Opening the "black box" of protection and reintegration interventions for trafficking survivors in Myanmar

A realist-focused evaluation of World Vision's Anti-trafficking in Persons (A/TIP) Program

Aye Thiri Kyaw, Cathy Zimmerman, Aye Myat Thi, Afke Jager

Opening the "black box" of protection and reintegration interventions for trafficking survivors in Myanmar: A realist-focused evaluation of World Vision's Anti-trafficking in Persons (A/TIP) Program
(Working paper)

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Abstract

This study evaluates how World Vision's (WV) Anti-Trafficking in Persons (A/TIP) programming aimed to strengthen protection and reintegration services for survivors of trafficking in Myanmar. It employs a realist evaluation approach to examine A/TIP activities between 2019-2021. We analysed WV's administrative data and conducted interviews with survivors and case managers to identify how core elements of the programs influence the outcomes, and consider contextual influences. The study findings inform a program-specific Theory of Change and articulate WV's program model in detailed and replicable ways, which can be used for future programming and potential adaptation for other settings.

Keywords: Trafficking interventions, realist evaluation, survivors of trafficking, forced labor, reintegration, well-being, empowerment, Myanmar

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Introduction

Globally, there are approximately 49.6 million people in forced labour and forced marriage. However, measuring accurate estimates of the trafficked victims is challenging due to the clandestine nature of human trafficking (ILO, Walk Free Foundation, & IOM, 2022). Trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling remain pressing issues throughout the Southeast Asia Region. The search for economic opportunities is a driving factor of human trafficking, as individuals from less developed countries migrate to more developed countries in search of better livelihood opportunities. Women and girls are common targets for sex trafficking in many parts of the world (UNODC, 2019). This study draws on the United Nations (UN) protocol's definition of "Trafficking in persons": "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation."

Studies indicate that survivors of trafficking suffer high levels of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Hossain et al. 2010; Kiss et al. 2015). In addition to physical and psychological poor health outcomes, it is not uncommon for survivors to be charged with criminal violations related to, for example, illegal border crossing, prostitution, or petty crimes (ICAT, 2020). To date, evidence on "what works" to prevent human trafficking or address the consequences of these abuses is scarce (Kiss & Zimmerman,2019).

Antitrafficking interventions

Since the early 2000s, a significant number of programs and policies have been developed and implemented to prevent and combat human trafficking. At international, regional, and national policy levels, government and non-governmental organizations have established plans of action, conducted trainings, developed policy tools, and carried out a variety of other activities to counter trafficking in persons (Bryant & Landman, 2020). International non-governmental organizations (INGOs) have worked to produce evidence on trafficking, conduct anti-trafficking awareness-raising, engage in advocacy, and implement programs to help people escape human trafficking and provide sustainable solutions for survivors to be re-integrated (Bryant & Landman, 2020).

The use of anti-trafficking awareness-raising programming is common. These interventions focus on providing information to promote safe, informed migration, with particular attention to women's empowerment and rights (Kiss et al. 2021; Zimmerman et al. 2021; Terres des Hommes, 2012; Connolly, 2020). In addition to awareness raising and capacity building activities, anti-trafficking interventions include advocacy to strengthen laws and policies or technical support to the governments (CPCR Foundation, 2006; UNODC, 2013; Terres des Hommes' 2012). Supporting survivors with direct assistance has been central to many anti-human trafficking interventions. These types of interventions typically include training for front line service providers to improve case management, medical support, shelters, and longer-term reintegration services such as livelihood and income generating programs (CPCR Foundation 2006; Connolly 2020; GRETA 2018).

While there appears to be increasing numbers of evaluations since 2016, rigorously conducted impact evaluations remain largely absent (Davy 2016). To date, the quality of evaluations has not met established standards because they suffer from reliability and replicability problems, which leave little evidence for future anti-trafficking interventions (Surtees and Johnson 2019). For example, Bryant and Landman (2020) point out that 73 of 90 evaluations on human trafficking did not employ rigorous methodologies when conducting evaluations, which limits the validity and future application of the findings.

In alignment with the International Organization for Migration (IOM)'s and the International Labour Organization (ILO)'s priority research area to provide evidence on "what works and what does not" for national and local government policy interventions, this study uses a realist-focused evaluation framework to assess World Vision's A/TIP program - aimed to strengthen protection and reintegration services for survivors of trafficking[5] in Myanmar. This study explored how the activities have worked to influence survivor outcomes in a risk-laden context. Realist evaluation approaches focus on program theories to examine the validity of assumptions and ideas underlying

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[5] A/TIP program serves survivors of sex trafficking, labor trafficking, and forced marriage

how, why, and under which circumstances complex social interventions work (Pawson & Tilley 2001).

<h3 style="text-align:center; color:#c55a11;">Research context: World Vision and its program in Myanmar</h3>

World Vision is one of the leading anti-trafficking agencies in Myanmar, collaborating with the Government of Myanmar (up to February 2021), UN agencies, INGOs, and local partner organizations. World Vision's programs aim to prevent, protect, and help survivors with reintegration, while simultaneously advocating for policy changes. The A/TIP project was a six-year project (2015-2021) funded by the U.S. Department of State's Office to monitor and combat trafficking in persons with the purpose to improve victim-centred investigations and prosecutions of human trafficking cases and enhance victim protection in Myanmar. Over the six years, World Vision partnered with local organizations Yangon Kayin Baptist Women's Association (YKBWA) and Karen Baptist Convention (KBC) to carry out repatriation and reintegration activities, facilitate improved access to legal assistance, and enact prevention activities. Its two main objectives were to: (1) improve victim-centred investigations and prosecutions through training and support to police, judges, prosecutors, and case managers; and (2) enhance victim protection through comprehensive victim services.

World Vision's A/TIP Project: World Vision's six-year project was conducted in two phases. In the project's first phase (before the military coup on 1st of February 2021), trainings were provided to police, judges, prosecutors, and case managers through materials and content informed by survivors' testimonies and voices to improve understanding of how to conduct victim-centred investigations. Phase I was implemented in fifteen hot spot townships for migration and human trafficking in the Yangon region, Mandalay region, Tanintharyi region, and Shan State from October 1, 2015, to January 31, 2021. The first phase end-line project evaluation (Myanmar Development Network, 2018) found increased knowledge and attitude changes among the officers who received the victim-centred investigation training. The officers reported increased sensitivity in dealing with the trafficked survivors who were traumatized from their trafficked experience.

World Vision completed the second phase of the project on April 30, 2022. Phase II follows the original Myanmar A/TIP Project that ended on January 31, 2019. The goal of Phase II was to

strengthen the support of reintegration assistance to trafficking survivors through local, regional, and national coordination mechanisms. The main objectives were to: (1) improve comprehensive services for identified survivors of trafficking (SoTs); (2) create results-driven community, subnational, national, and regional networks empowered to combat human trafficking; and (3) improve organizational and/or technical capacity of service providers from World Vision Myanmar (WVM), YKBWA, and KBC to provide comprehensive services for identified survivors of trafficking. World Vision's A/TIP project Phase II (30-month) provided reintegration services across 45 hotspot townships for migration and human trafficking in the Yangon Region, Mandalay Region, Bago Region, Ayeyarwaddy Regions, Rakhine State, Mon State, and Shan State. The design of the delivery of Phase II changed significantly following the context within the military coup[6].

This paper sought to establish evidence to inform further investment in Myanmar A/TIP programming. To develop this evidence-base, we assessed World Vision's theory of change (ToC) and examined the project phase II outcomes through the analysis of multiple secondary data sources and primary interviews with survivors of trafficking (SoTs) and service providers. For this evaluation, the objectives were to evaluate the extent to which project phase II achieved the desired outcomes: increased organizational and/or technical capacity of service providers to provide appropriate services for identified survivors of trafficking; and, improved quality of comprehensive services for SoTs.

This study addresses two main questions based on World Vision's projected outcomes: *1). How has the capacity and knowledge of local partners improved to provide victim-centred support? 2). Do victims of trafficking have appropriate access to care and receive quality reintegration services?*

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[6] WVM ATIP halted activities involving the government counterparts due to the rising anti-sentiment against the Military coup among Myanmar population.
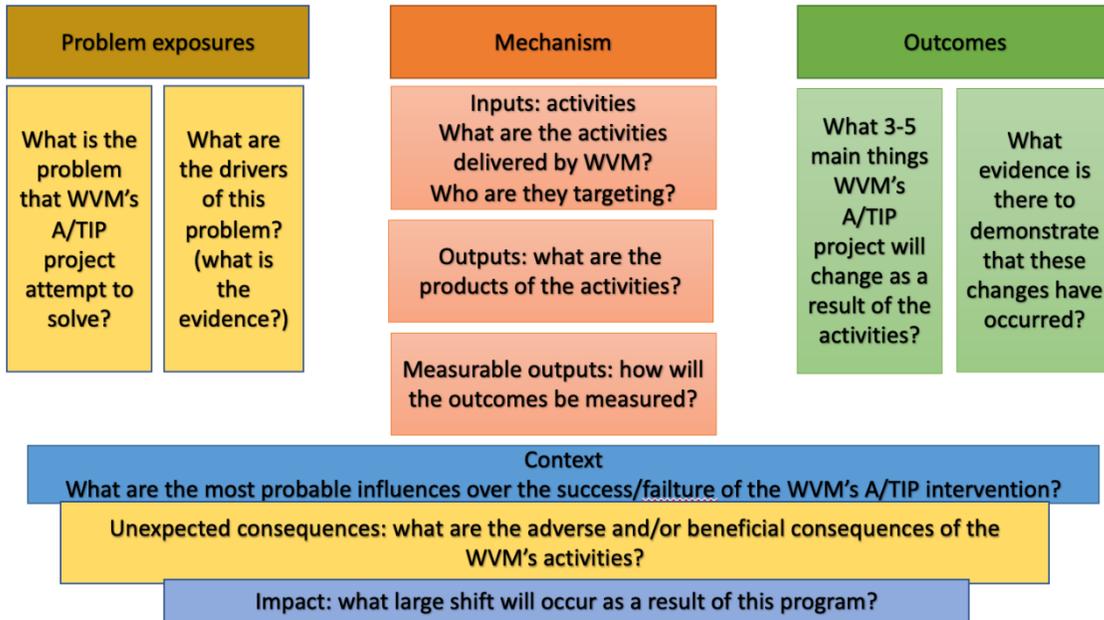
Method

We conducted a realist-informed evaluation of World Vision Myanmar (WVM)'s A/TIP project to provide an in-depth understanding of its specific components, with an objective of verifying whether the programmatic assumptions of World Vision were supported by relevant evidence. A realist evaluation framework - **Figure 1** was adapted for this study.

A realist evaluation undertakes program assessments by investigating what works, for whom, and under what circumstances (Pawson and Tilley 1997). It includes four main steps: 1). Explaining the rationale of the program theory of change; 2). Testing the program assumptions via the data collection; 3). Testing the program hypotheses; and 4). Interpreting and refining the program intervention model.

The Realist Evaluation's Context-Mechanism-Outcome (C-M-O) configurations provide an in-depth understanding about the causal pathways by testing the program's underlying theory - **Figure 2** through its multiple components. Realist evaluations focus on program theories to examine the validity of assumptions and ideas underlying how, why, and under which circumstances an intervention works (or does not) (Dalkin et al. 2015)**.** More importantly, it provides the transferrable guidance based on the program theory, which can be used to help inform other programs in different contexts.

Figure 1. Realist Evaluation Framework

Problem exposures		Mechanism	Outcomes	
What is the problem that WVM's A/TIP project attempt to solve?	What are the drivers of this problem? (what is the evidence?)	**Inputs: activities** What are the activities delivered by WVM? Who are they targeting? **Outputs: what are the products of the activities?** **Measurable outputs: how will the outcomes be measured?**	What 3-5 main things WVM's A/TIP project will change as a result of the activities?	What evidence is there to demonstrate that these changes have occurred?

Context
What are the most probable influences over the success/failure of the WVM's A/TIP intervention?

Unexpected consequences: what are the adverse and/or beneficial consequences of the WVM's activities?

Impact: what large shift will occur as a result of this program?

Data collection and analysis

Guided by the realist evaluation framework, this study considers: 1). The main outcomes (safety, healthy recovery, and re-integration) desired by the program; 2). How the fundamental activities or mechanisms delivered by the program (survivor services) are hypothesized to improve survivor outcomes; and, 3). How the context (e.g., civil unrest, unemployment) may be influencing intervention delivery and effects (positively and negatively). We used multiple sources such as World's Vision's administrative data, as well as in-depth interviews with trafficking survivors and key stakeholders. Data coding and analysis were carried out based on the analysis framework co-developed with World Vision and drawing on the content of **Figure 1** and the realist C-M-O concepts, with further adjustments as findings emerged. In collaboration with the World Vision team in Myanmar, we took inventory of the available program data. **Appendix Table 1** displays the various data sources that were part of the study.

Sampling and recruitment

Potential participants for in-depth interviews were recruited through purposive sampling with the support of World Vision. We conducted 12 qualitative interviews with SoTs who received any support from World Vision's program and nine service providers associated with World Vision

and its local partner organizations (KBC and YKBWA). Nine respondents were randomly chosen from the pool of 17 case managers. For SoTs interviews, we targeted recently enrolled youth victims because of difficulty in tracing the beneficiaries enrolled in early project years. All interviews were conducted in Burmese by three experienced enumerators via telephone.

The in-depth interviews with SoTs were all held in private locations and conducted via mobile phones. Each in-depth interview was conducted with same-gender enumerators. The study purpose and design were explained to the participants. It was made clear that the participant would not receive any remuneration for their participation, apart from communication and transportation expenses (if required). Participants were provided the opportunity to ask any questions, which were answered by the enumerator, prior to giving verbal consent to participate in the audio-recorded interview and then verbal consent was recorded. Participants were called at their preferred, convenient time upon their requests. We stressed confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation at the start of the interview and encouraged them to skip any questions or stop at any point of interview if they did not want to answer. Considering potential risks of reminding participants of traumatic experiences and evoking difficult emotions, case managers were prepared to provide psychosocial support when needed. At the end of the interview, each participant was offered the contact information for the research lead, as well as contact information of the psycho-social support team. No major incidents arose during the study around safety for the study participants or the research team.

Data were managed in an organized and confidential manner to maintain privacy of the respondents and integrity of the study. Each participant's case was deidentified and given a unique code, which was assigned to audio files and transcriptions. The interview audio files were uploaded daily to a password protected email account after conducting interviews. Encrypted audio files and electronic transcripts without personal identifiable information were stored on a secure server and password protected computer. Only the research team could access these research materials. All interviews were transcribed by the transcribers who have experience processing sensitive data.

Results

The presentation of the findings is guided by the Realist Evaluation's Context-Mechanism-Outcome framework **Figure 1**. This framework shows: (1) how the fundamental activities or mechanisms delivered by the program (survivor services) are hypothesized to improve survivor outcomes and service providers' capacity development; (2) the main outcomes; and (3) how the context influenced intervention delivery and effects.

Mechanisms of World Vision's A/TIP project

This section describes the main activities or mechanisms of the World Vision's A/TIP Phase II program. It starts by explaining World Vision's programs that aimed to improve the capacity of service providers to support reintegration services for SoTs in the project context. It then examines the quality of services received by the survivors to evaluate the mechanisms and the support offered by the intervention using conceptualizations of mechanisms in realist evaluation.

Uptake of capacity building trainings and support

Case managers from WVM, YKBA, and KBC were trained on human trafficking, criminal justice process, direct case management support, and access to legal assistance to improve their technical capacity to provide comprehensive services for identified SoTs. In addition, trainings on how to provide effective reintegration support for SoTs was offered, such as psycho-social counselling and intake assessment.

Based on case manager responses, the trainings were well-received, with almost all case managers noting the relevance and usefulness of the trainings. One case manager, commenting on the legal support and assistance, stated: 'Honestly speaking, every training was useful. I was not very familiar with the criminal justice process before. We learned about it [legal procedure] during the trainings.' [Case Manager 02]. Case managers also noted that they appreciated the psycho-social counselling support, which was used by all 220 survivors in Phase II.

While many respondents appreciated the type of trainings, some respondents (case managers) noted that it would have been helpful if trainings were scheduled earlier in the program, as some trainings were provided while the project was already being implemented: 'I did not know what

to do in the beginning. Only later, I realised things because I received the trainings. When that happened, the project nearly came to an end'. [Case Manager 08].

In addition to the trainings, World Vision provided mentoring for the case managers to support them in case of challenging situations. According to the respondents, mentoring increased their confidence during their performance. As noted by one participant who discussed the importance of mentorship in carrying out their activities:

> I speak very fast. So, I missed some important information when I explained. The managers advised me how to improve it. I also remembered an incident I had to meet a survivor along with the police. They were about to arrest the broker. I wasn't sure whether I should go with them. When I called my manager, I learned that I didn't need to go since it was not safe for me [Case Manager 01].

Uptake of comprehensive reintegration support for SoTs

World Vision's A/TIP project offered comprehensive reintegration service to trafficked survivors who were referred by the Anti-Trafficking Task Force (ATTF), Department of Social Welfare, court, police, watch groups, NGOs, and survivors themselves. The following eight types of support were offered to SoTs: 1). Housing and accommodation (n=34), 2). Physical well-being (Medical) (n=24), 3). Education/training (n=12), 4). Psycho-social counselling (n=220), 5). Legal counselling (n=133), 6). Legal support such as escorting survivors to court (n=53), 7). Social inclusion (n=23), 8). Economic and livelihood support (n=190).

The Phase II program provided services to a total of 220 individuals, including 141 forced marriages, 16 sex trafficking, and 63 forced labor survivors. While World Vision documents stated that SoTs received one or more types of support, based on interviews from this study, the most common forms of support mentioned were psycho-social counselling, legal counselling/assistance, and livelihood support. Individual reintegration plans were developed by case managers in close collaboration with SoTs as the project was designed to address the SoTs' needs based on their perspective.

Beneficial support. Psycho-social counselling appeared to be the most well-received support, according to both SoTs and case managers. Similar to WVM's internal reports, counselling was reported to be commonly used by SoTs who experienced stress and discomfort due to their traumatic experience. Many survivors carry trauma with them when they return to their place of origin. Participants shared that they were relieved and gained courage after talking to the case managers: 'I felt so disheartened before. I lost face and experienced near death. I recovered and got back because my case manager words are very comforting to me'. [Survivor 12].

Similarly, according to both case managers and SoTs, survivors benefitted from legal counselling and assistance. Legal counselling focused on providing knowledge and awareness about human trafficking and criminal justice process to the SoTs, while the legal assistance consisted of accompanying survivors to court when testifying. 'SoTs like the legal support. Most SoTs are afraid to go to the court alone because they feel scared due to their past experiences. So, when we accompany them to the court, they are very happy about it'. [Case Manager 04]. 'We became familiar with the legal knowledge. Normally, we don't know about law. Our case managers share legal knowledge with us. So, we can avoid the troubles'. [Survivor 10].

Support with challenges. Another component of individual case planning was to provide seed capital to 190 SoTs for small businesses, such as selling dried goods (rice, oil, onion, potato), fabric or clothing, betel leaves, and amenities to open mobile street shops, sales of livestock (piglets), and food. Most SoTs in our study received livelihood support. Although survivors indicated they preferred cash, the project did not provide direct cash assistance. The SoTs decided which livelihood to pursue based on prior work experience and existing skills. However, in contrast with programmatic assumption about survivors having the skills to select which livelihood to pursue, our data showed that some SoTs had little or no relevant work experience with their chosen livelihood. 'SoTs asked the support based on their needs. But some do not have skills to do well'. [Case Manager 06].

Some case managers shared mixed feelings about the design of the livelihood support and raised concerns over the program design that relied primarily on survivors' livelihood preferences. Case managers noted that they could have used more information and training to help survivors with

decisions and plans about the livelihood support to prevent failure of livelihood projects. 'There was a survivor who chose to raise domestic ducks. The survivor had a prior experience of doing it. But the business was a failure. I didn't know how to advise as I have not done it before' [Case Manager 03].

'I am not in a position to say about the design. I felt invisible during the entire process. The survivors shared their business idea. The program assumed that they were somehow skilled for the livelihood choice they made. However, the plan did not go well. We had no idea because this is not something that we have done before'. [Case Manager 02]

As part of comprehensive support, World Vision provided support to address the accommodation needs of 34 SoTs, such as partial contribution to rental cost, fixing houses, or referring SoTs to shelters run by KBC and Eden Ministry. One SoT who lives in Eden Ministry did not feel positive about the living arrangement. 'When I first arrived, there were nearly 20 girls were living here. However, communication is quite bad. Right now, there are only three of us now because many fled.' [Survivor 06]. World Vision apparently understands the challenges with current housing options:

There were reports of tension between the shelter house and SoTs. We can't intervene much since this shelter house is run by an independent organization and one of our referral partners. We referred our survivors to them. Besides, 'xxxx' is strict. Living there would be difficult for young girls since they don't allow you to use your phone after 8pm. However, if SoTs are joint recipients with WVM and 'xxxx', we intervened when it is necessary [WVM Program Manager].

Survivor gathering. In addition to the support, WVM organized mini gatherings for survivors as an attempt to bring survivors and government officials together. The gathering aimed to enable SoTs to voice their concerns and identify gaps. The gatherings received positive response among attendees. 'This event opened my eyes and gave full energy to move on my life, and I can avoid from re-trafficking. I got a lot of information especially for legal migration channel'[WVM's ATIP II Quarter 2 report, 2021].

'At first, I am so scared to attend this event and don't want to share with others about my pathetic trafficking experience. But I was very overwhelmed because of warm care of the staff. And I realized that I am not only one who this happened to, and I also found out some of my friends' experiences are worse than mine. I made a lot of friends, and I can also encourage them as well' [WVM's ATIP Quarter 2 report, 2021]

Outcomes

The intended outcome of World Vision A/TIP's project Phase II was *"to increase and sustain the comprehensive protection services for identified survivors by: (1) improving the capacity of trafficking in person (TIP) service providers/case managers to coordinate and provide services using standardized practices and protocols; and (2) empowering the survivors to inform improved prosecution and service delivery."* This section presents the findings that describe the outcomes of World Vision's organizational and/or technical capacity-building support for service providers and the quality of A/TIP's reintegration services.

Improved capacity of service providers

Findings from interviews with the service providers indicated that the trainings led to an increased confidence in delivering the services, based on reports by service providers. Overall, World Vision's capacity building support improved the technical and organizational capacity of case managers.

'When I handled the first case in 2018, I had some concerns as it was my first time. But I received more trainings as the project progressed, so I am more confident. I become better to get other people cooperation'. [Case Manager 04].

'I became more confident. The trainers trained us to be familiar with legal procedures and awareness. When I listen to SoTs' stories, I immediately understand the cause and nature of trafficking. The trainings also taught us how to approach and refer SoTs when we receive them. As we are trained well, we are well-versed about the process now; [Case Manager 08]

The findings suggest that case managers felt their skills were improved, such as managing expectations of SoTs, clearly explaining project activities, and building strong relationships with SoTs.

'When we made introduction, we first build trust with the survivors. One time is not enough to gain trust. It takes many times. And then, we explained about the nature of our support. We also have to manage their expectations because we don't provide direct cash assistance' [Case Manager 04].

In addition, the capacity-building trainings were reported to reflect the needs of the case managers. In particular, they appreciated the trainings that offered skills such as psycho-social counselling and other important skills such as legal trainings, human rights and gender trainings, which are useful in dealing with the survivors.

Through World Vision's mentoring and on-site monitoring support, case managers noted that additional hands-on support addressed their practical challenges in dealing with different stakeholders and SoTs.

'One of SoTs, who received first time support, got married and moved to a far place. Her family members are also in a very financially difficult condition. If I go by book, I cannot give her follow-up support because she is no longer there. But my project managers advised how to proceed with the support in the SoTs absence. This type of advice was so helpful for us when we face dilemma'. [Case Manager 01].

Improved provision of reintegration services to SoTs
Interviews with SoTs generally supports the usefulness of World Vision's services. Psycho-social counselling, legal, and livelihoods services were most commonly used among the eight types of support. This finding was in line with case managers' perceptions about common forms of services delivered.

Support with positive outcomes. SoTs reported improved psychological well-being during the course of the program. Survivors noted that following their trafficking experiences, they had lost motivation and confidence, and therefore needed time to recover. Respondents said that following the intervention, they had increased confidence and self-esteem because of the counselling and were able to overcome their fears. 'I remember that I used to have a phobia with strangers because of the trafficking experience. But my case managers told me not all people are scary and bad'. [Survivor 04].

'In the past, I always felt saddened. There was no one to comfort me. When I met my case manager, she comforted me when I was feeling low. She said I could rely on her as a mother and share my feelings to her. I felt so much better because of my case manager' [Survivor 06].

Findings indicate the program improved survivors' access to legal assistance. On many occasions, case managers accompanied the survivors during court appearances and provided a travel allowance. The survivors noted how helpful this support was.

'They appreciate that we (case managers) accompany them to the court because they are scared about going to the court. For those who just returned, they are vulnerable because of the traumatic experience. So, when we accompany them, they feel encouraged'. [Case Manager 04]

'I have never been to the court before. Although I want to say the truth, I feel scared to do so. My case manager encourages me to be brave. She told me truth will always prevail. Because of her, I had the courage to tell the truth in the court'. [Survivor 12]

Support with mixed outcomes. Even though the livelihood support did not generate the desired ? sustainable outcomes, many survivors appreciated the acute benefits of this support. The support responded the economic needs during immediate reintegration phase although sustainability of livelihood activities is influenced by other contextual circumstances (see the Context section for

more information). However, findings suggest that some survivors have been able to create a regular source of income due to this support.

Case managers noted that prior experience of survivors also influences the outcome of the business. One manager noted that 'The success depends on their skills. Some survivors fail because they lack the [business] skills.' [Case Manager 09]. This may depend on the survivor's age, as we interviewed relatively young survivors aged between 18-22 years. As noted by one case manager: 'Middle-aged people could do better as they are more experienced and had prior experience. The youth are inexperienced. Therefore, it is hard for them.' [Case Manager 07].

Context

This section analyzes how contextual factors may have influenced World Vision's A/TIP project outcomes positively or negatively. Our findings show that several contextual circumstances hindered positive survivor outcomes, especially sustainable livelihoods.

Social context - Individual agency and characteristics, social and cultural relations

An important assumption in WVM's theory of change is that SoTs can be empowered to inform improved service delivery so that comprehensive protection services will be sustainable. However, case workers suggested that some SoTs demonstrated greater agency than others. 'Some SoTs were very responsive before they received the support. After that, they changed their mind. However, there are also survivors who really walk the talk. They implemented their plan. so, their plans are successful.' [Case Manager 07]. Another cased manager noted 'Some SoTs understand. They know there are more desperate people. so, they are diligent and do well. They respect the support' [Case Manger 06]. Some SoTs seemed better able to work hard and maintain communications with case managers and were therefore more likely to report positive outcomes.

> 'This is about one of my cases. When this SoT returned home, her brother did not welcome her. She has two kids and separated from her husband. When we approached her, her brother appreciated the support. She said she wanted to work at a grocery shop and bought a motorcycle carrier. When the project is over, she has three motorcycle carriers. Also, she

paid back her debt. She reconciled with her husband. This is a very unique case. She succeeded because she wanted to get out of this miserable life'. [Case Manager 05]

Moreover, individual circumstances such as debts, age, and skill set may have influenced the livelihood outcomes . Our findings showed that SoTs who had substantial debts found it hard to maintain their livelihood. 'As soon as they returned home, creditors are already waiting […] once they made some progress with business. They have to pay back their debts. Trafficked victims have this issue. Their debt is deep.'[Case Manager 08]

The case managers reported that the SoT's age often related to individual outcomes. Respondents in this study were between 18-22 years old. Because of their young age, it is not surprising that they have limited experience and skills to generate a favorable outcome. In some cases, survivors did not have any prior experience with the livelihood activity. However, according to case managers, the older SoTs fare relatively better than the younger ones as they are more mature and skilled (see outcomes section regarding prior work experience). Further, while individual plans are supposed to be designed in close consultation between case managers and survivors, inevitably, family influence over their decisions was noted in some cases, especially around livelihood decisions. 'My mom used to raise domestic pigs before. My mom doesn't know how to make living with other livelihoods. She is skilled at raising pigs. So I am interested in this business.' [Survivor 01)]. 'Some SoTs received family cooperation. When this happens, the result is satisfying. but other family members are unemployed and facing debts. Then, the result is discouraging' [Case Manager 06]. Thus, while at times beneficial, family influences may not always be in the best interest of young SoTs.

Relationships. Moreover, survivor relationships with case managers, family, and community members also influenced outcomes. Survivors who managed to improve psychological well-being and livelihoods were found to have a good relationship with case managers, family, and community members.

Interviews indicated that SoTs' relationships with case managers are important to their reintegration outcomes. Although the design of service delivery is generally praised, reports of

tension between case managers and SoTs surfaced during the interviews. Reportedly, some survivors appeared to be inflexible and disrespectful towards the service managers. 'There are some trainings that survivors are required to attend. But they refuse to do so and say they don't need one. I want them to listen to us and respectful.'[Case Manager 06]. The same respondent noted this could be done by addressing the relationship dynamic between case managers and SoTs, explaining: 'The senior staff could help us. They are powerful enough to convince SoTs and explain our roles to them. So, SoTs understand us better. If the higher-ups know the survivors' needs better, our work will be more effective.' [Case Manager 06]. This may indicate that the program could have focused on improving the relationships between SoTs and case managers. One respondent suggested that the trainings should be organized in a way that brings survivors and case managers together. 'Both survivors and case managers received separate trainings. I think it would be better if trainings bring two parties together' [Case Manager 06].

Findings also suggested that relationship issues may also be influenced by the workload of the case managers. One case manager explained: 'I managed 60 cases during phase 1. But only 50 took the support. Some migrated to other places. Some died. In Phase II, I managed 40 cases' [Case Manager 05]. Another one shared: 'I currently managed 4 or 5 cases. If necessary, I have to take more' [Case Manager 06]. Importantly, one SoT noted 'I received only psychological support. They don't have much time. So, I wouldn't bother asking them for help' [Survivor 06]. According to WVM's quarterly reports, YKBWA from Yangon region receives significant higher cases during October to December in 2019, WVM observed the unbalanced workload during monitoring visit to YKBWA in Yangon. Although WVM addressed this issue by redistributing the cases among the case workers, it may have inevitably affected the quality of service to SoTs during that reporting period.

Complementary to case managers, family and community may play an important role in SoTs' life: 'One of my SoTs opened a grocery store. Her husband and family members are also supportive. She managed to do well with her shop.' [Case Manager 01]. SoTs who do not receive family and community support struggle. 'Even when the community is not receptive, they (SoTs) would do well if the family members welcome them. When they don't receive the warmth from family, they face so many challenges' [Case Manager 04].

The combined political and pandemic context

Due to COVID-19 and the political crisis, the project regularly conducted follow up psycho-social counselling support for SoTs via phone. While World Vision could maintain some project activities such as online counselling, livelihood support was substantially hindered by the movement restrictions, financial constraints, and inability to conduct follow-up monthly visits.

Despite challenges, World Vision organized monthly calls with its service providers from YKBWA and KBC to monitor and provide support remotely. Additionally, case managers remained in contact with survivors by making routine calls to monitor their health situation and provided individual psychosocial social support. However, communications with some SoTs were challenging. The pandemic significantly disrupted the core component of close communication with SoTs. 'COVID-19 disrupted our entire follow-up plan with SoTs. We couldn't do monthly monitoring visits as per our plan. We could only follow-up with mobile.' [Case Manager 08]. 'We do monthly monitoring visits before the pandemic. During the Covid-19 [pandemic], we remained in touch with mobile phone. However, some survivors often changed the sim card. Follow-up was quite difficult.' [Case Manager 04].

While the project continued with the psycho-social counselling, the livelihood support was greatly impacted by the movement restrictions and unemployment:

'During COVID-19, our livelihood support recipients lost the investment money provided by the project. Normally, their clients cannot pay back their money for clothing and goods. Some went back to their hometown because of unemployment. The lost their investment just like that'. [Survivor 11]

'Business was going well before. One of the SoTs opened a small food shop. But the shop had to shut down because of Covid. It was impossible to reopen because of the coup again. She lost all her money'. [Case Manager 08]

'Many people are unemployed. So they could not return the money they owed me. My business had to close'. [Survivor 11].

Civil unrest because of the military coup in Myanmar exacerbated the existing vulnerabilities caused by COVID-19. Since February 1, 2021, banks have been frequently shut down, preventing the project team from withdrawing cash and sending it to field staff. Consequently, the economic and livelihood support aspect of the project was delayed. 'One SoT wanted to open a small food shop. Her shop had to shut down because of COVID-19. Now that there is the political situation. She could not reopen her shop and lost money.' [Case Manager 08].

'Cash was so difficult to find [in the] aftermath of the military coup. Many ATMs were not working so withdraw was not possible. Our mobility during that time was scary. There were bomb blasts in many places. We also lost contact with survivors as they change their mobile sim card'. [Case Manager 05].

After the military coup, the project paused coordination with the government which affected the quality of delivering program services: 'We coordinated with the government departments for legal matters. Right now, it is not possible because of political situation. So, we cannot provide legal support for those who recently returned.' [Case Manager 04].

Discussion

First and foremost, World Vision case managers received various types of trainings which are required for smooth delivery, according to WVM's program ToC. Our study observed an increase in the capacity of service providers to coordinate and administer services using standardized practices and protocols. For example, survivors' feedback related to improved psychological health and improved access to legal assistance shows that WVM capacity building support is effective. However, WVM should consider the timing of some training topics as it was difficult for some case managers in the earlier phase of the program. Clearly, housing is an issue for survivors, as WVM appears to have very little control over the quality and regulations of their partner organization, which indicates the need to address housing challenges to improve survivor outcomes. Perhaps more encouraging is the support for the survivor gatherings, which were highly valued by the survivors. The gatherings were praised as an empowering platform where survivors

exchanged their views and concerns. Thus, future anti-trafficking interventions in Myanmar could benefit from incorporating the survivors gathering to their A/TIP programs.

Furthermore, for a program intervention to be successful, relationships are critical. Our findings indicate that WVM's program theory did not pay sufficient attention to the relationship dynamics between case managers and SoTs. Although most case managers had positive relationships with SoTs, some case managers had to deal with difficult, disrespectful, and irresponsible SoTs. While WVM's intervention focuses on separate trainings for case managers and SoTs, it may be advisable to organize joint trainings to explain the roles and responsibilities of case managers to SoTs. In addition, specific training content on strategies for managing difficult cases/clients will be helpful for the case managers.

WVM's livelihood support missed some explicit considerations about differences in requirements of SoTs, according to a realist evaluation (Pawson and Tilley 2007). Our findings suggest that livelihood outcomes may have been influenced by SoT's age, experience with the livelihood activity, capacity, and autonomy and/or resilience. For example, the younger SoTs failed to sustain the livelihood support as they were too young and lacked skills. While some SoTs show willingness to work hard, other SoTs did not show persistence and gave up even when faced with small challenges, such as changing mobile SIM cards or moving to a new place. Moreover, the results indicate that family influence should also be taken into account as the survivor's family plays an important role in decision making. Furthermore, relying on case managers to manage livelihood support when SoTs lacked necessary experience may have had an impact on the outcome. More business skills support, such as business skill training or external consultation, or linking them with specialists, can benefit SoTs and case managers and are essential for business sustainability.

Phase II of the WVM A/TIP project took place in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and the military coup in Myanmar. Therefore, it's not surprising that the project did not produce the intended results for some of the program components as a result of these unforeseen circumstances. Case managers, for example, were unable to provide the necessary face-to-face follow-up for livelihood support. Furthermore, some SoTs changed locations without informing case managers.

Support for SoTs was also limited due to a lack of collaboration with government counterparts such as criminal justice and social Welfare. Future interventions should include WVM A/TIP's lessons to adapt to politically fragile situations and consider flexible ways to operationalize the program's aims and objectives. Brainstorming sessions with case managers will be helpful in order to strategize when developing the implementation plan.

Finally, the underlying ToC developed by World Vision - **figure 2** indicates that *if* the capacity of trafficking in person (TIP) service providers is improved to coordinate and administer services using standardized practices and protocols, and survivors are empowered to participate in prosecution and inform service delivery, *then* comprehensive protection services for identified survivors will be increased and sustained. Further, *if* communities and civil society organizations (CSOs) are empowered to implement prevention and protection activities that inform evidence-based feedback, and civil society actors are provided access to be able to feed into multi-stakeholder platforms, *then* effective results-driven networks to combat TIP will be improved.

Figure 2. WVM's Program Theory of Change
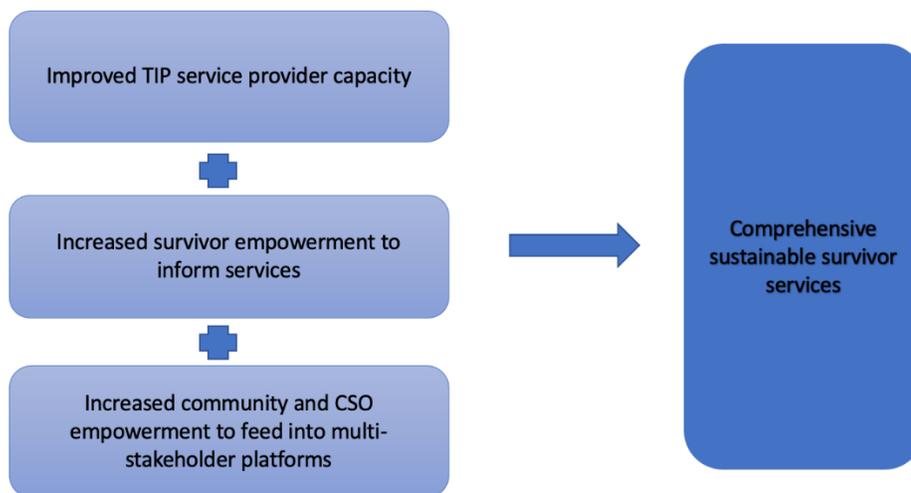
However, a more refined theory of change - **figure 3** based on the findings suggest that improving the capacity of service providers through the trainings is the first step in the right direction. In addition to the relevant trainings and mentorship support, the trainings need to occur with the right timing. To strengthen the communication between case managers and SoTs, some trainings need

to be streamlined. The findings demonstrate that while some support may not benefit all SoTs, support such as psycho-social counselling and legal assistance was well-received. Survivors' outcomes were influenced by contextual elements such as relationship issues, SoTs' characteristics, and the combined pandemic and political situation. Our refined theory of change provides clear pathways of how WVM's program mechanisms work for some SoTs and do not work for some under different contextual circumstances. Future anti-trafficking programming in Myanmar and other places with a similar contextual background may consider the new refined model informed by the principles of realist evaluation.

Figure 3. Refined Theory of Change for WVM's future A/TIP
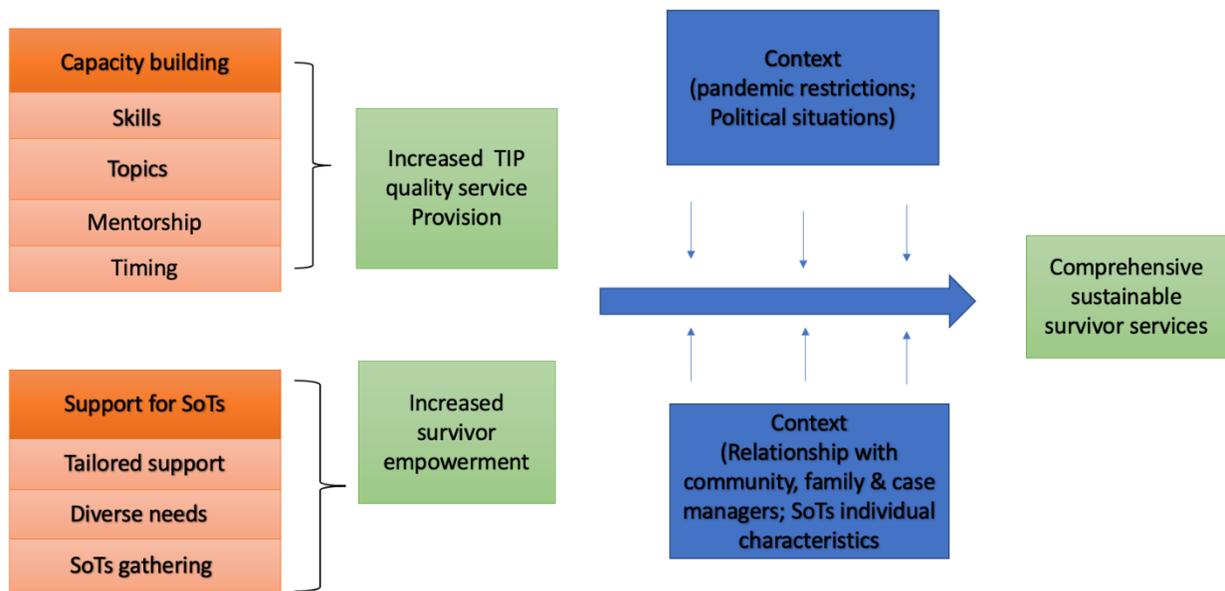
Strengths and limitations of the study

This study's strength was the design, which aimed to understand how the intervention operated, thus enabling us to establish the potential replicability of the program. Producing a well-articulated intervention model and identifying the main mechanisms – or "active ingredients" – and how they influence outcomes among survivors will improve World Vision's programming and provide a valuable model for other key actors in the sector.

World Vision's intervention involved community empowerment activities and government advocacy, which were intended to have positive effects for their clients. However, our study focused on examining the processes of the intervention delivery and uptake, which included assessing the activities by service providers and consider how these services affected survivors.

This study was limited in several ways. First, it is worth noting that these findings are based solely on document review and interviews with case workers and survivors, rather than direct monitoring and observation. Because this evaluation did not start at the beginning of the project, it was not able to assess changes along a causal pathway from a case worker or survivor baseline. The study was not able to evaluate how interventions were implemented (quality, consistency, etc.) or verify how case worker behaviors and service delivery practices might have changed from their "baseline" practices. Findings to assess the quality of any changes among survivors or attribute effects the services are based on self-reports by participants.

Conclusion

World Vision's A/TIP project Phase II strived to provide quality comprehensive services to respond to the needs of SoTs in face of the immense contextual challenges to provide support to trafficking survivors in Myanmar. The program reached 220 SoTs with one or more type of assistance. Legal assistance and psycho-social counselling were proven beneficial to SoTs although the livelihood support needs to be tailored according to SoTs' background (eg; age, experience) to achieve the desired survivor outcomes. This evaluation contributes evidence towards anti-trafficking direct assistance programs because it demonstrates how the intervention works differently for SoTs of different ages, prior experience, and family backgrounds. Additionally, findings highlight contextual factors, from the individual level (e.g. the SoT's individual situation), to the national and global level (e.g. COVID-19 pandemic and military coup), strongly influenced the outcome of World Vision's reintegration services. This evaluation results offer important insights about future programming of comprehensive victim reintegration services, to design more effective and cost-effective programming.

Ethics statement

This study adhered to international standards on conducting interviews with trafficking women (World Health Organization, Zimmerman & Watts, 2003). The research team received ethics approval from the Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) Institutional Review Board (IRB). The full study protocol and research tools (including Myanmar translations) were submitted on January 31, 2022, and the ethics approval was granted on March 2, 2022.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest. The funders did not play a role in the study design, data collection and analysis, decision to publish, or preparation of the manuscript.

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