PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH WITH ANIRBAN:

Survivor-led Organizing for Empowerment and Changing Systems that Drive Trafficking in Persons

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH WITH ANIRBAN:

SURVIVOR-LED ORGANIZING FOR EMPOWERMENT AND CHANGING SYSTEMS THAT DRIVE TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

Eric Kasper and Md. Abdus Salam

October 2024

Table of Contents

Acronym

ATSEC	Action against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children
ACT	Action for Combatting Trafficking in Persons
ADAB	Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh
BC/TIP	Bangladesh Counter Trafficking in Persons
BMET	Bureau of Manpower, Employment, and Training
BRAC	BRAC Probashbandhu Limited
B-PEMS	Bangladesh Program to End Modern Slavery Augro Jatra Climate Change
CTC	Counter Trafficking Committee
COP	Chief of Party
CSO	Civil society organizations
CTIP	Counter-trafficking in persons
DAM	Dhaka Ahsania Mission
DEMOs	District Employment and Manpower Offices
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
E2A	Evidence2Action
FDG	Focus Group Discussion
FSTIP	Fight Slavery and Trafficking-in-Persons
FTC	Fair Training Center
GFEMS	Global Fund to End Modern Slavery
HRC	Humanity Research Consultancy
HTWG	Human Trafficking Working Group
IJM	International Justice Mission
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMC	Implementation Management Committees
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IVET	Integrated Vocational Educational Training
JDR3	John D. Rockefeller 3rd Scholars Program
MEL	Monitoring, evaluation, and learning
METIP	Monitoring and Evaluation for Trafficking in Persons
NCCT	National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPA	National Plan of Action
PAR	Participatory Action Research
RMMRU	Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

Introduction

In the field of Counter Trafficking in Persons (CTIP), there is a growing consensus around the need to engage more meaningfully with survivors (people with lived experience), not merely as recipients of support, but as people with knowledge and expertise about what works and what doesn't work in CTIP programing (Ash and Otiende, 2023). Survivor engagement has become an important requirement for many CTIP projects, and survivor empowerment has become a common goal. If we are to do justice to these ideas, to center survivors as both partners and valuable assets in our CTIP work, we must ensure that they are not conceptualized or operationalized in superficial ways. This report presents our experiences and findings from a research project carried out in partnership with a set of survivor leaders in Bangladesh. We offer our insights into the nature of survivor leadership and its implications for meaningful engagement with survivors to support substantive empowerment.

In our recent work, we have explored trafficking in persons as a complex phenomenon that takes place at the intersection of many social, political, and economic challenges. We have documented mechanisms that create and perpetuate vulnerabilities, and we have offered explanations for why it is so difficult to stop trafficking even as there is a near universal consensus that it should be stopped. We have also documented that to address complex systemic problems, relational approaches are needed that can facilitate sustainable changes to how systems regularly operate. That is, since a problem like trafficking is related to current configurations of relevant social/political/economic systems, the solution to the problem must involve a reconfiguration of those systems. In our experience, effective and lasting system reconfigurations tend to require delicate and relational efforts by embedded stakeholders who can remain attuned to the many forces at work while nudging, circumventing, and undermining the problematic mechanisms and while imagining, testing, and nurturing alternatives.

This report considers that survivors of trafficking, with their deep knowledge stemming from their lived experience – both of trafficking as well as with living in the systems in which trafficking occurs – may often be best placed to direct those change efforts.

To explore this, we designed this research project to work alongside a set of survivor leaders to learn about their perspectives, processes, and power as they engage in counter trafficking efforts (Stewart et al., 2023). Specifically, we were interested in exploring what leadership looks like in terms of the relational work of organizing via survivor-led groups, as well as the mechanisms by which such organizing might lead to sustainable change (Tauson et al., 2023).

To do this, we built on connections with branches of ANIRBAN, a survivor network in Bangladesh, in the cities of Jashore and Cox's Bazar[1]. We spent five weeks from February to early March, 2023, working in Jashore with a research team made up of the authors[2], a researcher from Winrock's Asia CTIP office (which commissioned this research project), and 6 members of the Jashore ANIRBAN's leadership committee. Additionally, one of the authors (Salam) and the Winrock researcher spent one week in Cox's Bazar interviewing and holding workshops with members of the Cox's Bazar branch of ANIRBAN. From March through December of 2023, we maintained contact with the research team to follow up on what happened after our time working together.

Using a participatory research methodology, the research team explored the nature of survivor leadership within the ANIRBAN branches, including common organizational practices and their approach to organizing. Together we produced a social network map of Jashore ANIRBAN's connections to document their embeddedness in the local CTIP ecosystem. We accompanied members of the Jashore ANIRBAN branch as they carried out their regular activities to observe their organizing practices, and we carried out workshops to jointly reflect on their journey of empowerment.

In this report, we document ANIRBAN's approach to survivor leadership and organizing. We present evidence for how this leadership and their organizing work has contributed to their empowerment by strengthening their own capacities to take action, their levels of confidence, and by helping to reconfigure some of the key elements of the systems which relate to trafficking and vulnerability in their communities. We further reflect on the lessons the experience of ANIRBAN in Jashore and Cox's Bazar might have for survivor engagement and supporting survivor empowerment in other contexts.

1. Background and research methods:

1.1. A systemic approach to CTIP

For the last 5 years, Humanity Research Consultancy (HRC) and Winrock International's Asia CTIP project have been exploring the systemic nature of trafficking in persons. Noting that CTIP research and programming tends to consider individuals in isolation – both as individuals at risk of trafficking and individuals attempting to heal and reintegrate after trafficking – we have conducted several research projects that have situated people at risk of being trafficked and people who have survived trafficking in wider systems that tend to generate vulnerability and resistance to healing (Kasper et al., 2023; Kasper and Chiang, 2024, 2022, 2020).

---

[1] The decision to work with Jashore ANIRBAN was based on established rapport previously built through previous research conducted with USAID Asia CTIP on vulnerabilities to human trafficking, which focused on the Bangladesh-Malaysia labour migration corridor. The Cox's Bazar chapter of ANIRBAN was chosen based on advice from the ANIRBAN central committee president, who suggested working with them as they had developed a strong presence in the local community through their counter trafficking work.
2] Eric Kasper is an Humanity Research Consultancy (HRC) senior consultant based in Washington, DC. Md. Abdus Salam is HRC's Survivor Empowerment Officer. He is based in Bangladesh full time and also has lived experience with trafficking in persons.

A significant contribution of this empirical work is an evidence base about mechanisms that generate harm and how they can be targeted through interventions to break the vicious cycles of harm.

For example, in our previous report on the systemic nature of vulnerability to trafficking in persons in Bangladesh (Kasper and Chiang, 2024), we explored the issue of brokers and middle-men in trafficking pathways. Brokers play an important role across Bangladeshi society – as in many societies around the world – helping people (rich as well as poor) navigate bureaucracies and the intensive informal networks required to carry out basic tasks from finding housing to obtaining a passport to finding formal or informal work opportunities. Others have explained that brokers (especially low-level brokers known as dalals) are very difficult to regulate because there are so many of them and they operate in the informal sector (See, for example, Siddiqui and Abrar, 2019). Because of the large numbers of people attempting to migrate and the very limited number of opportunities to migrate formally, most migration requires the use of informal brokers (Mubde et al., 2021; Castles et al., 2014; Afsar, 2009). Without a dramatic change to the systems governing formal migration, it will not be easy to govern these informal brokers since there is a great demand for their services[3]. Attempts to simply outlaw informal brokers will not work, since informal brokers play an essential role in the system.

However, we were also able to document that the issue of brokers intersects with and amplifies other aspects of the system that also create vulnerabilities. For example, brokers are not only used for migration; they are necessary for navigating many aspects of life in Bangladesh for people of all socio-economic backgrounds. The ubiquity of informal brokers means it is difficult for either citizens or the government to imagine and construct other ways of operating. Additionally, we were able to articulate how, since migration brokers play an important role in the system, they have managed to attain significant power which enables them to both influence government's efforts to craft regulations and to influence efforts to prosecute traffickers.

In one case, one of the survivors we interviewed for the vulnerability report filed a legal case against a broker for trafficking. The case was in process for many years, and as is typical of cases brought against traffickers, the prosecutors were not able to provide enough evidence to get a conviction. In the last year, once the case was closed, the broker (who likely was guilty, but who was not found guilty in the tribunal) filed a case against the victim for harassment and filing a false case.

While victims often struggle with the herculean task of seeing a case through to the end, brokers often have enough resources to fight the case against them and punish the victim by filing a counter case. In this way, the role played by brokers in the system leads to trafficking vulnerability in several ways: by directly trafficking unwitting migrants, by indirectly resisting more stringent legal regulations, and by taking advantage of the limited state capacities to prosecute traffickers to resist punishment and to retaliate against victims who attempt to hold them accountable.

Another significant contribution of our recent work has been to highlight the leadership and agency of survivors themselves in driving system change. While there has been a welcome trend in CTIP guidance (a prominent example of which is USAID's revised Policy on Countering Trafficking in Persons published in 2021) to shift the language used to discuss people who have experienced trafficking and to emphasize the need for **"survivor empowerment"** and **"meaningful engagement"** of survivors, it is not clear that this has translated into substantially different approaches to survivors within CTIP practice.

The language has changed from speaking of "victims" to speaking of "survivors", which emphasizes that what happened to someone does not perpetually define them and that they have played an active role in their own movement towards healing. However, while survivor-centered language is more respectful, it still tends to lead to framing survivors as passive recipients of services and programming. The latest trend is a shift to speaking of **"people with lived experience."** This is a more substantial shift in language towards "people-centered" language, which has been an important shift with other historically marginalized groups (i.e. people with mental or physical disabilities, people of color, etc.). It further emphasizes the "experience" of trafficking, which must lead to a more profound recognition of the knowledge and skills that survivors possess as a result of what happened to them and their subsequent journeys.

The experience of trafficking, for all the harm it inflicts, does often result in survivors knowing much more about both the objective on-the-ground reality of how trafficking happens and the important subjective experiential knowledge of what it is like to go through trafficking and the healing process. This knowledge is incredibly valuable, and it is urgent that CTIP programs incorporate it into project design. A robust incorporation of survivors' knowledge and experiences can happen by working directly with survivors as co-equal creators, designers, and practitioners throughout the intervention.

1.2 Survivor leadership as an important driver of system change

In our previous research reports, we have generated several systemic pictures of the conditions that enable trafficking, what tends to generate vulnerability to trafficking, what tends to inhibit effective victim identification and support, and what tends to matter for successful reintegration after trafficking. In each of these reports, based on their respective research projects, we have identified and analyzed key mechanisms within systems that lead to repeated patterns and functions: within community social and cultural dynamics, within economies, within political systems, and within national/international policy. One of the key insights that has emerged over this series of research projects is that, while systems tend to resist change as they keep on recreating the existing patterns, new patterns can be generated through highly relational (and usually informal) efforts that can create new structures (i.e. relationships, institutions, etc.) and new dynamics (i.e. new narratives, new actions, etc.).

As we have shown that the "problems" associated with trafficking are rooted in the functioning of systems, and that systemic change tends to be created by relatively informal and highly relational efforts, it makes sense to deeply explore organizing practices.

Organizing is the intentional practice of forming and managing relationships in order to build power and strengthen agency (the capacity to act to make a difference). The relational power at the heart of organizing can result in and be the result of strengthened individuals who are connected in such a way that unlocks capacities for collective action. In this way, the act of organizing is the act of reconfiguring a system, since both relational structures and relational dynamics are the fundamental component parts of any social system.

1.3 Choice of ANIRBAN as research partner and research design

We first encountered ANIRBAN – a network of survivor-leaders with nine branches across Bangladesh – in the first of what would become four research projects on the systemic nature of trafficking in persons in Bangladesh and other countries of South and Southeast Asia. In that first project, on how survivors of trafficking experience the reintegration process and how they define successful reintegration outcomes, ANIRBAN members engaged as interviewees speaking to the perspectives of both survivors and services providers, as they often play both roles in their communities. In the third research project – on the systemic factors that contribute to generating vulnerability to trafficking for labor migrants – we were able to travel to Bangladesh (for the first time after the Covid-19 pandemic). We met a group of ANIRBAN survivor leaders in Jashore, and in our discussions, we caught a glimpse of the wide-ranging work they were doing in their communities, which appeared to be remarkably impactful. We saw evidence that their organizing efforts were making a difference to survivor outcomes. We wanted to get to know them better, to gather evidence about how their efforts were able to make such an impact, and to figure out how CTIP projects can work in partnership with bottom-up survivor leaders to change the systemic conditions that enable trafficking.

We designed our project to be fully participatory, with a co-designed research process, to create opportunities for co-learning, and to create opportunities for contributing to ANIRBAN's vision for survivor empowerment. We grounded our design in principles that resonate with those later articulated by the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery (GFEMS) in their guideline for including people with lived experience in CTIP research: 1) Minimize harm to participants, 2) Lead with trust, and 3) Reciprocity and commitment to mutual learning (Stewart et al., 2023, p. 7).

We set out to answer a set of research questions of interest to us around the nature of survivor leadership and the practices of community organizing. We also set out to build our own relationships with the local ANIRBAN branch and its leaders to identify opportunities for supporting them in their organizing work and on their journey of empowerment.

Our primary research question: what is the nature of Jashore ANIRBAN and its leaders' agency, as evidenced by their activities and leadership practices?

Additionally, we asked: how does Jashore ANIRBAN engage in organizing – how does it carry out its everyday activities, maintain its key relationships, and how does this relate to its journey of survivor empowerment?

In order to answer the research questions, we budgeted sufficient time and money to spend 4 to 6 weeks working directly with the survivor leaders in Bangladesh. One of the authors and HRC research staff (Salam) is also a Bangladesh national who has experienced trafficking. We further planned for the possibility that he could continue working closely with the ANIRBAN members and we could continue a series of facilitated reflection sessions through December 2023 in order to learn from any actions that happened over the course of the year.

To begin, we needed a deep understanding of the individual survivor leaders in ANIRBAN as well as the nature of their embeddedness in the social system. Since social changes such as empowerment correspond to reconfiguration of the social systems in question, strategies for social change can benefit from clear understandings of the key elements of those systems. Namely, we can get a picture of social systems by examining a) social structures, b) social dynamics, and c) social functions. Social structures comprise the main individuals, groups, organizations, and institutions as well as their network of relationships. Social dynamics include patterns around the things people do (including what they see as impossible to do); the formal rules and informal norms that guide behavior. Societal functions include higher-order issues such as the nature of the economy, key policies and how they are enforced, and the role played by government officials and state institutions.

In this way, our research plan involved building a genuine connection to ANIRBAN members interested in acting as research partners. Then we worked with the research team to develop a picture of the relevant systems. Finally, we participated in ANIRBAN activities during the weeks we spent with the research team and held a series of reflections as they considered their empowerment and social change aspirations in relation to what we were learning about the systems in need of change.

In order for the research team to connect deeply with the survivor-leader participants, we spent time daily with them, talking over all kinds of things: personal histories, values, interests, the nature of daily life. While Jashore ANIRBAN had interacted with many foreigners and outside organizations over the years, we were the first to spend extended time with them and the first to come without a pre-set agenda. It took some time to develop trust and for them to understand what we were even doing there.

As part of this initial relational work, we discussed our shared aim of supporting the empowerment and leadership capacities of the ANIRBAN members. We asked questions about how they understood their position within their community and society. We asked questions about their perceptions of their power and the sources of that power. Together we decided to carry out a participatory network mapping exercise; this helped us understand how ANIRBAN and its members were embedded in their society, and it helped ANIRBAN to have a visual representation (as a kind of affirmation) of their connections and capacities.

As we built trust with the research team of ANIRBAN members, two strategies emerged for our mutual learning: a) we would accompany members on their regular ANIRBAN activities and b) we would visit (a kind of informal interview) key connections highlighted in the network map.

At the very beginning and repeatedly throughout the project we had explicit discussions about the risks of working together on the project and of taking specific actions. As the project mainly involved us joining the ANIRBAN members in activities they were already planning to carry out, we did not expect an unusual level of risk for the participants.

However, part of the research involved working with the participants to imagine and plan for their future goals. In these cases, we made sure to discuss the risks and potential unintended consequences of possible actions as well as to be very clear with the participants that decisions about their future should be their own. In line with our participatory research approach, we set out to be clear about our own positionality as outside researchers[4] and our own interests as stakeholders in the research.

While the findings of this Participatory Action Research (PAR) reflect rich, authentic, and in-depth insights from the survivor group, it is important to acknowledge that the inherent purpose of this method is to amplify the voices of the community directly involved (Wakeford and Rodriguez, 2018). The perspectives gathered largely reflect the lived experiences and narratives of the survivor group we worked alongside. This method intentionally prioritizes the voices of those most affected by the issue at hand—in this case, survivors—rather than seeking to represent the perspectives of all stakeholders. This does not imply that counter-narratives from associated non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and donors lack validity, but they fall outside the intended purpose of this PAR, which centers the experiences of the survivor group. Future studies or complementary research may be needed to fully capture the range of perspectives, particularly from organizational stakeholders.

1.4 Research ethics and risk assessment

The ethics and risks of this research project were assessed according to a rigorous review process drawing on the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)'s Research Ethics Guidance (ESRC, 2023, 2021). Research team members from HRC and Winrock's Asia CTIP Office jointly produced a risk assessment for our research design and justified the ethics behind our methodological choices. The assessment was evaluated by a panel of independent peer researchers who offered critical feedback and guidance for mitigating the risks. The research was determined to be "medium risk."

As this research was designed to be highly relational, with many of the specific objectives and methods left open-ended at the start, a key issue would be navigating the risks and ethical challenges of building relationships with survivors and taking appropriate joint actions. We made sure to be transparent about our interests and our intentions as we established working relationships with the ANIRBAN members.

As participant observers in the ANIRBAN activities, we would learn something about what it is like to be part of ANIRBAN. In speaking to ANIRBAN's key contacts, we would also learn about the motivating interests of the other actors in the system, how some foundation of shared interests served as the foundation of ANIRBAN's relationship with them, and what kinds of action might be enabled or constrained by those connections.

---

[4] Even though Salam is also a trafficking survivor from Bangladesh, he was an outsider in the sense that he does not come from either Jashore or Cox's Bazar and he was not a member of ANIRBAN

In both ways, we would more deeply understand the nature of ANIRBAN's everyday practices; not only what is done but the logic of why in relation to the prevailing system conditions. As organizer-researchers ourselves, we offered our observations and suggestions as a contribution to the exchange. We did not want to simply take away knowledge from this project. We wanted to learn about how to support survivor leadership and empowerment by trying to do so in the relational context of this project.

To this end, one author (Salam) played a particularly important role. Because he has experience with trafficking and is from Bangladesh, he was able to help build a close relationship between the research team and the ANIRBAN members. He could understand and help the rest of us navigate the complex social situations including high levels of social hierarchies. He was also able to directly contribute to relational power-building efforts as an organizer in his own right.

By the end of our five weeks in Jashore, we hosted a two-day workshop with the research team to reflect on the time we spent together, jointly assess the agency and power of the group, how it might have changed or might be changed, and to support the team of ANIRBAN leaders as they considered aspirations and plans for their future organizing efforts. From our perspective, the key conversations that took place during the workshop helped us better understand the **nature of survivor leadership**, their **processes of organizing**, and the **relationship between organizing and empowerment**. That is, it helped us to answer our research questions. From the perspective of the research team, it was an opportunity to reflect on their own empowerment journeys and to articulate their own plans for further empowerment to achieve their own objectives. Two additional reflection discussions happened in subsequent months: at an all-ANIRBAN convention in Dhaka and another set of 3-day workshops in Jashore and Cox's Bazar.

2. The history and evolution of ANIRBAN

This section presents a history of ANIRBAN that synthesizes contributions from a number of our interviews with Winrock staff and ANIRBAN members who were involved in its founding as well as members who joined in recent years. ANIRBAN is a survivors' network that formed on 22 February 2011. Dipta and Sara, who were working with Winrock in Dhaka at the time, held many discussions with survivors of trafficking and worked primarily with survivors in women's shelters.

Dipta was the manager for protection and Sara was the Chief of Party for the Action for Combatting Trafficking in Persons (ACT) project[5], funded by USAID and implemented by Winrock. One of their concerns was how to engage more with survivors, especially in developing strategies for reintegration and for providing life skills training. A major issue encountering was that many female survivors of trafficking were ending up stuck in shelters for years because the laws at the time required an entity to take responsibility for their safety while cases were being handled. However, cases tended to go on indefinitely, and many survivors were complaining that they were stuck in shelters unable to get on with life while the perpetrators were free, pending prosecution. This was before Bangladesh even had a national counter trafficking law.

---

[5] The ACT Project, which was implemented by Winrock International from 2008 – 2016, aimed to strengthen Bangladesh's institutional capacity to combat human trafficking and unsafe migration. Its goals included enhancing government prosecution of trafficking crimes, preventing fraudulent migration practices, building community awareness, and improving protection and care for trafficking survivors.

Dipta and Sara arranged a three day convention with over 70 survivors from all over the country. A professional psychologist, a lawyer, and a facilitator helped to structure the discussions over the three days, and the survivors shared their challenges with reintegration, their struggles to realize their rights, and their suggestions for how NGOs and government could provide better support. During these three days, the survivors found it very emotionally powerful to connect with each other, to realize their shared experiences, and to feel that they could do more for themselves if they worked together. They decided to form a group, and they gave themselves the name "ANIRBAN," which means "the flame that never dies."

Sara recalled that at the end of the convention, many of the survivors decided to go on stage in front of an assembled group of NGO, government, and USAID representatives to say their names and introduce themselves as survivors of human trafficking. At the time, this was very unusual in Bangladesh, given the stigma of trafficking and the sense of isolation survivors tended to feel. To state publicly and to own their identity of "survivor" was an important act of empowerment and helped to begin making it possible for survivors to come forward and become advocates of their own interests.

2.1. Evolution of the institutional relationship between ANIRBAN and the Winrock CTIP projects

The ANIRBAN group which formed spontaneously during the ACT convention solidified over time somewhat informally within the ACT project context. When ACT was created, direct support to an organized survivor group had not been envisaged. But once ANIRBAN existed, Dipta and Sara found creative ways to support them through the ACT project activities. In particular, the project's concern on developing more effective reintegration support with input from survivors led to the creation of a "life skills training" module (Ashshash Project, n.d.; IOM UN Migration and Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), 2023). These life skills modules have been used ever since, and many survivors claim that the training has been one of the most important instances of support that helped them on their reintegration journeys. While life skills trainings of various types are quite common in reintegration support programs, this one appears to be uniquely successful because it was co-designed with actual survivors and avoided some of the common pitfalls that other programs face.

For example, sometimes trainings focus more heavily on job skills than survivors are ready for, while other times they can focus more heavily on mental health support than survivors feel they need (Kasper and Chiang, 2020, p. 33). Participants who went through this training explain its unique level of effectiveness as the training facilitators were attuned to the needs of the attendees. Indeed, training content had been developed by survivors to be sensitive to the situation of other survivors and balanced the need of both mental health and practical skills.

ANIRBAN grew out of a rather unique crucible of powerful, emotional connections between survivors and a sense of trust between them and the ACT staff. The energy of these informal relational connections enabled risk-taking, experimentation, and a rapid emergence of institutional arrangements between ANIRBAN and the ACT project. There were inevitably challenges, and it is insightful to consider the reflections from those early experiences.

Dipta was concerned from the beginning that, while participating in the ANIRBAN group could be powerful and beneficial for survivors, taking public action as a survivor leader can be demanding. Survivors still struggling to get on their feet after their trafficking experiences might not be best placed to volunteer their time and energy to ANIRBAN activities. Like any collective action (especially those for the purpose of self-help), there is a tension between the value that members want from the group and the resources they are able to put into the group. Dipta was concerned that if the group had needs beyond their collective resources, it could collapse and leave them worse off for having failed. Further, if the ANIRBAN group was to provide counter trafficking or reintegration services in collaboration with the ACT project, Dipta felt that doing so as a volunteer while not yet having one's own sustainable livelihood could lead to exploitation. The ACT staff and the ANIRBAN members had discussions during those days, rooted in their strong relationships built on trust, and came up with several experiments to create livelihood support for ANIRBAN members to go along with ANIRBAN's collective activities.

Dipta was also worried that the fledgling ANIRBAN group should not be too dependent on the ACT project to sustain itself, since the ACT project would inevitably end. One way this was mitigated was to subcontract local NGOs to be responsible for supporting ANIRBAN. The thinking was that, even though the funding from Winrock to those NGOs would also end when the project ended, at least ANIRBAN would have developed relationships with NGOs that are in Bangladesh and that would continue to exist and operate after the project ends. However, Dipta reflected that once the ACT project came to a close, the subcontracted NGOs naturally ceased their programmatic support to ANIRBAN, and ANIRBAN members experienced this as a significant disruption – even though it was a challenge that was foreseen and planned for. Despite that, it is worth mentioning that even without external support, the organization did not dissolve.

Winrock's role in supporting ANIRBAN at its inception along with the local support organizations' connection to ANIRBAN groups led the subsequent USAID-funded project, Bangladesh Counter Trafficking in Persons (BC/TIP)[6] to include working with ANIRBAN as part of the project from the beginning in 2015. Whereas ANIRBAN's formation came as a surprise once ACT had already started, institutional arrangements between ANIRBAN and the BC/TIP project were put in place at the beginning of the second project. What had emerged informally through trial and error, rooted in the relationships between the key individuals, became more formal during the BC/TIP project as obligations to ANIRBAN and contributions from ANIRBAN were articulated through the project's performance indicators and its log frame[7].

A third Winrock project was funded and initiated in 2021, Fight Slavery and Trafficking-in-Persons (FSTIP)[8]. This third project again built on the connection between Winrock, its local partner NGOs, and ANIRBAN. Again, Winrock was able to make direct partnership and collaboration with a survivors' network a key aspect of its work. To be clear, both BC/TIP and FSTIP projects carried out a range of counter trafficking activities unrelated to ANIRBAN – for example, working with and training police, justice professionals, and members of counter trafficking committees (CTCs) across the country; building networks

[6] The Bangladesh Counter Trafficking-in-Persons Program operated from 2014 – 2021 and focused on addressing human trafficking in 20 high-risk districts by mobilizing and coordinating efforts among local and national governments, NGOs, and community leaders. Its initiatives include empowering survivors, enhancing prosecution processes, and fostering societal engagement to combat trafficking at all levels.

[7] Log frame, or "logical framework," documents are common devices used in projects to articulate desired outcomes and the mechanisms by which project activities will attempt to achieve the desired outcomes. Log frames provide justifications for project actions and lead logically to indicators that can assess progress towards the desired outcomes. This nearly ubiquitous approach to planning and accountability for NGO-led, donor-funded projects has enabled relatively standard processes for evaluation, but it has been critiqued for incentivizing narrow, "countable," and clearly foreseeable metrics for success. When goals are more ambiguous and pathways to achieving them more dependent on informal, relational, and creative work, log frames may miss what "matters" by focusing on what "counts." For example, "empowerment" is much more difficult to precisely imagine ahead of time or measure in a simple metric than something like "number of health clinics accessible within a neighborhood."

[8] USAID's Fight Slavery and Trafficking-in-Persons (FSTIP) activity aims to reduce vulnerability to human trafficking, child marriage, and related exploitation in 25 districts of Bangladesh. Through collaboration with governments, service providers, civil society, and other partners, FSTIP employs a "4Ps" approach: Prosecution, Prevention, Protection, and Partnership.

of service providers; and convening discussions of policy such as the National Plan of Action on counter trafficking. Nevertheless, considering some of the performance indicators put in place for the BC/TIP and FSTIP projects can help demonstrate the ways interdependence between ANIRBAN and the projects came to be formalized and institutionalized.

During the BC/TIP project, core performance indicators for the project included a number of indicators related work carried out by ANIRBAN, including the number of counter trafficking actions taken (1.1), number of people reached through a TIP awareness media campaign (1.7), number of survivors receiving services (2.2) (Winrock International, 2018, app. A). In the FSTIP project, core performance indicators go further to capture the contributions of work carried out by ANIRBAN, especially around victim identification and referrals[9]. So, for example, when ANIRBAN members carried out a community meeting under the BC/TIP project, this would count as a counter trafficking action taken. It might increase the number of people reached by the TIP awareness campaign. And it might lead, indirectly, to new survivors being identified and receiving services. ANIRBAN would have been supported in carrying out the activity in the form of cost reimbursements for travel and food. From our understanding, the costs for a similar action carried out under the FSTIP project is not directly covered, yet any new victims of trafficking that ANIRBAN members identified and referred for services count towards two new FSTIP measures of success.

Donor-funded projects often have many restrictions on how project funds can be used (See Chua and Tauson, 2022 for a comprehensive discussion of structural challenges related to donor-funded, NGO-implemented projects). For transparency and accountability, it is not generally easy to provide payments to groups that are not formally registered NGOs with particular legal clearance for receiving foreign funds. It is generally not allowed to establish reserve funds or seed funds for project participants. There are bureaucratic procedures for approving costs and documentary requirements for reimbursing expenses. Nevertheless, the ACT and BC/TIP projects managed to provide funding support to ANIRBAN branches in carrying out the activities that contributed to project metrics of success – mainly through reimbursement for travel expenses and the cost of food, which is socially and culturally required for hosting any gathering. But this practice of direct reimbursing expenses to ANIRBAN members for costs associated with their project activities ceased under the FSTIP project.

The prevailing question is, why has it been so challenging to have ANIRBAN reach independence and sustainability? We suggest that there is a general systemic tendency at work here, which any survivor network working with NGO partner support would face. In this way, we could see the removal of cost reimbursements for ANIRBAN activities under FSTIP which was meant as a "push" to nudge ANIRBAN to find its own resources outside of the project. However, the project still relies on the identification and referrals of victims from those activities, leaving an incentive to resist ANIRBAN truly widening its base of support, which would lead to sharing referrals (and credit) amongst a wider group of stakeholders. For both parties, it appears to be easier to continue with the established symbiotic relationship within Winrock projects.

---

[9] As of December 2021, the following FSTIP Core Performance Indicators related to work carried out, at least in part, by ANIRBAN members:
Indicator 1.3.1: Number of TIP survivors receiving services
Indicator 3.3.1: Number of TIP victims referred for protection services
Indicator 3.4.1: Number of ANIRBAN survivor chapters that successfully raise funds for CTIP activities outside of FSTIP
Indicator 3.4.2: Percent of ANIRBAN survivor chapters that report being meaningfully engaged in District level CTIP Committees and Child Marriage Prevention Committees
(Winrock International, 2022, app. D)

Our point is not to criticize the arrangements of the FSTIP project, but to point out that over the three iterations of the projects, the construction of the relationship between ANIRBAN and the Winrock office evolved from one of informal encounter and exploration to one of partnership and finally to one of formal interdependence. Even as the current project articulates the notion that ANIRBAN is being supported to achieve sustainability (i.e. not relying on the continuation of a project for support), Winrock has increasingly come to rely on ANIRBAN's independent activities to achieve success according to performance indicators. This makes sense as both parties have had incentives to formalize and stabilize their interconnections over time, but they have had few incentives to work towards any final separation.

Here we wish to draw on the particular experiences of ANIRBAN to make observations that are likely common for any survivor group working with any NGO partners. Firstly, we can see the trend over time from informal arrangements to formal arrangements, from emergent creative experiments based on deep relationships to established practices based on precedent or contract, and from relatively separate identities and actions to relatively interdependent ones. Secondly, while we can observe advantages and disadvantages related to the evolution of the arrangements over time, we suspect that this evolution has been driven as much by systemic forces as by any actors' intentional or strategic decisions. The evidence is that Dipta and Sara foresaw many challenges from the beginning and took various actions to address them or avoid them, and yet the challenges were not prevented. In the following exploration of key experiments in institutional arrangements, we consider what specific as well as general forces were likely at work. Thirdly, recognizing that similar systemic forces would likely contribute to shaping the development of any survivor network working with NGO support, we suggest that survivor leaders and those wishing to support them prioritize awareness of those systemic factors and focus on practices (namely maintaining informal and congenial relationships of trust) that proactively emphasize power-sharing and survivor agency.

2.2. Experiments in supporting ANIRBAN members with organizational and livelihood needs

As Dipta explained, growing the institutional capacities of ANIRBAN would require significant time and nurturing effective organizational practices. A fundamental tension arose around the voluntary nature of ANIRBAN. In Dipta's mind, in order to meaningfully be able to engage in voluntary ANIRBAN activities, a member would need to have reached a level of successful reintegration where they were financially stable. This would mean having ANIRBAN continue as a relatively small group of financially stable volunteers, or else it would require participation in ANIRBAN activities to include some form of livelihood support from the project. Over the first few years of ANIRBAN's existence, most of the original 70 plus members dropped out – for a number of reasons, but often because they needed to devote their time to earning their own livelihoods. At the same time, new survivors were invited to join ANIRBAN as members, since membership in ANIRBAN built a meaningful sense of solidarity amongst the group. Several of the original members were able to continue leadership in ANIRBAN because they found jobs with NGOs doing related social work with survivors.

To avoid asking recently returned survivors living in poverty to provide voluntary services through ANIRBAN, which were now also supporting BC/TIP and the project partners, Dipta experimented with arrangements to support ANIRBAN in running shared enterprises through which they might earn money (individually) and grow funds (jointly) for their activities.

In the first instance, about 25 individual ANIRBAN members pooled some money and set up a shop in Dhaka, called Ovibashi Enterprise, in 2015 when there were only four ANIRBAN branches (Dhaka, Rajshahi, Jashore, and Cox's Bazar, which can be seen in the map in Figure 1). Individual members would bring goods from their respective areas to sell at the ANIRBAN shop in Dhaka. For example, members from Rajshahi brought mango and lychee products and members from Cox's Bazar brought mustard oil and other food products. This reportedly worked well for a time. However, some time over the next year or so, several individual members faced financial hardship, and they began asking to withdraw their investments from the shared enterprise. This led to the business failing, and it created tensions between the participating members.

In 2018, after ANIRBAN branches were established in some additional cities (again, indicated in Figure 1), Dipta led another livelihood experiment that involved providing ANIRBAN branches with a pot of seed funding to set up small enterprises. BC/TIP project funds were not allowed to be used for seed funding. Instead, Caram Asia, an organization founded by a Bangladeshi migrant in Malaysia, provided the funds. ANIRBAN branches, including those in Cox's Bazar and Jashore, were provided with around $500, (45,000 BDT), which they used to set up clothing and tailoring stalls. Eventually these efforts also failed.

Dipta and several ANIRBAN members from Dhaka, Cox's Bazar, and Jashore separately provided reflections on this experience. Their view was that $500 was a relatively small amount of money, so the profit that resulted from the businesses was also relatively small compared to the expenses of running ANIRBAN activities. Compared to the effort involved, those who participated in the experiment felt there was not enough money for the individual members to support themselves and the ANIRBAN activities. Eventually this created tensions within the group. In Jashore, this reportedly resulted in some members simply taking the funds and disappearing.

In another experiment, a US-based survivor organization established a single pot of money for all ANIRBAN members to draw on in times of particular hardship; for example a health emergency. Again, collective management of the shared resource proved impossible for the struggling organization, and tensions arose over who would get access to the fund at which times and how members who had accessed the fund would be required to eventually pay back what they had taken.

In a fourth incident, Dipta explained that an international organization visited the ANIRBAN branches and convinced members to take out loans to set up businesses. The members who got involved reportedly did not understand the financial requirements, and they ended up unable to make their loan repayments, and the ventures collapsed.

According to the ANIRBAN members of the research team, the failures of their enterprise efforts were an unfortunate result of not having established strong enough trust amongst

members, members not having sufficient support in running their enterprises, and the structural problem of struggling to earn an individual livelihood while providing voluntary work to ANIRBAN's activities.

Dipta's reflections echoed their points. She looked back on these experiments with a sense of disappointment that all the good-faith efforts to resolve the fundamental challenge of livelihood and sustainability seemed to yield so little success. In her mind, the key issue was that collective action is difficult and depends on deep relationships of trust. She felt that it is not possible for a project officer in Dhaka to maintain the required level of intensity in interacting with all the ANIRBAN members to directly oversee their collective action. Even when there is strong trust, one often isn't able to see the problems arising until it is too late. She had hoped that shifting the intense and relational work of day-to-day support to local NGO partners would help, but, again, there was no way to ensure those relationships functioned intensely enough to ensure success. Partly this is because it is not possible to make intense relational work of an inherently informal and open-ended nature part of an NGO contract.

She finally reflected that, after all her experiences, perhaps the best thing would be to employ a community organizer whose sole job would be to carry out that deep relational work to support the ANIRBAN members in their day-to-day interactions, to build solidarity and capacities for collective action within the group without having any other competing contractual obligations or incentives. The types of accountability for such a position – namely assessments of trust, sense of solidarity, and expressions of capacities to act collectively – could be put into a contract with a community organizer, but they would be nearly impossible (and quite unusual) for contractual arrangements with NGOs.

Based on our own work experiences and research, this approach seems quite promising, though we cannot say for sure that it would solve all the problems. In our previous research projects, we have articulated the idea that most examples of sustainable systemic change we have seen have involved highly relational and informal efforts. In this report, as we develop the picture of survivor leadership, it also appears to be rooted in informal and highly relational activities. If effective survivor leaders display effective relational organizing, having an effective organizer support them would be a logically consistent strategy. Further, if that paid organizer was also a survivor, this would seem to be even more likely to succeed, since that organizer would share many similar experiences with the survivors receiving the support. **We suggest that experimenting with employing an organizer to support developing survivor leadership would be a promising strategy for NGOs and counter trafficking programs to consider in the future.**

Each of the experimental efforts discussed in this section arose because Dipta and the ANIRBAN members took opportunities to go above and beyond the contractual requirements of the project; to take risks in search of better arrangements that might address some of the structural challenges involved in supporting survivor-led organizations that they had foreseen from the beginning. While none of them worked perfectly, many of the participants were able to earn money for a while to support themselves as they made voluntary contributions to ANIRBAN activities. The fact that they did not endure suggests that overcoming those structural challenges is quite difficult. However, there is not enough evidence from these experiments to conclude that those challenges are impossible to overcome.

These experiences suggest that successful collective management of resources – for the organization or for individual livelihoods – would require flexible, relationally intensive arrangements rooted in strong trust and effective communication, dispute resolution, and decision-making processes. Perhaps NGO-led projects with formalized contractual arrangements are not best placed to nurture these capacities, but these experiences also suggest that experimentation and valuable risk-taking can happen if the individuals involved are willing to prioritize informal processes and relational flexibility.

2.3. Concluding points on the history and evolution of ANIRBAN

The ACT and BC/TIP projects led to the establishment of eight ANIRBAN branches in locations across the country and the development of a standard set of ANIRBAN activities, which we explore in the next sections. Through today, with the FSTIP project ongoing, the organization has grown to 10 branches with over 200 members. Even though it has been a consistent goal of the Winrock projects from the beginning to support the ANIRBAN survivors' network in reaching some kind of sustainability outside of any project context, this has not happened. We also explore this in the next sections, especially from the perspective of the Jashore ANIRBAN members. Reflections on the various models of sustainability for survivor-owned groups and the challenges achieving them can be found in the companion report – a practitioners guide to supporting survivor leadership and survivor-owned groups – by our colleagues (Chua et al., 2024)[10].

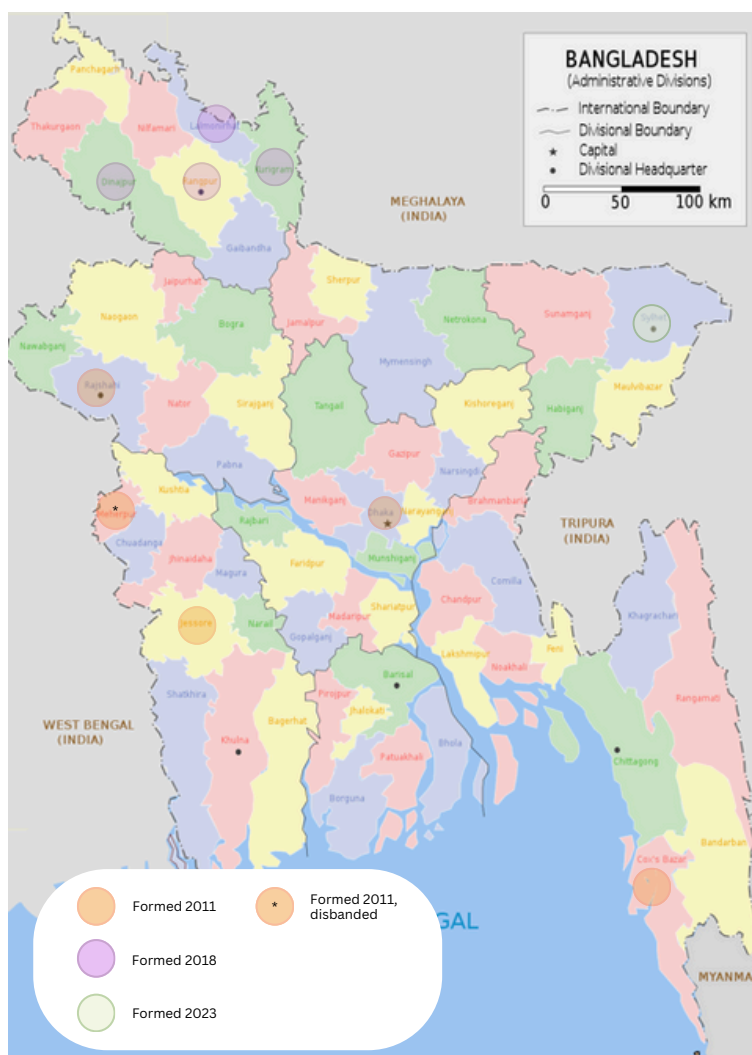*Figure 1. ANIRBAN branches over time (using map from Wikipedia, 2024)*

As the project context changed from ACT to BC/TIP and then to FSTIP, Winrock staff had turned over and much of the ANIRBAN membership had also changed. By the start of the FSTIP project, the working arrangement came to be seen by the different parties as somewhat established. What started as a mostly informal relationship between the new ANIRBAN group and the already-in-progress ACT project became progressively more formalized across the next two projects. The kinds of experiments based on particularly strong personal relationships that were possible in the earlier years became less possible once interdependence had become formalized – with ANIRBAN growing accustomed and reliant on project support and Winrock coming to rely on ANIRBAN activities to achieve success on project metrics. Again, this appears to be something driven by the prevailing system of donor-funded NGO-implemented counter trafficking programs (Chua and Tauson, 2022).

To be clear, the institutional arrangements that have evolved appear to be mutually beneficial for all parties. However, as the arrangements became increasingly formalized and fixed, there appear to be fewer opportunities to take risks that might lead to greater sustainability for ANIRBAN but which also might disrupt what works well enough now. This is especially true since the informal and particular relationships which existed early on have taken on a more formal contractual nature, since, in our assessment, informality and deep relational connections appear to be necessary for achieving systemic change.

In the next sections, we focus on the structural relationships that Jashore and Cox's Bazar ANIRBAN have developed through this historical evolution and their current practices. Through this, we develop a picture of their survivor leadership – what it looks like in the context of their particular organization as well as what it tells us about the nature of survivor leadership in general.

3. ANIRBAN and the nature of survivor leadership

We opted to work with the Jashore ANIRBAN branch because of the particular individuals we encountered in our previous work and the opportunities that arose to collaborate based on those individual connections. We encountered key individual leaders from Dhaka, Cox's Bazar, and in Jashore. Spending time with them over the project helped us to see what they do as individuals, as a group embedded in their community, and collectively through their organizational practices. The following sections explore those three areas.

3.1. ANIRBAN and individual survivor leaders

Individual leadership is rooted in one's personal perspective on one's experiences. Among those who have survived the ordeal of trafficking, many people develop a strong desire to address the problems that generate vulnerability and to prevent it from happening to others. Unfortunately, there continues to be a very large number of people who experience trafficking; most of them are not subsequently able to devote significant portions of their lives intentionally working in public to counter trafficking. However, there are many survivors who do go on to devote their time and energy to leading, honing their skills and putting themselves into positions from which to make a difference. It is not our goal here to explain why some people become leaders after trafficking, but to highlight some of the individual-level attributes common to survivor leaders that we observed.

The experience of trafficking is traumatizing, and upon return from trafficking, survivors' first priority is to recover and heal. Holistic healing is often impossible without strong support – from friends and family or from organized psychosocial services. Our earlier report on survivors' perspectives on successful reintegration (Kasper and Chiang, 2020) details how the process of healing and rebuilding one's life is a complex process in which multiple challenges intersect and often spiral. However, because of the systemic interlinkages of issues, the positive benefits of any resources can also lead to positively reinforcing feedback to overcome the multiple challenges.

In the case of ANIRBAN, many survivor leaders we talked to from Dhaka, Cox's Bazar, and Jashore explained that the life skills training module that ANIRBAN co-developed with Dipta and ACT was a powerful turning point on their journeys of both reintegration and leadership.

Nahid, a leading member of the Jashore ANIRBAN branch, told us that when he first returned from being trafficked in Malaysia, he stayed in Dhaka for six months before returning to his family in Jashore. He described a very dark period of grappling with his trauma from trafficking, too ashamed to face his family after failing to earn a livelihood through migration. Eventually he realized that, even though he had escaped the trafficking situation, he was still struggling with its effects. He realized that remaining alone in Dhaka would not lead to overcoming those effects of trauma; his family still needed him, and he needed his family as well. Once he encountered ANIRBAN and the organization offered the life skills training, this helped him process everything that had happened to him. He was able to understand that he wasn't alone; that many others had gone through, were going through, and would go through the same struggle. The life skills training helped him address both his mental health needs and his livelihood needs. The desperate need to find a livelihood is often what drives people to undertake risky migration and returning to the same desperate conditions can lead to a sense of hopelessness, since it can seem that the only option is to try to migrate again and risk facing the trauma of trafficking again.

By meeting the returned survivors where they are, finding the right balance of psychosocial support and livelihood support, the life skills training has helped many survivors to simultaneously heal from what happened to them and find a better way to earn a living that avoids remigrating. In the case of Nahid, it also showed him a way to channel his feelings into becoming a leader. ANIRBAN not only offered him support, it offered him an opportunity to be part of something bigger than himself through which he could support others experiencing what he had gone through.

Every ANIRBAN member we spoke to across the three branches who had been through the life skills training described it as transformative. It helped them understand what had happened to them, to come to terms with the pain and injustice, to understand their experiences as part of a bigger problem rather than something that happened only to them as an individual. They described how valuable the livelihood training aspect was in helping them get skills with which to earn an independent livelihood without re-migrating. It also gave them the space to think about their strengths and what they could do to actively rebuild their own lives, with help from referrals to services. It gave them a space to think about what they wanted to do with their lives, giving them a sense of agency.

They also shared how the life skills training and interactions with ANIRBAN inspired them to explore opportunities to participate in counter-trafficking efforts, and encouraged them to become survivor leaders.

Like Nahid, Samad also went through a very dark period after returning from trafficking in Malaysia. He spent his first three months living on the streets of Dhaka, not believing he was worthy of returning to his family and not knowing how to rebuild his life. He encountered the ACT program and was able to access support services. He was part of the original group that decided to form ANIRBAN at the ACT convention, and he helped develop the life skills training. Along with the more than 70 founding members that were present during that powerful founding moment, he was driven to use his hard-earned wisdom to help others. He became the President of the Dhaka ANIRBAN branch and came to take on central leadership supporting all the other branches. Over time, the majority of the founding members left ANIRBAN – either successfully moving on with their lives or finding they no longer had the time to spend on organizing work while struggling with their own livelihoods. Samad was fortunate to find employment at an NGO working in counter trafficking, which allowed him to earn his livelihood through counter trafficking work. This also enabled him to continue his volunteer work with ANIRBAN, since his employment aligned with his social activism and kept him in the relevant networks.

Story 1. Shila story of becoming a leader

Shila recently became a leading member of a branch of ANIRBAN, after the previous president (and member of this project's research team) migrated to Malaysia. She has shown strength and determination in the face of extreme adversity. Trafficked to India and sold into a brothel, she endured three brutal months before returning to Bangladesh, where she was met with alienation from her community and family.

At 15, Shila was subject to a child marriage and quickly became a mother. When her husband fell ill, she was compelled to seek refuge and assistance at her father's house. However, due to her family's poverty and inability to support her, she was turned away, prompting her to seek employment. She had few skills or education, but a neighbor's suggestion to go to India for work seemed to offer a glimmer of hope. Unaware of the legalities of migration, Shila crossed the border by boat, only to find herself in a brothel. After repeated abuse, she resolved to escape and return to her son in Bangladesh strengthened.

With no knowledge of NGOs that could assist her, Shila relied on the support of a stranger, who helped her sell her mother's gold earrings and pay for passage back across the border. She faced rejection from her family and community, and she struggled greatly. It was her encounter with a grassroots organization that marked the beginning of a transformation. Recognized as a trafficking survivor, she was referred for life skills training, which helped her understand what had happened to her as trafficking and helped her process her experiences. It also motivated her to join ANIRBAN in 2018.

Shila has contributed to counter trafficking work and been heavily involved in ANIRBAN's activities over the years – especially the work of protecting girls from child marriage. She has grown stronger and more confident in her personal abilities as well as in leadership, and she was recently elected to the ANIRBAN branch's leadership committee.

Story 2.[11] MD's story of becoming a leader[12]

My name is MD. My hometown is in Teknaf, Cox's Bazar [Bangladesh]. I came [back to Bangladesh] through the Red Crescent Society from Sri Lanka. One of my friends from the neighboring locality proposed to me to go to Malaysia. I was a student in grade 8 back then. I got on a [fishing] trawler involuntarily. They forced me to get on it. After 8-9 days, we mistakenly entered the Malaysian border. They beat me a lot. They tortured me in such a way that I can't even say properly. They sent me to the border of Thailand. We somehow escaped. We couldn't eat anything for 24 days. Then the Sri Lankan Navy rescued us and took us to Sri Lanka. They provided the needed treatment for us. After three months and 19 days, we came back to Bangladesh with the help of the Red Crescent Society.

I didn't stay in any shelter home. I was in a life skill training program. After coming back to Bangladesh, I returned to my home. I cannot remember much, but my rehabilitation started maybe in 2012. I took training from Winrock's project. I learned to drive. Now I am a driver.

When a victim comes back to Bangladesh, it's usual to have a lot of loans over his head. Depression is common in such moments. According to my perspective, giving a victim his old life back is a successful rehabilitation. Alhamdulillah, at this moment I think I am successful. I have also got married. I have children as well. I bought a car by taking loans. The loan is almost paid. I have also built a house. I am leading a happy life now. I am the president of [Cox's Bazar] ANIRBAN [organization]. I have been working since 2013 with ANIRBAN. I know, it's tough to give everyone a life that I am leading, but at least I can help. From 2013, we have provided support to 400-500 victims.

When I was a victim, I couldn't even speak properly. They took me to a union council after joining ANIRBAN. The main purpose was to let others know about the pain I suffered from. When I was sharing my experience, I started crying. I wasn't even able to speak. At that time, I had so much problem talking. In 2012, when a new law regarding human trafficking was in the making, we were present there.

Even now I see bad dreams about those days. How terrifying those days were and how happy I am now. It took me over a year's time to be rehabilitated. When I share these experiences, I feel both happy and sad. The main obstacle to this reintegration process is that the male victims face the financial problem, and female victims face social problems. Society doesn't accept female victims of trafficking. In Cox's Bazar, most people think that the female victims are harmful to the other girls in society. To make them acceptable we have to do counselling with members and many leaders in the society.

After taking the life skill training, I could understand what the right decision for me is and what's wrong. When I went back home, my family helped me a lot. When I came back here, both my mental and physical health was not okay. My elder brother who was studying at Chittagong University used to motivate me to forget all these [problems]. He took me to Chittagong. I stayed there for a month. I have been working since 2012. I have worked on so many projects.

But to be honest, 80% of work is done by NGOs. The government has no concern about us. There is no committee in the union council [13]. The meetings are only held when we go there physically. It's supposed to be their responsibility, but they are not doing anything.

Shila's story (Story 1) shows that it is not only men who can be effective survivor leaders. However, women who become leaders have to overcome even more challenges than men. Shila endured multiple forms of exploitation, stemming from her vulnerabilities as a woman. In her childhood home, poverty along with gender norms meant she was perceived as a burden. Getting her married – which at her age was a form of trafficking in persons – was seen as a way to help the family survive. Facing desperate circumstances, she had to break with accepted norms for a woman to pursue paid work, for which there were few actual opportunities, leading her to be trafficked. Encountering ANIRBAN, accessing support services, and becoming a part of the group ultimately gave her a way to forge a new life for herself. She has demonstrated incredible endurance and tenacity on her journey, growing her own individual skills and capacities as she became interconnected with the Jashore ANIRBAN group – offering support to others even as she continued to struggle herself. It would not be reasonable to expect anyone to overcome so many obstacles and to still have the greatness of spirit to engage in public service, or to demand that others who have experienced the same hardships take on the mantle of survivor leadership. However, people like Shila exist, and they have their reasons for taking on leadership. They must be understood and appreciated for the value they bring, not only to their communities, but to the larger work of counter trafficking. They must not be taken for granted, as there are likely limits to how much of one's life they can devote to such service.

Another survivor leader's story, relayed by Dipta, is instructive. Afsana was one of the original founding members of ANIRBAN. She had been in a shelter home, and in the early years, she was extremely vocal about the need to change how female survivors of trafficking were treated during reintegration. As noted above, women who were able to access services after trafficking were often kept in shelter homes indefinitely, with NGOs taking direct responsibility for their safety while pursuing justice through the courts. Many women experienced these shelters as a kind of patronizing punishment, keeping them locked up while the traffickers remained at large. Afsana spoke at many events, telling her story as a survivor of trafficking to raise awareness and advocate for change. However, a few years later, she found a husband and decided to withdraw from public life. She felt that, at least for her, it was not possible to move on with her life while still identifying publicly as a survivor of trafficking. For her, she felt that women survivors in Bangladeshi society were still judged too harshly and faced too much stigma to simultaneously hold identities as survivor leaders and also normal people.

From each of the examples, we can see the importance of both accessing psychosocial support services (through something like ANIRBAN's life skills training) and being part of a group like ANIRBAN for nurturing survivor leadership. Finding both healing and an opportunity to direct their energies into something constructive has helped many survivors become leaders through ANIRBAN groups. However, we can also see that, to continue in leadership roles, survivors eventually need to balance their own sustainable livelihoods with the work of public service.

MD's case (Story 2) also shows the challenges for survivor leaders over time. He was one of the early members of ANIRBAN and spent over 10 years working as a survivor leader in Cox's Bazar. He describes in his own words how the support and sense of belonging through ANIRBAN helped him heal and become a leader. He explains how difficult it was to speak up in the early days, but that over the years, he grew new skills for taking public action.

He grew confidence to speak in public – noting how his presence at CTC meetings could help ensure the authorities were held accountable for carrying out their duties – and he contributed to many counter trafficking projects. However, he eventually felt that he could not manage with the level of income he was able to maintain while devoting time to voluntary service work through ANIRBAN. Even knowing as much as he did about the risks of migrating – and having as many resources as anyone in similar circumstances for migrating safely – he still ended up in a situation of exploitation (possibly trafficking) once he decided to migrate again to Malaysia.

Not everyone who joined ANIRBAN after the life skills training became strong leaders. But those who are driven to become leaders, who find that they have enough personal resources to be able to devote time to this work, have a chance to grow as leaders. And there is something in the way ANIRBAN operates that supports their individual leadership growth. It doesn't appear that ANIRBAN has a particular "leadership training" practice or formal programs for developing survivor leaders. But members learn from each other, start to see opportunities to do more, to grow things, to take on more responsibilities. Through the connections with the group, mutual encouragement, and informal creative exchanges, people make their own way into leadership.

3.2. Jashore ANIRBAN's network and its organizing work

Organizing is the intentional building of power through forging relationships and nurturing relational practices to enable strengthened agency and effective collective action (Kasper, 2016, pp. 70–83; Porter Magee, 2023). Grassroots organizations all over the world practice organizing in some forms, with organizing practices ranging from very informal to very disciplined and methodical. Sometimes groups (such as the National Slum Dwellers Federation in India (Kasper, 2016, pp. 76–81)) formalize their practices and develop organizer training modules for new members. Organizing to build relational power tends to function at two levels: the relational structures and dynamics among members and the relational structures and dynamics of the connections between the group and other important stakeholders. In this research, we learned from the ANIRBAN members how they practiced organizing. In this section we explore Jashore ANIRBAN's organizing network for insights into the group-level nature of survivor leadership.

In the network map in Figure 2, we can see the many connections that the Jashore branch of ANIRBAN maintains to people, organizations, and institutions from both government and civil society. These connections represent ANIRBAN's embeddedness in society; they can influence and are influenced by these various stakeholders. These connections represent both ANIRBAN's power (since it acts through these connections to make a difference) as well as the constraints on its power (since its actions are limited by the strength and nature of those relationships as well as the relative power of the other actors who may have interests that conflict with ANIRBAN's).

These connections did not just happen; they are the result of Jashore ANIRBAN's intentional organizing work. Over the course of their existence, they have forged links to others with power and resources related to trafficking in persons. ANIRBAN is not simply a group of individual leaders; it is an organization with member-leaders, capable of leading at the level of the organization, which is more than the sum of its parts. The members we worked with explained the purpose behind building and maintaining each relationship, and we visited many of them together to speak with the connections about the importance of those relationships as well.

Figure 2. Jashore ANIRBAN network map
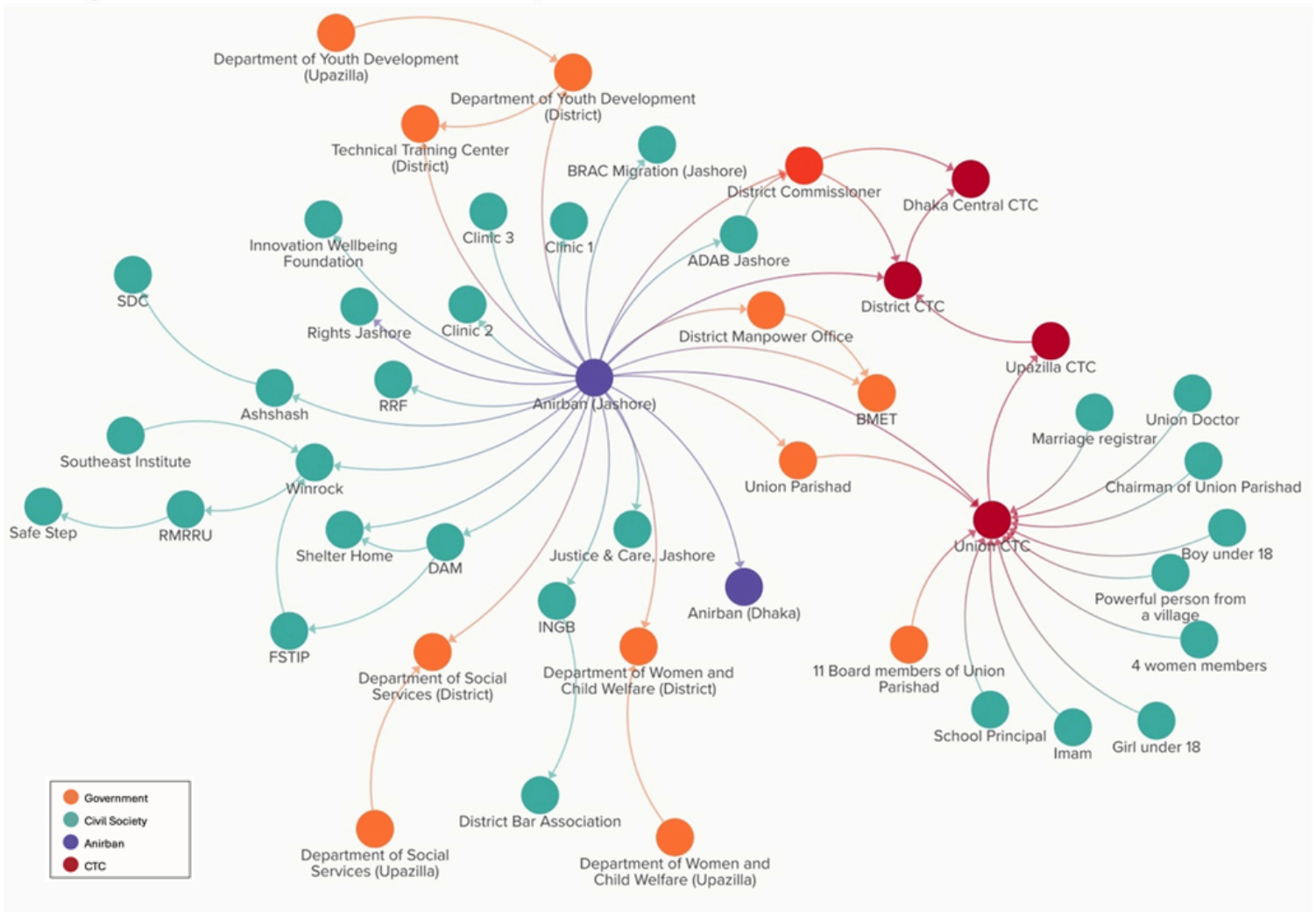
The members have a sense of society as a system, which puts people in their communities at risk – through poverty, inequality, lack of education and opportunities – of being exploited and abused, including but not only through trafficking. Traffickers and bad faith brokers operate as part of that system (our previous research report elaborates the structure and functioning of the system in greater detail (Kasper and Chiang, 2024)), and that system tends to inhibit justice and healing for survivors during reintegration. To change that system, ANIRBAN has intentionally developed their own networks of support, to create new systemic functions that help protect people and support their reintegration. That network of supportive connections enables new kinds of dynamics; it constitutes a reshaping of the system, and as such it constitutes successful social change.

Shortly after ANIRBAN was formed in 2011, branches were set up in several cities (see map in Figure 1), including Jashore. The Jashore branch maintains an institutional connection to the central Dhaka branch, though it also communicates regularly to the other branches. As detailed above, ANIRBAN formed rather spontaneously and informally around the relationships and activities of Winrock's ACT project. Eventually, the ANIRBAN branches were formally connected to local NGO implementing partners so that institutional support would be held within relationships likely to outlast any particular project's life cycle. For Jashore ANIRBAN, that partner is Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) [14].

---

[14] The Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) has been actively combating human trafficking and supporting survivors since 1997 through prevention, protection, rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration programs. DAM provides comprehensive services via initiatives like shelter homes (e.g., the Thikana Shelter) offering safe housing, counseling, healthcare, education, and vocational training.

That connection to DAM and Winrock (including FSTIP, which is the current iteration of what had been ACT) constitutes an institutional foundation for Jashore ANIRBAN through which it receives various forms of support and through which it is also able to collaborate on the work of counter trafficking. For example, when new survivors are identified, ANIRBAN can direct them to DAM for referral to services, which contributes to key FSTIP project performance indicators. Jashore ANIRBAN is also able to interact with other organizations that engage with Winrock on adjacent projects – such as Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) , the Southeast Institute, and the Safe Step migration support program.

However, the Jashore ANIRBAN members did not describe their network as completely dependent on that institutional foundation with Winrock and DAM. Over time, they have taken the initiative to forge independent relationships with other civil society and government actors in their community. Ashshash is a project funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) that also supports survivor organizing. BRAC Migration's Jashore office, Rights Jashore, Justice & Care's Jashore office, and Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB)Jashore are major NGOs that offer many support services to survivors. By maintaining their own connection to these NGOs, Jashore ANIRBAN can ensure multiple options for directing survivors to the best possible services. They can also collaborate with them on any larger counter trafficking campaigns where beneficial. Ain Jibi and the District Bar Association are organizations of lawyers that often offer pro bono legal support for survivors pursuing justice through legal action. Finally, Jashore ANIRBAN maintains relationships with three medical clinics in the city that often provide free or reduced-cost medical treatment to survivors, which is incredibly important as survivors often return with acute injuries or long-term health conditions.

One particularly interesting set of relationships is between Jashore ANIRBAN and the Counter Trafficking Committees (CTCs). CTCs were set up by the government of Bangladesh, and they exist at union (local government), sub-district and district levels. At the most local level, the union level, CTCs are composed of several key community representatives (such as Imams, a respected elder, a girl under the age of 18, etc.) as well as government representatives (namely the leadership from the Union Parishad (the union-level governing body). CTCs from lower levels channel issues up the chain and send representation to the higher-level CTCs. The Deputy Commissioner is a key figure who leads the District CTC and who also manages the relationship between the district-level government and civil society actors in the district. The nature of one's relationship to the Deputy Commissioner is a major factor determining one's ability to operate in the district, since he can enable or block much civil society action.

In most of our interviews (including interviews carried out for the previous research project on vulnerability), we asked about the CTCs. The people we spoke to overwhelmingly described CTCs as not functioning effectively or consistently, especially at the local levels. This likely reflects the fact that CTCs – collectively a very large number of entities covering the entire country with multiple levels of administrative organization – were instituted from above by the Central Government without universal local buy-in or even understanding about their intended purpose or function. However, training CTC members and building the capacities of CTCs has been a significant objective of the FSTIP project.

This is quite common in development projects, particularly those operating under bilateral agreements, which prioritize supporting governance capacities. Initiatives such as FSTIP, which represent development assistance from one country to another, typically include key components that address host country development priorities and assist in addressing identified gaps in governance or institutional capabilities.

ANIRBAN members see much value in attending the CTC meetings – both to get support for survivors and to generally try to apply pressure on the CTC members to fulfil their obligations. We heard that some actors (especially representatives from Rights Jashore) do have enough power to insist on the meetings be carried out properly. Further, lawyers from the District Bar Association who often represent trafficking survivors pro bono told us that, even when the meetings have no formal content, they are still useful occasions for sharing information and coordinating between the attendees. Although Jashore ANIRBAN members are not regularly invited to join the district level CTCs, they are able to engage indirectly via their connections to more powerful NGOs who attend those meetings. This is quite helpful as they currently have limited options for directly participating in the CTCs and a rather weak connection to the District Commissioner. Meanwhile, it is worth noting that MD in Cox's Bazar claimed that his presence at CTC meetings was able to pressure the CTCs in Cox's Bazar to function more effectively.

Additionally, Jashore ANIRBAN maintains connections to government agencies and state actors, which are shown as orange and red nodes. Jashore ANIRBAN was able to successfully register with the district-level Department of Social Services, which conferred them official NGO status. This gave them a formal organizational status, entitled them to a small amount of government funding (around $500 per year), and increased the legitimacy of their group as an organization of similar standing to other NGOs. During our time working with Jashore ANIRBAN, they were attempting to register with the district office of the Department of Women and Child Welfare, which would allow them to access additional resources specifically for the women members and for special programming for women in trafficking-affected communities. Finally, they maintain connections to government service providers such as Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), which supports workers to find employment opportunities and which runs District Employment and Manpower Office (DEMO) in each district. Some of these offices provide training to prospective migrants which is required for anyone migrating formally.

Maintaining relationships between the Jashore ANIRBAN branch and these institutions takes a great deal of intentional effort on the part of survivor leaders. They are not merely one-way connections to services but often enable members to make contributions to larger efforts – related to counter trafficking but also more generally. Mapping out these connections helps show Jashore ANIRBAN's embeddedness in its community and to highlight its leadership position within the wider systems related to trafficking. It helps to reveal the infrastructure of its organizational leadership capacities as well as the current limits to its power – as seen in the persistent challenge of being taken seriously, of navigating the give-and-take of patronage politics (for example, via the District Commissioner), and their current lack of connections for holding law enforcement accountable for protecting people. Through this infrastructure, Jashore ANIRBAN members are able to take collective action, and in the next section we explore their relational practices behind survivor leadership at the collective level.

3.3. ANIRBAN's regular activities and survivor collective action

Jashore ANIRBAN is led by an 11-member committee that is elected by its members to two-year terms. The current committee explained to us that before around 2018 the committees were selected by the BC/TIP project. But the branch took an initiative to change the practice and hold elections for committee membership. According to the current committee, they have been much more driven and self-directed after the change to elections. In their view, having elections created incentives for greater ownership of their own organization as well as for internal leaders to think creatively and to pitch ideas to the membership. While we were not independently able to verify these claims,   we did observe very engaged leadership amongst the current committee to carry out activities and to think creatively about how to grow and strengthen the organization. The committee also mentioned that they try to have gender balance on the committee (they currently have 5 women and 6 men) as well as representation from the different areas of the Jashore district (since the Jashore branch serves many surrounding villages in addition to Jashore city).

The committee has assigned responsibility to one or more members for each of the activities that the Jashore ANIRBAN branch carries out. In describing the activities, the committee members explained the purpose of each in relation to building, maintaining, and expanding a sense of solidarity amongst the members as well as connections between the branch and its various communities.

The key activities are shown in Figure 3, taken from the Jashore ANIRBAN Facebook page (Jashore ANIRBAN Independent Voluntary Organisation, 2023).

Figure 3. Jashore ANIRBAN's key activities (reproduced from Jashore ANIRBAN's Facebook page).

In general, the activities serve one of five main purposes: directly identifying and managing referrals for victims of trafficking, providing psychosocial support, awareness and outreach campaigns, prevention work, and efforts to develop and strengthen their organization. Further, the activities interlink to achieve multiple goals at once.

We were able to observe many of the key activities. For example, we attended a "yard meeting" in a village in a part of Jashore district at the border with India. Meetings like this are often held in the border areas, since these areas experience a lot of cross-border movement, smuggling, and trafficking. In the meeting, the Jashore ANIRBAN president and general secretary explained the definition of trafficking, shared their own experiences of trafficking to give an example and to intentionally break the stigma associated with trafficking, and explained both what to do if anyone had also experienced trafficking and how to take precautions if anyone was considering migrating. At the meeting one recent victim came forward and another reached out the next day to be identified.

These "yard meetings" not only serve as outreach campaigns and opportunities for recruitment; they also build trust and connections between the organization and those communities. Since the communities get an inside view of ANIRBAN's work, they are less prone to skepticism towards ANIRBAN as an "outside" agent. When new victims are identified, ANIRBAN members approach victims' families and other community members before directly referring victims to services. This ensures both a wider system of support for the survivor and also ensures that coming forward doesn't lead to fractured connections between the survivor and their local family/community connections.

Jashore ANIRBAN also has a practice of following up with survivors after referrals to make sure they are getting the support they deserve. Sometimes survivors struggle to make effective use of services. For example, sometimes newly returned survivors struggle with mental health and find it difficult to actually attend job training programs. Direct personal encouragement from survivor leaders who have also been in the same situation can help them find ways of overcoming such challenges.
We heard of a case where a survivor was provided a cow for livelihood support, but the family took the cow and sold it. In such cases, Jashore ANIRBAN can intervene and provide additional support or counselling (including to survivors' families) to ensure that services survivors access from other providers actually work to benefit the survivor. We observed that this kind of sustained contact with survivors during and after service provision is incredibly difficult and rare, especially when identification is made by outside organizations. This kind of follow-up work is incredibly important for making sure services actually make a difference.

Through trusted community connections, ANIRBAN also often gets alerted when a person is at risk of trafficking or forced child marriage. There appear to be important differences between cases when the person is at risk of forced marriage compared to at risk of labor trafficking during migration. When the trafficking risk is of forced child marriage, the ANIRBAN leaders tend to approach police, who usually help stop the marriage. However, when the risk is of labor trafficking, the leaders tend to not directly approach the police to stop the migration. As the members explained, this is because labor traffickers are often powerful brokers or individuals with powerful connections. Because they are embedded in their communities and are able to stay attuned to the power landscape, survivor leaders can assess the risks of any particular action.

When they cannot approach authorities directly, they often find indirect ways to connect with the potential migrant, to offer them alternative pathways and resources. This is captured under the activity of "checking paperwork," which allows an apparently neutral way to counsel prospective migrants and alert them to risks without directly opposing powerful brokers or traffickers.

To an outside actor such as an NGO employee or CTIP professional, it would be incredibly difficult to assess such risks or to identify potentially safe and effective indirect routes for intervening. As former migrants and victims themselves, they are able to understand the processes prospective migrants are going through and what might tip the scales on their choices – whether to undertake a very risky migration journey with a broker likely to traffic them or to find another way.

The kinds of collective action that Jashore ANIRBAN engages in – namely the regular activities that they carry out – demonstrate the nature of survivor leadership. Their activities directly impact people's lives by helping them minimize the risks of migration (including the risk of being trafficked), address and overcome the challenges of reintegration and healing after trafficking, and nurturing connections of civic agency within communities. Their organizational capacities are a form of leadership, and they are rooted in the individual capacities of member-leaders as well as the network of relationships Jashore ANIRBAN has grown over time. Survivor leadership in the form of collective action and organizational activities depends on deep relational integration within the social systems that drive vulnerability. Organized survivor leaders must **remain attuned to the power landscape, nurture close trusting relationships with different community stakeholders, and delicately assess the best relational course of action** – whether responding to prevent trafficking or responding to support a victim. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to attain enough power within society to be able to stop trafficking in every case. Thus, constantly assessing one's power in any given situation and finding ways to strengthen it, relationally, is an essential leadership practice for survivor leaders.

4.Jashore ANIRBAN's reflections on empowerment and growing their organization

Over the course of our weeks working together, and especially during the workshop, we spoke with ANIRBAN leaders about their goals for empowerment, their aspirations for their organization, and plans for achieving them. During the workshop, we asked the participants to reflect on the nature of their own power. One of the leaders of Jashore ANIRBAN explained his view: "First of all, power is unity. Unity is power. Power is our money. Networking with different institutes is power. Power is our qualifications, our working ability" (7 March 2023).

We observed this to be clearly reflected in their approach to their activities, which served to strengthen unity amongst the Jashore ANIRBAN membership as well as the connections to community and other powerful stakeholders. We note that this view of power resonates with other organizing literature, especially that of the Alinsky tradition in the USA. Ed Chambers, long-time director of the Industrial Areas Foundation – a large and powerful organizing organization in the USA – argues that power is "organized people and organized money" (Chambers and Cowan, 2006, p. 65).

Similar to Dipta's reflections about the fundamental tension around livelihood needs and voluntary contributions to collective action, the research team often discussed their funding needs. ANIRBAN funds its own activities through a voluntary 200 Taka per month (about $2 per month) contribution from members who are able to give it. This is able to cover some, but not all, of the costs of ANIRBAN members traveling for activities, materials such as flyers and information leaflets, and snacks which are often necessary for any gathering. While many of these costs were reimbursed based on receipts under ACT and BC/TIP, the current FSTIP project arrangements are different. The research did not pinpoint the exact reason for the change in funding ANIRBAN under the new iteration of the CTIP project. However, it's important to note that providing funding to groups like ANIRBAN, which lack registration enabling them to receive funds from foreign organizations, or paying individuals without a contractual agreement, is not feasible under awards funded by USAID and other institutional donors. Stringent restrictions on how donor funds are utilized in projects, along with requirements for official documentation on financial transactions, are commonplace across all aid sectors. While these measures aim to prevent fraud and ensure transparency, they can inadvertently create barriers for informal organizations, which, as highlighted, play a crucial role in reaching hidden populations in countries with limited or non-existent social welfare systems.

For ANIRBAN to qualify for general funding, it would need to be formally registered and serve as a formal sub-grantee of Winrock. However, given the relatively informal nature of ANIRBAN, this requirement is likely unattainable. Even the reimbursement of costs that was previously feasible posed administrative challenges, necessitating ANIRBAN to collect receipts for mostly informal transactions and Winrock to navigate complex bureaucratic processes for approvals.

Moreover, a significant concern among NGOs is the sustainability of actions and groups beyond the project's duration. Providing financial support for operations can jeopardize sustainability unless alternative funding sources are identified before the project concludes For this reason, support for ANIRBAN obtaining independent funding has, to some extent been built into the FSTIP project, as reflected in one of FSTIP's metrics for project success (Indicator 3.4.1: the number of instances in which ANIRBAN branches obtain funding) (Winrock International, 2022, app. D).

During the workshop, one of the Jashore ANIRBAN leaders reflected on the impact ending the previous practice of reimbursements for ANIRBAN activities:

> I noticed one problem for ANIRBAN. After this FSTIP program started, I noticed one matter, and that is the issue of ANIRBAN members dropping out. Because previously they gave money [reimbursements for expenses], and now they are not giving money. For example, if we arranged a program, like our anniversary celebration,[15] if we invited them, we would get 40 people [to come] previously. And you can see it in some of the pictures from the last years. Now we cannot invite them strongly. We invite them, but with a very weak voice because we know we will not be able to provide them financial support, not even a meal. And you saw last time [at the anniversary celebration and quarterly planning meeting we attended]. How many people were there? 21 or 22. (6 March 2023)

---

[15] ANIRBAN branches tend to hold a celebration each year to mark the anniversary of their founding in February 2011.

This quote also underscores the challenges arising from current funding policies and the emphasis on long-term sustainability, which may impede the development of trust between informal groups such as ANIRBAN and NGOs managing funds from donors like USAID. Additionally, payments to meeting participants are often discouraged or prohibited by donors due to concerns that individuals may attend solely for financial gain rather than genuine engagement. However, this approach risks fostering mistrust and fails to acknowledge the practical reality that such payments may be essential for enabling attendance, particularly for individuals facing financial constraints. Consequently, this dynamic can exacerbate the difficulties faced by organizations like ANIRBAN in sustaining their operations and fostering meaningful member engagement.

In this way, the research team and the leadership committee reflected that in order to become more sustainable (which would be a form of empowerment), they aspired to having a reliable form of fund-raising which would be integrated into their plan for organizational development. In the workshop, we reflected together on several models to achieve this.

One possible model would be to become increasingly like an NGO. NGOs typically have paid employees which carry out activities, and they typically raise funds from donors through applying for grants. This is something ANIRBAN has seen modeled by DAM and other NGOs in their network, and it is something they could imagine themselves working toward. In fact, since Jashore ANIRBAN had successfully registered with the District Department of Social Services, they had achieved recognition as a NGO . This is something they were immensely proud of; something no other ANIRBAN branch has yet to achieve.

However, there are also distinct challenges for this pathway. Namely, they are currently in no position to have paid employees, since they currently have not raised funds. Further, they were not convinced that having some members be paid to carry out activities (as professionals) while others continued to work as volunteers struck most of the participants as a risky departure from their established way of working. Further, even after multiple trainings from the BC/TIP and FSTIP projects, the members were not confident in carrying out the reporting requirements that come along with grant funding. In fact, we discovered in our meetings with both the sub-district and district offices of the Department of Social Services that ANIRBAN was already behind in providing the reporting based on their registration with that department.

To address this, our research team shared some strategies for record-keeping and documentation during the workshop. We discovered that Jashore ANIRBAN had already developed their own system of recording their activities and assessing their impact. However, these were kept in paper notebooks, and the committee needed some guidance on how to translate them into the kinds of documents that donors and the Department of Social Services would find acceptable. They also had no access to a computer.

During the workshop, we also discussed other potential models of organizational development. For example, some groups – such as the National Slum Dwellers Federation in India – avoid having formal NGO status and continue as informal volunteer organizations (Patel, 1996).

Some such informal organizing groups are able to fully fund themselves through member contributions, though this is not something Jashore ANIRBAN is currently able to do. Some such groups – such as Mahila Milan, a women's group of pavement dwellers in India – manage their member contributions collectively as a joint savings account (Patel et al., 2016; Patel and d'Cruz, 1993). Other groups fund themselves through collective management of a social enterprise. On this point, the participants reflected on their past experiences with social enterprise experiments that happened over the course of the ACT, BC/TIP, and FSTIP projects.

They reflected on the ways that each of those previous experiments had failed. In their assessment, they had failed through a combination of insufficient startup funds and leadership within their branch that had not been fully up to the task of managing the tensions between members that can arise over joint management of resources. They felt that at this point, after having spent several years building up the leadership capacities of their branch, perhaps they were ready to try a social enterprise again. Over the course of the workshop, they explored multiple options for such an enterprise, thinking through how much startup capital would be required and what kinds of management structures would need to be in place.

Throughout the workshop and afterwards, we (outside researchers) remained neutral on what the best options would be – both for Jashore ANIRBAN's efforts to meet their funding needs and for their choices for organizational development. The research team, comprising a subset of Jashore ANIRBAN's leadership committee, was informed about the budget allocated for their participation in the research project, with discretion given to them on how to utilize their earnings. However, attempts to contract ANIRBAN members as local consultants faced hurdles due to concerns from Winrock regarding HRC's registration status in Bangladesh, which limited its ability to sign consultancy agreements and implement activities not approved by the NGO Affairs Bureau, a government office which strictly regulates NGOs' activities and the use of foreign funds for development projects.

Additionally, FSTIP expressed concerns that compensating members of one branch of ANIRBAN might lead to conflicts within that branch and among other branches, potentially risking the group's cohesion. To address these challenges, Winrock and HRC explored alternative ways to utilize the allocated budget, such as funding a small business to support the group's future sustainability or providing training support. However, these options also raised concerns about potentially creating tension with the other branches. Eventually, considering the mandate of Asia CTIP to conduct research and provide technical assistance, implementing activities directly with the group was deemed to be outside the project's scope. Consequently, a portion of the project budget was returned to Asia CTIP to explore alternative means of supporting ANIRBAN through the work of FSTIP. While acknowledging these concerns and bureaucratic hurdles, we note that for ANIRBAN to operate independently, its members should have autonomy in fundraising decisions and individual engagement in contract work.

Furthermore, this situation highlights the need for funders to reconsider their approach to working with informal organizations like survivors' groups, as current funding policies and evaluation metrics do not effectively account for the practical challenges they face. Our study also identified how these challenges can contribute to increased mistrust.

It can be perplexing when a well-funded project struggles to cover seemingly minor expenses, such as payments to survivor groups, while directly benefiting from their significant (volunteer) work. This discrepancy can lead to frustration for both parties involved. Additionally, it can place NGOs in the position of needing to take greater risks to accommodate the flexibility required when working with survivor groups, since existing policies and regulations tend to hinder such adaptations.

This kind of challenge would likely be faced by any NGO attempting to support survivor organizing. The more interconnected the survivor leaders and the supporting NGOs become, the greater the risk to the NGO becomes of "allowing" the survivor leaders to be genuinely autonomous. NGOs likely face common pressure to "gatekeep": to make decisions on behalf of the survivor groups in good-faith efforts to minimize risk, but likely also preventing ultimate autonomy for the survivor groups as well. This is a delicate issue related to the challenges of empowerment. Survivor empowerment requires survivors to be free to make their own decisions and take risks they deem appropriate; supporting NGOs must find appropriate ways of sharing power, making allowances for the inevitable risks that may arise, and being willing to share some of the risks if survivor-led initiatives diverge from the NGO's interests.

In this way, we were able to learn much about Jashore ANIRBAN's survivor leadership as well as their organizing practice in pursuit of empowerment. But one of the important lessons we learned is that empowerment can be a risky business for anyone involved. This is also something we discussed frankly with the participating ANIRBAN members. Again, we note a resonance with conventional organizing wisdom. Ed Chambers quotes Saul Alinsky's colorful expression: "Change means movement; movement means friction; friction means heat; heat means controversy" (Chambers and Cowan, 2006, p. 31). During our workshop, one of the Jashore ANIRBAN leaders made this reflection when considering their plans for the future of their organization: "We have power in everything, but not enough. We have to make changes in that, but we have to be careful so that we don't face resistance or damage during this changing." (7 March 2023).

5. Reflections on power and empowerment

Empowerment is often discussed in the context of survivors (and other marginalized groups) in ways that obfuscates the key issue of power (Archibald and Wilson, 2011; Cornwall and Rivas, 2015; Hardy and Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998; Tchida and Stout, 2023; Woodall et al., 2012). Empowerment is not something that comes from mere participation, engagement, or receipt of resources. It is fundamentally about changing the balance of power. Empowerment requires those opportunities and resources to be realized in stronger abilities to act in pursuit of one's goals.

Of course, power is complicated, and there is extensive literature that develops conceptualizations of power and explores its operation in various social contexts (See, for a general overview, Kasper, 2016, pp. 41–43). In fact, there are pedagogies and toolkits that NGOs and grassroots organizations can use to make power analysis part of their strategies and organizational practices (See, for example, Gaventa, 2020, 2006; Pettit, 2013). One key insight is that power is not, or does not have to be, zero-sum. Certainly, if two groups are diametrically opposed and fighting for an excludable resource, it can be the case that one will win while the other loses.

However, it can equally be the case that if one's partner groups have greater power, one's own group can experience greater power as well from knock-on effects.

In this research, we have seen Jashore ANIRBAN's agency and its limits through considering the relational structures and behavioral patterns that revealed what the ANIRBAN branch could and could not do in its pursuit of its goals. The network of connections they have built and continue to grow with other powerful stakeholders is both a product of their agency (since they have built it intentionally) and a representation of their agency (since we can see the possibilities for action in relation to each of the key stakeholders). Further, Jashore ANIRBAN's agency is expressed through their everyday activities and their organizing practice. Their activities make a difference to both the members and their communities. Further, in their intentional organizing practices, they are continually acting to strengthen their abilities to act.

In our approach to supporting the empowerment of the project team, we diligently remained neutral about how they should grow power and about what their goals should be for using their power. We did not push them to attempt starting a collective business venture. We did not push them to change how they related to any of their network contacts, including police, officials, and their NGO partners. As outsiders, we held to the idea that empowerment would entail changes to how things work, and that that would carry risks for the participants (with some small potential for risks to ourselves). As such, we felt it was important that decisions around actions would need to be led by the participants and that we should help facilitate critical discussions about the potential risks for any action that might be taken.

5.1. Resistance: an inevitable systemic response to change

Trafficking in persons is a crime that can happen to anyone. However, as with other forms of exploitation, those most vulnerable are those who are already experiencing forms of marginalization, including poverty and low socio-economic status. In this research project, we chose to work with a group of survivor leaders that had come from rural parts of Bangladesh and had relatively low socio-economic status in their society. We have been able to document the relatively empowered position that they have achieved, in large part through their organizing efforts via the ANIRBAN group, even as we recognize they continue to face opposition and hardships in the form of social stigma, marginalization, poverty, and other intersecting forms of inequality. While it was not the purpose of this research to assess the ANIRBAN members' level of power or empowerment, we were able to determine that they had achieved some level of empowerment, and that their organizing efforts and participation in ANIRBAN played a role in their empowerment journey.

Still, they face limitations in their abilities to act and challenges for their empowerment. They had achieved many things, including building and maintaining an extensive network of relationships with supportive people and NGOs. They had successfully registered as an NGO with the District Department of Social Services, which strengthened their legitimacy within the local CTIP ecosystem and local society. However, they still faced limitations in their ability to meet requirements for documentation that came along with registration. Not everyone in Jashore ANIRBAN positions of leadership could read and write or use computers. Additionally, we observed resistance they face when taking action.

They struggled to command full respect from district-level and subdistrict-level officials. They struggled to play a substantial role in CTC meetings. They struggled in their efforts to prevent trafficking when cases of trafficking were likely to occur, in part because of their inability to forcefully demand protection from police. And they struggled to manage their own organizational activities, including possibilities for independent fund-raising.

Nevertheless, over the course of our participatory research with ANIRBAN, we observed ways in which they were able to take action to maximize their own agency. Their outreach activities (especially the "yard meetings") enabled them to maintain strong levels of trust in trafficking-affected communities, which also enabled them to identify and support victims. They actively communicated with and met with other CTIP stakeholders including NGOs, lawyers, and government officials. This enabled them to refer victims to appropriate services and to point prospective migrants to resources that could help protect them from trafficking on their migration journeys. Their regular meetings and quarterly planning meetings enabled them to maintain strong levels of solidarity amongst the ANIRBAN membership.

The ANIRBAN activities have evolved into an established set of practices over the last decade; the different ANIRBAN branches have taken them up, tested them, and shaped them over time to be fit for purpose. To some extent, Jashore ANIRBAN's organizational activities are also guided by DAM, the project sub-partner in the FSTIP project. We observed some tensions around how much freedom Jashore ANIRBAN leadership felt to further experiment with and deviate from these standard activities. Based on our observations, this "handholding" through the FSTIP project (and its previous iterations) has helped ensure continuation of basic functions over time. It is possible that, without this long-term support, ANIRBAN might have disbanded or collapsed. However, it also appears to constrain them, to some extent, in terms of how ambitious they can be in their collective actions. Because DAM has key performance indicators related to the number of victims identified and referred to services (Dhaka Ahsania Mission, 2023), it makes sense that they would prefer ANIRBAN not make their own independent referrals. Further, because the FSTIP project is constructed around their unique position as partners with ANIRBAN as a survivor organization, there are structural incentives in place to keep that relationship proprietary to project partners. ANIRBAN is clear that the institutional arrangements have evolved in a way that, while mutually beneficial, also tends to resist change in the form of greater ANIRBAN independence.

Again, we do not claim to know what is best for Jashore ANIRBAN, its members, or the FSTIP project. In this report, we are merely able to document how Jashore ANIRBAN's own actions, organizational power, and the organizing capacities of its leaders has contributed to the current system configuration (partially depicted in their network map) in which they have significant agency even as they continue to face significant constraints. We find important lessons to be learned in both how survivor leader organizers have been successful in partially reconfiguring the systemic conditions around them as well as areas where their actions provoked pushback from systemic forces.

It is conventional wisdom in community organizing traditions (Chambers and Cowan, 2006, p. 82; Porter Magee, 2023) as well as systems thinking traditions (See, for example, Coleman et al., 2011; Schweiger et al., 2018; Sterman, 1994) that pushback can be important evidence that an action is having an impact.

In our previous reports, we have documented evidence for mechanisms by which systems tend to resist efforts to change them. Importantly, even in cases where there appears to be universal agreement (i.e. that trafficking in persons is bad and should be stopped immediately), it can often be difficult to overcome resistance to making changes to achieve that apparently universally held goal.

In this project, we initially anticipated that resistance might come from officials (for example, who might be reluctant to take time or resources to engage more meaningfully with the network) or traffickers (who might want to avoid detection and prosecution). Indeed, we did observe evidence of resistance in these ways.

For example, the CTCs tended not to function effectively, but when powerful local NGO members attended the meetings, they were able to force the CTC meetings to happen and to carry out their roles. Jashore ANIRBAN members, on the other hand, struggled to find a voice in CTC meetings, and they could not pressure CTCs to act more effectively. Also, for example, the participants felt that traffickers (or at least people who benefit from trafficking operations) were able to put pressure on police and other officials to the extent that the group did not feel safe approaching them when trafficking cases were impending.

However, as we observed Jashore ANIRBAN leadership attempting to explore greater independence and independent fund-raising activity, this generated resistance from DAM and FSTIP as well. This resistance can be attributed to systemic factors that put immense pressure on CSOs, both in CTIP and in the broader international development sector, to achieve targets and comply with stringent regulations. Amid this setting, adaptations rely heavily upon the project leader's willingness to take calculated risks. From the Jashore ANIRBAN case, we observed that integrating the efforts of survivor groups into the project and formalizing these relationships within donor contractual agreements created an interdependent dynamic between survivor-led groups and NGOs. Within this rigid framework, there is limited scope for adaptation and innovation, potentially increasing project risks and vulnerabilities. For example, Jashore ANIRBAN often relies on local NGOs as intermediaries to access funding from FSTIP, since donors' requirements do not usually allow to give funding to an informal group without a proper registration as legal entity. This setup creates financial risks when intermediaries fail to deliver adequate or timely funds and relational risks as ANIRBAN cannot communicate grievances directly to FSTIP. The hierarchical nature of these relationships exacerbates misunderstandings and accountability gaps, hindering effective collaboration and undermining the independence of survivor-led groups.

5.2. Lessons for supporting empowerment

Survivor-led organizing has great potential to strengthen survivor voice, agency, and power. ANIRBAN members participating in this project unanimously expressed the value of belonging to ANIRBAN in terms of feeling more powerful, getting access to resources, the joy of connecting with fellow survivors, and the hope of contributing to the end of trafficking.

Survivor organizers are often best placed, based on their positions within the system and their direct lived experiences, both to understand the experiences, needs, and potential of other survivors and to remain attuned to the system structures and dynamics that

that tend to keep on reproducing vulnerability. As such, they should be considered important potential partners for anyone looking to effectively stop trafficking and effectively support survivors.

Given the expertise and capacities (at least potential capacities) of survivor-organizers to act as partners and to provide valuable support to CTIP initiatives, they should be valued. One way to value survivor-organizers in the context of CTIP programs would be to pay them as staff or consultants when they provide expert inputs, just as other professionals get paid when carrying out CTIP initiatives. However, when survivor-led groups are based on volunteered time and effort, an influx of money can be a challenge. There is a risk of creating tensions between the individuals acting as paid experts and the other members who continue to volunteer. This is just one of many risks survivor-leaders and practitioners must navigate. If effective working relationships are in place, all parties should be able to negotiate a workable solution to avoid both disruptions to survivor-led groups and the exploitation of survivor-experts through insistence on "volunteer" participation. Recognizing that many of these survivor organizers have little formal education, little formal work experience in the NGO sector, and little confidence operating in the exclusive world of NGO CTIP initiatives, appropriate approaches to connecting and unlocking their value will need to be followed.

In our case, the team told us that they did not know how to keep data on their own activities or to write reports to submit to the Department of Social Services. However, once we began discussing their activities, we could immediately see how they had already developed their own ways of keeping records and sharing their achievements with each other. At that point, it was easy to translate what they were already doing into the medium and language required by the formal NGO sector. Unlocking their valuable contributions simply required spending time, listening, and getting creative.

Given that empowerment is about power, there can be no empowerment without changes to the systems of power, which comprise relational networks and social dynamics. That is not to say that survivor empowerment requires conflict or that it requires survivors to take power from some adversary. However, any relational system tends to have power dynamics, and all actors within the system tend to have a visceral sense of balances of power. That means empowerment of some actors will immediately be felt by others. Foucault (1982) described this phenomenon by explaining power as a field (akin to an electromagnetic field) which permeates all social interactions. Great care must be taken and creativity deployed to ensure that, where possible, interests can be aligned (especially when it comes to nominally supportive actors) so that empowerment of survivors is perceived as mutually beneficial and empowering (rather than disempowering) to others. Where this cannot be achieved, conflict will follow. Conflict carries risks which must be considered and mitigated ahead of time so that empowerment efforts don't instead lead to disempowerment and devastation.

These changes in power dynamics within informal systems necessitate creativity, risk-taking, and the ability to operate within a flexible framework. However, when NGOs are constrained by rigid regulations imposed by donors and country laws, this is much easier said than done. Limited room for adaptation and informality, coupled with pressure to achieve predetermined targets and demonstrate success, requests for more independence from survivor groups can lead to conflict and frustration.

The challenge lies in balancing the need for transparency and effectiveness in spending public funds, when working with institutional donors, while also acknowledging the necessity of taking risks to achieve effectiveness in programming. Considering Dipta and Sara's reflections on over a decade of trying to change systems while working within the same constrained systems, this is a herculean task for even the most devoted good-faith actors.

We must not kid ourselves; effective counter trafficking initiatives also necessarily involve changing the systems which are currently conducive to trafficking and which keep on creating vulnerabilities. There can be no effective efforts to change entrenched systems without the power to act along with the power to deal with the system's natural resistance to change. As such, there can be no effective CTIP programming without effectively building power, and doing so will necessarily carry risks. In this way, genuine and direct efforts to empower survivors should not be seen as any riskier or more exotic than other pathways for counter trafficking. Survivor empowerment is possible, and supporting survivor empowerment is likely necessary for top-down CTIP initiatives to have a chance at being effective.

In the recent Evidence2Action conference hosted by Winrock in Bangkok, Salam said, "To empower survivors, CTIP professionals need to take a step back to make room for survivors to share their thoughts. To empower survivors, we need to give up power." While power does not have to be zero-sum, those hoping to support survivor empowerment will have to find ways to share their power with survivors through effective, mutually beneficial relationships. Through such effective relational arrangements, organizing and change action can be carried out in ways that are mutually empowering, though care must be taken to avoid the pitfalls of misaligned objectives leading to contestation over power.

6. Concluding reflections on survivor leadership and survivor engagement in CTIP action

This research set out to explore the nature of survivor leadership through the case of Jashore ANIRBAN. Our view, which is increasingly accepted within CTIP literature, is that survivors must be effectively engaged with as part of CTIP activity, that survivors are often best placed to know more and understand more deeply the challenges of countering trafficking because of their lived experiences, and that survivor leaders can be the best agents of their own empowerment. However, there is too little documented evidence about the nature of survivor leadership and the work survivor leaders do, especially working through survivor-owned groups, to change the systems that keep on generating vulnerabilities to trafficking in persons (Tauson et al., 2023).

To address these needs, we spent six weeks working closely with survivor leaders in the Jashore and Cox's Bazar branches of ANIRBAN to see and experience first-hand how survivor leadership and organizing works. The history of ANIRBAN is one of inspiring partnership between formal counter trafficking projects funded by a large donor and a genuine, bottom-up movement made up of survivors. It is a story of empowerment involving complicated experiments to evolve effective institutional arrangements that remain imperfect.
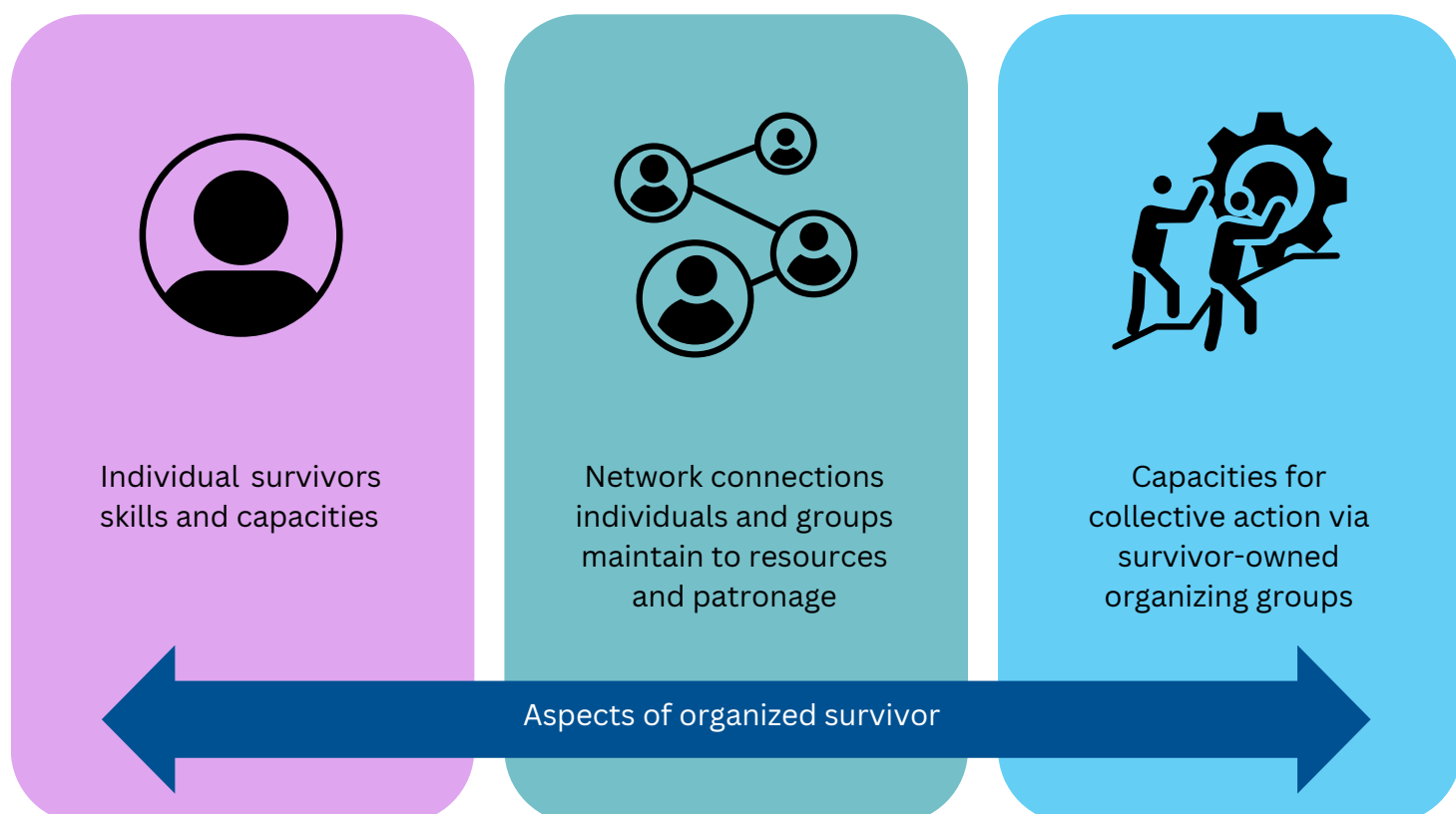
Jashore ANIRBAN's organizing work – involving building its own membership and its own network of connections to a host of other stakeholders – has led to a strengthened position and greater capacities to act for its members. It is not clear that this could have happened without the long-term structural support of the successive Winrock projects, even as the goal of eventual self-sufficiency and independence remains elusive. Indeed, we suspect that effective top-down leadership and support is important, even if not essential, to leveraging and enabling effective bottom-up survivor leadership.

To understand ANIRBAN's organizing work, we spent many hours discussing the history of ANIRBAN to learn from past experience, strategy to learn about what is working and why, and aspirations to consider how best to continue the journey. In mapping the network of Jashore ANIRBAN, we have been able to document the new configuration of the system that has been achieved through the organizing work. This already represents significant systemic change. Through articulating and examining ANIRBAN's structured activities and their relational organizing work, we have been able to document the new system dynamics through which survivors are now able to take effective action in their communities. Again, this is a great achievement of systemic change and empowerment.

In Jashore ANIRBAN (and Cox's Bazar ANIRBAN), we have observed survivors to be capable leaders in three particular ways that tend to mutually reinforce in the context of survivor-led organizing (see Figure 4):

- as charismatic or inspiring individuals that contribute their own skills and capacities
- as individual-level and group-level network connections that bring access to resources and patronage
- as organized groups of survivors capable of collective action.

Figure 4. Three aspects of organized survivor leadership

| Individual survivors skills and capacities | Network connections individuals and groups maintain to resources and patronage | Capacities for collective action via survivor-owned organizing groups |

Aspects of organized survivor

Our previous research has generated extensive evidence of the systemic nature of trafficking in persons, leading to the conclusion that both empowerment of survivors and effective counter trafficking are manifested as and require changing systems. In our two recent reports on vulnerability to trafficking we drew important conclusions about how that change happens. Firstly, change happens through informal and highly relational processes that can target the mechanisms which tend to generate harm and vulnerabilities. Significant change almost never happens through simply changing policy or developing the perfect program to provide services. Systemic mechanisms get changed when new relationships get forged through which new ways of doing things can be developed.

The informal and relational process of making change requires bottom-up leadership, even when powerful and effective top-down leadership is in place (i.e. a government committed to ending trafficking or well-funded organizations committed to running well-designed, evidence-based programs). We have documented evidence that such local or bottom-up leadership often exists within and around communities with experience of trafficking, and survivor-leaders are often the best-placed actors to work for and support change.

The organizing practice we have documented in ANIRBAN, rooted in survivor leadership, is an excellent example of this kind of informal and relational approach to making systemic change. As such, it is urgent that CTIP actors seek to engage with such survivor leaders to build programming that can leverage that fundamental driver of change where it already exists. In many ways, this flips the paradigm of survivor engagement on its head. Instead of initiating a CTIP project and then seeking to engage survivors, we suggest CTIP projects will have a better chance of success where practitioners seek out and connect with survivor leaders – to engage with them – in order to jointly design and carry out CTIP action. In the companion piece to this report (Chua et al., 2024) our colleagues at Winrock offer their reflections for how CTIP practitioners can best approach this task. Indeed, there will inevitably be challenges in bridging the two very different worlds that survivor leaders and professional CTIP practitioners tend to occupy. However, the partnership between Winrock and ANIRBAN suggests that with patience, mutual respect, and shared objectives rooted in a long-term good-faith relationship, great things can be achieved.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Afsar, R., 2009. Unravelling the Vicious Cycle of Recruitment: Labour Migration from Bangladesh to the Gulf States. Geneva: International Labour Organization.

Archibald, T., Wilson, A., 2011. Rethinking Empowerment: Theories of Power and the Potential for Emancipatory Praxis. Adult Education Research Conference. Available at https://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2011/papers/3

Ash, C., Otiende, S., 2023. Meaningful Engagement of People with Lived Experience: A framework and assessment for increasing lived experience leadership across the spectrum of engagement. Global Fund to End Modern Slavery and National Survivor Network- Cast, Washington, DC. Available at https://gfems.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Meaningful-Engagement-of-People-with-Lived-Experience.pdf

Ashshash Project, n.d. Module on Transformational Life Skills for ASHSHASH/WI Project. Ashshash Project.

Castles, S., de Haas, H. and Miller, M.J., 2014. The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World. New York: Palgrave Macmillan (5 th edition).

Chambers, E.T., Cowan, M.A., 2006. Roots for radicals : organizing for power, action, and justice. Continuum, New York.

Chiang, M., Kasper, E., Sharma, D., Crump, J. (Eds.), 2022. Resilience and Reintegration: Our Stories as Trafficking Survivors. Winrock International and Humanity Research Consultancy. Available at https://winrock.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/My-Migration-Journey_New-Version.pdf

Chua, J.L., Tauson, M & Piazzano, S., 2024. Practitioners' Guide to supporting Survivor Groups: based on learnings from Bangladesh. Winrock International.

Chua, J.L., Tauson, M., 2022. Learning from our Actions: How can we be Comfortable with Failure? Winrock International. Available at https://winrock.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Asia-CTIP-Learning-from-Our-Actions-Paper.pdf

Coleman, P.T., Vallacher, R., Bartoli, A., Nowak, A., Bui-Wrzosinska, L., 2011. Navigating the Landscape of Conflict: Applications of Dynamical Systems Theory to Addressing Protracted Conflict, in: Giessmann, H.-J., Körppen, D., Ropers, N. (Eds.), The Non-Linearity of Peace Processes : Theory and Practice of Systemic Conflict Transformation. Verlag Barbara Budrich, Opladen, Germany; Farmington Hills, MI.

Cornwall, A., Rivas, A.-M., 2015. From 'gender equality and 'women's empowerment' to global justice: reclaiming a transformative agenda for gender and development. Third World Quarterly 36, 396–415. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1013341

Dhaka Ahsania Mission, 2023. Fight Slavery and Trafficking-In-Persons (FSTIP) Activity. Available at https://www.ahsaniamission.org.bd/fight-slavery-and-trafficking-in-persons-fstip/

ESRC, 2023. Research ethics guidance [WWW Document]. Available at https://www.ukri.org/councils/esrc/guidance-for-applicants/research-ethics-guidance/

ESRC, 2021. Ethics review: example of checklist [WWW Document]. Available at https://www.ukri.org/publications/ethics-review-example-of-checklist/

Foucault, M., 1982. The Subject and Power. Critical Inquiry 8, 777–795. Available at http://www.jstor.org/stable/1343197

Gaventa, J., 2020. Applying power analysis: using the 'Powercube'to explore forms, levels and spaces, in: McGee, R., Pettit, J. (Eds.), Power, Empowerment and Social Change. Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon, pp. 117–138.

Gaventa, J., 2006. Finding the spaces for change: a power analysis. IDS bulletin 37, 23. Available at http://www.powercube.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/finding_spaces_for_change.pdf

Hardy, C., Leiba-O'Sullivan, S., 1998. The Power Behind Empowerment: Implications for Research and Practice. Human Relations 51, 451–483. https://doi.org/10.1177/001872679805100402

IOM UN Migration, Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), 2023. Life Skill Training for Human Trafficking Survivors. IOM, Dhaka.

Jashore ANIRBAN Independent Voluntary Organisation, 2023. Jessore ANIRBAN's Style of Work [WWW Document]. Facebook. Available at https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=844680297658769&id=100063504195409&mibextid=WC7FNe

Kasper, E., 2016. Nurturing Emergent Agency: Networks and Dynamics of Complex Social Change Processes in Raipur, India (Ph.D.). University of Sussex, United Kingdom.

Kasper, E., Chiang, M., 2024. Illuminating the Nature of Systemic Vulnerability to Cross-Border Human Trafficking: the Bangladesh-Malaysia Corridor. Winrock International and Humanity Research Consultancy. Available at https://winrock.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Asia-CTIP-Bangladesh-Systemic-Vulnerability-3.pdf

Kasper, E., Chiang, M., 2022. Barriers and Opportunities for More Effective Identification of Victims of Human Trafficking: Insights from Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Taiwan. https://doi.org/10.19088/IDS.2022.033

Kasper, E., Chiang, M., 2020. Survivors' Perspectives on Successful Reintegration After Trafficking (USAID Asia Counter Trafficking in Persons). Winrock International and Institute of Development Studies. Available at https://winrock.org/document/survivors-perspectives-on-successful-reintegration-after-trafficking/

Kasper, E., Chiang, M., McCleary, J., 2023. The Systemic Nature of Vulnerability to Trafficking for Kyrgyz Labor Migrants. Winrock International and Humanity Research Consultancy. Available at https://winrock.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Asia-CTIP-Systemic-vulnerability-to-HT-in-KYR-3.pdf

Mubde, M.B., Karim, A., Rashid, R.B., Faisal, M., Karim, S. and Anjum, R., 2021. The Hidden Costs of Migration: Evaluating the Bangladesh-Malaysia Corridor.

Patel, S., 1996. SPARC and its Work with the National Slum Dwellers Federation and Mahila Milan, India. IIED, London. Available at http://pubs.iied.org/7036IIED/

Patel, S., Arputham, J., Bartlett, S., 2016. "We beat the path by walking": How the women of Mahila Milan in India learned to plan, design, finance and build housing. Environment & Urbanization 28, 223–240. https://doi.org/10.1177/0956247815617440

Patel, S., d'Cruz, C., 1993. The Mahila Milan crisis credit scheme: from a seed to a tree. Environment and Urbanization 5, 9–17. Available at http://eau.sagepub.com/content/5/1/9.short

Pettit, J., 2013. Power Analysis: A Practical Guide. Sida.

Porter Magee, M., 2023. The Action is the Reaction: Community Organizing for Local Change. AdvocacyLabs. Available at https://www.future-ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Community-Organizing.pdf

Schweiger, S., Stouten, H., Bleijenbergh, I.L., 2018. A System Dynamics Model of Resistance to Organizational Change: The Role of Participatory Strategies. Systems Research and Behavioral Science 35, 658–674. https://doi.org/10.1002/sres.2509

Shipurkar, T., M, Dr.P., Joseph, A.R., C, M., Narayanan, P., 2023. சிந்தனை (Sindhanai) as contemplative pedagogy: Embedding Measurement in Collectivisation. London. Available at https://www.linkedin.com/posts/sindhanai-main_sindhanai-as-contemplative-pedagogy-activity-7122829415268413440-Bmxt

Siddiqui, T., Abrar, C.R., 2019. Making Dalals Visible: Towards Transparency in Recruitment. RMMRU, Dhaka. Sterman, J.D., 1994. Learning in and about complex systems. System Dynamics Review 10, 291–330. https://doi.org/10.1002/sdr.4260100214

Stewart, A., West, G., Lawrence, N., 2023. A Funders Toolkit for Lived Experience Inclusion in Modern Slavery Research: Guidelines for Supporting Peer Engagement of People With Lived Experience in Modern Slavery Research. Global Fund to End Modern Slavery and National Survivor Network- Cast. Available at https://gfems.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/GFEMS-Peer-Engagement-in-Research_Sept-2023.pdf

Tauson, M., Grasso, C., Chua, J.L., Chang, J., 2023. Understanding Survivor-Owned Groups: A Systematic Literature Review and Narrative Synthesis. Winrock International. Available at https://winrock.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Collective-Action-SLR_Asia-CTIP_pubversionfinal_11122023.pdf

Tchida, C.V., Stout, M., 2023. Disempowerment versus empowerment: Analyzing power dynamics in professional community development. Community Development 0, 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330.2023.2247470

USAID, 2021. U.S. Agency for International Development Policy on Countering Trafficking in Persons. USAID. Available at https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/December-2021_Revised-C-TIP-Policy.pdf

U.S. Department of State, 2023. Trafficking in Persons Report 2023. [online] Available at: https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/ [Accessed 27 September 2024]

Wakeford, T. and Sánchez Rodríguez, T., 2018. Participatory action research: Towards a more fruitful knowledge. University of Bristol and the AHRC Connected Communities Programme.

Winrock International, 2022. USAID's Fight Slavery and Trafficking-in-Persons (FSTIP) Program Quarterly Performance Report: FY22 Q1: October - December 2021. Winrock International. Available at https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00Z7N4.pdf

Winrock International, 2018. Bangladesh Counter Trafficking-in-Persons (BC/TIP) Program Quarterly Performance Report Quarter 1, Year 4 (October-December 2017). Winrock International. Available at https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00T5C3.pdf

Woodall, J.R., Warwick-Booth, L., Cross, R., 2012. Has empowerment lost its power? Health Education Research 27, 742–745. https://doi.org/10.1093/her/cys064

Photo Credit: Winrock International & HRC

USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE Humanity Research Consultancy *Local insights, global impact* WINROCK INTERNATIONAL