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Human Trafficking Awareness Tool for Humanitarian Agencies in Post-Disaster Crises

Designed by the Rights Lab with partners GGIS and Rescue Global
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Hazards that transition into disasters, pose a serious threat to communities and both rapid- and slow-onset events have been linked to issues of human trafficking globally (Bharawaj et al. 2021, 2022) and the links between climate change and risks to vulnerable populations are also increasingly being identified (Coehlo 2016; Brown et al. 2019; Decker Sparks et al. 2021; Jackson et al. 2021; O'Connell 2021). For these vulnerable populations not to slip through the cracks during chaotic immediate post-disaster events, protocols should be adopted by humanitarian agencies and government services to vet and identify communities and individuals who may face additional exposure and harm linked to human trafficking and forced labour.

These questions were designed to be incorporated into standard service provision population information gathering and needs assessment data collection to identify potentially vulnerable persons who may be exposed to exploitation immediately following a disaster event.

Guidance

We advise that these questions should be used in full where possible if there is not already an equivalent in the structures that organizations are applying but can be integrated into existing methods.

Questions should be selected based on the sensitivity and appropriateness for the cultural context in which the tool is being applied. Not all options and questions will be applicable or safe to use in all geographic and disaster contexts.

Finally, these questions should be integrated with the advice and guidance of relevant expertise within your organisation, or with external partners. Follow up questions may not be necessary if disclosures are not made. They are to be adopted and applied at your own discretion.

Recommended Implementation Guidance

- Interviews to gather supporting data for humanitarian action with the target populations should be undertaken by trained social workers, or support workers who are trained first responders, are aware of mental health interventions, and have received training on interacting with vulnerable populations (and that this training is up-to-date).
- Disclosure should not prohibit any access to humanitarian support and should not lead to the reporting of any illegality a victim/survivor may, or may not, have been involved in.
- Any interviews should be undertaken with adherence to ethical standards for conducting humanitarian research interviews, provided by organisational or national civil agencies – with adequate privacy, security, and relevant support mechanisms for safely conducting this type of questioning. All data should be stored following the relevant data collection rules and/or data management protocols of the responding organizations implementing this tool.
- Safeguarding measures and the ability to leave at any time should be made clear to the target population seeking support at the start of any information gathering.
- A clear grievance mechanism should be in place for those target populations seeking to access support but have poor experiences with organisations.
- Lack of disclosure to any of the questions does not mean exploitative issues are not taking place, but care should be made to ensure the populations being supported are free to choose to not disclose information. Care should be taken to note additional signs of human trafficking risks beyond verbal disclosure, which can be identified through ongoing organisational training and external consultation with expert bodies.

Demographic Questions

1.1 What is your age? _____

1.2 What is your nationality?

1.3 How do you identify?

- Female
- Male
- Other

Prefer not to say

1.4 Do you have any caring responsibilities?

- Yes – children
- Yes – elderly
- Yes – disabled
- No
- Other:

Debt Questions

2.1 Have you ever used a labour recruiter/
recruitment agency to gain employment?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

2.2 Have you ever had to pay a labour recruiter/
recruitment agency to use their service?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

2.3 Have you ever accrued debt using a labour
recruiter/recruitment agency service?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

2.4 Have you ever been forced to work in order to
pay off a debt?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Debt Questions (continued)

2.5 In what type of job/sector you were you
working if you were forced to work?

2.6 Have you ever been told or thought that you
could not leave a job as a result of debt?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Human Trafficking Questions

3.1 Have you previously been exposed to
situations of labour exploitation? (e.g., you
were promised work but it was not as advertised;
low wages and lack of leave; threats if you tried to
quit)

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

3.2 Which type of exploitation do you most
identify with having experienced?

- Forced marriage
- Early marriage
- Child marriage
- Forced labour
- Debt bondage/bonded labour
- Labour exploitation
- Domestic servitude
- Sexual exploitation/Sex trafficking
- Other:

Not sure

Prefer not to say

3.3 In which sector/job did this exploitation occur?

3.4 How long were you previously subjected to
exploitation?

Gendered Risks

4.1 Have you or any women/girls you know been married as a result of poverty and need?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Prefer not to say

4.2 Have you or anyone you know experienced early pregnancy (before the age of 19)?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Prefer not to say

Gendered Risks (continued)

4.3 Did anyone you know who experienced early pregnancy have to leave school?

- Yes
- No
- They were not at school
- Not sure
- Prefer not to say

4.4 Have you or anyone you know experienced sexual abuse or exploitation?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Prefer not to say

Question Reasoning Breakdown

Here we provide more detail into the different questions and the reasoning behind their importance and potential inclusion in an overall assessment of vulnerability for communities to human trafficking during a post-disaster event.

Demographic Questions

What is your age? This is important to note as the risks of the worst forms of child labour could be exhibited for those below 18 years of age in accordance with the ILO definition where slavery and similar issues (including slavery, child trafficking, debt bondage, serfdom, forced labour including child soldiers, sexual exploitation and trafficking, and coercion into illegal activities including the drug trade are experienced by a child (or children) (ILO 1999).

What is your nationality? Depending on the hazards and subsequent disaster that has occurred, people from varied nationalities may be impacted and, in some geographies, nationality may play an adverse role in discrimination against certain communities, alongside issues of racism for example. It is important to capture this information, as the risks to communities originally from one country may be vastly different to those experienced by another.

How do you identify? Gendered risks and exposure for communities who may be transgender are also important to note in the potential for added vulnerabilities that communities may face in post-disaster crises and may affect upon the support they have access to initially leaving persons further exposed to risks associated with the potential for human trafficking.

Do you have any caring responsibilities? Is important to note because the need for urgent employment in order to support a family or other member who requires economic and social support may be forced into riskier working situations. Additionally, those who require care could potentially become more vulnerable to potential exploitation and therefore it is important to keep track of the relationships for potential exposure to human trafficking post-disaster.

Debt Questions

Have you ever used a labour recruiter/recruitment agency to gain employment? Labour recruitment agencies are regularly linked to the risks workers face to potential human trafficking cases (ILO 2016). Identifying whether a person(s) have previously used such agencies provides a level of awareness that these agencies are in operation and that a person may intend to use them again if they have so previously which may lead to addition levels of risk.

Have you ever had to pay a labour recruiter/recruitment agency to use their service? Payment to recruitment agencies have been linked to the accumulation of debt, which can mean some people become indebted, and trapped

in exploitative working conditions. Identifying whether someone has previously paid to use such a service could lead them to being identified as someone who is currently indebted (and thus requires help) or has the potential to become indebted and exploited in the future.

Have you ever accrued debt using a labour recruiter/recruitment agency service? The identification of someone who has previous debt because of their usage of recruitment agencies suggests that they are vulnerable to potential exploitation and trafficking in post-disaster situations as there are some agencies operating in a questionable manner and thus greater populations may become exposed during times of crises and loss of livelihoods.

Have you ever been forced to work in order to pay off a debt? Identifying those that have been forced to work off a debt in a previous or current role during post-disaster humanitarian support can help twofold. First, it enables the identification of a survivor who is in need of support to help them leave a situation of exploitation. Second, it can flag potential abuses of humanitarian aid systems where those in need may have to provide their support to their debtor, thus continuing the risk of exploitation.

In what type of job/sector were you working if you were forced to work? Enabling the identification of sectors that are engaging in exploitative working practices can flag to service workers additional survivors who may have been subjected to human trafficking. It also means investigations can be put in place as people may be relocated due to lost livelihoods into other sectors where the risks may not have previously been known and safe working measures can be required.

Have you ever been told or thought that you could not leave a job as a result of debt? Again, this question is used to identify those persons who may have previously been exposed to risks of human trafficking but may not have been able/willing to identify, thus highlighting members of the community who may require or want additional support in searching for employment or housing that is safe.

Human Trafficking Questions

Have you previously been exposed to situations of labour exploitation? By assessing whether someone has previous experiences of human trafficking survivors can be provided with additional support mechanisms during the post-disaster crisis phase to ensure that they are not subjected to further exploitation, nor re-trafficked. Such an identification means extra attention can be paid to ensure survivors or human trafficking are provided with the tailored and trauma-informed support required.

Which type of exploitation have you experienced? Obtaining knowledge of the type of exploitation that someone has experienced is important as the spectrum of labour exploitation (*Schwarz forthcoming*) varies greatly. Being able to name the type of exploitation someone was subjected to enables a more tailored approach to support following his or her exit from exploitation, which could occur during a post-disaster crisis event.

In which sector/job did this exploitation occur? Being able to identify a sector in which human trafficking has occurred during a post-disaster event is important as it can direct support services to identify other additional survivors from the same sector. Moreover, such checks can be used to ensure a sector is safe for community members to engage with should they require a change in employment following a hazard and subsequent disaster event.

How long were you previously subjected to exploitation? By establishing the duration of exploitation and human trafficking a survivor has experienced, the scope and range of support services that a person may require in addition to basic humanitarian support can begin to be identified; particularly as some survivors may require more support than others may, depending on both the individual and their experiences.

Gendered Questions

Have you or any women/girls you know been married as a result of poverty and need? Being able to identify those who have experienced great loss and may require additional support is important in order to prevent the potential for forced, early or child marriage to occur – whether to girls or boys. Being able to locate communities that may be at risk without judgement, means additional resources can be targeted at the community to try to reduce the potential for marriage-related human trafficking vulnerabilities.

Have you or anyone you know experienced early pregnancy (before the age of 19)? Due to of early pregnancy, there are additional vulnerabilities related to caring responsibilities and the potential for engagement in poor working conditions. Establishing whether support systems are in place to support those who have experienced early pregnancy post-disaster is important in order to identify where additional financial and social support may be necessary. Early pregnancy in this case is defined as before the age of 19 due to the impact on adolescent health (UNICEF 2022).

Did anyone you know who experienced early pregnancy have to leave school? Noting whether early school leaving, or not being able to attend school at all, is important in identifying potential populations who are vulnerable because of reduced schooling. This is both through the risk of a person(s) who may require additional support, but also as there may be reduced employment opportunities available placing them at greater risk of exposure to human trafficking and exploitative work.

Have you or anyone you know experienced sexual abuse or exploitation? Risks of sexual exploitation have been identified as an immediate impact following hazard and resulting disaster events. As such additional medical and mental health support needs may be required, and identifying cases can enable further resourcing in this area.

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