Summary from the 2022 Annual Conference: A Call to Action

June 2022

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

Background

The 2022 METIP Annual Conference – on the theme of "*Equitable and inclusive monitoring, evaluation and research in the anti-trafficking movement: putting theory into practice*" – took place virtually on the 15th and 17th of February 2022. The event brought together professionals from across the anti-trafficking community, including experts with lived experiences of human trafficking victimisation, to reflect on current gaps and identify promising approaches to make marginalised voices more embedded into monitoring, evaluation, and research.

Through a series of presentations, panel discussions and Q&A sessions, the conference sought to build consensus on future directions for the field, and to encourage collaboration, cross-pollination between different actors, and sharing of expertise, especially by experts with lived experience and members from at-risk communities. This Call to Action summarises the main findings that came out of those discussions and calls on participants to reflect on inclusivity within their organisational policies, procedures, research design, data collection and monitoring methods. The views expressed in this document do not necessarily represent those of all participants.

Conference agenda

Tuesday 15th February 2022, 2pm - 6:30pm GMT

2pm - 3:30pm GMT	**Panel discussion: Incorporating "missing" voices into anti-trafficking program design, monitoring & evaluation**	
	Panellists:	Aditi Chatterjee, Senior Engagement Manager at Sattva
		Lauren Jackson, Research & Policy Officer at WalkFree
		Lucy McCray, Director of Strategy at The Freedom Story
		Sophia Aliza Jamal, Co-founder and Chief Operating Officer at Pinkcollar Employment Agency
		Zenna Law, Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer at Pinkcollar Employment Agency
	Moderator:	Rachael Jackson, Research Scientist at NORC at the University of Chicago

5pm - 6:30pm GMT	**Panel discussion: Good practices for collaborating with survivors & other marginalised populations**	
	Panellists:	Sophie Otiende, CEO of Global Fund to End Modern Slavery and Founder at Azadi
		Jessie Brunner, Director of Human Trafficking Research, the Center for Human Rights and International Justice, Stanford University
		Laura Cordisco Tsai, Research Fellow, Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard University
		Lara Powers, Senior Advisor for Survivor Engagement Polaris
		Sara Woldehanna, Director of Learning, Innovation and Data Systems, Polaris
	Moderator:	Emily Wyman, Head of Data Impact and Methods Development, University of Nottingham Rights Lab

1pm - 2pm GMT	**METIP Annual Conference Coffee & Happy Hour**	

2pm - 3:30pm GMT	**Panel discussion: Creative methods for gathering feedback from hard-to reach populations**	
	Panellists:	Andrew Riley, Research and Advocacy Consultant
		Jessica Sadye Wolff, Senior Program Manager at Immigration Policy Lab, Stanford University
		Kim Foulds, Vice President, Content Research and Evaluation at Sesame Workshop
		Pradeep Narayanan, Director of Research and Capacity Building at Praxis Institute for Participatory Practices
		Sneha Subramanian, Interim Country Manager at Innovations for Poverty Action/Bangladesh
	Moderator:	Jeni Sorensen, Director of the Human Trafficking Research Initiative at Innovations for Poverty Action

5pm - 6:30pm GMT	**Panel discussion: Investments to support local researchers & networks: considerations & lessons learnt**	
	Panellists:	David Okech, PhD, Professor and Founding Director of the Center on Human Trafficking Research & Innovation at the University of Georgia
		Kelly Ryan, Operations Director at the Modern Slavery Policy & Evidence Centre
		Megan Lundstrom, CEO of The Avery Centre
		Rima Kalush, Program Director of Migrant-Rights.org
	Moderator:	Yuki Lo, Head of Research and Evaluation at The Freedom Fund

Maintaining the collaborative spirit of the METIP community

METIP is a close-knitted community and our members are here to motivate, encourage and assist each other. To maintain the positive spirit of our community, we asked all participants to be respectful and considerate of people who live and work in different contexts - especially people with lived experience of exploitation. Based on guidelines developed by Survivor Alliance[1], the following principles were promoted throughout the conference:

Act sensitively and respectfully when responding to participants' self-disclosure. Be mindful of asking for details about someone's trafficking experience and whether it is relevant to the discussion at hand. No one is obligated to disclose any lived experience.

Use the terminology of 'survivor' to refer to people who have lived experiences, instead of using 'they/them'. This terminology helps shift our language from assuming survivors are absent and the object of our discussions, to people actively in the session.
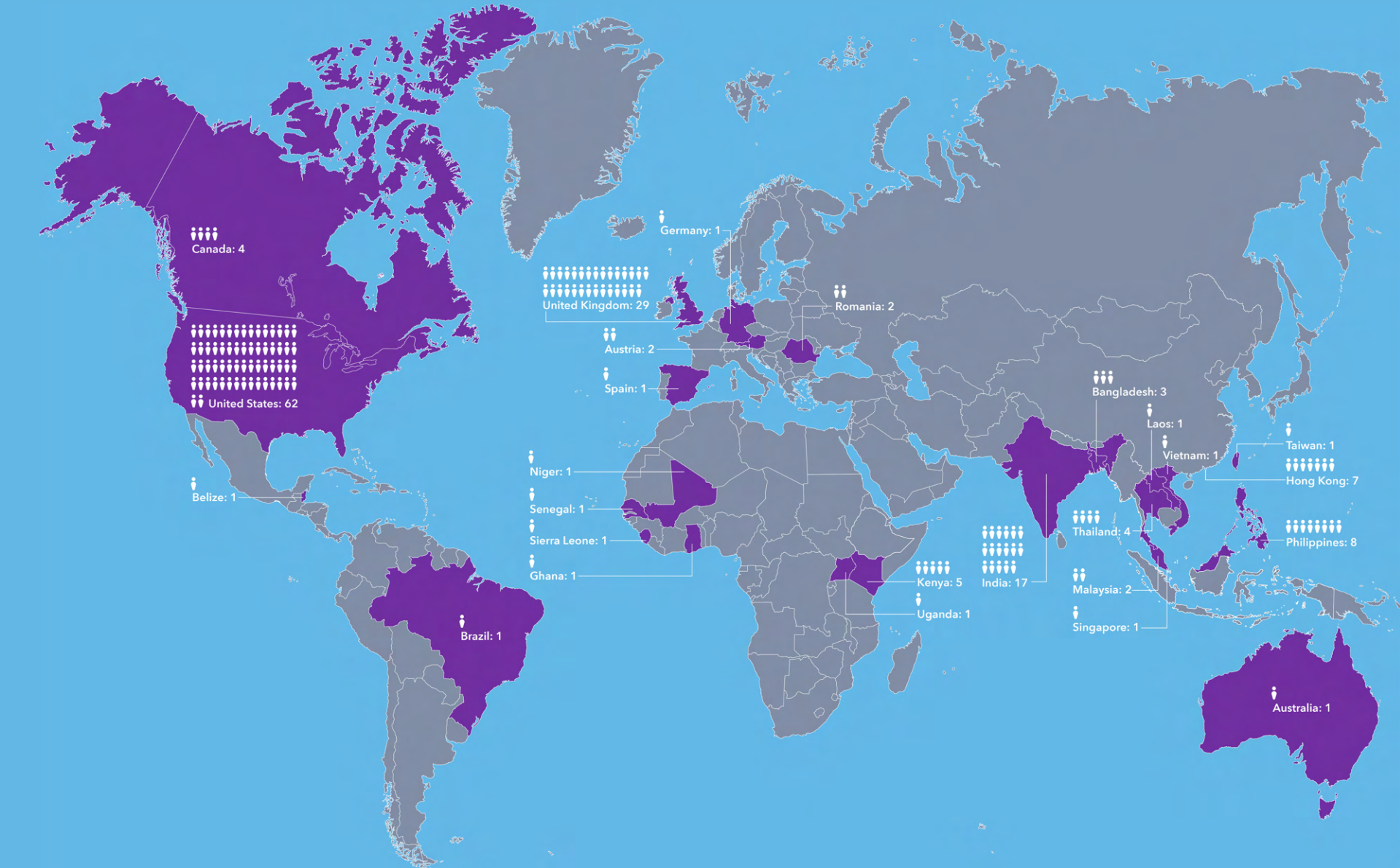
Show respect and trust towards one another. It's often hard to express the complexity of our work in a short virtual session, so please be constructive and courteous in our interactions.

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[1] Dang, M. (n.d.). *Survivor-Informed Spaces*. [Online] Survivor Alliance. Available at: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ee517995ce62276749898ed/t/5f21511b89d9b11a5cd4ad00/1596018976255/Survivor-Informed-Spaces-Resource.pdf

Profile of participants

The 2022 METIP Annual Conference welcomed 159 participants from 26 countries, including representatives from academic institutions, civil society organisations, survivor networks, businesses, government and UN agencies, program and policy advisors, as well as donor organisations.

Figure 1 - Geographical location of participants who attended the METIP 2022 Annual Conference

Canada: 4
United States: 62
Belize: 1
Brazil: 1
Germany: 1
United Kingdom: 29
Austria: 2
Romania: 2
Spain: 1
Niger: 1
Senegal: 1
Sierra Leone: 1
Ghana: 1
Kenya: 5
Uganda: 1
Bangladesh: 3
Laos: 1
Vietnam: 1
Taiwan: 1
Hong Kong: 7
India: 17
Thailand: 4
Philippines: 8
Malaysia: 2
Singapore: 1
Australia: 1

Monitoring & Evaluation priorities

Session 1: Incorporating 'missing' voices into anti-trafficking program design, monitoring, & evaluation

The first session illustrated the exclusion of survivors in meaningful decision-making roles within program design, monitoring, evaluation, and research; the lack of outreach to all stakeholders within a given supply chain including those that might not appear to be directly exploited; and the great need for ethical recruitment including digital models without intermediaries to protect workers from debt bondage and exploitation.

Walk Free revealed that of the 262 anti-trafficking intervention evaluations on their Promising Practices database, 181 included the words "survivor-informed and victim-centred." However, only 10 of those 181 involved survivors within the program and evaluation design. 88% of evaluations referring to survivors or related terms did not actually involve them in decision-making processes. In order for survivors to lead research design, organisations must recognise the expertise of survivors and contribute to their skill-building in education, advocacy, organisational management, and leadership while promoting wellness and self-care to avoid re-traumatization.

Call to Action #1	Anti-trafficking organisations should take on efforts to include survivors in decision-making roles within program, monitoring, evaluation and research design, by supporting the personal and professional development of people with lived experience.

Reflective questions to guide efforts towards inclusive M&E:
1. Does your organisation have survivors in decision-making roles throughout the organisation?
    a. If not, does your organisation have a plan for survivor leadership?
    b. If not, what can you do to establish and implement such a plan?
2. How does your organisation conduct monitoring, evaluation, accountability, learning, and research?
    a. Does your organisation contract survivor researchers and/or survivor-led research organisations?
    b. Do survivors sit on the Institutional Review Board of your organisation?
    c. Do survivors lead and/or contribute to design of program interventions and/or evaluations, methods, and research questions?

Sattva explained that it is important to reach out to all stakeholders when preventing forced labour within a given supply chain - in case of the construction supply chain as an example, this includes not just workers/survivors, but also their direct employers (or micro-contractors), as well as the implementation partners and enumerators involved in programming and MEL data collection. For a program that incentivizes micro-contractors to enable better working conditions for workers, Sattva is specifically reaching out to micro-contractors to understand the challenges that they face including sustained cash flow to pay workers in-full and on-time. Micro-contractors have the most control over working conditions, therefore understanding their needs could improve the effectiveness of interventions to enable a more ethical supply chain for workers.

Call to Action #2	Anti-trafficking prevention efforts should take into account the voices of all stakeholders involved in the supply chain, including workers, their direct

Reflective questions to guide efforts towards inclusive M&E:
1. How has your organisation identified root causes of forced labour or trafficking?
2. Has your organisation conducted stakeholder mapping?
   a. If so, has the situation changed enough to merit another mapping exercise?
3. Has your organisation reached out to all stakeholders within any given supply chain?
4. Have you intentionally sought input from all participants or community members, who are affected by your intervention?
   a. If not, which ones are missing?
5. Who among them are the most vulnerable and/or have the least access?

Pink Collar Employment Agency ensures no recruiting or placement fees. They also reach out to migrant workers before, during, and after migration to understand ways to prevent or stop exploitation. Pink Collar chooses to operate as a business and invests their profits in order to offer financial compensation to employers whose workers choose to leave legally. In addition, Pink Collar supports digital recruitment which cuts intermediaries and improves transparency in job placements.

Call to Action #3   **Businesses and employment agencies have a crucial role to play in achieving fair and transparent recruitment practices, and should be engaged as part of efforts to combat forced labour, debt bondage and other forms of human trafficking.**

Reflective questions to guide efforts towards inclusive M&E:
1. Has your organisation worked with businesses or public-private partnerships in anti-trafficking interventions?
   a. If so, what worked well and could be utilised in other anti-trafficking interventions

Session 2: Good practices for collaborating with survivors and other marginalised populations

The second session explored how collaboration and partnership in anti-trafficking research benefit the people involved and the wider anti-trafficking sector.

Survivors face significant barriers to entry into anti-trafficking research: Disruption in education and career development, lack of recognition of formal qualifications between countries, and interests in survivor engagement within a limited range of research roles --- often with inadequate remuneration- – typically lead to limited forms of engagement, and the perpetuation of broader imbalanced power dynamics in the anti-trafficking sector.

Ways of starting to address this power imbalance include nurturing collaborative inter-organisational relationships early in the research process (e.g., before grant calls are released), setting out a joint inter-

organisational vision to progress together, and making explicit agreements to explore tensions that arise and hold each other accountable to mutually agreed principles of engagement.

Adaptive participatory research practice can transform the way that questions are framed towards research participants, enhancing both research integrity and quality. In this context especially, jointly articulated shared values for working together act as a critical guide for collaborative problem solving, help maintain mutually beneficial relationships, and keep the research process on track. Long-term participatory research collaborations provide a special context in which trust can be earned over time, allowing new points of collaboration to emerge rather than being pre-determined at the outset.

Our understanding of what makes for genuine collaboration and partnership in anti-trafficking research is emerging as a result of varied organisations jointly exploring this question through practice and sharing from experience.

Call to Action #4	**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.**

Reflective questions to guide efforts towards inclusive M&E:

1. To what extent does your organisation explore professional connections with survivor leadership organisations for joint learning and preparation for collaboration (as opposed to reaching out once funding deadlines become salient)?
2. How does your organisation value lived experience in the context of monitoring and evaluations of anti-trafficking interventions?
3. What values or commitments does your organisation hold that could promote survivor leadership in monitoring & evaluation of anti-trafficking interventions?
4. What concrete steps could your organisation take to developing collaboration and partnership with survivor-led organisations?

Image 1 - Panellists discussing good practices for collaborating with survivor-led organisation and people with lived experience of trafficking
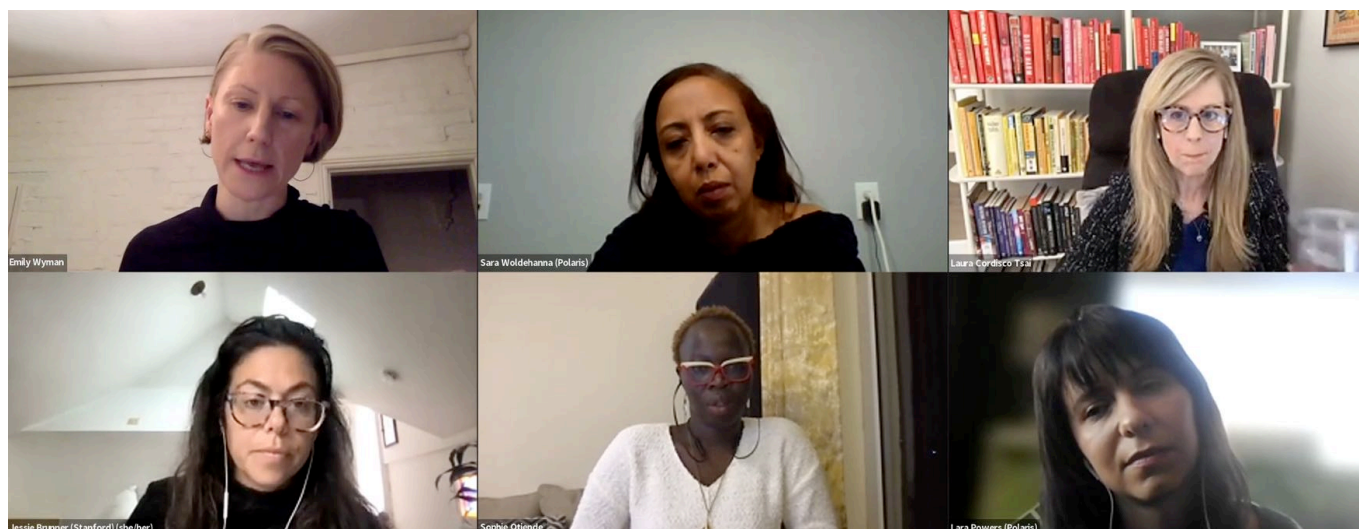
Session 3: Creative methods for gathering feedback from hard-to-reach populations

The third session highlighted several key points for putting people in target communities at the centre of research and programming. This includes prioritizing participatory research approaches that involve local staff and affected individuals to improve the accuracy of data collection; recognizing and mitigating power imbalances and potential privacy and protection issues to obtain honest feedback; ensuring programs of interest are a priority for the affected communities and actively reflect their needs and cultures; and examining the impact of power relationships in developing and implementing research.

Call to Action #5	**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.**

Reflective questions to guide efforts towards inclusive M&E:

1. Does your organisation use participatory methods with survivors and community members to develop the data collection method to prioritize inclusion and accessibility?
2. What barriers prevent your organisation from using participatory research to gather feedback from hard-to-reach populations?
    a. How could your organisation overcome those barriers?
3. How does your organisation engage the relevant local communities when disseminating and sharing the results of completed research projects?
4. What are the protection, privacy, and access questions that your organisation asks when developing research and implementation projects?
5. What are the data protection procedures your organisation has in place?
6. How might your organisation improve participation/response rates by piloting different technologies in different communities and contexts?
7. How do you compensate community members and survivors who take part in your research?

Session 4: Investments to support local researchers & networks: considerations & lessons learnt

This session examined the dynamics between funders and researchers and identified barriers in funding requirements and processes that often led to exclusion of researchers from trafficking-affected communities, particularly survivors.

The panel discussions highlighted several observed barriers that hindered the flow of research funding to individuals and organisations working on the frontline of efforts to combat trafficking, such as onerous requirements for due diligence, which can be challenging for researcher in low-resource or conflict settings (where there is no functioning government, banking or professional services) or where communities are ostracised by local authorities (for example, the Muslim population in Myanmar).

Panellists noted that even when research funding is able to reach frontline researchers, they are frequently used as subcontractors and 'fixers' for data collection, with limited influence over the design of the research as well as interpretation and dissemination of the results.

Funders have shown a tendency to rely on 'recognised academics' from well-known institutions who have a history of publications, rather than supporting lesser-known researchers or organisations. This has resulted in researchers from trafficking-affected communities being overlooked, even though have equally valuable insights and skills as recognised academics, gained through their lived experience as well as rare access into hidden populations such as undocumented migrants and sex workers.

A lack of input from survivor groups has often led to misaligned priorities between funders and trafficking-affected communities. One example of this is funders' expectation for research projects to have 'immediate policy relevance', rather than to consider root causes such as poverty and endemic forms of discrimination.

To conclude the session, the panellists also highlighted some promising practices that should be considered by funders more widely. Core features of a grant process that is move inclusive of survivor researchers and people from trafficking-affected communities should include: lower documentation requirements, accepting applications in the local language or written in basic English, and   more flexible financial terms that allow for cash advances rather than payment in arrears to avoid frontline researchers needing to take on loans to carry out the research.

Call to Action #6	The anti-trafficking movement should eliminate overburdening funding requirements, in order to better recognise the knowledge and skills of survivor researchers and the priorities of trafficking-affected communities.

Reflective questions to guide efforts towards inclusive M&E:
1. For funders, to what extent is your organisation funding research that is owned and led by survivors and people from trafficking-affected communities?
    a. How do survivors and people from trafficking-affected communities benefit from the research that you fund? How is your grant making informed by, and ideally led by, the priorities of these groups?
    b. How are you supporting, direct or indirectly, research that is delivered by people with lived experience? What requirements or steps within your research grant making and grant management run counter to this?
2. For researchers, what are the barriers you see to naming people with lived experience and research expertise as Principal Investigators in your funding applications?
    a. What are the concrete barriers in funding requirements and processes that need to be removed to create a more equitable distribution of research grants?

Acknowledgments

We hope these seven recommendations and accompanying questions provide a roadmap to the work ahead. The presentations from a diverse group of anti-trafficking practitioners and researchers revealed some of our blind spots as a sector. Now is the time to reflect on what we've learned and create methods and procedures that intentionally include the most vulnerable and promote the voices of those with lived experience. We hope that the accompanying questions will provide a starting point for conversation at the individual, organisational, and sector levels. We encourage participants to continue to collaborate and share experiences, learnings, and best practices about survivor leadership and inclusion in the anti-trafficking monitoring, evaluation, learning, and research field.

The METIP Steering Committee would like to take this opportunity to express our deepest gratitude to everyone who attended the 2022 METIP Annual Conference and contributed to the valuable and insightful discussions that took place and allowed us to build this Call to Action. This endeavour would not have been possible without the invaluable contributions of our speakers, who shared strategies on actively promoting those with lived experience into decision-making roles and intentionally incorporating diverse stakeholders into evaluation and research design.

The METIP community of practice was founded in 2013, when a small group of monitoring and evaluating staff from non-governmental organisations and consultancies met monthly in Washington D.C. to share their knowledge, challenges and successes with measuring anti-trafficking interventions in the United States and around the world. Since then, METIP has grown into a global network with over 280 members working in non-governmental organisations, academic institutions, consultancies, and national and international governmental agencies.

The Freedom Fund currently acts as the Secretariate for this voluntary membership group, taking the reins from International Justice Mission who served as the Secretariate during 2017 – 2020 and Free the Slaves during 2013 – 2017.

Monitoring and Evaluation of
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Community of Practice

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