

Phil BENNETT
Independent Technology Strategist

High-Level Conference: Empowering Change: Technology and Artificial Intelligence in the Fight against Human Trafficking

Rabat, Malta, 11 June 2025 (9:30 – 5 minutes)

Panel 1 – Innovative technology in combating human trafficking: challenges and opportunities

Phil Bennett is a strategist and a recognised anti-trafficking technology expert. He currently works independently supporting organisations tackling human trafficking and forced labour worldwide. In recent years he has worked with dozens of NGOs, inter-governmental organisations and academic institutions, most recently in Ukraine, USA and Asia. Prior to his work in anti-trafficking Phil was a C- Suite advisor and consultant in the enterprise IT sector.

Following the high-level conference “ Empowering Change: Technology and AI in the Fight against Human Trafficking”- June 11th, 2025, Mr. Bennett shared a list of relevant resources and recommended actions relevant to the panel 1.

Notes and Resources:

1. Data sharing and collaboration across countries, sectors and organisations can be a powerful way to improve our collective response to human trafficking. However, data sharing barriers can impede initiatives. These barriers include legal issues, security, privacy and confidentiality.
2. Privacy preserving technologies are an approach to overcoming some of these barriers. The UK’s Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) has listed some of these technology patterns here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/privacy-enhancing-technologies-cost-benefit-awareness-tool/cost-benefit-awareness-tool>. In addition, there are various use cases collected which have been published here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/repository-of-privacy-enhancing-technologies-pets-use-cases>
3. One output of the Tech Against Trafficking Accelerator Programme has been an open-source tool to anonymise data using an approach to generate differentially private datasets from sensitive case data. https://github.com/microsoft/intelligence-toolkit/blob/main/app/workflows/anonymize_case_data/README.md
4. The same Intelligence Toolkit aka.ms/itk also includes statistical and AI tools to tackle common data problems. These include identifying new patterns in datasets, identifying risk exposure in entity networks such as supply chains, querying large document datasets using AI and extracting structured data such as locations, typologies and demographics from unstructured data such as case notes.

5. Tech Against Trafficking have recently published a gap analysis to advance forced labour supply chain data standardisation: <https://techagainstrafficking.org/tech-against-trafficking-publishes-gap-analysis-to-advance-forced-labor-supply-chain-data-standardization/>

Recommendations:

1. It is likely that recent advances in AI consumer technology will result in a rapid change in how criminals recruit and exploit victims. See <https://www.osce.org/cthb/579715>. It is therefore essential to seek out new collaboration opportunities and to use modern methods to share data safely and ethically, and to gain new insights to improve collective impact.
2. Consider the use modern privacy preserving technology to overcome barriers to sharing data.
3. Modern advances in AI enable new insights to be extracted from trafficking data. The technology can reduce the cost of developing these insights and handle different data formats more easily.
4. Although there are tremendous opportunities to use modern technology to tackle human trafficking, it is essential that principles of safety, ethics and equity remain at the heart of projects using data and AI.