

A review of current promising practices in the engagement of people with lived experience to address modern slavery and human trafficking

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Authors: Dr Wendy Asquith (Modern Slavery PEC Research Fellow, University of Liverpool)
Dr Allen Kiconco (Visiting Research Fellow, University of the Witwatersrand)
Professor Alex Balch (Modern Slavery PEC Director Research, University of Liverpool)



Research by:

Contributors

Throughout this project efforts were made (through recruitment, equitable remuneration, peer-support and safeguarding) to facilitate and encourage those with lived experience of modern slavery and human trafficking to be fully involved in co-developing and co-producing the research, while not requiring disclosure. This enabled a research team to be put together that included a rich and diverse mix of expertise including individuals with lived experience.

We would like to thank the team of Regional Consultants who worked on this project with us: co-designing the research instruments, gathering and analysing data, writing regional reports and through discussion and feedback have shaped many of the insights and ideas in this document.

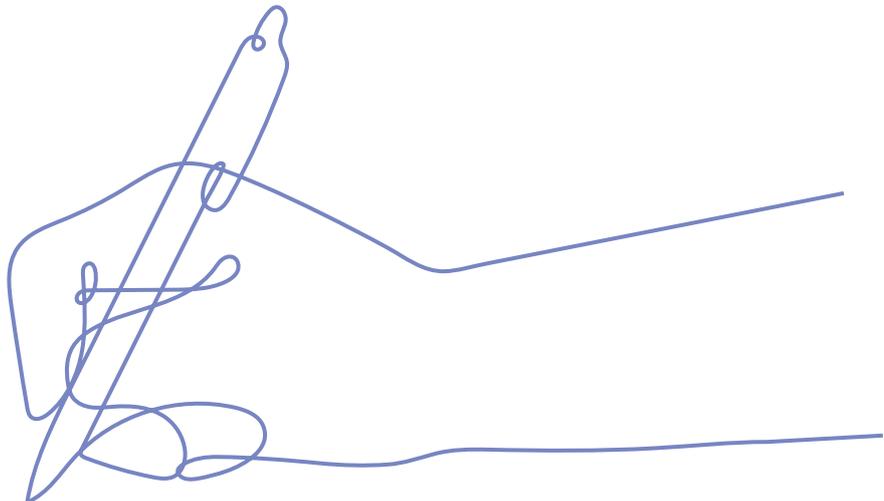
Ling Li (Independent Consultant).

Benedetta Wasonga (Director Gender, Justice and Human Rights at the Centre for Equality Diversity and Inclusion (CEDI)).

Chris Ash, (Survivor Leadership Program Manager, Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking).

Dr Sutirtha Sahariah (Independent Consultant).

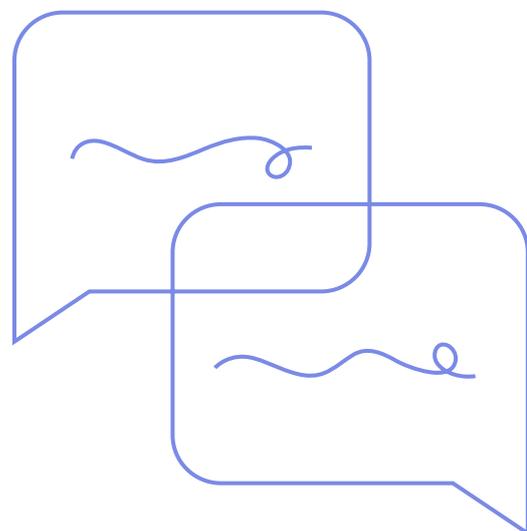
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was informed by engagement in consultation with experts by experience also reported **innovation in programming and improved confidence in organisational policy and practice.**

'Survivors possess knowledge about their own experiences that deserves to be listened to and recognised. Understanding the perspectives of youth on their experiences transitioning out of care is vital for strengthening services for this underserved population.'

(Tsai, Lim and Nhanh, 2020).

'Survivor engagement leads to innovation with evidence of more effective programming, alteration of federal policy (e.g. change in vacatur and expungement laws and safe harbour laws) and release of incarcerated survivors.'

(Independent consultant, North America).

Where organisations included people with lived experience as employed colleagues or paid consultants embedded within project teams and engaged across the lifecycle of a project benefits were deepened and outlined with greater precision. In addition to the benefits outlined above, stakeholders assessing or involved in collaborative engagement with employed colleagues who have lived experience evidenced **improved efficacy of prevention initiatives, rehabilitation interventions, data collection mechanisms and outcomes for service-users** due to the unique insight and understanding offered through lived experience expertise being embedded within the project team.

Stakeholders also noted that **significantly improved relationships were developed with trafficked individuals and affected communities where projects, programmes and interventions were lived experience-led.** Studies, evaluations and reflections collected for this evidence review demonstrated that lived experience-led interventions had **greater credibility** with individuals experiencing exploitation and affected surrounding communities with **higher engagement levels and self-referral rates.** People with lived experience are shown to have **greater trust** in such interventions and they are also regarded to have **greater relevancy** through the deeper awareness that colleagues with lived experience have of the barriers experienced by affected individuals and communities.

'Survivors provided credibility and a knowledge and understanding of the issue that was often difficult to translate through training to other staff. They also have unique insight into where to find potential victims and how best to approach them.'

(Clawson et al., 2009).

'[Survivor involvement was] unprecedented and mission critical, as [these colleagues] bring an unparalleled understanding of the challenges faced by trafficking victims and the limitations of efforts that focus exclusively on law enforcement and criminal justice.'

(Barrick, n.d.).

Projects and programmes designed and delivered in partnership with grassroots, lived experience-led or survivor-engaged networks and coalitions and affected communities demonstrated **greater sustainability** and a broader range of improved outcomes that were

Whilst legitimate safeguarding concerns have been raised within the sector about the potential for re-traumatisation of professionals with lived experience who engage in anti-human trafficking work the evidence gathered for this study shows that, where organisations put robust support packages in place, colleagues with lived experience taking up professional roles can not only improve the efficacy of programmes and interventions, but they can also derive significant personal, professional and collective benefits. Indeed, some stakeholders focussing on frameworks for trauma-informed practice have **highlighted a link between personal healing for people with lived experience and the ability to effect social change and take political action to overcome forms of oppression**. Resonating with this theory some studies described engagement of people with lived experience as paid and expert colleagues within project teams addressing forms of modern slavery and trafficking as **a form of self-care**.

'This experience left me feeling strong and empowered. I was able to stand up in front of a group of professionals, tell them about my story, and educate them on how to be better providers for other survivors.'

(Panda, Mango and Garg, 2021).

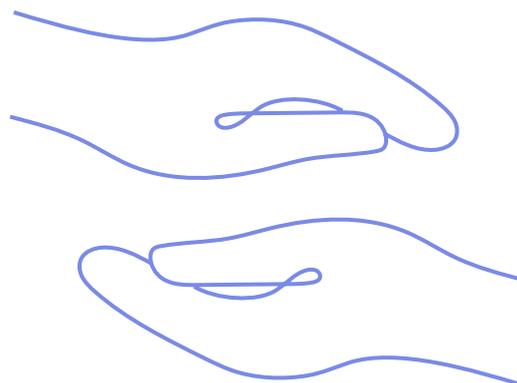
'The women found self-care in working as peer-providers.'

(Fagnoli, 2017).

Where engagement with people with lived experience was undertaken via **grassroots, survivor-led and -centred networks**, coalitions and organisations, the benefits derived were spread with a greater reach amongst affected communities leading to a sense of **connection** and **collective empowerment**. Communities engaged in this way were assessed as having **greater knowledge and in-depth understanding of exploitation, harms and rights** which has been linked to **effective prevention programming**, an ability to **hold authorities and law enforcement to account**, as well as the potential to **address structural inequities** that lead to exploitation.

'Indigenous-led research allows for nuanced, regionally specific Indigenous methodologies that can be healing, transformative and a path forward for decolonization and self-determination.'

(Olson-Pitawanakwat and Baskin, 2021).



In South and East Asian contexts there was also clear concern from a significant number of stakeholders that the term 'modern slavery' could not only alienate affected populations, but also cause stigma and even place people with lived experience in danger.

"Modern slavery" is a "western terminology that is used mostly in the UK and Australia", but the UN would rather use "rights" (child rights, migrant rights) as the gateway to talk to different stakeholders about the same issue.'
(Project Manager UN, South-East Asia).

'There is always a misconception about the terms because the definitions [are] given by individuals who write in different paradigms. These terms confuse ordinary people whom we work with as they are not straightforward in their meaning.'
(Manager, UN Agency, Southern Africa).

'We do not use the term "modern slavery" in our daily work, ... we even try to avoid us[ing] the word "child labour" and use the phrase "underage workers" ... because otherwise, it will give the factory managers too much pressure ...[to] use a term that can criminalise their behaviours ... for the parents [it] is the same, if we use child labour directly, it sounds like we are blaming them being irresponsible. Therefore, we also will not use words like "victims, survivors", we try to help them move on ... We tend to talk only about how to ensure the education rights for children.'
(Case Management Officer, Consulting Company, South, East and South-East Asia).

'... to balance the safety of the interviewee and get useful information, I know my only chance is to take the perspective of corporate social responsibilities (CSR) and get contact with the big brands committed to eliminating child labour/forced labour.'
(Independent Consultant, East and South-East Asia).

'[Modern slavery] language is more common among faith-based, conservative, or rescue-focused organizations.'
(Independent Consultant, North America).

'I think that obviously we would align more with labor trafficking, labor exploitation, human trafficking, sex trafficking. You know, we for the most part, have moved away from using modern day slavery language, but those concepts that are underneath that umbrella are understood.'
(Training Specialist, North America).

a. Policy design and partnerships

i. Working with trusted lived experience-led and issue-based networks and coalitions

Working with trusted lived experience-led and issue-based networks and coalitions enables affected individuals to protect their own identity and avoid direct engagement with unknown international actors whilst having a mechanism to share their expertise, understandings and recommendations. There is a variety of good practice in this area with particularly strong examples in the project dataset from South Asia. Such interventions are recommended by a range of stakeholders due to their ability to enable ethical engagement of a wide base of people with lived experience as well as providing structured and supported opportunities for capacity-building where the practice of actively engaging those with lived experience in policy and programming is nascent. For international organisations too, there is a benefit here in recognising and engaging with established (often elected) local networks rather than attempting to create short-term and project-specific groups or consulting with prominent international groups that may not have requisite local knowledge.

Example case study

Summary of Project/Policy or Programme: NGOs support survivor collectives to shape the National Trafficking in Persons Bill (2016-2021)

Description: With the support of ally-led NGOs, collectives of people with lived experience were enabled to read and understand the proposed bill in detail. One method for this was translation and visual representation of policies proposed in the bill to make it accessible across states and for those who were partially literate or illiterate. This enabled individuals with lived experience and lived experience-led networks and organisations to make specific policy recommendations around definitions of rehabilitation: pushing for community-based rather than shelter homes-based programmes and the delinking of victim compensation from prosecution.

Country/Region: India, South Asia

Sector: Government and NGO

Type of Exploitation: Not specified/Multiple

ii. Consulting survivor-leaders and involvement of experts by experience in steering groups to inform strategic-level policy

An accelerating practice across the sector worldwide, is the consultation of individual or groups of survivor-leaders or the inclusion of people with lived experience within management or steering groups (existing or newly created) to inform strategic level policy of organisations or various levels of local, national and international government. Prominent examples in this vein include the formation of the International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council (ISTAC) by OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR); or the establishment of an 'Advisory Board for the Potential and Identified Victims of Trafficking', composed of three people with lived experience representing stakeholders from across the 'Coalition of the Albanian Shelters for Victims of Trafficking'. The latter Advisory Board's remit includes making recommendations 'on police liaison, communications with shelter residents, appropriate interviewing conditions, efficacy of trafficking criminal investigations and trial procedures, and access to longer term, independent move-on accommodation.' (OSCE, 2022).

Example case study

Summary of Project/Policy or Programme: Set-up of OSCE's International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council (ISTAC)

Description: In 2020, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe's (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) launched an International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council (ISTAC). This advisory council consists of 21 leading survivors and experts of human trafficking and was set up 'with due attention to diversity in terms of expertise, gender and geographical location'. The Council assists member countries across the OSCE region in increasing and improving their combat of human trafficking via a variety of activities.

'We have this advisory council [ISTAC] to ensure that the work from the beginning to the end involves survivors and inclusion [...]. I think [survivor engagement] at ISTAC is good enough because, through the selection, we were paid, we were trained, and there is a media/channel to get involved in. There is a lot of work we get involved in. We have now created paperwork for our involvement. [... For] our engagement with them [ODIHR], we are compensated with per diem and stipend.'
(Member, ISTAC)

Country/Region: Europe

Sector: Government

Type of Exploitation: Not specified

iii. Informing policy formation and dissemination

While interview data collected for this study evidenced a strong appetite among networks of people with lived experience and affected communities for being involved in policy design and development, with many stakeholders having directly experienced the impact of flawed policy or policy implementation, only a few tangible examples emerged of promising practice in this area.

Example case study

Summary of Project/Policy or Programme: OSCE's development of gender-sensitive policy informed by engagement of people with lived experience.

Description: The world's largest regional security organisation conducted multilevel engagement of people with lived experience during development and dissemination of a large-scale study on gender-sensitive approaches to combat trafficking. The study explored issues including gender effects on the recruitment of trafficking victims and state response; how societal stereotypes regarding gender tend to create risk for certain groups, cause some victims to be overlooked and can also make it harder for those exploited to disclose and identify as victims. People with lived experience were engaged in three ways in relation to this policy evaluation:

1. A wide array of individuals with lived experience, who could give different perspectives, were engaged to provide feedback on findings pre-publication;
2. Experts by experience organised related events ('from conceptualisation to inviting speakers to moderating the panels') and spoke at a launch event about their experience of engaging in policymaking;
3. Training based on the publication was designed and run by people with lived experience, including simulation-based experiences for police forces, social workers, labour inspectorate, NGOs and prosecutors.

'So what we do is hire survivors to help us develop the scenario, follow the training and make sure that the survivor is instructing the anti-trafficking practitioner, saying, 'that is not how you do this. You might want to shift and look a little bit like this'. The goal here is to move 180 degrees away from tokenistic engagement with survivors and to include them in a way that ... highlights their very expertise. This allows their expertise to direct what our activities are.'

(Executive Programme Officer, OSCE)

Country/Region: Europe

Sector: Government

Type of Exploitation: Not specified

iv. Supporting the formation of lived experience-led, grassroots and issue-based networks, coalitions and interventions

Supporting the formation of lived experience-led and issue-based networks and coalitions has been identified as a practice that is both inclusive and capacity-building for the anti-human trafficking sector. Evidence collected for this study illuminates a concentration of such work in contexts of South Asia and a variety of regions in Africa, where either through resourcing, stigma or socio-political challenge people with lived experience struggle to gain recognition from or access to people in positions of power for social change.

Example case study

Summary of Project/Policy or Programme: NGO partners and donors supporting the formation and growth of 'Identity-Based Associations' and a more inclusive aid sector

Description: Shakti Samuha is an Identity Based Association (IBA) set-up in Nepal by 'stigmatized women' survivors. The association comprises an elected board of survivors, an advisory committee of allied professionals, a staff that is made up of 70% survivors and a general assembly of over 135 survivor members and allies. It has become an award-winning actor in the national anti-trafficking space delivering programmes including prevention, awareness-raising and advocacy, reintegration and rehabilitation initiatives. Its model of set-up illuminates the gains that can be made through supporting the formation and capacity-building of grassroots movements and networks.

Shakti Samuha was established by a small group of female survivors who were repatriated from India following experiences of exploitation. Several organisations, including WOREC Nepal, Global Fund for Women, Oxfam-GB and Save the Children Norway (Redd Barna) provided initial support and training to these women enabling them to found and develop their own anti-trafficking organisation before it was formally registered. Once registered, UN-GIFT was also an early sponsor. Staff, leaders, board members, supporters and partners of Shakti Samuha emphasised the importance of NGO partners and donors who can offer safe spaces for connection of IBAs in their early stages; flexible contracts inclusive of nascent and unregistered IBAs; capacity-building support and human resource development and co-funding with partners who can decrease the administrative burden on IBAs. Such practices are identified as a pre-requisite to fostering 'inclusive aid' that is based on more egalitarian relations among development actors that centre human rights, affected communities and their representatives.

Reference: M. Tanaka, 'Changing Relationships between Rights Holders and Others in Inclusive Aid: A Case Study of Partnerships between NGOs and Identity-Based Associations in Nepal' *Journal of Contemporary India Studies: Space and Society*, 5 (2015) 31-38 <<http://doi.org/10.15027/37255>>

Country/Region: Nepal, South Asia

Sector: NGO and Development

Type of Exploitation: Not specified

v. Leadership programmes, fellowships and employment pathways

Stakeholders in every region consulted for this study agreed on the importance of developing lived experience-leadership. Such initiatives were considered essential to the efficacy of future anti-human trafficking work and for ensuring that engagement of people with lived experience is ethical and meaningful by embedding capacity-building initiatives that are not merely extractive of affected individuals' unique knowledge, perspectives and skill sets. Interview data collected for this study and material submitted to our global call for research evidenced the increasing, though nascent, development of programmes and fellowships designed to foster survivor-leadership and offer employment pathways to people with lived experience. In contexts where this work was more developed, nuanced insights were offered on problematic assumptions that could govern such initiatives and ways that these could be addressed. Key here were concerns about ensuring individualised approaches to professional development. Stakeholders were clear that it should not be assumed that all people with lived experience will want to take up leadership positions in the anti-human trafficking sector. Opportunities for professional development of individuals with lived experience, including in leadership, should centre on transferable skills and be responsive to each person's diversity of career ambitions and aspirations.

Example case study

Summary of Project/Policy or Programme: Survivor Alliance's Employment Pathways Programme developed in partnership with the Freedom Fund

Description: Survivor Alliance's Employment Pathways Programme has been designed with input from people with lived experience based in the UK and aims to place survivors of slavery and human trafficking into paid positions within anti-slavery organisations, equipping fellows with entry-level skills required for working in non-profit organisations. A pilot program was completed in May 2022 at Freedom Fund, with two part-time positions in their London office in the areas of Strategic Partnerships and Programmes. The Employment Pathways Programme offers a continuum of support, providing fellows with mentoring from Survivor Alliance during the entire fellowship and during the exit and transition phases. The programme delivers a new model for inclusion of people with lived experience of modern slavery and for broader diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Country/Region: UK/Global

Sector: NGO and Development

Type of Exploitation: Not specified/Multiple

b. Programme development and implementation²

vi. Public untargeted awareness-raising (advocacy)

There is established, though widely contested, practice in NGOs (often from international contexts) engaging individuals with lived experience, who may be beneficiaries of their programmes and services, to share their personal experiences of trauma in the media. The sharing of such stories has historically been a central component of fundraising campaigns for international actors in the anti-slavery sector.

Our research evidenced widespread mistrust of the media and NGOs using such practices due to their potentially extractive and exploitative nature. Sharing of affected individuals' experiences in this manner is seen to have greater benefits for the organisations behind these campaigns than the people with lived experience at their centre, who can often experience stigmatisation and re-traumatisation through such initiatives where featured individuals are often presented as passive victims, rather than empowered survivors.

Where some people with lived experience are given the space, power and resource to tell their own stories on their own terms with a clear sense of how, where and why these stories will be used, awareness-raising through sharing of lived experience can be considered to have benefits in terms of empowerment and contribution to healing processes, (though this has more often been the case with targeted sensitising campaigns, such as storytelling for peer support in survivor-centred spaces – see examples below).³

Interview data for this study made clear that considering affected individuals' sharing of their trafficking experience as the primary form of work that people with lived experience are equipped to do, or should do, is highly problematic and often associated with tokenistic engagement. Some stakeholders raised concerns over the systemic power dynamics that may lead some people with lived experience to share their personal experiences publicly out of pressure, coercion, or obligation and without adequate preparation, coping strategies, and self-management skills. A notable number of interviewees with lived experience also described that their attitudes to public storytelling had shifted significantly over time from positive to ambivalent or negative as they saw or experienced impacts upon their well-being and career trajectory.

2. A number of examples given in this section cluster around engagement of people with lived experience in awareness-raising activities. This is because current practice in involving experts by experience in implementation activities tends towards these forms of activities i.e. public speaking, sharing personal stories of trauma and exploitation. However, there are a much broader array of implementation activities that people with lived experience could lead and engage in across programming to address forms of exploitation and there should be a widening of ambition in this area to involve people with lived experience in all aspects of implementation activity not just public speaking.

3. See, for example, S. Otiende, 'A toolkit for ethical antislavery work: Models for improved practice drawing on AKN projects' *How Can we Practice Freedom? An exhibition by the Antislavery Knowledge Network*, <https://aknexhibition.org/toolkit/>

Example case study

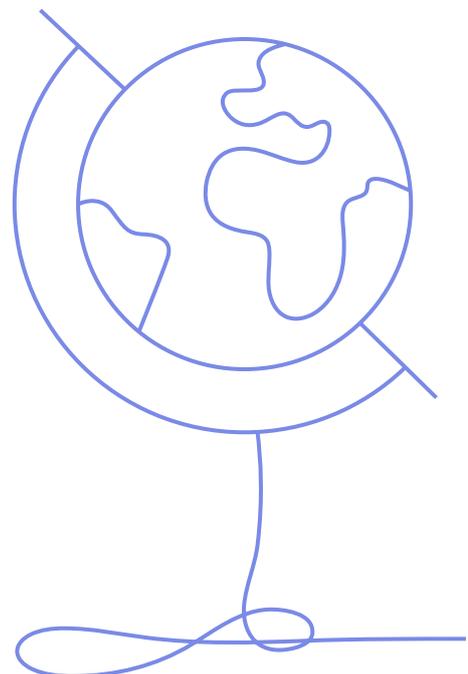
Summary of Project/Policy or Programme: Grassroots community based organisation, Youth Leaders for Restoration and Development (YOLRED), develop a model of ethical storytelling

Description: YOLRED is a local NGO designed, built and run by formerly abducted child soldiers. In partnership with University of Bristol, a UK-based artist and supported by the Antislavery Knowledge Network, members of YOLRED created a model of ethical storytelling for public awareness-raising. The project employed storytelling practices that differ from those routinely used in international fundraising campaigns, which have caused much stigma and disempowerment among returnees despite the best of intentions. In-depth interviews were conducted with former child soldiers, which recounted individuals' experiences of abduction, captivity, rehabilitation and the longer-term challenges of reintegration. Twenty-seven of these testimonies were amalgamated into one narrative and used to create a visually striking yet nuanced, accessible and ethically-sensitive comic. The form and content of this narrative refused the tropes of rescue and victimhood, while the creative process used to develop it enabled YOLRED's members to share their stories of survival without revealing their identity.

Country/Region: Uganda, East Africa

Sector: NGO

Type of Exploitation: Child soldiery



vii. Targeted awareness raising, 'sensitising' and 'promoting literacy' for at-risk groups or peer-support

This is a prevalent practice with examples and recommendations drawn from almost all regions where research for this study was conducted (including Eastern Europe, East Asia, North America, and West Africa). Across these examples there was variance in the formality and stage at which people with lived experience were involved – suggesting that this is an accessible form of engagement for affected individuals that is in demand and widely considered to be appropriate if conducted in an ethical and empowering manner or ideally lived experience-led. Other recent studies have similarly distinguished between 'generalised awareness-raising' and what they term 'promoting literacy' defined as 'enabling the development of knowledge and in-depth understanding of exploitation, harms and rights ... as well as the skills to take action at personal, community and organisational levels' among different populations, 'including victims, survivors [and] people at risk' (Such et al. 2022). There is limited data available in the form of formal evaluation of impacts and effectiveness of such initiatives, though the transformative value of lived experience-led and -informed approaches in this area are widely attested to by stakeholders.

Example case study

Summary of Project/Policy or Programme: Grassroots storytelling initiatives led by people with lived experience amongst at-risk and affected communities.

Description: In social and political contexts where it is difficult for organisations to work on issues of 'modern slavery' or 'human trafficking' grassroots and informal awareness raising issues led by people with lived experience address crucial resourcing and knowledge gaps. In East Asia people with lived experience design programmes for at-risk communities and teach peers about how to protect themselves. They are trusted within affected communities and are able to run workshops, share books on the topic of 'modern slavery' and its roots causes and create spaces to debate related topics such as discrimination and gender inequality.

'It is more effective... they are designing the programmes that really respond to the people in need. Since they were victims before, they understand what are the root causes that made them end up in such a situation. They are also in a better position to teach their peers to protect themselves. They know their communities and the communities trust them ... For me, they are providing a deeper engagement which has an impact not only on the industry but also on the notions of the participants. Some of them understand their own values and start to think about their life meaning and career path.'

(Consultant, East Asia)

Country/Region: East Asia

Sector: Civil Society

Type of Exploitation: Child labour

viii. Targeted awareness raising, training and education for service providers and those involved in law enforcement

Targeted awareness-raising activities that aim to offer or improve training and education for frontline service providers and those involved in the justice system increasingly involve people with lived experience. A wealth of studies evidence lived experience involvement in such programmes at design, implementation and evaluation phase, though quality and level of engagement varies. For example, in the US context a range of such training or education programmes have been developed to improve policy and practice of healthcare providers and professionals who may come into contact with those experiencing trafficking, with the aims of improving identification of victims and offering services and support to those exploited. Forms of engaging people with lived experience in such programmes have ranged from groups offering feedback on personal experiences in healthcare settings as evaluation or research participants, to consultants collaborating on design of training curricula and peer-trainers delivering workshops for professionals.

Interview data as well as extant literature on the topic shows that similar initiatives are also being undertaken in selected contexts in East Africa and Europe. Some of these interventions focus on training initiatives for professionals involved in the justice system to improve knowledge of trafficking and practices in interacting with victims, affected individuals in recovery and colleagues with lived experience.

Example case study

Summary of Project/Policy or Programme: A participatory advocacy project with survivors of sexual violence in Albania, Moldova and Serbia led by international researchers in partnership with local service providers.

Description: The Our Voices project offers a programme of training leading to participatory advocacy for youth survivors of sexual violence in Eastern Europe. The project recruited 3 groups (n=15) of women (18-26) in conversation with trusted local service providers. It provided a 12-week course of engagement with a toolkit comprising: education, training and peer-support for young women affected by sexual violence who, in turn, developed advocacy activities and training materials to improve responses to children and young people affected by sexual violence amongst targeted groups of professionals. In Moldova, for example, a video titled *Letter to the Judge* was developed by participants with lived experience (www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dw-BhWfkeDo), which was launched by the group at a high-level event in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection.

In line with trauma-informed and strengths-based practices this project emphasised the importance of connecting the personal healing of people with lived experience to their opportunities to work towards socio-political change by challenging systems of oppression. While the project acknowledged 'significant ethical and practical challenges' it argued for 'put[ting] risk into perspective' in order to recognise the potential protective benefits of participatory work for participants.

'In order for benefits for young people to arise, particularly those related to empowerment, there has to be genuine opportunities for individuals to inform decision-making and influence change.'

(Researcher and programme co-designer, UK).

Country/Region: Albania, Moldova, Serbia, Eastern Europe

Sector: Social Services/NGOs and Academic/Research

Type of Exploitation: Youth sexual violence

Reference: S. Bovarnick and C. Cody, 'Putting risk into perspective: Lessons for children and youth services from a participatory advocacy project with survivors of sexual violence in Albania, Moldova and Serbia' *Children and Youth Services Review*, 126 (2021) 106003

ix. Involving people with lived experience in funding decisions and developing research priorities

One relatively new area of practice involves lived experience in the prioritisation of research and decisions over which projects and programmes get funded. This potentially provides a significant route for increasing the influence of people with lived experience and their perspectives on the generation of evidence to inform and support policy and programming. While this is an emerging area, there are some lessons from efforts to include lived experience in the realm of public health, although there is relatively little documented guidance (for an exception see, e.g. Rittenbach et al 2019). Donors such as GFEMS and Freedom Fund have prioritised lived experience-led projects and set up ring-fenced resources, e.g. the 'Survivor Leadership Fund', but the involvement of lived experience in the identification of research priorities, drafting of calls and funding decisions offers a powerful way to influence the research agenda itself. The UK's Modern Slavery PEC has progressively increased involvement of lived experience in its funding processes, arguing that it "will help us to produce higher quality, more relevant research. There are also wider benefits for the people who will be able to get involved in research and policy, for the wider modern slavery sector, and for the development of better laws and policies, more accurately reflecting the reality of modern slavery and therefore more effective in addressing it."

Example case study

Summary of Project/Policy or Programme: Engagement of people with lived experience by the Modern Slavery PEC in development of calls for research and decision-making on funding.

Description: A consultation on research priorities by the Modern Slavery PEC in 2020 highlighted the need to step up involvement of lived experience in all aspects of the research funding process. The most recent open call for projects issued by the PEC in 2021 on the impact of wider laws and policies on modern slavery featured a lengthened, 2-stage process to enable input into the drafting of the call and sifting of successful applications, and holding a pre-panel consisting of a group of people with lived experience and another made up of policymakers. This allowed the full panel to include insights from people with lived experience and policymakers across every application. Support for the process included fair and equitable remuneration, the development of a new safeguarding policy, ethical recruitment, tailored induction, training, de-brief and support. Although it is too soon to measure the impact of this on the research portfolio that has been funded, the feedback from participants in this process has been very positive, particularly in relation to personal and professional development. According to the Modern Slavery PEC, learning is already being shared with other funders, and the process has helped contribute to wider changes across the organisation in relation to future call processes, its plans to enhance EDI, and day-to-day practice e.g. ethical recruitment, and other practices to make the organisation more inclusive to those with lived experience.

*'I'm working with the Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre (Modern Slavery PEC), advising it on survivor inclusion in its research and policy work. I take part in research funding reviews, panellist meetings reviewing research projects for grant awards and other work-related meetings. I watch myself daily growing in confidence and self-worth, as I thrive in this opportunity to make a difference and give back to the community, as well as earning a decent wage. All the members of staff I have worked with have not treated me differently in any way, I feel accepted, valued and included, I am not pushed to take up any role or responsibility that I don't want to or feel ready for.
(anonymous, news.trust.org/item/20211018151546-e8z7u)*

Country/Region: UK

Sector: Research

Type of Exploitation: Not specified

x. Involvement in service delivery including as peer mentors

Expert consultation conducted for this study and selected literature suggests that there is already widespread, yet largely unrecognised, involvement of people with lived experience in frontline service delivery and a variety of other professional roles in the sector (see, e.g. Cohen, 2011). Some of these stakeholders explained that colleagues with lived experience can be reticent to disclose their identity as a survivor for a variety of reasons including associated stigmas, professional pigeonholing and being held to a different set of standards than allied colleagues.

‘Survivors who work professionally in the field in roles comparable to those filled by non-survivors may be discouraged from disclosing survivorship. One interviewee currently working in a general sector position shared, “I was told by my supervisors to no longer share that I was a survivor because people would no longer deem me as appropriate or believe my ability to manage a project.”’
(Consultant and interviewee, North America).

Despite interview data pointing to the commonplace involvement of people with lived experience as professionals within frontline service delivery in a variety of forms, evidence from our desk-based review yielded only a limited number of cases where the skilled professional work of people with lived experience has been acknowledged, embedded and evaluated within service delivery.

Example case study

Summary of Project/Policy or Programme: The Justice Resource Institute’s survivor-led mentorship programme for CSE-experienced and at-risk youth.

Description: The My Life My Choice (MLMC) programme, founded by the Justice Resource Institute, provides survivor-led mentorship for ‘CSE-experienced’ and ‘at-risk’ youth. The programme pairs exploited/at risk adolescents with trained adult mentors who are survivors of exploitation. MLMC has 13 full-time survivor-mentor staff who have been free from CSE for at least five years. Newly-hired survivor-mentors spend at least two months shadowing a senior survivor-mentor before being assigned their own mentees and will also undertake a minimum of 40 hours training on topics including trauma-informed care, Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSE) of children, healthy boundaries, suicide prevention and substance use. MLMC has a designated survivor-led assessment team, who make first contact with referred youth and match individuals assigned to the programme with a survivor-mentor, who will support mentees exiting CSE and recovering from exploitation. Findings show that survivor-mentorship of CSE-experienced/at risk youth significantly reduced the percentage of those who experienced CSE, used illicit drugs, engaged in delinquent behaviour or were arrested or detained by police. Participants were also shown to have better social support and coping skills.

Country/Region: United States, North America

Sector: Social Services, Justice system and Academic/Research

Type of Exploitation: Sex trafficking

Reference: E.F. Rothman et al., 'A Longitudinal evaluation of a survivor-mentor program for child survivors of sex trafficking in the United States' *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 100 (2020) 104083

xi. Using digital applications to better engage people with lived experience in service provision, law enforcement and evaluation

This mechanism allows people with lived experience to access data on the availability of services in their area, it offers opportunities to improve accountability of service-providers, as well as providing a way to identify service gaps. While there are important safeguarding and data protection issues to consider when engaging communities via digital applications, the value of such technologies is being championed by some stakeholders in the sector for their potential diversity of functions and accessibility (when appropriate hardware and training is provided). Digital applications have been used to enable remote and anonymised identification of services for people with lived experience of human trafficking and evaluation of programmes providing legal aid, housing, or education and livelihood options in the state of West Bengal, India. New applications are being developed and existing platforms are also being used to engage with people with lived experience in South Asia in order to aid with law enforcement.

Example case study

Summary of Project/Policy or Programme: Local NGO facilitates lived experience-led peer-support groups to engage in the development of new apps and trial Whatsapp usage to aid law enforcement

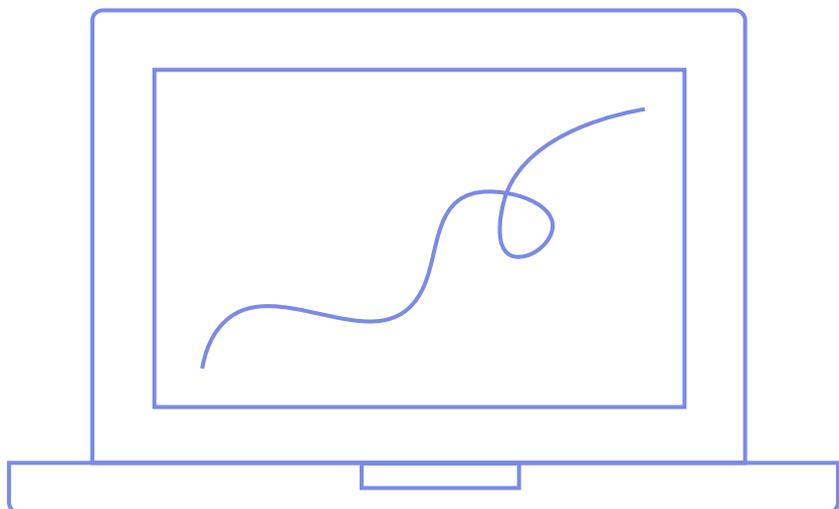
Description: With the support of a local NGO, 134 women with lived experience have been given access to mobile phones and trained in the use of Whatsapp to enable peer-to-peer support. A new application has also been developed with people who have lived experience in mind: it is designed to enable those undergoing exploitation to capture 'real time' evidence. It can be used in English or local languages and also has a voice feature, to enable illiterate individuals affected by exploitation to record audio evidence. The supporting NGO is engaging in discussion with the national government and judiciary to explore whether stored information could be presented in court as evidence of trafficking.

*'As you know, in India most of the cases relating to abuse of women fail to stand in the courts because of lack of evidence. Now to fight slavery we must use technology... We have developed a prototype of an app in which data or information can be stored by survivors on a real time basis when they are going through the process of victimisation... by data I mean photos and other information like recording an abuse'.
(President Activist, NGO, South Asia)*

Country/Region: India, South Asia

Sector: NGO and Law Enforcement

Type of Exploitation: Not specified



c. Monitoring and evaluation

xii. Sharing feedback on programmes and practice as a research participant

Seeking feedback from people with lived experience of exploitation on frontline services and other programmes they may have experienced as a service-user or participant as a result of their trafficking experience is one of the most common reasons why a variety of organisations seek to engage affected individuals. Among motivations frequently given for this type of evaluative engagement is a desire to improve the quality and reach of service provision, though not all programmes are currently evaluated and not all evaluations currently have focused aims and plans for feedback that are transparently shared with those who have offered that feedback. Emerging frameworks on the engagement of people with lived experience warn against open-ended feedback mechanisms that merely gather data without any specific purpose in mind for integrating that feedback into organisational policy and practice. Stakeholders are very clear that such unfocused feedback activities do not constitute 'survivor-informed practice' and run the risk of alienating respondents with lived experience who invest time in sharing feedback without a clear sense of how or where that data will be used and within what timeframe.

If the efficacy of anti-trafficking and modern slavery programmes are to be improved, robust and independent mechanisms for evaluation with transparent and accessible routes for feedback are crucial. The quality of engagement in this area is very mixed at present with many open-ended evaluations that collect the perspectives of people with lived experience on programmes or sector-wide practice without a targeted and transparent plan for programme or policy improvement as a result of that data. Alternatively, there are a variety of evaluative studies with very focused objectives but these do not generally involve those with lived experience who are consulted for feedback in shaping the agenda of an evaluation through the design phase or the analysis of data provided, leaving other stakeholders to control these elements.

Example case study

Summary of Project/Policy or Programme: Involving people with lived experience as participants in academic research to better conceptualise human trafficking prevention.

Description: Survivors (n=35) from four states across the US were brought together in five brainstorming sessions to inform the development of a conceptual framework for prevention of human trafficking. At the outset participants were briefed on informed consent and participant rights as well as background study information including the purpose of the engagement. 108 unique statements were generated to 'describe what can be done to prevent people from being trafficked'. Participants were then asked to review all of these statements, place them into groups by theme or commonality and then rate each group of statements by 'importance' and 'feasibility'. Participants rated the cluster of statements on 'education and awareness' as both the most important and most feasible.

Country/Region: United States, North America

Sector: Academic/Research

Type of Exploitation: Multiple - Labour trafficking and sex trafficking

Reference: J. Donohue-Dioh et al., 'Survivors' conceptualisations of human trafficking prevention; An exploratory study' *Evaluation and Programme Planning*, 83 (2020) 101873.

xiii. Evaluating programmes and practice as a peer-researcher

There is evidence of the involvement of people with lived experience, or inclusion of 'survivor voice' in evaluating anti-slavery and -human trafficking policy and programming since the late 1990s. However, until recently, evaluation mechanisms have almost exclusively used extractive methods that position people with lived experience as research participants offering data input in the form of testimony, rather than working with them as research partners or project leaders to shape the agenda of evaluations or the analysis of gathered evidence.

Data collected through interviews and literature analysed for this study evidenced a strong appetite amongst affected individuals and communities to be more actively involved in the design, analysis and delivery of research and reporting. In some contexts, good examples of how this can work in practice are beginning to emerge, with experts by experience working as peer researchers to conduct and direct research and evaluation.

Example case study

Summary of Project/Policy or Programme: Researcher-Survivor-Ally evaluation of the Mayor's Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking commissioned by the National Institute for Justice (2016-2019).

Description: A 'first-of-its-kind' survivor-ally led comprehensive evaluation of the Mayor's Task-Force on Anti-Human Trafficking in San Francisco. At all levels of the research process including that of Co-Principal Investigator and Research Assistants, people with lived experience who also had the professional skills needed to conduct this work led the project. This enabled survivors' insights, expertise and perspectives to direct the evaluation at multiple levels with involvement in conducting and analysing informant interviews as well as devising a research infrastructure to support the intellectual and career development of trafficked persons.

Country/Region: United States, North America

Sector: Government and Academic/Research

Type of Exploitation: Not specified/Multiple

Reference: A. Lutnick and M. Dang, *Researcher-Survivor-Ally Evaluation of the Mayor's Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking, Final Process Report* (National Institute of Justice, DC, 2018)

xiv. Involvement in monitoring programmes and sector-wide practice

Monitoring committees that include people with lived experience as members can create active opportunities for affected individuals to provide feedback on programmes and improve practice while a project is active, rather than waiting until a programme is complete and formal evaluation is conducted. There are limited concrete examples in this area, though consensus among interviewed stakeholders affirms that creating effective monitoring mechanisms for policy and programmes designed to address modern slavery, which are engaging people with lived experience, is a priority for the sector to address. A brief example from an NGO based in Uganda shows that such arrangements create ongoing opportunities for learning and sharing during the project cycle and for addressing any elements that are not functioning effectively.

People with lived experience have also been involved in informing the development of international level instruments for monitoring the efficacy of efforts to tackle trafficking by governments worldwide (see case study).

Example case study

Summary of Project/Policy or Programme: Lived Experience Expert Groups (LEEG) run by Walk Free in partnership with Survivor Alliance to inform indicators for the Global Slavery Index (GSI).

Description: LEEGs have been run in the UK, India, Ghana and Kenya with the purpose of asking survivors for their expertise on measures of government assessment that comprise the GSI. People with lived experience were paid for their attendance at these workshops at the level of consultants. Among the work undertaken at these workshops was LEEG review of the GSI's conceptual framework and indicators. Participants were asked, for example, which indicators could be removed and which were missing. In the UK, the LEEG highlighted that the right to work while going through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) had not been included, while the Kenyan group highlighted the importance of monitoring recruitment agencies. After testing for availability of data, both of these indicators were added to the GSI framework for all countries in the government response assessment.

'Our partnership with Survivor Alliance ensures that the LEEGs are survivor-led and survivor-driven. Survivor Alliance ensures that participants have a safe environment where they can freely contribute and develop an advocacy strategy that utilizes the GSI as a point of leverage. The process is inclusive for people of different levels of education and experience with research, and incorporates training about the role survivors can play in anti-slavery work beyond the LEEGs.'

(Walk Free Foundation and Survivor Alliance)

Country/Region: UK, India, Ghana, Kenya/Global

Sector: Government and Civil Society

Type of Exploitation: Not specified/Multiple

6. How to connect practice with principles: ethical and meaningful engagement of people with lived experience

There are a growing number of toolkits, concepts and guidelines outlining the key principles for ethical and meaningful engagement of people with lived experience, but less is available about the translation of these into practice. There are also notable gaps, e.g. regarding the involvement of people with lived experience in policy design. Strategic, longer-term engagement at the policy level has also not received a great deal of attention in terms of developing bespoke principles, likely because the practice remains nascent.

This section begins by identifying the essential conditions, or 'golden rules' which should inform and shape **all** good practice: namely that engagement of people with lived experience must be: non-tokenistic, trauma-informed, and prevent harm. The rest of the section then presents evidence about specific areas of practice to show how these can connect with key principles and provide insights into implementation, including insights into strategic and operational issues.

- a. Essential foundations of good practice
- b. Mainstreaming engagement of a diversity of people with lived experience
- c. Equitable recruitment, compensation and professional development
- d. Effective collaboration and partnership, monitoring and evaluation

a. Essential foundations of good practice

Relevant to every area of practice, the following emerged from our research as providing essential conditions or foundations for meaningful, ethical and effective engagement to take place. As will be illustrated in the subsequent sections, many other principles flow from, or connect, with these.

i. Non-tokenistic

Stakeholders across a range of global regions agreed that the accelerating desire to engage with people who have lived experience in the anti-slavery and -human trafficking sector does not yet translate into meaningful engagement in many cases. Although it can be difficult to succinctly define 'meaningful', there was wide agreement that it means not tokenistic. Tokenism means actors and organisations claiming engagement without real opportunities for people with lived experience to offer input, challenge, make decisions and transform practice. Taking steps to understand and avoid tokenistic engagement were agreed to be crucial in ensuring a successful approach to engagement.

'Tokenism: a superficial practice to create the appearance of social inclusivity and diversity; includes members of minority or underrepresented groups, including survivor leaders, as a symbolic gesture to avoid criticism.'

(Bender quoted in National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center, 2018).

"...I can be included in a choir, I just go to the practice but they don't really engage me like they don't really get me into action like I'm just there to add the population" [these thoughts] led me to reflect about the tokenistic involvement of survivors in projects and programmes which is more often just for show... involvement is common, but meaningful inclusion is still not where it needs to be.'

(Director, NGO, Central Africa and Independent Consultant, East Africa).

To ensure that engagement of people with lived experience is meaningful, rather than tokenistic, it is crucial to make sure there is clarity on purpose and how the time and resource of people with lived experience will inform a particular practice, policy or programme. Engagement should always lead towards tangible and meaningful change, e.g. for communities or beneficiaries of programmes, or the organisations and people involved in designing and delivering programmes. For this to happen, other areas of practice come into play, such as equitable recruitment, partnership, fair pay and professional development.

ii. Trauma-informed

Increasingly recognised as key amongst frameworks developed for engagement of people with lived experience of modern slavery and human trafficking are trauma-informed approaches and practices. These are widely referenced as essential for best practice by previous research and by those interviewed for this review. Trauma-informed approaches have developed out of practice first devised in healthcare settings and summarised in resources such as the 6 principles devised in the US by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)'s National Center for Trauma-Informed Care (NCTIC) in collaboration with The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response (OPHPR).

6 guiding principles to a trauma-informed approach

The CDC's Center for Preparedness and Response (CPR), in collaboration with SAMHSA's National Center for Trauma-Informed Care (NCTIC), developed and led a new training for CPR employees about the role of trauma-informed care during public health emergencies. The training aimed to increase responder awareness of the impact that trauma can have in the communities where they work.

Participants learned SAMHSA'S six principles that guide a trauma-informed approach, including:



Adopting a trauma-informed approach is not accomplished through any single particular technique or checklist. It requires constant attention, caring awareness, sensitivity, and possibly a cultural change at an organizational level. On-going internal organizational assessment and quality improvement, as well as engagement with community stakeholders, will help to imbed this approach which can be augmented with organisational development and practice improvement. The training provided by CPR and NCTIC was the first step for CDC to view emergency preparedness and response through a trauma-informed lens.

Content source: [Center for Preparedness and Response](#)

Many of the principles outlined here resonate strongly with the aspects of individual support and care that most stakeholders we interviewed referred to as essential in ensuring meaningful rather than tokenistic engagement. However, what was widely lost in these reflections on current practice was the clear emphasis in original frameworks on connecting personal healing of affected individuals with political context and opportunities for collective social action to tackle forms of oppression (on the connection between healing and social action see for example, Bovarnick, 2021; Olson-Pitawanakwat and Baskin, 2021).

Our interviews with stakeholders highlighted that people with lived experience come to engagement with a variety of life experiences that shape how they feel, what they think, and how they respond during interaction with other stakeholders in the anti-human trafficking sector. **Creating a trauma-informed organisational context** for people with lived experience to work within, alongside provision of robust support, including peer-support for colleagues with lived experience, can enable 'triggers' to be managed effectively, harms to be avoided or minimised and can enable non-survivor colleagues to be better equipped to understand this and manage their own triggers.

'I see in many consultations, when survivors speak, they come out emotionally and the others feel that it's a disturbance. You must learn to respect the emotional aspect of the survivors. Winning the trust of survivors and confidence takes time before they speak with you.'

(President/Activist, NGO South Asia).

Interviews with experts show that appreciating and recognising the trauma felt by people with lived experience can be both powerful for them and other stakeholders, leading to meaningful engagement. Trauma should not be used to exclude people with lived experience from engagement, but instead, a wide range of adaptations can be made to support affected individuals to cope with the effects of trauma.

Safety and trustworthiness are key for effective engagement of people with lived experience, with organisations integrating physical, emotional, psychological and cultural safety measures as part of their trauma-informed engagement. Data from grassroots local organisations, where most engagements seem to happen, suggests that it is important to understand that people with lived experience might feel unsafe in the engagement space/environment, experiencing difficulty trusting other stakeholders and their intentions. The reactions of people with lived experience may be influenced by what has come before, or expectations of what is to come next, including fear of being let down by yet another set of stakeholders. Therefore, safety and trustworthiness must be established from the first encounter with people who have lived experience and continually addressed throughout the engagement process.

'So, one of the core values is that we do not undermine the rights of the survivor leaders' groups as well as our rights as allies. It is important to engage with survivors in an authentic respectful way, recognize their talent and support them in their growth but they must not be patronized, nor should their agency be undermined in assuming that they will not understand anything.'
(Director/Activist, NGO, South Asia).

There are also a range of frameworks for effective community engagement, and inclusion of vulnerable and marginalised stakeholders from cognate areas of practice that are useful in informing work to ethically and meaningfully engage people with lived experience in policy and programming on modern slavery and human trafficking. Examples of this work that speak to trauma-informed principles of **collaboration**, **peer-support** and **empowerment** include:

[National Institute for Health and Care Research \(NIHR\), Resources on Patient and Public Involvement and INVOLVE programme resources](#)

[GSDRC Guide on Voice, Empowerment and Accountability in International Development](#)

iii. Prevent harm

Frameworks using terminologies of trauma-informed practice relate closely to wider systems, processes and practices intended to anticipate, prevent and mitigate harm. In the UK context this comes under 'safeguarding' which includes lines of accountability and redress. However, a key finding from the data collected for this study is that 'safeguarding' as a concept is unfamiliar in many of the national and regional contexts where our consultants have conducted interviews. The concept and its specific application needs to be context-appropriate and ideally co-developed with involvement of partners and beneficiaries.

We found that in different regions disparate/siloed set of ideas, policies and practices were designed to prevent or mitigate harms within specific areas of programming – e.g. child protection policies, policies to address gender-based violence during emergencies etc. In some contexts, broader terms such as ‘protection’ or the maxim ‘do no harm’, widely used in the humanitarian sector worldwide, were also offered as a starting point for introducing the concept of safeguarding. Aspects of safeguarding related to the rights of whistle-blowers and accountability of organisations to good governance (included within recently published guidance by UKCDR: [Balch et al., 2020](#)) do not seem to be widely recognised under this term, though some did mention this.

‘It is not necessary to expose people to undue risk. It can be prevented. It should be prevented, and organisations need to be responsible for how and when they engage particular people. [...]. Survivors need to step up on their terms and not quest into, you know, coming into the picture because it will make your program beautiful and attract positive reviews.’

(Director, INGO, West Africa).

Consensus among the stakeholders we interviewed was that safeguarding is paramount for any kind of involvement, engagement and inclusion of people with lived experience. Yet, while the need for formalised risk-reduction and due diligence was recognised as good practice to ensure robust safeguarding practices are embedded within organisations, policies and specific programmes, a range of stakeholders emphasised the importance of balance in this area.

While effective and context-appropriate ‘safeguarding’ should be considered an essential foundation of the engagement of people with lived experience, there are risks that systems and processes to protect can become politicised or mis-used. An example of this is the forced ‘rescue’ of sex workers against their will. Certain safeguarding practices were pointed to by experts in both the US and India as impeding engagement of people with lived experience and creating mistrust. Similarly for affected individuals who work in the anti-trafficking sector as professionals, misapplication of safeguarding policies has been highlighted as contributing to discriminatory/paternalistic practices and acting as a barrier to meaningful leadership and progression. Examples here include people with lived experience being overlooked for promotion, being subject to additional scrutiny of their workplace behaviour in ways not imposed on non-survivor colleagues, or being excluded from certain types of work whilst being told these decisions have been made ‘for their own good’.

‘...sometimes the conservative approach by the anti-slavery groups to control survivors in the name of risk aversion also contributes to silencing the voice of the survivors.’

(Independent Consultant, South Asia).

For meaningful engagement of people with lived experience to be built on appropriate safeguarding, this should be co-developed and produced to avoid reinforcing or re-introducing power dynamics, e.g. within organisations, or reflecting wider structural inequalities, and incorporating issues such as equity, fairness as central to anticipating and preventing harm (Balch et al., 2020).

'So one key element is that survivors are in decision-making positions. So our staff and board are the majority survivors, as written into our bylaws. I try and say, you know, imagine a women's movement with no women in it, or very few women in it. It is like our current anti-trafficking sector. It is a sector, not a movement, but imagine if there are no or very few survivors. You have to have survivors in decision-making positions.'
(Executive Director, NGO, UK).

Finally, the experience of the Modern Slavery PEC illustrates the importance of recognising power dynamics at the earliest stage and throughout the development of an advisory board. The PEC decided to create permanent staff positions for people with lived experience to oversee, set up and manage their advisory board. It was felt that including this pre-step in the development process could help ensure the whole process was informed and led by people with lived experience. This has the potential to maximise the influence and power of the body to make a difference, aligning with the principles of non-tokenism, but also helping ensure the process is inclusive, equitable and ethical.

'The other thing that we've learned is that the ideas for where the organization goes on survivor leadership, those ideas need to come from the survivors. Last year we had a board member who was a survivor who worked really closely with staff to create a racism survey. But that was an idea that literally this survivor came up with. She said, we should do a survey on racism. Let's not just do the regular sort of survivor leadership stuff. And then this year, another survivor suggested that the organization should be working on poverty. And so we're doing an entire sort of focus group and survey now on how poverty impacts trafficking survivors.'
(Lawyer NGO US).

d. Effective collaboration and partnership, monitoring and evaluation

Previous sections have emphasised the importance of mainstreaming, intra-organisational change and fair recruitment, but engagement of people with lived experience in international policy and programming on modern slavery is likely to be implemented through collaboration and partnership. This is because of the value of local NGOs (LNGOs) and grassroots networks in developing meaningful, long-term and sustainable engagement with communities most affected by modern slavery. Some of these will include lived experience-led and -centred organisations and networks, and these may be involved in processes of monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL).

i. Working with local partners

There have been a range of initiatives to support effective collaboration with local partners. Examples include the partnership-building work of Norway's Forum for Women and Development (FOKUS) which is supported by the Norwegian Agency for Development (NORAD) (e.g. a forum organised by FOKUS was held in Thailand in 2007 to facilitate networking between organisations in Asia and the Middle East with Norwegian counterparts). The United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT) (2007-2010) was another early example of efforts to support the work of grassroots, lived experience-led organisations (one stream of its funding, the Small Grants Facility (SGF), focussed on making funding available to local, community-based organisations, with Nepal's survivor-led non-profit, Shakti Samuha, among their grantees. Many organisations in the third sector who fund and support anti-trafficking work, such as Freedom Fund and Oxfam UK, also have established networks of local NGOs that they work with on both short-term and longer-term bases (See Tanaka, 2015 and The Freedom Fund, n.d.).

Our interviewed stakeholders noted that for partnerships to enable meaningful engagement of people with lived experience it is important to acknowledge points of dissonance as well as organisational alignments and resonances. Such divergence need not be resolved but rather transparently and respectfully discussed in order to ensure effective partnerships and programmes.

'For survivor engagement to be successful, expressing disagreements and bringing out conflict is as important as looking at alignments, resonances, empathy. The disagreements need to be projected transparently, authentically, and respectfully ... we don't undermine the rights of the survivor leader leaders' groups as well as our rights as allies.'

(Director, NGO, South Asia).

'As an ally organization or as advocates who work with survivors, if you disagree with survivors in any process or any action, for example, positions that they are taking, it is important to bring that (the differences) up transparently, authentically, and respectfully.'

(Director/Activist, NGO, South Asia).

It may not always be possible to facilitate engagement in all contexts, and there could be good reasons for this which should be used to reflect upon and re-evaluate the purpose and value of the policy or programme. The choice not to engage should also be respected with an understanding of the varied socio-political contexts in which people with lived experience are situated.

'In the Asia-Pacific region we were pointed to survivors who had 'built a community to help women understand their rights and the ways to escape from hazardous working conditions' but these individuals declined to speak with us because they felt participating in 'modern slavery' related research would put them in danger.'
(Case Management Officer, Consulting Company, South, East and South-East Asia).

Local partners are shown to be much more effective at mobilising local citizens and affected communities to hold authorities accountable, as well as improving the efficacy of anti-trafficking initiatives by supporting in the process of law enforcement and prosecution (Balanon and Barrameda, 2007). One example of this is the development of Self-Regulatory Boards (SRBs) by the sex worker collective Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (DMSC) in the Sonagachi neighbourhood of Kolkata, India. These boards are sex worker-led and include those with lived experience of trafficking. They combat human trafficking and child sexual exploitation by systematically screening all newcomers to red light areas leading to the successful identification of minors and unwilling adult women who are then assisted to exit and supported in rehabilitation. Over a three-year period DSMC was able to identify 259 trafficking cases compared to local police identification of 90 cases (Jana et al., 2014).

'For survivors' engagement to have meaning, survivors' collectives need to be treated equally ... and find common areas of co-operation [with allies] ... trust building and retaining trust are essential for the survivors' collectives to be strong.'
(Director, NGO, South Asia/Independent Consultant, South Asia).

Interviewed stakeholders for this review pointed to funders' lacking awareness of local and international power struggles within the aid sector that can lead to smaller, grassroots organisations being unable to access funding opportunities. Smaller grassroots organisations and their international NGO partners also highlighted further barriers to funding in the form of eligibility requirements that effectively barred organisations in low-resource or conflict settings who may not have a formal track record of previous international funding, a certain level of cash reserves, grant-writing experience, English language proficiency or even particular administrative capacity (in relation to due diligence or access to banking) (METIP, 2022). Ineffective feedback loops in this kind of work have also been linked to potential stagnation and disengagement by affected individuals and communities who are not kept clearly and transparently informed of how their input has or has not been taken on board to inform policy or programming.

'How much of the funding goes to the victim and survivor program? Grassroot organisations and not big organisations do the work of survivor inclusion. The big organisations seem to be in this work because of the name, because of the people that work there... But small organisations in Nigeria or the Philippines try to fill the gap, struggling to help and heal people who need help. My organisation, a small organisation in New York, struggles to access funding. We cannot get that big money because we have to have USD 500,000 [...]in our account to apply for that specific grant. This challenge needs to be straightened. The USAID gives funding to many organisations across the globe, but where does the money go? (Founder and CEO, NGO, North America).

'I think one of the barriers is gatekeeping, especially in the NGO field and in the international NGO field. Like people want to be seen as the only experts on the issue that they're working on and they definitely want to be the only recipients of funding, and we see this, again mostly with larger International organisations. With grassroots organisations, there tends to be a lot more solidarity and stuff. But when it comes to the organisations that can give space to survivors, they're the ones who tend to do it the most tokenistically and at times actually they won't even do that.' (Expert, Migration Rights, MENA).

ii. Monitoring and Evaluation

The final area of practice is monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL). MEL tools are increasingly being used to enable engagement of people with lived experience, but here we heard mixed reports about effectiveness, with some examples of tokenism. Analysis suggests that most activity in this area comprises the use of survivor-centred MEL tools, or a gathering of testimony from affected individuals around skills developed or acquired during participation in programme implementation and delivery ([see Section 3 for more detail on the benefits of engaging people with lived experience](#)).

'I mean, first, obviously, on a project-by-project basis, getting the reflections of the people who were involved is really important. It's to see if they felt that they actually had the space to say what they wanted to say and that they were taken seriously. So I feel like that's a really important way to start.' (Expert, Migrant Rights, MENA).

Some stakeholders raised the issue of only certain people with lived experience being 'cherry-picked' to provide feedback based on their known positive views of a programme, rather than organisations honestly seeking feedback that might challenge, but ultimately improve their policies and programmes.

'Meaningful survivor engagement should include challenge and feedback about what can be changed/improved not just what worked.' (Independent Consultant, North America).

While some stakeholders talked about well-established monitoring and evaluation systems for programme impact, engagement of people with lived experience was often not included as an indicator. However, a number of interviewees offered suggestions for possible improvement here:

'So, from their perspective, one is how they saw the activity they were involved in. So it is more qualitative, just the experience and how it may have affected them positively or negatively. That is the first measure. The second also has to do with if there was any major adverse effect or reaction from a third party to their participation. So I'm looking at threats.'

(Lawyer, East Africa).

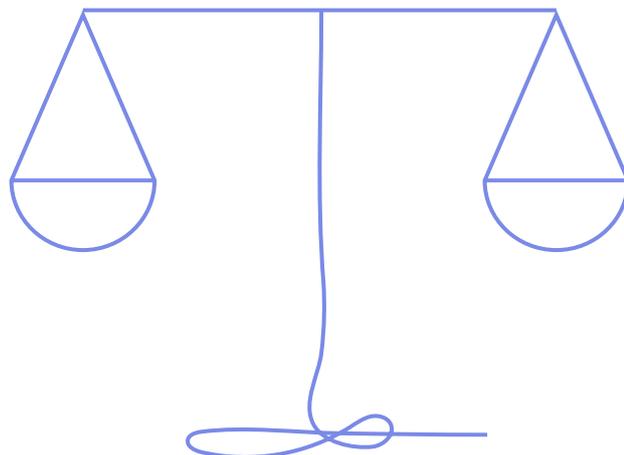
'So, we must measure the success both in qualitative and quantitative form. First, we see how much the capacities of survivors have increased and if the confidence levels have gone up. It is important on the part of the survivor to have confidence and courage to tell their own story or to be vocal. Assessing the communication skills, therefore, are very important for evaluation. Then comes the knowledge levels. When we talk about policies, the survivor must understand the policies – what and where are the gaps in policies and how those gaps can be cemented. These things make the survivor strong. If they can articulate even a bit, it makes them less vulnerable.'

(President/Activist, NGO, South Asia).

'I think that we need to think about success in a more individualistic way as a person, as a survivor, about what success means to them.'

(Clinician, North America).

To meaningfully engage people with lived experience in MEL can enable active on-the-ground and timely feedback, as well as broad-based, anonymised engagement of people with lived experience via trusted local partners rather than requiring those with lived experience to disclose their identity to unknown INGOs and/or governments, given affected individuals' legitimate concerns about potential stigmatisation and criminalisation.



7. Recommendations for policymakers

In line with the objectives of this study, these recommendations are tailored for the UK Government teams working on international modern slavery policy and programming. However, they may also be relevant to organisations working in the field and policymakers in other governments or international organisations. The recommendations take account of the UK International Development Strategy, published May 2022, in particular the shift towards delivering development in partnership, taking a patient approach to enable the tackling of structural problems, increased investment in country programmes led by Ambassadors and High Commissioners, and the importance placed on the voice of beneficiaries of UK Government development work.

a. In all aspects of work where engagement of people with lived experience is undertaken by UK Government and its external delivery partners:

- **Take measures to ensure that initiatives are non-tokenistic, trauma-informed and prevent harm** in line with our findings around widespread consensus on the importance, resonance, and recognition of these three key principles among varied stakeholders across a range of sectors and global regions.
- **As a priority, pursue partnerships with lived experience-led or survivor-led organisations, networks and coalitions.** Our research shows that such partnership working, when done in an equitable and inclusive way: improves outcomes for all stakeholders, increases credibility of projects, heightens engagement levels from affected communities, enhances sustainability of projects and improves projects' ability to understand and address many root causes of exploitation.
- **Undertake a process of identifying context-specific, non-exclusionary terminologies with local stakeholders (including those with lived experience) to avoid alienation or harm.** Our study showed that currently the term 'survivor' is highly gendered and associated with those who have experienced particular forms of exploitation. It should be noted that the term 'survivor' has played an important role for these groups in helping challenge the passive, disempowering implications of being labelled 'victim', amplifying the voices of those affected, and fostering solidarity and collective action to the point that some people and organisations describe themselves as part of a survivor movement. However, the terms 'modern slavery', 'victim' and even 'survivor' have limited resonance among other groups with lived experience and are avoided in a variety of contexts due to political or cultural reasons. Stakeholders in such contexts raise concerns that these terms can alienate, cause stigma for or even endanger people with lived experience.

At a strategic level, for example in the UK Government revised Modern Slavery Strategy and in policy documents, the UK Government should use broad and inclusive terminologies. We recommend terms such as 'people with lived experience' and

'affected communities' to make policies and programmes accessible to the full diversity of people affected by all forms of exploitation covered under SDG 8.7 and to incorporate those at risk of such exploitation. It is, however, important to recognize and respect the value that the term 'survivor' has for many individuals, networks and collectives led by those with lived experience and to reflect that in relevant partnerships.

- **We recommend a high-quality, multi-level approach to inclusion of people with lived experience.** By multi-level, we mean that engagement should take place at every level of government activity that relates to international modern slavery policy and programming. By high-quality, we mean long term, across the policymaking or programming cycle where people with lived experience are embedded within project teams and where engagement has a specific purpose and very clear focus.
- **Take measures to make opportunities open, inclusive and accessible to a diversity of people with lived experience without requiring disclosure of lived experience identity.** Historically, recruitment of people with lived experience has been concentrated around public-speaking and awareness-raising activities with, at times, damaging consequences. All job adverts in the area of policy and programming on modern slavery should be open and inclusive of people with lived experience without requiring disclosure, which our research shows is currently linked to some discriminatory practices in the workplace.
- **Put in place organisational policies and procedures to ensure fair and equitable remuneration for all work undertaken by people with lived experience.** Frameworks developed by lived experience-led networks on the issue of remuneration emphasised the importance of equitable pay for all time and resource expended, as well as access to benefits such as childcare and the possibility of upfront or advance payments, hiring bonuses or access to expense budgets to prevent barriers to participation.

b. People with lived experience should be involved in UK Government policymaking through strategic-level decision-making, setting of objectives and policy priorities.

- **The FCDO modern slavery policy team should work across Government to set up a mechanism or mechanisms to involve people with lived experience in UK Government modern slavery international policy and programming at a strategic level.** A very clear purpose should be defined for this mechanism to ensure efficacy and avoid actual or perceived tokenistic engagement. Appropriate training and support should be put in place for all those involved in this mechanism in order to enable full and equitable participation.
- **Equitable, long-term partnerships with international lived experience-led organisations or networks representing affected communities should be pursued to inform and support this mechanism.** This might include UK-based organisations and diasporic groups who can effectively support activities such as recruitment, training, capacity-building and monitoring and evaluation in government policy and programming worldwide. In the global contexts where FCDO is implementing programmes and projects, UK government should devise capacity-building initiatives and adapt partnership requirements where needed to make funding calls and partnership opportunities inclusive of grassroots lived experience-led and civil society organisations. This could include, for example, tailored guidance on how to apply for funding, seed-funding to support the development of organisations not meeting partnership thresholds, upfront and timely processing of payments rather than reimbursement of costs or amending requirements around administrative capacity and track record.
- **Define a very clear purpose and feedback loops for this mechanism.** Our research suggests that transparently discussing the realities of policymaking processes with those engaged and undertaking regular monitoring and evaluation activities to enable honest feedback result in real opportunities for learning of all stakeholders and can avoid demotivation or frustration among participants.
- **Put in place appropriate training and support for all those involved in this mechanism (both colleagues with and without lived experience of exploitation) without creating barriers to participation.** Routine organisational training and support to enable full engagement and literacy in role and sector specific work should be offered to all. Supportive conversations should be conducted with all prospective employees and collaborators during recruitment, onboarding and partnership-formation to identify individual expertise, strengths and training needs. Appropriate training should then be offered to enable full participation in assigned activities and to promote progression.

c. People with lived experience should be involved in all aspects of UK Government programme design and delivery.

- **Teams involved in designing and delivering modern slavery programmes should consider opportunities for involvement of people with lived experience at every phase of design and delivery.** This includes UK Ambassadors, High Commissioners, country officers and programme budget holders (e.g. the Home Office Modern Slavery Fund).
- **Partnerships with local lived experience-led organisations who are connected with the specific communities that programme is trying to reach should be explored as a priority.** Where there is a lack of engagement in proposed policies or programmes from grassroots lived experience-led organisations in a particular context this should be taken as an opportunity to reflect on the purpose, aims and objectives of what is being proposed, considering relevancy and taking steps to rethink interventions where indicated by local stakeholders.
- **Consulting the table below, all opportunities for involvement of people with lived experience should be considered.** This table uses the four stages of programming set out in the FCDO Programme Operating Framework (Definition, Mobilisation, Delivery, Closure), to give an indication of where such involvement could be possible:

Programme phase	Opportunities for involvement of people with lived experience
Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To inform the understanding of context and setting of programme objectives • Proposing interventions to achieve objectives (including drafting of concept notes • Undertaking design process (including involvement in drafting of business case). • Feed into evidence-based appraisal of delivery options and realistic assessment of risks, opportunities and management requirements • Support in identifying potential lived experience-led partners for delivery and lived experience-led mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation and learning

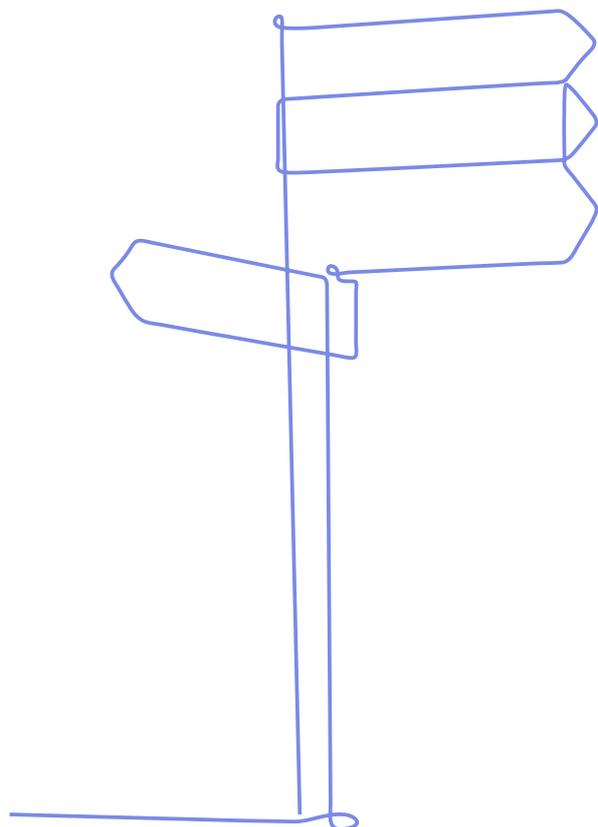
<p>Mobilisation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment of people with lived experience to in-house delivery teams • Identifying lived experience-led delivery partners or giving preference to INGO/multilateral and government partners who propose to work in high-quality partnership with local/grassroots organisations, networks or coalitions that are either lived experience-led or represent affected communities. • Involvement in assessment of applications for any competitive bidding process to deliver projects. • Involvement in assessing project risks and avoiding barriers to participation. • Contribution to devising monitoring frameworks
<p>Delivery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informing any adaptation of interventions during delivery due to context or circumstance • Involvement in monitoring finances, monitoring and defining value for money, progress and results. • Feeding into the checking of programme assumptions, ensuring continued relevance and strategic alignment. • Mandate the involvement of local people with lived experience in annual performance assessment of programmes wherever possible • Being contracted to research/provide evidence for decisions about the continuation, closure or extension of a project or programme.
<p>Closure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement in drafting/contributing to completion reports. • Leading on/contributing to the review of programmes, evaluating their performance and assessing their outcomes, assessing impact and value for money (including defining review and evaluation criteria) as well as assessing risk criteria of closing projects, particularly if closing early. • Mandate the participation of local people with lived experience /affected communities in all evaluation and feedback mechanisms on projects wherever possible (an ethical review process should be undertaken prior to this to ensure participants and their data are not placed at risk). • Involvement in discerning lessons that can be learned from any project or programme.

8. ANNEXES

a. Methodological Annex

This document includes more in-depth discussion of the methodological approaches taken and supporting documentation (including Informed Consent Form, Participant Information Sheet, Interview Guide and Global Call Document) devised for use in the strand of work developed with our Regional Consultants. Additionally, this document contains a PRISMA diagram and full list of references for the desk-based review.

Full details can be found in our [methodological annex](#)



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Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre
c/o British Institute of International and Comparative Law
Charles Clore House, 17 Russell Square, London, WC1B 5JP

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office@modernslaverypec.org

www.modernslaverypec.org