Providing Services to Survivors in Counter Trafficking Projects: Learning from Our Actions

USAID Asia CTIP Learning Paper Series

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

COVID-19   Coronavirus disease 2019; SARS-CoV-2

CTIP   Counter trafficking in persons

GHQ   General Health Questionnaire

NGO   Non-government organization

NRM   National Referral Mechanism

SDC   Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

UN   United Nations

USA   United States of America

USAID   United States Agency for International Development

INTRODUCTION

This Learning Paper Series was developed by the USAID Asia Counter Trafficking in Persons (CTIP) project with the overall aim to learn from our current and previous programming to better inform our future work. Winrock International is the implementing partner of this USAID-funded regional project. Winrock also implements six other USAID CTIP projects in nine countries: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Thailand, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. In addition to this, Winrock is the implementing partner to an additional CTIP project in Bangladesh, generously funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

Based on the wealth of experience coming from the region and the unique perspective of the regional project, USAID Asia CTIP decided to develop this Learning Paper Series to pull out crucial learnings that can be widely disseminated to funders, our teams at home office, our project staff in the field, and anyone else working in CTIP that wants to ensure the highest quality program delivery.

The papers in this series are meant to be small in scope, tackling specific areas of concern in the general programming models. In the future, the aim is to address the identified shortcomings with CTIP partners and ensure that ways of working are evidence based and impactful for survivors.

This learning paper focuses on services for trafficking survivors – both in how CTIP projects measure the provision of services and how services are being delivered. Victims of trafficking in persons who have escaped their traffickers' control often find themselves in a position of vulnerability and insecurity. In addition to suffering psychological trauma, rescued victims may have physical injuries or illnesses, no means of subsistence, and may be afraid of the retaliation of traffickers against themselves or their family members. Trafficking survivors thus have various protection and reintegration needs, including, but not limited to, psychosocial counselling, health services, shelter, legal aid, education, livelihood skills training, and access to employment or entrepreneurship. Without access to quality support services, trafficking survivors may not recover from their trauma, or may be vulnerable to re-trafficking.

In many countries a range of government agencies, international organizations, and non-government organizations (NGO) provide services to trafficking survivors. Various reports, journal articles, and briefs have been written on the subject of the provision of support services to trafficking survivors.[1] The existing body of literature spells out quite clearly the support needs of trafficking survivors in terms of immediate, medium-term, and longer-term needs. However, there is a lack of evidence around how useful services are to survivors. There is a need to better understand service provision if our ways of delivering and measuring access to services are to be improved.

The research conducted for this learning paper set out to answer the following research questions:

> Do the CTIP projects provide decent coverage, and regular access to the core services that survivors need?

> Are some services more important for survivors' reintegration than others?

> What indicators are projects currently using to measure access to, and provision of protection and reintegration services?

> Do these measures show program effectiveness?

> Do the standard indicators encourage quality services for survivors or lead to a focus in quantity over quality?

> How can we better measure the effectiveness of protection and reintegration services in terms of reducing vulnerability to trafficking and re-trafficking?

Based on 11 semi-structured interviews with CTIP project staff and NGO practitioners, this paper highlights a select number of learnings around access to services for survivors. Because the subject of services for trafficking survivors is already well documented in the literature, this paper sought to collect learnings regarding access to services for survivors in areas that we know little about, especially the challenges for the projects in monitoring service provision.

Interview respondents currently work on counter trafficking projects implemented by Winrock International in the following countries: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nepal, and Thailand. In addition, four interviews were conducted with CTIP project NGO sub-grantees that implement service provision.[2] The interviews were conducted during the period 1 March to 15 April 2021. Each interview was approximately 45 minutes to 80 minutes in duration. Interpreters were used when requested by the interview participants. While 11 interviews is a small sample, the interviews provided some key learnings that can be used to open up a conversations on how CTIP projects are approaching survivors' access to services and what can be learned from our current ways of working to improve or adapt these approaches.

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1   See, for example, GRETA, 2018, Assistance to victims of human trafficking: https://rm.coe.int/assistance-victims-thematic-chapter-8th-general-report-en/16809ce2e9; Davy, D., 2015, Understanding the support needs of human trafficking victims: A review of three human trafficking project evaluations: https://refugeeresearch.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Davey-2015-Support-needs-of-victims.pdf ; Clawson, H., et al, 2009, A study of HHS projects serving human trafficking victims: https://aspe.hhs.gov/system/files/pdf/75966/index.pdf

2   To ensure anonymity and frank and honest contributions, individuals were interviewed under the assurance that we would not list out the organizations or the individual roles of the staff working for Winrock International, nor would we connect contributions with country projects or international organizations.

The paper is structured as follows: The first section provides an overview of access to services programming for CTIP. This section summarizes the key objectives of CTIP access to services projects and describes the activities and services implemented through the projects. The second section presents four key learnings that were identified through interviews. The third section provides some recommendations for strengthening survivors' access to services. The paper concludes with a brief summary of the key points presented in the paper.

LEARNINGS AT A GLANCE:

1. Survivor support projects are not designed with sufficient participatory methods and could be strengthened through more community-based inputs.

2. The projects face complex problems in the area of livelihood support and access to decent employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

3. There is a risk that the CTIP projects are creating a parallel protection system in some countries.

4. There are numerous challenges and flaws in the monitoring of survivor services projects.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Embed more community-based participatory methods into project design

Develop an anonymous feedback mechanism

Expand the livelihood options available to survivors

Strengthen support for families and communities

Strengthen referral mechanisms

Strengthen the capacity of governments to take ownership of survivor protection and reintegration

Shift the project focus from quantity to quality

Strengthen monitoring mechanisms and develop a training program for all staff responsible for project monitoring

Conduct research on projects that provide direct services.

OVERVIEW OF SURVIVOR SUPPORT SERVICES PROGRAMMING

The CTIP projects under consideration in this learning paper provide a range of support services to trafficking survivors. The projects aim to address the immediate needs of survivors through the provision of shelter, food, health services, and psychosocial support. In the medium to long-term, the projects provide survivors with ongoing psychosocial counselling, legal aid (if survivors want to pursue access to justice), education, livelihood skills training, and access to employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. To reduce stigma and increase the likelihood of survivors being successfully reintegrated in their communities, some CTIP projects also provide counselling to the families of survivors, and to community members. Some of the projects also have some budget to provide financial support for survivors to start small businesses.

The CTIP projects partner with national NGOs for the provision of direct services to trafficking survivors. These NGO partners are organizations that have long histories of working in the anti-trafficking field, usually in the identification of victims, provision of support services for trafficking survivors, and trafficking in persons awareness raising.

In addition to the projects' work in providing support services to survivors, the projects also aim to strengthen the capacity of the countries they operate in to provide reintegration support to survivors. Capacity building activities include technical support and trainings to strengthen government health, education, legal aid, justice, and employment mechanisms. These activities are directed at all levels of government, i.e. central/federal, regional, and local levels.

Monitoring frameworks are in place in each of the CTIP projects. The standard indicator suggested for use by the US government is "Number of victims of human trafficking receiving services (medical, repatriation, legal, transportation, etc.)." Depending on the project, some use this standard indicator, and some use a variation of this indicator. In order to provide data for this indicator, NGO sub-grantees record information and regularly report the data to the CTIP project for the purpose of project monitoring. Monthly, quarterly, and annual reports are produced and shared internally and with project partners. Data are used to identify service provision gaps and bottle necks and to redirect resources to those areas. For example, additional resources or services may be directed to a specific at-risk group, or a particular geographic area. Some CTIP projects, and their partners, use tools to evaluate survivor progress and outcomes. For example, in the area of psychosocial counselling, one project uses the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) tool to assess individual survivor's mental health progress.[3]

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3   Interview with a Winrock International staff member.

LEARNINGS

This section of the paper presents four key learnings. It should be noted that there is a large body of literature on access to services for survivors; this paper aimed to collect and present learnings on areas that we know little about, such as the challenges around monitoring and evaluation of survivor service delivery.

Learning #1: Survivor support projects are not designed with sufficient participatory methods and could be strengthened through more community-based and survivor inputs.

The first learning is that **CTIP projects are often designed by staff in a centralized business development unit who have limited understanding of the country context**. This can have adverse consequences, such as project objectives that cannot be achieved, uneven or patchy service delivery, and services being delivered that do not meet the needs of survivors.

There is no 'one size fits all' to the provision of support services to trafficking survivors. Each survivor has diverse support needs, and every community context is different. Some survivors may be successfully reintegrated within a period of weeks or months, where-

as other survivors may need support for a decade or even longer. The interviews conducted for the development of this learning paper identified that effective programming in the area of support services for trafficking survivors requires that: 1) support for survivors is individualized; and 2) project design includes participatory methods so that the local context is well understood.[4]

CTIP projects are often designed, however, by staff in headquarters that may have limited knowledge about the local context (for example, the service capacity in specific geographies within a country) and the com-

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4   Participatory methods could include inviting the input of trafficking survivors, members of the target communities, and local NGOs on project design. This could be done through interviews, meetings, seminars, focus group discussions, or other activities.

plex support needs of trafficking survivors. Interview participants reported that project design does include consultations with local staff, partners and experts; however, they expressed concern that this consultation does not go far enough, and that projects could greatly benefit from collecting more information from target communities to understand the local context, the needs of the target group, and identify any structural, resource and other challenges that might impede the effectiveness of the project.

Interview participants further reported that **participatory methods are not routinely built into project design**. *Participatory methods* refers to the implementation of different activities that have a common thread, which is to enable people to play an active part in decisions that affect their lives. Participatory methods in the development of a project mean that local community members have the opportunity to provide their input on a project in order to shape its design and intended outcomes. The result is that projects reflect local realities and may lead to longer lasting social change.[5] Interview participants reported that some important activities, such as performing a landscape assessment, and consulting with national NGOs, are conducted by some CTIP projects; however, interview participants emphasized that more needs to be done to embed participatory methods into project design. **Failing to include participatory methods in project design can result in unrealistic targets and broad project objectives. The failure to include participatory methods can also lead to the development of standardized and time-based reintegration services that do not suit the individual needs of survivors**.

> " *Research has shown again and again that change will only come through sustainable policy change over time. And from the ground up it only works through empowerment and making sure that people are getting the things they need to create the change they want [for themselves]. And that usually starts from participatory research and some observation on the ground to develop programming. Our people in Washington DC develop programming. They're great and they care. But some of these people have never been to the country, never worked on trafficking before, **they're new staff building a project around human trafficking in country they've never been to**.* "[6]

Further, the interviews conducted for this learning paper identified that better reporting mechanisms are needed. **Project staff and NGO sub-grantees do not feel that they can provide honest feedback to the donor on project design problems and implementation challenges**. The staff who are implementing support service projects are best placed to identify the programmatic gaps and challenges and suggest changes to the project design and implementation; however, they feel that once the project has commenced that it is too late to make changes to the project's design.

> " *We have limited provision to change the design of the project.*"[7]

The consequence of this is that **projects continue to operate with significant deficiencies**, which limit the projects' ability to achieve key service provision objectives.

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5   Institute of Development Studies, n.d., About participatory methods: https://www.participatorymethods.org/page/about-participatory-methods

6   Interview with a USAID CTIP country project staff member.

7   Interview with a USAID CTIP country project staff member.

The second learning is that the CTIP projects face challenges in providing sufficient livelihood support and access to decent livelihood opportunities for survivors.

A key area of CTIP projects is livelihood skills training and access to employment for survivors. Interview participants reported that CTIP project staff and partners do their best to provide survivors with livelihood skills training and access to decent employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, but there exists a range of challenges in providing appropriate, decent, and sustainable livelihood skills training and opportunities.

SURVIVORS HAVE LIMITED EDUCATION AND WORK SKILLS
Many survivors who are supported through the CTIP projects in Asia have received little education and have limited work skills. Through the CTIP projects, survivors have access to training and employment or entrepreneurship opportunities across a number of livelihood areas, such as driving (taxis, tuk tuks), repairs (e.g. mobile phones, automobiles, motorbikes), garment making, beautician work, and hospitality. Providing survivors with access to employment/entrepreneurship outside of these livelihood areas often requires sending survivors to school or training centers; this is easier to achieve for younger survivors who may be interested in engaging in long-term education or training and willing to relocate to another part of the country for studies and work. However, many other survivors need to find employment as soon as possible in their local area and are thus limited in the education and employment opportunities that are available to them.

Interview participants reported that the projects are constantly trying to engage private sector partners that may be willing to provide employment opportunities to trafficking survivors; however, this is reportedly no easy feat. Not only do survivors need to be trained and supported during their new employment, but employers also need to be sensitized about the survivors' ongoing trauma. Thus, despite the best efforts of project staff, many companies see the partnership with the CTIP project as potentially fraught with problems and thus will decline to partner with the project.

SURVIVORS ARE NOT INTERESTED IN THE LIVELIHOOD OPTIONS MADE AVAILABLE TO THEM
Furthermore, because the livelihood areas offered to survivors are generally low-skill employment areas, the pay is usually not high. Interviewed project staff reported that, for this reason, **few survivors want to engage in the livelihood options that the projects present to them**, and many survivors would prefer to attempt migration again in the hope of securing better salaries abroad.

As the quote below illustrates, the projects have assessed the interest of survivors in participating in the livelihood skills training and employment options, and in some cases the take up is extremely low.

> *So we conduct the needs assessment, we also know what kind of training our target group needs, what kind of occupation that our target needs, and what kind of job they are looking for, based on the individual needs assessment that we conduct in two districts and more than 100 people participate.* **We found that only two people are interested in job placement**. *Most of them are interested in vocational and occupational training. This is another lesson learned.* **There are jobs available but people are not interested in them**… *We found a gap between the labor market and between the need of our target group.* "[8]

Interview participants reported that more effort needs to be made to share important information on local and overseas employment opportunities for survivors. One interview participant emphasized that CTIP projects should place more emphasis on supporting survivors who wish to remigrate for employment purposes (rather than take up local employment opportunities that are offered to them) through information, livelihood skills training, and other relevant services.

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8   Interview with a USAID CTIP country project staff member.

SURVIVORS FACE ONGOING TRAUMA WHILE THEY ENGAGE IN NEW LIVELIHOODS

Interview participants reported that survivors' ongoing trauma can negatively affect their new livelihoods. Some survivors engage in new employment or business activities while they are experiencing ongoing trauma. Many employers do not have a good understanding of the challenges that survivors face in working while experiencing trauma. Tensions consequently arise between the employer and the survivor, which places significant pressure on the survivor and may lead to the survivor resigning from the work, or the employer terminating their employment.[9]

> " *Most of our target population, they're not in a position to really grab opportunities and just start something. We're also considering the readiness – their mental and physical status. Most of them … they're traumatized.* "[10]

LIMITED BUDGET TO SUPPORT SURVIVOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Interview participants reported that the CTIP projects aim to support survivors in livelihood activities, including starting small businesses; however, the projects only have limited funds to support survivors' new business activities. Most survivors need capital to start their new business, but the project cannot provide financial support to everyone, thus only a few survivors receive some financial support through the project. This becomes particularly problematic when a large group of survivors finishes livelihood skills training at the same time and the survivors all need financial support to take the next step into opening a small business.

> " *In economic empowerment we have very limited business start up support for survivors. Since in one batch there are 25 survivors who completed their entrepreneurship development training and are going to start a new business but sometimes they don't have the capital to start a new business. We have limited resources.* **Ten or 20 per cent we cover from our side but this support isn't enough to start a business at village level.** "[11]

HIGH TARGETS ARE DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE

Interviewed project staff reported that high targets (for example, the project will provide employment to X hundred or thousand survivors) are positive in that they mean many survivors will be assisted by the project, but

they feel that they are often difficult to achieve. The projects only have a limited number of staff to manage the project, engage with NGO partners, and provide support services to trafficking survivors, including livelihood skills training, and access to employment and entrepreneurship. High targets mean that project staff prioritize finding private sector partners to employ survivors, but there is limited time and human resources available to train survivors, support them while they are engaged in new jobs, sensitize employers about survivors' ongoing trauma and support needs, and solve the problems that invariably arise between employers and survivors in work settings.

> " *I've seen often examples where things didn't work, they put very high targets because it sounds nice, like 'we will employ 1,000 survivors'. And then the project is not able to select the right people and they don't have the resources… We need to work with them (survivors) to empower them, and at the same time you need to work with employers.. when you apply quotas there's always a risk attached to that.* "[12]

High targets can also lead to staff burn out. Support for survivors requires that case managers and other relevant staff have the time and resources to provide comprehensive support to survivors. High targets can make effective service provision difficult for staff to achieve, and lead to high stress levels.

COVID-19 HAD NEGATIVE EFFECTS ON SURVIVOR LIVELIHOODS

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the fragility of survivor livelihoods during crises. A 2021 report by the United Nations (UN) Office on Drugs and Crime documented the fact that many trafficking survivors around the world lost their livelihoods at the start of the pandemic, and have faced ongoing financial insecurity during the pandemic.[13] Interview participants for this study similarly reported that many survivors who had received livelihood skills training and support to access employment or entrepreneurship lost their livelihoods in the first phase of the pandemic, and became more reliant on the CTIP project and NGO partners for support. In addition, most CTIP livelihood skills training activities were paused during the pandemic, leaving annual project targets unmet, and a significant number of survivors with extremely limited opportunities for income generation.

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9   Interview with a USAID CTIP country project staff member.

10   Interview with a USAID CTIP country project staff member.

11   Interview with a USAID CTIP country project staff member.

12   Interview with a USAID CTIP country project staff member.

13   UNODC, 2021, The effects of COVID-19 on trafficking in persons and responses to the challenges: https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/2021/The_effects_of_the_COVID-19_pandemic_on_trafficking_in_persons.pdf

The third learning is that the CTIP projects are inadvertently creating parallel protection systems in some countries. What this means is that the CTIP project provides a program of services to trafficking survivors (alongside other donors, international organizations, and NGOs that provide reintegration services for survivors), and that **this system operates entirely independently of the government social protection mechanisms**.

The key problem with such a parallel system is that it is not sustainable. Eventually, the CTIP project will close, and the government will be left to take on the survivor reintegration work, unless another donor steps in to create a similar project. It should be noted that this problem is certainly not specific to USAID-funded CTIP projects. Other donors, UN agencies, and NGOs risk contributing to the development of a parallel protection system, and reducing the government's inclination to strengthen protection and reintegration systems for survivors.

> *In terms of design, your country context, you have to see what's available there without creating a parallel system. And that's what's happened [here].[14]* ***There's this whole new parallel system to government… that is completely unsustainable****. They don't even interact. It's been managed separately and there's no contribution from the government."[15]*

Interview participants reported that the CTIP projects do include capacity building activities with the target country governments. Further, the projects lobby governments to take more action to provide support to survivors, and strengthen health, education, employment, and other important infrastructure for the benefit of not only trafficking survivors, but all citizens and residents in their territory. However, while USAID CTIP projects, and other international organizations and NGOs, continue to expand survivor support projects, **some governments remain 'disincentivized' to take much action**.

> *It disincentivizes the government when we're running this parallel universe. At the same time there's a lot of lobbying from international organizations. Working on policy level and saying – you have to offer these services to people… It ends up being really problematic, you're pushing the government to provide services. The government only has so much money so they have to choose. But if we pulled away would they (the government) do anything? It should be the idea, getting the government to take over.[16]*
>
> *It's a vicious circle. If you stop providing funding, they stop providing services. But if you keep providing funding they never commit to invest resources."[17]*

A second problem is that **the quality and duration of survivor protection and reintegration becomes a 'lottery' for trafficking survivors**. Depending on which organization or project (the government protection system, the USAID-funded CTIP project, or an NGO) that the survivor is referred to, they may receive comprehensive and quality support, or shorter-term support. This results in a framework of patchy and uneven support services for trafficking survivors.

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14   Country name withheld.
15   Interview with a USAID CTIP country project staff member.
16   Interview with a USAID CTIP country project staff member.
17   Interview with a USAID CTIP country project staff member.

The final learning is that the projects face significant challenges in monitoring and evaluating service provision for survivors. The research conducted for this learning paper identified a number of serious challenges and flaws in the monitoring and evaluation of survivor services.

SURVIVORS ARE UNLIKELY TO CRITICIZE SERVICE DELIVERY

Common project monitoring activities include monitoring survivors' satisfaction with the services that they receive through the CTIP project. The research conducted for the development of this learning paper identified that a key flaw in this is that survivors may not provide honest feedback on the services that they have received. This is because project staff conduct satisfaction surveys or interviews with survivors. **It is unlikely that survivors will be critical of the projects, and the services offered to them, to CTIP project staff or NGO staff because they may be concerned that criticism will lead to their support being cut off**. Even when the person asking the survey or interview questions promises the survivor anonymity, the survivor may still be concerned that their name will be attributed to responses that are critical of the project.

> *In terms of knowing how services work, for a while we had indicators of victim satisfaction. But usually when it's been administered by a social worker who has been providing services, **there's very little likelihood victims will be critical**. They have received help. So that's one of the challenges, how do we get to that understanding. And what was really helpful and to what extent. It's difficult. When it's the service provider who does the victim satisfaction surveys, and the victim can't read or write, … and they may not trust that it may be anonymous."18*

As a result, it is difficult for project staff to learn through survivor feedback on service delivery, and make appropriate, impactful changes to project design and implementation.

THE PROJECTS LOSE CONTACT WITH BENEFICIARIES

Interview participants reported that a key priority for the CTIP projects is monitoring individual survivor outcomes to determine whether survivors have been successfully reintegrated. This can involve conducting interviews with survivors at multiple points in time to determine whether the survivor's mental health has improved as a result of psychosocial counselling, or their livelihood options have improved through skills training and access to employment/entrepreneurship. However, interview participants noted that it is very difficult for the projects to track survivors long-term. Most projects have a maximum follow up period of six months, meaning that once the survivor has returned to their community or remigrated the project only monitors their well-being once or twice over six months, then all monitoring of survivor outcomes ceases.

A key challenge in monitoring survivor outcomes is that some survivors move to a different part of the country or remigrate because they do not want to return to their community due to stigma or a lack of employment opportunities. This means that CTIP project staff cannot conduct face to face visits or interviews with the survivors. Further, many survivors change their phone number, and the CTIP project staff can no longer get in touch with the survivors by telephone to assess their current situation.

> *As soon as we stop giving them services they change their number, they're gone, we can never find them again. **It's very difficult to keep track of people so it's hard to know what ends up happening to them.**"19*

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18   Interview with a USAID CTIP country project staff member.
19   Interview with a USAID CTIP country project staff member.

HIGH TARGETS MEAN THAT THE PROJECTS ARE UNABLE TO MONITOR ALL SURVIVORS

With consideration of the sheer size of the target group within some CTIP projects, **it is not possible for the CTIP project to conduct in depth, or long-term monitoring of survivor outcomes for all project beneficiaries**. Project staff do their best to monitor survivors for the duration of their participation in the project, but project staff do not have the time or resources to conduct one on one interviews or surveys on a regular basis with survivors when the project has hundreds or thousands of beneficiaries.

> ❝ *The number is a factor. When you complete 4,000 people. It's not humanly possible for five or six persons (project staff) to address all the things.* This is the kind of weakness with this kind of project. You're trying to provide survivors with comprehensive support services for their integration but when the number is large, in that case it's difficult for any organization to maintain the quality 100 per cent. But we're trying to manage at our level best."[20]

High targets can also mean that the projects are unable to focus on their key objectives. The focus of projects that provide support services to trafficking survivors should be on successful reintegration, rather than simply the delivery of services. It is important that the projects understand through monitoring whether an individual survivor is in a decent socio-economic situation and no longer vulnerable to trafficking in persons. High targets make this objective difficult to achieve in practice.

THE PROJECT LIFE SPAN DOES NOT ALLOW FOR LONG-TERM MONITORING OF SURVIVOR OUTCOMES

Most CTIP projects have a life span of approximately five years. It takes approximately one year to set up the projects, leaving approximately four years for project implementation (service delivery) and monitoring of survivor outcomes. With consideration of the fact that the projects only monitor survivors for a period of six months after they have been returned to their community, a good case scenario is that the CTIP project could monitor individual survivor outcomes for a period of several years.

As noted in earlier pages, the reintegration process for trafficking survivors is not linear, and some survivors may need support for a decade or even more. It may be that a survivor is re-trafficked after four years, but the project will never know this because monitoring of survivor outcomes has ceased.

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20   Interview with a USAID CTIP country project staff member.

SOME STANDARD INDICATORS ARE NOT APPROPRIATE FOR DETERMINING SERVICE QUALITY AND PROJECT EFFECTIVENESS AND CAN RESULT IN REPORTING FLAWS

The research conducted for this learning paper identified that some monitoring indicators do not tell CTIP projects much about service quality and project effectiveness. Indicators such as the number of people who received a service (as donor standard indicator) or the number of people who were referred to a partner organization for a service (used in several CTIP projects) tell the projects, partners and donors very little about the quality of those services. In most cases it is reportedly even difficult for the CTIP projects to determine whether a survivor actually accessed a service that they were referred to.

> ❝ *At the end of the day they have the standard indicator – number of people receiving services. But what is a service, how do you count a service? Do you count every counselling session you went to, or do you count like if I give you a bus ticket home or a plane ticket, is that a service? So no one has any idea.*[21]
>
> *For example, in some cases you would have an NGO reporting – five services provided to this person. Legal consultation, legal aid, legal representation. Or a bus ticket to reach the court. This doesn't tell me that we are really addressing the needs of this person.* **So when we talk about services.. it's also not so easy to count.** *For example, legal aid, it's difficult, it includes a lot of different services. It's even not fair to count one. And then there will be some organizations that have their own expertise, or the services they can provide internally. And they will just provide a service.*❞[22]

Interview participants reported that there is a risk that not only do these indicators tell donors and the CTIP projects very little about the quality and effectiveness of services, but they also push the projects and partners to show high numbers.[23] NGO partners may try to count as many services as possible, even if the 'service' is simply giving a survivor a bus ticket, because they are concerned that low numbers of 'services' in monitoring reports will suggest that they have not been working hard enough.

Confusion over the indicators and how to count a 'service' leads to fundamental reporting flaws. Monitoring reports will show, for example, that one survivor received 30 services, whereas another survivor received only one service. When CTIP project staff are prompted to explain why some survivors are receiving many services, while others are not, they struggle to answer because they do not necessarily understand how partners are counting services and recording service referrals.

THERE IS INSUFFICIENT BUDGET FOR ROBUST RESEARCH

Interview participants noted that the projects have budget to conduct research, monitoring and evaluation activities but that the budget does not stretch far enough to allow staff and partners to conduct robust studies of survivor outcomes. According to some interview participants, it would be helpful for the CTIP projects to conduct longitudinal studies, and other robust research studies to evaluate survivor outcomes and successful reintegration and determine project effectiveness; however, the budget available for such in depth and long-term research is limited. As a result, the projects remain in the dark about whether survivors are being successfully reintegrated and the projects are achieving their objectives.

> ❝ *It's just enough money to be a lot, but useless. Like USD30,000 to do a baseline. That's good money. But if you've got a project in seven districts and you want to do a population study that looks at something.. and you want to do a control group because you want to see if our project did that, you want to see evidence, it's not enough. It's enough to do a survey but not enough to do a scientifically rigorous study.* **It's really frustrating because they give you a large sum of money but it's just enough to tell you nothing.**❞[24]

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21   Interview with a USAID CTIP country project staff member.
22   Interview with a USAID CTIP country project staff member.
23   Interview with a USAID CTIP country project staff member.
24   Interview with a USAID CTIP country project staff member.

NEXT STEPS

Below are some recommendations that respond to the main learnings explored in this paper.

Embed more participatory methods into project design

Embedding participatory methods in the development of survivor support projects is crucial. Project design staff should, when possible, spend a period of several weeks in-country collecting information from and with target communities and survivors at the project design phase. They should meet with relevant government agencies, international organizations, and NGOs, including at regional and local levels, to discuss project design and invite the input of stakeholders. **Members of the target community should be invited to provide input on project design**, and trafficking survivors should be consulted (on a compensated basis) to discuss their support needs, and the challenges that they face in accessing key services in their local area. At times, donors can drive standardized and time-based reintegration services that do not suit the needs of survivors, and more advocacy around the realistic needs of survivors should be carried out by implementing partners.

Develop an anonymous feedback mechanism

An anonymous feedback mechanism should be made available so that project staff, NGO partners, and beneficiaries are able to provide honest feedback on project challenges and bottle necks, and the quality of services. This mechanism could come in the form of an online and hard copy survey tool or similar, which allows the participants to provide feedback anonymously. Feedback should be used to address service delivery gaps and bottle necks, and to drive future access to services program design.

Expand the livelihood options available to survivors

More needs to be done to provide survivors with livelihood skills training and access to employment in areas that the survivors are interested in, and that have decent work conditions and pay. Project staff and partners are already doing the 'right' things in terms of working with the private sector to identify new survivor employment opportunities, providing survivors with a number of potential livelihood options (and related training), and conducting market assessments to determine the potential sustainability of a survivor's preferred business activity. However, the problem remains that few decent employment opportunities are available in survivors' local areas, and the employment opportunities that are available provide low pay. It may be beneficial for the CTIP projects to **focus more effort on exploring employment opportunities available to survivors outside their home community (i.e. in different parts of the country), and dedicating additional resources to link survivors with training programs in skilled areas with high demand**, such as Information Technology. Project staff will further need to sensitize survivors to the employment opportunities that may be available to them if they consider relocating to other parts of the country. Special provisions such as family and community counselling will need to be made for female survivors who may face significant cultural and other challenges in accessing employment beyond their local area.

Where possible, **additional partnerships with microfinance organizations or community loan associations should be made to provide capital to survivors to start small businesses**. At present, only a small number of survivors receive financial assistance through the CTIP project to start their businesses. The same capital amount should be provided to all survivors wanting to embark on a new entrepreneurship activity. As existing project budgets likely do not stretch far enough to provide start-up capital to all beneficiaries, project staff should continue to explore potential partnership opportunities with the private sector, business associations, and microfinance organizations, or consider setting up community banks as part of the project. Microfinance organizations must be fully vetted before they are approached.

Strengthen the capacity of governments to take ownership of survivor protection and reintegration

CTIP projects, in partnership with UN agencies and NGOs, need to continue to **lobby governments to take ownership of survivor protection and reintegration**, and to strengthen key service areas such as health, shelter, education, and employment for all persons in need of support services. The provision of economic and social support, through the delivery of livelihood and other key support services, needs to be pushed to the top of government agendas. In light of competing priorities, such as combating crime, and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, this is difficult to achieve in practice. Where possible, donors and implementing organizations should work with national anti-trafficking committees that are able to advocate for the rights of survivors and lobby their governments for additional budget to be set aside for survivor service provision.

Shift the project focus from quantity to quality

Large targets are positive in that they mean that hundreds, if not thousands of survivors will receive services. But when services are not sufficiently comprehensive, and support is not long-term, it possible that survivors will remain vulnerable to re-trafficking. **Priority should be shifted from the quantity of services to the quality of service provision**. The central goal of support service programming should be to ensure that the survivor has been successfully reintegrated and is no longer vulnerable to trafficking in persons. Monitoring should thus be more outcome-focused rather than output-focused.

CTIP projects should be realistic about the livelihood support that the projects can provide to trafficking survivors. High livelihood support targets need to be considered in light of the available project resources – both human resources, and financial resources. **It is potentially more effective and sustainable to target a smaller number of survivors and provide them with comprehensive and long-term livelihood support, including financial support to start a new business, than it is to provide broad but patchy and uneven support to hundreds or even thousands of survivors**.

Strengthen monitoring mechanisms and develop indicators that better capture quality over quantity

It is important that the CTIP projects understand the varying ways to monitor and evaluate service provision, so that they are in a better position to report successes to donors, and do not influence service providers to inflate numbers.

Where possible, evaluation of survivor outcomes should be conducted on a long-term basis. Checking in with survivors several months after they exit the project is useful, but it is important to increase efforts to locate survivors after they have exited the project and monitor their well-being for a number of years. In light of the limited budget available for long-term survivor monitoring, a recommendation is that a selection of survivors (approximately 50) is followed to determine, on a long-term basis (i.e. five to ten years) their well-being. It is also recommended that CTIP projects invest in technologies that can be used across borders for long periods of time.

An assessment of the current indicators, and the monitoring data that has thus far been collected by the CTIP projects should be conducted. Project staff, including monitoring and evaluation staff, and partners should be interviewed by independent researchers to assess the utility of the current monitoring indicators, the challenges that the indicators pose in terms of collecting and analyzing data, and the effects of high targets on service delivery and monitoring activities. With the resulting information, USAID Asia CTIP should develop standard indicators and data collection tools for their projects that focus on capturing the quality of services.

CONCLUSION

The provision of quality and comprehensive services to trafficking survivors is paramount for survivors' recovery and reintegration. Without comprehensive services, survivors may never recover from their trauma and may be vulnerable to cycles of re-trafficking. The research conducted for this learning paper found that the services provided to survivors within CTIP projects are comprehensive, and thousands of survivors are being supported by the CTIP projects; however, there are significant gaps and challenges in access to services programming. Project design is very top-down, with inadequate effort to embed participatory methods in project design. Projects are often designed by staff who have limited understanding of the local context, the complex support needs of trafficking survivors, and the need for individualized care. Project staff have high targets for providing livelihood support to survivors but the projects lack the human and financial resources to provide comprehensive and targeted livelihood support to hundreds or thousands of beneficiaries. There is still a mismatch between the skills training that survivors receive and the jobs that survivors want to engage in. The CTIP projects risk creating a parallel protection system in some countries and disincentivizing governments to take charge of survivor protection and reintegration. Finally, there are significant challenges around the monitoring of survivor support projects. The current indicators are not useful for monitoring the quality or accessibility of services; project staff do not understand how partners are counting a 'service'; monitoring reports are flawed; and there is insufficient long-term monitoring of survivor outcomes.

Despite years of providing services to trafficking survivors, there is much work that needs to be done to strengthen access to services programming and monitor service delivery. In terms of next steps for access to services programming, donors and implementing organizations should consider: Embedding participatory methods in project design; developing an anonymous feedback mechanism for staff, stakeholders, and beneficiaries to provide feedback on service delivery; strengthening the livelihood support and livelihood options available for survivors; strengthening support for families and communities; supporting the development of referral mechanisms; strengthening the ability of governments to drive survivor protection and reintegration; shifting the focus of the projects from quantity of services to quality; developing monitoring and evaluation training for all relevant staff; and conducting research into service delivery, survivor outcomes, and the utility of current monitoring indicators.

Photos by Luke Duggleby, Jeanne Crump, Binh-dang-nam, Misty Keasler and Winrock International.