DRG Learning Digest

Countering Trafficking in Persons: Prevention and Protection

November 2021

Human trafficking is the second largest criminal industry worldwide, after drug trafficking. More than 25 million people are trapped in the commercial sex industry or other involuntary labor as a result of force, fraud, or coercion. Trafficking in persons (TIP) affects the most vulnerable in our societies. Seventy percent of identified victims are women and girls, and many other marginalized groups -- Indigenous Peoples; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI) people; migrant workers; refugees and internally displaced persons; persons with disabilities; and religious and ethnic minorities -- are also highly susceptible to this human rights abuse. TIP undermines the rule of law, corrupts global commerce, fosters gender inequality, impedes child protection, and threatens global security.

USAID efforts to counter TIP (C-TIP) follow a "4P" approach: Prevention of trafficking, Protection of victims and survivors, Prosecution of traffickers, and Partnerships for a strengthened response. Research is a crucial component of USAID's efforts to combat TIP. This edition of the DRG Learning Digest highlights several recent studies commissioned or implemented by USAID regarding prevention and protection:

- Prevention/Protection: Big data reveals TIP drivers and opportunities for targeted interventions
- Prevention: Research underscores complexity of TIP and challenges of insecure environments
- Protection: Community-based trauma healing (CBTH) services can assist migrants and victims of trafficking
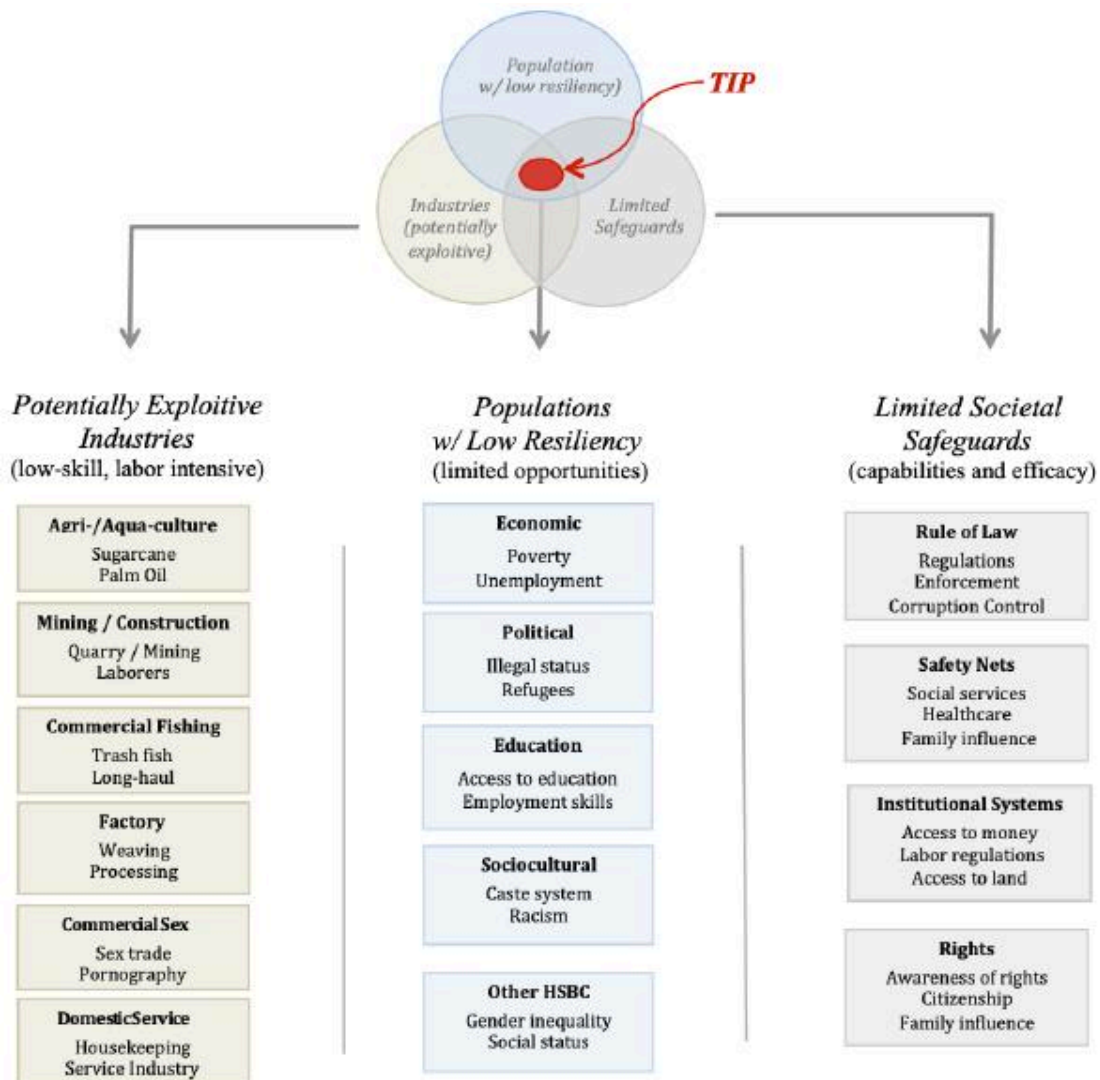
Please also make use of DRG Evidence and Learning Team resources! (See text box at the end.)

Prevention/Protection: Big data reveals TIP drivers and opportunities for targeted interventions

Three new C-TIP-related studies released in 2020 help us better understand the types of interventions USAID may consider to address the evolving problem of human trafficking. In the first two studies, NORC at the University of Chicago studied Europe-bound migration from the Sahel region of central Africa through Libya, in the context of increasingly hostile European immigration policies and reduced numbers of migrants from Africa. "Information and Decision-Making among Sub-Saharan African Migrants Traveling to Europe through Libya" includes a review of the drivers of risky migration that fuel human trafficking and ways to combat TIP through programs to prevent risky migration (link only accessible to USAID personnel). The study recommends thinking about this migration pattern beyond the "push factors" of conflict and poverty. Instead, taking a more holistic view of the current context can help create better solutions and interventions. The study suggests avoiding the discouragement of migration generally, and instead alerting the public to the potential danger of trafficking situations. Information campaigns with careful messaging to vulnerable women who have made up their minds to migrate can serve as a useful TIP prevention strategy.

A second study from NORC, "Human Trafficking, Smuggling, and Governance in Libya," examines how patterns of human trafficking and smuggling undermine stability, enable local conflict, and challenge governance in Libya. The report outlines the negative effects of illicit trade such as weakening governing institutions, undermining government legitimacy, fostering corruption, disrupting employment patterns, fueling conflict and racism, and encouraging terrorism.

Novametrics produced reports in 2020 for both Laos and Cambodia entitled "Weak-Signal Analysis of Vulnerability to Trafficking-in-Persons." Weak-signal analysis is a new approach grounded in the criminology theory of situational crime prevention (SCP), and thus focused on the "Prevention" component of the 4P approach to C-TIP. Weak-signal analysis is used to identify the characteristics of an ecosystem that support TIP; it provides a means for predicting vulnerability to TIP by identifying inter-relationships among multiple variables and underlying relationships associated with vulnerability. By employing the weak-signal analysis technique, populations with a high vulnerability to trafficking can be more precisely identified so that targeted interventions can be developed to increase their resilience to TIP. This analysis provides empirical support for theories that suggest the desire to have access to upward mobility and the appeal of working in urban areas are factors that human traffickers use to lure victims; and that women's autonomy and decision-making powers may be crucial factors associated with TIP risk.

Conceptual Framework: Weak-Signal Analysis of Vulnerability to Trafficking-in-Persons (Source: Novametrics LLC)

Prevention: Research underscores complexity of TIP and challenges of insecure environments

Child laborers at a gold mining site in Kangaba, Koulikoro region, Mali. Gold mining sites are areas of intensive economic activity, but individuals who have been exploited lack access to justice. Practices such as human trafficking, gender-based violence, and child labor are prevalent in those communities. (Source: Mali Justice Project).

[USAID/Mali's September 2021 research](#) explored the drivers of TIP in Mali and recent efforts by Malian governments and other actors to address it. The Mission is using the evidence both to inform and to measure the success of its C-TIP programming. Mali is a particularly vulnerable hot spot for trafficking due to: 1) violence, 2) weak state institutions, 3) high levels of poverty, 4) low levels of formal employment, 5) a weak educational system, 6) norms that encourage rural-to-urban migration and de-prioritize rights for women and girls, and 7) limited resources for C-TIP efforts. Urban migrants often work in sectors such as domestic work, hospitality, and artisanal mining, where children are vulnerable to exploitation and sexual trafficking by recruiters. Urban migration leaves rural areas with a smaller labor pool and may contribute to increased rates of child labor and forced child labor in agriculture. In addition, armed groups commonly recruit youth in areas where the state has decreased ability to offer security and uphold the rule of law. Although legal frameworks for prosecution of traffickers exist, they are not always effectively applied due to lack of proper mechanisms and insufficient resources and training for victim identification. Perpetrators may also not be convicted due to a lack of reliable evidence. Findings include:

Awareness-Raising Campaigns

- Awareness-raising at the community and government level is important to promote the possibility of behavior change. Campaigns can improve knowledge about TIP and reduce the desire to engage in activities that might make one vulnerable (e.g., irregular migration).
- Awareness-raising activities can be most successful when coupled with other intervention strategies and focused on multiple sub-populations (such as both children and parents/adults).

- Radio-based awareness-raising programming combined with "listening clubs" and campaigns using mobile technologies (e.g., social media) provide platforms for connectivity and fostering discussion on issues related to TIP.

Youth Programming

- Effective programming to address child trafficking must account for individual vulnerabilities and characteristics as well as consider family/community contexts. Leveraging existing local structures of care and family/women's social networks helps strengthen community responses to child labor and trafficking.
- Local youth leadership programs can reduce vulnerability to TIP by facilitating discussions in which individuals with negative migration experiences provide testimonials to youth audiences.
- Holistically-designed youth-oriented interventions are particularly needed to inform communities about the risks of child trafficking, specifically with a focus on income generation, economic opportunities, psychological support, and community engagement.

Legal Training

- Engaging legal professionals (e.g., paralegals) can increase a community's awareness and willingness to participate in C-TIP-related activities.
- Recommended interventions include: training for C-TIP-related government officials (including for magistrates and other legal professionals on the intricacies of existing laws), facilitation of access to appeal for victims, and improved mechanisms for assisting removal of victims from trafficking situations and rehabilitation.
- Counteracting sociocultural stigmas around trafficking and exploitation reduces challenges to reintegration. Mechanisms providing legal aid and rehabilitation assistance to victims are vital in reintegration.
- Hands-on training on TIP-related issues for law enforcement and civil society organization (CSO) staff (e.g., integrating role play activities and emphasizing appropriate skills) helps professionals provide important services and support. Training of trainers can help mitigate high staff turnover and reassignment in law enforcement and CSOs.

TIP Reduction in Complex Environments

- Identifying and engaging with communities at higher risk (e.g., mining or conflict-affected zones), with buy-in from relevant local stakeholders, assists with sustaining holistic responses as it incorporates local insights, culturally and situationally appropriate design, and targeted implementation for individuals/communities.
- However, individuals in regions in which the security environment is deteriorating become doubly vulnerable: they are more at risk of TIP, and interventions may become increasingly difficult to implement.

- Communities demonstrate resilience by negotiating with armed groups to keep schools open, using parental chaperones, and developing local-level incentives to keep teachers at the conflict-affected schools.

Protection: Community-based trauma healing services for migrants and victims of trafficking

USAID is innovating to develop new evidence-based C-TIP interventions. In June 2020, NORC at the University of Chicago produced [Community-based Trauma Healing (CBTH): Literature Review and Opportunities in Colombia](#) to inform a possible CBTH intervention with Venezuelan migrants in La Guajira and Cartagena, Colombia. In 2021, [follow-up research](#) was conducted to study whether CBTH approaches could be employed to reduce trauma among Venezuelan migrant and host communities in Colombia. The out-migration of Venezuelans is the largest refugee movement in the Americas and almost half of the Venezuelan diaspora currently resides in Colombia. Venezuelan migrants in Colombia have reported experiencing instances of human trafficking, including sex trafficking, forced recruitment, gender-based violence (GBV), and other human rights violations. Key informant interviews revealed a high trauma risk for Venezuelans in Colombia. Recommendations include: 1) providing psycho-social and trauma healing services that use hands-on techniques allowing participants to connect to the emotional aspects of their migration experience; 2) tying mental health interventions to income generation and employability to help empower migrants to take back control of their lives; and 3) offering programs to promote social cohesion between migrant and host communities.

Venezuelan refugee camp in Colombia. (Source: Ahmed Akacha, Pexels).

Other C-TIP resources:

- USAID C-TIP webpage
- C-TIP Maps
- C-TIP Field Guide
- USAID's C-TIP Factsheet and Policy One Pager
- C-TIP Code of Conduct and Standard Operating Procedures: Contractor/Recipient Compliance
- USAID One-pager on Integration of C-TIP in other sectors
- Previous DRG Learning, Evaluation, and Research reports (2018):
  - Philippines: TIP Knowledge, Awareness, and Victim Identification Survey Final Report explores the public's general knowledge on and attitudes toward trafficking, and utilizes interviews with trafficking survivors about their experiences.
  - Honduras: TIP Survivor Survey Final Report examines the prevalence of different forms of human trafficking and how victim vulnerabilities, recruitment patterns, regional particularities, and servitude experiences vary among different types of human trafficking.

Use Our Resources!

Welcome to the DRG Learning Digest, a newsletter to keep you informed of the latest learning, evaluation, and research in the Democracy, Human Rights and Governance (DRG) sector. Views expressed in the external (non-USAID) publications linked in this Digest do not necessarily represent the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

Don't forget to check out our DRG Learning Menu of Services! (Link only accessible to USAID personnel.) The Menu provides information on the learning products and services the Evidence and Learning Team offers to help you fulfill your DRG learning needs. We want to help you adopt learning approaches that emphasize best fit and quality.

The Evidence and Learning Team is also excited to share our DRG Learning, Evidence, and Analysis Platform (LEAP) with you. This Platform contains inventories of programmatic approaches and indicators, evidence gap maps, and data portraits - all of which can be very useful in DRG activity design, implementation, evaluation, and adaptation. Some of these resources are still being built, so check back frequently to see what has been newly added.

We also want to share our Inventory of DRG Learning with you! (Link only accessible to USAID personnel.) The inventory is a searchable database of DRG learning products, including summaries of key findings and recommendations, drop-down menus to easily find documents related to a particular country or program area, and links to the full reports on the DEC.

Our friends at the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Institute are also seeking to expand their research partnership with USAID on the complex nature of democracy by inviting research questions from you for V-Dem to work on. If there's a DRG technical question you've been wondering about, please submit it to the Research Wishlist now! (Link only accessible to USAID personnel.)

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We welcome your feedback on this newsletter and on our efforts to promote the accessibility, dissemination, and utilization of DRG evidence and research. Please visit the DRG Center's website for additional information or contact us at ddi.drg.elmaillist@usaid.gov.

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