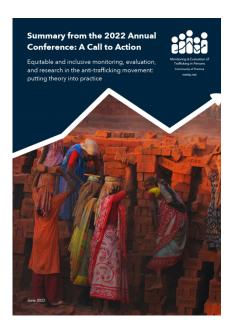# Introducing the METIP Call to Action and discussing practical steps for achieving equitable and inclusive monitoring, evaluation, and research in the anti-trafficking movement

Summary from the 2022 Annual Conference: A Call to Action

Equitable and inclusive monitoring, evaluation, and research in the anti-trafficking movement: putting theory into practice

Monitoring & Evaluation of Trafficking in Persons
Community of Practice
metip.net

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On the 12th of July 2022, the METIP community gathered once again to discuss a cutting-edge topic which is currently marking its way into discussions on anti-trafficking research and monitoring: how to achieve equitable and inclusive monitoring, evaluation, and research.

This meeting built upon the presentations and insights gathered during the METIP 2022 Annual Conference, which took place in February and resulted in our Call to Action on equitable and inclusive monitoring, evaluation, and research in the anti-trafficking movement. Attendees were split into four groups to discuss the second, fourth, fifth, and sixth points in the Call to Action. In these groups, a safe space was created for participants to discuss the reflection questions included in the Call to Action, sharing the practical barriers, unintended consequences, challenges, and successes to implementing its statements in their own organizational or professional context. These are some of the lessons that we were able to extract from these discussions.

Lessons learned

1 The voices of relevant stakeholders such as NGOs working closely with survivors, government officials, supply chain buyers, direct employers in supply chains, MEL enumerators, and community members in home-based supply chains are often missing in MEL programming. Applying snowballing techniques to network mapping might be an innovative way to encounter other missing voices in programming and research.

The first discussion group focused on the second point of our Call to Action, which states that "Anti-trafficking prevention efforts should take into account the voices of all stakeholders involved in the supply chain, including workers, their direct employers (i.e. micro-contractors), larger industry players in the supply chains, as well as implementation partners and enumerators working on programs that aim to reduce forced labour".

The group shared some of the voices which are currently missing from their MEL programming, including: NGOs working closely with survivors; government officials, particularly those in law enforcement; buyers in supply chains, particularly for big brands; direct employers, such as plantation managers in palm oil supply chains; community members where community-based models of work exist for employment; and

enumerators who are collecting the data, and can provide feedback on survey times, locations and question framing.

In order to ensure such voices can be incorporated into MEL programming, developing a network map of stakeholders at the start of a program, and then using snowball sampling to reach out to such stakeholders can inform the research. Challenges however may exist and therefore need to be thought through, for high mobility groups like migrants, control groups for whom incentives and ethical protocols need to be factored, and direct employers to whom the pitch needs to be more around 'worker welfare' instead of 'trafficking / forced labour' to ensure worker safety.

Some techniques to overcome challenges associated with involving all stakeholders within any given supply in research and MEL were mentioned and included: minding what is said to employers to avoid a blowback on employees, and reframing the research scope to mention worker practices instead of forced labour when pitching to employers.

2 Creating survivor-led and/or survivor survivor-centred Institutional Review Boards, developing MEL indicators incorporating survivors' inputs and designing toolkits on best practices on survivor inclusion can be meaningful ways of valuing lived experience in the context of M&E evaluations and trafficking interventions.

Another group discussed the following Call to Action statement: "True collaboration between survivor groups and research organisations should begin well before research inception, to agree on a joint vision and principles guiding long-term equitable partnership, and practising values-led research".

In relation to this statement, the group reached the conclusion that good practices of collaborating with survivors could involve building survivor inclusion into requests for proposals by, for example, writing in the target languages, accepting verbal and/or video applications, lowering government compliance regulations and ensuring that these include language that states a preference for survivor-led applicant organisations and/or applicant organisations that present a survivor inclusion plan with achievable timelines and specific actions along the survivor-inclusion continuum (survivor-informed to survivor-centred to survivor-led). Understanding the ethical demands associated with this and setting aside organisational time to reflect on these matters can also reflect good collaboration practices.

The same group pointed out Covid-19 as a highly obstructive factor when it comes to collaborating with people with lived experience in remote areas.

3 Shortage of funding, projects' tight timelines, and lack of compatibility between results that are useful to community members and those valued by policy makers are some of the issues obstructing the usage of participatory methods involving survivors and community members.

Faced with our fifth Call to Action, stating that "The design and implementation of research projects should strive to include participatory research and contextual knowledge of people in the target communities, seek to mitigate power imbalances that can arise in research, and utilise appropriate technologies to facilitate accurate and honest feedback from hard-to-reach populations", Praxis provided several examples reflecting good practices of participatory approaches, such as working closely with community members to train them on how to do research by making use of the fellowship model, and using digital media as a resource to gather feedback from hard-to-reach populations. Creating short videos with findings was pointed out as an innovative way to disseminate research results with relevant communities.

4 Adopting advocacy strategies to push for more flexible funding requirements at government-level, sharing funding opportunities more broadly, endorsing multi-stage selection approaches, widening perceptions around "credible research methods" and investing in "innovation pots" of grants targeting "higher risk" grantees can help creating a more equitable distribution of research grants in the anti-trafficking sector.

The fourth group engaged in a highly relevant discussion around our sixth Call to Action, which reflects a need of the anti-trafficking movement to "eliminate overburdening funding requirements, in order to better recognise the knowledge and skills of survivor researchers and the priorities of trafficking-affected communities".

Participants shared how funders often don't understand the extra time and cost that adds up to the research timeline if researchers are to engage meaningfully with local communities. The importance of ensuring that people with lived human trafficking experience are not asked the same questions by multiple individuals within the same organisation or different organisations, which may lead to unnecessary requests to share traumatic stories in multiple occasions, was discussed as something that should be prioritised and could potentially be addressed by anti-trafficking organisations sharing and making use of existing data.

Training for academics so they know how to engage respectfully and safely with survivors, and recognizing the value added by survivors to the project were mentioned as steps to create a more equitable and inclusive grants giving space.