



The Bali Process

on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime

Task Force on Planning and Preparedness – Co-Chairs report to the AHG SOM 6 December 2022

1. The report is based on the activities of the Taskforce on Planning and Preparedness since the 15th AHG SOM meeting in October 2020.
2. The Taskforce on Planning and Preparedness (“TFPP”) brings together representatives from agencies with both policy and operational responsibilities, including border security, immigration, law enforcement, coast guard and navy, ministries of home affairs and interior, and foreign affairs.
3. Since its establishment in 2017, it has become a valuable part of the Bali Process, including to prepare agile and timely national and regional responses to large influxes of irregular migrants.

6th meeting of the TFPP, October 2021

4. The sixth meeting of TFPP, co-chaired by senior official co-chairs from Australia and Indonesia, took place in June 2021, against the backdrop of the multidimensional impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
5. Members discussed the impacts of the changing global and regional context on efforts to address irregular migration and safety of life at sea issues.
6. There was universal recognition that closed borders, stretched economic resources, and health security challenges were all increasing the susceptibility of the region’s population to the appeal of irregular movement. Discussions focused on preventing irregular maritime ventures as the best way to save lives at sea. Members spoke to the importance of information sharing, inter agency cooperation, and effective law enforcement mechanisms in implementing successful prevention strategies and operational responses.
7. Discussions focused on preventing irregular maritime ventures as the best way to save lives at sea. Members spoke to the importance of information sharing, inter agency cooperation, and effective law enforcement mechanisms in implementing successful prevention strategies and operational responses.
8. Members also identified areas that could be explored further and form part of the TFPP’s future strategic direction. These included strengthening the focus of the TFPP according to its mandate on prevention, as well improving preparedness for irregular migration overland and by air. The discussions highlighted the importance of coordinated responses and cooperation, including in the light of the increasing trend of women and girls and unaccompanied children joining irregular ventures.
9. Through the discussion, it was clear that there was appetite for exploring synergies with other Bali Process working groups, including the Disruption Working Group that brings together a network of law enforcement officials from Ad Hoc Group members.

Policy Experts Gatherings - Purpose and proceedings

10. Following on from this discussion, in July 2022, the TFPP convened two virtual Policy Experts Gatherings (PEGs) to review the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on irregular migration, and discuss the particular vulnerabilities of women and children.
11. Both days had strong attendance, with 70 individuals online for both sessions from 20 members/observers. Participating Bali Process members included representatives from co-chairs Australia and Indonesia, Bangladesh, Hong Kong, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, the Maldives, New Zealand, Samoa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor Leste, Tonga, Viet Nam, UNHCR, IOM and UNODC. UNDP, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Canada attended as observers. The Co-Managers of the Bali Process Regional Support Office also attended.
12. On day one, members were invited to present on lessons learned with respect to handling irregular migration during pandemics. Issues covered included:
 - trends in irregular migration observed during the pandemic
 - the experience of survivors, with a focus on the unique vulnerabilities of migrant workers;
 - national policy objectives and plans of action; and
 - integrity of travel documents, including new challenges arising from the pandemic, such as fraudulent health documentation and vaccine certificates.
13. Health experts and civil society actors were invited to present on the challenges they witnessed during the pandemic for irregular migrants. A number of members spoke about policies temporarily implemented to regularize and provide visa certainty to stranded migrants.
14. A key conclusion was that inclusive policies for vaccinations and other health needs of migrants during the pandemic had led to better outcomes. There was a suggestion that the Bali Process could work on guidance and recommendations on managing migrant health, which could include a common set of SOPs.
15. On day two, participants were invited to present on actions they were taking to address the particular vulnerabilities of women and children in irregular migration.
16. Experts from UNHCR and the ASEAN-Australia Counter-Trafficking Program spoke about the importance of a gender-sensitive and victim-centered approach to management of irregular migration and victims of trafficking.
17. A presentation from UNHCR highlighted the challenges faced by Rohingya women and children departing Cox's Bazaar by boat. Five boats with 700 Rohingya had arrived in Indonesia in 2020 and 2021, of which 45% were women and 29% were children, 65% of whom were unaccompanied. Trauma, child marriage and violence against women suffered at sea and in camps were widespread issues.
18. Indonesia's National Agency for Witness and Victim Protection (LPSK) presented on its work in protecting, supporting and empowering victims of trafficking in Indonesia, including provision of psycho-social support, support for skills-development, and work with law enforcement to incentivize restitution payments from perpetrators to victims.
19. The Regional Support Office highlighted the role that victim-centered and gender sensitive approaches play in all of the RSO's workshops. The RSO also referred members to the RSO's Practitioner Guide Series, which offers practical guidance on identification and protection of trafficking victims, as well as the RSO-UNHCR toolkit and mobile application on screening and referral, designed to assist border officials to identify people with specific needs.

20. The inclusion of civil society members as guest speakers in both days was welcomed by participants and provided ideas for future 1.5 track participation in Bali Process activities, particularly focused on victims/survivors of trafficking.
21. I will now pass to my Indonesian co-chair to provide the second part of the TFPP report.

Table Top Exercise - Purpose and proceedings

22. Table Top Exercises continue to be a valuable part of the suite of activities undertaken by the Taskforce on Planning and Preparedness to strengthen operational and policy responses to irregular migration.
23. In line with members' interest in collaboration across workstreams, on 10-11 October 2022, the TFPP Co-Chairs Australia and Indonesia, together with Working Group on Disruptions Co-Chairs New Zealand and Viet Nam, co-convened an in-person Table Top Exercise in Bangkok.
24. Held back-to-back with the Working Group on Disruption annual meeting, the exercise was a good example of ways the Bali Process can streamline technical consultations across different working groups.
25. The exercise was an opportunity to build informal networks and promote dialogue between policy and operational agencies on preparedness for managing a large influx of irregular migrants, including how to investigate and prosecute people smuggling and human trafficking along migration routes in the region.
26. It focused on coordinated national and regional responses to a significant irregular migration incident involving both human trafficking and people smuggling. Participants from Australia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Maldives, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Viet Nam and the United Arab Emirates joined the event, represented by a wide range of policy and operational agencies, including border security, immigration, law enforcement, home affairs, justice and foreign affairs. It also involved experts from UNHCR, UNODC, IOM and the RSO.
27. Responding to Member interest in activities related to irregular movement, the exercise gave participants the opportunity to engage with a fictional scenario involving the movement of a large group of irregular migrants from multiple source countries over a land border, with elements of both people smuggling and trafficking.
28. Day one of the Exercise, facilitated by the Regional Support Office, provided an opportunity to consider:
 - the range of national and regional stakeholders that would be involved in the response and the sort of coordination mechanisms required;
 - reception arrangements to manage the different needs and potential protection requirements of members of the mixed group; and
 - mechanisms for screening and referral to appropriate authorities and services.

The co-chair colleagues from the Working Group on Disruption have already reported on the outcomes of Day two, which focused on an effective law enforcement investigation into crimes committed as part of the mixed movement, including decision-making around prosecution and digital evidence gathering.

29. Key themes of the discussions at the Table Top Exercise included:
 - the need for multi-disciplinary responses, involving – among others – law enforcement, border officials, social services, and the value of national coordination mechanisms;
 - the importance of data collection; and
 - the value of preparedness, including standard operating procedures and guidelines for managing human trafficking and people smuggling.

30. Building on the themes of the Policy Experts Gatherings in July, participants discussed child protection considerations, the importance of gender-sensitive approach to handling irregular migration situations, and health considerations.

Next steps

31. While the challenge of irregular maritime migration continues, the past few years have brought to the fore some of the other challenges Bali Process members face to counter trafficking in persons, people smuggling, and related transnational crime.
32. Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, TFPP activities have brought participants from a wide range of agencies together in a flexible format – online or in person – to discuss a broad range of issues and challenges with respect to people smuggling, human trafficking and related transnational crime.
33. The TFPP has provided strategic engagement through dialogue on policy and operational responses and technical practices, in collaboration with other Bali Process workstreams.
34. The table-top exercise held in 2022 highlighted the value of the TFPP undertaking concrete and action-oriented activities on irregular movement by land, air and sea.
35. More broadly, the work of the TFPP since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in convening virtual Policy Experts Gatherings has demonstrated the important role it plays in considering the possibilities of emerging issues and trends in people smuggling and human trafficking, and supporting preparedness to respond. Going forward, TFPP should continue its work to assist Bali Process members to develop their operational capabilities in addressing flows of irregular migrants and refugees, from early warning capacities, coordination actions, to building operating procedures and measures on handling the people.
36. In view of the evolving people smuggling and human trafficking landscape, and to keep the Bali Process remains future-focused and responsive to Members' needs and priorities, the Australian and Indonesian TFPP Co-Chairs also recommend that, as part of their discussions today, senior officials to consider that the TFPP to continue activities to identify and build regional preparedness to respond to emerging trends in people smuggling and human trafficking including those using new technology, through further policy experts gatherings, multi-disciplinary table-top and futures planning exercises, as appropriate.