



Universal Periodic Review 40<sup>th</sup> session – Stakeholders Report

## Uganda: Human Trafficking

Joint Submission to the 40<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council's

Universal Periodic Review Working Group

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### Report submitted by:

- **Salvation Army (SA).** The Salvation Army is a Christian church and registered Charity in England and Wales. This briefing was prepared by the Ugandan Territory of The Salvation Army. Registered Office: Plot 78-82 Lugogo Bypass, Kampala. Postal address: PO Box 11776, Kampala, Uganda <https://www.salvationarmy.org/ihq/uganda> The Salvation Army in Uganda run community programmes throughout the country and specific trafficking awareness programmes in the areas of Busia, Lwakhaka and Tororo. The Salvation Army in Uganda has a designated contact person with a remit focusing on trafficking and contemporary forms of slavery, who is part of an international network of contact people.
- **World Evangelical Alliance (WEA).** The WEA was founded in 1846 in London and has special ECOSOC Consultative Status since 1997. Today, the WEA is a network of churches in 134 nations that have each formed an evangelical alliance and over 150 international organizations joining together to give a world-wide identity, voice, and platform to more than 600 million evangelical Christians worldwide.

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## Context

1. The World Evangelical Alliance and The Salvation Army are deeply committed to fighting contemporary forms of slavery and, in particular, human trafficking globally. In Uganda, The Salvation Army runs trafficking awareness programmes in the areas of Busia, Lwakhaka and Tororo, these programmes help communities identify potential victims of trafficking who can then be referred to receive necessary support. So far seven community groups have been specifically trained to identify indicators of trafficking and a further 5000 people have been reached by broadcast workshops focussed on the issue. By developing community partnerships, the programme grows sustainably, promotes resource sharing and capacity building among others.

2. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic The Salvation Army has seen a growth in trafficking within already vulnerable communities across national borders and also internally within Uganda. The social and economic impacts of COVID-19 will be long-lasting and will continue to force people into vulnerable situations which makes their exploitation more likely. It is essential that the Ugandan Government continues and strengthens its efforts to tackle human trafficking.

3. As a result of the 34<sup>th</sup> Session of the UPR held in 2016, Ugandan government supported several recommendations related to trafficking in persons. These included agreements to 'Make further efforts to ensure compliance with the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act' (1115.16) and to 'Strengthen its efforts to enforce the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act' (115.15).<sup>1</sup>

4. We welcome the Ugandan Government's efforts to tackle human trafficking and support legislation such as the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act, 2009. However, from our perspective, more work needs to be done within communities to raise awareness of victim's rights and about the trafficking itself.

5. The World Evangelical Alliance and The Salvation Army urge the Ugandan Government to adopt the recommendations below and continue its work in combatting trafficking.

### 1. Protection of child victims of trafficking

6. The Salvation Army has experience of working with child victims of trafficking, many of whom are victims of sexual and/or labour exploitation. Children are at a particular risk of internal trafficking, comprising 90% of all victims.<sup>2</sup> Currently there is insufficient support in place for child victims of trafficking. The Salvation Army has observed that the accommodation provided for children following a period of exploitation is not appropriate to cater to their complex needs. Failure to provide appropriate accommodation jeopardises an individual's recovery process and safety, which leaves them at a risk of re-trafficking.

7. For instance, The Salvation Army is aware that child victims within supported accommodation ought to receive short term needs support, such as appropriate healthcare, and long-term needs support through programmes including skills training. In many instances, accommodation providers are unable to provide sufficient short- or long-term support to the children in their care. Without

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Uganda*. Human Rights Council. December 2016.

<sup>2</sup> *Enforcement of human trafficking laws: Implications for gender and labour externalization in Uganda*. The Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC). Issue No. 122. May 2020

their basic needs being met, child victims face an exacerbated recovery after their period of exploitation.

8. The issue of shelter is emblematic of the lack of support seen across child victims' recovery period. Greater support must be given to reduce the risk of re-trafficking. The child victims The Salvation Army works with have complex needs, including physical and mental health support needs. Many struggle to reintegrate in the communities from which they were initially trafficked. We urge that the Ugandan Government builds working relationships with local NGOs and community groups to build a network of organisations that can identify appropriate accommodation options and service providers.

**Recommendation: Provide appropriate accommodation and services for child victims of trafficking so that they can recover from periods of exploitation and rebuild their lives in a position of safety.**

## **2. Support for the reintegration of the victims of trafficking**

9. The Salvation Army works with many victims of trafficking who struggle to reintegrate into their communities following periods of exploitation. Both adult and child victims need transitional support to ensure that they can progress with their recovery and reintegrate into their community. Victims face extensive obstacles when recovering from trauma, many are long lasting and must be properly managed to ensure a proper recovery.

10. We recommend that the government provides financial support to local organisations and communities who can provide support services to victims of trafficking. Support could also come in the form of offering tax waivers for services and organisations working to prevent and combat contemporary forms of slavery. For instance, The Salvation Army is aware of many victims whose greatest concern when recovering from trafficking is securing a position of financial security. A lack of sustainable income puts former victims at risk of re-trafficking. Therefore, we recommend that the Ugandan government supports and accredits local organisations that provide employment or employment training to former victims of trafficking. These organisations must themselves be monitored to ensure that they do not seek to use their position to exploit victims themselves.

11. Long term support, such as employment training, ensures that there is a sustainable route out of cycles of exploitation. It is crucial that the Ugandan Government considers support for long term interventions alongside more immediate support.

**Recommendation: Provide transitional support to victims of trafficking looking to reintegrate into their communities.**

## **3. Access to the justice system for the victims of trafficking**

12. We agree with and support the steps the Ugandan government has made to build awareness of trafficking within the judicial and legal system. However, in The Salvation Army's experience, victims of trafficking are often unable to engage with legal processes due to a lack of funding to support them in proceedings. This means that victims are often unable to find a sense of closure and traffickers are able to escape justice.

13. Through its established partnerships, The Salvation Army is aware that many victims of trafficking return to the communities where their trafficker is still active. Therefore, placing them at risk of further harm or even re-trafficking. Giving victims greater access to public funds and government pro-bono services in legal proceedings will help address the power imbalances between traffickers and the communities they exploit. It is essential that legal proceedings against traffickers provide justice for all involved. We therefore urge the Ugandan government to ensure the victims' access to financial support in order to fully implement Section 12 of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (2009).<sup>3</sup> This will allow the Ugandan government to fulfil its obligations under the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (2009) by providing greater support for victims within the legal system and to break the cycles of exploitation experienced in Ugandan communities.

**Recommendation:** Increase and improve access to funding for victims of trafficking looking to engage with the justice system.

<sup>3</sup> *The Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act, 2009*. The Government of Uganda. October 2009. Available at: [https://www.law.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Uganda\\_Prevention-of-Trafficking-in-Persons-Act\\_2009.pdf](https://www.law.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Uganda_Prevention-of-Trafficking-in-Persons-Act_2009.pdf)