuing to combat organized crime and strengthening migration governance at the local level. The organization plans to continue advancing these efforts and advocating for the principles of international migration governance across all levels.

Visit [Casa Monarca's WhatsOn profile](#) to connect, network and find further information or visit their [website](#). Visit the [UNODC-Civil Society Unit's website](#) for training opportunities.

Strengthening responses to organized crime through research and capacity-building



For the last decades, organized crime has been a challenge in Pakistan, with various forms such as drug trafficking and human trafficking posing significant threats. The government of Pakistan has taken several measures to tackle organized crime, including through law enforcement operations, legislative actions, and international cooperation. At the same time, local non-governmental stakeholders are actively involved in raising awareness, advocating for policy changes, and contributing to community-based initiatives. Most of them often work on issues related to human rights, justice, and social development, which can intersect with the challenges posed by organized crime.

Pakistan's largest legal think tank, the Research Society of International Law (RSIL) conducts research on the intersection between international law and the Pakistani legal system. Based in Islamabad, **RSIL is a private sector research and policy institution whose contribution involves extensive publication of materials through dedicated centres and various channels, including podcasts, articles, blogs, and in-depth research papers to create awareness about international law and tackle domestic legal challenges through the application of global legal frameworks.**

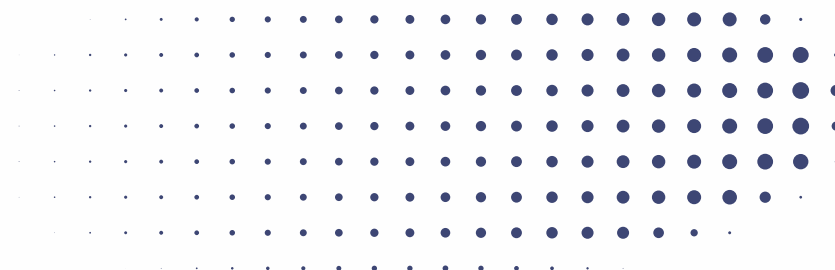


UNODC as a facilitator and partner :

Noor Fatima, Senior Research Associate at the RSIL, states that research is fundamental to their work. They have collaborated numerous times with the UNODC office in Pakistan, with a significant emphasis on counterterrorism. Through these collaborations, the RSIL is actively engaged in capacity-building for public stakeholders to raise their awareness of international legal developments. Through conducting training sessions, workshops, and developing targeted knowledge materials to enhance their understanding of international legal dynamics, the RSIL is bridging these gaps and fostering awareness in the international legal sphere.

Noor Fatima and her team are at the early stages of involvement with the SE4U (Stakeholder engagement for UNTOC), project implemented by the UNODC Civil Society Unit (CSU). Noor affirms that the course platform provided for civil society serves as an excellent starting point for members to study the review processes, understand the UNTOC, its protocols, and the technical perspectives unfamiliar with the UNTOC convention, offering detailed information available to civil society members at their own pace. **“The collaboration between UNODC and the government to empower civil society in areas where governments might prefer confidentiality is a significant highlight. UNODC’s role as a facilitator and partner lends legitimacy to the process, making it easier for civil society organizations to engage with the public sector. This partnership provides a straightforward gateway for civil society actors, addressing challenges faced when operating independently.”**

In September 2023, Noor attended the Constructive Dialogue on international cooperation in Vienna. This experience highlighted the tangible impact civil society can have on international law processes, especially concerning the untapped UNTOC Convention. Noor acknowledges, “Participating in such events is not only refreshing but also reinforces our commitment to these initiatives.” She further adds, “Personally, it was eye-opening to witness international law in action. As a civil society member, despite being geographically distant and not representing any Member State or UNODC secretariat, I was provided a platform to contribute insights and make an impact. The unprecedented attendance of 49 Member States in the dialogues on smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons demonstrated a significant willingness to incorporate civil society perspectives into their deliberations.”



This experience left a lasting impression, prompting the RSIL to embrace a more proactive approach towards Constructive Dialogues. The organization is considering increased participation in future dialogues to further influence these seemingly distant legal processes. This newfound ability to have a genuine impact on such complex legal discussions is the most significant takeaway for Noor Fatima.

The way forward :

The challenges in Pakistan are indeed numerous. Without political will and coordinated action, actors can continue to operate in isolation, which could potentially impede efforts to fight transnational organized crime.

However, the positive aspect in Pakistan's context is the initiation of the Voluntary Pilot Initiative (VPI), providing civil society actors with a platform to influence government processes. While the VPI addresses one challenge, sustaining momentum remains a significant task. The extensive review process, covering different clusters, requires that civil society actors continuously enhance their expertise and consistently communicate with the public sector. Keeping engagement alive becomes crucial due to the lengthy review process, potential shifts in government priorities, and the dynamic nature of challenges within this framework. Staying committed and consistently involved is key, offering a solution to this persistent organized crime challenge.

Ms Fatima mentions that what truly instilled understanding was targeting the justice sector, such as investigators, prosecutors and judges. This is where societal change happens. While laws may be written in legal texts, without correct application and implementation, positive societal change remains elusive. "Although our organization is relatively new to the WhatsOn platform and the SE4U project, our goal is to collaborate more with like-minded partners. We aim to share our research, believing that what has worked in Pakistan may benefit other countries. Many of these issues are easily transferable to other jurisdictions, so sharing best practices, lessons learned and our technical research, which is readily available on our website, can have a positive impact if we reach a broader audience," highlights Noor Fatima.

Visit the [RSIL WhatsOn profile](#) to connect, network and further information or visit their [website](#).

Visit the [UNODC-Civil Society Unit's website](#) for training opportunities.



Leveraging technology to help victims of human trafficking in Thailand

Thailand has long grappled with significant challenges linked to **human trafficking**, notably within industries such as fishing and seafood processing. Numerous independent reports have shed light on instances of forced labour, exploitation, and human trafficking within the Thai fishing sector. According to the Global Slavery Index, an estimated 610,000 individuals endure conditions of modern slavery in Thailand, with many subjected to exploitation within the fishing sector.

Addressing these issues head-on is **MAST Human**, a non-profit social enterprise dedicated to tackling the root causes of human trafficking and Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing in Southeast Asia. Formerly known as the Multi-Stakeholder Initiative for Accountable Supply Chain of Thai Fisheries (MAST), MAST Human was founded in March 2016 by Dornnapha Sukkree, who serves as Founder and Executive Director, bringing together her dual expertise in legal strategy and human rights advocacy to drive the organization's mission. As MAST Human evolved towards leveraging technology as a core tool for protection and justice, Caden Moskowitz joined as Co-founder and Chief of Technology, bringing with him the resources of Edge Case Capital Partners, his California-based venture capital firm, to build the technological infrastructure that would come to define the organization's impact. Together, Ms Sukkree and Mr Moskowitz have built MAST Human into a collaborative force, drawing upon the expertise of frontline civil society experts and professional consultancies to activate solutions that empower communities to combat human trafficking.

Technological empowerment :

MAST Human uses technology to aid victims of human trafficking. Ms Sukkree's firm belief in technology's potential for prevention led to collaboration with Edge Case Capital Partners, a California-based tech company. Together, they developed the MAST Human Intelligence App, tailored to track worker safety and welfare while preventing labour rights violations and human trafficking. Additionally, the app serves as a communication platform, fostering workplace awareness and empowering workers to overcome vulnerabilities.



Dornnapha Sukkree and the MAST Human Intelligence App

The app adopts a worker-centric approach, empowering individuals while targeting criminals. It uses data collection and predictive behaviour modelling, and it offers real-time assistance to those in need. With features including location tracking, emergency alerts, criminal reporting, worker education, and crowdsourced communication, the app caters to diverse linguistic backgrounds, available in English, Thai, Khmer, Burmese, Filipino, and Bahasa Indonesia languages, while its encrypted and secure design ensures user privacy and safety. Within a few months, the app garnered 12,000 users, leading to investigations prompted by user alerts. Presently, the organization aims to expand their user base to 400,000 active users, focusing on habit automation and engaging law enforcement. This expansion will enable them to extend coverage in the fishing industry and other sectors in the future. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the MAST Human Intelligence App proved to be invaluable for workers.



DSI - MAST MoU Signing, September 2024

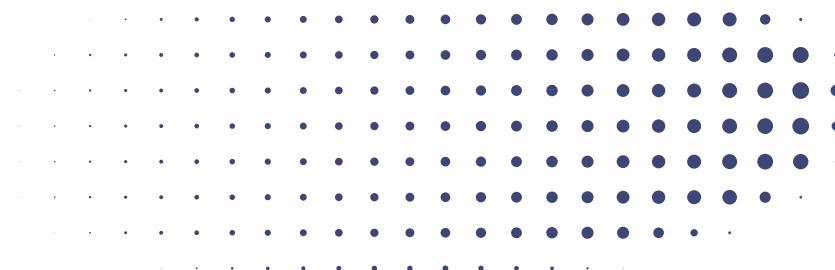
Working together :

MAST Human collaborated with the Thai Government, civil society organizations, and international entities such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) from the start. Participating in the SE4U Self-Paced Course on the UN Convention against Transnational organized Crime (UNTOC) broadened their understanding of the international legal framework and brought fresh perspectives to their work. Attending the 11th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNTOC in October 2022 was a transformative experience, elevating her work to new heights. Subsequently, Ms Sukkree initiated collaboration with the Thai Government, fostering a partnership to tackle organized crime collectively.

MAST Human closely collaborates with Thai law enforcement, the Department of Special Investigation (DSI), utilising the app's alert system to notify authorities in case of incidents. This collaboration includes discussions with the Department of State for Investigation regarding interventions or rescue operations prompted by alerts from the app. Leveraging technology as a tool, along with the involvement of law enforcement and cooperation with the Ministry of Justice.

“Engaging with the government is essential, as it has obligations and functions that align with our objectives,” says Ms Sukkree. “Collaborating with stakeholders from diverse backgrounds allows us to drive change collectively, even if we do not always see eye to eye on every aspect. Learning from previous experiences and engaging with organizations like UNODC provides valuable insights into compliance requirements and how non-profits like ours can contribute effectively.”

“When combating organized crime, emerging technology plays a crucial role,” Ms Sukkree notes. “Our technology has garnered attention in the fishing industry, particularly from the Thai Government and international forums. Engaging with government departments and participating in global conferences like the Bali Process has opened doors for collaboration and innovation.”



Gaining interest and attention becomes easier when non-profits possess technology that can make a difference. Without it, their contributions to government efforts, such as intervention, rescue, or prosecution, would be limited. The technology enables MAST Human to facilitate successful prosecutions and collaborations with NGOs, initiating crucial conversations and dialogues. Overcoming challenges lies in bridging the gap between traditional NGO work and innovative technology solutions.

Alternative ways to fight human trafficking :

In 2023, MAST Human collaborated with the Tourism Authority of Thailand and local marine conservation authorities, introducing innovative approaches focused on community advocacy and cultural awareness by using ecotourism as a driving force to combat human trafficking and promote sustainable fisheries.

“By empowering communities with alternative income sources, we address overfishing and alleviate poverty, which are root causes of trafficking. This holistic strategy, though unconventional, effectively addresses interconnected issues. With technology and innovative strategies, we can engage stakeholders and drive progress swiftly,” emphasises Ms Sukkree.

Recognizing that climate change is an increasingly significant driver of vulnerability, MAST Human works alongside coastal communities on mangrove restoration and marine conservation initiatives. These efforts aim to restore ecosystems and strengthen community resilience, reducing the risk of unsafe migration and exploitative labour driven by environmental degradation. To scale this impact, MAST Human is establishing a partnership with Journey with Purpose (JWP) to advance regenerative tourism and climate action within the Impulse Model Framework. By supporting sustainable livelihoods and addressing the climate-human trafficking nexus at the local level, this collaboration contributes to a proactive model of protection rooted in long-term prevention.

Building the Next Frontier: The Unified Safeguard Platform and Digital Public Goods for Access to Justice

Building on its commitment to harnessing technology for protection, MAST Human, in collaboration with Impulse NGO Network and Bouncer Technology, has expanded its work through the development of the Unified Safeguard Platform (USP). Together, these partners are leveraging Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) to develop the Unified Safeguard Platform in accordance with Digital Public Goods (DPG) principles of openness, interoperability, and rights-based design.

The USP Initiative strengthens coordinated responses to cross-border human trafficking, exploitation and gender-based violence by connecting civil society organizations, frontline responders and government authorities through a secure, interoperable digital ecosystem. MAST Human leads the system architecture and integration through a single-window platform. It brings together the Impulse Case Management Centre (ICMC) and its award-winning Impulse Model, recognised for its multi-stakeholder, cross-border approach to victim identification and case coordination, with Bouncer’s advanced digital identity and verification capabilities. These are complemented by responsible and ethical applications of artificial intelligence to support real-time risk assessment. Together, this unified infrastructure aims to enhance the early identification of vulnerabilities, strengthen cross-border coordination and enable timely, victim-centred interventions. At its core, the approach seeks to expand safe and trusted access to justice and protection services for vulnerable populations, particularly women and girls and those affected by human trafficking and unsafe migration, while upholding strong data protection safeguards, “do no harm” principles and the importance of building systems that are trusted by the communities they serve.

It also reflects a broader effort to foster cross-sector collaboration among governments, civil society, law enforcement, and technology partners to deliver scalable, rights-based solutions in the global fight against organized crime and exploitation. In this context, collaboration with law enforcement, both domestically and internationally, is essential in addressing issues such as forced labour and human trafficking. While the primary focus of MAST Human is Thailand, their solutions are well-positioned to support governments worldwide, particularly when complemented by engagement with civil society organizations to amplify impact and advance ethical, effective technological interventions.

Visit the [MAST Human \(MAST\) WhatsOn Profile](#) to connect, network and further information or visit their [website](#).
Visit the [UNODC-Civil Society Unit’s website](#) for training opportunities.



Reintegrating for Justice: Survivor- centred Responses to Trafficking and organized Crime



Vienna, 25 March 2026. My name is Daniel Melese Areda, I am the Founder and CEO of Nigat Global Initiative (NGI), an Ethiopian-led civil society organization established in 2024 to address human trafficking, unsafe migration, and organized crime through survivor-centred reintegration and prevention.

Our work focuses on protecting human dignity by reducing vulnerability to exploitation, disrupting harmful systems, and supporting survivors to rebuild their lives through sustainable livelihoods, social inclusion, and access to opportunity. We work closely with affected communities, survivors, media professionals, and institutional actors to ensure that reintegration, accountability, and prevention are treated as interconnected parts of justice.

Since its establishment, NGI has contributed to prevention and response efforts by documenting trafficking and smuggling risks, facilitating dignified livelihood and job placement pathways for survivors, and conducting community-based awareness and education initiatives. We also engage in media and policy work to strengthen accountability and promote ethical, evidence-based reporting on migration and trafficking.

UNODC has become an important partner in strengthening the link between locally rooted work and global legal and policy frameworks. Through engagement with the Civil Society Unit and the WhatsOn platform, our organization has gained visibility, institutional learning opportunities, and access to dialogue spaces that allow field-level realities and survivor perspectives to inform international discussions related to UNTOC. Through the Constructive Dialogues of the UNTOC Review Mechanism, NIGI has been able to bring field-level experience and survivor perspectives into dialogue with Member States in Vienna. Grassroots experiences are essential for governments' policy decision-making rooted in local realities. Through its vast network of NGOs, UNODC has supported us in reaching and returning victims of trafficking trapped in faraway countries.

One of the most meaningful moments in my work was accompanying a survivor of trafficking linked to an organized criminal network through her reintegration journey and later welcoming her as a member of our team. After rebuilding safety, confidence, and economic independence, she now works alongside us to prevent trafficking and support others at risk. Her story is a powerful reminder that justice is incomplete without reintegration, dignity, and survivor leadership.

The most challenging part of this work is confronting the deep structural inequalities and organized systems that enable exploitation, while ensuring that survivor-centred approaches remain ethical, sustainable, and grounded in long-term change. Yet seeing survivors regain agency and contribute to prevention efforts continues to reaffirm the importance of this work.

Our vision is to see locally rooted organizations play a central role in dismantling exploitative systems while restoring dignity and opportunity. Through continued collaboration, learning, and survivor-informed action, we aim to contribute to lasting reductions in vulnerability to trafficking and stronger accountability for organized crime.

Want to know more about this [story](#) and Nigat Global Initiative's work on countering trafficking and organized crime?

Visit [their profile](#) on WhatsOn or explore their initiatives to learn more about their survivor-centred approach to reintegration and prevention.





Strengthening Civic Action Against organized Crime: The Role of LIBERA and Transnational Networks

My name is Monica Usai and I am Program Manager at LIBERA Associations, Names and Numbers against Mafias, an Italian network founded in 1995 that today brings together over 1,600 associations, schools, trade unions, and local groups.

LIBERA works to prevent and combat organized crime and corruption through civic engagement, education, research, advocacy, social reuse of confiscated assets, and support to families of innocent victims of mafia violence.

Our mission is to strengthen democratic participation and community responsibility, promoting justice, transparency, and social inclusion as fundamental tools to prevent criminal infiltration.

At the European level, LIBERA promotes CHANCE – Civil Hub Against Organised Crime in Europe, a network connecting civil society organizations committed to preventing organized crime through education, advocacy, and youth engagement.

Internationally, we collaborate within broader networks such as ALAS – América Latina Alternativa Social in Latin America and PLACE – Platform for African Civic Engagement in Africa, fostering community-based prevention, youth empowerment, and civic participation in contexts where organized crime and corruption undermine development and democratic stability.

Collaboration with UNODC

Our collaboration with UNODC, particularly through the Civil Society Unit, focuses on strengthening meaningful civil society engagement in the implementation and review of the United Nations Convention against Transnational organized Crime (UNTOC).



Our recent engagements include the joint regional workshop on non-governmental stakeholders' engagement in practical application of UNTOC held at LIBERA's headquarters in Rome. The workshop strengthened collective and multi-stakeholder actions against transnational organized crime in Europe, and led to practical recommendations, including the creation of a European Civil Society Working Group on UNTOC implementation. LIBERA has also participated in CCPCJ sessions, side events, and consultations related to the UNTOC Review Mechanism, where we contributed reflections on how transnational civil society networks such as CHANCE, ALAS, and PLACE can support prevention, monitoring, and community resilience strategies aligned with UNTOC principles.

How This collaboration Has Benefited Our Work

The partnership with UNODC has:

- Strengthened our international advocacy capacity.
- Reinforced the legitimacy of civil society participation in global governance.
- Connected grassroots practices to international legal frameworks.
- Encouraged dialogue between local communities and multilateral institutions.

For LIBERA and its partner networks, linking everyday community experiences with global instruments such as UNTOC ensures coherence between international commitments and real-life impact.

Research, Knowledge and Evidence-Based Prevention

In addition to grassroots action, LIBERA produces structured research and policy-oriented analysis on organized crime and corruption. For example:

- **“Raccontiamo il Bene”**, our periodic report on the social reuse of confiscated assets, documents how properties seized from criminal organizations are transformed into social cooperatives, schools, cultural centers, and community enterprises.
- **E!State Liberi!**, our national volunteer camps on confiscated lands, engage thousands of young people every year in hands-on civic education.
- **ExtraLibera**, a multimedia and interactive space in Rome, promotes knowledge and critical awareness of organized crime and anti-mafia history.

These initiatives demonstrate that prevention is not abstract: it requires research, education, cultural transformation, and long-term community investment, all elements fully aligned with the preventive spirit of UNTOC.

Challenges for CSOs in Engaging with UNTOC and the Review Mechanism

Civil society organizations face several structural challenges:

- Limited awareness of UNTOC at the local level.
- Technical complexity of the Review Mechanism.
- Limited access to information and institutional consultation spaces.
- Shrinking civic space in some national contexts.
- Insufficient financial and technical resources.

For grassroots networks such as PLACE in Africa or ALAS in Latin America, these barriers are often compounded by fragile institutions and socio-economic vulnerabilities, and day by day are a European challenge as well.

How collaboration with UNODC Helps Address These Challenges

The UNODC Civil Society Unit plays a crucial bridging role by:

- Providing access to institutional dialogue spaces.
- Facilitating inclusive consultations.
- Offering guidance and information.
- Legitimising civil society participation at international level.

Through this collaboration, local experiences, such as social reuse of confiscated assets or youth-led prevention initiatives, could gain visibility within global policy discussions.

This exchange helps translate community practices into policy-relevant contributions, strengthening both accountability and implementation.

What More Could Be Done

- To further strengthen meaningful CSO engagement, UNODC could:
- Promote more structured national-level consultation mechanisms.
- Provide simplified and accessible guidance materials on the Review Mechanism.
- Facilitate peer-learning exchanges across regions.
- Encourage youth-led and community-based organizations to engage in UNTOC processes.

Bridging global governance and local realities remains essential.

Differentiated Needs Within Civil Society

Civil society is not homogeneous.

Some organizations specialized in legal monitoring and policy analysis; others focus on community prevention, victims' support, youth empowerment, or education.



Key differentiated needs include:

- Technical capacity-building.
- Protection mechanisms in high-risk contexts.
- Recognition of prevention as a strategic pillar alongside repression.
- Sustainable funding for grassroots engagement.

Networks such as CHANCE, ALAS, and PLACE exist precisely to connect these diverse actors and build collective impact.

Positive Impact of LIBERA

- Over the past 30 years, LIBERA has:
- Contributed to the development and strengthening of legislation on confiscation and social reuse of assets.
- Promoted the transformation of thousands of confiscated properties into spaces of social inclusion and employment.
- Supported families of innocent victims of organized crime.
- Engaged thousands of young people in civic education and prevention programs.
- Integrated anti-corruption civic monitoring into our anti-mafia approach.

Our work demonstrates that fighting organized crime and mafia is not only about repression, it is about prevention, memory, justice, and community empowerment.

Engagement with Government

Yes, LIBERA regularly engages with national and local authorities through legislative advocacy, public monitoring, consultations, and institutional dialogue.

We maintain our independence while constructively contributing expertise and community-based knowledge to policy processes.

Most Meaningful Moment / Anecdote

One of the most powerful experiences is witnessing land once controlled by criminal organizations become vibrant social cooperatives managed by young people.

Seeing places that once symbolised fear transformed into spaces of dignity, work, and hope is a tangible reminder that justice can generate development and that communities can reclaim their future.

Vision

My professional vision is to strengthen transnational civic networks, such as CHANCE, ALAS, and PLACE, ensuring that prevention, youth participation, victims' rights, and community resilience remain central in global responses to organized crime.

We firmly believe that defeating transnational criminal networks requires strong transnational civic networks.

Visit [their profile](#) on WhatsOn or explore their initiatives to learn more about their community-based approach to prevention and social justice.



Information
Sharing



Fostering
Collaboration



Knowledge
Hub

WhatsOn is UNODC's online platform designed to bring together relevant non-governmental stakeholders in the fight against transnational organized crime.



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