



Support for survivors of human trafficking in Uganda: a survey of key stakeholders

Research briefing, October 2022

Dr Katarina Schwarz, Rights Lab Associate Director, University of Nottingham

This briefing provides an overview of survey responses of government representatives and CATIPU network members assessing care and support needs of survivors of human trafficking in Uganda. The survey was conducted as part of the GFEMS-funded Addressing Child Trafficking and Slavery (ACTS) in Uganda project, delivered by Hope for Justice, PLA, and the Rights Lab, in conjunction with the Rehabilitation and Reintegration for Survivors of Trafficking & At-Risk Populations project, delivered by Willow International. It is intended to inform the development of new Standards of Care for survivors of trafficking in Uganda.

Overview

Experiences of human trafficking are complex—with both immediate and long-term impacts on survivors’ health and wellbeing. Experiences of trauma are common amongst those with lived experience of trafficking, with implications for their interactions with service providers and officials, as well as their recovery and reintegration. The care and support needs of survivors of human trafficking are likewise complex and multi-faceted, entailing a range of different support needs tailored to the individual survivors based on a range of different factors.

This survey sought to understand key stakeholders’ perspectives on survivors’ support needs in Uganda, and the extent to which current provision fulfilled these. Respondents from organisations providing support services to survivors of trafficking, as well as government representatives in relevant roles, shared perspectives on both the generalised support needs of all survivors, and the specialised needs of survivors in different groups. The different needs of survivors of different ages, genders, exploitation types, and migration statuses were examined.

Summary of methods

The survey was broken into seven substantive parts, addressing general support needs and access in Uganda, the support needs of different groups of survivors, and the requirements and value of establishing new, centralised standards of care for survivors of human trafficking in Uganda.

The survey was conducted between May 2021 and May 2022, disseminated through two mechanisms: (1) an online survey for members of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Persons in Uganda (CATIPU); and (2) an in-person survey conducted at a Standards of Care workshop with CATIPU and government representatives in Kampala, Uganda.

Although 33 distinct engagements with the online survey were recorded, only seven respondents responded to substantive questions about care and support needs. These seven responses were combined with nineteen responses collected at the workshop, for a total of 26 respondents.



Key findings

› Survivors require a range of different forms of support

Respondents emphasised the multiple support needs of survivors of human trafficking, highlighting the importance of a wide range of different forms of support in facilitating survivors' recovery. Respondents advocated for a comprehensive approach to support.

› Survivors require both immediate and long-term support

Both immediate and long-term support were viewed as crucial, yet respondents noted that long-term support in particular was often insufficiently considered.

› Many survivors in Uganda cannot access the support they need, or at the level required

Current limitations in support provision—including critical issues in resourcing—were considered as significantly constraining, with implications for survivors' recovery and reintegration. Overall, this was considered to create a context in which survivors received the support they needed, at the level required to facilitate recovery, only some of the time.

› Significant barriers to accessing support in Uganda exist

Significant barriers to survivors accessing support were outlined, with implications for the overall level of support survivors could obtain within Uganda. In addition to limited resourcing, key barriers emphasised by respondents included a range of structural, community, family, and individual factors, as well as a lack of provision in relation to various forms of support required.

› Support should be responsive to survivors' age, gender, exploitation type, and migration status

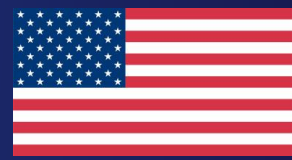
Respondents generally considered survivors' support needs to be highly specialised on the basis of age, gender, exploitation type, and migration status. While some groups within these categories were considered to have more specialised needs than others, all groups were considered to have needs more specialised than not.

› Core forms of support were considered common for all survivors

While some forms of support were considered more relevant to particular groups of survivors, many forms of support were considered to be common across all. These included, in particular, provision for psychosocial support, healthcare, shelter and material needs, and reintegration.

› Recognition of specialised needs often related more to approach than forms of support

In many cases, it was not the specific forms of support that dictated respondents' recognition of the specialisation of support needs for different groups of survivors. Support needs identified were often common across different groups, yet respondents nonetheless emphasised specialised needs. This indicates that an approach responsive to the survivors' age, gender, exploitation experiences and migration status is required, rather than different forms of support.



➤ **Specific forms of support were more heavily associated with some groups of survivors than others**

While in general all forms of support were considered relevant for all survivors, some specificity in forms of support for different survivors groups was recognised. Support needs were considered to progress through the life journey, transforming through the different age groups. Some specific needs for female survivors were also noted, in particular the need for menstrual hygiene kits. Addressing stigma was particularly emphasised for survivors of sexual exploitation, and rehabilitation for survivors of forced criminal activity. Immediate support needs were of greater concern to respondents in relation to third country nationals, while support needs identified

for Ugandan nationals and citizens were more likely to include a long-term focus.

➤ **Centralised standards of care for survivors in Uganda would increase access to core resources across the sector**

Limitations in existing coordination and information sharing around survivor care and support were noted by respondents. While some respondents indicated access to high quality existing resources within their organisations, those without internal resources reported little access to high quality guidance and toolkits. This suggests a need for accessible, centralised standards and frameworks that reflect joint learning, knowledge, and expertise across the sector

The need for new standards of care

Respondents highlighted the value of new, centralised standards of care for supporting survivors of trafficking in Uganda. They noted issues in coordination—both between support providers and across sectors—that hampered provision for survivors. Gaps in information sharing were identified. Although organisations were reported to have meaningful and effective internal framework materials directing care and support, those without such internal tools had limited access to standards and guidance.

New standards of care should be developed in collaboration with civil society, government, survivors, and communities. They should be trauma-informed, evidence-based, and human rights based, emphasising non-discrimination. They should include sections for different exploitation types, genders, migration statuses, and age groups, but adopt a holistic, needs-based approach focused on the individual survivor’s experiences, identity, and needs. Standards of care should be comprehensive and accessible, covering all relevant topics using jargon-free language.

