



Final Report

Ex-post Evaluation of Trafficking in Persons Projects in Sri Lanka

Submitted to:

U.S. Department of State, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons

Submitted by:

DevTech Systems, Inc.

1700 N. Moore Street, Suite 1720

Arlington, VA 22209

Tel: 703-312-6038, Fax: 703-312-6039

Company Website: www.devtechsys.com

Submitted September 22, 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	V
Key Findings and Conclusions.....	v
Recommendations for USG and IPs.....	vii
Recommendations for GoSL.....	viii
1. BACKGROUND	2
Trafficking in Persons Projects in Sri Lanka.....	2
Evaluation Objective	2
2. TECHNICAL APPROACH.....	3
A. Evaluation Questions.....	4
B. Data Collection	4
Approach to Site Selection.....	4
Data Collection Methods and Sampling	5
Individual Data Protection	7
Limitations	7
3. FINDINGS.....	8
A. Respondent Demographics.....	8
B. EQ 1.....	10
C. EQ 2.....	12
D. EQ 3.....	18
E. EQ 4.....	25
F. EQ 5.....	29
G. EQ 6.....	33
H. EQ 7.....	35
I. EQ 8.....	37
J. Other Findings	42
4. CONCLUSIONS	44
5. RECOMMENDATIONS.....	46

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Number of respondents by data collection category	8
Table 2. Administrative levels of respondents.....	9
Table 3. Respondents by Affiliation with Project Implementers.....	9
Table 4. Respondents’ roles in combatting human trafficking	9
Table 5. Changes in GoSL approach to TIP	12
Table 6. Intended and actual role of the GoSL in USG programs, as cited by IPs and Subs	21
Table 7. Respondents’ knowledge of GoSL funding for NGOs/CSOs	32
Table 8. Respondent's willingness to accept funding from GoSL	32
Table 9. Civil Society Collaboration with GoSL.....	38

ACRONYMS

ABA	American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative
AGD	Attorney General’s Department
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
COR	Contracting Officer Representative
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DoIE	Department of Immigration and Emigration (Sri Lanka)
DoL	Department of Labour (Sri Lanka)
DoS	Department of State (U.S.)
EQ	Evaluation Question
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FRC	Family Rehabilitation Centre (Sri Lanka)
GoSL	Government of Sri Lanka
ILO	International Labour Organization
IO	International Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IP	Implementing Partner
KII	Key Informant Interview
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoJ	Ministry of Justice (Sri Lanka)
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Sri Lanka)
MoWCA	Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs (Sri Lanka)
NAHTTF	National Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force (Sri Lanka)
NCPA	National Child Protection Authority (Sri Lanka)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SCA	Department of State, South and Central Asia Bureau
SLBFE	Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment
TAF	The Asia Foundation
TIP	Trafficking in Persons
TIP Office	Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons
ToT	Training-of-Trainers
USG	United States Government

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this evaluation was to understand how USG-funded activities have influenced GoSL efforts to combat TIP. For this evaluation, the Evaluation Team (ET) reviewed relevant documents and conducted interviews (with 43 respondents) and surveys (with 49 respondents) with a wide range of stakeholders including government officials, implementing partners and their subgrantees, government and civil society members, community leaders and recruitment agencies trained by or otherwise involved in USG-funded projects and other organizations involved in combating trafficking but who were not directly involved in USG-funded projects. Just under half of all respondents were affiliated with the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) projects (42.4%), followed by The Asia Foundation with 25% of respondents, International Labour Organization with 10.9%, American Bar Association with 6.5% and the Solidarity Center with 2.2%. Other respondents, especially at the national GoSL level, were not associated with a particular implementer, but may have worked with more than one. Very few respondents could be identified from projects that had closed more than one year prior to this evaluation. Key findings and conclusions for each evaluation question (EQ) are presented below.

KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

EQ 1: What USG efforts are perceived by government and non-government stakeholders to have had the most positive impact on the Government of Sri Lanka's (GoSL) approach to TIP? Training and capacity building, as well as community awareness activities, all of which have been key components of USG-funded programming, are viewed as having had a positive impact in enhancing the GoSL's attention to and interest in TIP and helping to develop the know-how to address it. Fifty-seven percent of respondents (n=30) said capacity building, principally for GoSL actors, played a crucial role in engaging government officials to identify cases and address TIP. In parallel ground-level programming, 30% of respondents noted that setting up and engaging community and District Forums and conducting outreach in communities have jointly facilitated change in local government engagement and cooperation while enhancing community awareness.

EQ 2: Which aspects of the GoSL's approach to TIP are perceived to have changed as a result of specific USG programming? Seventy-six percent of respondents said that since 2007, the GoSL's approach to TIP had changed. Key changes cited include increased awareness (44%), increased GoSL-GoSL collaboration (29%), and identification and reporting of cases (24%). Not all progress has filtered to the local level, but respondents applauded the District Forums, where they exist. Investigations and prosecutions remain modest, partly due to lack of victim/witness cooperation. Most respondents (91%) attributed changes in the GoSL approach either partly or directly to USG-supported programming. Areas cited as needing additional attention were law enforcement and victim services. Hampering ongoing efforts were a perceived lack of GoSL prioritization of TIP, perceived corruption at the local levels, lack of resources or allocation of resources, and improved but incomplete awareness and practice, as training had not trickled to all locales throughout the country. Government involvement in USG-funded programs, including at the outset in program design, was valued as a key component for future efforts.

EQ 3: Where has the GoSL played a substantial positive role in TIP projects funded by the USG? Where has the GoSL fallen short in its expected role? The GoSL has played an important, if not optimal, role both in TIP overall and in TIP projects supported by the USG. A variety of successful steps were undertaken by 86% of implementers to engage the GoSL, mostly

at the implementation stage (90%). The most effective elements included sustained outreach to develop and leverage relationships with the GoSL; ongoing and routine GoSL engagement, including in design and decision-making; and involvement of the GoSL in activities as participants or resource persons. Suggested growth areas for the GoSL role principally focused on increased and widespread commitment and leadership, including allocation of GoSL resources. Going forward, respondents suggested more emphasis at the divisional, district and village levels, as well as more services for victims. Addressing turnover and transfer on the National Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force (NAHTTF) and among law enforcement assigned to TIP was also recommended, along with the institutionalization of TIP curricula, especially for the police academy.

EQ 4: What is missing from the USG's current approach that could positively affect the GoSL's approach to TIP? Respondents generally felt that projects were on target and useful (62%, n=37), and that more of the same was warranted and valuable going forward. Forty-two percent of respondents (mostly implementers and subgrantees) also noted either something that was missing from USG programming, or could be reoriented, emphasized, or de-emphasized. Services for victims were perceived by some to receive short shrift. Awareness activities and capacity-building workshops should continue to serve as a mainstay of programming, perhaps with creative methods, such as in-depth mentoring on the job. Targets groups – law enforcement, investigators, government agencies, and citizens – remain relevant, though prosecutors and judges are also relevant for further inclusion. Programming should continue to reach divisional and district levels in expanded locations and especially in areas vulnerable to TIP. Coordinating structures from the local level to the national level need strengthening, and data systems need to be fully implemented. Respondents generally felt that projects were on target and useful, and that more of the same was warranted and valuable going forward. Services for victims were perceived by some to receive short shrift. Awareness activities and capacity-building workshops should continue to serve as a mainstay of programming, perhaps with creative methods, such as in-depth mentoring on the job. Targets groups – law enforcement, investigators, government agencies, and citizens – remain relevant, though prosecutors and judges are also relevant for further inclusion. Programming should continue to reach divisional and district levels in expanded locations and especially in areas vulnerable to TIP. Coordinating structures from the local level to the national level need strengthening, and data systems need to be fully implemented. Sustainable impact can best be achieved through enhanced data collection and institutionalizing both training and GoSL and community coordinating structures.

EQ 5: What role has Sri Lankan civil society taken in combatting human trafficking and protecting victims? What has been most effective in strengthening this capacity? Civil society has been involved in raising public awareness, identifying potential victims in the community, and providing services directly and through referral. USG projects have been integral in building the capacity of NGOs and CSOs to address trafficking. Local organizations state that the training not only raised their awareness about trafficking, but also provided them with tools needed to address it, such as checklists to help identify victims, and tools to conduct awareness raising. Trainees reported that since the training they have raised awareness in their communities (90%), referred victims for support (90%), and reported cases to authorities (80%) or to other organizations (80%). They also credit USG programs for improving their relationships with the GoSL in their communities. Respondents felt that projects needed to plan in advance for a handover of activities to the GoSL for progress to be sustainable. The GoSL was

less involved in building the capacity of civil society, though this appears to be changing, with the GoSL providing in-kind support and expertise to support NGO and CSO programs. Civil society appears to be welcoming of GoSL support and findings show the GoSL becoming more open and supportive of civil society.

EQ 6: How do underlying political issues in Sri Lanka play a role in hindering progress on combatting TIP? Most respondents did not think political issues had much of an impact on efforts to combat trafficking (49% of KIIs & 41 survey respondents rated the impact of political issues on human trafficking 2.1 (out of 5), not particularly relevant). However, turnover among government employees and changing prioritization of trafficking has impacted efforts. Respondents also identify the economic importance of international labor migration and remittances as leading some politicians to support ill-advised pro-migration policies that allow trafficking to flourish. In a similar vein, they point to corrupt practices that lead officials and politicians to protect suspected traffickers. Efforts to address these issues have included building relationships with government officials, supporting relationships between GoSL and NGOs/CSOs, and raising awareness among GoSL officials more broadly. Respondents also expressed concerns that the economic hardship resulting from the pandemic and the restrictions put on legal migration mechanisms may result in increased levels of trafficking in the future.

EQ 7: How do underlying religious issues/cultural tensions/past conflict in Sri Lanka play a role in hindering progress on combatting TIP? The majority of respondents also felt that religious, cultural and ethnic conflict had little impact on trafficking today (23 KIIs & 46 survey respondents rated the impact of religious, cultural and ethnic issues on trafficking 2.2, not very impactful). However, they reflect back on migration that arose from earlier conflicts and recognize that such conflicts in future could result in increased irregular and unsafe migration. Respondents present few ways of dealing with these issues except to provide livelihood opportunities to vulnerable groups and raise awareness in communities. One respondent did mention training being conducted only in Sinhala for a group that included Tamil trainees who had difficulty participating as a result.

EQ 8: How well are anti-TIP stakeholders (USG and local stakeholders) collaborating in Sri Lanka? What will it take to improve collaboration among stakeholders? While respondents had many things to say both positive and negative about their collaborations on trafficking, it was clear that collaboration on trafficking takes place across a wide spectrum of respondents and has improved significantly since 2007, in part due to the USG-funded projects. Generally speaking, collaboration within stakeholder groups is effective and takes place as needed. Collaboration between the GoSL and civil society is more effective at the district and divisional level than at the national level. While perceived as not being sufficiently active, the NAHTTF is still credited with improving collaboration across government offices at the national level and its establishment is credited to IOM's USG-funded program. Cross-sector collaboration at the local level is credited to the District Forums also established under IOM's USG-funded project. Respondents recommend working to improve GoSL and NGO/CSO collaboration and to improve coordination between administrative levels of government by building communication channels from the national level to the divisional.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR USG AND IPs

- Increase GoSL involvement with USG programs and engage the GoSL as early as possible in program design and development. The USG should seek GoSL input into any planned calls for proposals to ensure programs are designed to address GoSL priorities. Calls for proposals should encourage respondents to reach out to and seek the support of GoSL and to encourage them to engage GoSL in all phases of the project.
- Build sustainability plans into programs and ensure the handover process is incorporated into the program from the beginning and not tacked on at the end. Formalize handover to ensure that the recipient agency is involved and committed from the design phase.
- Institutionalize training of GoSL officials through the police academy, judicial training center and other academic or in-service training mechanisms.
- Encourage the GoSL to formalize the District Forums. See below.
- For all projects going forward, to facilitate post project evaluation, the TIP office should require its implementers to turn over to them all lists of project participants and partners.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOSL

- Increase coordination and collaboration with local civil society organizations. GoSL could invite representatives from other anti-trafficking forums to participate in the NAHTTF. The civil society forums could vote to designate their representative, a role that could rotate annually from one organization to another. GoSL could also designate a representative from the NAHTTF (or a Secretariat – see below) to participate in the Development Partner Forum.
- Consider setting up and funding a full time Secretariat for the NAHTTF to provide day to day stewardship and to ensure that momentum continues even if Task Force membership changes. The Secretariat could also lead coordination with the District Forums.
- Set up District Forums on human trafficking throughout the country, much like the child protection committees. Assign a District Secretariat to lead the forum but ensure that it includes the participation of a broad swath of non-government stakeholders. Set up a mechanism to link these District Forums with the NAHTTF.

1. BACKGROUND

TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS PROJECTS IN SRI LANKA

The Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (the TIP Office) has funded several projects to combat human trafficking in Sri Lanka. Since 2011, Sri Lanka has been rated Tier 2 Watch List in the annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report except for two years (2017 and 2018) when it was upgraded to Tier 2. In 2019, Sri Lanka was downgraded again to Tier 2 Watch List and remained there in 2020 and 2021. Despite U.S. donor funding from the TIP Office and the South and Central Asia Bureau (SCA), and the development of a National Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force (NAHTTF), gaps remain in adequately addressing human trafficking. For instance, according to the 2021 TIP report, Sri Lanka failed to investigate official complicity in trafficking, had fewer convictions of traffickers, and made insufficient efforts to address forced labor among the overseas workforce.¹

In this context, the TIP Office and other parts of the U.S. government (USG) have funded at least 11 projects to combat trafficking in Sri Lanka between 2007 and 2021. Taken together, these projects focus on improving Sri Lanka's capacity to prevent trafficking in persons, protect trafficking victims, and prosecute traffickers by working closely with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL), the NAHTTF, law enforcement, civil society organizations (CSOs), community leaders, and policymakers. During this period, other governments and private organizations also funded TIP programs in Sri Lanka, including the British High Commission,² the Salvation Army,³ Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation,⁴ and the Australian Government⁵, among others.

EVALUATION OBJECTIVE

This evaluation covers an extensive period from 2007 until 2021, during which the USG funded more than ten TIP projects in Sri Lanka. Given the extensive number of projects and the objectives of the evaluation, the DevTech ET did not evaluate individual projects. Instead, the focus was on evaluating the effectiveness of USG-funded interventions and their effects on the Government of Sri Lanka's approach and response to human trafficking. The evaluation examines how USG-supported programming has altered the GoSL's attention to and sustainable support for anti-trafficking goals and activities; the role played by the GoSL and civil society in USG-supported activities; the impact of underlying political, cultural, ethnic, and conflict issues on anti-trafficking efforts; and the extent to which the GoSL and other local and international partners successfully collaborated to address human trafficking. The evaluation also seeks to determine what future efforts are needed to encourage or support GoSL to make sustained steps toward combating human trafficking.

¹ DoS, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2021*. United States Department of State: Washington, DC.

² UNODC. South Asia. *Sri Lanka: Strengthening Coordination to Protect and Assist Human Trafficking Victims*. https://www.unodc.org/southasia/en/frontpage/2019/October/sri-lanka_-strengthening-national-coordination-to-enhance-identification-and-referral-of-human-trafficking-victimsnter-drug-trafficking-extends-support-to-unodc.html

³ The Salvation Army. *Sex Trafficking and the Salvation Army's Response*.

<https://www.salvationarmy.org/ihq/878D2DB0650E7DC2802573B7005267A0>

⁴ SDC Network on Migration and Development. *Civil Society in Sri Lanka strengthens its capacity to advocate for migrant workers' rights*. <https://www.shareweb.ch/site/Migration/focus-area/Pages/Workshop-Sri-lanka-migrant-workers-rights.aspx>

⁵ Government of Australia. *Amplifying our Impact: Australia's international strategy to combat human trafficking and slavery*. <https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/amplifying-our-impact-australias-international-strategy-to-combat-human-trafficking-and-slavery.aspx>

2. TECHNICAL APPROACH

The ET utilized a mixed-methods approach that leveraged primary project documentation, third-party data, and qualitative information collected through key informant interviews to respond to the evaluation objectives. A mixed-methods approach builds a broad evidence base that allows triangulation of findings across multiple data sources. This increases the reliability and strength of the findings. The evaluation drew from a collection of projects implemented between 2007 and 2021 to explore the effectiveness of USG-funded interventions writ large. These projects include:

- The Asia Foundation (TAF) project entitled Building an Effective Trafficking-in-Persons Data and Information Collection and Reporting System in Sri Lanka; implemented 2017-2021 (S-SJTIP-17-GR-1016)
- International Organization for Migration (IOM) project entitled Sri Lanka: Strengthening Counter-Trafficking Efforts (SCOUT); implemented 2018-2021 (S-SJTIP-18-GR-0023)
- ABA ROLI project entitled American Bar Association Fund for Justice and Education; implemented 2018-2019 (S-SJTIP-18-GR-0009)
- International Labour Organization (ILO) project entitled EQUIP: Equipping Sri Lanka to Counter Trafficking in Persons; implemented 2017-2020; funded by SCA (LKA/16/02/NOR)
- IOM project entitled Countering-Trafficking in Persons in Sri Lanka: Strengthening, Prosecuting and Victim Protection Project; implemented 2007-2009 and 2010-2012 (S-GTIP-07-GR-030 and S-GTIP-10-GR-0016)
- Lawyers for Human Rights and Development (LHRD) project entitled Anti-TIP Project in Sri Lanka; implemented 2009-2010 (S-GTIP-08-GR-0044)
- IOM project entitled Combatting Trafficking in Persons and Strengthening Prosecutions in Sri Lanka; implemented 2010-2012 (S-SJTIP-12-GR-1020)
- IOM project entitled Enhanced Mechanisms for the Provision of Protection and Assistance for Victims of Trafficking in Sri Lanka; implemented 2012-2015 (S-SJTIP-12-GR-1020)
- Solidarity Center (SC) project entitled Anti-Trafficking Project: India, Sri Lanka, Philippines; implemented 2008-2009 (S-SGTIP-08-GR-0041)
- ILO project entitled Prevention of Trafficking in Persons through Improved Management of Labour Migration; implemented 2009-2012 (S-SGTIP-09-GR0083)
- IOM project entitled Sri Lanka T&A Assessment; implemented 2014-2017 (S-STIP-17-GR-1016)

The ET reviewed relevant documents for all projects. The ET also attempted to conduct key informant interviews (KIIs) with appropriate informants for every project. However, this was not possible in all cases, primarily for projects that ended longer ago.⁶ Nevertheless, the mixed-methods approach and triangulating data analysis across data sources ensured the collection of a sufficiently strong evidence base with which to answer each evaluation question (EQ).

⁶ Projects where key informants could not be identified include: Countering-Trafficking in Persons in Sri Lanka: Strengthening, Prosecuting and Victim Protection Project (IOM; 2007-2009 and 2010-2012), Anti-TIP Project in Sri Lanka (Lawyers for Human Rights and Development (LHRD); 2009-2010), Combatting Trafficking in Persons and Strengthening Prosecutions in Sri Lanka (IOM; 2010-2012), Enhanced Mechanisms for the Provision of Protection and Assistance for Victims of Trafficking in Sri Lanka (IOM; 2012-2015), and a Sri Lanka T&A Assessment (IOM; 2014-2017), Anti-Trafficking Project: India, Sri Lanka, Philippines (Solidarity Center (SC) ; 2008-2009), Prevention of Trafficking in Persons through Improved Management of Labour Migration (ILO; 2009-2012).

The data collection plan was adapted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite a 12-month postponement, COVID-19 outbreaks in Sri Lanka and resulting travel restrictions made in-person data collection impossible. Ultimately, the evaluation took place over a period of 24 months. Data collection began in 2020 with remote interviews of U.S.-based implementing partners. In February 2021, the ET began reaching out to implementing partners in Sri Lanka to inform them about the objectives of the evaluation, to obtain their assistance in identifying key stakeholders at the national, provincial and district level, and to help secure top-level permission to speak with GoSL and criminal justice actors at other levels. In March 2021, the international team conducted training for the local team. In March and April, the international team worked with the TIP Office and US Embassy personnel to secure high-level authorization from the GoSL. Data collection resumed in April and continued through June 2021. The extended time period was necessary as lockdowns due to COVID-19 made it difficult to reach informants, especially from the GoSL, who were mostly working from home and unreachable through their official contacts.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The purpose of this evaluation is to understand how USG-funded activities have influenced GoSL efforts to combat TIP. The evaluation questions were finalized in close cooperation with the TIP Office as a part of DevTech's approved Evaluation Plan.

1. What USG efforts are perceived by government and non-government stakeholders to have had the most positive impact on the Government of Sri Lanka's approach to TIP? What is the basis of this perception?
2. Which aspects of the GoSL's approach to TIP are perceived to have changed as a result of specific USG programming?
3. Where has the GoSL played a substantial positive role in TIP projects funded by the USG? Where has the GoSL fallen short in its expected role?
4. What is missing from the USG's current approach that could positively affect the GoSL's approach to TIP?
5. What role has Sri Lankan civil society taken in combatting human trafficking and protecting victims? What has been most effective in strengthening this capacity? How has the GoSL supported these efforts (financially or otherwise)?
6. How do underlying political issues in Sri Lanka play a role in hindering progress on combatting TIP? What efforts have been successful in dealing with these issues while effectively combatting TIP?
7. How do underlying religious issues/cultural tensions/past conflict in Sri Lanka play a role in hindering progress on combatting TIP? What efforts have been successful in dealing with these issues while effectively combatting TIP?
8. How well are anti-TIP stakeholders (USG and local stakeholders) collaborating in Sri Lanka? Provide case examples of collaborations that demonstrate promising practices. What will it take to improve collaboration among stakeholders?

DATA COLLECTION

Approach to Site Selection

The ET worked with the TIP Office Contracting Officer Representative (COR), the TIP Office SCA Program Officer, and IOM to finalize relevant locations and collect data in those locations. Because all interviews were conducted remotely, sites did not have to be specifically selected.

Instead, respondents were selected from lists provided by the USG implementing partners, with an eye to ensuring as much diversity of location as possible.

Data Collection Methods and Sampling

There were three main methods of data collection for this evaluation: 1) document review; 2) KIIs with project implementers and their sub-grantees; and 3) surveys with other key stakeholders. The sampling approach for the evaluation was driven primarily by implementers' access to project files, especially trainee and activity participation lists for the four projects that are currently being implemented or were recently closed. The ET also collected available documentation about prior USG-funded interventions and probed for the effects of these earlier interventions during stakeholder conversations. The ET made inquiries to identify and contact key informants who may have been involved in these earlier projects, with no success.

Document Review: The ET conducted a desk review of available pertinent documents related to TIP Office-funded projects in Sri Lanka (as described above), TIP Reports from 2007 to 2021, and government data to gain a better understanding of the manner and the extent to which DoS-funded projects have been effective in engaging the GoSL in anti-trafficking efforts. The ET reviewed project quarterly and annual reports, training reports, evaluations, and monitoring data. See Annex I for a full list of documents reviewed.

Key Informant Interviews: KIIs deepened the team's understanding of USG-funded projects' engagement with the Sri Lankan government. The KIIs complement and contextualize other data sources by illuminating respondents' viewpoints on the contributions of USG-funded projects, underlying issues affecting project effectiveness, and the challenges, successes, and unintended consequences or benefits of USG-funded projects.

There are four major groups of key informants who were targeted for KIIs: 1) USG officials; 2) project implementing partners; 3) implementing partners' sub-grantees; and 4) key GoSL officials, especially at the national level, but also at other levels of government for those with significant involvement in USG-funded activities. DevTech worked with the TIP Office, the US Embassy, and implementing partners to develop the initial list of key informants. The evaluators also used the "snowball" technique to identify additional relevant key informants by asking interviewees to recommend contact from their networks.

Interviews were guided by open-ended interview protocols adapted to each group of informants. This included targeted inquiries to answer specific evaluation questions and open-ended questions to better understand the effectiveness of USG-funded TIP and SCA activities. Interview protocols can be found in Annex II. Key informants were contacted in advance to schedule interviews. To ensure accuracy and efficiency, the interviews were conducted by telephone by a two-person team; one taking notes while the other led the interview. The local team was proficient in the three main languages of Sri Lanka [Sinhala, Tamil, and English] and conducted interviews in the preferred language of the respondent. Prior to conducting interviews, the Team Lead and International M&E Expert conducted a virtual enumerator training with the local team. During training, the team reviewed the objectives of the evaluation, ensured a common understanding of TIP, reviewed the KII and survey protocols, and discussed quality control procedures. Initial interviews were conducted with the participation of the International M&E Expert. After debriefing these initial interviews, the local team proceeded to conduct

interviews independently. See Annex III for DevTech’s internal training guide for this evaluation.

Surveys: Surveys were conducted to replace the originally planned focus group discussions. These remote surveys were conducted by phone using the same method described for KIIs. They were shorter than KIIs—generally 15 to 30 minutes long—and consisted of close-ended questions tailored to the category of respondent. Surveys were the main data collection tool for five categories of participants: 1) officials who received training or benefited from a USG-funded TIP project, such as prosecutors, foreign employment officers, child protection officers, and others; 2) selected government officials from national, provincial or district levels who did not participate in KIIs; 3) recruitment agents; 4) community leaders who participated in or were the targets of project interventions; and 5) NGOs and CSOs involved in combatting human trafficking, but who were not directly involved in the USG-funded projects under review. Implementing organizations and their sub-grantees provided lists of trainees and project participants for inclusion in the survey. Purposeful sampling ensured representation of all relevant projects, where possible. Not all implementers were able to provide the lists due to projects being closed, as well as lockdowns that restricted staff from accessing files in the office. Surveys addressed broad issues related to successes and challenges of the USG’s current project implementation approach in Sri Lanka with a specific focus on their impact on GoSL approaches to TIP. Surveys were conducted in the preferred language of the respondent. Survey protocols can be found in Annex II.

Problems Encountered During Data Collection

1. **COVID-19 restrictions.** The evaluation pivoted to a fully remote data collection plan. However, the sustained lockdowns, which took place just as data collection began, made it especially difficult to contact respondents. This was particularly true for GoSL respondents who tended not to respond to emails and for whom we had only work phone numbers. With officials reporting to the office infrequently, they could not be reached on their work phones. This extended the amount of time needed to reach many respondents, while others could not be reached at all.
2. **Difficulties accessing key stakeholders from past projects implemented in Sri Lanka.** It was difficult to find local contacts for projects that have been closed for many years. In some cases, international staff found lists of training participants or other project contacts. For others, they could not locate files or former staff.
3. **Difficulties obtaining government approvals.** The focus of the evaluation is on the GoSL involvement in combatting TIP. To ensure their participation, the ET obtained high level GoSL approval with the help of the US Embassy. As a result, many GoSL officials agreed to participate. While some declined the ET is confident that sufficient numbers of government officials participated to ensure unbiased results.
4. **Gaps in evaluating project data from 2007-2018.** As anticipated the team identified and interviewed very few respondents from closed projects. Analysis therefore relied heavily on reports and project literature to understand the objectives and results of closed TIP projects from 2007- 2018.
5. **Respondent Fatigue.** One problem that was not anticipated in advance was respondent fatigue. Because the data collection was delayed for one year, it overlapped with an assessment on TIP conducted for USAID. Data collection for both the USAID assessment and this evaluation took place almost simultaneously. There was good

cooperation between the USAID assessment team and the DevTech ET. However, some respondents did question the need to participate in multiple interviews.

Individual Data Protection

DevTech abides by the ethical principles of informed consent, respect, sensitivity, do no harm, non-discrimination, and confidentiality. Participation in this evaluation was not expected to present any risks or direct benefits to respondents. The respondent population includes adults and does not include any vulnerable groups – the ET did not interview victims of trafficking. The ET minimized potential risks through the following steps. Interviewers sent informed consent statements to respondents in advance of the KII/survey. At the start of each KII/survey, they discussed the informed consent, answered respondents' questions, and obtained informed consent before proceeding. Additionally, all respondents were assigned an identification code. Interview notes and surveys are marked with the identification code rather than names. The list of codes with identifying information is kept separate from the interview and survey notes. Only the ET members have access to the codes.

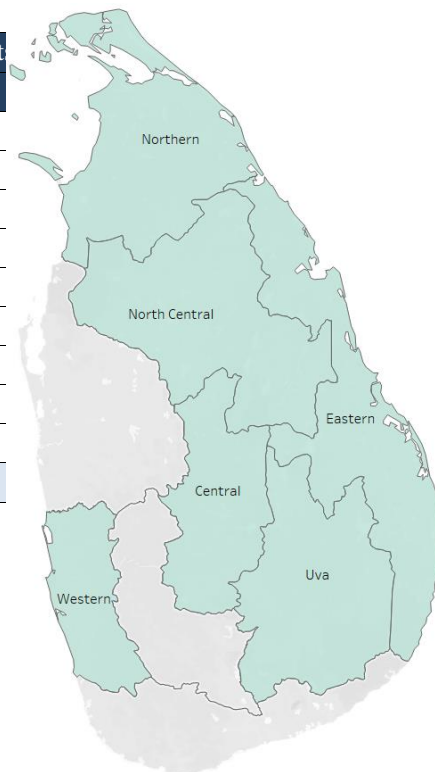
Limitations

As with any evaluation, there are several biases that can affect the reliability and validity of the findings. Below are some of the forms of bias that may be encountered during data collection. The mixed-methods evaluation approach is designed to mitigate these biases by triangulating data across stakeholder groups and across data collection methods.

- **Gender/Ethnic Bias:** Individuals have conscious and unconscious opinions about appropriate roles and behavior of males, females, and LGBTQ. This can be especially important for sensitive issues such as human and sex trafficking. Data analysis explored potential gender differences. Ethnic bias can also affect findings. Both local ET members were fluent in Sinhala and Tamil—languages of the two main ethnic groups in Sri Lanka—to ensure the comfort of respondents.
- **Recall Bias:** KIIs and surveys rely on the memories of individuals. Memories are imperfect and are influenced by many factors including what was deemed significant to the individual, what took their time and attention, if there were other distractions in their life at the time of an activity, or other factors. To mitigate this bias, the ET focused on current projects, and clarified, as possible, each project mentioned by an interviewee. The evaluation protocols contained specific questions and probing sub-questions to mitigate recall bias.
Response Bias: Response bias comes into play when a person, consciously or unconsciously, provides a response influenced by a variety of factors. The individual may give a positive response in order to please the interviewer, influence the donor or present their organization or culture in a positive light. On the other hand, a person could give a negative response for the opposite reasons - to negatively portray a rival, for example. Response bias is mitigated through triangulating data across respondents and data sources.
- **Sampling and Selection Bias:** For current projects, selection was dependent on the timing and location of ongoing activities that may not optimally represent a cross-section from each project. For past projects, identifying former staff and stakeholders proved difficult, limiting the number of key informants. Survivors, as direct beneficiaries, were not interviewed. Additionally, given the constraints of budget and time, the ET was not able to interview or survey everyone and had limited time with each person; thus, not all questions may be fully explored in all circumstances.

- Poor or non-existent data collection and statistical information:** Although most data was directly collected as a part of this evaluation, existing data relevant to understand context, culture, politics, or other elements may be lacking. Moreover, most of the data collected for this evaluation is based on perceptions and self-reporting of behavior change. This is balanced to the extent possible, by triangulating data, including from multiple sectors, and by using a mix of tools to collect both objective and subjective data.

Figure 1. Sri Lanka provinces included in evaluation



Respondent Category	
GoSL TF	
GoSL Other	
GoSL Other - Prosecutors	
GoSL Other - trainees	
IP/USG	
Subgrantees	
Other IO/NGOs	
Community Leaders	
Recruitment Agencies	
<i>Total</i>	

3. FINDINGS

For data analysis, respondents were grouped into several categories in order to understand differences in perceptions between these groups. Government respondents were categorized into two groups: Task Force members are indicated as 'GoSL TF;' all other government respondents are 'GoSL other'. The USG's implementing partners are grouped with USG respondents, of whom there were few, as 'IP/USG'; their subgrantees are indicated as 'Subs'. Most of these 'Subs' are local NGOs or CSOs; however, some are international. Other local and international organizations which are not subgrantees are indicated as 'other NGOs/IOs'. Community leaders - most of whom are also involved in some way with community-based organizations are indicated as 'CL'. Respondents representing recruitment agencies are indicated as 'RA'.

A. RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

The ET interviewed a total of 92 respondents comprising 43 individuals in KIIs and 49 through the shorter survey format. Male to female ratios were not evenly split within some respondent categories or between data collection tools (see [Error! Reference source not found.](#)), which reflects the unequal distribution and availability of men and women.⁷ There was an equal number of male and female respondents overall. Respondents also varied by the administrative level at which they work (see Table 2). More than half of respondents work at the national level (52%, n=89) and a quarter at the district and divisional levels (24% each). The administrative level for one respondent was unknown. Respondents at the district and divisional level worked in a variety of regions, including Eastern (16), Western (9), Central (8), Northern (3), North Central (2), Uva (1) and seven who worked in multiple regions (see Figure 1). As discussed previously,

⁷ The IP respondents were nearly all female and the recruiting agency representatives all male. This presumably reflects the demographics of their staff. However, the ET cannot verify this. The individuals interviewed were those referred to us by the implementer or, in the case of the recruiting agencies, the implementer referred the ET to the secretary of the Association of Licensed Foreign Employment Agencies (ALFEA) who gave us the names and contact details for the nine agency respondents interviewed; all of whom had some involvement in the ILO project.

respondents were not equally distributed across all USG-funded projects. Very few respondents could be identified from projects that had closed more than one year prior to this evaluation. As a result, just under half of all respondents are affiliated with IOM (42.4%), followed by TAF with 25% of respondents and ILO with 10.9% (see Table 3). The ET was only able to interview one former employee from the SC project and one from ABA along with five prosecutors trained under the ABA program. Findings are therefore more reflective of the IOM and TAF projects. See Annex IV for a complete list of respondents.

Table 2. Administrative levels of respondents

Administrative Level	GoSL TF	GoSL other	IP/USG	Subs	Other NGOs/IOs	CLs	RAs	Total
National	7	9	12	8	1	0	9	46
District	0	4	0	9	8	0	0	21
Divisional	0	10	0	0	0	11	0	21
Provincial	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
<i>Total</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>89</i>

Table 3. Respondents by Affiliation with Project Implementers

Respondent Group	ABA	SC	ILO ¹	IOM	TAF	N/A	TOTAL
IPs/USG	1	2	1	4	5	1	14
Subs				15	3		18
Other IO/NGOs					1		1
CSO/NGO - trainees				6	3		9
GoSL - TF						7	7
GoSL - Other				1	3	4	8
GoSL - trainees				10			10
Prosecutors	5						5
Community Leaders				3	8		11
Recruiting Agencies			9				9
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>92</i>
<i>Percent</i>	<i>6.5%</i>	<i>2.2%</i>	<i>10.9%</i>	<i>42.4%</i>	<i>25%</i>	<i>13%</i>	<i>100%</i>

Respondent role vis-à-vis TIP

Respondents were asked to describe their role in combatting human trafficking (see Table 4). The most common responses were raising awareness in their community (35, 49%) and identifying potential cases of trafficking (34, 47%). Respondents also have a role in providing support to victims (24, 33%), being a first responder (14, 19%), investigating cases (10, 14%), being involved in advocacy on human trafficking (7, 10%), and being a watchdog on human trafficking (6, 8%). Other roles included managing programs and a variety of other less common responses. All respondents indicated that they have a role in combatting trafficking.

Table 4. Respondents' roles in combatting human trafficking

Respondent Role in TIP	GoSL TF (n=7)	GoSL Other (n=23)	IP/USG (n=5)	Sub (n=16)	Other NGO/IO (n=10)	CL (n=11)
Advocacy	0%	9%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Identifying potential cases in community	14%	57%	0%	6%	50%	100%
Investigating cases	14%	30%	0%	0%	80%	9%
Prosecuting cases	14%	17%	0%	0%	10%	0%
Providing support to victims	29%	43%	0%	13%	0%	27%
Raising awareness	0%	48%	0%	25%	70%	100%
Responding to reports/first responder	0%	57%	0%	0%	90%	9%
Watchdog	0%	4%	0%	0%	0%	27%
Other	71%	22%	0%	94%	20%	0%

Respondent experience with TIP Cases

Survey respondents were asked about their experience handling trafficking cases. Only three (n=45) said that they had not handled any cases (CL 1, RA 2). Ten respondents had their first case since being trained (GoSL other 6, other NGOs/IOs 4). These respondents reported handling between two and 15 cases each for an average of eight cases. Fourteen respondents had handled cases of trafficking both before and after being trained, from two into the hundreds. Nine community leaders stated that they had handled cases of trafficking since 2007. The number of cases they handled also varied widely from one to 90.

Those respondents who stated that they handled hundreds of cases noted that cases were mostly not reported to authorities. In some cases, the individuals were not willing to be referred to authorities for personal reasons; another respondent said that “people do not go and complain. We only educate them and provide psychosocial support.” (Other NGO/IO) USAID’s assessment of trafficking in Sri Lanka also found that the reported number of cases is low because victims are reluctant to cooperate with law enforcement.⁸ A recent ILO report similarly confirms that there are “no incentives” for victims to come forward, that the process is lengthy and can be further victimizing.⁹

B. EQ 1

This section examines the perceived positive impact of USG interventions, and answers the questions: What USG efforts are perceived by government and non-government stakeholders to have had the most positive impact on the Government of Sri Lanka’s approach to TIP? What is the basis of this perception?¹⁰

Types of positive efforts

Capacity building of government actors and community awareness seemed to have the most positive impacts overall. To a greater or lesser extent and for different groups, these activities were components of virtually all of the DoS-funded programs in Sri Lanka. Capacity building of government actors was cited the most often as having a positive impact, increasing both

⁸ Social Impact. Trafficking in Persons and Counter Trafficking in Persons Assessment in Sri Lanka: Final Report, 2021.

⁹ ILO. Presence of Human Trafficking and Forced Labour in Labour Migration: Sri Lanka. International Labour Organization, 2019.

¹⁰ There are other sections that also tie back to positive impact – among them sections EQ2 (GoSL changes in approach attributed to efforts by the USG), and EQ8 (collaboration efforts tied to USG programming). To avoid redundancy, this section has been narrowed to activities said to have a positive impact on the GoSL’s approach. Elements related to diplomacy and collaboration can be found in other sections.

knowledge about TIP and collaboration between actors. A total of 17 respondents (57%; n=30) (GoSL TF 2, GoSL other 12, Subs 2, other NGOs/IOs 1) said capacity building played a crucial role in engaging government officials to address TIP. Though most respondents referred to training of government officers as a whole, some specifically cited training workshops for police and CID (2), the SLBFE, immigration staff and officers at airports, investigators and the AG, women's development officers and development officers, and the NAHTTF itself. Training of GoSL officials was credited for bringing increased understanding of and interest in human trafficking and helping government units to identify cases, "Until we got the training from the OECRP¹¹ through IOM we did not have any idea or never heard about the term human trafficking. Only after the training I understood that I have come across and did not identify the cases as human trafficking in the past. Now, I can identify the cases properly... So, I can say that this kind of international organizations' projects made [a] positive impact." (GoSL other)

Building community and public awareness was cited with second frequency. Using varied methods to reach communities was also said to increase impact, including live events and theatre. 'People like different methods. Rather than trainings and awareness, forum theatre helped to keep the facts and information about human trafficking in their minds longer.' (Sub) Several respondents emphasized the value of establishing and participating in local district-level forums, as these brought ground-level stakeholders together. Nine respondents (30%; GoSL other 5, Subs 4, other NGOs/IOs 1) noted that such awareness efforts at the district- or divisional-levels had a positive impact. One respondent (Sub) credited district government participation in local community forums as building collaboration between district-level government and the community.

The caliber of training provided by implementers was also said to be strong. When surveyed, GoSL trainees ranked their satisfaction with training on a scale from one to five, where one meant "not satisfied" and five meant "exceeded expectations". On average GoSL trainees rated USG-funded training in which they had participated at 4.5.¹²

Implementers also conducted other activities, including training-of-trainers (ToT) and mentoring for GoSL officials, CSOs and in communities. Since few respondents were affiliated with the Solidarity Center (SC) or LHRD, respondents mentioned very little about their programs. SC's program worked across borders in Bahrain, Qatar, India, and Sri Lanka. They conducted pre-departure training for over 1,400 Indian and Sri Lankan workers, trained 20 activists on investigative research and reporting, and published 10,000 copies of a safe migration leaflet, among other things.¹³ LHRD conducted training for 660 from 180 police stations in 15 police divisions, led 16 community awareness seminars for 1,602 community leaders, and helped monitor 37 cases of trafficking.¹⁴

Basis of perception

Respondents were not only asked "which efforts had a positive impact" but also "why" they thought so. Respondents answered by citing the elements that had a positive impact (as above).

¹¹ OESRP - Organization for Environment and Child Rights Preservation

¹² One respondent ranked their satisfaction at level three, six at level four and eight at level five.

¹³ SC' June 2010 final report on *Multi-country: Combating Trafficking in Asian Migrant Workers to the Gulf States*.

¹⁴ LHRD September 2020 final report for *Combating Trafficking in Persons by Strengthening Law enforcement and Providing Legal Support to Victims of Trafficking*.

As noted earlier, respondents were chosen based on their affiliation with the programs of a key implementer. Only 12 respondents were not associated with a particular implementer, including seven from the NAHTTF, four from other government offices (SLBFE 2, police 1, child protection 1), and one from the USG. Though there is no direct data on the basis of perception outside of the positive elements cited, it is reasonable to assume that those affiliated with an implementer had at least some direct knowledge or participation, those on the NAHTTF had some direct interaction, and those chosen to represent government had a perspective based at least in part on their direct interaction with USG programs.

C. EQ 2

Though there are always many factors that influence change, this section presents respondents’ views on the extent to which changes in the GoSL’s handling of TIP can be traced back to USG programming. It answers the question: Which aspects of the GoSL’s approach to TIP are perceived to have changed as a result of specific USG programming?

Changes in the GoSL’s approach to TIP

The vast majority of respondents (76%) believed that the GoSL’s approach to TIP has changed since 2007 (n=78). Ten respondents (13%) said that nothing has changed, and 14 respondents (18%) were not sure if anything has changed (though five offered some possible areas of change). Table 5 details responses by respondent group. Additional data tables can be found in Annex V.

Changes were diverse and included many elements within the 4P paradigm. USG programming stimulated awareness and action, increased identification, bolstered investigation and prosecution, and enhanced collaboration. The leading form of change cited was greater awareness and understanding of TIP (26 respondents; 44% of those who said ‘yes’). Respondents linked greater awareness to a myriad of capacity building and awareness efforts by the GoSL, USG and other implementers, and one also cited television advertisements. “Every relevant agency and ministry have different people to handle these matters and there are so many awareness programs. So, it has tremendously expanded the knowledge, the know-how, the practical procedures like issuing notices to judges asking to expedite the cases and sending letters and affidavits to our missions abroad asking how to fulfill that when a trafficked person comes or someone is suspected of a trafficking matter.” (GoSL TF)

Table 5. Changes in GoSL approach to TIP

Change in GoSL approach to TIP	GoSL TF (n=7)	GoSL other (n=23)	IP/USG (n=12)	Subs (n=17)	Other NGOs/IOs (n=10)	RAs (n=9)	TOTAL (n=78)
No			17%	24%	30%	11%	13%
Not sure		22%	33%	24%		11%	18%
Yes	100%	78%	75%	65%	70%	78%	76%
If “Yes,” specify what changed							
Awareness/understanding of TIP	42%	52%	42%	24%	2%		44%
Increased GoSL-GoSL collaboration	57%	35%	8%	12%	2%		29%
Improved legislation/regulation	71%	9%	33%	29%		11%	29%
Increased ID and referral	14%	52%	8%				24%
Increased/improved investigation		48%	8%		1%		22%
Increased/improved prosecution	14%	43%	8%	6%			22%
Increased GoSL-CSO collaboration	14%	35%		6%			17%
Referral of victims to services		39%		6%			17%
GoSL more active			25%	12%	1%	33%	15%

Additional victim services		26%					10%
Other types of change	29%	22%	25%	41%	3%	11%	36%

The next most commonly cited form of change was increased collaboration between GoSL partners (17 respondents; 29%), for the most part due to the existence and work of the NAHTTF and collaboration with and between specialized units (e.g. police units, women’s desk, SLBFE, and risk assessment units). “Earlier different organizations and agencies worked in isolation. Now we work in collaboration. This collaboration happens through the Task Force. For example, we share information, exchange information and maintain close linkages with different agencies that are a part of the Task Force. The Task Force created a bonding.” (GoSL TF) In 17 (29%) interviews, respondents mentioned improved legislation, regulatory frameworks and SOPs. Laws, policies and regulations were said to have been enacted or amended, regulations surrounding migration have been modified, and SOPs related to identification and referral, border surveillance and special treatment of children are in place. “The GoSL took every possible effort to combat human trafficking in Sri Lanka by bringing in various laws, regulations, bilateral, multilateral agreements, and amendments to the laws.” (IP/USG) The GoSL was also seen as being generally more active and committed in relation to TIP (9 respondents, 15%), and more efficient, including in collecting TIP data.

Victim identification and reporting, and case investigation and prosecution also benefited from USG programming. Increased identification and reporting of cases was named 14 times (24%) as a positive change resulting from USG programming “There has been a major change. When we started working on TIP, the topic was very new. We only identified the TIP cases when we started working on TIP. Afterwards we developed SOPs, strategic working plans, etc. There was an awakening in all the agencies to work on TIP.” (GoSL TF) Improvements in investigation were noted by 13 respondents (22%), with the caveat that cases still took too long and should be expedited. According to 13 respondents (22%), the quality of prosecution also improved, though only one respondent mentioned that the timeline had improved, “There is not much difference in the number of cases reported. But we have been able to provide a better service to victims and hear the cases faster.” (GoSL other) Another respondent praised the assignment of points of contact in the police and the AG’s office, along with increased training.

Collaboration, named ten times (17%), principally at the local level, also improved between the GoSL and CSOs, “District and divisional level government agencies also have been involved in networks with CSOs to jointly address the TIP cases. These are some good developments in the field.” (Sub) This increase in collaboration also facilitated an increase in victim referrals to services, mentioned ten times (17%), with six respondents also citing improved access to services. The quality of services for survivors also showed improvement (6 respondents, 10%). Three respondents named both positive (above) and negative changes. For example, that the SLBFE and district-level officers were not working well, or that GoSL involvement dwindled after a project was completed. As one respondent summarized, “But all the efforts of these agencies come to one point at the end. There are victims not coming to the system because of the shortcoming of the system. And the victims who come here do not remain there due to its shortcomings.” (other NGO/IO)

Ten respondents said that nothing has changed in the GoSL approach to TIP, and offered various reasons and caveats generally having to do with lack of ample GoSL interest. Various rules and regulations have been enacted but were said to have had little impact on curbing unlicensed

recruiters, or the GoSL is restricted to “regular work” and does not want to do anything differently. One respondent acknowledged a change at the national level but said it had not trickled down to the local level, and police in particular were “not involved much”. Another said, “You have to give money to officers to get any work done.” (other NGOs/IOs) Other examples of the GoSL’s muted enthusiasm for TIP included a reference to a government shelter that was funded by the USG and then shut down when funding lapsed, the NAHTTF having uneven commitment among members, a lack of knowledge at the district and divisional levels, lack of resources, a focus on the USG TIP Report ranking rather than authentically addressing the issues, and government turnover in key positions. “There are not resources, or interventions or proactiveness to address these issues. This issue is not fully understood by the government. The risk, process, and outcome of these issues are not understood. Another gap is whenever there is a reporting time [this is the] only [time] the matters related to TIP and child trafficking emerge. The focus is on the TIP Report rather than addressing the issues. In the regular government programs, the topic is not a priority.” (Sub)

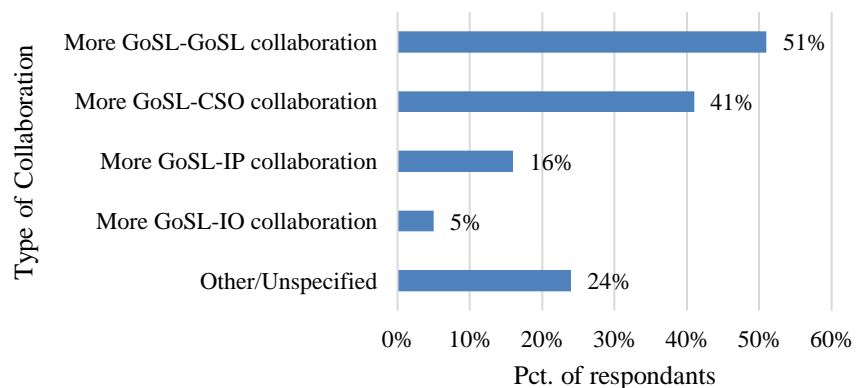
Among the 14 respondents who were not sure if anything has changed, four noted that the shortfall was at the grassroots level where, “Officers do not have sufficient information and knowledge about human trafficking. They are not able to distinguish human trafficking issues from other issues like rape and sexual violence.” (Sub)

Changes in GoSL’s approach to collaboration in relation to TIP

Respondents were separately asked if there have been any changes in the GoSL’s approach to collaboration. From 47 responses, four (9%) saw no change in collaboration, six (13%) were not sure if collaboration had changed, and 37 (79%) said there had been a change in the GoSL’s approach to collaboration. Collaborative relationships were also specified by stakeholder type. Government stakeholders (70%) typically said that GoSL-GoSL collaboration had improved. IPs agreed (40%), but also equally claimed that GoSL-CSO collaboration had improved. Subgrantees, mostly working at a more local level, were less sure about GoSL-GoSL collaboration (only 19%) but saw evidence of more GoSL-CSO collaboration (31%). **Error! Reference source not found.** presents in aggregate the changes in GoSL collaboration reported by respondents.

Of the 19 respondents (51%) who said there had been change in GoSL-GoSL collaboration, eight (GoSL TF 4, GoSL other 1, IP/USG 2, Sub 1) emphasized the role of the Task Force in improving GoSL-GoSL collaboration. District-level forums also improved collaboration at the district level (3 respondents; GoSL

Figure 2. Changes in GoSL collaboration in relation to TIP (n=37)



other 1, IP/USG 1, Sub 1). “Establishment of the Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force and especially, I must note, this coordination among officers, we have for example, WhatsApp groups, we have everyone’s numbers and if we need, we send messages to the NCPA and all. So, we are connected. So, the interagency coordination is working very well.” (GoSL TF)

GoSL-CSO collaboration also increased according to 15 respondents (41% of those who saw a change in GoSL collaboration). Of those who expanded on their response, four mentioned district level forums and collaboration (IP/USG 1, Subs 3). “At the district level government officials more closely work with CSOs due to their increased knowledge about TIP. I am not sure of this at the national level.” (Sub) Respondents also referred to changes in GoSL-IP and GoSL-IO collaboration. Six respondents (GoSL other 1; IP/USG 2; Subs 3) said that both the priority to collaborate and functional collaboration between the GoSL and IPs had improved through the NAHTTF and Development Partners Forum, with law enforcement, and with the MoJ. Nine respondents (GoSL TF 1, GoSL other 1, IP/USG 2, Subs 3, CLs 2) cited other changes in collaboration, including cooperation between police and the community, cooperation with the NAHTTF and with foreign governments, and the use of WhatsApp technology to communicate.

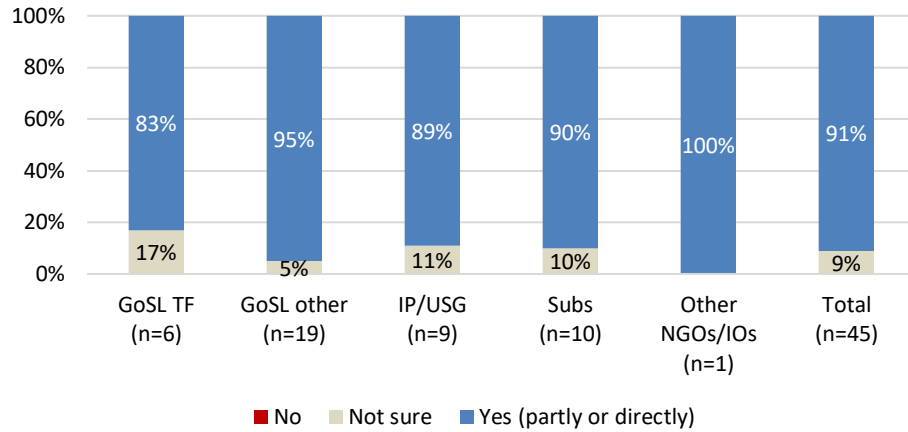
There were a handful of respondents who said there had been no changes in the GoSL’s collaboration related to TIP (other NGO/IO 1; Subs 3), that collaboration remained poor in some areas of work (Sub 1), or that, “The change of governments and ministry secretaries had an impact. Priorities get changed when government and secretaries change.” (Sub)

GoSL change in approach attributed to USG-supported efforts in Sri Lanka

During KIIs, respondents were asked whether or not and to what extent changes in the GoSL’s approach to TIP could be attributed to USG-supported efforts in Sri Lanka. A total of 30 respondents (GoSL TF 6, GoSL other 4, IP/USG 9, Subs 10, other NGO/IO 1) answered the question. No one said that USG-supported efforts had no impact on the GoSL’s approach to TIP, and only four respondents (GoSL TF 1, GoSL other 1, IP/USG 1, Sub 1) either gave an unrelated response, did not know or were not sure. A strong majority of twenty-six respondents (87%) noted that USG-supported efforts had partly or directly contributed to changes in the GoSL’s approach to addressing TIP in Sri Lanka, some adding caveats about other factors that influenced the GoSL approach. Ten respondents (GoSL TF 3, GoSL other 1, IP/USG 3, Subs 3) credited USG programming for having at least partly influenced the GoSL’s approach, while 16 respondents (GoSL TF 2, GoSL other 2, IP/USG 5, Subs 6, other NGO/IO 1) more directly tied USG programming to changes in the GoSL’s approach. Prevention, protection and partnership activities were mentioned most often. Specifically, the NAHTTF and District Forums played a key role in change, and some credited the founding or facilitation of both to IOM. “The Task Force was initiated by IOM in 2010. With the technical assistance from IOM, the Secretary to the Ministry of Justice took the initiative.” (GoSL TF) “These forums were facilitated by IOM. If the project interventions from them were not there, such forums will not operate.” (GoSL other) Survivor services were also featured as a USG contribution to change, “I think on protection a lot could be attributed to USG funding – especially shelter and legal assistance, processes, and even building the capacity of law enforcement to respond.” (IP/USG)

Additionally, all 15 GoSL officials and prosecutors who had participated in USG-supported training, said that they had personally changed or enhanced their approach. Nine had helped raise awareness in their community or with colleagues, eight had reported cases to authorities, two had reported cases to NGOs/CSOs/IOs, nine had referred victims to services, ten said victims were treated differently, and three changed the services they offered to victims. **Error! Reference source not found.** combines KII (30) and GoSL survey (15) responses on whether GoSL’s approach changed as a result of USG programming.

Figure 3. Were there changes in GoSL approach as a result of USG programming?

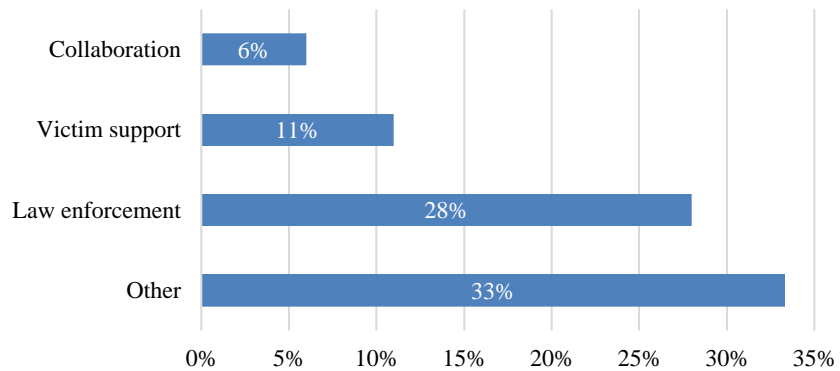


Areas of change desired in GoSL approach

Despite the stated success of changes in the GOSL’s approach to TIP to date, 36 respondents (GoSL TF 4, GoSL other 10, IP/USG 4, Subs 9, other NGOs/IOs 4, CL 1, RAs 4) also noted changes in approach that they would like to see. Ten stakeholders (28%) talked about more inclusive and institutionalized training for law enforcement, especially at the field level, and to include judges. Courtroom stalls were said to result in part because of a lack of knowledge about how to handle TIP cases. Suggested changes covered both capacity building for police (cited 4 times) and institutionalizing TIP curriculum at the police academy (1), building field-level capacity (1) to include internal TIP (1), and capacity building for prosecutors and judges (1). “I would say there are changes in approach. But if you see the prosecution side, the respected officers have poor knowledge and understanding of the trafficking cases. Even in the courts they do not know the law and the cases have never concluded.” (Sub)

Other desired changes in the GoSL approach focused on victim identification and support, with four respondents (GoSL TF 1, GoSL other 1, Sub1) offering suggestions. For example, focusing messages counteract stigma (1), increasing available services and vocational training (3), legal support for victims (2), and support for vulnerable families (1). Though services were said to be lacking, victims are also not aware of services that do exist. “For instance, someone who is trafficked for work, when such person returns, we must make them aware of the legal support they can seek, the safe house and the opportunities they can have though vocational training, counseling.” (GoSL TF). Others offered a variety of suggestions as reflected in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Aspects of GoSL approach that respondents would like to see change (n=36)

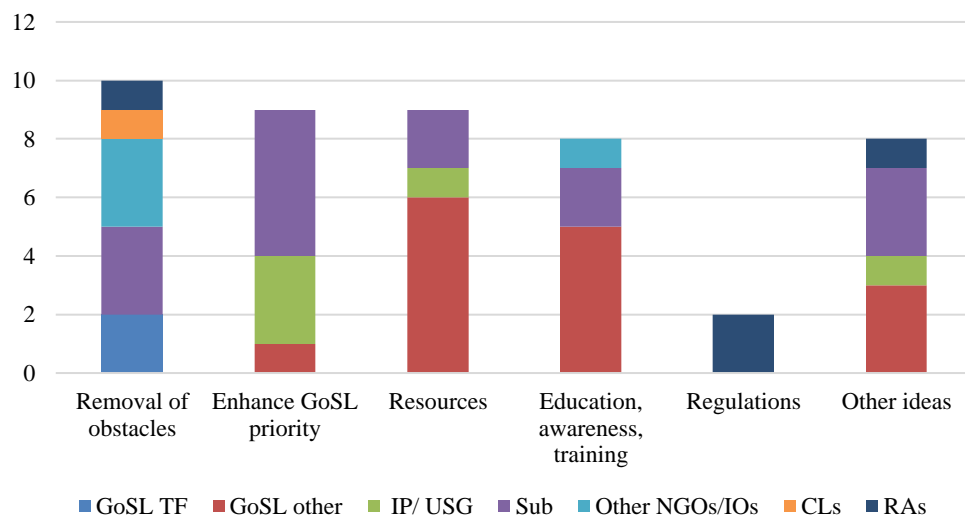


When asked what might be needed in order to stimulate or permit

suggested changes in aspects of the GoSL’s approach, 32 respondents (GoSL TF 2, GoSL other 9, IP/USG 4, Subs 8, other NGOs/IOs 4, CL 1, RAs 4) offered ideas that clustered into six general categories: removal of obstacles (10); enhanced government interest or priority (9); resources (9); education/awareness /training (8); regulations (2); and other ideas (8). Both government and non-government stakeholders pointed to obstacles said to be standing in the way of changes. These obstacles included non-specific government corruption (5), government patronage (1), police corruption (1), gender inequality (1), stigma for victims leading to a failure to report cases (1), and other government impediments (1). The gap in government interest and participation was mostly cited by IPs and Subs, who said that GoSL interest was uneven or that TIP was not a

high priority (4), and turnover in the ministries (1), or the lack of knowledge in parliament hampered progress (1). Government actors more frequently named resource shortfalls and gaps, which applied to both work on TIP cases and

Figure 5. What is required to stimulate change in GoSL approach, per stakeholder group (n=32)



resources for at-risk families. A recurring theme echoed by respondents here and throughout was the need for continuous training: “The training should be given to judges, prosecutors, lawyers and public.” (GoSL other) Figure 5 details responses by respondent group.

Recommendations on ways USG projects can enhance the GoSL’s approach to TIP

As one respondent stated, “The point of JTIP programming as I understand it is to make the implementer obsolete ... eventually to build the capacity of the government – and civil society – to enable the government to continue the actions and use the tools and education provided throughout the project to be more self-sufficient. The more the government [of Sri Lanka] can dedicate itself to working with such a project and the more financial investment they can make in it the better.” (IP/USG) Other recommendations (total 16; GoSL TF 1, GoSL other 1, IP/USG 10, Subs 2, other NGOs/IOs 2) went in a variety of directions, but most had to do with doing more of the same things that have been done – continuing funding with a more long-term approach, reaching more corners (e.g. prosecutors, judges, villages) with awareness and training and including “manpower agencies” in activities, and continuing to enhance collaboration and engagement while more actively including CSOs in the mix. One concrete suggestion was that the Victim and Witness Protection Authority could play a bigger role in providing services for victims. Another was to focus on livelihoods and prevention. And two respondents suggested involving the GoSL more at the design and development stage, and “hearing their needs”, rather than external parties designing programs. “Sometimes programs are designed by people who haven’t even stepped foot in Sri Lanka.” (IP/USG)

D. EQ 3

This section looks at findings related to the questions: Where has the GoSL played a substantial positive role in TIP projects funded by the USG? Where has the GoSL fallen short in its expected role?

GoSL overall role in TIP

The ET began this line of inquiry by asking non-GoSL respondents (n=13; Subs) what they thought was the current overall role of the GoSL in relation to TIP (i.e. not specifically in relation to USG-supported TIP programming). Three respondents (23%) were not sure of the GoSL role, “It’s not clear what the government is doing. The Ministry of Justice is connected, but many departments would say that human trafficking is not an issue in Sri Lanka and we don’t have such a problem here.” (Sub) Recognition of internal TIP is also limited.¹⁵ Overall, however, while the role at the national level was generally said to be functioning, and that some initiatives were underway, the impact was not fully reaching the field level (4). “In general, there is lack of knowledge about TIP. The national level decisions and actions do not trickle down to the district and divisional level. For example, women development officers at the divisional level do not know that their line ministry is a member of the Task Force. There are a lot of complaints related to TIP but they go under other offices because of this lack of knowledge. TIP is largely a topic discussed at the Colombo level.” (Sub) This disconnect between administrative levels was mentioned in several interviews and in relation to various interview questions.

Community leaders (n=11) were also asked if and how the GoSL was involved in TIP in their communities. Respondents indicated that the GoSL helped to identify and to investigate

¹⁵ Social Impact. Trafficking in Persons and Counter Trafficking in Persons Assessment in Sri Lanka: Final Report, 2021.

suspected cases of TIP (6 respondents), assisted with awareness at the community level (5), responded to reports from the community (3), and helped provide support to victims (2). Two respondents said that the GoSL was not involved in TIP. When community leaders were asked if the GoSL was doing enough on TIP, three said they were, one was not sure, and seven (64%) said that not enough was being done. “It is the government that should work but they do not do anything. The officers are only in their offices and there is a big gap between the community and officers. They do not go to the people and do not know the issues that the people undergo.” (CL) All respondents offered suggestions as to what more the GoSL could do to respond to TIP, including more awareness activities (7), identifying cases (2), responding to reported cases (2), investigating cases (5), prosecuting cases (3), and supporting victims (3). Eight recruiting agents (n=9) said the GoSL was involved in combatting TIP. Of these, seven said the GoSL helped to train and orient migrants and monitor migration. “There is a counter at the airport to monitor illegal activities like trafficking. ALFEA president and secretary also help the SLBFE to find the trafficking cases.” (RA) One agent indicated that this was not enough. “They provide training but no further follow-ups - I mean that they don’t even check the documents correctly. There are sub-agencies who prepare fake documents and traffic people.” (RA) Seven also said that the GoSL was responsible for vetting and blacklisting agencies like their own, though not all were satisfied with the results. Respondents did not think that the GoSL had made TIP enough of a priority. Five (n=13; GoSL TF 7, GoSL other 4, Subs 2) said they witnessed some prioritization, but that it was insufficient or uneven. “I do not see that relevant agencies and individuals consider human trafficking as a major priority in the country. Issues like child rights and child abuses are priorities but not trafficking as such.” (GoSL TF) Others were vague but reflected that officials faced constraints to prioritizing TIP (2), “Government officials are often constrained by the circulars. They cannot take decisions because they are afraid to take a decision beyond the circulars. They are afraid to be involved in activities.” (GoSL other)

The ABA¹⁶ gave special positive recognition to the Attorney General’s Department (AGD). “From the onset, the Attorney General (previously Solicitor General) has been a champion to prosecute TIP and related offenses in Sri Lanka, as well as open to taking on a leading advisory role with respect to TIP victim identification and TIP investigations. This commitment to combat TIP is not only top down but also bottom up as State Counsel (participants in a USG-supported ToT) demonstrated a strong commitment to prosecute TIP and related offenses. The challenge is that successful prosecutions hinge on effective TIP victim identification, investigations, and evidence collection — not only by CID, but also national/local police authorities, SLBFE monitors/ investigators and MoL monitors/investigators.’

GoSL obstacles in combatting TIP

Recognizing that combating TIP is difficult, 14 respondents (GoSL 7TF 7, GoSL 4, Subs 2, other NGO/IO 1) named specific obstacles faced by the GoSL, principally stemming from challenges related to investigation that also thwart prosecution. These included difficulties getting victims to come forward (GoSL TF 2), turnover in the GoSL (GoSL TF 2), external issues and the need for more bilateral agreements (GoSL TF 2), lack of knowledge within the GoSL and specifically among police (GoSL TF 1, GoSL other 1), and lack of coordination between GoSL departments or lack of performance by the SLBFE (GoSL TF 1, GoSL other 1). “We reported 61 cases out of

¹⁶ American Bar Association. Combating Trafficking in Persons in Sri Lanka FY19 Q3 Quarterly Report. June 2019, page 24-25.

which only three revealed a court case. The main issue is insufficient information. We have to drop them [cases] and could not go further because we did not have sufficient information. We request the relevant police area to investigate when people complain to us. We categorize those cases as potential trafficking. But it is the police officers at the field level that conduct the investigations. Those officers need a lot of training to illicit information [from witnesses, etc.]. Another issue we have is that in all cases the informant is a third party. We haven't received any complaints from the victims or the victim's family." (GoSL TF) Other obstacles were tied to underlying socio-economic factors and unemployment (GoSL other 2), as well as a lack of sufficient child or shelter care and reintegration systems (GoSL TF 1, GoSL other 1).

Intended versus actual role of GoSL in USG-supported TIP projects

Implementing partners (n=12) were asked what role they intended for the GoSL to play in their specific projects. Intended roles varied from design to implementation to monitoring results. Four IPs cited a consulting role at program initiation, for example in program design, during the needs assessment or development stage, or to identify locations of focus or select GoSL partners to be engaged (1). Six IPs mentioned an intended role in implementation, including engaging the GoSL as participants in training and awareness activities (3), as well as in a leadership role (3). "For the trafficking project we expected the project to be completely led by MOJ." (IP/USG) An additional two each talked about a more overarching role in acknowledging TIP and championing anti-TIP efforts, co-funding or in-kind funding, and one cited a role in project monitoring and evaluation.

In describing the actual role of the GoSL, as it played out with USG-supported programs, 21 implementers (IP/USG 7, Subs 14) shared their experiences across various programs and levels. Three respondents (IP/USG 3) said that the GoSL was involved at the program design stage. (However, during interviews with the GoSL, only one (GoSL TF) mentioned involvement in program design, indicating that this encouraged their continued involvement in the projects.) One IP respondent said the GoSL was involved in selecting priority villages for work. Nineteen IP and subgrantee respondents (90%) named involvement that would be a part of the implementation stage. The most common area of involvement was working in collaboration with divisional- or district-level government actors (12), including local child rights and probation officers, counseling officers and social workers, women's development officers, officers in charge of foreign employment, *Grama Niladhari* (local government officer). "We closely worked with Government Agents (district) to Grama Niladhari at the divisional level, with their guidance and support. District level government supported a lot for this project and they were involved in all training and coordination meetings." (Sub) Other roles of the GoSL during implementation were varied, such as working with the NAHTTF (6), or on SOPs (2) or training modules (1) or helping with referrals to GoSL branches (3); seeking GoSL approvals (1); sharing information (3), including on post-training data; and providing some support for training police and immigration officials (3). Some government officers helped support livelihoods for survivors through local government development projects (3), "When we identified victims and had to support them, apart from project funds, government also supported with funding through various development projects. Some livelihoods training was also provided by government officers, and they also connected the victims to access finance and marketing of their products." (Sub) District-level government actors were also involved in training and coordination meetings (8) or as resource persons during workshops (2). Three IPs did not mention a clear role but said that the GoSL had not objected to their project or created any obstacles for them. "There were no

restrictions for us to lead this project and they released the relevant government staff for training. However, they don't have the capacity and resources to work on their own in anti-TIP ... We worked 90% and expected 10% only from them. But we got what we expected.” (Sub) Full responses for the intended and actual role of the GoSL are reflected in Table 6. Numbers in blue under ‘actual role - implementation’ reflect examples from some respondents.

Table 6. Intended and actual role of the GoSL in USG programs, as cited by IPs and Subs

Role of GoSL	Intended role, per IP/USG	Intended role, per Subs	Actual role, per IP/USG	Actual role, per Subs
Needs assessment / design	4		3	
Selection of partners	1			1
Implementation	6		7	12
<i>Leadership role</i>	2			1
<i>Coordination role / assist in coordination</i>	2		5	21
<i>Participant role / trainee</i>	2		5	5
<i>Permission / approval / no obstacles</i>			3	2
Monitoring / evaluation	1		2	
Funding and in-kind support	2		2	1
Anti-TIP champion	2			
Other	2		3	2

Steps taken to involve the GoSL in USG-supported TIP projects

Implementers universally acknowledged the need for GoSL involvement in their projects, though with varying emphasis at different stages, and each had taken a variety of steps, sometimes through trial and error, to engage the GoSL. Twenty-nine non-GoSL respondents (IP/USG 12, Subs 16, other NGOs/IOs 1) named the specific steps, successful and otherwise, that they took to involve the GoSL in their projects.

Twenty-five respondents (86%) identified ways they had successfully engaged the GoSL in various stages of their programs. Successful tactics expressed by the 11 *primary implementing organizations* included developing and leveraging relationships (8), regularizing contact and consultation with the GoSL and involving them in decisions (6), sharing information with the GoSL (2), using the GoSL as resource persons (2), and getting government in-kind or financial support (2). No one mentioned a precise formula for engaging the GoSL; instead, most emphasized sustained engagement, “trying every avenue”, adapting to different methods of communication, employing persistence and partnership. “One [method] was advisory committees. Another was constant written and verbal conversations. We constantly invited Task Force members to every key event. We asked for meetings and kept them informed. We constantly invited government officials for every event so that government knows what we do. They were quite supportive of our work.” (IP/USG)

Tactics used by 13 *subgrantees* to engage and involve the GoSL were both similar and varied. They also cited relationship building (1), regular contact and consultation in decision-making (4), and sharing information (1). Going further, they emphasized involving GoSL actors in awareness activities and training (6), working on SOPs (1), creating a core group or getting one GoSL representative to bring others (2), and front-end engagement at a high-level to increase GoSL ownership (4). In one example, something as simple as allowing the GoSL to set the training schedule helped. “I decided to give the opportunity to them to fix the date and time for the

training, forum, and some other activities, which made them to take part actively. So, they came and took part in all the activities that we did. It was one of the tricks I used to get them involved in our activities.” (Sub) An additional respondent (other NGO/IO) noted that the optimal tactics changed based on the government department.

Among those (Subs 5) who said their attempt to engage the GoSL was not successful, four suggested mixed levels of enthusiasm within the GoSL. “The next step of developing their capacity is that when they meet the victims, they can actually help these people. But that does not happen effectively. They are not very enthusiastic because as I said it is not in their mandate. They will not have a role to play in human trafficking. It is extra work for them, and they think - why they should go that extra mile?” (Sub) As an example of the lack of understanding of some GoSL officials, another respondent talked about a mix-up in sending *road* traffic police officers to a training activity because the concept of *human* trafficking was unknown. (Sub) Five respondents (IP/USG 3, Subs 2) did not know or said that they had not involved the GoSL in their project (or at their level).

Involvement of GoSL agencies in USG-supported TIP projects

An overwhelming 95 percent of GoSL stakeholders interviewed (n=21; GoSL TF 7, GoSL other 14) said that their agency had a role in USG-supported TIP projects. Only one (GoSL other) said that their agency was not involved in TIP, but only in migration – if they identified victims, they referred them to the Family Rehabilitation Centre. Most respondents (17; GoSL TF 5, GoSL other 12) had participated in training including for police, other GoSL and the NAHTTF. Two had served as resource persons during training. Others had various roles in USG projects related to research, SOP development, or coordination of awareness activities.

Eleven (52%; GoSL TF 7, GoSL other 4) also talked about involvement of *other* GoSL agencies (i.e., not their own agency or work) in USG TIP projects, or their involvement with other GoSL agencies in those programs. Respondents from the NAHTTF mentioned involvement with the CID (4), police (5), immigration/emigration (3), MoJ (2), the Attorney General’s Department (2), and one each of the following: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Child Protection Authority, Department of Labour, Women and Children’s Bureau, Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs, Department of Probation, provincial councils, government safe houses, legal support agencies, the border surveillance unit, and the other members of the NAHTTF. Respondents from other GoSL agencies mentioned work on USG projects with the National Apprentice, Industrial Training Authority; the Vocational Training Authority; the CID and police; National Child Protection Authority (2); Human Rights Commission; the SLBFE; and the Women and Children's Bureau.

When GoSL respondents were asked how they or their agency became involved in a TIP project supported by the USG, three (38%) said that they were successfully engaged by IOM or through IOM forums (GoSL TF 2, GoSL other 1), or that TAF reached out (GoSL TF 1). Two were engaged due to their role on the NAHTTF. One was assigned by the police academy (GoSL other 1), and two were involved as a function of receiving a report of a suspected case of TIP or being engaged in cases of TIP (GoSL TF 1, GoSL other 1).

A few GoSL respondents (GoSL TF 4, GoSL other 5) also weighed in on what kept them involved in USG-supported programs, citing that they appreciated information sharing, including

on investigation techniques (3); being involved in program design (1); responding to TIP complaints (1), and the fact that the USG implementers or the NAHTTF mobilized actors and promoted coordination, not only between the GoSL and non-government stakeholders, but also between GoSL-GoSL actors (4).

Areas where the GoSL role in USG projects was not optimal

While the actual role of the GoSL in USG-supported programs was substantial, as noted above, there were a number of areas where respondents felt that GoSL involvement was crucial but not optimal. “Yes, the thing is that implementation of these projects really rested on the participation and willingness of the government stakeholders to be involved in it. A lot of the time it had huge impact on whatever was going ahead in the implementation.” (IP/USG) Several respondents noted that more attention or deeper commitment would have accelerated efforts. Program implementers were asked if they had examples where GoSL involvement or lack of involvement harmed or diminished project outcomes. A few other stakeholders (Subs 4, other NGO/IO 1) also answered this question, though it was not specifically asked. No one (combined n=17) said that the presence of the GoSL or its involvement negatively impacted programs or intentionally hindered progress. Two mentioned bureaucratic or other response-time delays but none claimed the GoSL intentionally thwarted programming. On the other end of the spectrum, 12 respondents (71%; IP/USG 8, Subs 3, other NGO/IO 1) cited a lack of optimal government involvement as potentially diminishing desired outcomes. Four respondents (IP/USG 3, other NGO/IO 1) described not being able to get on a busy official’s schedule or the GoSL not attending programs or not showing interest or enthusiasm. Others mentioned lukewarm buy-in from some members of the NAHTTF (1). turnover in government or among the police (3) as factors that negatively affected the project. “We went through four ministers and eight secretaries during these five years. This [turnover] in key positions had a major impact on the project.” (IP/USG) Other mentions had to do with field structure (IP/USG), specifically the absence of a designated field officer being linked to the national forum; police not filing cases under the TIP law (IP/USG); or cultural issues that thwarted investigation (Sub), especially in working on trafficking for sexual exploitation.

Project reports indicate that the SOPs were not being followed, “The SOP [for Identification and Referral of Victims] was not being followed, simply due to the fact that institutions opt to follow their own set of ‘home-grown procedures’ in identifying victims and survivors of trafficking.”¹⁷ Another (IP/USG) said that lack of GoSL funding for victim support and repatriation was an issue. Lack of trust or understanding between the GoSL and CSOs was also cited (IP/USG 1, Sub 1). “There was a lot of tension between civil society and the government. Civil society bashes the GoSL for lack of capacity and will, when it might actually be resources and time holding them back.” (IP/USG) Thirty-five percent (IP/USG 4, Subs 2) said that they had no examples of negative impact on USG programming based on GoSL involvement or lack thereof, and that the NAHTTF worked well, and collaboration gained momentum over time.

Things that can be done to optimize the GoSL role in USG-supported projects

¹⁷ The Asia Foundation. Quarterly Report. December 2019. On file with the evaluation team. And: Guneratne, Camena (2019). Review of the Standard Operating Procedures for the Identification, Protection and Referral of Victims of Human Trafficking. The Asia Foundation: Colombo.

In responding to a series of questions about optimizing the role of the GoSL in USG programs, respondents shared ideas that both fall into and cross three buckets: 1) things that implementing partners can do; 2) things that the GoSL can do; and 3) things that the USG can do.

For implementing partners: Twenty-one respondents (GoSL TF 4, GoSL other 4, IP/USG 11, Sub 2) weighed in on what more implementing partners could do to engage the GoSL. These included:¹⁸

- Additional/continued support for TIP (4)
- Direct funding/support of the NAHTTF, including for a physical space to house it (2)¹⁹
- Coordinate to engage/communicate with the GoSL as a unit (2)
- More trainings and/or with more institutions, including the judiciary, and at more levels of government (4). Among the above, one concrete suggestion was that capacity building needed to focus on the local level. “All the programs that I attended are not for the people at the grassroots level. All of them were for senior government officials, the policy makers.” (GoSL TF)
- Create more shelter options and streamlining entry (1)
- Increase involvement of CSOs, especially those by and for women, and facilitating an improved relationship with the GoSL, including through quarterly meetings (2); and
- Share international experience on TIP (1)

For the USG: Fourteen respondents (GoSL other 1, IP/USG 11, Sub 1, other NGO/IO 1) said that the USG could do more to engage the GoSL in USG-supported programs Their suggestions included:²⁰

- Use diplomacy to ‘push’ the GoSL (2)
- Ensure long-term funding or funding for victim services or repatriation of victims (3)
- Direct funding for the GoSL instead of to CSOs (1)
- Simplify the Leahy approval process (1)
- Provide more clarity on the TIP Report (1)
- Seek GoSL buy-in by more engagement in project design and implementation (2). “It would be helpful if the U.S. government from D.C. as well as the embassy could involve the GoSL as early as possible in any design or project. Early consultation with the host country government is always helpful.” (IP/USG)

For the GoSL: Thirteen out of 16 respondents (GoSL TF 6, GoSL other 4, IP/USG 3, Subs 3) offered suggestions on what could be done to enrich or strengthen the GoSL’s role in USG TIP programming. Notably, most suggestions were ways to further address TIP writ large and not about how to enhance the GoSL’s role in USG TIP programs. These suggestions included:

- Enhance the work of the NAHTTF (7), especially to improve monitoring and coordination: “There is some level of poor coordination among government officers. This

¹⁸ These suggestions are from 13 respondents (GoSL TF 3, GoSL other 2, IP/USG 8). Three (GoSL other 2, IP/USG 1) said that there was nothing more to be done, as things were working well. Five (GoSL TF 1, IP/USG 1, Subs 2) were not sure what more could be done or did not specify who might do more.

¹⁹ The IP also acknowledged that it was not, in principle, “a good thing to have a donor-funded secretariat because of sustainability issues.”

²⁰ These suggestions come from 11 respondents (GoSL other 1, IP/USG 9, Sub 1). Three others were not sure what more the USG could do.

is mainly because there are no permanent secretariats or officers with mandatory roles. There should be permanent officers in the Task Force and a secretariat.” (GoSL TF)

- Establish district-level networks throughout the country (1)
- Provide more training for officials at the local level (3)
- Improve prosecutions, make legislative amendments, better regulate sub-agents and improve relationships with CSOs.

Recommendations on how international assistance can best support GoSL engagement on TIP

When asked how future international assistance can best support GoSL engagement on TIP, 12 respondents (GoSL TF 7, GoSL other 4, IP/USG 1) suggested key areas for assistance, such as:

- Most responses from the GoSL focused on continuing to fan-out awareness trainings and providing various forms of support for victims.
- Support for victim services also resonated with five interviewees, especially support for livelihoods, vocational education, medicine and psychiatric services.
- Support for improved prosecutions: One respondent talked about an automated digital management system for the AG and another mentioned needing assistance addressing the international aspects of the crime. “Yes, the thing is a multi-national organized crime. In fact, we need the assistance of the international organizations so we can communicate, how to try to protect not only the Sri Lankans abroad but we also we have to look after the foreigners in Sri Lanka who are working.” (GoSL TF) Respondents also mentioned resources to employ the existing database (1), and equipment to track traffickers (1).

E. EQ 4

This section aims to answer the question: What is missing from the USG’s current approach that could positively affect the GoSL’s approach to TIP?

Something missing/ misguided in USG-supported TIP projects

Among the 38 respondents (GoSL TF 7, GoSL other 3, IP/USG 12, Subs 15, other NGO/IO 1) who shared their thoughts on whether something was missing or misguided in USG-supported TIP projects, 12 (32%; GoSL TF 4, GoSL other 1, IP/USG 2, Subs 4) said nothing was missing or misguided. As one noted, “Definitely those approaches have been very fruitful for the implementation of the government sector process because the government officers sometimes have a lack of funds, and their capacities are not up to standard.” (GoSL other) Twenty-six percent (10 respondents; GoSL other 1, IP/USG 3, Subs 6) were not sure if something was missing or misguided, but noted some discrepancies, such as some duplication between an ILO and an IOM project, or the sum of the areas of effort not resulting in impact on cases. “I am not sure if anything is missing - but still I don’t see the flow of function or actions for the cases from identification to providing solutions. For example, a community brings the trafficking issues to us - and then we review, advise and refer to relevant departments including police and divisional secretariat office staff. After that everything goes into the black hole. No decisions or supports are given to the victim. So – does it mean that something is missing?” (Sub) Other respondents echoed similar experiences in answering other questions, i.e., that suspected or actual cases do not move forward due to lack of victim/witness testimony, insufficient investigation or charging, or stalls in the justice system that frustrate prosecution. In terms of tracking the status of cases, the TAF database project was extended through March 2021 in order to address gaps in data collection, “After the assessment of existing data collection and reporting mechanisms it was

evident that clear data routes are not prevalent within members of the Task Force, there are no uniform methods for data input; the process for data output and internal data mechanisms vary largely from stakeholder to stakeholder.”²¹ The broader TAF project goal was to expand and standardize existing GoSL data systems while also standardizing data collection and roll-up from 23 participating CSOs. It remains unclear the extent to which the data collection system was put into place under the TAF project.

Sixteen respondents (42%; GoSL TF 3, IP/USG 7, Subs 5, other NGO/IO 1) were able to identify things that were missing from USG programs, or could be reoriented, emphasized, or de-emphasized. Several areas of programming were said to be useful but needing more or ongoing emphasis, especially awareness and capacity building to identify victims, including at the local level (4). Seven people cited the need for increased coordination with the GoSL, including in the field (2). GoSL respondents (5) wanted to improve coordination between the GoSL and CSOs “to be more responsive to GoSL needs.” One IP shared this sentiment, “You need to understand from the government side, their challenges – and need to consult the GoSL at the beginning.” (IP/USG) Others (2) felt that survivor services, including for males were insufficient, or that extended hands-on training or emphasis on data collection was needed (4). “I would like to see more programs that would focus on services to victims versus capacity building. Or to do something hand-in-hand where we build capacity and improve services. For example, training for safe migration to deal with different officers. Something that will be more permanent or tangible than general awareness.” (IP/USG) One programming element that was seen as over-emphasized was child trafficking, “I think the USG looks at lot at child trafficking. [We ourselves] show that there were only a few [cases of] child trafficking in Sri Lanka. It can be seen as creating problems that do not exist when too much emphasis is given to child trafficking.” (IP/USG)

Areas of concern related to USG programming included GoSL turnover and its impact on USG programs (1), Leahy vetting and the complications and stalls that it creates (1), lack of in-language programming for non-Sinhala speakers (1), and counter-productive competition between implementers (2). “There needs to be better coordination and accountability that’s joined up between different groups funded by the USG. What happens is competition between groups – and as much as we talk about collaboration – there is competition. Unless you join accountability – where all fail or succeed - it keeps rearing its head and what ends up happening is there is a lot of undermining between organizations that get funding.” (IP/USG)

Projects or elements not useful

USG projects were generally useful, and many respondents suggested doing more of the same going forward, with various caveats to extend programming to penetrate deeper into villages or cover a broader swath of the country. When asked whether certain projects or elements of projects were not useful, 23 of 37 respondents (62%; GoSL TF 7, GoSL other 4, IP/USG 2, Subs 13, other NGO/IO 1) said that all elements of USG projects were useful, and none should be deleted. Instead, they sometimes mentioned add-ons to or accelerations of existing elements. “There were none that were not helpful because without this we would have not met this awareness level and other aspects. But in the future, we need something that goes beyond what we have done now, either a different added approach or covering more regions.” (GoSL TF)

²¹ TAF Amended Timeline and Project Extension Request, p. 1.

Six respondents (GoSL TF 2, IP/USG 4) offered suggestions about project elements that were not useful. One cited a pre-requisite need for a mechanism to get local feedback on that very question. (IP/USG) “The only people who can tell you if it was useful are the intended users, the audience. And we don’t have a mechanism to get feedback.”²² Others cited processes more than elements, including the waste of printed materials that sat on shelves undistributed (1), and the need to institutionalize processes and training (1). Another cited the need for awareness activities to evolve and be taken over by the GoSL. “In general, if there are any sort of awareness raising campaigns they should be done at a national level and should come from the government and not necessarily from a development partner because I feel that that’s not a very sustainable way of doing things because awareness can’t be the same message you continue for a long time, it needs to evolve, change and I would think things like setting up strengthening systems and processes and also building capacity is really important.” (IP/USG) The need for better coordination among USG implementers, especially in working with the GoSL was also mentioned. “Sometimes I have seen that the U.S. funding is divided to many agencies. These agencies have to coordinate with many government agencies. Different agencies reach to us at different times for the same or similar activities. As we are involved in many activities, we do not find it easy to allocate time for all of them. Sometimes, surveys are conducted and the findings are quite simple and things that we already know. Task Force members get tired when many agencies reach to them one after the other.” (GoSL TF)

Projects or elements useful for sustainability/expansion

Among the various elements and activities in USG-supported programs, some aspects were considered especially ripe for expansion or vital for sustainability. Of the 38 respondents (GoSL TF 7, GoSL other, IP/USG 10, Subs 16, other NGO/IO 1) who were asked about programs, approaches or elements that might best lead to sustainable results or were suitable for expansion, only five had no suggestions to offer. Twenty-six respondents (GoSL TF 6, GoSL other 4, IP/USG 7, Subs 9) offered options to expand programming, and nine (GoSL TF, IP/USG 1, Sub 5, other NGO/IO 1) cited options to promote sustainability. Capacity building and training continued to be among the most popular responses for expansion, with respondents naming continued awareness training (7), including through social media; and capacity building for the GoSL, the police academy, CID, and prosecutors (3). Respondents (5) asked to expand awareness activities to every district throughout the island, extend forums to more districts (4), and to the divisional level (2), and to better engage government officials at these levels (1).

Referring to projects or elements that promote sustainable solutions, one respondent suggested institutionalizing training and learning by alternative means, such as training-of-trainers (1), or on-the-job training/mentoring (1). “I see that when people work with the departments like immigration and police, they institutionalize what they learn. It is a sustainable way to doing it.” (Other NGO/IO) Another respondent noted that the divisional and district level forums were potential mechanisms for sustainability and “need to be connected to the national level forum”; another seconded the expansion of the forums but with some concern as to how well these might function after the project ends unless someone was charged with coordinating them. (Sub)²³ One suggestion was integrating TIP in a holistic way into other ongoing themes - for example, alongside labor exploitation, worker rights violations, trade union issues, and sexual harassment

²² DevTech hopes that this evaluation can, at least in part, fulfill that need.

²³ In some districts the SLBFE took leadership of forums.

in the workplace issues - would be an efficient way of working on them all at once. (IP/USG) Continuous learning and feedback loops to improve were also cited (2). “Awareness for these district and divisional level officials should be given step by step. There should be some monitoring on awareness to see what change they result in.” (Sub) “For these projects to be a more sustainable we need a database that looks into the currently reported cases, what is the progress of the reported cases, a monitoring mechanism of what has happened to the victims, whether they are at the safe house or placed with family, whether they received any assistance by law.” (GoSL TF) Also named was strengthening systems for victim support and reintegration to sustain progress and avoid re-trafficking, “Economic support and psychosocial interventions for victims and families should continue for several years and be closely monitored” (Sub). A final respondent offered the sage advice that, “Donors or implementers should plan the projects along with the stakeholders who need to take the ownership of the activities and continue to implement in a sustainable manner. If donors/NGOs develop something and implement on their own, the structure will not be prepared for buy-in. So collaborative planning and engagement will be essential.” (Sub) This replicates a theme identified under EQ 3, the need to engage the GoSL as early as possible in program design and implementation.

Recommendations on ways programs can lead to positive changes and sustainable impact

Throughout interviews, respondents made various suggestions about practices, approaches or types of programmatic interventions that positively affect the GoSL’s approach and lead to positive changes and sustainable impact. These suggestions from 34 respondents (GoSL TF 7, GoSL other 4, IP/USG 8, Subs 15) are varied, but generally cluster into the following categories: 1) approaches; 2) program elements; 3) target groups and levels; 4) structures and systems; 5) diplomacy and collaboration.

Approaches: Featured under this category of recommendations is the need for continuous and long-term support for programming (3); soliciting and consulting the GoSL and other stakeholders to ensure buy-in from the outset, including in program design (6); and institutionalizing training of police and migrants (3).

Program elements: Elements of programming that were considered vital for positive sustainable change included awareness activities at the local level (3); capacity building for the GoSL and local officials, including through exposure visits for high officials to foreign countries with more TIP experience, and training on how social media is used for TIP (4); victim identification, protection and services, including psychosocial support and family social support (7).

Target groups and levels: Recurring themes in this category include the need for local, divisional and district level efforts, throughout Sri Lanka, especially in areas most vulnerable due to high levels of poverty and/or disenfranchisement of certain groups (6); for ground level officials and officers (2); reaching a broad swath of GoSL institutions (1) and including work with CSOs (1).

Structures and systems: Enhanced structures suggested to be of benefit include dedicated officers, a separate unit or department for TIP within the GoSL (2); a coordinating structure at the local level and that links divisional and district efforts to the national level (3); a system to coordinate data (1); and processes and systems to improve the efficiency of investigations (1).

Diplomacy and collaboration: In this category recommendations clustered around the need for the USG to use diplomacy as a conduit and to press the GoSL to put more emphasis on TIP (4), and to engage with CSOs to do it (1). In terms of collaboration and communications, suggestions focused on more coordination with the GoSL (1), and from local to national levels (1), and through regularized communications about all projects (1). A final suggestion was to encourage regional collaboration to identify and disrupt trafficking chains.

F. EQ 5

This section presents findings which respond to the following questions: What role has Sri Lankan civil society taken in combatting human trafficking and protecting victims? What has been most effective in strengthening this capacity? How has the GoSL supported these efforts (financially or otherwise)?

Role of NGOs/CSOs in combatting human trafficking

NGOs/CSOs in Sri Lanka are primarily involved in prevention (33, n=52) and protection (31, n=52) issues. Prevention activities were said to include primarily raising awareness, but also training the public, other organizations and government staff, and providing livelihood support for vulnerable people. Protection activities included support and services for victims (27) and identifying cases in the community (21), and, to a lesser extent, being first responders (3). Only four respondents (GoSL other 2, IP/USG 1, CL 1) believed that NGOs/CSOs were involved in prosecution related activities. This included helping to investigate cases (3), acting as a watchdog (1) and providing training to law enforcement (1). Five respondents (GoSL TF 1, IP/USG 1, Subs 3) stated that NGOs/CSOs had a role under the partnership framework including writing reports on TIP (2) collecting data (2), participating in local coordination groups (2) and advocacy (1). Recommendations for additional roles they might play replicated roles mentioned above as roles they are already undertaking. Only seven, all GoSL respondents, were either unsure of the role of NGOs/CSOs (6) or thought they had no role (1).

Role of USG projects in capacity building of NGOs/CSOs

In 21 interviews (GoSL TF 3, GoSL other 3, IP/USG 10, Subs 5) respondents discussed the role of USG programs in raising the capacity of NGOs/CSOs to combat human trafficking. By far, training was the most common response (14 (GoSL TF 1; GoSL other 3; IP/USG 5; subs 5). IOM stated that they trained 50 NGOs in 20 districts. Training was provided for staff to train others, to develop awareness raising materials and conduct awareness raising and to identify and support VOTs. Financial Support was mentioned in five interviews (IP/USG 3; subs 2); collaboration in four (GoSL other 1; IP/USG 2; subs 1), mentoring in only one along with other outlier responses.

CSO trainees were very satisfied with the training they received through the USG-funded projects. They rated the training an average of 4.2 on a five-point scale, with five being the highest (n=10). No one rated the training less than a 3. “They have given training with in-depth understanding on the subject. People who are involved in this subject were involved. They also facilitated a good network that came as a result of training.” (Sub) CSO trainees stated that the training increased their knowledge about TIP (5), taught them how to identify potential victims (5) and provided them with a checklist for that purpose (2) and taught them how to raise awareness in their communities (2). Only two had negative feedback. One thought training

should be given in both national languages as the Tamil participants had a hard time following it. They also thought that the IPs should provide more follow-up after the training. CSO trainees reported doing many things differently since the training. In particular they have raised awareness in their community (9), referred victims for support (9), and reported cases to authorities (8) or to other organizations (8). All 11 community leaders involved in the projects, who were all affiliated with local community-based organizations, also stated that they also do things differently since projects began. They report raising awareness in their communities (11), reporting cases to authorities (6), and changing norms and behavior in their communities (5). One respondent describes how the projects made a difference in the lives of individuals: “People who went on labor migration and did not receive salaries in the past, were able to have their salaries [back] due to the interventions of ESCO²⁴. Some people who were trafficked and could not come [back] to Sri Lanka, were able to come. People now have information on how to migrate legally.” (CL)

Recruitment agents were also engaged in the ILO project. They participated in training (5), and meetings (5), received materials such as codes of conduct, marketing tools and regulations (3), and participated in public events on migration (2). Recruiting agencies are less likely to report changes as a result of their participation in the project or the training. Only two out of five state that they do anything differently. Two indicated that they now provide information to migrants about labor laws (1) and about the insurance policy and how to make a claim (1). One stated that they have new procedures for recruitment, one that they added information on human trafficking to the migrant orientation training and one stated that there had been a change in the fee structures. The other three respondents indicated that there had been no need for changes since they are already in compliance with the rules and regulations governing recruiting agencies.

Benefits to NGOs/CSOs from USG programming

Local NGOs/CSOs commented on the importance for their organization to be a part of the project and to work on trafficking – often for the first time. In 23 interviews (17 KIIs, 6 surveys; Subs 17, other NGOs/IOs 5) respondents discussed the benefits received by NGOs/CSOs from participating in USG-funded programs. Thirteen, all subgrantees, received funding support, mostly support to run the projects. One subgrantee noted the importance of having funding to work in particular locations for two years – longer than they normally are given – and how impactful that was for their work and the project. Seventeen (Subs 12, other NGOs/IOs 5) received capacity building assistance through the USG-funded programs, primarily from IOM. “In many ways it has really developed our capacity as an organization to work on human trafficking more comprehensively, so I feel it has been very beneficial to us.” (Sub)

In 31 interviews respondents discussed how this support to NGOs/CSOs has made a difference (GoSL TF 3, GoSL other 2, IP/USG 9, Subs 16, other NGOs/IOs 1). The most common response (23) was they the support has made NGOs/CSOs and/or their community better informed about human trafficking (GoSL other 1, IP/USG 5, Subs 16). NGOs and CSOs noted that the training provided to their own staff allowed them to then raise awareness in the community.

²⁴ ESCO is the Easter Self-reliant Community Awaking Organization in Sri Lanka.

In 13 interviews respondents noted that the support for NGOs/CSOs improved collaboration on trafficking (GoSL TF 1, GoSL other 1, IP/USG 1, Subs 10), especially with the GoSL. “We were also able to coordinate with SLBFA, the anti-trafficking Task Force and MOJ. We were able to link with these institutions as a result of the project.” (Sub) Two respondents noted that the program, by supporting collaboration with government entities, lifted the profile of their organization “...we gained a lot of knowledge through a lot of trainings conducted by IOM. On the other hand, we earned a good image for our organization from the government officials, police department, Justice ministry by addressing a sensitive issue through this project.” (Sub)

Other responses focused on improved capacity for victim identification and service delivery²⁵ (Subs 9): “After the training, we [realized] that we have been working with certain clients who had been victims of human trafficking, but earlier we did not know that we could categorize this under human trafficking. So, through the process we actually were able to identify such people and support them.” (Sub) Organizations felt the resources to operate were also an important support from the projects 7 (IP/USG 3, Subs 4). Two noted that the support allowed them to expand the geographic coverage of their work.

Respondents were also asked if anything was missing in the support they received that would have been useful (19; IP/USG 1, Subs 16, other NGOs/IOs 2). Of these 17 had ideas for what was missing including sufficient resources (4) to expand activities to other locations, to provide more services to more individuals and to conduct more training or awareness raising. Four also mentioned sustainability issues – that the projects given to subgrantees should be longer to give more time for activities to take root and that there should be a planned handover of activities to the GoSL. Two respondents felt that CSOs should be involved earlier in the project to improve project design and coordination.

Role of GoSL in capacity building of NGOs/CSOs

The GoSL has not been involved in building the capacity of NGOs/CSOs in any substantive way. The role of the GoSL in building the capacity of NGOs/CSOs was discussed in 36 interviews (GoSL TF 6, GoSL other 3, IP/USG 11, Subs 15, other NGOs/IOs 1; 25 national, 10 district, 1 divisional). Of these 16 (44%) felt that the GoSL had no role in building the capacity of NGOs/CSOs (GoSL TF 2, GoSL other 1, IP/USG 5, Subs 7, other NGOs/IOs 1). The second most common response was about GoSL participation in programs as either participants or resource persons (9 (IP/USG 1, Subs 8; 5 national, 4 district) which is not so specifically about building NGO/CSO capacity, though some respondents indicated that resources persons were often very informative. The third most common response was specifically about capacity building (7 (GoSL TF 1; IP/USG 4; subs 2). It is interesting to note that it was only national level respondents who felt the GoSL was involved in capacity building for civil society, some of whom indicated that district and divisional level government officials are more supportive of than GoSL at the national level: “At the divisional level, government officers do support CSOs in their work in terms of providing expertise. There is lot of support provided on capacity building at the divisional level. It gets less and less as it goes up. At the national level CSOs do not seek support because [support is] non-existent.” (IP/USG). Respondents also mentioned in kind support from the GoSL (4 (GoSL TF 1, IP/USG 1, Subs 2); 3 national, 1 district). In kind support

²⁵ In contrast, the USAID assessment (Social Impact. Trafficking in Persons and Counter Trafficking in Persons Assessment in Sri Lanka: Final Report, 2021), found that CSOs were not trained on SOPs for victim identification and referral.

included the provision of training venues, resource personnel, equipment, sending out invitations and help identifying informants for research.

Impact / effectiveness of GoSL support

Only nine²⁶ respondents discussed the effectiveness of GoSL support for NGOs/CSOs (GoSL TF 2, GoSL other 2, IP/USG 2, Subs 3). In two interviews respondents were negative, noting that the GoSL at the national level is hostile to civil society. In six interviews 6 (GoSL TF 2, GoSL other 2, Subs 2; national 5; district 1) respondents had positive things to say including that their support resulted in increased reporting of cases, support for District Forums, and improved law enforcement action against traffickers.

Attitudes toward USG and GoSL support for civil society

Government respondents were in favor of international support for NGOs/CSOs (100%, n=11; GoSL TF 7; GoSL other 4). Six said it was because the support can help prevent people from being trafficked, three because of the importance of gaining international expertise on the subject, one because NGOs/CSOs can be more efficient and less bureaucratic and one because NGOs/CSOs have established relationships with communities.

Table 7. Respondents’ knowledge of GoSL funding for NGOs/CSOs

Is there a GoSL Funding Vehicle?	Subs	Other NGOs/IOs
No	10	1
No answer, received no funding	1	6
Not sure	5	
Yes, but not for TIP		1
Yes	1	
TOTAL	17	8

Table 8. Respondent’s willingness to accept funding from GoSL

Would you accept GoSL Funding?	Subs	Other NGOs/IOs
Have accepted for TIP		
Have accepted, not for TIP		2
Have accepted, not clear if for TIP		1
Would accept but none to date	14	
Not sure if would accept	1	
Would not accept		
TOTAL	15	3

In the reverse, civil society was asked if they receive and/or would accept financial support from the GoSL. Out of 25 respondents, only two believed that there was a mechanism for such support; one of whom thought it was not available for trafficking interventions and the other assumed there must be but knew nothing specific. All respondents when asked (18) said they would accept GoSL funding, though one with the caveat that the decision would have to be made by their Board. Three had accepted funding from the GoSL for other projects unrelated to human trafficking.²⁷

Respondents’ recommendations

Recommendations for NGOs/CSOs were offered in 40 interviews (GoSL TF 7, GoSL other 5, IP/USG 10, Subs 16, other NGOs/IOs 2). National respondents (28) had several suggestions, the most commonly cited of which was to improve engagement between GoSL and civil society (14). This

included developing platforms for dialog and ensuring engagement is constructive: “It should not be with the CSOs that praise the government. There should healthy and critical discussions

²⁶ Of these, one response was unclear and did not appear to directly answer the question.

²⁷ One CSO had a project with the GoSL on HIV prevention; another had funding from the GoSL for projects funded by the Asian Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme. The third did not specify the nature of the project.

between CSOs and government. Government should be willing to be heard critically by the CSOs and vice-versa.” (IP/USG) Government respondents also encouraged more involvement by civil society: “...the supporting roles of the NGO are welcomed by [the] Ministry. The government of Sri Lanka should give all the support and priority to the NGOs who are doing their role in good faith to combat these illegal activities, to implement their plans and suggestions towards a successful end.” (GoSL other) “Lack of funding to NGOs is the main reason for low involvement of NGOs in this area. Government policies also restrict NGO work in Sri Lanka.²⁸ Government can identify NGOs that are doing some good work on TIP and support them.” (GoSL TF) Other suggestions included more capacity building for NGOs/CSOs, especially on fiscal compliance and programmatic suggestions such as longer programs, more support for victim services, reintegration support, data collection and the like.

Recommendations were also offered from 10 district level respondents. As with the national level respondents, they felt that NGOs/CSOs should be provided with organizational capacity building so that they can raise funds independently to continue programming after projects end, that proposals should be accepted in Sinhala and Tamil as English requirements restrict many smaller organizations from applying. They also stated that they should be given more financial support, increase the administrative portion of grants, provide funding for a longer period, and allow more flexibility in requiring a cost-sharing match. District level respondents felt that implementers should more closely monitor the work of CSOs and others they have trained. They also felt that a platform for GoSL – NGO/CSO collaboration should be established and that donors should arrange for GoSL to take over activities after the projects end.

G. EQ 6

How do underlying political issues in Sri Lanka play a role in hindering progress on combatting TIP? What efforts have been successful in dealing with these issues while effectively combatting TIP?

Respondents did not believe that underlying political issues had a significant impact on efforts to combat human trafficking in Sri Lanka. In 20 KIIs (49%, n=41), respondents believed that political issues had no impact or relevance for combatting human trafficking. “I do not see that political leadership has a major impact on TIP. Successive governments have neither been overly supporting or badly destructive of the work that the taskforce has done on TIP. I do not see any political impact on the work of the Task Force.” (GoSL TF) Similarly, on a scale of 1-5, survey respondents ranked the political impact on human trafficking 2.1, not particularly relevant (n=41). GoSL respondents rated political influence slightly higher than the average at 2.7.

Negative impact of political issues on TIP

The majority of comments related to the impact of political influence revolved around changes in staff or administration which led to changes in political will, individual interest or priorities. For example, turnover/restructuring (7), change in government (7) that leads to changing attitude

²⁸ While the ET does not know specifically which restrictions the respondent was referring to, it is our understanding that in Sri Lanka NGOs have to take approval from the government to implement each project they get from donors. Projects involving activities considered sensitive may not get approved. There have been incidents in the past where USG-funded projects on legal aid and reform were closed overnight. NGOs have to submit detailed expenditure reports to the GoSL NGO Secretariat and the GoSL can control project location selection.

toward CSOs (6) or changes in prioritization of TIP (8): “From the officers’ side no one gets an incentive whether they work on TIP or not. It’s difficult to keep officers working on these and getting a second leadership. Government should support the work done on TIP. CID also has a counter trafficking unit, but they have so many other works. They must give priority to cases that come from political priority.” (GoSL TF)

Respondents noted that some leaders will support policies for personal/political gain regardless of whether or not it results in more human trafficking (5): “When the government needs money through remittance, it tends to encourage people going abroad. This can cause risks because the government is not very much concerned about the way through which the people try to migrate. Some promote tourism and with that also trafficking happens. Some political leaders are not worried about TIP if it is a good way to bring money to the country.” (CL) Ten respondents also mentioned that officials are involved in trafficking or have political connections to traffickers. Respondents also noted that there can be increased migration due to political decisions/policies that make it more difficult to earn a living. This increased migration can result in more trafficking (4).

Ten respondents offered suggestions of successful efforts to deal with these political influences including coordinating projects through a government institution or the Task Force (4) and engaging Parliamentarians and the media (1). “Those officers also know that the project is coming through the MOJ so they know that there is a good political relationship at the government-to-government level.” (Sub) Two respondents mentioned that the US TIP Report was instrumental in garnering political support for combating TIP.

COVID

Respondents were asked about the impact of COVID on human trafficking in Sri Lanka. In surveys (47), respondents rated the impact of COVID a 3.5. Interestingly all recruitment agents rated it a 5, having a quite significant impact, while community leaders rated it the lowest at 2.8. In 59 interviews (10 KIIs, 49 surveys), respondents discussed the impact of COVID on Sri Lankans. People noted the biggest impact is the loss of income since the pandemic began, due to lost employment (21) or lost remittances (2): “...quite a large number of local migrant workers have come back to estates due to lockdowns from Covid-19. They lack opportunities to be self-employed or employed. That makes them more vulnerable to human trafficking. We have come across many such cases.” (other IO/NGO) Four respondents felt that COVID had reduced trafficking due to the restrictions on travel; three of these respondents felt that this would later lead to increased trafficking when the restrictions are lifted due to the significant loss of income in the country. “The poverty opens the gate of trafficking. Traffickers’ magical words and false promises make people to fall in.” (GoSL other) Recruitment agencies noted that the reduction in legal avenues for labor migration led to risk of trafficking (9). Five respondents noted that activities to combat TIP were delayed or postponed and three expressed concerns that returning migrants were being exploited upon their return – paying exorbitant prices for mandatory quarantine – or were not given sufficient support by the GoSL in the destination country if they had migrated through irregular channels.

The recent USAID assessment similarly found that COVID-19 may have temporarily reduced trafficking but that this is likely a short term effect and that the pandemic may increase migrants’ vulnerability to being trafficked. They also found it had negatively affected service provision for

victims of trafficking by the GoSL as well as those provided by NGOs/CSOs, and had affected investigations and prosecutions of trafficking cases.²⁹

Respondents' recommendations

There was little consistency among respondents regarding what could be done to address the impact of political issues on efforts to combat trafficking. As for what the **USG** could do about these issues, the most commonly cited recommendations included using their platform to raise issues with the GoSL (4) and facilitate collaboration between the GoSL and CSOs (3).

There were 12 recommendations for what **IPs** could do to address political issues. Most commonly cited were various ways of engaging with GoSL officials and politicians (6) and, as noted above for the USG, strengthening the relationship between the GoSL and CSOs (3): “Capacity building among government officials to understand the services rendered by CSOs needs to be raised. Capacity of CSOs also needs to be improved to ensure their transparency and coordination with the government under difficult circumstance.” (Sub). Other respondents had suggestions such as making interventions conditional on actions by the GoSL, using training to motivate officials, better screening of trainees, etc.

Recommendations for what the **GoSL** could do (12) were even more disparate and included raising awareness among officials and with the public, in schools and workplaces (2); putting mechanisms in place to ensure consistency of policy implementation even in the face of high turnover and changes in administration (2); ensuring the NAHTTF takes the lead on efforts to combat trafficking (2); improving relationships with CSOs (1); and increasing political will (2).

H. EQ 7

How do underlying religious issues/cultural tensions/past conflict in Sri Lanka play a role in hindering progress on combatting TIP? What efforts have been successful in dealing with these issues while effectively combatting TIP?

Respondents stated that underlying religious, cultural, or ethnic tensions or conflict did not currently have a significant impact on efforts to combat human trafficking in Sri Lanka. In 87 KIIs and surveys, respondents answered questions about the impact of religious, cultural, and ethnic issues on human trafficking and efforts to combat it. In 23 KIIs respondents expressed a belief that religious, cultural, or ethnic issues did not significantly impact on combatting or promoting human trafficking. These findings are replicated in the survey in which, on average, 46 respondents rated the impact of religious, cultural, and ethnic issues on trafficking 2.2 out of 5, or not very impactful. In 38 interviews, respondents described negative impacts of religious, cultural, or ethnic issues including: increased migration (12), reduced reporting (8) due to cultural acceptance or shame, and a host of other disparate outlier responses.

In 13 interviews, respondents discussed successful efforts to deal with these religious, cultural, and ethnic issues which included examples of how livelihood support during conflict kept people from having to migrate, raising awareness with service providers mitigated discrimination against victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation, independently investigated cases when

²⁹ Social Impact. Trafficking in Persons and Counter Trafficking in Persons Assessment in Sri Lanka: Final Report, 2021.

police refused, successful prosecution of religious leaders, and engaging religious leaders to raise awareness in their communities.

Project documents, many of which were written during or just after past conflicts or terrorist attacks, reflect a history of conflict, tensions and terrorist attacks that have greatly impacted project activities. These events have delayed activities, distracted government officials from focusing on combatting trafficking and even led to the premature end of a project as staff had to depart the country.³⁰ One final evaluation report notes that the project design was not adapted to reflect the changing landscape in the country due to recent conflict, which impeded achievement of objectives: “The critical stage of the ethnic conflict which led to the final victory by the GoSL in 2009 and subsequent elections and reshuffling of government Ministries and transition from war to peace significantly changed the contextual factors under which the original project was designed. Although there were significant delays in starting the project, the project document remained intact and did not benefit from a situation analysis or risk analysis to identify emerging factors relating to trafficking and the connected growing concern of illegal smuggling or factors that could potentially impede the achievement of project objectives.”³¹

Respondents’ recommendations

As with political issues, there was little consistency about what could be done to address these religious, cultural or ethnic issues and how they affect human trafficking. As for what the **USG** could do about these issues, nine offered recommendations, the most common of which was to develop reconciliation programs to deal with impacts of conflict (3). Two respondents suggested that the **USG** encourage or pressure the **GoSL**.

Twelve offered the following recommendations for what **IPs** could do: support research (2) to identify social and economic impacts; to analyze trends and risks; address community-based vulnerability factors (2) such as poverty, domestic violence and alcoholism; more culturally specific awareness raising (3) and sensitize political and religious leaders: “We have to sensitize religious leaders and political leaders first and get their support to create awareness for people. If not, they become barriers to implementation. It will take some time for a social transformation. And organizations should work in a broader way to approach political and religious leaders when they get involved in the projects.” (GoSL TF)

In 19 interviews respondents discussed what the **GoSL** could do to address religious, ethnic or cultural factors that affect TIP. Fifteen respondents had the following recommendations: collect better data on trafficking and migration (3); target vulnerable groups for economic development programs (2); address language issues to ensure that officials can speak with the local

³⁰ International Organization for Migration. Final Report to G/TIP, Counter-Trafficking in Persons in Sri Lanka: Strengthening Prosecution and Victim Protection. 2009. On file with the ET; United States Department of State. Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. Grants Officer Representative’s (GOR) Review of Progress Reports. June 2019. On file with the ET; American Bar Association. Combating Trafficking in Persons in Sri Lanka FY19 Q3 Quarterly Report. June 2019. On file with the ET.

³¹ Perera, Shermila Antony. Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Through Improved Management of Labour Migration. Final Evaluation Report. January 2013. On file with the ET.

community (1); address indebtedness from microfinancing³² (1); get community police more involved (1); better monitor recruitment agencies (1).

I. EQ 8

How well are anti-TIP stakeholders (USG and local stakeholders) collaborating in Sri Lanka? Provide case examples of collaborations that demonstrate promising practices. What will it take to improve collaboration among stakeholders?

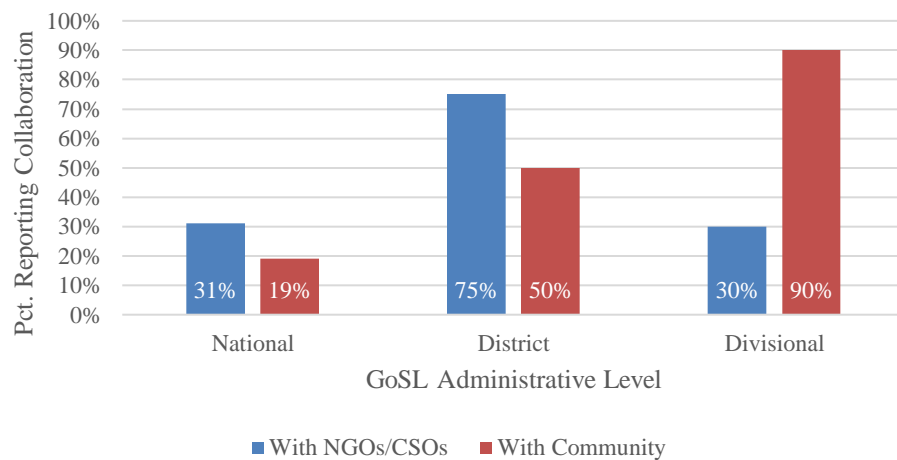
Collaboration partners

Respondents indicate that they collaborate with many others to combat trafficking. Only seven respondents (six recruiting agencies and one other for whom it was not a relevant question) did not mention any collaboration partners.

All **GoSL respondents** indicate some level of collaboration **with other GoSL** offices or agencies. GoSL TF all collaborate with GoSL at the national level, but no GoSL respondents at the national level mentioned collaboration with district government.³³ However, the GoSL at lower administrative levels indicate some level of collaboration with the GoSL at both the national and district levels. Seventy percent of divisional level GoSL respondents collaborate with GoSL at the national level while 90% indicate collaboration with GoSL at the district level. Seventy five percent of district level GoSL respondents collaborate with other GoSL staff at the district level.³⁴ GoSL respondents also have high levels of collaboration with the police (GoSL TF 43%, n=7; GoSL other 78%, n=23).

GoSL respondents are less likely to collaborate **with civil society**, but there is a significant divergence between national, district and divisional level respondents (see Figure 6). Five (31%) national level GoSL respondents state that they collaborate with NGOs/CSOs and three (19%) with local communities.

Figure 6. GoSL Collaboration with NGOs/CSOs and Communities, by GoSL Administrative Level



³² Other research confirms that indebtedness is a reason many women turn to labor migration in Sri Lanka. ILO. Presence of Human Trafficking and Forced Labour in Labour Migration: Sri Lanka. International Labour Organization, 2019.

³³ It is possible that the national level GoSL officials interviewed for this evaluation were rather high ranking and this is why they did not mention collaboration with lower levels of government.

³⁴ Sri Lanka has nine provinces, 25 districts, 331 Divisional Secretary's Divisions and 14,022 Grama Niladhari Divisions.

GoSL respondents at district and divisional levels were far more likely to have these relationships. 75 percent (n=4) GoSL at the district level collaborate with NGOs/CSOs and 50 percent with local communities. At the divisional level, GOSL respondents were more likely to collaborate with local communities (90%, n=10), and to a lesser extent with NGOs/CSOs (30%, n=3). See EQ 2 for more findings related to changes in GoSL efforts to collaborate on combatting human trafficking.

GoSL at all levels reported significant collaboration **with USG IPs**. All GoSL TF members and 83% of all other GoSL respondents (national 56%, district and divisional 100%) reported such collaboration. Figure 6 reflects the extent of reported collaboration.

Civil society organizations state significant levels of collaboration with a wide variety of stakeholders. All but one civil society organization, which includes NGOs, CSOs, subgrantees and CLs, reported some level of collaboration **with the GoSL**. This was true at all administrative levels (see Table 9). Civil society respondents had varying levels of collaboration with police. Subgrantees had the least at 29% (n=17) followed by community leaders at 55% (n=11). All other NGOs/IOs stated that they collaborated with the police.

Table 9. Civil Society Collaboration with GoSL

Respondent administrative level	Subgrantees (n-16)	Other NGOs/IOs (n=9)	CLs (n=11)	Total (n=36)
National	88%	100%	0	89%
District	100%	100%	0	100%
Division	0	0	100%	100%

The majority (87 percent) of civil society respondents also had significant collaboration with other local NGOs and CSOs (subs 16, 94%; other NGOs/IOs 8, 80%; CLs 9, 82%). Collaboration across civil society organizations was slightly greater at the district level (94%, n=17) than the national level (78%, n=9). Similarly, civil society respondents had significant collaboration with communities at 92% (subs 15, 88%; other NGOs/IOs 9, 90%; CLs 11, 100%). Subgrantees at the national level (75%, n=8) had slightly less collaboration with communities than those at the district level (100%, n=9).

How well stakeholders collaborate

Evaluation data indicates that collaboration on trafficking is taking place but there is room for improvement. In 74 interviews respondents discussed how well stakeholders collaborate. Respondents were asked to rate collaboration on a scale of 1-5, with five being the most collaboration. In 43 interviews, respondents rated how well stakeholders collaborate in general on TIP 3.1. However, opinions varied widely among stakeholder groups with GoSL Task Force members rated collaboration very highly (4.5, n=2) and other NGOs/IOs rating it below average (2.6, n=9) along with subgrantees (2.9, n=9).

When examining collaboration among various groups, the highest rated collaboration overall was between GoSL at the national level and USG implementers (4.1, n=34). The lowest rated was GoSL provincial authorities with GoSL provincial authorities (2.3 n=29) and GoSL national with GoSL provincial (2.4, n=35). For the latter, GoSL stakeholders rated their own collaboration higher than local organizations perceived it to be. Most combinations of collaboration among stakeholders were rated as average, just below or just above 3.0, with the average rating being

3.2. While respondents were not asked to rate collaboration between different levels of government with local NGOs/CSOs, respondents comments indicate that among the local NGO/CSO respondents, they believed there were better relationship with GoSL in their communities than was reflected at the national level.

Community leaders and recruiting agencies were also asked how well the IPs collaborated with them. Both rated their collaboration slightly above average, and at 3.2 for community leaders, just at average for all stakeholders (n=6) and slightly above at 3.8 for recruiting agencies (n=6).

Collaboration platforms

Four main collaboration platforms were mentioned by respondents: the NAHTTF, the Development Partners Forum, District Forums, and Child Protection Working Groups. In 41 interviews respondents discussed these collaboration mechanisms (GoSL TF 7, GoSL other 4, IP/USG 12, Subs 16, Other NGOs/IOs 2).

The **NAHTTF** is well known, mentioned by nearly half of respondents (GoSL TF 86%, n=7; GoSL other 0; USG/IPs 67%, n=12; Subs 38%, n=16; other NGOs/IOs 50%, n=2). This is primarily a government forum at the national level. Respondents from the district and divisional levels stated that there was not much cross collaboration with their level of government. IOs and NGOs felt the same way. There was also limited involvement of civil society in the NAHTTF, though some indicated that this has improved. “When compared to 2007, government has made a considerable progress collaborating with other Task Force members, government and non-government stakeholders.” (IP/USG) “The Task Force got the NGOs once or twice a year to join in the Task Force meetings. We discussed the issues at the ground level with NGOs.” (GoSL TF)

There is a separate, more informal mechanism, for collaboration among IOs and NGOs at the national level working on TIP called the **Development Partners Forum**. Respondents note that this group meets regularly and shares information to avoid duplication of effort. They advocate together and try to encourage participation by the government, but this has not produced results. “At the Development Partner Forum, we thought it is good to reach out to the Task Force as a team rather than reaching out to them individually. But we failed in that. Even though there are persistent invitations from the Development Partner Forum to the Task Force, we have not got anyone from the Task Force to join us.” (Other NGO/IO) One respondent did comment that there was competition among members of the forum for funding, but most respondents spoke positively about the forum.

District Forums were developed under IOM’s JTIP funded project and have participation of local NGOs/CSOs and local government. Where they were established, respondents indicate that the forum has been effective at encouraging collaboration with government and non-governmental stakeholders. “The District Forum was an open space for them to discuss issues in the district. They joined the forums continually. At the start they were not clear what to do and even awareness programs hadn’t made a big difference because the subject was quite new to them. But the forum was important to clarify doubt and discuss issues in more details which further raised their awareness. The forum was represented by officials from all sectors and community. Better coordination between them were developed. Police was not connected with the other departments before. The [District] Forum was a platform for them to coordinate.” (Sub). Some respondents expressed concern about its viability after the project ends. “But we are not sure how far they will function after the project, as there will not be any mechanism to

coordinate these forums.” (Sub) USAID’s assessment also found that where established District Forums have been a gateway for better coordination and for effective referral to a wide range of government officials.³⁵

Two respondents mentioned **child protection working groups**; one mentioned village-level child development committees. Respondents indicate that these groups address the topic of child trafficking as a part of general child protection issues. Respondents indicate that these groups function at the national, district and divisional level. “The child protection authority has a child protection working group where NGOs and CSOs meet monthly with the NCPA. Trafficking is one portion of this discussion. NGOs give ideas as to which areas [to focus on]. The child protection working group has been coordinated and summoned by the NCPA.” (GoSL TF)

Examples of positive collaboration

In 19 interviews, respondents discussed positive collaboration they have experienced. The **NAHTTF** was mentioned once. Efforts of the **Development Partners Forum** were discussed in 6 interviews. Specifically, respondents (3) mentioned a commemorative event for human trafficking for which all of the partners helped organize and contributed resources and the GoSL participated. Respondents also mentioned the Development Partners Forum advocacy with the GoSL and its role in survivor services and other programmatic issues “[It is a] strong platform for development partners to reach out to each other for referral, information, discussion.” (IP/USG). Positive examples from District Forums were brought up in four interviews: “The district level forums that we created under our project are the best platform for coordination. All stakeholders in the anti-TIP segment participate in the coordination meeting. We have done many things together including awareness activities and trainings.” (Sub)

Other examples of positive collaboration were brought up outside of the context of the collaboration forums. In three interviews respondents mentioned collaboration for victim services: “SLFB and some other government-related officers assist us for finding the victims and suspects. They personally arranged the field visit - we identified cases in a particular DS area.” (Sub) “The government officers also act fast when we report any cases.” (Sub) One respondent mentioned finding highly motivated individuals among government officials: “There are champions that should be tapped to mobilize. There was complete engagement from start to finish.” (IP/USG) Another respondent talked about how the GoSL stepped up during COVID to take over some of their planned activities. “As CSOs we had restrictions to reach community to raise community awareness. Government officials came forward and undertook the responsibility of raising community awareness at that stage. Because of the good collaboration we had, we could achieve the targets even within many restrictions due to the pandemic.” (Sub).

Respondents’ recommendations to improve collaboration

The most common recommendation from respondents was **for the GoSL** to coordinate more with IOs/NGOs/CSOs and to respect the role of NGOs/CSOs (13). “Government agencies should be encouraged to work with the CSO and CBO because the support of the community is much more important to work on human trafficking related issues. Such issues cannot be addressed without community participation.” (Other IO/NGO) Respondents generally called for more coordination across government agencies and departments, police, etc. (9). Respondents also

³⁵ Social Impact. Trafficking in Persons and Counter Trafficking in Persons Assessment in Sri Lanka: Final Report, 2021.

encourage greater coordination between national level coordination platforms and those at the district/divisional levels (4). Respondents recommend designating human trafficking officers at the divisional and district level and linking them to the national level. These designated persons can also be the point of contact to whom victims can go for referral for services which the respondent who recommended this, thinks it is more sustainable than the current project-based model relying on CSOs.

Several respondents had recommendations **for the NAHTTF**. Respondents felt that the NAHTTF needs to meet more frequently and be more active (4); that they should take leadership on coordination projects and interventions (3). Three respondents also suggested restructuring of the NAHTTF; specifically, to assign a Secretariat for combatting TIP and provide funding for it. Another respondent noted a need for alternate focal points to address turnover so that they do not lose momentum. One GoSL TF member encouraged collaboration between GoSL and NGOs/CSOs: “One sector cannot address all issues. It needs collaboration between government, donors and NGOs. We have to decide whose responsibility and to what extent. Once the government finalizes the policy and platform then the organization can decide how to support the policy.”

USG implementing partners were recommended to involve the GoSL at the national and district levels in projects (10). They felt that GoSL should be involved at the outset of a new project and even during the design phase (3) and that IPs should keep the government apprised of and involved in project activities (3). IPs were encouraged to build relationships with other stakeholders (4), including working with the GoSL at other than just the national level and with more CSOs at the local level. “[They] work with the organizations that they are familiar with. They don’t reach out to many organizations in the same district. Identify all the organizations working in a particular district. Build a network among those organizations. Develop a common program to work with government agencies and NGOs.” (Other NGO/IO)

Respondents also had recommendations for how implementers work with civil society. They should strengthen cooperation, be transparent, and treat CSOs as true partners: “We only had to do [only able to do] what was sort of ordered to us [what we were instructed to do].” (Other NGO/IO) And they should encourage GoSL to coordinate with CSOs (2).

Other recommendations for IPs included building the capacity and/or improving the efforts of police and prosecutors (6): “Police are not interested in this. We cannot trust them. Traffickers have lots of money and they support the police.” (CL) They also advise IPs to better coordinate among themselves to avoid duplicating efforts (2): “Trainings for government officers were given by both ILO and IOM. There was lack of coordination of those works at the field level.” (Sub)

Recommendations for the **USG** were fewer. Respondents recommended better coordination with the GoSL to ensure their support for projects (2) and showing support for projects (3) by coming to see them and their activities, spending more time on field visits and undertaking more monitoring of their implementing partners. They also recommend not duplicating efforts across IPs: “USG can stop funding similar projects to avoid competition. They can also support these organizations looking at potential links between implementers, identify different expertise and promote them by encouraging them to complement each other’s work.” (Sub)

J. OTHER FINDINGS

Sustainable strategies and sustainability plans

Government officials (19), recruiting agency personnel (9), and community leaders (11) were asked about sustainable strategies and whether they or their agency or community had any plans to sustain activities to combat and address TIP.

Of nineteen government officials (GoSL other) queried, four were unaware of any such plans, but three noted that they would continue to do their job as per their day-to-day routine and responsibilities, and one said he would work with the knowledge gained in training. Fifteen government officials offered some strategies that most frequently featured community awareness (4), including through the Rural Development Societies (1); and ongoing prosecution (7), enhanced by separate TIP police units (2), and border surveillance units (2), and through sharing of experience (1). Three talked about a database, including a border surveillance database (1), a non-specific database (1), and a non-specific plan for a database (1). Two mentioned efforts to increase victim identification through forum discussions (1), and a reporting hotline (1). One each mentioned collaboration with other GoSL partners and through the ministry to sustain efforts, and with the SLBFE that offers an insurance plan for migrants.

Community leaders (11) offered a slightly different focus on sustainable strategies to combat TIP, but also featured variations on the theme of awareness. Seven talked about continuing awareness through CBOs (4), village vigilance committees (1), migrant societies (1), and the use of technology (1). *“We can continue the community awareness programs. We have vigilance committees. We can continue this work.”* Four mentioned monitoring cases through CBOs (3), and specifically migrant societies established by ESCO (1). An additional three stated they would continue the work they have been doing, one with the caveat that it needed to start up again after COVID. An additional community leader said that it would be helpful to have funds for victims. *“Since we have a society, we can do some work. But it is good to have some funds in these societies so that we can support victims and potential victims. The issue is that we do not have funds.”*

Future Interventions

Asked in a separate question what more could be done in their community to combat TIP, local leaders emphasized awareness (8), by means of posters and billboards (1), television (3), radio (2), printed materials (3), oral or performance-based activities (7), and specifically street drama (2). Door-to-door campaigns were cited six times, with one respondent noting, *“The most vulnerable households do not join these awareness activities. We have to reach them at home, go door-to-door, and raise awareness.”* Nine community leaders mentioned community or committee-based activities; three mentioned school-based activities; three named activities aimed at identifying victims; and one cited psychosocial activities for children. Target groups included recruiters (1), and at-risk youth and families (3). Additional comments include the need for training of youth and community mobilization through youth, and the registration of sub-agents (2) as they prey on the vulnerable and *“are the main reason for trafficking.”*

Recruiting agency personnel (9) offered both their current strategies to prevent TIP and strategies to sustain efforts over time. In terms of prevention, seven cited orientation training for migrants as being a useful tool. *“We explain to candidates, how trafficking takes place abroad. And explain to them to be aware of traffickers at any cost. And we instruct them to contact us to*

obtain appropriate advice at any time.” Seven respondents also said that they work only with vetted partners at each stage and in each country, and two also specifically mentioned not working with sub-agents, “We do not engage with sub-agents. We only deal directly with companies. We specifically have direct contact with the reputed companies and check their background with a reliable person to control and stop trafficking related issues.” Five said prevention is abetted by having contracts that cover liability and return costs, though only one confirmed covering such costs and not for all migrants. Other practices include working with the SLBFE and following their regulations (2), and follow-up with clients in foreign countries to ensure they are receiving their salary and that facilities are as promised in the offer letter (2). When asked what more recruiting agencies can do to sustain efforts to prevent TIP, current practices above were again mentioned, along with a more proactive approach to continuous monitoring and, “tracing illegal activities in the process of migration” under the umbrella of ALFEA. “We have apprehended 200 migrants as ALFEA and handed them over to the government. I do not have further information of the other steps taken by the government.” One agent added that, “Following an invitation from IOM, we have submitted a proposal on anti-human trafficking rules and regulations to be followed in the recruitment practices. We have not received any feedback on the proposal submitted.’

Additional recommendations from respondents

Outside of suggestions and recommendations directly applying to other sections of this report, several respondents (22; GoSL TF 4, GoSL other 4, IP/USG 3, Subs 3, other NGO/IO 3, CL 1, RA 4) offered recommendations in other thematic directions or for special emphasis. These are detailed in this section and can be clustered into four categories: 1) programming; 2) cooperation and coordination; 3) funding and resources; and 4) other suggestions. Suggestions not included in other sections of the report include encouraging the judiciary to step up on prosecution. “We tried to remind the judiciary it was their role to direct police and investigators and council to get more information and to fill gaps. Judges have that power – to ask for more evidence during investigation.” (IP/USG) And another who recommended a needs assessment of prosecutors conducted with the AGD.

Under cooperation and collaboration, one respondent wanted to emphasize equal training for all relevant areas of government so that cooperation would be more fluid. “I think the government should make that collaboration because most of the departments still have no idea about the trafficking. When we access them to get the information or to get any report, they cannot respond to that. That creates disappointment and the process breaks in the middle. So, if all departments get broad knowledge about trafficking, it would be easy to work with all systematically. We all can create a general database system for this purpose. So, all the details will be up to date at everyone’s fingertip.” (GoSL other) A second respondent suggested cooperation through bilateral agreements, “Yes, government-to-government agreements. The government has taken steps to recruit people to South Korea as well as Japan. And in the meantime, they are asking that we have to educate all persons going abroad to work. These are the fundamental things you must follow, such as learning the languages, passing certain exams to attain these vacancies.” (GoSL TF)

Six respondents wanted to share recommendations related to funding and resources. The first was a GoSL request for USG support for a media campaign on TIP. The GoSL was also interested in continued TIP funding and funding for: “modern technology for detecting

offenders; especially nowadays most of the perpetrators are using modern technology to groom the children. If we can launch our investigations more effectively using technology, it would be fruitful. For example, organizations that provide assistance to countries to track online child trafficking offenders would be useful.” (GoSL other) The GoSL also cited a need to better fund the SLBFE, “Mostly the SLBFE is not in a good financial position so then we have to have a special channel for these people who have medical needs; we are not able to provide them with this.” (GoSL TF) A recruiting agent added a request that the GoSL or ILO consider COVID subsidies for recruiting agencies, noting that other tourism-related businesses had been eligible for subsidies.

4. CONCLUSIONS

EQ 1: Training and capacity building have been key components of USG-funded programming since the post-2007 period covered by this evaluation. Such training and capacity building is viewed as having had a positive impact in enhancing the GoSL’s awareness and interest in TIP and helping to develop the capacity to address TIP. In parallel, establishing and engaging community and District Forums and generating awareness of TIP in communities have jointly facilitated change in local government engagement while enhancing community awareness. Continued training and awareness efforts are needed to meet the demands of an evolving TIP environment and to reach to district, divisional and village levels throughout Sri Lanka. [Refer also, EQ4.]

EQ 2: Since 2007, the GoSL has changed several aspects in its approach to TIP – increased awareness and capacity as well as improved collaboration stand out. Legislation and regulatory frameworks have also progressed. Not all progress has filtered to the local level, but multiple respondents applauded the District Forums, where they exist. Investigations and prosecutions remain modest. This is partly due to lack of victim/witness cooperation, driven by both victims’ reluctance to report to authorities and lack of confidence in a slow prosecutorial process. Areas cited as needing additional attention focused on local law enforcement as well as victim services, among others. Hampering ongoing efforts was the lack of GoSL prioritization of TIP as well as perceived corruption at the local levels, lack of resources or allocation of resources, and improved but incomplete awareness and practice, as training had not trickled to all locales throughout the country. Long-term strategic investment, including by the GoSL, and government involvement in USG-funded programs, including at the outset in program design, were also seen as key components for future efforts, alongside prevention activities to build awareness and address poverty and social conditions among at-risk groups.

EQ 3: The GoSL has played an important, but not optimal, role both in TIP overall and in TIP projects supported by the USG. A variety of steps were undertaken by implementing partners to engage the GoSL, but the most successful include developing and leveraging relationships with the GoSL, engaging the GoSL in routine contact and consultation, including the GoSL in design and decision-making, and involving the GoSL in activities as participants or resource person during workshops. Suggested growth areas for the GoSL role principally focused on increased and widespread commitment, coupled with leadership and ownership, including allocation of GoSL resources. Going forward, respondents did not suggest wholesale changes in USG programming, but suggested more emphasis at the divisional, district and village levels, as well as more services for victims. Addressing turnover and transfer on the NAHTTF and among law enforcement assigned to TIP was also recommended, along with the institutionalization of TIP

curricula through the police academy (and potentially through judicial training centers). Deeper engagement of the GoSL, at all levels, requires buy-in that can be facilitated through inclusion in design and decision-making, and can be implemented to include closer collaboration with CSOs.

EQ 4: USG interventions produced positive change and had an impact on the GoSL's approach. Respondents generally felt that USG programming was on target and useful, and that more of the same was warranted and valuable going forward. Nevertheless, there is space for improvement. Services for victims were perceived by some to be insufficient and could be accelerated. Long-term funding could build on prior efforts and strengthen and support the GoSL to combat TIP. Recommended approaches feature increased involvement and buy-in from the GoSL at the outset, and institutionalizing training curricula as mandatory components for specific government roles. Awareness activities and capacity building workshops should continue to serve as a mainstay of programming, perhaps with creative methods, such as mentoring on the job. Targets groups – law enforcement, investigators, government agencies, and citizens – remain relevant, though prosecutors and judges are also relevant for further inclusion. Programming should continue to reach divisional and district levels in expanded locations and especially in low-income areas vulnerable to TIP. Coordinating structures from the local level to the national level need strengthening, and data systems need to be fully implemented. The USG can use diplomacy to further engage the GoSL on TIP and to promote bilateral and regional collaboration.

EQ 5: Civil society has primarily been involved in raising public awareness about trafficking, identifying potential victims in the community and providing services, directly and through referral. USG projects have been integral in building the capacity of NGOs and CSOs to address trafficking in their communities. Local organizations state that the training not only raised their awareness about trafficking, but also provided them with tools needed to address it, such as checklists to help identify victims and tools to conduct awareness raising. They also credit USG programs for improving their relationships with the GoSL in their communities. The GoSL was less involved in building the capacity of civil society, though this appears to be changing, with GoSL providing in kind support and expertise to support NGO and CSO programs. Civil society appears to be welcoming of GoSL support and findings show the GoSL becoming more open and supportive of civil society.

EQ 6: The majority of respondents did not think that political issues had much of an impact on efforts to combat trafficking. However, turnover among government employees and changing prioritization of trafficking has impacted efforts to combat it. Respondents also identify that the importance of international labor migration and remittances for the economy leads some politicians to support ill-advised pro-migration policies that allow trafficking to flourish. In a similar vein, they point to corrupt practices that lead officials and politicians to protect suspected traffickers. Efforts to address these issues are similar to those mentioned in other sections, namely building relationships with government officials, supporting relationships between GoSL and NGOs/CSOs, and raising awareness among GoSL officials more broadly. Respondents also expressed concerns that the economic hardship resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions put on legal migration mechanisms, may result in increased levels of trafficking in the future.

EQ 7: The majority of respondents also felt that religious, cultural and ethnic conflict had little impact on trafficking today. However, they reflect back on migration that arose from earlier conflicts and recognize that such conflicts in future could result in increased irregular and unsafe migration. Respondents present few ways of dealing with these issues except to provide livelihood opportunities to vulnerable groups and raise awareness among in communities.

EQ 8: While respondents had many things to say both positive and negative about their collaborations on trafficking, it was clear that collaboration on trafficking does indeed take place across a wide spectrum of respondents and has improved significantly since 2007, due in part to the USG-funded projects. Generally speaking, collaboration within groups – between GoSL stakeholders or between civil society organizations – is effective and takes place as needed. Collaboration between the GoSL and civil society is more effective at the district and divisional level than at the national level. The NAHTTF is credited with improving collaboration across government offices at the national level and the establishment of the NAHTTF is credited to IOM’s USG-funded program. However, respondents indicated that the NAHTTF is not sufficiently active. This was also noted in the recent assessment of trafficking conducted by Social Impact.³⁶ Similarly, cross-sector collaboration at the local level is credited to the establishment of the District Forums established under IOM’s USG-funded program. Respondents recommend working to improve GoSL and NGO/CSO collaboration and to improve coordination between administrative levels of government, to build communication channels from the national level down to the divisional level.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations presented below are drawn from the totality of the findings from interviews and the desk review. They do not include recommendations for programming to prevent or combat trafficking per se – these do not touch on how to raise awareness, improve services for victims, or increase successful prosecutions, as this was not the focus of the evaluation. However, respondents had many suggestions in this regard which are presented throughout the findings section above.

For USG and IPs

- To increase GoSL involvement with USG programs, engage the GoSL as early as possible in program design and development. The USG should coordinate with the NAHTTF as well as with any specific agencies that would likely be the focus of programming. The USG should seek GoSL input into any planned calls for proposals in order to ensure programs are designed to address GoSL priorities. Calls for proposals should encourage respondents to reach out to and seek the support of GoSL and to encourage them to engage GoSL into all phases of the project.
- Build sustainability plans into every program and ensure the handover process and recipient agency is incorporated into the program from the beginning and not tacked on at the end. Formalize handover to ensure that the recipient agency is involved and committed from the design phase.
- Institutionalize training of GoSL officials through the police academy, judicial training center and other academic or in-service training mechanisms.

³⁶ Social Impact. Trafficking in Persons and Counter Trafficking in Persons Assessment in Sri Lanka: Final Report, 2021.

- Encourage the GoSL to formalize district level collaboration forums. See below.
- For all projects going forward, to facilitate post project evaluation, the TIP office should require its implementers to turn over to them all lists of project participants and partners. This would include, names, positions, cell phone, work phone and email for all trainees, key government and civil society partners for project design and implementation, service providers, such as shelters, community partners involved in awareness raising or other project components, etc. The TIP Office could develop a database or spreadsheet into which IPs can upload this information, using a similar system to that used for Common Performance Indicator data.

For GoSL

- Increase coordination and collaboration with local civil society organizations. The GoSL could invite representatives from other anti-trafficking forums to participate in the NAHTTF. The civil society forums could vote to designate their representative which can be rotating so it changes annually from one organization to another. The GoSL could also designate a representative from the NAHTTF (or a Secretariat – see below) to participate in the Development Partner Forum.
- Consider setting up and funding a full time Secretariat for the NAHTTF in order to provide day to day stewardship and to ensure that momentum continues even if Task Force membership changes. The Secretariat could also lead coordination with the District Forums – see above.
- Set up District Forums on human trafficking throughout the country, much like the child protection committees. Assign a district secretariat to lead the forum but ensure that it includes the participation of a broad swath of non-government stakeholders. Set up a mechanism to link these District Forums with the NAHTTF.

ANNEXES

- Annex I contains a complete list of the documents reviewed for this evaluation.
- Annex II includes interview protocols for both KIIs and surveys.
- Annex III presents DevTech's guide for training the evaluation team.
- Annex IV is a complete list of KII and survey respondents
- Annex V presents additional data tables that, due to space limitations, could not be included in the main body of the report.