MODERN SLAVERY & HUMAN RIGHTS | POLICY & EVIDENCE CENTRE
Led by the University of Oxford

Promising Practice in the Design and Evaluation of Modern Slavery Prevention Programming

Research Report

September 2026

Authors: Dr Wendy Asquith (Modern Slavery & Human Rights PEC Co-lead), Dr Tesfalem Yemane (Modern Slavery & Human Rights PEC Research Fellow), Professor Alex Balch (Modern Slavery & Human Rights PEC Director Research), University of Liverpool



Research by:

UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL

Citation

This report should be cited as: W. Asquith, T. Yemane and A. Balch (2026) Promising Practice in the Design and Evaluation of Modern Slavery Prevention Programming. Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre.

Contributors

We would like to thank colleagues within the Home Office Counter Exploitation and Abuse Portfolio (CEP), Modern Slavery Unit (MSU) and FCDO teams who contributed to the shaping of this report through co-development and participation in the MSF learning event held in Liverpool in March 2026 and through regular feedback loops since. We would also like to thank all of the Modern Slavery Fund (MSF)/ Modern Slavery Innovation Fund (MSIF) grantees who participated in the learning event facilitated by the MSPEC team in Liverpool for the thoughtful discussion, feedback loops and conversations which have informed the research underpinning this report and its content.

Thanks is also due to our colleagues in the Modern Slavery & Human Rights Policy & Evidence Centre (the PEC) Impact and Partnerships teams Rowshan Hannan and Owain Johnstone as well as Adam Burns and Ella-Mai Storer for their support in delivering the MSF/MSIF learning event and to the latter for research support leading up to this.

Funding

This research is funded and supported by the Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC), University of Oxford, which in turn is funded and supported by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre, the University of Oxford, or the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

Cover image source: Photo by fauxels from Pexels

Acronyms

ATMG	Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group
CBA	Community-based approach
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
HO CEP	Home Office Countering Exploitation and Abuse Portfolio Team
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
IASC	Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner
LE	Lived Experience
LMIC	Low- and Middle-Income Countries
MSHT	Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking
MSF	Modern Slavery Fund
MSIF	Modern Slavery Innovation Fund
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
PHA	Public Health Approach
RCT	Randomised Controlled Trial

Contents

1. Introduction 5
- Prevention: why and how? 5
- Opportunities and challenges for strengthening approaches to prevention 6

2. Reflections on mechanisms to build a modern slavery prevention community of practice 8

3. What tools, models or frameworks are useful when developing prevention strategies? 10
- 3.1 A Public Health Approach (PHA) 11
- 3.2 The Socio-ecological model (SEM) 17
- 3.3 The Human Rights Based Approach 21
- 3.4 The Community-Based Approach (CBA) 26

4. Implementing prevention in programming on modern slavery: promising practices 29
- Hope for Justice: Project Tesfa 29
- Terre des Hommes Albania: The Multifunctional Community Centre Model 31
- Freedom Fund: Call Me Priya 33
- IOM UK: CREATE Project - The Climate Chains Model 35

5. How can lived experience expertise be meaningfully involved in prevention programming? 38

6. How to monitor, evaluate and learn from prevention programming? 43
- State of the evidence base and lessons from adjacent policy areas 44
- Critical reflection on what qualifies as rigorous evidence? 45
- What questions? Which frameworks? 46
- The case for a plurality of evaluative approaches 46
- Emerging practice spotlight: Realist Evaluation 47

7. A mapping of current monitoring and evaluation practice for modern slavery prevention programming 50
- External, internal and hybrid evaluations: strengths and limitations 51
- Quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods approaches: strengths and limitations 53

8. Recommendations for improved design, monitoring and evaluation of MSHT prevention programming 55

9. Bibliography 58

Introduction

There is a growing consensus around the value and potential for a focus on prevention in anti-human trafficking and modern slavery (MSHT), but less clarity on the most appropriate approaches and frameworks to implement this, and on how their success can be measured. This report presents a practical overview of existing practice, shared challenges, and areas of innovation around effective and measurable prevention of MSHT. It draws on the latest evidence and case study examples discussed at a workshop in Liverpool in March 2026. The event brought together grantees from the UK's Modern Slavery Fund (MSF[1]) and Modern Slavery Innovation Fund (MSIF[2]) with UK-based policymakers involved in managing those funds and academics from the Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre based at University of Liverpool. The MSF/MSIF is run by the UK's Home Office and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and uses official development assistance (ODA) funds to support the UK's goal of reducing the prevalence of MSHT through delivery of programmes "in countries from which the UK sees a high number of victims" (Gov.uk, 2025). This report has been designed to provide useful and usable insights and guidance on prevention of MSHT to support future funding and programming in the area.

Prevention: why and how?

A turn towards prevention by policymakers (US HHS, 2024) and civil society actors in the MSHT space (e.g. Thompson et al. 2025) can partly be seen as a response to longstanding criticism that policies and programmes on MSHT lack long-term efficacy and measurable or sustained benefits. A core argument has been that they have prioritised short-term goals around prosecution and criminal justice solutions that are reactive: dealing with the consequences of MSHT while ignoring or under-funding more holistic, systemic measures that seek to prevent the problem from happening in the first place. Research finds countries concentrate more on implementation of prosecution than prevention or victim protection (Yoo and Boyle 2015). This has come alongside claims that those directly affected have too often been systematically excluded from the design, implementation and evaluation of programmes.

1. The Modern Slavery Fund is a £33.5m official development assistance (ODA) fund that supports "the UK's goal of reducing the prevalence of modern slavery in countries from which the UK sees a high number of victims" https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/programme/GB-GOV-6-01/summary

2. MSIF was initially launched with £11m from the MSF, but has since expanded, and is designed to build the evidence base "by supporting projects taking innovative approaches to tackling modern slavery" https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/programme/GB-GOV-6-01/summary

A 2010 report by the Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group (ATMG) argued that in the UK "there has been little to no meaningful engagement in the area of prevention" (ATMG, 2010) and fifteen years later the UK's Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner echoed this concern, pointing out that "most current systems intervene after someone is trafficked – rather than tackling the vulnerabilities that make exploitation possible" (Thomas, 2025).

There have been growing calls over this period from researchers, campaigners and political actors for a more concerted effort to develop more effective approaches to MSHT by taking prevention more seriously, putting it at the centre of policy and programming, and doing this through genuine collaboration with those individuals and communities affected.

One indicator of this focus on prevention is the choice of naming (or framing) MSHT as a 'public health issue' (Roy, 2024). Public health research is today perhaps the field that has the most advanced concepts and theories on what prevention is, how it can be put into practice through strategy, policy, programmes; and how it can be measured through research and evaluation. However, there are multiple approaches to prevention, many of which overlap, from 'classical' public health which tend to focus on social determinants and mitigation of risk factors, and others which might emphasise the strengthening of different types of capabilities – e.g. through human rights, economic or financial empowerment, or community-based support. The application of a public health lens is therefore a useful step, but not necessarily sufficient on its own to develop a strategic approach to prevention of MSHT.

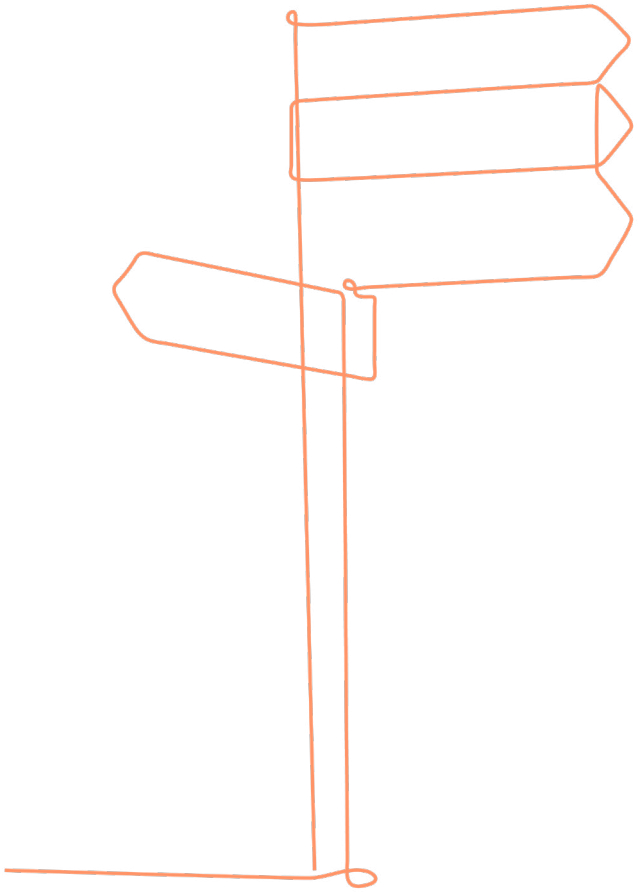
Opportunities and challenges for strengthening approaches to prevention

This report provides guidance for implementation in current and future programming in this area. It responds to the findings of an internal review of the Modern Slavery Fund (2022 to 2025) which identified key areas where programming on prevention needed to be strengthened (Home Office MSF/CEP/Cecchinel, 2026). The report was critical that activities labelled as 'prevention' were mainly 'awareness raising' and these were not embedded "within broader interventions that tackle the underlying drivers of vulnerability". Its review of the MSF suggested that future funding should invest in 'identifying, testing, and refining methodologies to measure the effectiveness of prevention interventions' and recommended that these could be 'most accurately assessed through geographically localised evaluations. This is because the key outcomes of prevention—such as reduced vulnerability and changes in behaviour—typically occur at the local level'. A key finding from the report was that "prevention work, while essential, often lacked sufficient duration and resources to tackle root causes", "lacked pathways

for scaling', and "measuring impact across the fund remains a challenge due to inconsistent definitions, reporting standards, and data gaps—especially around prevention and re-trafficking"

There is now a body of knowledge in the context of MSHT prevention which identifies key pathways, maps different potential types of prevention interventions and highlights promising practices. However, many of these have not been widely implemented or evaluated rigorously (Such et al., 2022). Those programmes that have been systematically evaluated point to a need for interventions that are based on evidence regarding contextual 'social, political and economic realities' (Zimmerman et al., 2021). Therefore, despite a growing consensus on prevention, there remain gaps in knowledge over 'what works' and doubts about the efficacy of international programming. These concerns are correlated with a systematic lack of meaningful inclusion of lived experience (ICAI, 2020).

The rest of this report draws from research undertaken by University of Liverpool in 2025-2026 including a 2-day learning event for practitioners. It brings together practical examples from diverse international contexts where different approaches to prevention have been implemented and evaluated at the local level, highlighting the key opportunities and challenges. The case studies gathered here help to illustrate and address known issues and gaps, setting out the different factors important for designing, implementing and measuring effective prevention strategies and activities.



2. Reflections on mechanisms to build a modern slavery prevention community of practice

In 2026 PEC researchers co-convened a two-day learning event for current and former MSF/MSIF grantees with colleagues from Home Office and FCDO. This event sought to lay the groundwork for a cross-portfolio community of practice in response to MSF/MSIF evaluations which highlighted a critical need for provision of shared learning spaces among grantees as well as the resourcing of mechanisms for disseminating learnings beyond the portfolio (Home Office MSF/CEP/Cecchinel, 2026).

Before the event, grantees expressed an appetite for peer-to-peer learning spaces that could facilitate sharing of practice-based insights as well as valuable opportunities for networking. One grantee explained:

> ***"I am especially interested in learning what has been shown to work in similar settings. Connecting with other professionals in prevention work, exchanging ideas, and learning from experiences. Building partnerships and expanding the network."***

There was a desire to hear from colleagues on "practical", "evidence-based" and "proven initiatives" as well as creating collective spaces to consider how approaches might be adapted to particular contexts.

Post-event feedback was particularly positive about the "safe", "shared" learning space provided for practitioners alongside policymaking colleagues and academics. Grantees pointed to the value of having open 'time to pause and reflect' among these peers on their understanding of and approaches to modern slavery prevention programming. Many grantees highlighted the particular utility of considering how 'prevention cuts across' different policy contexts, practices and geographies with a broad range of participants actively working in many of these. Grantees also appreciated opportunities to contribute insights from their existing anti-slavery prevention practice, discuss "shared challenges being encountered" and raise technical questions in regard to project design, monitoring and evaluation. One grantee explained:

"My key takeaway insight is the opportunity for crossing-learning and learning about the value of complementing traditional results-based indicators with "explanatory indicators" that capture process and relational change. These may include shifts in institutional behaviour, quality of engagement, and inclusiveness of stakeholders—factors that often precede and enable sustainable outcomes but are typically under-measured..."

Participants identified tangible takeaways for future prevention programme design and evaluation practice. One grantee explained that they will aim to incorporate 'tracking signals such as the seniority of government participation, openness to civil society engagement, and the degree of proactive collaboration across institutions'. They explained that such indicators would 'strengthen our ability to understand causal pathways, support more adaptive management, and build a stronger evidence base on how our interventions contribute to long-term impact'.

Another participant shared that the workshop provided the space to think about opportunities for 'collaborations among existing grantees'. It was suggested that consideration be given to setting up and resourcing a network of grantees to encourage sustained, collaborative cross-learning that could be more than the sum of its parts – i.e. outputs that would share synthesised insights across programmes of various grantees rather than siloed learnings shared by individual grantees in parallel.

Policymakers from the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and Home Office, underscored the value of having an in-person event. It was noted that the workshop demonstrated the value of wraparound conversations and intensive smaller group discussions to maximise learning opportunities. It was highlighted that the workshop brought important practice-guiding insights for practitioners and policymakers, such as valuable insights gained on the potential for multi-layered prevention interventions at the 'early' and 'treatment of harms' stages teased out in engagement with public health approaches to preventative programming as explained in the BETR framework.

Finally, the open space for dialogue between colleagues managing the MSF/MSIF portfolio and grantees offered a useful feedback loop in both directions on a couple of key issues at portfolio level. These included collective reflections on macro-level indicators of success for prevention programming and ways forward to promote the embedding of lived experience expertise in this element of the portfolio's work. The need for agility, context-sensitivity and realism was emphasised on both points. There was some consensus of interest in exploring what harmonised qualitative indicators could look like cross-portfolio for monitoring and evaluation of MSF/MSIF prevention programming. Consideration of dedicated funding to track impacts in a longitudinal way and to facilitate high-quality lived experience engagement in prevention programming strategies, where appropriate, was also suggested.

3. What tools, models or frameworks are useful when developing prevention strategies?

The following sections (3.1 - 3.4) offer an overview of four overarching frameworks or models currently being used to support design of prevention programming in the modern slavery policy space: the Public Health Approach; the Socio-Ecological Model; the Human Rights Based Approach and the Community-Based Approach. Each section begins with an overview of what the selected approach entails, and concludes with a summary of its strengths and limitations, as well as a signpost to useful resources that can support effective approaches to monitoring and evaluation designed to match that particular prevention strategy. Included in the more detailed narrative sections are learnings from adjacent policy and programming spaces including humanitarian intervention, violence reduction and public health with some details provided on how each prevention strategy has been applied, adapted and operationalised in practice.

In each case the approaches explored are recognised beyond the confines of a single project. They have been selected for inclusion here because they are evidence-based - theoretically-elaborated and practice-tested - models that have a standard set of recognised features outlined in existing, peer-reviewed and practice-based literature. Programme or intervention planners may therefore use the sections below as a starting point to explore distinct prevention approaches more deeply. It is hoped that in making this accessible summary of key prevention approaches, the quality, consistency and usability of the evidence base on what works for designing anti-trafficking prevention interventions can be enhanced and mapped more clearly.

It should be noted that, to be relevant and effective, these models always need to be adapted and applied to the specifics of the social, political and cultural contexts in which interventions are taking place.

3.1 A Public Health Approach (PHA)

A public health approach (PHA) to modern slavery has been widely discussed by researchers, practitioners and policymakers. Though it is not the only prevention approach available, it is fast becoming synonymous with preventative anti-trafficking efforts advocated by a range of governments, academics, and civil society actors worldwide (WHO 2023; NSN, 2023; US HHS, 2024; CDC, 2024, Such et al, 2024a; Scottish government, 2025).

What defines a PHA?

There are a variety of strategic frameworks, starting points or ways of working that define a public health approach to any social challenge. Collectively these offer fresh ways: to understand and effectively address the issues at hand through evidence-based approaches, to identify intervention points and, to give targeted focus to programming. These include:

- Committing to a four-step evidence-based process: To effectively implement a PHA, investments of time and resource must be made in engaging with the existing evidence base and robustly evaluating any interventions designed and delivered to further contribute to that evidence base through a four-step process (see figure 1): 1) Define and monitor the problem by analysing existing data and evidence. In the anti-trafficking/slavery policy space this would include identification of the social determinants or root causes of exploitation. 2) Identify risk and protective factors - frameworks such as the socio-ecological model outlined below are useful here. 3) Develop, implement and test prevention strategies - using rigorous evaluation to assess effectiveness. 4) Promote widespread adoption and adaptation of effective evidence-based interventions to relevant contexts (CDC, 2024).

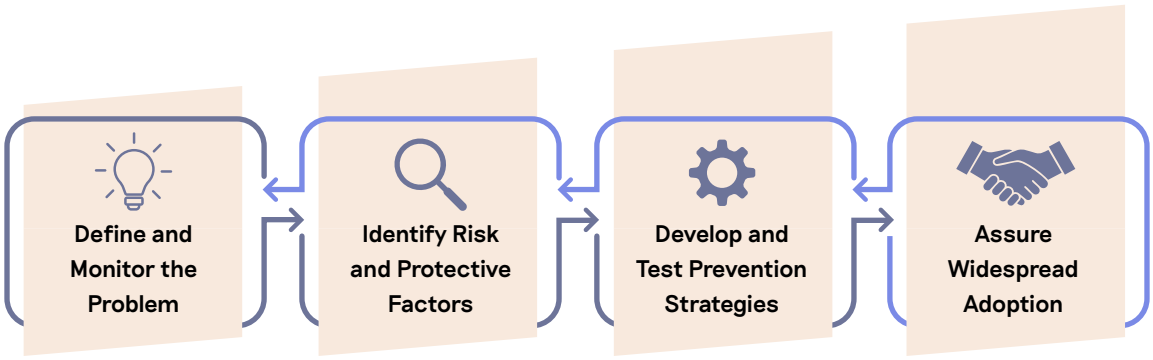


Figure 1: Adpated image of: The four-step public health approach [online image] Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2024. Available at: https://www.cdc.gov/violence-prevention/about/about-the-public-health-approach-to-violence-prevention.html

- **Identifying multi-layered preventative intervention points:** Public health frameworks often visualise a tiered model of preventative intervention points across three stages: primary, secondary and tertiary (see figure 1). Primary interventions seek to stop harm before it occurs. In some models a 'Primordial' or 'contextual' stage is added before this that seeks to create or maintain the conditions that prevent risk factors for harm developing - e.g. proactive investment in resourcing healthy, resilient communities (White, 2020). Secondary interventions are those that intervene early to prevent further harms occurring. Tertiary interventions treat harms and, in some cases, are characterised as long-term support after harm has occurred (US HHS, 2024).

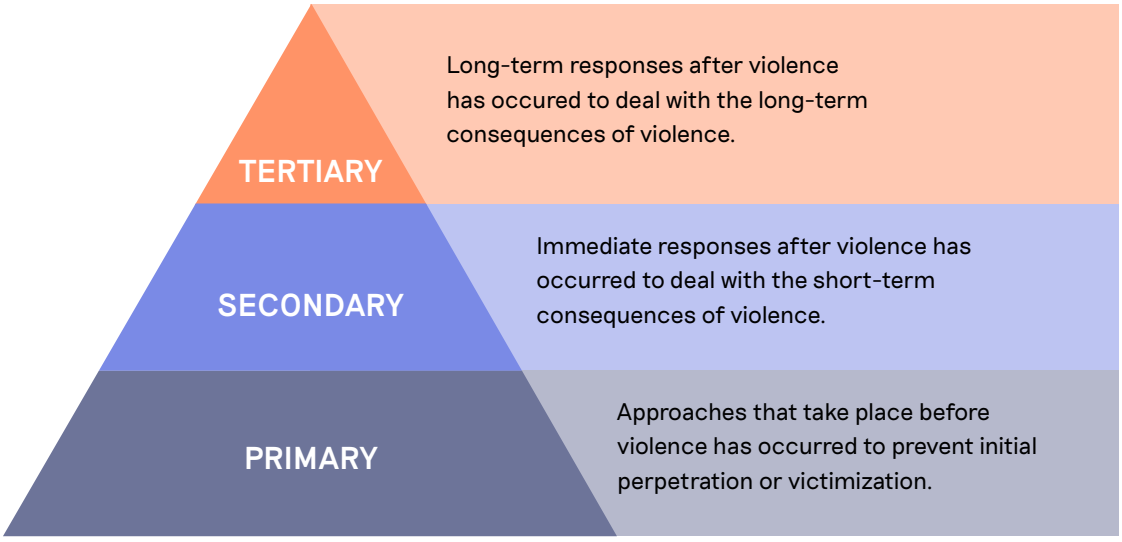


Figure 2: Adpated image showing stages of prevention intervention [online image] Source: US Santa Barbara Campus advocacy resources, nd. Available at: https://care.ucsb.edu/prevention/our-public-health-approach/primary-secondary-tertiary-prevention

- **Defining population focus:** A PHA is primarily concerned with population, rather than individual, health and well-being. This means that strategies and interventions are designed to proactively treat a target group rather than respond to harm caused in an individual case. The scope of that population focus can be at varying scales. Some PHA strategies use technical terms - such as universal, selected, indicated - to define these scales by proximity to risk factors (US HHS, 2024; Christmas and Srivastava, 2019). Others have used more general terms such as place-based scales: local, regional, national (Holmes, 2022).

- **Working in-partnership across sectors:** Any framing of an issue as a public health concern recognises that its determinants stretch far beyond the limited domain of healthcare deriving from a complex mix of social, psychosocial, economic and political conditions. The range of stakeholders involved in designing and delivering programmes devised through a public health lens therefore needs to be as broad, inclusive and far-reaching. This way of working is sometimes described as a 'whole-systems approach' (Such et al, 2026; Walsh et al, 2023).

In favour of this approach is the clear strategic direction it offers, which has been well-developed through application and testing on a range of social issues and policy areas including violence reduction, substance abuse and proactive policing.

The initial application of public health approaches to new policy areas is often characterised by a phase of conceptual ambiguity and adjustment with variable outcomes (Christmas and Srivastava, 2019; Walsh et al, 2023). This is apparent in current applications of the PHA to modern slavery/anti-trafficking but should not undercut the innovative potential of this approach to offer new ways of designing and delivering preventative interventions to address modern slavery in appropriate contexts.

Some have questioned the capacity of a PHA to be applied to social issues with complicated interacting causal factors that are not fully understood, given that it was originally designed to provide a framework for disease containment (Walsh et al, 2023). Yet, its broad application to a variety of complex social concerns - most notably in the spaces of violence reduction - speak to practitioners' assessment of its usefulness where appropriately adapted (Walsh et al, 2023). Caution has been raised about the feasibility of applying public health approaches outside of high-income settings. In Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) - where health and social care systems can be configured and resourced very differently than the predominant contexts where PHAs have been tested - robust, detailed knowledge of current operating realities is an essential precursor to assessing feasibility and design of any public health-based interventions (Alonge and Brooks, 2025).

How a PHA alters programming:

A key benefit of a public health approach to modern slavery and anti-trafficking is that it fundamentally shifts, and broadens, who is involved in this work and how they approach it. By reframing anti-trafficking as a public health concern, it is recognised to have far-reaching 'adverse physical and mental health, developmental, financial, and social effects' that cause harm to individuals and ripple outwards to impact upon families, communities and wider society (US HHS, 2024). This way of conceptualising modern slavery and human trafficking marks a significant break with anti-trafficking responses largely centred on criminal justice framings of the issue, which have prompted the predominant law enforcement and border securitisation responses of early 21st century solutions. A public health framing profoundly alters the mode of programming designed to address modern slavery and points towards a highly collaborative, multi-sectoral, proactive - rather than reactive - response via a series of preventative intervention points (see figure 1).

Strengths and Limitations of a PHA

Strengths

- Provides clear strategic direction for the design of interventions, with the availability of well developed and thoroughly tested systems and conceptual frameworks
- Based on solid evidence base, assessed as useful by practitioners, and can be applied to a range of relevant social issues and policy areas
- Recognises complexity, breadth and scale of harms, pushes interventions towards more collaborative, multi-sectoral, proactive response

Limitations

- Some caution about feasibility outside of high-income settings
- Implications of properly implementing a public health approach are significant, e.g. the need to include all relevant stakeholders and encompass a wide range of determinants

Useful touchpoints for design of PHA MEL frameworks:

Online resources including accessible explainers and supporting resources:

NIHR Health Determinants Research Collaboration (2026) Online learning resources - The stages of research and evaluation [online] Available here: https://www.evidenceandlearning.org.uk/what-we-do/learning-development/online-learning-resources/

Further reading:

US HHS/ CDC (2011) Introduction to program evaluation for public health programs: A self-study guide. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Altare, C. *et al.* (2022) "Measuring results of humanitarian action: adapting public health indicators to different contexts," *Conflict and health*, 16(1). Available at: https://doi.org/10.1186/s13031-022-00487-5.

The BETR Prevention Model:

A PHA-inspired framework for modern slavery prevention

In the UK context, the BETR prevention study has offered an important contribution in devising bespoke elements of a public health framework for the anti-trafficking policy space (Such et al, 2022; Such et al, 2024). This includes a tailored model identifying preventative intervention points (see figure 3). To the standard primary, secondary and tertiary tiers of prevention it adds a subsequent stage directed to prevent re-trafficking. In full, the BETR model proposes four intervention points: Before harm occurs, Early and Treatment to prevent further harms, and prevention of Re-trafficking.

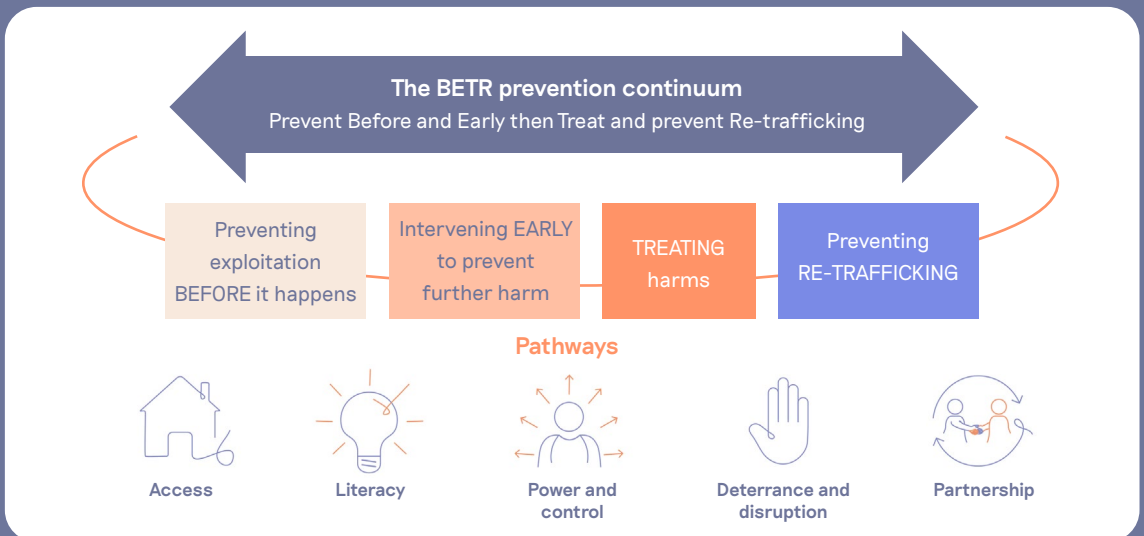


Figure 3: Reproduced image of The BETR Continuum and the pathways of prevention. Source: E. Such and H. Aminu, The prevention of adult exploitation and trafficking (2024). London: Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre

The BETR prevention study has also offered a synthesis of the existing evidence base within the UK on efforts to prevent adult sexual and labour exploitation. This review includes an assessment of the depth and quality of extant evidence. As a result, it identifies five pathways to prevention, each seeking to promote a particular kind of outcome (see figure 3). These are: **access** to the fundamental things in life. **Literacy** on harms and risks factors linked to exploitation as well as protective factors such as knowledge of related rights. Fostering **power and control** of individuals and communities at risk of exploitation and promoting their opportunities to thrive. Improved **deterrence and disruption** of exploitative perpetration and building **partnerships** to resource enhanced preventative interventions.

The five pathways can be understood as a grouping together of prevention interventions into five categories that offer to future programmers an archive on what has been attempted in the modern slavery policy space within the UK up to the early 2020s and a suggestion of the types of interventions that have been tried and tested for particular outcomes (Such et al, 2022; Such et al, 2024).

3.2 The Socio-ecological model (SEM)

This approach to prevention attempts to identify factors that can impact a person's vulnerability to an issue (such as exploitation or perpetration of harm) by mapping these factors at four or five different social levels. Psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner developed this model in the 1970s to explore the ways human, and particularly childhood and adolescent, development is impacted by layers of interacting environmental factors (Bronfenbrenner, 1996). Ways of conceptualising these levels can vary, but they commonly include consideration of factors at: the individual level; the familial, home or relational level; the community level; the societal or structural level and; sometimes a fifth layer is added to consider change over time (Kousoulis, 2021; UNICEF, 2024).

The aims of a socio-ecological model

This model doesn't seek to offer solutions for a particular problem. Instead, it seeks to diagnose and locate where an issue may be occurring and to identify all the interacting **risk factors** at different layers of social influence that may be contributing to that problem and, or, all the interacting **protective factors** at different levels that might help to mitigate against that issue. As a result of this diagnostic exercise targeted interventions can then be designed to address selected risk factors or augment protective factors.

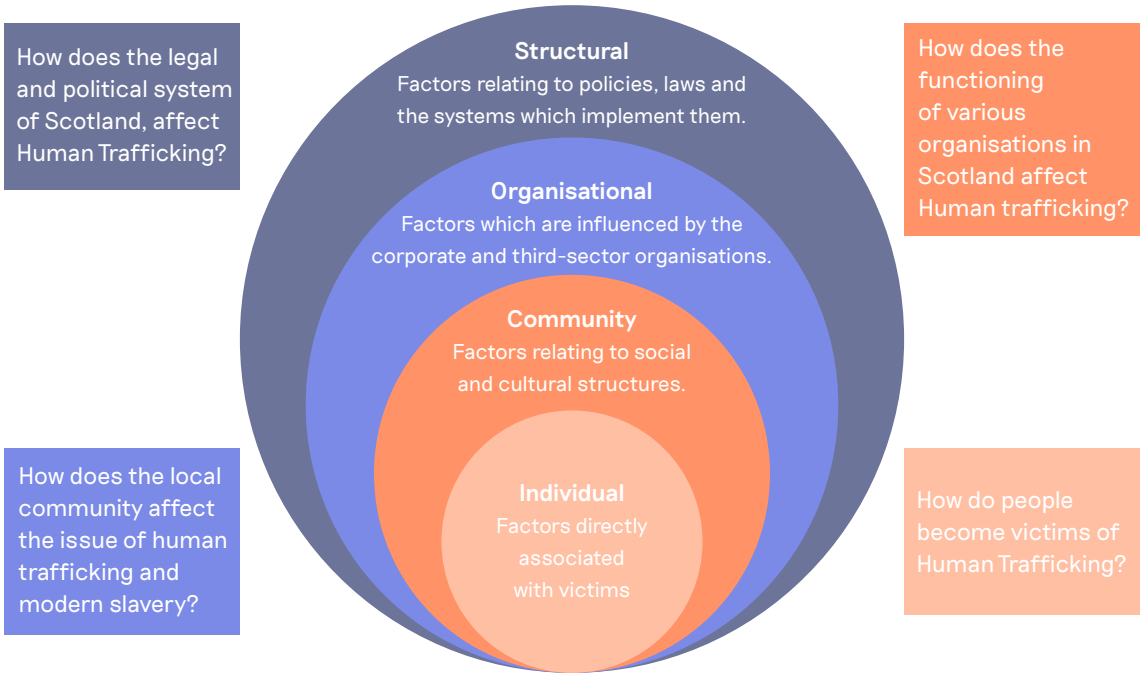


Figure 4: Adpated image introducing the socio-ecological model [online image]
Source: UN House Scotland (2017). Available at: https://www.unhscotland.org.uk/post/2017/11/13/human-trafficking-modern-slavery-introducing-the-socio-ecological-model

Socio-ecological models are easily identified by the distinctive visualisation or type of diagram that usually accompanies variations of this strategy. These usually consist of a series of nested, concentric or interconnected circles that place the individual in focus at the centre (see figures 4 and 5). Within modern slavery programming this might be someone 'at-risk' of, or currently experiencing, trafficking, re-trafficking or exploitation. Bronfenbrenner's original model emphasised consideration of how different spheres within one layer - such as home and classroom, or school and parents' workplace - interact with each other to have impacts on the individual. An example might be that a parent overworked in their employment is less able to engage with their child's schoolteachers and this would have an impact on the child, despite the child not being directly connected with their parent's workplace.

Where else has the model has been used?

The model has been used widely in a range of policy contexts. Initially, following Bronfenbrenner's original focus, applications were seen in spaces of education, psychology, social work and public health in relation to childhood development. The model has since been applied much more widely in a range of programming contexts some of which overlap and intersect with anti-trafficking. Practitioners and policymakers have found it useful to direct disease prevention initiatives and health promotion campaigns, strategies within agro-medicine, violence reduction, humanitarian interventions and migrant support amongst others (Kilanowski, 2017; Kousoulis and Goldie, 2021; Neal and Neal, 2013). It has also been cited within national level anti-trafficking strategies as a key component of a public health approach to this issue (US HHS 2024).

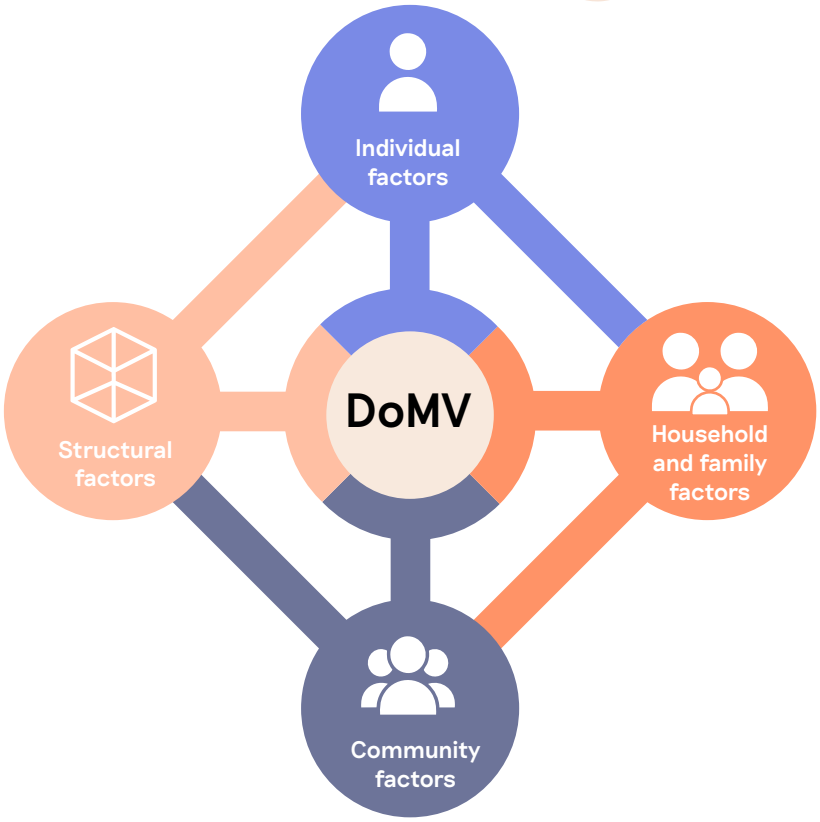


Figure 5: Adpated image from The determinants of migrant vulnerability (DoMV) model. Source: IOM Handbook: On protection and assistance for migrants vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse (2019) Geneva: International Organization for Migration (IOM). Available at: https://publications.iom.int/books/iom-handbook-migrants-vulnerable-violence-exploitation-and-abuse

There are also useful examples in the violence reduction and anti-trafficking policy spaces of this framework being used to diagnose risk and protective factors that may simultaneously apply to victimization and perpetration. It would therefore support the design of interventions that could address at a communal or societal level both those at risk of becoming victims or perpetrators of trafficking and exploitation. Investments in research, programming and evaluation in this area would address a significant gap identified in upstream prevention through a focus on prevention of perpetration (Clarke, 2021; Broad and Gadd, 2023).

Strengths and Limitations of a SEM

Strengths:

- Centring the affected individual within their multi-layered social context.
- Draws attention to root causes that underlie social issues such as exploitation and it puts longer-term structural factors into the frame.
- Creates opportunity to identify protective, as well as risk, factors.
- Lays the groundwork for further upstream proactive preventative investments. It directs these investments to focus not only on mitigating risks that can lead to harm, but also to the building up of those networks, relational and community structures that safeguard a person, promote their well-being, sense of agency and support optimal life chances.

Limitations:

- It **can** tend towards a responsibilising of the at-risk person/survivor (centred in the diagram) and their community to find the solutions to social issues.
- While structural factors are acknowledged, they can remain as background context when using socio-ecological models, with interventions tending to focus on changing something about the individual, the family unit or 'local' community. An example of this would be poverty, underpinned by global inequities of resource distribution, being acknowledged as a key risk factor for an individual but the intervention proposed seeking to promote individual resilience to poverty rather than addressing the structural factors that underlie it.
- The above issues can be exacerbated where resource is more limited and interventions are constrained in targeting only factors identified at the inner (individual, relational or community) levels.

Useful touchpoints for design of SEM MEL frameworks:

Online resources including accessible explainers and supporting resources:

RE-AIM (2026) Re-aim: Improving Public Health Relevance and Population Health Impact - A Tour of Resources [online] Available here: https://re-aim.org/resources-and-tools/

Rural Health Information Hub - RHI hub (2026) Toolkits and Guides. [online] including details of the PRECEDE-PROCEED model. Available here: https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/health-promotion/2/theories-and-models/precede-proceed

3.3 The Human Rights Based Approach

What constitutes a HRBA?

At the core of the HRBA is the recognition of all individuals as 'rights-holders' with specific entitlements and the identification of corresponding states, institutions and their representatives as 'duty-bearers' with particular obligations to uphold human rights.In 2003, the United Nations Development Group (or UNDG now renamed UNSDG) issued a statement of common understanding to try and clarify the essence of a HRBA from their perspective (UNDG, 2003). At this time, there was building momentum for mainstreaming a HRBA to programming in the development sector, but a plurality of interpretations for what constitutes a HRBA. UNDG's clarifying statement is instructive for contemporary anti-trafficking programming as calls for a HRBA in this policy space now are accompanied by a multiplicity of interpretations threatening to undermine the coherence of this approach. UNDG's framework identifies three core components of a rights-based approach to programming (that are shared by many other institutions and organisations (see for example: OHCHR, EHRC, SHRC):

1. Seeking to **directly** promote and protect human rights; with an understanding that these are "anchored in a system of rights and corresponding obligations established by international law." (UNDG, 2003).

2. Identifying and empowering 'rights-holders' to claim their rights.

3. Strengthening the capacity of 'duty-bearers' to fulfil their obligations.

Subsequent frameworks have been developed to build on these core components and tease out principles to guide activity in a broad range of programming and policy spaces. The Scottish Human Rights Commission, for example, developed the PANEL principles to offer practical guidance on the working practices that can centre human rights. These are: participation, accountability, non-discrimination, empowerment and legality (see more at: SHRC, nd). UNDP has built on this with its PLANET framework - that adds the principle of transparency - and offers a detailed toolkit with practical guidance on how to implement a HRBA within programming, monitoring and evaluation (UNDP, 2025, 31,55-60).

In the human trafficking space, the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW) which has centred a HRBA in all of its work since the 1990s, has offered an overlapping set of core guiding principles and a mapping of human rights principles and standards onto violations occurring within human trafficking cases. In their interpretation of the HRBA for the anti-trafficking context, GAATW add an underpinning emphasis on self-representation and organisation by those directly affected - groups that may now be termed or self-identify as survivors of trafficking and exploitation (see, for example, GAATW, nd; GAATW, 2000; GAATW, 1999).

When did calls for a HRBA to human trafficking emerge?

Just over a decade after the Palermo Protocol was adopted by the UN General Assembly (2000) OHCHR set out Guidelines and Principles for a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) to Human Trafficking (2002; 2014). Then UN Human Rights Chief, Navi Pillay, celebrated the prioritisation of the emergent anti-human trafficking agenda but argued that its ways of working should build on the existing UN human rights system, rather than developing in parallel to it (OHCHR, 2011). This drive to mainstream a Human Rights-Based Approach within anti-trafficking responded to two key issues. Firstly, criticism of predominant state-led, law and border enforcement approaches that dominated post-Palermo and which were being linked to harmful outcomes (see for example: Kempadoo, 2007; Anderson, 2012; Jordan, 2002). Secondly, calls that had pre-existed Palermo for a response to exploitation that centred the rights and wellbeing of the at-risk, victims and survivors (see for example: Wijers, 2021).

Civil society and state-led anti-trafficking initiatives, preventative and otherwise, now widely cite human-rights based principles and approaches as core to their work. In reality, this language has indicated a range of things in human trafficking and modern slavery programming and policy: from a set of programming intentions, or an organisational ethos, to a range of intervention types that recognise extreme exploitations and their causes as human rights violations. Common prevention programming activities in this space tend towards two streams. Firstly, those designated as educational or awareness-raising initiatives that seek to deepen knowledge of rights entitlements and how to claim them among at-risk and exploited groups. Secondly, capacity-building initiatives either involving: work with community-based civil society organisations that hold duty-bearers to account or; working directly with states and duty-bearing institutions supporting them in meeting their obligations to ensure rights-holders can claim their rights.

How does a HRBA alter programming?

In 2014, OHCHR made clear that a HRBA to human trafficking cannot be claimed were the human rights of trafficked or at-risk individuals "are only addressed as an afterthought" of law or border enforcement approaches to human trafficking. For example, where trafficking is dealt with as an "immigration issue", or "as a matter of crime or public order". In this sense, the HRBA is about a reorienting of policy, programming and practice away from a criminal justice and law enforcement approach towards a new set of goals and values; those that centre the rights and well-being of people experiencing exploitations or at risk of experiencing these. In the preventative mode of modern slavery and anti-trafficking programming, the centring of rights is particularly valuable because it is suggestive of where upstream investments could be made in order to augment those factors which prevent people from experiencing exploitation in the first place: i.e. child rights, labour rights, rights of persons with disabilities, rights of migrant workers, women's rights.

Again, knowledge in the development sector is informative here. When the HRBA was debated for implementation in this programming space it was positioned as a counterpoint to a flawed "needs-based" approach. The guiding ethos of the latter was to secure provision of basics to 'needy' - marginalised, impoverished - groups positioned as beneficiaries, dependants and recipients of aid. A key criticism of this was its obscuring of the structural and historical conditions that have produced people's vulnerabilities and unequal access to resources and opportunities. It presented inequality as something unfortunate and unforeseen rather than historically rooted, politically, socially and economically produced. In contrast, the HRBA was celebrated as a new approach that could make space for politics and reframe development as a call for justice rather than charity. In his annual report as UN Secretary General in 1998, Kofi Annan (1998, quoted in Third World Network Berhad, 1998) expressed it this way:

"The rights-based approach to development describes situations not simply in terms of human needs, or of developmental requirements, but in terms of society's obligation to respond to the inalienable rights of individuals. It empowers people to demand justice as a right, not as charity, and gives communities a moral basis from which to claim international assistance where needed."

In their working paper reflecting on efforts to embed a rights-based approach within development programming Nyamu-Musembi and Cornwall (2004) drew attention to important issues that inflect and direct rights-based approaches. Quoting the Indian MP S. Jaipal Reddy on this topic they point to the importance of rights-based campaigns being locally owned: "A rights-based approach … is most desirable. It needs, however, to come from within. Movement away from political, economic or social oppression can only be sustainable when it springs from within a society" (Jaipal Reddy quoted in Nyamu-Musembi and Cornwall, 2004).

Connecting with this point, Nyamu-Musembi and Cornwall (2004) highlight the "critical importance to locate today's rights talk historically". In so doing, they caution against only connecting with the formal institutional history of human rights development (i.e. the inception of the UN and its founding documents) when implementing a HRBA. Such an approach erases hard-fought movements for universal recognition of rights in colonised contexts including those that preceded the UN. By remembering these other roots to rights claims beyond the UN system, programmers can: improve credibility with partners and communities in delivery contexts, consider their own accountability to the communities they work in (particularly in light of the implication of many donors and some NGOs in colonial histories) and better situate contemporary rights struggles that seek to address exploitation.

Strengths and limitations of an HRBA

Strengths

- Empowers and centres the rights and wellbeing of the at-risk, victims and survivors
- Addresses criticisms of anti-trafficking and reorients strategy, i.e. away from sole focus on criminal justice measures, or needs-based approaches
- Aligns with prevention focus by identifying human rights obligations and accountability of states and businesses
- Strong direction and guidance for design of interventions provided by history of agreements, principles, frameworks established by international organisations

Limitations

- Needs to be 'ground-up' and build on/connect with history of broader movements fighting oppression, cannot be straightforwardly applied as a top-down 'solution'
- Existing guidance provides strong general direction, but language is arguably vague/abstract and requires significant work to build required context-specific frameworks for design, implementation and measurement
- Has been criticised for lack of guidance on how to narrow the scope of a HRBA to match project-level resources and a feasible intervention.
- It **can** tend towards isolated, individualised and case-by-case interventions with limited impacts.

Useful touchpoints for design of HRBA MEL frameworks:

Online resources including accessible explainers and supporting resources:

#Eval4Action (2026) 7 takeaways: Is evaluation key to realizing universal human rights? [online]. Available here: https://www.eval4action.org/post/7-takeaways-is-evaluation-key-to-realizing-universal-human-rights

Further reading:

Miller, A., Dassen, v. J., Rattray, S. and O'Connell S. (2025) The Human Rights-Based Approach to Development Planning: HRBA Toolkit. United Nations Development Programme. [Online]. Available from: https://www.undp.org/publications/human-rights-based-approach-development-programming-hrba-toolkit

Berman, G. (2008) Undertaking a Human Rights-Based Approach: Lessons for Policy, Planning and Programming – Documenting Lessons Learned for the Human Rights-Based Approach to Programming: An Asia-Pacific Perspective. Bangkok: UNESCO Bangkok.

At the core of the HRBA is the recognition of all individuals as 'rights-holders' with specific entitlements and the identification of corresponding states, institutions and their representatives as 'duty-bearers' with particular obligations to uphold human rights.

3.4 The Community-Based Approach (CBA)

There is some overlap in usage of the terms community-based programming and community development in the anti-trafficking policy space and adjacent fields. In theory the terms distinguish between community development initiatives which emerge from the grassroots and are self-organised by and for the communities they are delivered in; and community-based initiatives. The latter term can be used to mean anything from delivery of top-down services in a local community setting to more collaborative modes of developing an agenda with communities, though the impetus tends to still be top-down. In practice, however, these terms are often deployed as synonyms.

Within MSHT prevention programming the CBA has typically been used to designate a range of community-engaged programming that prioritises a collaborative model. These prevention practices appear to be rooted in the understanding that local leaders, places, communities and those with lived experience of exploitation can bring action-guiding, contextual insights to prevention. These approaches emerged from the understanding and experience that top-down and centralised models for prevention programming - that is, 'prevention from above'- risk becoming abstracted from local realities and the lived experiences of survivors. A top-down approach to prevention **can** be underpinned by a securitarian logic that is geared toward law-enforcement rather than preventing harms or long-term social reintegration. Such a centralised approach is more likely to use 'generic' ideas, concepts and standard approaches that are disconnected from local contexts and knowledge systems. In this way, 'top-down' prevention often fails to reach impacted communities and marginalised groups, thus falling short in achieving long-term outcomes and preventing re-trafficking. CBAs to modern slavery prevention seek to operate more horizontally: to create more opportunities for genuine partnership and collaboration between international actors, donors,local stakeholders - including national and sub-national actors -, communities and survivors (Gardner et al., 2021; Preble et al., 2023).

Some key features of community-based approaches are that: agendas and advocacy emerge from the frontline and collaborative networks are established between international partners, local communities, survivors, NGOs, policymakers, law enforcement, and social services. Existing literature on the community-based model in the field of anti-trafficking traces its convergence with three existing frameworks: the 'grassroots abolitionist approach' or 'grassroots prevention' (Free the Slaves, 2017), 'public health and social ecology framework' (Long et al., 2018; NSN, 2023), and 'survivor leadership and inclusion' (Azzopardi, 2024).

Historically the CBA has been used in different areas of policy and practice (Slatez, 2026). These include 'public and social care' such as in 'preventative medicine', 'mental health and suicide prevention', and 'social prescribing'

(Jones et al, 2013 etc); 'urban planning and housing' (Weil, 2023); 'education and early childhood' such as educational support and life-course learning (Hall et al, 2023); 'research and civic engagement' (Slatez, 2026) and 'international development' (Gardner et al., 2021). Practice within the latter policy space has been particularly influential for anti-trafficking programming implemented in the Global South by governments, donors and NGOs based in the Global North including that funded through Overseas Development Assistance (which includes much of MSF and MSIF prevention programming). Caution should be noted that 'community development' was a term coined and first used in the post-war (late 1940s) British colonial context. It therefore has potential to be an alienating conceptualisation of prevention practice, particularly in postcolonial contexts where it may be perceived to be reframing practices that maintain continuity with the colonial project (Maggetti, 2025).

Other aspects of the community-based model also require careful consideration include. Smaller community groups tend to operate with very limited funding and may lack specialised expertise to deal with complex legal or psychological cases (Sarkar, 2024). Deeply entrenched local traditions, attitudes and/or stigmas may also undermine community efforts, silencing advocates or victims. Another challenge is that without adequate institutional support and resources, local campaigners and advocates often risk emotional exhaustion and burnouts (Houston et al, 2015). Lastly, the community-based model often suffers from lack of standardisation for monitoring, evaluation and learning to prove long-term effectiveness (Bryant, 2021).

Strengths of the CBA lie in its foregrounding of localised, collaborative approaches to prevention. Its main strength has been assessed to be its privileging of local knowledges and collaborative networks to prevent modern slavery and trafficking (Houston et al, 2015). It mobilises contextual, situated insights (Johnstone, 2018) to promote preventative community resilience (Scottish Government, 2025), early identification of potential victims to enable early prevention and treatment of harms (Agyemang et al, 2023), and long-term rehabilitation (Sarkar, 2024) of survivors which support prevention of re-trafficking.

Strengths and limitations of a CBA

Strengths

- Emphasis on 'horizontal' collaboration and engagement responds to criticism of anti-trafficking interventions as too 'top-down' and not appropriate to local context
- Recognises and promotes local knowledge/expertise
- Aligns, and combines well with, all other recognised models/approaches to prevention

Limitations

- Risks of alienation if not genuinely collaborative, locally-led and sensitive to cultural and socio-political context
- Requires additional time and resources, often relies on smaller community-based organisations that may have limited capacity
- Not always amenable to standardised measures/evaluation

Useful touchpoints for design of CBA MEL frameworks:

Online resources including accessible explainers and supporting resources:

Mcloughlin, C. and Walton, O. (2012) Measuring Results: Participatory tools and approaches. Governance and Social Development Resource Centre - GSDRC [online]. Available here: https://gsdrc.org/topic-guides/measuring-results/participatory-tools-and-approaches/

Further reading:

UNESCO (2009) A Guide for Monitoring and Evaluating Community-Based Projects. Paris. UNESCO. [Online]. Available from: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000186231

Andrews, N.C.Z., Pepler, D.J. and Motz, M. (2019) "Research and Evaluation With Community-Based Projects: Approaches, Considerations, and Strategies," The American journal of evaluation, 40(4), pp. 548–561. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214019835821

4. Implementing prevention in programming on modern slavery: promising practices

In this section we offer an overview of a range of activities that have occurred under the banner of 'anti-trafficking prevention' within the MSF/MSIF portfolio through showcasing four projects described here as case studies. Two outline examples of programming informed by one of the prevention frameworks or models outlined above. The remaining two showcase combined and emergent approaches to preventative programming in anti-trafficking. Elements of programming related to a particular prevention framework are emphasised in the case studies below, but many of these projects have been informed by a range of models or approaches that can be explored through the suggested further reading for each.

Sharing these brief reflective case studies offers future prevention programmers a starting point from which to discern what might work well for the types of outcomes/contexts they are planning to work in. We also give an indication of the stage at which each intervention occurs against the BETR prevention framework, and in each case we map how these overlap with other policy/practice areas - e.g. poverty reduction, child protection, migration management, movement building etc.

Promising Practice Spotlight

Hope for Justice: Project Tesfa

Drawing on the Socio-Ecological Model and Community-Based Approaches to Prevention

Overlapping policy areas: Child Protection and Women's empowerment in Southern and Central Ethiopia

Stages of Prevention intervention: Early and Treatment of harms.

Hope for Justice describes itself as an international human rights-based anti-slavery organisation, promoting safer communities in which vulnerability to human trafficking is transformed into resilience.

Hope for Justice's Project Tesfa has been implemented in 3 phases beginning in 2017 and was still active in 2026. Project evaluations state that it has contributed to creating a safer environment by using a whole community

approach to reduce the vulnerability of girls and boys to modern slavery in the Wolaita and Hadiya Zone's of Southern and Central Ethiopia. The project uses a multi-level, community-based approach that involves children, school groups, teachers, caregivers, and community leaders. It aims to address the social, economic, and cultural factors that increase the risk of exploitation in these communities. Its main focus is to change harmful social norms and reduce the systemic risks that make children vulnerable to forced labour, forced marriage and other forms of exploitation.

Project Tesfa's 'whole-of-community' approach to prevention is described as "working holistically with different segments of the community". The project centres child protection and seeks to enhance this through multi-layered interventions at individual, household and community-levels in a way that clearly draws from the logic of a socio-ecological model.

Under UK Home Office funding and support, project activities included working directly with children through school-based Child Well-being Clubs (CWCs) as well as indirectly protecting children through women's financial empowerment within Self-Help Groups (or SHGs; an established model drawn from practice within International Development programming). Through CWCs, Project Tesfa promoted knowledge of child rights and modern slavery risks. Within SHGs mothers, women carers and other community-members were supported to build networks and invest in income generating activities to improve socio-economic stability.

In line with the tendencies of a socio-ecological model, structural drivers of exploitations affecting communities in Wolaita and Hadiya were identified. These included the impacts of macro-economic instability and intensifying climate change. Yet, evaluations of the project reflected that while interventions like SHGs improved household resilience, they could only relieve, not solve, economic hardship caused by structural challenges.

Project Tesfa also used a social norm diagnostic to explore where shared communal ideas about practices of child domestic work, early marriage or child protection might be linked to experiences of exploitation within communities in Wolaita and Hadiya. Hope for Justice emphasised their "long-standing presence as a trusted partner" in these communities as a key factor underlying their ability to undertake this sensitive work credibly in collaboration with networks of local organisations. In the application of a Socio-Ecological Model, to work with groups considered vulnerable to exploitation, in the anti-trafficking space there is often attention to social norms as a risk factor. Future anti-trafficking programming which uses this model could, alongside this identification of social norms as risks, give greater attention to identifying those social norms that act as protective factors and seek to amplify and promote these.

In line with the theory underpinning the Socio-Ecological Model for prevention, Project Tesfa highlights how layered child protection interventions sensitive to

the ways in which multiple spheres and social conditions impact on children's lived experience - such as financial stability at home, promotion of child rights at school and open discussion on social norms at communal level - can interact to strengthen project outcomes.

Find more information here:

Briefing Document: Learnings from Project Tesfa: https://hopeforjustice.org/

Promising Practice Spotlight

Terre des Hommes Albania: The Multifunctional Community Centre Model

Drawing on the Socio-Ecological Model and Community-Based Approach to Prevention

Overlapping policy areas: Child Protection & Migration Management in Northern Albania

Stages of Prevention intervention: Before, Treatment of Harms & Prevention of Re-trafficking

Terre des Hommes (TdH) Albania works in the fields of child's rights, child protection, social inclusion of migrants and juvenile justice. Since 2016 TdH has been piloting the Multifunctional Community Centre (MFCC) model. An innovative approach to integrated, community-based, anti-trafficking prevention in Albania. The MFCC programme was designed to address the multiple and overlapping vulnerabilities that increase individuals' exposure to trafficking risks. Initially it was implemented in the municipalities of Dibër, Kukës and Shkodër and was later expanded to Bulqizë. In many cases, trafficking risks are closely linked to broader social protection gaps, which means effective prevention cannot rely on single interventions but requires coordinated, multi-sectoral responses.

The origins of TdH's MFCC model lie not in trafficking prevention itself, but in Terre des hommes Albania's efforts to strengthen community-based protection for children, young people and families experiencing multiple and interconnected vulnerabilities. During a period of significant reform of Albania's social protection system - including territorial reform and the introduction of a new legal framework for social care services - increasing unsafe migration and the growing need to support the reintegration of returning Albanian migrants exposed important gaps in access to coordinated community-based services. The Multifunctional Community Centre model was piloted in response.

Rather than creating a new specialised service, the model brought together existing municipal, social, educational, psychosocial and protection services within a single integrated community protection framework, built around multidisciplinary collaboration and individualised case management. The model was designed to respond to assessed needs through coordinated, tailored interventions, recognising that vulnerabilities rarely exist in isolation and therefore require integrated responses. As a result of experience and evidence generated through TdH's programming, the MFCC model was formally approved and standardised by Albania's Ministry of Health and Social Protection in 2018.

Building on implementation of the MFCC model, programme learnings are being scaled through a complementary 'Reach and Support' mechanism which has seen integrated protection services extended to more remote communities including those in Klos. Reach and Support was designed to address the challenge of connecting with highly marginalised communities: where trust in formal institutions is low or where practical barriers (such as distance, care responsibilities or social stigma) limit engagement. Through proactive outreach, home visits and close coordination with local institutions, the mechanism extends MFCC services into underserved and remote areas.

Through implementation and evaluation of the MFCC and Reach and Support programmes valuable learning has been gathered on how local services can be coordinated to prevent trafficking at multiple intervention points. Firstly, before harm occurs. Secondly at treatment and prevention of re-trafficking phases through the provision of services for the safe and sustainable social reintegration of victims after harm has occurred. In concert, TdH Albania sees these multi-layered interventions promoting social cohesion and thereby contributing to the strengthening of socially protective factors for at-risk individuals.

"One of the most important lessons from this experience has been that trafficking prevention begins long before exploitation occurs. It begins with strengthening community protection systems that reduce vulnerability, reinforce protective environments and ensure that children, young people and families can access the integrated support they need before risks escalate. In this way, community protection and trafficking prevention become mutually reinforcing rather than separate interventions."

Find more information here:

Transforming National Response to Human Trafficking in Albania [Online article]

Protecting Lives, Building Resilience: A Local Response to Human Trafficking [Online article]

Promising Practice Spotlight

Freedom Fund: Call Me Priya

Drawing on a Community-Based Approach to prevention

Overlapping policy areas: Women's and girl's empowerment, labour and child rights in Southern India

Stages of Prevention intervention: Before and Treatment of harms

The Freedom Fund describes itself as an international non-governmental organisation that invests in frontline organisations, communities and movements to achieve 'a measurable reduction' of modern slavery and human trafficking worldwide.

The Freedom Fund's "Call Me Priya" project delivered in Tamil Nadu, southern India centred collaborative creation and screening of a Film-Based Curriculum (FBC). Launched in 2017, this film-based curriculum was a year-long, film-based and community outreach programme designed to empower young women and girls (aged 14 to 20) who work in conditions of bonded labour in spinning mills—or were at imminent risk of entering mill work. As the Freedom Fund's reports show, many young women and girls in Tamil Nadu, especially within Dalit and migrant worker communities are subject to 'employer violations or exploitation', 'harassment, abuse and infringement of their labour rights'. Against this backdrop, the "Call Me Priya" Film-Based Curriculum was designed to help affected communities tackle the issue of bonded labour and human trafficking in over 400 villages in the Tamil Nadu region.

The project was commissioned by the Freedom Fund, and it was part of a wider community-based model to combat bonded labour. As a community-based model, it operated in collaboration with local NGOs, community-based groups, trained community facilitators, local human rights and development outreach experts and a professional filmmaker, Lindsay Branham, from Novo Film. Through combining a professional filmmaker, with localised content and context, including the local language (Tamil), incorporating learning from the lived experiences of 308 former mill workers in Tamil Nadu, and featuring actors from local communities, the FBC was able to create a space for 'discussions on labour exploitation, gender rights, social norms and challenges facing the local communities.' Developed by Lindsay Branham, the film drew on previous analysis of the lived experiences of former workers in the spinning mills—an analysis process that young workers were part of. These lived experience accounts and insights were then used to develop themes for the FBC and associated toolkits. In addition, scoping visits and interviews were conducted with over 60 former mill workers in the region to refine the film narrative, making it relatable to local contexts and audiences.

The FBC was used to engage groups of young women and girls in Tamil Nadu. During the first 12-month period, 11,000 young women and girls attended a multi-session film-based course. The toolkit also consisted of 17 sessions, including group activities and discussions drawing from topics raised in the film such as societal norms on gender roles and workers' rights. Project activities focused on 'self-awareness and self-esteem, communication skills, ways to reduce and cope with psychological distress, avoiding risky recruitment, addressing working conditions in the mills, knowledge of basic worker rights, basic reproductive health awareness and health risks, making choices on the basis of personal beliefs, accessing further education and training'. The curriculum was also used among new groups in other locations over the course of the next several years of Freedom Fund's hotspot programme, and followed up with a mobile phone campaign to reinforce key messages to adolescent girls and their families, focusing on workers' rights, parent-child communication, health, and self-care.

By drawing on the knowledge and experiences of local communities as well as involving local NGOs and stakeholders, the "Call Me Priya" FBC project echoed the strengths of the community-based model. As the Freedom Fund's report and the 'Call Me Priya' evaluation by Praxis describe, for example, by working closely with the local communities and NGOs, the project was able to record improved outcomes on a range of challenge areas. For example, out of the 11,000 young women and girls who took part in the programme, many showed greater awareness and knowledge about their rights, safer working conditions (34.2% increase) and wage entitlements (an increase from 19.2% to 48.4% of participants). Moreover, participants showed improvement in their mental health and resilience. They also showed attitudinal shift towards equitable gender pay (36.8% improvement) and positive social norms, with many also saying they were more likely to take a stronger action against employer bullying (59.9%) or sexual harassment in the mills (36.8%). Overall, the FBC project helped them develop positive thinking about their future.

The above being said, the Freedom Fund also cautions against drawing exclusive causal conclusions between the FBC and the results reported, citing that other intervening social, economic, and political factors may have also played a causal role in the changes registered over the evaluation period. As the Freedom Fund's reports indicate, the adolescent girls' groups using the FBC were part of a wider ecosystem of community-based groups – with versions of the toolkit also used by parent groups and adolescent boys' groups. In this way, the FBC was carried out alongside other activities in the community such as informal learning centres for young children, improving access to government entitlements, and income generation activities.

Find more information here:

The Freedom Fund. 2019. Unlocking What Works: How community-based interventions are ending bonded labour in India. Available from: https://cdn.freedomfund.org/app/uploads/2024/03/Freedom-Fund-Evidence-in-Practice-Paper-Unlocking-what-works.pdf

Joseph, S., Narayanan, P., Bharadwaji, S. and Vincent, K. 2019. Evaluation of the "Call Me Priya" film-based curriculum in Tamil Nadu. Available from: https://cdn.freedomfund.org/app/uploads/2024/03/SUMMARY-Call-Me-Priya-Evaluation-of-film-based-curriculum.pdf

Promising Practice Spotlight

IOM UK: CREATE Project - The Climate Chains Model

An emergent Climate Chains model informed by the Socio-Ecological Model

Overlapping policy areas: Climate resilience and migration management in Ethiopia and the Philippines

Stages of Prevention intervention: Before harm occurs

In recent years, there has been considerable interest among policymakers, donors and practitioners in the link between climate change, exploitation and human trafficking. Research shows that this link occurs through disruption of livelihood options and vulnerability to trafficking and exploitation. As adverse climate events intensify worldwide, individual/household/community vulnerabilities grow, increasing the risk of exploitation and human trafficking. This risk is also further compounded by climate-induced displacement and onward migration through unsafe migratory routes which can increase vulnerability to exploitation.

In 2023, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) UK developed the 'Climate Resilience Against Trafficking and Exploitation' (CREATE) project to build systemic adaptations and resilience to climate change and use this in prevention programmes. In this context, the CREATE framework aims to address the trinity of climate change-vulnerability-trafficking by engaging impacted communities in Ethiopia and the Philippines. As part of this project, IOM also commissioned research titled, 'Climate Chains: Mapping the Relationship between Climate, Trafficking in Persons and Resilience'. The research found that climate events impact livelihood options in two ways. First, climate events result in the 'reduction of income/assets and de-diversification of livelihood options'. This includes risks linked to extreme weather events such as 'shocks to specific livelihood assets, including 'destruction of physical assets used to assure livelihood, such as fishing boats or death of livestock. Second, local-level climate events such as droughts, can 'generate crop losses and decreasing agricultural production' which can exacerbate vulnerabilities (IOM, 2025:14).

Through the CREATE project, IOM UK worked with different stakeholders, experts and impacted communities to develop more climate resilient livelihoods and prevent trafficking. The national IOM teams in Ethiopia and the Philippines worked with technical experts from local government officials and universities to support selection of locally-relevant livelihood options and deliver training to project participants. In Ethiopia, the project was supported by the Universities of Jimma and Haramaya with the involvement of academics with expertise in Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness. Other experts also came from local government departments such as Kebeles and Woredas. The experts were involved in the 'Decentralisation of Disaster Risk Management' (DDRM) framework in their local authorities, and they contributed towards mainstreaming counter-trafficking.

The project engaged with the local communities not as passive recipients to be acted upon, but as experts in understanding how climate change impacted them. Livelihood options and prevention strategies were co-produced in conversation with community members, project beneficiaries, policymakers and practitioners. Community conversations about the risk of trafficking, and how to access support and pocketbooks with resources and information were designed with inputs from people with lived experience of migration and exploitation, family members, would-be migrants and wider community members. In the beginning, the project staff spent several days in the communities to carry out assessments with various groups using CARE International's 'Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis Handbook'. This engagement helped the project staff to have nuanced understanding of the impact of climate change on different groups such as youth and women, and to consider what responses would work for each group.

Through the community engagement, the subject matter experts were able to build new pathways for climate solutions, climate adaptation and resilience and prevention of trafficking. In this way, the experts played vital roles in designing climate adaptation systems such as diversification of income generating sources, purchasing of disaster-resistant materials and/or household assets. In the Philippines, for example, this involved simple adaptation systems such as growing produce vertically rather than in the ground. As it was evidenced in 2024, these vertical structures were relocated during the record Tycoon season in the country. In addition, one of the livelihood groups in the Philippines was focused on eco-tourism which involved mangrove preservation activities and raising awareness of the local communities about the importance of mangrove trees as natural flood defence systems for climate-induced displacement. And in Ethiopia, modern beehives were produced and used rather than the traditional bee keeping practices.

The climate chains model of prevention has some limitations. For example, it does not include a temporal dimension that could speak to deeper colonial legacies sustaining structural exploitation and the ways in which climate policies ignore or exacerbate unequal impacts of climate change across

countries or communities. The emphasis of rich Global North states and donors on the technical assessment of climate change and resilience strategies often occludes from view the ways in which former colonial powers continue to shape policies that maintain inherited domination originating from global coloniality.

Find more information here:

IOM. (2025). Climate Chains: Mapping the Relationship between Climate, Trafficking in Persons and Building Resilience. Geneva, IOM. Available here: https://publications.iom.int/books/climate-chains-mapping-relationship-between-climate-trafficking-persons-and-building-CREATE

5. How can lived experience expertise be meaningfully involved in prevention programming?

Engaging people with lived experience is widely seen as a priority for programming on modern slavery, and was an area highlighted by the Independent Commission on Aid Impact review which strongly criticised how this had been done in UK international development spending (ICAI 2020). As one of the main themes of the MSF workshop, participants were introduced to key issues around lived experience engagement, drawing from areas of practice in the UK refugee and migrant sector. This was then followed by in-depth group discussions bringing together grantees, academics, and policymakers. Participants shared examples of existing practice, alongside the challenges, ethics and practicalities of involving people with lived experience. They also shared reflections and questions around how practice can be improved going forward. Collectively, the discussions emphasised the vital role that lived experience engagement can play in prevention programming. Below are brief descriptions of some of existing methods and practices of lived experience inclusion in prevention programming shared by MSF/MSIF grantees at stages of programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Promising Practice Spotlight

Dedicated staffing and the 'Iterative Process' in prevention programming:

Freedom Collaborative shared a promising mechanism for lived experience inclusion within anti-trafficking work taking place globally across international networks. The iterative approach is a cyclical process used in their prevention campaigns targeting trafficking for forced criminality and illicit recruitment into cyber-scam centres in Southeast Asia. In this process, people with lived experience are involved at multiple levels in campaign co-creation through an integrated feedback loop consisting of civil society organisations, local communities and policymakers.

The organisation has recruited a Project Officer with lived experience under the UK MSF/MSIF project. Their role includes consultation on the organisations' programme of activities and facilitating input from a range of lived experience groups into the ideation process underpinning creation of preventative campaigns. The expertise of lived experience groups is greatly valued in this process. Their insights, based on what they experience at the frontline, are integrated with evidence of overall trends across South Asia

and East Africa shaping campaign strategies. People with lived experience are included throughout the different stages of the grantee's prevention programming. From inception to design, implementation and evaluation - through ongoing dialogue and feedback - insights from lived experience groups inform how the organisation refines, adapts and even changes its proposed prevention programming. In this way, the iterative process offers a 'promising practice' in prevention by bringing together action-guiding insights from lived experience groups and integrating these with prevention strategies 'from above'. Through this iterative process, the organisation was able to adapt and contextualise its campaign strategy to specific countries and localities, including translation of materials, and ensuring that the campaign is effective and targeting the right demographics.

Measures put in place to promote positive outcomes and safeguard against unintended harms through these mechanisms for lived experience engagement have included:

- Ensuring the Project Officer and engaged groups are fully compensated for their time and expertise.
- Setting up regular communication channels to ensure well-being throughout projects.
- Assurance that if any staff or lived experience groups decide to withdraw their involvement at any point; they are free to do so on their own terms.
- Having a dedicated 'focal point' or contact person that lived experience groups can consult directly with any concerns during their engagement.
- Ensuring protocols are in place that prevent lived experience groups being asked to narrate and re-live their lived experiences frequently
- Putting in place ample breaks between engagements.

Survivor Leadership Council:

Hope for Justice's Survivor Leadership Council comprises survivor leaders from across its geographies who bring a diverse range of lived experiences, perspectives and learned expertise. The Council provides strategic advice and challenge across organisational priorities, including prevention programming. In this way council expertise can be mobilised across the organisation's portfolio addressing knowledge gaps within specific project teams.

One of its key contributions is helping staff think critically about ethical survivor inclusion, including when, why, and how survivor perspectives should

be involved in programme design, implementation, evaluation, advocacy, and research. The Council co-designed a now-mandatory course for all staff members on working in more trauma-informed ways, helping the organisation be more prepared for working with survivors across its work.

Council members are compensated for their contributions, and participation is structured to support meaningful engagement and reduce the risk of tokenistic involvement. The Council has also generated significant interest from peer organisations, governments, universities, and other stakeholders seeking to understand how survivor leadership can be implemented in practice.

Peer-mentoring Programme:

Peer-mentorship was discussed as a promising practice of Different and Equal's 'survivor participation' programme. Different and Equal is an Albanian non-profit organisation which provides reintegration services for victims of trafficking, exploitation and abuse, and works to improve the legal, institutional and social context in order to prevent and counter these violations of human rights.

The peer-mentoring programme involves creating a space where lived experience leaders who are at an advanced stage of their reintegration process, and who are willing to support other survivors, mentor those at an earlier stage. Peer mentors are generally paired with one service user whom they support in building or strengthening a social network at the community level. The mentor's own personal experience provides an important source of practical knowledge and understanding. The selection of mentees is conducted in close collaboration with case managers. This process takes into consideration the individual circumstances, needs, preferences, and willingness of both the mentor and mentee. Initial activities organised by mentors focus primarily on establishing a relationship of trust and identifying common interests. Activities may range from cinema, theatre, museum and gallery visits to sports and physical activities; walking and bicycle rides; language courses; employability workshops; community and religious activities, self-care activities; and nature-based activities. Through these interactions, mentors and mentees gradually develop a trusting relationship that provides a foundation for further mentoring. Moreover, having experienced mentors who 'return to work in their communities' and mentor others can help combat stigma that may be attached to people discussing their experiences of exploitation and can offer a protection against retrafficking.

Peer mentors are survivors of trafficking assessed by the assisting organization as suitable to take on this role. Different and Equal has developed and implemented a program to prepare former victims of trafficking to

become peer mentors including ongoing supervision and tailored training with a focus on providing support, guidance, and empowerment. As a result of this process, Different and Equal have developed a Mentoring Curricula.

Read Different and Equal's Survivor 'Reintegration Guide' here:

Surtrees, R., M. Meshi, S. Tanellari and A. Alikaj. 2022. Mentoring trafficking victims: A reintegration guide for practitioners. Available from: https://differentandequal.org/en/mentoring-a-reintegration-guide/

Benefits and challenges in lived experience engagement

Identified benefits of lived experience inclusion in MSHT programming (beyond that focussed specifically on prevention) have been outlined in detail elsewhere as have frameworks for mitigating risks of harm in such engagement activities (see for example: Asquith, Kiconco and Balch, 2022; Ash and Otiende, 2023). Here we supplement this wider discussion with some particular benefits and challenges discussed by MSF/MSIF grantees in the context of a focus on MSHT prevention programming.

Benefits:

- Situated knowledge from people with lived experience can provide important insights on hidden or intersecting root causes of MSHT to guide and shape policy and practice.

- Engaging lived experience groups in a sphere of horizontal partnership that recognises them as historical actors and knowing subjects can go further in centering their agentive capacity and avoiding empty claims of inclusion.

Challenges:

- Lived experience engagement can be synonymised with tokenistic, box-ticking and homogenising practices that are heavily shaped by fund-raising interests or donor pressures. One participant noted the conflicting 'challenge of responding to donor requests to report on lived experience … without requiring people to disclose experiences [of exploitation]'.

- Imposing a norm of survivor engagement was considered to be a risk, particularly where organisations or groups may otherwise have no interest in engaging with lived experience work thereby potentially diminishing the quality, safety and ethics of such engagements.

- It can lead to imposing particular labels on people with lived experience such as 'survivors', 'victims', 'experts by experience'. These can have the effect of shedding other identities people may have, therewith risking professionalisation of trauma and pain.
- Finally, one participant raised the risks of 'adultification', a situation where child survivors of exploitation are perceived and treated as professionals in their local communities as a result of engagement activities.

In summary, one of the grantees described the challenges faced by them as follows:

> ***"How do we make lived experience engagement meaningful? […] Whose space are we in? Are we speaking with or for people with lived experience? How we name people has a lot of power. How long is one a survivor, and what is one surviving from now? How can we go beyond supporting people to just survive, but also to thrive and self-actualise?"***

6. How to monitor, evaluate and learn from prevention programming?

When discussing evaluation of programming that is preventative and considering what works in terms of demonstrating impact effectively, it's not long before the intractable question arises of how it's possible to measure something that has never occurred; how to capture, as impact, evidence that something did not happen. Varied approaches have been taken to try and address this conundrum (both within and beyond the MSHT policy space) - some of which are explored below - and what's clear from all of these is that this hypothetical question is not well-suited to generate evaluative evidence. Posing the question in these terms is a distraction that draws effort and attention away from asking more feasible and well-crafted questions that can contribute to the evidence base and better inform future policy and practice.

Preventative MSHT work, at its core, is about interventions that either seek to minimise risks of exploitation and perpetration or those that seek to promote protective factors. Often, in practice, the two work in tandem. Recognising this is suggestive of key ways to measure prevention programming - are there signs that this activity has lessened a person or groups' exposure to risk factors or has this activity enhanced those factors which we know to protect a person or group from vulnerability to exploitation.

A common observation in reviews of evaluative evidence on anti-trafficking and modern slavery (MSHT) prevention programming is that there is limited evidence of what works. But equally crucial to reflect on is which questions we are currently asking as evaluators, programmers, researchers and policymakers. This section aims to offer an overview of discussions on the state of the current evidence base for MSHT prevention and reflect on trends in current approaches to monitoring and evaluation in this policy space considering the relative strengths and limitations of dominant and emergent strands of practice. Firstly, it will offer an accessible summary of discussions within scholarly and practice-based literature and then will move on to share patterns of reflection that emerged from MSPEC's hosted discussions with Modern Slavery Fund grantees in 2026.

State of the evidence base and lessons from adjacent policy areas

There is growing consensus across the anti-trafficking policy space that despite significant funding of MSHT prevention programming there has been a comparative dearth of investment in evaluation and the technical expertise needed to undertake this (Cockbain et al, 2025; Henderson et al, 2024; Sorensen et al, 2025). Addressing this under-investment is now recognised to be vital. It would contribute to the building of a robust evidence base that can better inform future policy and programming. In doing so it would also it would show the value of investments that have been continually questioned for their efficacy and others persistently documented to cause what are often characterised in programmatic terms as "unintended consequences" but which others argue there is now sufficient evidence to categorise as "foreseeable harms" (IPA 2024; Konrad quoted in Cockbain et al, 2025).

Given recognition of this broad need to improve MSHT programming's evidence-base well-targeted evaluative investments into any intervention type could fruitfully be made, though there are some suggestions that there is currently a skew towards scrutinising international labour migration or trafficking programmes above others (Henderson et al, 2024). Part of the issue here seems to be that MSHT policy - and its programme and funding streams - have been artificially sealed off and separated from other social issues. Human trafficking as a concept and a lived reality has "porous boundaries". Modern Slavery as an umbrella term encompasses a heterogenous range of social challenges (Cockbain et al, 2025). This is often presented as a weakness of the policy space - but in terms of evaluation there is an opportunity to pool knowledge here. Learning about how vulnerabilities are reduced or protective factors enhanced from monitoring and evaluation of programmes on poverty alleviation, child protection, online harms and abuse, labour rights, violence reduction and migration management amongst others is just one way of building a more robust evidence base to address extreme exploitations.

Taking this tack, a recent policy brief from IPA's Human Trafficking Research Initiative shared collated evidence of efficacy from evaluations of projects and programmes - largely using awareness-raising interventions - designed to address "trafficking adjacent" issues related to "unsafe or irregular migration" (Henderson et al, 2024). An over-emphasis on "awareness-raising" initiatives in the MSHT prevention programming space has been well-documented with persistent questions being raised about the value of such investments (Home Office MSF/CEP/Cecchinel, 2026; Moore, 2019; Quirk and Shih, 2019). IPA's review of evaluations in the intersecting policy space of "adult migration" highlights the need for well-designed approaches that gather detailed baseline data and go beyond self-reported changes in knowledge and attitude - to

track indictors of behaviour and practice. Poorly designed interventions lack sustainability and can have "unintended effects". But evaluators can struggle to capture unintended consequences, especially in areas affected by conflict or instability, where these are likely to be more numerous (Davidson et al. 2022). Most importantly though there is now a wealth of evidence that awareness-raising campaigns - those interventions that seek to improve people's knowledge of exploitative phenomena, risk factors, rights entitlements and capabilities to access support if at-risk - do not function effectively as standalone preventative interventions. There is agreement that to have discernible and sustained impacts these must be combined with interventions designed to address the more complex "economic, political-legal, and socio-cultural foundations" or root causes of exploitation (Bah et al., 2022; Boittin et al., 2026; Sorensen et al., 2025).

Critical reflection on what qualifies as rigorous evidence?

Another point of agreement across the MSHT sector is that rigorous evidence - and funding more of it - is vital to improve the quality and efficacy of projects and programmes. However, what constitutes rigorous evidence, and why, is a question that is rarely directly addressed but rather subsumed into statements of a particular evaluative approach's claimed markers of quality (King, 2013; Henderson et al., 2024, Zhang, 2025). The response to concerns around rigour by some key donors in the sector has been to fall back on established evaluative practices with proven track records of traction among policymaking audiences. Promotion of experimental and quasi-experimental methods have come to the fore here with Randomised Controlled Trials (or RCTs) particularly championed as a "gold standard" in robust evidence generation given their widespread usage to inform health policy and more recent transference as an increasingly popular mode of evaluation within social policy and economic development (Henderson et al, 2024; Banerjee and Duflo, 2012; Gibson and Sautman, nd). RCTs ability to address questions of causality and measure a project's efficacy against its original theory of change are attractive propositions but generating such evidence through this method is very much conditional and there are active debates which challenge the primacy of the RCT in the clinical space and beyond (Callréus, 2022; Castillo and Wagner, 2014; Zimmermann, 2016).

A key claim for proponents of RCTs is that their comparative tracking of outcomes for a treatment and control group - the former receives the intervention and the latter doesn't - can allow evaluators to attribute changes in participants' lives to the programme being tested. Crucially though, such claims are only credible if conditions are sufficiently similar so that variance in outcomes between the groups cannot be attributed to other factors. There are therefore many critics who, while recognising the value of RCTs when deployed within laboratory conditions, question this method's suitability for evaluation in

'real world' settings where a complex array of social, political and environmental factors could compromise the credibility of such a costly investment (Walsh et al., 2023; Castillo and Wagner, 2014; Zhang, 2025). There have also been concerns expressed about the ethical credentials of this evaluative mode, given its roots in nineteenth century experimentation and the questionable ethical, and in some cases legal, appropriateness of withholding a potentially beneficial intervention or investment from some individuals and communities on the grounds of experimentation (Esterman, 2020; Callréus, 2022).

What questions? Which frameworks?

The case for a plurality of evaluative approaches

A highlighting of these limitations is not offered to entirely discredited RCTs and propose their wholesale replacement with another method. Indeed, some useful ideas about how certain ethical challenges could be addressed within the scope of RCTs have been offered (Heard et al., 2017). Rather, it is vital to recognise that a narrowing of the evaluative landscape by labelling some methods rigourous (thereby implying others are not) is likely to develop an evidence-base with significant gaps and weaknesses and an inability to be able to address crucial questions. Many researchers implore practitioners and policymakers to recognise that all evaluative methods have strengths and limitations - and there is therefore real value to gain in a plurality of approaches and investments if the evidence base on how MSHT prevention programming works is to be significantly improved (Zimmermann, 2016; Cockbain, 2025). The UK government's Magenta Book (2026) is a useful starting point in considering a broad spectrum of evaluative approaches that may be suited to assess policies, programme and projects, with detail on the strengths and limitations of a range of both process and impact evaluations, theory-based impact evaluations, experimental and quasi-experimental evaluations, cost-benefit analysis and other mixed methods approaches. The Scottish government (2026) has added to this a toolkit specific to evaluation of prevention programming.

For MSF/ MSIF programmes attention to OECD evaluation criteria is a key consideration with some useful resources on both evaluation and monitoring offered by practitioner-led networks and academics. The Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in humanitarian action (or ALNAP) has developed a guide that defines, interprets and offers a framework for adapting the OECD evaluation criteria for use in practice (ALNAP, 2006; 2025). Other sources offer useful supplementary detail that tease out a variety of ways in which monitoring plans, processes, indicators and targets can be generated (Better Evaluation, 2026; Markiewicz and Patrick, 2016). These emphasise the importance of baseline assessments which enable effective tracking of project progress across selected areas of focus (IFRC has developed a useful explainer on baseline basics: IFRC, 2013).

A well-designed RCT can, in certain conditions, answer targeted evaluative questions such as "which components of this program work or do not work?" and "how effective was this program?" The benefits of being able to ask such targeted questions are clear in terms of project accountability and compliance. However, posing these types of closed questions offers little promise of capturing the value of ongoing programme adaptations that recognise changing circumstance and deeper knowledge of delivery contexts generated once work progresses. Similarly, asking if a project or one of its components works or does not work is unlikely to connect with the more complex and multilayered reality that interventions always have effects intended or otherwise and what 'works' for one group or individual may not 'work' for another.

Realist reviews and evaluations are gaining some traction in the MSHT evaluation space, and address some of these limitations while maintaining the ability to ask causal questions (Mak et al, 2023; Wright et al, 2026; Sidebottom et al, 2025; NORC, 2026). These pose a set of questions that seek to illuminate the complexity of ways in which a preventative programme can simultaneously work for different groups and individuals in varied contexts. It asks: How does this programme work? For whom, when and in what circumstances? And according to whose measures of success? Crucially for the MSHT programming space where there is a recognised norm of survivor engagement (Asquith, Kiconco and Balch, 2022) there is an emphasis on inclusivity of data types. Moreover, for an evaluation in this mode to be considered high-quality, extensive consultation with a broad range of stakeholders is promoted including project participants - which in this policy space includes lived experience experts, survivors and affected communities.

Emerging practice spotlight: Realist Evaluation

Realist evaluation was first developed by Pawson and Tilley's (1997) pioneering work, '*Realistic Evaluation*'. At the philosophical level, it is based on 'realism', a philosophical underpinning which understands that 'both the material and social worlds are 'real' and can have real effects; and that it is possible to work towards a closer understanding of what causes [social] change' (Westhorp et al., 2011:1). The word 'real' in realist evaluation indicates that the work is done in 'the real world'; 'realist' denotes that it is grounded in realism, and 'realistic' implies that it is 'a form of applied research' (ibid).

Realist evaluation is a theory-driven evaluation method that seeks to examine and understand 'how and why things work in different contexts rather than focusing on average outcomes' (Feeny et al., 2023:25) in a particular intervention programme. As such, this method does not simply ask the 'what worked' question, or whether (or not) a particular intervention was effective at a given point in time. More importantly, it is also concerned with

the generalisability and applicability of evaluation findings to other peoples and places (Sidebottom et al., 2025:70). In this context, the central evaluation question in realist evaluation is 'what works, for whom, in what circumstances, in what respects and how' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Westhorp, 2014). What this means is, whenever an intervention programme is implemented, it is testing a theory about the mechanisms and causes of change, even though 'the theory' might not be explicitly stated (Westhorp et al., 2011). Realist evaluation makes theories within a programme explicit and intelligible by proposing clear hypotheses about how, for whom and why an intervention might (or not) be effective (ibid). In this way, realist evaluation is 'based on programme theories that are (continually) developed through an iterative process' (Feeny et al., 2023:3).

'Programme theory', as Westhorp et al. (2011:2) explain, 'describes the theory in built into every programme'. The specific programme theory developed in the context of realist evaluation is understood within the 'Context-Mechanism-Outcome (CMO) configuration (Westhorp et al., 2011; Feeny et al., 2023). Within this configuration, initial theories are 'tested, refined or refuted during the evaluation (Feeny et al., 2023:25). In this way, CMO helps us understand 'how (causal) Mechanisms (M) interact with characteristics of a Context (C) to generate Outcomes (O) (ibid). However, as Feeny et al. (2023) also advise, it is important to stress that by 'mechanisms' in CMO, it does not mean the 'programme interventions themselves' but what people do in response to the resources that a programme provides' (Westhorp, 2011:5). In other words, this means the '(usually) invisible changes in people's reasoning, capacity and motivation that might arise from, or in response to, the resources or opportunities provided by the intervention (Westhorp, 2018). Drawing from Pawson and Tilley's (1997) idea of the 'generative mechanism' in realist evaluation, Holma and Kontinen (2011:186) note that the 'change' in realist evaluation is generated rather than caused by a particular intervention in a certain context.

Furthermore, realist evaluation is 'method-neutral' in its approach, in that it does not subscribe to single research method or data type (Feeny et al., 2023; Sidebottom et al., 2025). It uses both qualitative and quantitative data to test the programme theories. As Sidebottom et al. (2025:70) writes, realist evaluation uses 'a diverse range of data and methods (including RCTs) which help develop and refine policy-relevant theory'.

The following example is directly taken from Westhorp et al.'s (2011:1) work.

An apple a day keeps the doctor away

(Prof. Patricia Rogers, with permission)

The proverb 'an apple a day keeps the doctor away' can illustrate Realist Evaluation. A program logic model would see 'apples' and 'people in poor health' as inputs and apples being eaten as an immediate result (output). The short-term outcome would be improved nutritional status and the longer term outcome would be improved health status.

Realist Evaluation tries to investigate how the occurred change happened. In this case, did change occur because apples are red? Because apples contain vitamin C? Or because they are healthier than junk food? To test these different theories, it is important to distinguish the active ingredient that caused the change (for example vitamin C in case of the apples), quercetin (an anti-oxidant found in naturally-occurring red food colours) or substitution (in case of reduced junk food).

Realist Evaluation also asks for whom things work. Vitamin C will only work for those who have vitamin C deficiency and will cause a reduced incidence of scurvy. Increased levels of quercetin will result in reduced incidence of cancer, heart diseases and, for men, reduced inflammation of the prostate. Decreased consumption of junk food works for overweight people and will result in reductions of obesity-related health conditions. For whom it works, and what the exact outcome will be, depends on how it works. Outcomes therefore depend on both the mechanism and the context.

It is important to note that the 'active ingredient' (an analogy for 'program mechanism') does not mean 'an aspect of the program activity' (here, apples). If the change was due to vitamin C, one could cause the same effect by using oranges. In case of the red color, one could use red onions, or if the change was related to not eating junk food, one could use carrot sticks. Realist Evaluation is about finding out how things work. Once that is understood, a program can be tailored for a specific context: – a person working in an area with no apples knows whether to choose carrots or red onions to achieve their goals.

7. A mapping of current monitoring and evaluation practice for modern slavery prevention programming

The MSF workshop participants discussed diverse evaluation tools and methods in the modern slavery and human trafficking space including randomised control trials (RCTs), key informant interviews (KIIs), baseline/endline surveys, community-led evaluations, survivor-led evaluations and focus group discussions. They exchanged ideas about how certain prevention programming can be evaluated or what can be readily known and measured about intervention outcomes. They also shared how the growing interest in building evidence-based evaluation in the MSHT space has increased pressure on policymakers and practitioners at a time when funding in this policy area has been reduced.

Some common challenges in building reliable monitoring and evaluation mechanisms were raised. These included: costs of conducting evaluation, challenges of gathering, using and integrating different data types, pressures for small, modestly-resourced teams to secure dedicated monitoring and evaluation expertise, being responsive to changing situations within programme delivery contexts and challenges of learning openly from 'failure' where future funding is contingent on success. As one MSF grantee noted, 'projects are complex, [we] can often have the same conversation over and over'. This can result in knowledge gaps and create 'blind spots', hindering the development of reliable monitoring and evaluation systems. Other challenges included maintaining contact details of service users for multiple years to enable tracking of project impacts longitudinally, donors and policymakers asking for particular methods of evaluation that may or may not be well-suited to the intervention, and governments/donors desire for extensive rounds of evaluative data presented within 'polished, final' reports. It was highlighted that the latter can often push grantees to focus 'too much on positives' and deflect honest reflections about 'what has not worked'.

External, internal and hybrid evaluations: strengths and limitations

The group had in-depth discussions about external versus internal evaluation, including sharing learning about the benefits and limitations of each of these evaluation approaches. The below tables of a summary of key points made:

Working with external evaluators

Strengths	Limitations
Where well-resourced over the long-term, external evaluators can gain a good understanding of project aims and goals, and what project teams are trying to achieve.	External evaluators "can take a long time to get up to speed".
External evaluators, can bring a useful level of impartiality or detachment, technical expertise and independence that can help with identifying 'blind spots' in programme design or implementation and challenge internal project teams to review and change elements of their practice, where relevant.	If given only limited time and engagement with prevention project teams externals may not always understand the services in great enough detail to enable them to conduct effective evaluative work.
Can help small, low-resource anti-trafficking organisations interpret and make sense of large volumes of data.	Externals may not be able to access elements of service provision and internal datasets.
Can assist with effective presentation of evaluation findings from a range of perspectives, and different stakeholders.	External evaluators can sometimes 'lack nuanced insights and make scant references', and therefore just end up 'validating the programme'.
'Expert evaluators can go across the portfolio' and assist with effective 'outcome harvesting' to evidence impacts of prevention programmes.	How 'honest and critical' project teams may feel they can be with external evaluators when future funding is felt to be contingent on demonstrating success.

Working with internal evaluators

Strengths	Limitations
As insiders, internal evaluators possess greater understanding of specific prevention projects, their aims and objectives.	Internal evaluators may not be, or feel able to be, 'critical' of their organisation.
They may bring important linguistic and cultural competency skills that enable effective design of evaluation questions/surveys and facilitate good rapport for engagement with local stakeholders.	Those conducting internal evaluations may be more likely to work across multiple roles rather than having dedicated time for monitoring and evaluation and therefore may lack specialist, technical skills in data gathering certain evaluative methods or approaches.
They can play vital roles in data gathering and data protection that would not be available to an external evaluator. Their status may also grant them better access to evaluation data.	It may be difficult for internal evaluators to maintain a level of impartiality when gathering and analysing data.

Considering the strengths and limits of each evaluation method, participants underlined that the best approach to effective evaluative work would be to put together internal programme teams and external evaluations—what was described as 'hybrid or mixed' evaluation. They suggested that for hybrid/mixed evaluations to work well, policymakers should allocate portfolio level resource as well as asking organisations to apportion 'time and resource carved out from internal project teams to support external evaluators to get up to speed'. One participant shared established practice in adjacent policy spaces of tendering prevention programmes and corresponding external evaluations simultaneously, which enables internal project teams and external evaluators to work together throughout the lifespan of a project designing and conducing baseline, mid-term and endline evaluations.

Quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods approaches: strengths and limitations

Participants also discussed about the benefits and limits of quantitative and qualitative data in evaluation practice. Some participants shared that quantitative data can be more useful when conducting micro- and open-response surveys for running campaigns. Quantitative data gathered in this way can be more suited to track and analyse the impact and reach of a prevention campaign. For example, one participant shared that they conduct micro-surveys to analyse policymaker connection with their prevention programme—that is, policymakers showing interest in their campaign and coming to them for more information. Despite these benefits, the participants recognised challenge of using quantitative data, especially pertaining to representativeness. They acknowledged that quantitative data can be 'restrictive' and it is hard to know whether it is a true representation of large groups and sample sizes.

Qualitative data was considered to be more suited to evaluate prevention programming related to measuring 'behaviour change'. Here, qualitative narratives - alongside and explaining quantitative measures - were flagged as an effective tool for engaging governments. These were described by one participant as 'gold dust' in evaluative data. Another participant noted that qualitative data is most useful in communicating 'most significant change' stories—that is, stories of positive change participants achieve due to engagement with a prevention programme. Developed by Rick Davies and Jess Dart (2005), the 'most significant change' story is a qualitative technique used to gather direct or first-person testimonies during programme evaluation. Through this technique, programme teams and evaluators capture the specific changes participants most valued as a result of a programming intervention.

However, some concern was expressed that exclusively using qualitative data in evaluative work would lack a clear identification and communication of casual links. For example, participants explained that it is difficult to present examples of individuals whose behavioural change can be solely attributed to project activities. There was clear consensus that, a mixed method approach (combining qualitative and quantitative data) would be best for evaluation in this programming area. A mixed method approach would help deal with and process different data types and evaluate the 'combined impacts' of project activities. It was discussed that the strength of a mixed method approach lies in its data-neutrality: or openness to varied data types.

Participants agreed that doing effective evaluative work in many ways hinges on selection of well-suited data gathering 'process[es]', monitoring and evaluation 'model[s]' that can open opportunities for genuine reflection. As

one participant noted, in doing an evaluation 'you are having a discussion of value [within a] project'. Holding on to this bigger picture question of value (beyond solely financial metrics) can yield incredibly valuable insights generated within spaces of monitoring and evaluation that can reshape practice beyond the bounds of a single project.

The desire for more robust evaluation needs to be placed alongside longstanding complaints on the part of those implementing international development interventions around excessive (and often inefficient or conflicting) demands for reporting of impacts (Gaston 2017). Donors are naturally focused on reporting results and outcomes but this can sometimes be at the expense of sharing learning, which often takes place continuously and from quite early in an intervention (Vähämäki et al. 2026). The reduction in aid funding and the shift in approach of countries like the UK from 'donor' to 'investor' raises additional questions about changing government priorities re: outcomes (ICAI 2026). Participants in the MSF workshop reflected on the specific challenges of reporting on community engagement and prevention of MSHT, an area they said has not always been a top priority for donors. They welcomed the increasing interest in these areas and the willingness of policymakers to listen to their insights as practitioners, but argued longer timescales were needed to achieve results on prevention. They commented that it was sometimes more difficult to learn from what doesn't work and contribute to a robust evidence-base when there is so much focus in evaluation on capturing 'successes'. They also talked about the challenges specific to the contexts they are working in which may be more prone to conflict and instability meaning any indicators needed to be broad and adaptive to respond in a flexible way to changing circumstances.

8. Recommendations for improved design, monitoring and evaluation of MSHT prevention programming

We offer here a set of priority recommendations for prevention programming practitioners, funders, donors, policymakers and portfolio managers as well as researchers and evaluators involved in design, evaluation and review of practice in the MSHT policy and programming space.

These are organised into two broad areas of practice: Firstly, holistic approaches to prevention programming with an emphasis on recommendations for overarching strategy, design, planning and implementation; Secondly recommendations for effective monitoring and evaluation of MSHT prevention programming.

In recognition that effective implementation of many of the below actions cuts across these stakeholder groups we are offering them in a tabular format indicating priority and secondary responsibility for taking these recommendations forward.

	Recommendations	Who needs to take action: X indicates primary responsibility X indicates secondary responsibility			
		Funders/ donors	Managers/ policymakers	Practitioners	Researchers/ Evaluators
Holistic approaches to design of MSHT prevention programming					
1	Allocate sufficient resource to implement, monitor and evaluate selected prevention approach(es) robustly - including prior to intervention allowing time for essential preparatory work.	X	X		
2	Cost in necessary specialist expertise at all relevant stages, when designing the programme approach and its evaluation.		X	X	X
3	Promote use of preventative strategies, monitoring and evaluation frameworks that value and facilitate inclusion of lived experience expertise at multiple levels of project or programme operation as well as portfolio level design and assessment. This should be done in a way that respects individual and group ambitions, preferences and safeguarding needs.	X	X	X	X

	Recommendations	Funders/ donors	Managers/ policymakers	Practitioners	Researchers/ Evaluators
4	Create and resource a trusted community of practice, run by an independent contractor. This could include a series of short online sessions and one annual in-person event to share promising practices, challenges and limitations of selected prevention programming strategies and their monitoring and evaluation.	X	X		
5	Ensure choice of prevention strategy/ies or model(s) is based on knowledge and research of previous examples and/or experiences using these models or approaches.			X	
6	Ensure choice of prevention programming strategy is well-suited to balance relevance to context of delivery with ability to address affected communities' and funders' priority outcomes.	X	X	X	
	Monitoring and evaluation of MSHT prevention programming				
7	Consider the hybrid model of evaluation - i.e. tendering an external evaluation of prevention programmes across the MSF/MSIF portfolio alongside tender of the programmes themselves.	X	X		
8	Work towards development of harmonized portfolio level indicators with MSF/MSIF grantees. These should be flexible enough to capture context-relevant outcomes with integrity but aim towards enabling comparable portfolio level data points.		X	X	X
9	Ensure choice of monitoring and evaluation frameworks or model(s) - as well as constituent tools and methods - is well-suited to assessing the selected prevention programming strategy (e.g. PHA, HRBA, SEM, CBA).		X	X	X

	Recommendations	Funders/ donors	Managers/ policymakers	Practitioners	Researchers/ Evaluators
10	Ensure choice of monitoring and evaluation frameworks or model(s) is based on knowledge and research of previous examples and/or experiences using these approaches.			X	X
11	Maintain an openness to diverse evaluative frameworks for assessing the value, efficacy and workings of MSHT prevention programming. Concerns about rigour should be focussed on defining appropriate standards relevant to each evaluation type and consistent reporting across project communications in order to contribute effectively to the evidence base.	X	X	X	X
12	Use learnings and evaluations from adjacent policy areas - beyond programming labelled as 'anti/human trafficking' and 'modern slavery' to inform MSHT prevention programming		X	X	X
13	Avoid policy-driven slippage in reporting metrics across the timespan of a project to ensure validity of measures. This should be clearly distinguished from openness to adaptations driven by delivery context - e.g. in crisis or conflicted affected areas.	X	X	X	
14	Promote a culture of learning from failures through monitoring and evaluation processes focussed on critical reflection and contribution to the evidence base rather than merely valuing compliance.	X	X	X	X

9. Bibliography

Agyemang, E.O., Haggerty, K.P., Guttmannova, K., Spencer, M.S. and Spearmon, M.L. (2023). Community-Based Child Labour Trafficking Prevention in Ghana: A Rights-Based Approach. Journal of Human Trafficking. Pp.1-18. https://www.tandfonline.com/action/showCitFormats?doi=10.1080/23322705.2023.2259785

ALNAP (2006) Evaluating humanitarian action using the OECD DAC criteria. London: ALNAP/ODI. Available at: https://alnap.org/help-library/resources/evaluating-humanitarian-action-using-the-oecd-dac-criteria/

ALNAP (2025) Adapting the OECD Criteria for the evaluation of humanitarian action. An ALNAP guide. London: ALNAP/ODI Global. Available at: https://alnap.org/help-library/resources/evaluation-criteria-guide/

Alonge. O and Brooks M.B. (2025.) Implementation science derived from low- and middle-income countries is essential for advancing global health. BMC Glob Public Health. 22;3(1):84. doi: 10.1186/s44263-025-00206-1. PMID: 40983963; PMCID: PMC12452020.

Altare, C. et al. (2022). "Measuring results of humanitarian action: adapting public health indicators to different contexts," Conflict and health, 16(1). Available at: https://doi.org/10.1186/s13031-022-00487-5.

Anderson, B. (2012). Where's the Harm in That? Immigration Enforcement, Trafficking, and the Protection of Migrants Rights. American Behavioural Scientist. 56(9),pp.1241-1257. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764212443814

Andrews, N.C.Z., Pepler, D.J. and Motz, M. (2019). "Research and Evaluation With Community-Based Projects: Approaches, Considerations, and Strategies," The American journal of evaluation, 40(4), pp. 548–561. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214019835821

Ash, C., and Otiende, S. (2023). Meaningful Engagement of People with Lived Experience: A framework and assessment for increasing lived experience leadership across the spectrum of engagement. Global Fund to End Modern Slavery and National Survivor Network – Cast, Washington DC

Asquith, W. Kiconco, A. and Balch, A. (2022.) A review of current promising practices in the engagement of people with lived experience to address modern slavery and human trafficking. Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre.

Azzopardi, C., Arruda, A., Miguna, A. and Bruder, R. (2024). Child Sex Trafficking: A model of survivor inclusion and survivor-informed practice. Child Protection and Practice. (3),pp.1-7. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chipro.2024.100074

Bah, T.L. et al. (2023). "Can information and alternatives to irregular migration reduce 'backway' migration from The Gambia?," Journal of development economics, 165. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2023.103153

Banerjee, A.V. and Duflo, E. (2012). Poor economics : a radical rethinking of the way to fight global poverty. New York: Public Affairs

Berman, G. (2008). Undertaking a Human Rights-Based Approach: Lessons for Policy, Planning and Programming – Documenting Lessons Learned for the Human Rights-Based Approach to Programming: An Asia-Pacific Perspective. Bangkok: UNESCO Bangkok.

Better Evaluation (2026) C4D: Develop planning documents (evaluation plans and M&E frameworks). The Better Evaluation Knowledge Platform. Global Evaluation Initiative [online]. Available at: https://www.betterevaluation.org/frameworks-guides/communication-for-development/tasks/manage/develop-planning-documents-evaluationresearch-plans-me-frameworks

Boittin, M.L. et al. (2026). "Growing Awareness to Reduce Labor Abuse: An Experimental Test of a Migrant Domestic Workers' Rights Awareness Campaign," The Journal of law & economics, 69(2), pp. 213–249. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1086/737771.

BRAC Europe. (2026) Climate Change: Scaling locally led initiatives to help communities adapt and thrive in the face of climate impacts. Available at: https://www.braceurope.org/about-us/

Broad, R. and Gadd, D. (2023) Demystifying modern slavery / Rosemary Broad and David Gadd. Abingdon, Oxon ; Routledge. Available at: https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429053986.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1996). The ecology of human development experiments by nature and design. Cambridge, Massachusetts ; Harvard University Press

Brouwer, J. (2025). Human Mobility and Vulnerability to Trafficking in Persons in the Context of Climate Change, Environmental Degradation, and Disaster. Geneva, IOM.

Bryant. H. (2021). Partnership and collective impact in the field of human trafficking: a review of evidence on what works. . Available at : https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/media/livacuk/politics/research/FINAL,A,broad,review,on,partnership,and,collective,impact,in,the,field,of,human,trafficking.pdf

Callréus, T. (2022). "The Randomised Controlled Trial at the Intersection of Research Ethics and Innovation: The RCT at the Intersection of Research Ethics and Innovation," Pharmaceutical medicine, 36(5), pp. 287–293. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s40290-022-00438-8.

Castillo, N.M. and Wagner, D.A. (2014). "Gold Standard? The Use of Randomized Controlled Trials for International Educational Policy, Comparative education review, 58(1), pp. 166–173. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1086/674168.

CARE International. (2026). Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis Handbook. Available at: https://careclimatechange.org/cvca/

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024). Violence Prevention: About the Public Health Approach to Violence Prevention. CDC. Available at: https://www.cdc.gov/violence-prevention/about/about-the-public-health-approach-to-violence-prevention.html

Christmas, H. and Srivastava, J. (2019). Public Health Approaches in Policing: A Discussion Paper. Public Health England/College of Policing. Available at: https://assets.college.police.uk/s3fs-public/2021-02/public-health-approaches.pdf

Clarke, M.C. Perpetrator-Centric Strategies for Addressing Modern Slavery, Journal of Human Rights Practice, 13(2), pp. 407–425. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1093/jhuman/huab036

Cockbain, E., Sidebottom, A. and Zhang, S.X. (2025). Evaluating Anti-Trafficking Interventions: Critical reflections and lessons from the field. UCL Press

Davidson, A. A., M. D. Young, J. E. Leake, and P. O'Connor. 2022. "Aid and Forgetting the Enemy: A Systematic Review of the Unintended Consequences of International Development in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations." Evaluation and Program Planning 92: 102099

Davies, R. and Dart, J. (2005). The 'Most Significant Change' (MSC) Technique: A guide to its Use. Available at: https://www.mande.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/MSCGuide.pdf

Esterman, A.(2020). 'The fascinating history of clinical trials' The Conversation.. Available at: https://theconversation.com/the-fascinating-history-of-clinical-trials-139666

#Eval4Action. (2026). 7 takeaways: Is evaluation key to realizing universal human rights? . Available at: https://www.eval4action.org/post/7-takeaways-is-evaluation-key-to-realizing-universal-human-rights

Feeny, S., Westhorp, G., & Williams, E. (2023). Understanding sustainable outcomes in international development. Towards a realist evaluation framework. Journal of International Development, (35)1:21-42.

Free The Slaves. (2017). Community Based Model for Fighting Slavery.. Available at: https://freetheslaves.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Community-BasedModelforFightingSlaverybooklet-web-September-2017-update.pdf

Gardner, A., Northall, P. and Brewster, B. (2021). Building Slavery-free Communities: A Resilience Framework. Journal of Human Trafficking. (7)3,pp.338-353. https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2020.1777828

Gaston, E. (2017) 'Harmonizing Donor Reporting', GPPI (Global Public Policy Institute). Available at: https://gppi.net/assets/Gaston__2017__Harmonizing_Donor_Reporting.pdf

Gibson, S. and Sautman, A. (nd). Introduction to randomized evaluations. J-Pal: The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab. Available at: https://www.povertyactionlab.org/resource/introduction-randomized-evaluations

Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women. (1999). Human Rights and Trafficking in Persons: A Handbook. . Available at: https://gaatw.org/resources/publications/903-human-rights-and-trafficking-in-persons-a-handbook

Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women. (2000). Human Rights in Practice: A guide to assist trafficked women and children. Available at: https://www.gaatw.org/resources/publications/904-human-rights-in-practice-a-guide-to-assist-trafficked-women-and-children

Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women. n.d. Principles. Available at: https://www.gaatw.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=94&Itemid=47

Gov.uk (2025) UK- Home Office Modern Slavery Fund. UK Government Development Tracker. [online] Available at: https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/programme/GB-GOV-6-01/summary

Heard, K. et al. (2017). Real-world challenges to randomization and their solutions. J-Pal North America.

Henderson, S. et al. (2024). Human Trafficking Prevention: Improving Interventions to Combat Forced Labor and Human Trafficking: Lessons from rigorous evidence. Innovations for Poverty Action: HTRI. Available at:https://poverty-action.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/HTRI-Prevention-Evidence-Review-Updated.pdf

HM Treasury. (2026). Magenta Book: Central Government Guidance on Evaluation, UK Government. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-magenta-book

Holma, K., & Kontinen, T. (2011). Realist evaluation as an avenue to learning for development NGOs. Evaluation, (17)2:181-192.

Holmes, J. (2022). What is a Population Health Approach? The King's Fund . Available at: https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/long-reads/population-health-approach

Home Office MSF/CEP/Cecchinel, (2026) Modern Slavery Fund internal review 2022 to 2025. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/modern-slavery-fund-internal-review-2022-to-2025/modern-slavery-fund-internal-review-2022-to-2025

Houston, J.D., Odahl-Ruan, C. and Shattel, M. (2015). Exploring Community-Based Advocacy Work in Against Human Trafficking in the U.S. Global Journal of Community Psychology Practice. 6(2),pp.1-17.

ICAI. (2020). The UK's approach to tackling modern slavery through the aid programme, report by the Independent Commission for Aid Impact, 14th October 2020. Available at:https://icai.independent.gov.uk/review/the-uks-approach-to-tackling-modern-slavery-through-the-aid-programme/

ICAI (2026). 'Watchdog warns of mounting global pressures as UK reshapes its approach to aid', 19th May 2026, Independent Commission for Aid Impact. Available at: https://icai.independent.gov.uk/watchdog-warns-of-mounting-global-pressures-as-uk-reshapes-its-approach-to-aid/

IFRC - International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2013) Baseline Basics. Planning and Evaluation Department (PED), Geneva. Available at: https://www.betterevaluation.org/sites/default/files/Baseline_Basics_2013.pdf

Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner. (2025). Report: Enhancing modern slavery prevention within the homelessness sector in the UK. Available at: https://www.antislaverycommissioner.co.uk/news-insights/report-enhancing-modern-slavery-prevention-within-the-homelessness-sector-in-the-uk/

IOM Handbook. (2019). On protection and assistance for migrants vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse. IOM. Available at: https://publications.iom.int/books/iom-handbook-migrants-vulnerable-violence-exploitation-and-abuse

Johnstone, K. (2018). The Power of Local Communities in the Fight Against Human Trafficking. U.S. Department of State. Available at: https://2017-2021.state.gov/the-power-of-local-communities-in-the-fight-against-human-trafficking/

Jones, M., Kimberlee, R., Deave, T. and Evans, S. (2013). The Role of Community Centre-based Arts, Leisure and Social Activities in Adult Wellbeing and Healthy Life-styles. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health. 10(5),pp.1948-1962.

Jordan, A. D. (2002). Human rights or wrongs? The struggle for a rights-based response to human trafficking in human beings. Gender and Development. 10(1), pp. 28-37. https://doi.org/10.1080/13552070215891

Kempadoo, K. (2007). The war on trafficking in the Caribbean. Race and Class. 49(2),pp.79-85. https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396807049002060 2

Kilanowski, J. F. (2017). Breadth of the Socio-Ecological Model, Journal of Agromedicine, 22:4, 295-297, DOI: 10.1080/1059924X.2017.1358971

King, E. (2013). A Critical Review of Community-Driven Development Programmes in Conflict-Affected Contexts. IRC/DFID.

Kousoulis, A.A and Goldie, I. (2021). A Visualization of a Socio-Ecological Model for Urban Public Mental Health Approaches. Front. Public Health 9:654011. doi: 10.3389/fpubh.2021.654011

Long, E., Reid, J., McLeigh, J., Stoklosa, H., Felix, E. and Scott, T. (2018). Preventing Human Trafficking Using Data-driven, Community-based Strategies. Available at: https://www.communitypsychology.com/preventing-human-trafficking/

Markiewicz, A. and Patrick, I. (2016) Developing monitoring and evaluation frameworks. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Mcloughlin, C. and Walton, O. (2012). Measuring Results: Participatory tools and approaches. Governance and Social Development Resource Centre - GSDRC . Available at: https://gsdrc.org/topic-guides/measuring-results/participatory-tools-and-approaches/

Maggetti, N. (2025). A British Approach to Colonial Development? Community Development Rhetoric in British Late Colonialism (1940s-1950s). Itinerario. 49,pp.423-236. doi:10.1017/S016511532510020X

Mak, J. et al. (2023). Psychosocial interventions to improve the mental health of survivors of human trafficking: a realist review. Lancet Psychiatry. Jul;10(7): 557-574. doi: 10.1016/S2215-0366(23)00105-0

Miller, A., Dassen, v. J., Rattray, S. and O'Connell S. (2025). The Human Rights-Based Approach to Development Planning: HRBA Toolkit. United Nations Development Programme. Available at: https://www.undp.org/publications/human-rights-based-approach-development-programming-hrba-toolkit

Moore, E. (2019). Rich in funds but short on facts: the high cost of human trafficking awareness campaigns, Open Democracy. Available at: https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/rich-in-funds-but-short-on-facts-high-cost-of-human-trafficking-a/

National Survivor Network. (2023). Care, Self-determination, and Safety: A Community-centred, Public Health Approach to Prevent Human Trafficking. Available at: https://nationalsurvivornetwork.org/document/care-self-determination-and-safety-a-community-centered-public-health-approach-to-preventing-human-trafficking/

Neal, J.W. and Neal, Z.P. (2013). "Nested or Networked? Future Directions for Ecological Systems Theory," Social development (Oxford, England), 22(4), pp. 722-737. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/sode.12018

NIHR Health Determinants Research Collaboration. (2026). Online learning resources - The stages of research and evaluation.Available at: https://www.evidenceandlearning.org.uk/what-we-do/learning-development/online-learning-resources/

NORC. (2026). Ideas in action: Evaluation results of a pilot program tackling exploitative child domestic work in Liberia. Freedom Fund.

Nyamu-Musembi, C. and Cornwall, A. (2004). What is the "rights-based approach" all about? Perspectives from International Development Agencies. IDS Working Paper 234. Sussex: Institute of Development Studies.

Pawson, R., & Tilley, N. (1997). Realist Evaluation. London: SAGE.

Preble, K.M., Nichols, A. and Owens, M. (2023). Assets and Logic: Proposing an Evidence-Based Strategic Partnership Model for Anti-Trafficking Response. Journal of Human Trafficking. 9(2),pp.131-147.

Quirk, J. and Shih, E. (2019). Introduction: do the hidden costs outweigh the practical benefits of human trafficking awareness campaigns? Open Democracy. Available at : https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/introduction-do-hidden-costs-outweigh-practical-benefits-of-huma/

RE-AIM. (2026). Re-aim: Improving Public Health Relevance and Population Health Impact - A Tour of Resources [online] Available at: https://re-aim.org/resources-and-tools/

Roy, L. (2024). Human trafficking prevention needs a public health approach. Forbes. Available at: Human Trafficking Prevention Needs A Public Health Approach.

Rural Health Information Hub - RHI hub. (2026). Toolkits and Guides. [online] including details of the PRECEDE-PROCEED model. Available at: https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/health-promotion/2/theories-and-models/precede-proceed

Sarkar, S. (2024). Long-Term Rehabilitation for Human Trafficking Survivors: The Case for Community-Based Models over Shelter Homes. Social Science Research Network. https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4903409

Scottish Government. (2025). Preventing Human Trafficking and Exploitation: Evidence Review. Available at: https://www.gov.scot/publications/preventing-human-trafficking-exploitation-evidence-review/

Scottish Government Prevention Unit. (2026). The Prevention Toolkit. Scottish Government. Available at: https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/research-and-analysis/2026/06/prevention-toolkit/documents/prevention-toolkit/prevention-toolkit/govscot%3Adocument/prevention-toolkit.pdf

Scottish Human Rights Commission. n.d. Human Rights Based Approach. Available at: https://www.scottishhumanrights.com/projects-and-programmes/human-rights-based-approach/

Sidebottom, A., Cockbain, E., & Tilley, N. (2025). Realist evaluation for trafficking. In: Ella, C., Aiden, S., & Sheldon, X. Z. (Eds). Evaluating Anti-trafficking Interventions: Critical reflections and lessons from the field. London: UCL Press. pp.69-89.

Slatez. (2026). Why is Community-Based Research Important for Policy Planning? Available at: https://slatez.org/community-based-research-policy/

Sorensen, J. et al. (2025). Evidence for Impact: Insights from the Human Trafficking Research Initiative. Innovations for Poverty Action: HTRI. Available at: https://poverty-action.org/sites/default/files/2025-11/HTRI-Evidence-for-Impact-Brief.pdf

Such, E., Aminu, H., Barnes, A., Hayes, K., Ariyo, M. D., and Brierley, R. (2022). Prevention of adult sexual and labour exploitation in the UK: What does and could work? Oxford: Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre.

Such, E. et al. (2024). "A public health approach to modern slavery in the United Kingdom: a codeveloped framework," Public health (London), 232, pp. 146–152. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2024.04.004.

Such, E. and Aminu, H. (2024b). The prevention of adult exploitation and trafficking: A synthesis of research commissioned by the Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre. MSPEC. Available at: https://www.modernslaverypec.org/resources/prevention-adult-synthesis

Such, E. et al. (2026). "Using Systems Thinking to Advance the Prevention of Human Trafficking: Examples and a Call to Action," Social sciences (Basel), 15(7), p. 474. Available at: https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci15070474.

Sy, A. (2025). Roots of Resilience: Stories of Livelihoods Offering a Way Out of Irregular Migration and its Risks in Ethiopia. IOM Ethiopia. Available at: https://ethiopia.iom.int/stories/roots-resilience-stories-livelihoods-offering-way-out-irregular-migration-and-its-risks-ethiopia

The Anti-Trafficking Working Group. (2010). Wrong Kind of Victim? One year on: an analysis of UK measures to protect trafficked persons. Available at: https://www.antislavery.org/reports/wrong-kind-of-victim-one-year-on-an-analysis-of-uk-measures-to-protect-trafficked-persons/ .

Third World Network Berhad. (1998). Human Rights Approaches to Development. Available at: https://twn.my/title/hrdev-cn.htm

Thompson, A., Vagge, C., and Tiburcio-Carneiro, M. (2025). 'Framework of Analysis for Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking: A Tool for Prevention' Global Commission on Modern Slavery. Available at: https://www.modernslaverycommission.org/gcms_prevention_framework.pdf

UNICEF. (2024). Brief on The Socio Ecological Model. UNICEF. Available at: https://knowledge.unicef.org/mental-health-and-psychosocial-support/resource/unicefs-brief-social-ecological-model

United Nations Development Group. (2003). The Human Rights Based Approach to Development Cooperation Towards Common Understanding Among UN Agencies. Available at: https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/6959-The_Human_Rights_Based_Approach_to_Development_Cooperation_Towards_a_Common_Understanding_among_UN.pdf

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – UNESCO. (2009). A Guide for Monitoring and Evaluating Community-Based Projects. Paris. UNESCO. Available at: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000186231

United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. (2011). Human Rights based approach to trafficking. Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2011/11/human-rights-based-approach-trafficking

United Nations Office of the High Commissioner (2002) Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking. New York ; Geneva : UN. [ST/]HR/PUB/02/3. Available here: https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/478074?v=pdf

United Nations Office of the High Commissioner. (2014). Fact Sheet No. 36: Human Rights and Human Trafficking. Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/en/publications/fact-sheets/fact-sheet-no-36-human-rights-and-human-trafficking

US HHS/ CDC. (2011). Introduction to program evaluation for public health programs: A self-study guide. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

US HHS - Department of Health and Human Services. (2024). National Human Trafficking Prevention Framework: A Public Health Approach to Preventing Human Trafficking. HHS.

Vähämäki, J., Hilgert, A., Wolf, K., Bruder, M. (2026). No need to wait for reporting - Examining learning from results-based management practices in development cooperation, World Development, Volume 206, 2026, 107451, ISSN 0305-750X, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2026.107451

Walsh, C., Razey, K., Sheehan, K., Farrington, C,. Hazelden, C., Scott, D., Anderson, P., and Caldwell, F. (2023). Characteristics of Public Health Approaches for Youth Violence Prevention (PH-VP): A Rapid Review. Belfast: Queens University Belfast

Weil, M. (2023). 'Community-Based Social Planning: Theory and Practice'. In Marie, W. and Michael. R. and Mary, L. O. (eds), The Handbook of Community Practice (pp.265-298). Sage Publications.

Westhorp, G. (2014). Realist Impact Evaluation: An Introduction. ODI Methods Lab Publication. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Westhorp, G. (2018). Understanding mechanisms in realist evaluation and research. In: Ana, M., Joanne, G., & Nick, E. (Eds). Doing Realist Research. Los Angeles: SAGE. Pp.41-58.

Westhorp, G., Prins, E., Kusters, C., Hultink, M., Guijt, I., & Brouwers, J. (2011). Realist Evaluation: An overview. Wageningen: Wageningen University Centre for Development and Innovation.

WHO, (2023). Addressing human trafficking through health systems: a scoping review. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

White, F. (2020). Application of Disease Etiology and Natural History to Prevention in Primary Health Care: A Discourse. Med Princ Pract. 29(6):501-513. doi: 10.1159/000508718. Epub 2020 May 18. PMID: 32422632; PMCID: PMC7768156.

Wijers, M. (2021). How we got here: the story of the Palermo protocol on trafficking. Open Democracy. Available at: How we got here: the story of the Palermo protocol on trafficking

Wright, N., Such E., Ahmed, N. and Ariyo, D. (2026). A rapid, realist-informed review of safehouse provision for survivors of modern slavery and human trafficking. Modern Slavery Policy and Evidence Centre.

Yoo EH, Boyle EH. (2015) 'National Human Trafficking Initiatives: Dimensions of Policy Diffusion'. Law Soc Inq. 40(3):631-663. doi: 10.1111/lsi.12115.

Zhang, S.X. (2025). ' Use of randomised controlled trials to evaluate anti-trafficking programmes' in E. Cockbain, A. Sidebottom and S.X. Zhang (eds) Evaluating Anti-trafficking Interventions. UCL Press.

Zimmerman, C. et al. (2016). "Rigged or rigorous? Partnerships for research and evaluation of complex social problems: Lessons from the field of violence against women and girls," Journal of public health policy, 37(Suppl 1), pp. 95–109. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1057/s41271-016-0006-3.

Zimmerman, C., Mak, J., Pocock, N.S. and Kiss, L. (2021). Human Trafficking: Results of a 5-Year Theory-Based Evaluation of Interventions to Prevent Trafficking of Women from South Asia. Front: Public Health. [Online]. 64 (8) doi: 10.3389/fpubh.2021.645059

MODERN SLAVERY & HUMAN RIGHTS | POLICY & EVIDENCE CENTRE

Led by the University of Oxford

The Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre (the PEC) at the University of Oxford exists to enhance understanding of modern slavery and transform the effectiveness of laws and policies designed to address it.

The Centre funds and co-produces high quality research with a focus on policy impact, and brings together academics, policymakers, businesses, civil society and survivors to collaborate on solving this global challenge.

The Centre is a consortium of the Universities of Oxford, Liverpool and Hull, and is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) on behalf of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

pec.office@humanities.ox.ac.uk

www.modernslaverypec.org

Authors: Dr Wendy Asquith, Dr Tesfalem Yemane and Professor Alex Balch

Published by: Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre, University of Oxford.

Publication date: October 2026

©2026, Dr Wendy Asquith, Dr Tesfalem Yemane and Professor Alex Balch

This work is openly licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence CC BY 4.0.

This work was supported by the Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre, University of Oxford [reference number: R90817/CN001] from its grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council [grant number AH/T012412/2].

Identification number of the publication: PEC/2026/20

Our partners

University of Hull | Wilberforce Institute

University of Liverpool

Bonavero Institute of Human Rights

BICL British Institute of International and Comparative Law

Funded by

UKRI Arts and Humanities Research Council