

# POLICY BRIEF

## Maximum Involvement of Survivors of Trafficking

NATIONAL  
SURVIVOR  
NETWORK

### Framework

Over forty million people worldwide have been victimized by human trafficking; 24.9 million through forced labor and 15.4 million through forced marriage. Out of the 24.9 million people in forced labor, 16 million are exploited in private sectors such as domestic work, construction or agriculture; 4.8 million persons in forced sexual exploitation; and 4 million persons in forced labor imposed by state authorities. There are 5.4 victims of human trafficking for every 1,000 people in the world and 1 in 4 victims are children.<sup>1</sup>

Populations most impacted by trafficking are those who do not hold power or have had their power suppressed or stripped away. Human traffickers target individuals uniquely vulnerable to exploitation. This disproportionately correlates to children, indigenous persons, colonized populations, immigrants, refugees and those who have been marginalized in support of the power monopoly of the dominant ruling class.

Political oppression through force involves restricted life opportunities, degradation of indigenous culture, economic sanctions, and inability to challenge authority, which fosters psychological powerlessness, learned helplessness, assimilation, obedience to authority, fear, and verbal and emotional abuse. Transformative approaches to

restoration and wholeness must address power, inequality, and political change.<sup>2</sup>

Survivors of human trafficking are entitled to the same human rights as everyone, including safety, access to services, equality, self-determination, non-discrimination and participation in decisions that affect their lives.<sup>3</sup>

193 countries have signed on to support the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals to end poverty, hunger and inequality worldwide, including Target 8.7, which calls for effective measures to end forced labor, modern slavery, human trafficking, and child labor in all its forms. The involvement of survivors of trafficking is essential to preventing and responding to human trafficking effectively.

### What is MIST?

Maximum Involvement of Survivors of Trafficking (MIST)<sup>4</sup> is not an initiative or addendum, but rather an ongoing effort to strengthen and increase the capacity of survivors of trafficking, networks of survivors and community-based organizations to participate fully at national, regional and global levels to create supportive political, legal and social environments.

Humanitarian and political declarations of support are meaningless if they do not become an integral part of the systems with which

1 Global estimates of modern slavery: Forced labour and forced marriage. International Labour Office (ILO), Geneva, 2017: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/publication/wcms\\_575479.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_575479.pdf)

2 Prilleltensky, I. (2008). The role of power in wellness, oppression, and liberation: The promise of psychopolitical validity. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 36(2), 116-136.

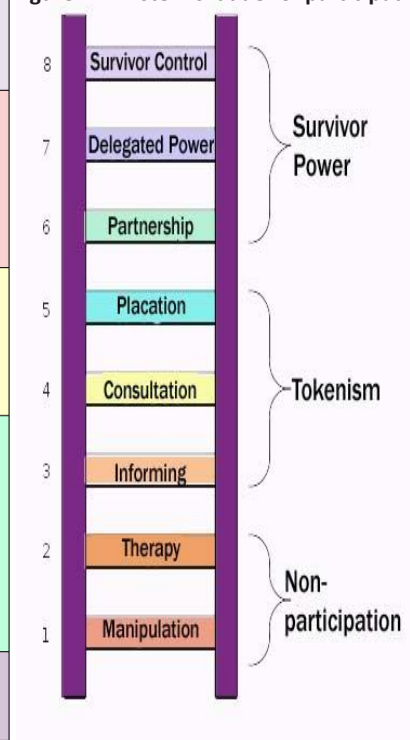
3 World leaders adopt Sustainable Development Goals. United Nations Development Programme, 9/2015: <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2015/09/24/undp-welcomes-adoption-of-sustainable-development-goals-by-world-leaders.html>

4 Adaptation of UNAIDS Policy Brief: The Greater Involvement of People with HIV (GIPA). Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. 3/2007: [http://data.unaids.org/pub/briefingnote/2007/jc1299\\_policy\\_brief\\_gipa.pdf](http://data.unaids.org/pub/briefingnote/2007/jc1299_policy_brief_gipa.pdf)

Figure 1: White’s Typology of Interest<sup>5</sup>

Form	What ‘participation’ means to the implementing agency	What ‘participation’ means for those on the receiving end	What ‘participation’ is for
<b>Transformative</b>	Empowerment-to enable people to make their own decisions, work out what to do and take action	Empowerment-to be able to decide and act for themselves	Both as a means and an end, a continuing dynamic
<b>Representative</b>	Sustainability-to avoid creating dependency	Leverage-to influence the shape the project takes and its management	To give people a voice in determining their own development
<b>Instrumental</b>	Efficiency-to limit funders’ input, draw on community contributions and make projects more cost effective	Cost-of time spent on project-related labor and other activities	As a means to achieving cost-effectiveness and local facilities
<b>Nominal</b>	Legitimation-to show they are doing something	Inclusion-to retain some access to potential benefits	Display

Figure 2: Arnstein’s ladder of participation<sup>6</sup>



survivors interact and are impacted. We have learned through foundational research that engagement that is sporadic and transactional is not effective. Participation must be taught, experienced and on-going. Confidence and competence must be learned through experience; it cannot be co-opted with the expectation of immediate competency and credible decision-making.<sup>7</sup> Participation must be inclusive of survivors of all forms of human trafficking and regardless of race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, physical ableness or national origin.<sup>8</sup>

The personal experiences of survivors should shape national and international responses to human trafficking. This involvement enhances

the value and efficacy of prevention, prosecution and protection; and is the heart of partnership.

### Why MIST?

Survivors have experienced the predators that leave individuals vulnerable to being trafficked; and, following their victimization, the long-term issues and how to address them. Their involvement in program development, implementation and policy creation will increase the relevance, acceptability and effectiveness of programs.<sup>9</sup> Measuring the involvement of survivors is not a simple or exact science; but experience proves that success is

5 Sarah White’s (1996) Typology of Interests: <https://360participation.com/models-of-participation/>

6 Arnstein, S. (1969) ‘A ladder of citizen participation’: <https://www.participatorymethods.org/method/levels-participation>

7 Hart, Roger A., (1992) Children’s Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship. United Nations Children’s Fund: [https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/childrens\\_participation.pdf](https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/childrens_participation.pdf)

8 Delta 8.7 Survivor Thematic: <https://delta87.org/resources/thematic-overviews/survivor-victim-support/>

9 U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking Annual Report 2019: <https://www.state.gov/united-states-advisory-council-on-human-trafficking-annual-report-2019/>

## NSN: Maximum Involvement of Survivors of Trafficking (MIST)

achieved when communities are proactively involved in ensuring their own well-being.

MIST works to ensure that survivors are equal partners and breaks down limiting and erroneous assumptions of service providers and service receivers. Engagement with survivors is urgent as countries ramp up their efforts to prevent and respond to human trafficking. The benefits of MIST are widespread. Individually, involvement improves confidence and self-image, decreases negative feelings and isolation, and improves outcomes via access to more information about services. At the organizational level, working with survivors changes assumptions and attitudes, in addition to providing the value of lived experience and knowledge. Within communities, public involvement of survivors breaks down judgment and biases through seeing the faces of survivors and showing that they are active members of and contributors to society.

Open engagement with survivors eradicates misconceptions about trafficking. MIST is not centered upon public disclosure. Not being public does not equate to no involvement. Survivors have the right to engage with entities on the issue of human trafficking without publicly identifying as a survivor of trafficking. The service responses to trafficking victims involve health and mental health services and therefore, like HIV, status as a human trafficking survivor is protected health information under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).<sup>10</sup>

MIST is about meaningful engagement, not tokenism. Ethical participatory models are

rooted in best practices and go the furthest in addressing inequalities, access to resources and power imbalances. Full incorporation of participatory models within research, decision making, service delivery, prevention, policy, organizations and governments must be done with cultural humility and mutually agreed upon goals. Adherence to ethical principles and implementation guidelines is vital. Identified ethical principles are: trust; transparency and accountability; equity and inclusion; balanced distribution of power; humility and co-learning; respect for diversity, tolerance and conflict resolution; attention to cultural sensitivity; and commitment to personal and professional responsibilities. Necessary implementation guidelines are: consensus on expectations; preparing cooperative agreements; consensus rather than informed consent; consideration of personal information, privacy, anonymity, ownership of data and research achievements; sharing of knowledge and knowledge translation; sustainability; and maintenance of developed relationships.<sup>11</sup>

### Challenges to realizing MIST

Organizations and networks of survivors are central to the achievement of MIST; yet they face many obstacles. These obstacles, as identified by survivors, include weak management, low skill levels, funding constraints, difficulties in representing the diversity of survivors, a lack of documentation of their histories of self-empowerment and a lack of evaluation of their successes and failures. Energy spent on basic survival, including access to shelter and treatment, achieving safety and stable housing as well as

---

<sup>10</sup> What is the Civil Penalty for Knowingly Violating HIPAA? HIPAA Journal. 3/2018: <https://www.hipaajournal.com/civil-penalty-for-knowingly-violating-hipaa/>

<sup>11</sup> Jamshidi, E., Morasae, E. K., Shahandeh, K., Majdzadeh, R., Seydali, E., Aramesh, K., & Abkhar, N. L. (2014). Ethical Considerations of Community-based Participatory Research: Contextual Underpinnings for Developing Countries. *International journal of preventive medicine*, 5(10), 1328–1336.

## NSN: Maximum Involvement of Survivors of Trafficking (MIST)

financial insecurity are critical barriers to the participation of survivors in their own organizations and networks. There are also many societal barriers to the organizational implementation of MIST, which are rooted in poverty, racism, gender inequality, homophobia, transphobia and other forms of prejudice. Systemic barriers of stigma and discrimination prevents access to services, earning livelihoods and becoming involved, especially in survivor organizations or high visibility roles. This burden is greater for those who belong to marginalized populations.

### Policy Position

No one organization can provide the full spectrum of services needed by survivors: collaborations between entities are needed. To enable the active engagement of survivors, we urge all entities to ensure that survivors have the space and the practical support for their greater and more meaningful involvement.

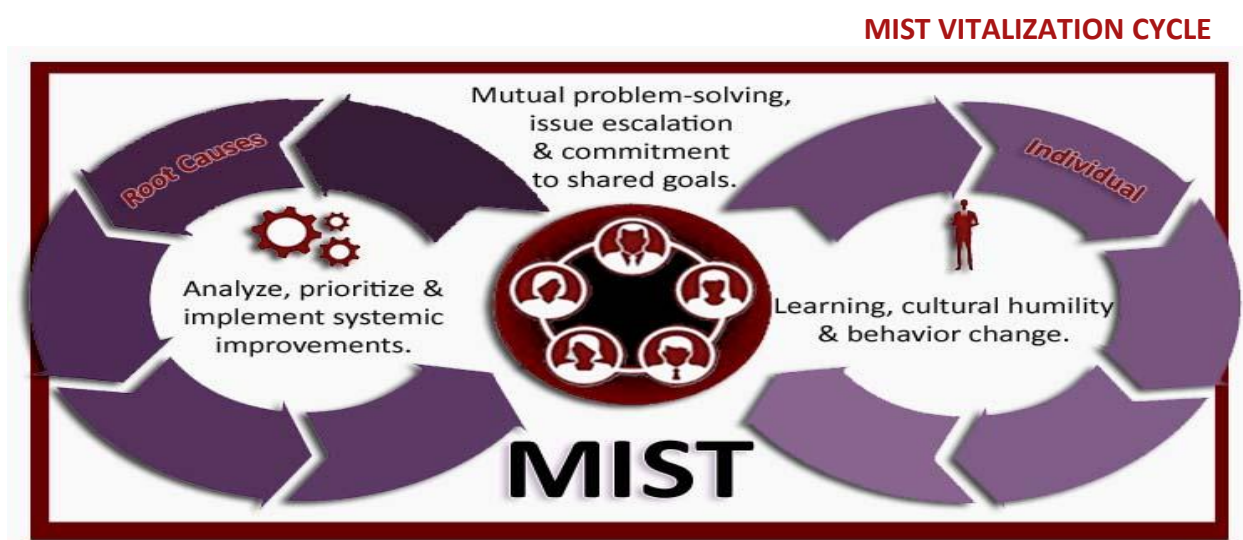
Governments, agencies and society must:

- Set, implement and monitor minimum targets for the participation of survivors of trafficking, including minorities, LGBTQIA2+ communities and immigrant populations, in decision-making bodies. Selection processes should be inclusive, transparent and democratic; and
- Involve survivors in developing funding priorities and in the choice, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of anti-trafficking programs from their inception.<sup>12</sup>

Additionally, we recommend the following actions:

### Actions for Governments

- Include MIST in the National Response to Human Trafficking; undertake a baseline survey for measuring MIST and include MIST within national monitoring and evaluation systems.
- Enable survivors of trafficking to claim their rights and meet their responsibilities by creating a supportive legal, policy and



<sup>12</sup> US Advisory Council Annual Report 2017: <https://www.state.gov/united-states-advisory-council-on-human-trafficking-annual-report-2017/>

<sup>13</sup> US Advisory Council Annual Report 2016: <https://www.state.gov/united-states-advisory-council-on-human-trafficking-annual-report-2016/>

## NSN: Maximum Involvement of Survivors of Trafficking (MIST)

immigration environment that also protects them from re-victimization and violence.

- Strengthen public policy dialogue on human trafficking; create and promote educational and employment or income-generating opportunities; and promote the adoption of workplace policies in the formal and informal sectors, following the Department of Labor’s recommendations.<sup>13</sup>
- Support the creation and strengthening of organizations of survivors of trafficking in addressing infrastructure, governance, management, resource mobilization, accountability and staff skill building needs.
- Strengthen the capacity of survivors of trafficking who volunteer for leadership in public speaking and communication skills, in organizing and conducting policy advocacy, dialogue and negotiation, in program design, and in monitoring and evaluation at the international, regional, national and local levels.
- Provide resources to train, and engage or employ survivors of trafficking in self-care, in human trafficking prevention and in being a knowledgeable participant in personal treatment decisions (treatment literacy); as home-based care and community health-care workers; in the practicalities and legal and social aspects of healing and counselling; and in anti-stigma campaigns.
- Ensure that reasonable measures to facilitate employment of survivors of trafficking are taken.
- Ensure psycho-social support for survivors of trafficking that, in sharing their experiences, may face discrimination against themselves or their dependents.
- Promote better understanding of human trafficking vulnerabilities and the needs of

survivors of trafficking in the community and the workplace.

### Actions for Survivor Networks

- Organize and establish common ground with other organizations and networks of survivors of trafficking and demand a place at decision-making tables.
- Ensure that MIST is a living and practiced concept within organizations and that new, inclusive and diverse leadership, such as young people, indigenous persons, people of color, LGBTQIA2+ and other vulnerable population leadership, is nurtured.
- Encourage professionals, particularly survivors of trafficking, to become involved by offering their skills and services to organizations and networks of survivors of trafficking.

### Actions for Society and the Public Sector

- Mainstream survivors of trafficking within organizations including the development and implementation of specific trauma-informed workplace policies.
- Create procedures for implementing MIST at all levels in the workplace including recruitment of skilled survivors of trafficking to boards and senior management.
- Commit and devote financial resources to organizational development, including leadership, management and governance, and capacity building of organizations and networks of survivors of trafficking.
- Work in partnership with other nongovernmental and government organizations and networks of survivors of trafficking on advocacy, service delivery and other relevant actions.



## Actions for International Partners

- Prioritize initiatives, supported by enhanced, predictable and continued funding, to build and sustain the capacity of organizations and networks in line with their self-identified needs.
- Promote efforts to fulfil the rights of survivors of trafficking, particularly young people, indigenous persons, people of color, LGBTQIA2+ and vulnerable populations.
- Promote good practice, strategic alliances and information exchanges between organizations and networks of survivors of trafficking within and across countries and particularly promote, fund and document collaboration and mentoring.
- Harmonize, simplify and create more flexibility in donor/partner procedures to facilitate access to technical and financial resources for organizations and networks.
- Ensure that survivors of trafficking are included in the design of ethical research for human trafficking prevention and the development of programs.

## Policy Voices

### **Susan Coppedge, Former Ambassador-at-Large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons**

I am particularly and acutely aware of the lives destroyed by human trafficking. It is essential that trafficking victims are treated as survivors of trafficking and afforded the dignity of being assisted, not harmed by systems meant to protect them.

Federal agencies have sought survivor input and funded survivors to develop trainings and new research. In the United States we are listening to survivors and empowering them to draw upon their experiences and make recommendations to guide our government as it develops policies and programs to combat modern slavery.

I have had the incredible honor of meeting inspiring individuals who fight each day to end modern slavery. I have seen first-hand how those on the ground in countries around the world implement effective strategies to combat human trafficking. Having the benefit and honor of these experiences, I am confident that we are closer than ever to creating strong communities where justice and freedom prevail. \*

*\*Comments originated in U.S. Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Report 2017*

### **Nat Paul, Former Member to U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking**

Implementation and incorporation of survivor involved policy has evolved with the anti-human trafficking movement and acknowledgement of survivor leaders. Best practices need to be informed by expert survivors and those with fresh service utilization experiences. As we learn from other fields, such as homelessness, no response can be beneficial without an informed approach created by individuals with diverse lived experiences.

### **Samantha Floyd, National Survivor Network Communication and Public Relations Chair**

This is the survivors' movement. We own it. There would be no court cases, no service programs, no policy and no understanding of this crime without our involvement. It is neither unique nor difficult to recognize that we are the most relevant stakeholders in the fight to end human trafficking. We should be leading the charge. We should be in every room where this issue is discussed. We should hold equal power in making decisions about how to combat trafficking and how to serve and support those victimized by it. We will accept nothing less.