

HOW HAS THE INTERNATIONAL ANTI-TRAFFICKING RESPONSE ADAPTED TO COVID?

A CONVERSATION WITH RESEARCHERS, INTERNATIONAL
PRACTITIONERS AND PARTICIPANTS

2 FEBRUARY 2021, 12PM (GMT)

Welcome

JOINT LEARNING INITIATIVE on
FAITH & LOCAL COMMUNITIES



Background to project

- International Anti-Human Trafficking Network (IAHTN) and Joint Learning Initiative (JLI) convened several webinars to address the impact of COVID-19 early on in the pandemic. Impacts include:
 - Loss of Livelihoods
 - Health Risks
 - Changes in Migration Patterns and Repatriation
 - Domestic and Online Exploitation
 - Supply Chain Risks
 - Reduced Services
 - Responses of Organisations

Background to project

- Survey disseminated via its membership organizations to which 47 responses were received
- 13 follow up interviews were carried out
- Two distinctive features of the project:
 - 1) A focus on how COVID-19 has *affected responses* of organisations working on trafficking and unsafe migration and sharing information about *effective responses* to the challenges this has presented.
 - 2) A focus on how faith-based organisations are responding to the increased pressure that COVID-19 has placed upon their anti-trafficking work (21 respondents were faith actors)
- Report

Outline of Webinar

- Key findings from survey and interviews
- Lucy McCray (The Freedom Story) Case Study
- Q&A (20 mins)
- Key findings from faith actor responses
- Anne Makumi (Salvation Army, Kenya) Case Study
- Recommendations and next steps
- Q&A/next steps (20 mins)
- Wrap up

Key findings - responding to Covid-19 and human trafficking

- In general participants identified they sought additional resources in order to support beneficiaries and communities they were working in.
- Participants felt it was necessary to engage with other stakeholders and potential partners in order to coordinate their efforts when responding to covid-19 and human trafficking issues.
- All participants highlighted that they had to adapt their programmes as a result of Covid.

Case Study:

The Freedom Story - Lucy McCray

Q&A

Key findings from faith actor responses

- Out of 47 responses, 27 were faith actors (57%) - only 1 'local faith actor'
- 26 Christian, 1 Buddhist
- Suggest that organisations from other faiths are local, informal and not consciously working on human trafficking. Not members of international anti-human trafficking networks.
- Existence of 'hidden' parallel anti-human trafficking activity

Inclusion of 'faith activities'

- [Understanding similarities and differences between faith-based and non-faith-based anti-trafficking NGOs \(John Frame 2021\)](#)
- 23 out of 27 faith actors included faith activities in their programming: prayer, using religious texts, collective worship, singing, engaging with religious leaders, meditation and chanting.
- However, 6 of the 20 non-faith actor respondents also included 'faith activities' in their work - prayer, using religious texts, engaging with religious leaders and meditation.
- A local NGO from Cameroon carried out '*awareness creation in churches*'
- A local NGO in Tanzania '*engage with religious leaders*'

Responding to COVID

- Faith leaders are trusted community figures and can play a role in challenging norms and behaviours, and in identifying potential trafficked persons.
- People often go to their places of worship first to report gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and missing children.
- COVID: places of worship have been closed - can't perform community role
- Where faith leaders have been able to reach communities the focus has been on COVID messaging - health, hygiene, vaccine uptake

Case Study:

The Salvation Army - Anne Makumi

Recommendations/next steps


- An integration of anti-trafficking and emergency response
- Encouraging awareness messages in the community that looks at reducing health stigma
- Worth exploring partnership opportunities with private companies
- Local faith actors are primary responders to human trafficking and COVID - research and networking for better engagement
- More research on role of faith activities in anti-human trafficking work, in both faith based and non-faith based organisations

Q&A

Wrap up

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Our Mission

We prevent child trafficking and exploitation through culturally relevant programs for vulnerable children, and share stories to empower creative, compassionate people to act



Education

Our holistic education program includes scholarships, mentorship, support for families and resources for child development for the community.

Human Rights

Our human rights training and programs teach students and parents throughout the region their sexual and legal rights. We raise awareness of trafficking and empower the next generation to protect themselves.





Sustainable Livelihoods

Our sustainable livelihoods programs teach organic farming, business skills and provide new sources of income for at-risk families.

COVID-19 and Trafficking in Thailand

Poverty is increasing

Economic choice is
decreasing

Exploitation is increasing

Increasing rates of online
exploitation





Our Response

Financial relief for families impacted.

Dry goods distribution.

Masks, hand sanitizer, alcohol spray distribution.

Continuing other programs as normal when possible.

Increasing mentorship, home visits, case support.


Research into the impact on women and children.


THANK YOU!

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How has the international anti-trafficking response adapted to COVID?

Anne Makumi

The Salvation Army – Africa Zone

Outline

- Context
- Challenges
- Responses to the challenges
- Outcome of the responses
- What role did Faith Play in our response

Context : Kenya

- COVID first case in March 2020 in the capital; ever since we currently have 100,773 cases confirmed, 1,763 deaths
- Immediate response:
 - COVID spread prevention measures – masks, sanitizers, handwashing (though a practice already due to other waterborne diseases such as cholera), physical distancing
 - Schools, churches, restaurants, entertainment spots, Closure
 - Restricted movement from and to the COVID hotspot areas
 - Curfew enforcement
 - Work from home encouraged
 - Reduced corporate, individual income, and value added tax rates and tax relief for those earning less than USD240

Challenges faced in the pandemic period; at the start, now, future..

- Resources for implementing COVID prevention measures;
 - Physical distancing meant travel was now more expensive
 - Masks and handwash stations for beneficiaries not just the staff
 - Information materials (eg.reflector jackets) and sensitization of COVID during AHT sessions (takes some time away from core business)
- Victim assistance is now more costly;
 - few shelters in operation as several shelters that could not meet govt directive for COVID prevention, closed for some time,
 - shelters in operation had less space due to physical distancing,
 - COVID test was a requirement for the victims-100USD and test took several hours so extra cost of hosting/transport the victim elsewhere-police cell

Challenges continued..

- Restricted movement meant beneficiaries not easily reached with prevention messages
- Victims not promptly rescued – one case where 3 children intercepted from a trafficking situation had to spend several nights in a police cell as repatriation immediately could not happen due to restricted movement
- Unable to reach children who are a major beneficiary of the program as schools closed and project implemented through school clubs
- Coordination of partners and actors was affected as physical meetings were more common
- Less attention/focus on AHT by beneficiaries with focus shifting to livelihood due to jobs losses
- Other related emerging issues such as teenage pregnancies, online sexual exploitation, gender based violence, recruitment to gangs became more prevalent

Response to the challenges

- Lobbying for
 - additional funding for COVID prevention from partners/funders/interested parties to meet the additional expense,
 - partnering with churches and community members to provide handwash stations and soap(locally made) as the project provides for masks, sanitisers
 - Intentional sharing on COVID either by the team or inviting MoH person who has more authority on the issue
 - Government AHT DCS dept involvement in victim assistance through the AHT actors network
- Use of virtual platforms for prevention work ; social media, whatsapp, text messages, skype,etc
- TSA applied and got an essential services license after afew months that allowed movement anywhere hence was useful in attending to any emergency issues
- Virtual coordination meetings
- Looking into use of community children clubs
- Provision of basic needs eg food and hygiene kits

Outcome of the response

- Ability to resume operations as more and more people follow the COVID prevention measures and under the guidelines of limited numbers of people
- More implementation time is required to cater for lost time when operations were halted and also for time spent on COVID prevention measures e.g. sensitization
- Need for proper child protection structures in engaging children away from school setting which is structured and easy to enforce child protection issues/policies
- Not all beneficiaries can access virtual platforms – lack smart phones, in some instances phones used for emergencies due to lack of electricity as we work with people from rural and informal settlements settings

What role did Faith Play?

- Project works through TSA Corps/churches as an entry point which creates easy buy in in the communities, as churches are highly trusted institutions in Kenya and also contributes to sustainability for the project beyond the life of the project.
- Churches and religious centers are also COVID response centres for the emergency response for food, hygiene essentials, safe haven for victims of GBV and by extension AHT reporting (as was even before COVID)
- TSA is a religious institution and without discrimination and therefore works with various faiths making it easy to reach – Christians and non-Christians
- Though the programme does not engage in direct evangelism, the churches normally offer prayer and pastoral care and counseling for those interested