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***Release of the comprehensive 2022 research study on the scope and nature of human trafficking in South Africa.***

**Pretoria, South Africa** – With funding from the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), key research partners LASER PULSE Purdue University, Khulisa Management Services and the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), today released the final multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary study on the scope and nature of human trafficking in South Africa.

The national Trafficking in Person (TIP) study, [Research into the Nature and Scope of Trafficking in Persons in South Africa: Research Report](#), was conducted between 2020 and early 2022 to provide evidence on the nature and magnitude of TIP in South Africa to policy makers in the Government of South Africa (GOSA) and to development partners, implementing partners and service providers. The evidence of this comprehensive study will elevate data into a more prominent role in public-policy debates and amplify South African institutional capacity to participate in and lead this process through partnership with US institutions and engagement with the GOSA.

The study employed a multi-sectoral, mixed-method approach to ascertain primary and secondary data from across the spectrum of sectors involved in combatting trafficking. The Landscape Review guided the empirical study on the gaps in TIP policy, practice and research in South Africa. The resulting research produced several stand-alone studies, that form part of this larger research compendium.

The first report, released in January 2023, entitled ‘Research Into The Nature And Scope Of Trafficking In Persons In South Africa: Prevalence Insights from the Criminal Justice System and Relevant Reporting Mechanisms’ ([TIP Criminal Justice Insights FINAL REPORT 2022.docx \(usaid.gov\)](#)), provided insights exploring reported trafficking incidents and calls for response service from three national Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) that are represented on GOSA TIP Task Teams; available police TIP statistics and data from the SAPS Crime Administration System; TIP prosecutions ongoing in South African courts in 2021; and an analysis of successfully prosecuted TIP cases in South African courts.

The full report, released today, includes the findings from the additional studies investigating the experiences of both adult and child victims of trafficking; a specific analysis of migration and labour exploitation as a facet of TIP in South Africa; a comprehensive legal and policy review augmented by a survey of TIP stakeholders in South Africa; an analysis of the functioning and shortcomings of the TIP task teams in the provinces, and an evaluation of the effectiveness of CSOs engaged in anti-trafficking work.

Findings across the research studies confirm that sex trafficking continues to make up most of both reported cases and prosecutions of TIP, while labour trafficking prosecutions, similar to trends observed internationally, are severely lacking. Victims of TIP are significantly undercounted in both research and practice. Labour trafficking and domestic trafficking are more common than previously thought.

All the research components confirmed that while the South African Government has made progress in some aspects of combatting trafficking, notably by passing a comprehensive legislation and national policy framework, that it is not doing enough to curb the crime.

Specific findings from the research point to poor management of TIP initiatives because there is no dedicated coordination unit to hold the system accountable; chronic under-resourcing; lack of training and capacity by first-responders and law enforcement; and persistent corruption and complicity by officials was cited in court documentation and by respondents. Prevention and early intervention efforts geared towards discouraging the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation of persons that leads to trafficking are also lacking. Victims and perpetrators of TIP are nationals from several African countries. Many child victims were from other African countries and were undocumented. Domestic or internal trafficking of women is more prevalent than reported, and men and boys continue to be invisible and silent victims as they are overlooked, under-identified, and under-reported, with limited or no interventions in place.

The research team worked diligently during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure broad stakeholder participation and buy-in from government and civil society actors – including from victims and survivors. While engagement at some levels remained a consistent challenge throughout, the research was able to produce important recommendations which the government should prioritize to address this growing crime. Recommendations for immediate attention include establishing a dedicated coordinating unit for TIP; increasing funding for prevention, protection, and prosecution of TIP cases; discourage the demand that fosters trafficking for sexual exploitation and forced labour by employing existing legislative instruments; improving data management and data integrity; better specialized training and capacity development of all members of the TIP ecosystem; rooting out of complicit officials; and strengthening legislative or other measures, including educational, economic, and socio-cultural measures. The legally binding TIP definition and ‘abuse of vulnerability’ as defined in the PACOTIP Act must be considered in research and policy discussions related to prostitution, gender-based violence, child abuse, labour violations, and irregular migration, as a means to correctly identify and prevent the ongoing undercounting of TIP cases among these phenomena.

The findings of the research were presented at a number of GOSA, civil society and donor meetings. /end

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**The full report is available here:** [Research into the Nature and Scope of Trafficking in Persons in South Africa: Research Report](#)

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