



# Practices of Shelter Services for Successful and Dignified Reintegration of TIP Survivors in Nepal

## Policy Brief 3, JDR3 Scholar Program, Hamro Samman

---

*Shelter-based care services are considered crucial for the reintegration of survivors of trafficking in persons (TIP). Reintegration of survivors is a multidimensional process that requires comprehensive care services for physical and mental health, legal justice, safety and security, and socio-economic well-being. The paths to successful and dignified reintegration are challenging due to various economic, social, legal, and cultural factors. Up to six months of care services provided by the shelters prepare survivors for reintegration; however, how the larger society and government system work to enable them after their exit from the shelter is vital for successful reintegration.*

### OVERVIEW

#### Shelter Management Requirements

- Shelter management has a direct and positive impact on the successful reintegration of survivors. Shelters play a crucial and significant role in building the confidence of survivors and empowering them economically to reintegrate into their family and society.
- Comprehensive shelter care services lead to successful reintegration of TIP survivors. Comprehensive care services encompass the minimum basic needs services, psychosocial counseling, health services, legal support, and networking with employer or private sectors.
- Adequate annual budget allocations by all three tiers of government (federal, provincial, local) are required to support the comprehensive shelters that provide services for rehabilitation and reintegration.

---

## Successful and Sustainable Reintegration

- Need, interest, and context-based reintegration approaches are central to successful reintegration of survivors.
- For successful and sustainable reintegration, survivors' economic self-reliance is essential. Linking with private sectors and employers enhances the economic opportunities that promote their economic independency.
- The regular monitoring and evaluation of shelters as per the operational procedures and guidelines can strengthen the service quality and effectiveness.

## Coordination and Collaboration Needs

- The inter-agency coordination and cooperation between shelters, governmental organizations (GOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and development partners has a significant impact on providing better shelter services and a referral system for the survivors.
- Community awareness and family consultation—in collaboration with the aforementioned entities—play pivotal roles in the preparation for reintegration.

## CONTEXT

Nepal is a source, transit, and destination country for human trafficking. According to the report published by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), about 35,000 people were victims of human trafficking in Nepal in the year 2018. Nepal has made significant efforts to control human trafficking by ratification of international conventions—such as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and Palermo Protocol, and enactment

of Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control Act) 2007. The government of Nepal has put a high emphasis on prevention and protection; however, reintegration of survivors of TIP is less of a priority.

Shelter-based services are one of the essential steps for preparing the groundwork for successful reintegration of TIP survivors into family and society. The survivors, particularly women and girls who did not receive shelter services, face multiple problems and issues—including social stigma and vulnerability—along with economic constraints. Shelters are run either by the government or NGOs and provide various services and opportunities for survivors. Most shelters or rehabilitation centers adopt a welfare approach, which mainly focuses on meeting the immediate needs of survivors of TIP. Although there is an increase in the levels of support available to survivors, it is yet to be seen how effective the services are in the reintegration of survivors across the country.

In this context, this study identifies existing practices within shelters in Nepal—including the laws and policies that guide them—and further documents some of the best practices of shelters.

To further define, best practices of shelters are those which are implemented by a majority of shelters having a high success rate of reintegration of survivors back into their family or community. Key criteria identified as best practices include: 1) good network of shelters with different sectors—including private sector and employer, 2) longer period of shelter services for enhancing the capacity of TIP survivors and ensuring legal services, 3) collaboration and coordination of shelters with federal,

provincial, and local governments for sustenance and effectiveness of shelter services, and 4) adoption and implementation of existing legal and policy frameworks—including different directives, National Minimum Standards (NMS) and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

The study was conducted by adopting qualitative methodology and includes primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected through in-depth interviews and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). The secondary data was collected through systematic and archival reviews. For primary data collection, the study selected six shelters from four districts—including Kathmandu, Jhapa, Morang, and Banke—for data collection. From these four districts, 72 interviews were conducted with shelter staff, TIP survivors at the shelters, reintegrated TIP survivors, community members, parents of TIP survivors, local government officials, decision makers, and police. For secondary data collection, various sources of literature—such as research reports, archives, and reviews of existing laws and policies about TIP and reintegration—were reviewed.

## KEY FINDINGS

There are three main findings of the study: 1) how dignified and successful reintegration is defined by various stakeholders, 2) existing laws and policies that support reintegration and shelter services, and 3) existing practices of the shelters and some of the best practices among them.

### Dignified and Successful Reintegration

Although the existing policies and laws do not categorically speak about dignified reintegration of TIP survivors, the study explored the meaning of dignified and

successful reintegration through key informants and stakeholders. For successful and dignified reintegration, ten elements were significant, which are shown in the



figure below.

Key informants and stakeholders stress that for dignified reintegration, the family and society need to support and accept survivors. A survivor’s economic empowerment and self-reliance are key for successful and dignified reintegration.

Some inalienable aspects required prior to reintegration are market-demanding skills; financial literacy; economic empowerment; provision of seed money; and soft loan, security, employment linkage, and follow-up mechanisms. The role of family and society is crucial for leveraging the survivor to reintegrate back into society.

### Existing Laws and Policies That Support Reintegration and Shelter Services

Nepal has ratified several international and regional human rights instruments aiming to

prevent human trafficking and promote justice and successful reintegration of survivors of TIP. In line with Palermo Protocol, Nepal has been preparing legislative framework and other measures for criminalizing human trafficking activities. It also supports the physical, psychological, and social recovery as well as reintegration of survivors of TIP. In the absence of a separate reintegration policy for TIP survivors, the operational guidelines and procedures for shelters steer uniform shelter services. Thus, a separate reintegration policy for successful reintegration of survivors is essential from the federal level.

National legislations have been developed in line with international conventions and provisions. The constitution of Nepal itself provides groundwork for reintegration services. Shelter management operational guidelines and policies promote shelter management in a standardized and collaborative approach. The government provides funding to different shelters run by NGOs and provides space for policy dialogue and coordination to different mechanisms—such as the National Committee to Control Human Trafficking (NCCHT), District Committee to Control Human Trafficking (DCCHT), and Local Committee to Control Human Trafficking (LCCHT).

### **Existing and Best Practices of the Shelters**

The study found that effective shelters have adopted survivor-centric and shelter-based approaches to contribute to the successful reintegration of survivors. They play a pivotal role for empowering, providing skills, training, and building confidence for restoring survivors' past status and/or initiating new life from different avenues. The shelter collaborates and coordinates with

other shelters, development partners, and local governments for referrals and other required services, as shown below.

### ***Types of services and support***

The types of care and services vary across the shelters in Nepal, although there is a national minimum standard. The comprehensive shelter services that yield significant contributions for successful reintegration of survivors include housing/accommodation, medical assistance, psychosocial support, education and life skills, economic empowerment, administrative assistance, legal assistance and proceeding, security, family counseling, and return assistance. The comprehensive shelter services offered by an established shelter in Bagmati Province reflected a higher success rate of reintegration of survivors.

The study showed that all the shelters were not able to afford the comprehensive service package. However, coordination and collaboration with other shelters and agencies were found to fill the gaps in the services.

Most of the shelters included in the study were followed the shelter operation guidelines and were trying to adopt the comprehensive service and care for survivors. The immediate needs of survivors were effectively fulfilled by shelters through dedicated staff and one-on-one support.

Psychosocial and legal counseling combined with legal aid services were found to positively contribute to the reintegration of survivors.

### ***The practice of shelter management***

Human resources, infrastructure, and delivery mechanisms are key aspects of shelter management. The provision of skilled human resources—such as trained

psychosocial counselors, medical doctors, lawyers, etc.—were found to enhance the quality and reach of successful reintegration services. Similarly, interviewees mentioned that the provision of infrastructure—including building, spaces, rooms, etc.—were vital for quality services and supporting the survivors for reintegration. The provision of adequate infrastructure enhances living arrangements and provides recreational activities for survivors, contributing to the restoration of normal life.

The management of minimum human resources—including focal points, referral services, coordination with local police for security matters, management of skilled human resources (psychosocial counselors, lawyers, etc.) through collaboration with concerned NGOs and International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), and development partners—were efforts adopted by successful shelters (i.e., Maiti Nepal) that have a higher rate of successful reintegration. Similarly, shelters that conducted regular coordination meetings with other shelters and stakeholders to share/discuss issues and problems also helped in the effectiveness of the shelters in the reintegration process, as indicated by shelter staff.

It must be noted, however, that the lack of regular funding support for shelter management and limited budget provisions for human trafficking poses challenges to the sustainability of shelters.

### ***Coordination and collaboration for referral and reintegration***

Effective collaboration and coordination among agencies are crucial for prevention, protection, interception, rescue, repatriation, training, and reintegration services in human trafficking. For instance, the coordination

between national anti-human trafficking bureaus, districts, local police, and One-Stop Crisis Management Center (OCMC) have provided ample examples of aforementioned services.

The shelters adopted the mechanisms of coordination and cooperation with local governments and other shelters and development partners for effective service and care services. As indicated by various shelter staff, regular sharing meetings with different stakeholders to ensure accountability, transparency, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of shelter services positively contributed to better shelter management.

The study found that better inter-agency coordination and collaboration of shelters to provide skills and other supports to survivors enhanced service quality and reach, contributing to the reintegration process.

However, existing practices in the majority of shelters' management, coordination, and collaboration needs further improvement for successful and dignified reintegration.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Shelters**

- Conduct needs-assessment to identify the needs/interests of survivors and provide holistic support based on the findings.
- Provide regular provision of psychosocial counselors, doctors, and lawyers in shelters for the comprehensive service and support to survivors.
- Assess the mentality of the family and community and organize awareness-raising activities for the reintegration of survivors from the outset, since community and family consultation and

counseling are important for survivors' acceptance.

- Create a provision of seed money and soft loan to be provided to survivors to support the reintegration with their family and community.
- Provide skill and income-generating trainings to survivors by assessing their levels of skill, interest, and market demand, in collaboration with local government and private sectors.

### **Federal, Provincial, and Local Governments**

- Allocate regular budget monies for the rehabilitation and reintegration of survivors of TIP.
- Facilitate coordination and cooperation between federal, provincial, and local governments for allocating budget and operating shelters and providing shelter services to TIP survivors.
- Carry out awareness-raising programs in coordination with civil society organizations (CSOs).
- Launch trainings related to skills, facilities, and schemes; provide start-up support for initiating entrepreneurship and small businesses.
- Monitor and review shelter standards and support provided by all the entities and ensure they are meeting the requirements as per the established guidelines.

- Facilitate strong collaboration and cooperation among shelter-running organizations, government committees, and private sectors for the best referral and service delivery for dignified reintegration of survivors.
- Coordinate and establish an appropriate mechanism for effective coordination and collaboration for better shelter service and reintegration (by Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens [MoWCSC]).

### **RESEARCH TEAM**

Mahendra Kumar Rai, principal researcher; Rita Khatiwada, Mohan Singh Sunar and Nutan Sharma, researchers

*This research project was conducted under the John D. Rockefeller 3rd Scholars Program (JDR3) in partnership with the Hamro Samman Project and funded by the generous support of the American and British people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United Kingdom's UK Aid.*