

**Scottish Universities Insight Institute**  
**Human Trafficking: Conceptualising definitions, responses and 'what needs to be done'**

**EVENT TWO**

**MODELS OF INTERVENTION: DEVELOPING A HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH**

13 and 14 December 2012

**Introduction**

Following our discussions on the definitions and concepts of trafficking in humans at Event One, Event Two will focus upon models of intervention and service provision and the development of a human-rights based approach to address the needs of victims of human trafficking. In particular, Event Two will consider the extent to which legislation can influence the 'effectiveness' of support to victims and ensure appropriate and effective models and interventions are accessible in terms of both the development of structured support systems for victims; and the prioritisation of preventative measures.

**Support and prevention**

There is some consensus on the key needs of victims of human trafficking, particularly in the immediate and short-term. The extent of these needs may vary among victims, depending on their circumstances and stage of the recovery process (Clawson and Dutch 2008).

Key to models of care and support for victims are:

- Comprehensive and co-ordinated services
- Suitable, safe and secure accommodation
- Easily accessible advice
- Support with communication and linguistic barriers
- Provision of medical and psychological support
- Victim-centred approaches
- Individualised and holistic care

International guidelines highlight the need for a holistic approach that takes account of the individuals' circumstances and needs and which is able to respond appropriately on that basis. A comprehensive continuum of care is highlighted as a key priority for support provision. IOM (2007: 60) notes:

“While recognising that trafficking victims share a number of common experiences and circumstances, staff should acknowledge the individuality of victims, including individual, cultural, gender and age differences and differing experiences of persons before during and after being trafficked, and to the extent possible, provide personalised care and assistance. Throughout the assistance process, staff should strive to provide the most appropriate protection, assistance and support measures appropriate to the needs and circumstances of individual victims”.

The importance of a continuum of care, from identification to reintegration, is highlighted by the United Nations (UNODC, 2006) and by Clawson et al (2009) in their review of the literature on appropriate services for victims of trafficking. However, they also note that the role of a case-manager is critical in supporting the victim (also ensuring they are not required to repeatedly tell their story with potential risks of re-traumatisation) and also supporting other providers and agencies (law enforcement, attorneys, counsellors and others) to direct their services to meet the needs of the victim.

Not all areas of intervention are uncontested however. For example, there has been some debate about the appropriateness of specialised service provision for trafficking victims, or whether emphasis should be given to improved access to more generic services. Arguments for improvements to mainstream services (a particular issue in relation to child protection systems) arise largely due to assumptions that mainstreams services can be accessed relatively quickly and that these provisions will be adequate. This is not always the case however and the needs of victims, particularly trauma-related needs, may not even be identified immediately or in the short-medium term (Busch-Armendariz et al 2011: 13).

Fundamentally, there is no easy solution, or quick fix, when addressing the needs of trafficking victims (USAID 2007). Identifying appropriate short, medium and long-term responses, and therefore developing appropriate interventions, is a key challenge. In light of the absence of evaluative data on service provision, the components which contribute to promising practices for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2008) require: the incorporation of safety planning (for workers and victims), collaboration across a number of agencies, ongoing development of trust and relationship-building, culturally appropriate approaches, trauma-informed programming, and the involvement of survivors in service development and provision. However, as Clawson and Dutch note (2007: 10): “Providing these services can take months or years: the timeline for serving each victim is different and often unpredictable”.

### **The limitations of ‘evidence’**

Underpinning the challenges of service provision for victims of human trafficking is the absence of a clear evidence base. While it is possible to identify characteristics of services that appear ‘promising’ (e.g. Armstrong, 2008), many conclusions relating to best practice have originated from overviews, manuals, fact sheets, non-peer reviewed journals, commentaries, and anecdotal observations and experiences (Gozdziak and Collet, 2005; Clawson et al 2009), rather than specific evaluations of programmes and services.

The complexity of trafficking, and the absence of a clear understanding of victims needs (particularly those of children), complicates evaluation; but without the contribution of an empirical evidence base for intervention, service delivery can remain subject to the vagaries of a political and media discourse which often focuses on immigration rather than the needs of victims.

In the UK much of the focus to date has been on the identification of victims of trafficking in humans (Hynes 2010). While necessary as an initial step, this has perhaps deflected from providing and evidencing effective recovery and reintegration services, not least because such assistance requires intensive work and follow up. The IOM (2007: 105) note that: “There have been few in-depth evaluations of long-term reintegration programmes and long term follow-up of victims can be difficult as those victims assisted move on with their lives and

lose touch with service providers, little is known about best practices for long-term reintegration”. There is relatively little evaluative research on the long-term needs of trafficking victims (Busch-Armendaiz et al 2011; Macy and Johns 2011).

### **Importance of contextualising responses**

Clawson et al (2009) identify the following barriers and challenges to accessing and providing services. For victims, this includes: an inability to self-identify as having been trafficked; lack of knowledge of services; fear of retaliation; fear of law enforcement/arrest/deportation; lack of trust; shame/stigma; PTSD; cultural and language barriers; lack of transport. For providers this can include: the hidden nature of trafficking which makes it difficult to identify and reach victims; lack of awareness/training; lack of adequate resources or services; cultural/language barriers; ineffective co-ordination of services; safety concerns. Caliber (2007) identifies housing and medical needs as key areas where providers experience difficulty in meeting the needs of clients.

While highlighting the importance of responding to and addressing individual needs in processes of recovery, as with other areas of victim-response, there is a risk that attempts to devise effective responses (without appropriate knowledge and/or evidence) may result in the ‘individualisation’ of victims. In this process, victims are held to be in some way responsible for their situation and processes of identification are focused on sifting out ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ victims thereby targeting resources to some, while effectively criminalising or marginalising others seen as ‘less authentic’ in their experience of victimisation (ATMG, 2010). Insufficient resources and capacity along with funding constraints and ongoing service needs can exacerbate these processes and appear to be characteristic of the difficulties experienced by service providers.

This is further exacerbated however, by a failure to understand the broader context within which trafficking in humans can occur and within which it is sustained. Addressing this will require that the needs of victims are identified and contextualised within a wider social, political and economic context that is informed by wider global structures and which takes account of the structural inequalities that underpin and perpetuate trafficking in humans.

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