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Survivor Aftercare
As the unprecedented global COVID-19 pandemic continues in its second year of deadly impact and disruption, it ‘challenges national health systems, shuts businesses large and small, and confines millions to their homes…’ leaving society’s ‘...most vulnerable groups exposed to its most destructive effects’.¹ When unexpected challenges threaten health stability, job security and mobility, individuals already living in precarious situations often become even more vulnerable and susceptible to exploitation. The increased vulnerability brought on from COVID-19 not only exacerbated health and economic challenges, but also increased challenges already faced by marginalised groups and trafficking survivors, as well as service providers. The A21 Campaign (A21), like many other organisations, experienced unexpected challenges throughout 2020, needing to quickly adapt service delivery and resources to work within COVID-19 restrictions amongst newly emerging and changing trends. This report aims to highlight the implications of COVID-19 on human trafficking in 2020 as experienced first-hand by A21 through its various offices around the world.

Currently, A21 has offices in 19 locations in 14 countries: Australia, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Denmark, Greece, Mexico, Norway, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and the United States.

About the A21 Campaign

A21 is a global non-governmental organisation (NGO) dedicated to combatting human trafficking using a three-pronged operational strategy, namely ‘Reach,’ ‘Rescue,’ and ‘Restore’. ‘Reach’ programs focus on preventing human trafficking through strategic awareness and prevention efforts targeted to specific vulnerable groups, as well as the general public (see Appendix A). A21’s ‘Rescue’ operational strategy encompasses programs focused on intervention and identification of potential victims of trafficking, often through partnerships and active support of government efforts, as well as facilitating access to justice for survivors receiving direct aftercare services from A21 (see Appendix B). A21’s ‘Restore’ programs have been developed following extensive research into best practices in aftercare services around the world, to provide a holistic approach to empower survivors with the support and necessary tools to reach wholeness and independence (see Appendix C). The availability and degree of implementation of each program is specific to each country.
In each of these countries, A21 equips individuals in the fight against human trafficking. A21 operates robust programs to combat human trafficking in a comprehensive manner focusing on vulnerable groups, individuals currently being victimised (both knowingly and unknowingly), and survivors who have exited their exploitative circumstances. While fundamental principles underlie all human trafficking situations, such as the use of some derivation of force, fraud or coercion, or the exploitation of a child, the types of human trafficking and exploitation in each country often contain differences by region, reflecting the varied vulnerabilities and social issues unique to each country. A21 applies a tailored approach to the issue in each country in the creation and application of its counter-trafficking strategy. This report explores in-depth reporting from eight of these frontline countries relating to the impact of COVID-19 on human trafficking.

The Global Health Crisis of 2020

In January 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a ‘public health emergency of international concern’ with the coronavirus officially declared a global pandemic in March 2020. Since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in late-2019 and throughout 2020, this unprecedented global health crisis has dramatically impacted governments, economies, and social structures throughout the world with devastating effects. As governments grappled with the health and socio-economic effects of COVID-19, many borders closed or were under strict controls, with varying degrees of lockdown restrictions. Imposed globally, these restrictions severely curtailed movement and limited social interaction in a bid to slow the spread of infection. While responses to COVID-19 have varied between countries, an interim report on the WHO’s response to COVID-19 notes that as of 29 April 2020, ‘over 100 countries had implemented either a full or partial lockdown, in an effort to contain the spread of the virus and reduce pressure on their health system’.³

The effort to curtail the spread of COVID-19 resulted in increased border restrictions by many countries around the world, greatly impacting global migration⁴ and travel in general.⁵ The pandemic also ‘decimated tourism and business travel; severely curtailed labour migration; and dampened movement of all stripes, from that of international students to family reunification’.⁶ The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimated that there were ‘nearly 105,000 movement restrictions’ implemented around the world in the year following the moment the WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic on the 11th of March 2020.⁷ The IOM also estimated that the pandemic, by mid-July 2020 had left ‘nearly 3 million people stranded sometimes without access to consular assistance, means to ensure they did not slip into irregular status or sufficient resources to meet basic needs’.⁸ The pandemic also caused ‘massive economic and social shocks’ around the world, with many workers facing ‘the prospect of unemployment and loss of their incomes and livelihoods’.⁹

The global pandemic quickly forced governments throughout the world into states of emergency, and affected all parts of society including all aspects of human trafficking. The pandemic increased vulnerabilities of already vulnerable or marginalised individuals, created obstacles to intervention, and depleted resources for identified survivors in need. As a global organisation, the COVID-19 pandemic directly impacted A21’s operations in its outworking of national and international counter-trafficking strategies. In response, A21 offices worldwide swiftly modified strategies and programs in light of rapidly changing environments and needs, to provide continuity of services in an effort to ensure stability and resources during this critical period.

In the midst of delivering modified programs and services, A21 witnessed first-hand the impact of the pandemic both directly and indirectly on human trafficking. Traffickers and exploiters forced to change their business practices by the pandemic, altered their recruitment methods and means of control.¹⁰ As recruitment methods shifted, traffickers also tightened means of control, with intensification of surveillance, violence and isolation.¹¹

Amidst the challenges posed by COVID-19, it became clear that the pandemic was not curtailing human trafficking and exploitation, but rather increasing obstacles for counter-trafficking efforts.

INCREASED UNEMPLOYMENT & INCREASED VULNERABILITIES TO FALSE JOBS

Lockdown and COVID-19 related restrictions in countries across the world resulted in widespread unemployment, increasing vulnerability to exploitation and trafficking. Financial insecurity or debt as a result of unstable employment or economic disadvantage is often leveraged by traffickers, and use of this vulnerability occurred on a widespread scale during COVID-19. Many people were victimised in their attempt to improve their situation when fraudulent recruitment agencies offered false employment or demanded high fees and fines.¹² Economic turmoil can increase vulnerability to trafficking through desperation and acceptance of unregulated or informal work. A21 operated hotlines received countless requests for employment screening to determine the validity of job opportunities. Review of these requests revealed the advertisement of suspicious employment opportunities which required travel to
other countries without concern about closed borders or the need for valid visas or other legal documents.

As both adults and children moved online for work, schooling and entertainment purposes during the pandemic, one noted trend was the increased use of the internet to advertise false employment opportunities, in an attempt to recruit, traffic and otherwise exploit. False job opportunities were posted on social media and other online platforms to entice individuals to travel for possible employment. Despite clear red flags, individuals desperate for a chance of employment appeared to disregard the potential for exploitation and continued to respond to these suspicious online employment opportunities. Other perpetrators advertised false job opportunities online in an attempt to forge relationships with the ultimate intent to produce sexually explicit materials. Using the prospect of employment, perpetrators engaged with both minors and adults to groom and manipulate, resulting in the creation of online child sexual abuse material (CSAM) or other sexually explicit materials. A21 worked diligently to address this issue by distributing awareness and prevention materials focused on safely seeking employment, providing employment vetting through hotlines, and active intervention attempts when permitted, through proactive victim identification operations.¹³

**IMPACT ON SURVIVORS**

The state of emergency of countries around the world, the subsequent economic crises, and the immediate needs caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, stressed existing government infrastructure as governments struggled to urgently adapt pre-existing services in a safe manner consistent with COVID-19 restrictions, while simultaneously responding to the ripple effect of the pandemic in various aspects of society. As governments responded to the crises caused by the pandemic, one tangible impact was seen in the scarcity of available resources for the most vulnerable, including survivors of trafficking. Government and NGO service providers became overwhelmed by need, and with restrictions, reached capacity quickly or shut down due to COVID-19 issues, further limiting available services and referral options for survivors in need of immediate assistance.

**COVID-19 Requirements**

Some countries subjected recently identified survivors in the midst of exiting their trafficking situation to rigid COVID-19 requirements, such as testing negative for COVID-19 before receiving basic assistance from law enforcement or service providers. Despite imposing such restrictions, government entities neither provided access to nor guidance on the acceptable execution of such COVID-19 protocols in order to facilitate survivors’ recovery to safety. In such cases, A21 caseworkers worked to both purchase and facilitate access to COVID-19 tests, personal protective equipment, assistance with quarantine, and anything else procedurally required to support the stabilisation of survivors exiting their trafficking situation.

**Housing Shortages**

Occupancy and social distance restrictions consistent with COVID-19 guidelines quickly resulted in housing shortages for the most vulnerable in society, including trafficking survivors. Across the board, many shelters either closed or significantly reduced their permitted occupancy during this time in alignment with government restrictions. Quarantine and COVID-19 testing requirements instituted by many shelters resulted not only in delays, but in gaps of services available to survivors in need of immediate housing. On more than one occasion, many of A21’s country offices provided emergency housing in the form of motels/hotels during parts of quarantine or while awaiting space at a shelter. Housing shortages occurred not only at the urgent shelter level, but for those that provided longer stays as well. While housing was in high demand for all survivors, shelters for male survivors, which historically experience shortages, were especially scarce.

**Mental Health Challenges**

Survivors in A21’s Aftercare program, along with the rest of the world, were subjected to their countries’ lockdown requirements, and like many during this period, experienced a range of mental health challenges due to the isolation. However, unlike others, many survivors of trafficking were already in the midst of processing their trauma from being trafficked, or other pre-existing trauma which had contributed to their vulnerability to trafficking. Some survivors in A21’s Aftercare program disclosed that their traffickers had used isolation to condition and control them during their trafficking and that consequently, mandatory lockdown and isolation served to retrigger that trauma. A21 caseworkers increased emotional support to many survivors who found aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as social isolation or economic insecurity, difficult to overcome.

The legal systems throughout the world initially responded by shutting down courts and delaying court cases, as they determined the best way to adjust future proceedings. While many adjusted within a few months to ensure the continuation of criminal prosecutions,
many countries delayed court cases indefinitely resulting in increased anxiety and trauma to survivors expected to testify. Many survivors expressed a desire to move forward in their lives, but felt impeded from doing so due to their pending court cases.

**Economic Impact**

The devastating economic impact of the pandemic affected not only those vulnerable to being trafficked, but also survivors who had exited their trafficking situations. Survivors receiving aftercare services from A21 expressed concern about lack of employment opportunities. A number of survivors in A21’s Aftercare program delayed their graduation from A21’s program either as a result of anticipated employment no longer being available, or difficulty in finding employment. One repatriated survivor who had just started receiving services from A21, even expressed the possibility of travelling back to the country of exploitation in the hopes of employment due to her family’s pressure for income. In response, A21 worked closely with survivors in its Aftercare program to obtain proper employment in the midst of limited opportunities, with over 70 survivors successfully securing employment in 2020 despite the pandemic. The economic implications of the pandemic also extended into additional expenses, including COVID-19 testing, personal protective equipment, and the need for electronic devices and access to the internet as all services and communication appeared to move online. A21 provided these items and services to all survivors enrolled in its country’s Aftercare program, as needed.

**Repatriation Difficulties**

Border closures in part or whole at various points throughout 2020 caused extreme difficulties in facilitating the repatriation of survivors for many reasons. The unexpected demands and urgent responses caused by the pandemic stressed existing government structures resulting in delays in other services, including the necessary government processes to facilitate repatriations, such as issuance of travel documents for survivors amongst others. Delays or in some cases, cancelations of flights, further complicated repatriation efforts. In one case, the unavailability of commercial flights resulted in extensive coordination of the governments of the source and destination countries, and the ultimate issuance of a charter flight in order to facilitate a survivor’s repatriation. In other cases, difficulties in obtaining travel documents, coordinating quarantine and COVID-19 testing efforts, resulted in a two-week delay for the repatriation of a survivor. Similar delays were faced by survivors in destination countries trying to repatriate back to countries where A21 operates. During these delays, survivors continued to need provision, including housing and basic needs.

While A21 was able to successfully address these needs directly, or through government or partner organisations, these pandemic related challenges significantly increased expenses, time and effort for all involved, in order to ensure provision of the same services available pre-pandemic.

**IDENTIFICATION CHALLENGES**

Governments throughout the world worked quickly to allocate and divert resources to address the alarming safety considerations created by the pandemic. Simultaneously, varying degrees of COVID-19 restrictions throughout 2020 such as mandated business closures and lockdowns, occupancy limits and social distancing, resulted in vacancy in public areas, and decreased opportunities to report suspected trafficking. In some countries, law enforcement initiated victim identification operations decreased significantly as a result of the pandemic. Other countries overwhelmed by the needs created by the pandemic, diverted resources from counter-trafficking efforts to respond to immediate pandemic needs. Personnel, including law enforcement officers were also affected due to exposure to COVID-19, and quarantine requirements, leading to law enforcement shortages, hindering counter-trafficking efforts. Closure of legal brothels in compliance with COVID-19 regulations did not hinder the operations of illegal brothels, which merely moved to private residences, but did result in a decrease of reports of potential trafficking. Although the reason for the reduced reporting is unclear, as a result of strict lockdowns, the general population decreased its activities and public presence. This necessarily diminished opportunities to observe suspicious activity. Moreover, in Greece in particular, historically many reports of suspected trafficking originated from clients of legal brothels, which were closed during the pandemic. Any ‘clients’ of illegal brothels would clearly be violating the law and less inclined to submit a report. That, along with the significant decrease of public activity, likely contributed to the reduction in reports, evincing that the pandemic did not stop the trafficking of persons, but merely increased the difficulty in detection.

In a number of countries, A21 observed that in contrast to previous years, 2020 yielded a larger percentage of domestic trafficking survivors than foreign national survivors encountered. It is unclear however whether closed borders resulted in less influx of vulnerable foreign nationals, or whether decreased identification efforts across the board resulted in a lower number of identified foreign nationals, or other reasoning.

**COVID-19 INCREASES VULNERABILITY AMONGST MIGRANTS**

The inability for many people to travel back home to family and social support, left many already vulnerable populations in even more precarious situations.
Unemployment ‘amplified the socio-economic vulnerability of those who depend on mobility for survival’,¹⁴ with individuals left unable to work due to local lockdown measures. Many countries implemented stimulus packages for their citizens.¹⁵ However, non-citizens and undocumented populations were often not included and therefore, unable to receive government assistance. This placed an even greater economic strain on many families and individuals, increasing risk of exploitation. The pandemic and resulting restrictions of movement also left many low-skilled migrants ‘disproportionately affected by the pandemic’ having to stay in crowded living conditions.¹⁶ Some migrant communities/camps around the world experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks were completely barricaded and cordoned off with barbed wire or guards,¹⁷ forced to live in cramped situations, increasing their exposure to the virus. In Greece for example, refugee camps situated on the Greek islands during the pandemic experienced significant overpopulation, with one island housing approximately 13,000 people in a camp designed to host 3,000.

Travel restrictions also limited the ‘ability of displaced people to seek refuge’,¹⁸ leaving many individuals in vulnerable and unsafe situations and others more dependent on ‘intermediaries and facilitators, from employment agencies to smugglers’.¹⁹ The combination of desperation and border closures also ‘pushed smugglers to use more dangerous routes and raise their prices’,²⁰ meaning more people explored irregular forms of migration, placing people at an even higher risk of being exploited. These trends were witnessed by some of A21’s staff after interviewing individuals who disclosed known community members using irregular migration channels due to closed borders, in an attempt to find employment outside their country.

While the pandemic brought the world to a standstill in many ways, traffickers shifted to continue to recruit and victimise individuals in spite of the restrictions. Counter-trafficking organisations, including A21, in turn shifted their operational strategies in response to ensure continued services and protections to the vulnerable, the victimised attempting to exit their exploitative situations and identified survivors working towards stabilisation and independence.

INCREASE IN ONLINE EXPLOITATION

As countries responded to COVID-19 by shutting down non-essential businesses and enforcing lockdown restrictions all across the world, much of society, including perpetrators, moved online. As discussed in more detail previously, the pandemic-induced economic crisis resulted in unprecedented global unemployment causing an increase of false job opportunities, with many being advertised online. The increase in the use of the internet to facilitate exploitation was not limited to false jobs, but also to groom and sexually exploit both adults and children, or on occasion to sell sexual services. In South Africa for example, social media accounts were used to ‘auction’ off women for sexual services specifically for companionship during the lockdown. These services were advertised as a ‘charitable contribution’ for women in need of work due to loss of wages resulting from lockdown restrictions.

Law enforcement globally have recognised that school closures, mass lockdowns of cities and social isolation, have also led to an increase of online child sexual exploitation through social media, video games, and other online activity.²¹ Consistent with that prediction, A21 observed a rising trend in online child sexual exploitation (OCSE) cases in Thailand in 2020 compared to the previous year. Moreover, in 2020, A21 received more requests for resources, and in particular those addressing online child exploitation, from governments, schools, community groups and other NGOs, further substantiating the increase in online exploitation during the pandemic.

A21’s Response

As a direct response to the impact of the pandemic, A21 adjusted its operations to varying degrees depending on the country and consistent with national regulations, in an attempt to provide continuous service to vulnerable populations and identified survivors. Often, A21 filled gaps created unexpectedly by newly implemented COVID-19 restrictions. Such gaps included, but were not limited to, coordinating COVID-19 testing for survivors, including payment as needed; providing various types of housing, ranging from emergency accommodation such as hotel or hostel placement to longer-term accommodation such as financial assistance for rent or placement in an A21 apartment; and provision of electronic equipment such as laptops or tablets, and accompanying internet data, to ensure survivors enrolled in A21’s Aftercare program continued to receive services remotely.
Through these adjustments, A21 provided ongoing aftercare services to 302 survivors, including the entry of 130 new survivors into its Aftercare program in 2020. Moreover, despite challenges of repatriation in 2020, A21 assisted in the successful repatriation of 14 survivors. Finally, in the face of economic challenges posed by the pandemic in 2020, over 70 survivors secured employment and 18 survivors graduated from A21’s Aftercare program, with sufficient resources to live independently.

A21 continued its intervention efforts, albeit in modified capacity, resulting in a total of 235 victimised individuals assisted in 2020 through various identification efforts, as well as via referrals where A21 played a part in the care or onward referral of already identified survivors. Despite the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, A21 still continued to proactively coordinate and support the identification of those victimised by trafficking through three main programs: A21 Hotlines, outreach activities through its Child Advocacy Centres (CAC) and coordinated multi-agency identification operations. As a result of these efforts, A21 was directly involved in the identification of 139 victimised individuals in 2020. Although in-person identification operations, usually conducted alongside law enforcement, greatly decreased in 2020, A21 still participated intermittently throughout 2020 upon request in some countries with necessary safety measures in place. Adjustment to frontline professional training from in-person to online, resulted in 101 trainings conducted by A21 staff globally, and a total of 2,685 professionals trained. Interestingly, the availability of training online resulted in a broader reach and higher attendance of professionals, as the ease of online access accommodated many busy schedules, and travel no longer had to be coordinated. For instance, in the UK, health industry professionals with limited schedules due to the strain caused by the pandemic, expressed a preference for online training in order to provide flexibility around work schedules, resulting in double the number of participants in sessions, as compared to previous years.

A21 also adjusted its prevention and awareness efforts to conduct its programs online. Through modification of its human trafficking curriculum, Bodies Are Not Commodities (BANC), to an online platform, more than 728,000 students used A21’s BANC curriculum and accompanying educational resources, which contain targeted content aligned with nationally contextualised education standards for each country. Moreover, understanding the new vulnerabilities resulting from increased online exploitation, A21 also created new resources in 2020 addressing online safety, as well as launched a free digital course, ‘Human Trafficking: A Global Crisis’, to help further educate the general public about the realities of human trafficking and online exploitation. This digital course utilised videos from A21’s existing Human Trafficking Awareness Program (HTAP) that informed an estimated 758,000 people globally. Aspects of this program were also highlighted on social media in the week leading up to July 30th, World Day Against Trafficking, where A21 had record-breaking engagement, shares, awareness, and people speaking about human trafficking, reaching over 30 million people through digital media. In total, more than 2,400,000 children and adults were reached with awareness through A21’s human trafficking presentations, online materials, and digital courses around the world, reaching 980,000 more individuals than in 2019. A21 also translated and contextualised its Primary Prevention Program (PPP) into seven languages, and 11 versions, and made them available online. In 2020, over 891,000 children are estimated to have participated in the program.

Finally, in lieu of A21’s global annual in-person awareness event ‘Walk For Freedom’ (WFF) which ordinarily takes place in 52 countries, in recognition of the European Union Anti-Trafficking Day (18 October 2020), A21 hosted its first ever ‘Global Freedom Summit’ (GFS). The GFS utilised an online platform on EU Anti-Trafficking Day to educate the general public with basic human trafficking information as well as to provide avenues for the general public to learn how to further combat human trafficking. The GFS resulted in over 2,000 local COVID-19 safe events organised across 71 countries, reaching an estimated 100 million people through digital media. Through the use of online platforms and digital media, A21’s GFS allowed more people to be reached with an anti-human trafficking message than had been reached in previous years.
Conclusion

While A21 was able to quickly adapt its programs to COVID-19 restrictions to ensure continuation of its operations globally, the pandemic had clear adverse effects overall on global efforts to combat human trafficking and exploitation. Although traffickers continued to exploit individuals, with government resources diverted to address the health emergency, and with strict restrictions in place globally, the need for NGOs to continue operations was clearly highlighted. Notwithstanding continued operations, as a result of the challenges presented, the number of survivors both identified and entering into A21’s Aftercare program decreased globally in 2020. The movement of trainings and awareness activities online however, resulted in an increase in the number of frontline professionals and general public being educated and trained on key anti-human trafficking information. Moreover, throughout all of A21’s operational countries, collaboration between stakeholders amongst others increased significantly in response to the decrease in resources, as it became quickly apparent that only through working together would human trafficking be deterred. A21 eagerly anticipates that newly formed partnerships and relationships during the pandemic, will continue to grow and strengthen counter-trafficking collaborative efforts in the years to come.


4 There are an estimated 258 million migrants globally, comprising of many different groups of people, including: migrant workers, international students, refugees, irregular migrants, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, stateless persons and trafficked and exploited persons who may have been taken across international borders: International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2021a) Global Migration trends. Global Migration Indicators 2018. https://www.iom.int/global-migration-trends.


8 Meghan Benton, et al. (2021), 2.


13 ’Victim identification operations’ as referenced throughout this report defines efforts to intervene in possible exploitative situations. ‘Victims’ as referenced in this phrase, include a range of individuals including not only those being actively trafficked, but also ‘potential victims’, which encompass those in the process of being initially approached, groomed, or recruited, or certain vulnerable populations such as refugees, irregular migrants, and certain marginalised ethnic groups that have been historically targeted by traffickers.

14 ILO (2020) at 3.


21 This number reflects the total number of survivors assisted through any intervention program of A21. See Appendix B for an in-depth description of these programs.
A21’s Response

A21 Bulgaria pursues a three-pronged operational strategy in its anti-trafficking approach within the country: prevention, awareness and professional training to reduce the prevalence of trafficking; interventions and hotlines to assist those at-risk or currently being exploited; and restorative aftercare services and reintegration support for repatriated survivors of trafficking. In all areas, COVID-19 and the associated security measures affected A21 Bulgaria’s operations, requiring shifts in strategy in order to maintain the anti-trafficking mission.
Prevention & Awareness

Every year, A21 Bulgaria works actively in schools in predominantly high-risk regions to present the topic of human trafficking to both students and educators and to build a peer-to-peer educational networks for anti-trafficking advocacy. The Sofia Educational Inspectorate and the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings have officially approved A21’s school program. In 2019, 3,114 high school students participated in A21 Bulgaria’s prevention curriculum. In 2020, this activity was not possible as the schools were closed nationwide due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, A21 Bulgaria developed new programs consistent with restrictions and delivered existing tools in an online format. These programs included the launch of an online dating safety campaign, a digital safety campaign on social media, and safety guides for children and parents. Despite circumstances, the increased efforts in raising awareness online resulted in an increased impact compared to the previous year, with a potential 300,000 people reached in 2020. In response to the rising unemployment in the country, A21 Bulgaria executed a Summer Jobs campaign and Safe Employment campaign that resulted in a substantial increase in employment screening calls to A21’s National Human Trafficking Hotline during their promotion period. A21 Bulgaria also collaborated with the Bulgarian National Employment Agency, educating 122 labour inspectors on the identification and reporting of potential human trafficking situations, the dangers of false job offers, and the job vetting services offered by the Hotline. More than 10,000 resources such as leaflets and posters with the Hotline number were distributed throughout the country in an effort to reach the highly vulnerable groups such as the unemployed.

Identification & Intervention Efforts

The Bulgarian National Human Trafficking Hotline (‘the Hotline’) is a resource to support survivors of human trafficking and provide advice and assistance on human trafficking issues. The Hotline was officially launched in 2015 by A21 Bulgaria in partnership with the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. The National Human Trafficking Hotline is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, and can respond in more than 200 languages. Calls to the Hotline are toll-free from any Bulgarian number both inside and outside of the country. A21 Bulgaria also operates an informational website that enables individuals to report trafficking-related tips online and deploys social media and public campaigns to educate the public of the availability and resources of the Hotline. During the periods where Bulgaria enforced stricter measures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as government-mandated travel restrictions, the Hotline experienced a significant drop in the number of calls. There were 22% fewer contacts received compared to 2019, with the lowest numbers corresponding with the national lockdown periods. In response to the increased vulnerability due to job losses caused by COVID-19, the Hotline shifted to raising awareness online, including the danger of false job opportunities, and to provide guidance on seeking assistance. As a result of targeted online awareness campaigns, the Hotline reported over a 400% increase of reports submitted through online means such as Facebook and through the dedicated Hotline website (www.080020100.bg) as compared to the previous year, demonstrating the positive impact of the shift to online campaigns and targeted audience demographics. More detailed analysis can be found in the accompanying Bulgaria Annual Hotline Report. Despite hurdles caused by COVID-19 restrictions, A21 Bulgaria’s collective Hotline and intervention programs resulted in the successful identification of 40 confirmed survivors, trafficked both domestically and abroad in 2020. Those identified abroad were successfully repatriated back to Bulgaria.

Aftercare Services

A21 Bulgaria operates a broad spectrum of restorative care services for trafficking survivors. As Bulgaria is a source country for trafficking, and survivors are often returning to their same vulnerable situations, A21 Bulgaria established a Freedom Centre to assist returning survivors with aftercare services. This drop-in day centre is designed to be a safe location for continued case management contact, learning, counselling, and skills training focused on safe reintegration back into society and equipping individuals to live independently. Over the years, A21 Bulgaria has seen the effect that this kind of long term integration support has on reducing vulnerability and re-trafficking. The A21 Bulgaria Aftercare program also offers medical, psychological and legal support to survivors, financial assistance for short-term and long-term accommodation, basic needs support, education and vocational training. In 2020, A21 Bulgaria was able to quickly shift methods in its delivery of aftercare services, adapting
to COVID-19 requirements to provide services unceasingly to survivors. The Freedom Centre continued to operate with specific requirements in terms of the number of concurrent visitors, required PCR testing, and sanitisation measures. For a period of two months, intra-country travel was forbidden, thus impeding assistance to visiting and supporting survivors who lived outside the Bulgarian capital of Sofia. As travel to other cities was forbidden, A21 Bulgaria began utilising partner networks to reach survivors in remote regions with provisions as well as deploying technology, such as tablets and smartphones to continue the psychological support that was being offered before the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of changes in operational capacity of other NGOs in the country due to COVID, A21 Bulgaria experienced an increased number of survivors entering into A21’s Aftercare program, commencing after the first quarter of 2020, and continuing through the rest of the year. Overall for 2020, the average caseload per quarter increased by 40% to 12.3 from 8.8 average cases per quarter in 2019. In addition, the Aftercare team assisted four survivors to find jobs, despite the rising unemployment in the country. A21 continued to offer the A21 Survivor Relocations Services (A21 SRS) program that aims to provide an avenue for worldwide referral of aftercare services for survivors of human trafficking, as well as domestic and international relocation and repatriation services. Within Bulgaria, almost all cases requiring repatriation are instigated via the Hotline. A21 then provides screening, translation support, pre-departure support, document restoration, and financial provision for the repatriation, culminating in ongoing aftercare support, to decrease the likelihood of re-trafficking. Despite complications in the COVID-19 affected year, A21 Bulgaria internationally repatriated 10 survivors back to Bulgaria and domestically relocated 12 survivors in 2020. Although a number of court proceedings were temporarily halted from March to late June 2020, by early July most had begun in-person proceedings with safeguarding provisions in place. One survivor receiving legal representation funded by A21, actually received her requested civil relief during the pandemic, after years of litigation. The COVID-19 pandemic required the delivery of additional services to both new and existing survivors. Additional costs and services included payment for COVID-19 PCR tests required for placement in shelters, purchasing sanitising equipment and personal protective equipment, assisting survivors in accessing medical treatment, and sending food vouchers and food aid to crisis centres and shelters across the country whose operational capacity was handicapped due to COVID-19 limitations. Placement of survivors of trafficking therefore became increasingly difficult with fewer shelters able to house survivors due to COVID-19 restrictions and health concerns, resulting in survivors being transported to shelters in locations further away or being placed in temporary accommodation such as hotels and hostels. Categories of survivors, such as males, who historically had placement challenges pre-pandemic, had even more difficulty finding accommodations during the pandemic due to these restrictions. During this period, A21 Bulgaria did not receive any government funding or COVID-19 specific grants to support those unexpected expenses.
A21 Bulgaria continued to facilitate international repatriations of survivors despite significant barriers and delays due to COVID-19. Shutdowns of institutions affected survivor access to support in the country of identification and country of return, including delay in the issuance of travel and immigration documents; lack of facilities designated for quarantine/accommodation; and challenges in the formal identification and recognition as a victim of trafficking under the law to name a few.

One such case involved a young survivor of human trafficking by sexual exploitation who escaped her trafficker in a Western European country during the height of the lockdown and called the Bulgarian Hotline for assistance. The Hotline immediately contacted partner NGOs to directly assist the survivor. Working collaboratively, A21 SRS services were activated to facilitate the safe repatriation and recovery of the survivor back to Bulgaria. However, a number of barriers stemming from COVID-19 restrictions arose during this repatriation. Borders were officially closed, issuance of identification documents necessary for travel from the in-country Bulgarian Embassy was unusually delayed, and with shelters unavailable, and many hotels closed, placement of the survivor in temporary accommodation was challenging. Through strong collaboration and advocacy with the in-country partner NGO, safe housing was secured, while the Bulgarian Hotline worked on resolving hurdles caused by the pandemic to ensure successful repatriation. Strict quarantine requirements meant the survivor needed to secure safe housing in Bulgaria prior to re-entry. Successful shelter placement requires a government certification of the survivor as an official ‘victim of trafficking’, however, closures delayed the Bulgarian Embassy from issuing the necessary certification in advance of travel, and border closures halted the regular screenings at the ports of entry. Fortunately, through a pre-existing relationship, A21 was able to arrange for the Bulgarian Border Police to conduct a special identification screening at the airport. Despite the hurdles, the survivor persevered through this process and ultimately A21 successfully facilitated the survivor’s travel back to Bulgaria, mandatory COVID-19 testing, and secured safe accommodation consistent with Bulgarian quarantine requirements. The prohibition of all intra-country travel pursuant to the lockdown required A21 to rely on partnership with Border Police to facilitate the survivor’s travel to the shelter. Coordinating the repatriation process to Bulgaria (including transport and accommodation) exceeded two weeks. This particular case was one of several that demonstrated the complications of survivor-support in the wake of domestic and international COVID-19 security measures, and also the need for heightened coordination amongst parties.

⁵ Ibid.
⁶ Svobona Evropa (Free Europe), A sharp increase in unemployment in Bulgaria is reported in December, Dec. 8, 2020, https://www.svobodnaevropa.bg/a/30989877.html.
‘After seven years of sexual exploitation and four more in searching for justice I had lost my trust in people completely. It is only since I call you that I started to feel as if there is hope I can move forward.’

—Survivor, 36 y.o.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in unprecedented challenges for the Hotline in 2020. During the first and second wave of COVID-19 in the country, the Hotline experienced a decrease in calls compared to previous years. The Hotline also noticed a preference for reporting through the dedicated website and via social media platforms over direct phone calls. New trends observed by the Hotline included an increase in domestic trafficking cases compared to previous years and the prevalence of employment screening requests and individuals seeking job opportunities abroad, despite government restrictions on travel and border closures. Despite the challenges caused by COVID-19, the Hotline continued to operate services uninterrupted. Reports to the Hotline continued to be referred to law enforcement, resulting in the identification of victims, both within Bulgaria and internationally.

‘Contacts’ to the Hotline include all forms of incoming enquiries, made via various channels, such as by telephone, email or other online means. ‘Contacts’ include reports on a potential human trafficking situation, related and unrelated crimes as well as more general enquiries about human trafficking, requests for assistance or job vetting requests. Non-substantive ‘contacts’ are excluded from this report.

‘Reports’ refer to contacts to the Hotline relating to a potential human trafficking situation, via any communication channel.

The following statistics in this report are based solely on substantive contacts related to human trafficking made to the Hotline from January - December 2020. Substantive contacts exclude hang-ups, missed calls, wrong numbers and instances where the reason for calling is unknown.

Disaggregated data has been collected on each individual case on descriptive factors including gender, age, type of trafficking, methods of control and recruitment methods. The below data is based on the cases where the specified information was made available.
Overview of Data

In 2020, the Bulgarian Human Trafficking Hotline received a total of 432 contacts. These ‘contacts’ include all calls and enquiries made through online means, as well as any follow-up calls on existing cases regarding assistance and general requests for information. While there were fewer phone calls to the Hotline in 2020, there was a 433% increase in reports through online means, such as through the dedicated Hotline website, as compared to the previous year.¹

Age and Gender

Ninety-three percent of reports to the Hotline in 2020 related to female victims. While the Hotline on occasion receives reports involving minors, the vast majority of reports related to adult victims. In 2020, child trafficking comprised only 10.3% of reports to the Hotline, and of which primarily involved the sex trafficking of minors.

Recruitment Methods

Traffickers use certain recruitment methods to deceive and coerce victims into situations of exploitation. In the cases where a recruitment method was identified, the two most common recruitment tactics were false job opportunities and the ‘loverboy’ scheme, where traffickers groom and manipulate the victim into a relationship in order to exploit them.

Victim Demographics

In 2020, after responding to various reports of potential human trafficking situations, the Hotline confirmed that at least 25 victims of trafficking were identified and assisted.

Caller Demographics

Since its inception in 2015, the Hotline has received reports from potential victims, concerned friends and family members, non-governmental organisations, law enforcement partners and the general public. In 2020, the majority of contacts to the Hotline originated from Community Members, composed of the general public, friends or family members of the potential victim, and victims who call the Hotline directly. Fifty percent of those contacts included reports from concerned friends or relatives of potential victims. The Hotline often receives reports from callers who are located outside of Bulgaria. In 2020, the Hotline received reports from numerous countries, including Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, amongst others. Most reports to the Hotline from outside Bulgaria originated from Germany.

Victim Nationality

The majority of human trafficking victims identified were predominantly from minority groups, such as the Roma community. A high proportion of reports to the Hotline involved transnational trafficking cases, with 41.4% of victims reported having been exploited abroad.
Methods of Control

Traffickers use certain means of control to manipulate and force their victims into staying in an exploitative situation. The methods of control reported here include threat, isolation, emotional, physical or economic abuse and the withholding of personal identification documentation, amongst others. From the data available from reports submitted to the Hotline, the most common method of control was physical abuse, most typically seen in cases of sexual exploitation. Other reported trends included traffickers using threats, isolation and induced substance abuse to coerce and control their victims. However, the Hotline rarely observes a single method of control as traffickers use a combination of different methods to coerce and manipulate victims.

Exploitation Type

In 2020, 86% of reports to the Hotline were cases of sex trafficking. Reports of labour exploitation were predominantly related to the agricultural sector. The Hotline also received several employment screening requests where individuals sought assistance about the legitimacy of job opportunities. Almost every report to the Hotline regarding a suspicious job opportunity had significant indicators of risk for potential trafficking. Due to COVID-19 non-essential travel restrictions, employment agencies offering jobs abroad would more likely be illegitimate organisations. Of all reports received related to human trafficking in 2020, the Hotline identified a connection to Germany in 61% of cases, where the trafficker either exploited the victim in Germany or attempted to transport the victim to Germany. All these cases involved sexual exploitation. This observation by the Hotline is consistent with the fact that Bulgarian citizens are one of the top nationalities reported to be trafficked in Germany. The Hotline also noted a connection to Germany in reports received concerning Bulgarian citizens that were ultimately unrelated to human trafficking such as domestic violence or labour abuse cases.

The observations contained in this report is limited to information communicated to the Bulgarian National Human Trafficking Hotline during the reporting period. Nothing arising from the data should be interpreted as showing the full extent or prevalence of human trafficking in Bulgaria.

1 To ensure data integrity, the data presented is extracted from reports submitted to the Hotline consisting mainly of those confirmed and assisted as identified victims of trafficking. Therefore, this report takes a conservative approach in presenting the Hotline data and analysis, for the most part omitting reports of potential victims of human trafficking which were unable to be substantiated or confirmed.


3 Threat includes threatening to harm the victim, the victim’s family or other persons, threat to expose or shame the victim, threat to report the victim to the police or immigration.

4 Isolation may include physical isolation or deprivation of liberty, denying access to medical support, surveillance or control of the victim in public, isolating the victim by moving the victim frequently from place to place.

5 Economic abuse includes situations of debt bondage or where traffickers limit the finances of the victim either in whole or in part.
Due to the Kingdom of Cambodia’s lower-middle-income status¹ and proximity to wealthier nations, Cambodia has been recognised as both a source and destination country for all forms of human trafficking. Cambodian nationals are trafficked through sexual exploitation, forced labour, forced marriage, forced begging, or exploited as domestic servants, domestically and abroad.² Traffickers also frequently exploit persons with disabilities, the elderly, and children, forcing them to beg domestically or trafficking them across the border through organised criminal begging rings. Trafficking and sexual exploitation of children are also prevalent more in a clandestine manner in entertainment and retail spaces.³

Irregular migration significantly contributes to the trafficking of Cambodian nationals who often travel abroad for work due to a ‘lack of sufficient employment opportunities available domestically’.⁴ The lack of job availability, coupled with porous borders between Cambodia and neighbouring nations, allows irregular forms of migration to occur, increasing vulnerability and risk of exploitation.⁵ The Cambodian Government and diplomatic missions proactively identify, assist and repatriate Cambodian survivors of trafficking back home with the financial support of non-government organisations (NGOs), including A21.⁶ The Cambodian Government has manifested its commitment to combat trafficking not only through specific anti-human trafficking laws,⁷ but also through the creation of the National Committee for Counter Trafficking (NCCT). The NCCT is a national mechanism for coordinating and gathering information about the efforts of ministries, institutions, national and international NGOs, private sector, and other stakeholders to combat human trafficking. The NCCT is the oversight for the Provincial Committee for Counter Trafficking (PCCT) which effectively operates as provincial multidisciplinary teams (MDT) of relevant departments, institutions, national and international NGOs, private sector, and other stakeholders purportedly to coordinate and streamline anti-trafficking efforts in a particular region.⁸

COVID-19 Impact on Human Trafficking

Official reports on COVID-19 in Cambodia as of December 31, 2020, recorded 366 cases and zero deaths.⁹ At the beginning of the pandemic, Cambodia closed all borders, including major border crossings with Thailand, which historically have been significant avenues for traffickers. Despite border closures however, economic hardship increased by COVID-19 resulted in Cambodian nationals continuing to use irregular means to cross international borders in search of employment. Intermittent closure of schools throughout the year, commencing in March 2020, forced children to conduct their schooling online and increased their vulnerability to online exploitation.
A21 initially began operations on the Thailand-Cambodia border in 2016 for the sole purpose of facilitating the safe repatriation of child-survivors from Thailand back to Cambodia. As a result of A21’s initial work in the border town of Poipet, a key crossing point of the two countries, the need for A21 to become fully operational in Cambodia quickly became apparent. A21 opened its first office in Poipet in 2018, and later expanded operations to Siem Reap, by opening Cambodia’s first Child Advocacy Centre (CAC) there in December, 2019. A21 Cambodia currently operates offices in both Poipet and Siem Reap, as well as provides support to other provinces, such as Battambang, Phnom Penh and Kampong Cham, in response to requests for victim identification and/or reintegration assistance.

A21 Cambodia regularly adjusted its programs to abide by government regulations in response to COVID-19, to ensure the continuous delivery of programs and services throughout the year. As the government implemented various lockdown measures in 2020, many service providers in areas where A21 also operate, either greatly decreased their activity or ceased completely for a variety of reasons. Consequently, A21 Cambodia experienced a greater demand for its services not only from the government, but also from other local organisations.

RESTRICTIONS LIMIT CAPACITY IN SHELTERS

On January 31, 2020 the MoSaVY announced COVID-19 restrictions, limiting group gatherings and encouraging NGO staff to work from home when possible. Such restrictions also applied to aftercare facilities, and vocational training schools which were precluded from admitting new survivors into shelter-based care in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The restriction period made it very challenging for NGOs, including A21, to refer survivors to services including shelters and psychosocial services care due to their restricted capacity.

A21’s Response

A21 Cambodia predominantly focuses its prevention and awareness efforts to vulnerable groups, including disadvantaged and rural communities and street children, as well as schools and partner organisations. Like most of the world, Cambodia closed schools intermittently throughout the year, and transferred classes online. In response to the resulting increased vulnerability to online exploitation, and requests from authorities for prevention material, A21 Cambodia, along with other relevant NGOs, provided online safety resources to parents and community members.

Strict government mandates resulted not only in school closures and restricted gatherings, but also the complete prohibition of any in-person events involving children. In response, A21 Cambodia shifted to training adults, including educators who would be able to provide prevention education to their students. In 2020, A21 Cambodia trained over 680 educators in ‘train the trainer’ style workshops to facilitate A21’s Primary Prevention Program (PPP) pursuant to guidance from the Provincial Ministry of Education (MOE) to prepare educators when schools reopened. The PPP is designed to empower primary-age children (6-12) to protect themselves against human trafficking and other risks through child-centred and play-based activities. This program equips educators with powerful protection tools for children, and is shared with education professionals across the country. A21 Cambodia also contextualised, translated into Khmer and distributed prevention and awareness resources, including the PPP, A21 Parent Guides and Safe Employment Guides, and prevention comic return to Cambodia. In a 2020 report by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSaVY), discussing the impact of the pandemic in Cambodia, 63,793 vulnerable individuals and victims of human trafficking and exploitation (specifically 31,733 men, 25,580 women, 3,318 boys, and 3,316 girls) were reported to have been deported from Thailand back to Cambodia due to being undocumented.¹⁰ The findings in the MoSaVY report are consistent with A21 Cambodia’s observations of the increase of vulnerabilities to exploitation as a result of the pandemic’s impact on the Cambodian economy. While not all irregular migration results in human trafficking, use of irregular channels certainly increases the risk of exploitation and trafficking.

Prevention & Awareness

A21 Cambodia predominantly focuses its prevention and awareness efforts to vulnerable groups, including disadvantaged and rural communities and street children, as well as schools and partner organisations. Like most of the world, Cambodia closed schools intermittently throughout the year, and transferred classes online. In response to the resulting increased vulnerability to online exploitation, and requests from authorities for prevention material, A21 Cambodia, along with other relevant NGOs, provided online safety resources to parents and community members.

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books which teach both children and adults to recognise human trafficking, as well as provide avenues to seek assistance. In 2020, A21 distributed over 1,500 print prevention materials directly to the community while following COVID-19 prevention measures. Responding to travel limitations throughout the pandemic, A21 Cambodia modified in-person presentations to an online platform, and conducted targeted awareness efforts online through social media in the local language.

In partnership with the PCCT in Siem Reap Province, A21 conducted prevention training specifically designed to strengthen the capacity of the local government to prevent human trafficking amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, to government partners across all 12 districts in the province. Participants included commune leaders, chiefs of villages, the MOE, local authorities, teachers, and the Cambodia Commune for Women and Children. Additionally, to address the continued use of irregular border crossings, A21 Cambodia conducted community prevention presentations and community-based aftercare programs in villages close to the Thai border in North Eastern Cambodia, expanding from Banteay Meanchey Province, Siem Reap Province and Battambang Province. Finally, in an effort to reach the public during lockdown, A21 along with speakers from government counter-trafficking entities, delivered a presentation on human trafficking on a local radio station, which was broadcasted across Cambodia and shared to more than 10,000 people on social media channels.

Identification & Intervention Efforts

A21 Cambodia works alongside local authorities to conduct preliminary victim identifications upon receiving reports of potential victims. Although A21 had initially anticipated that victim identifications would decrease due to COVID-19 restrictions and limitations with community outreach, A21 Cambodia’s preliminary identification and outreach operations still resulted in numerous confirmed victims of trafficking. In 2020, A21 Cambodia conducted 23 preliminary identification interviews, primarily of children, and more specifically 15 minor girls, three minor boys and five adult women. Fifteen of the preliminary victim identifications resulted directly from 17 proactive identification operations conducted by the Siem Reap CAC in partnership with local authorities. Referrals of potential human trafficking and child exploitation cases to the Siem Reap CAC increased significantly in the second half of 2020, with 15 identification interviews in contrast to eight in the first half of the year. Those 23 interviews resulted in the identification of 17 survivors (13 minor girls and four adult women), with 12 survivors entered into A21’s Aftercare program in the second half of the year in contrast to five in the first half. This increase of cases reported is likely the result of A21’s continued partnership with the Cambodian Government and the coordinated efforts to identify individuals victimised by all forms of trafficking.

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

In response to the interest expressed by local authorities in surrounding provinces in receiving training on human trafficking generally, and victim identification in particular, A21 regularly delivers training sessions to those working in frontline professions most likely to first encounter a victim or potential victim of trafficking. In 2020, these trainings were conducted with representatives from various government entities of the PCCT. A21’s collaboration with the Cambodian Government recognises that strengthening government capacity in this area will result in increased identification and assistance of individuals being exploited and trafficked throughout Cambodia.

These trainings encompassed, in part, recognising trafficking and the process of identification, conducting preliminary victim identification interviews, and survivor aftercare including understanding trauma, necessary services, and the availability of direct services to survivors in the region. A21 Cambodia conducted five such in-person training sessions with the Cambodian government to over 300 individuals, primarily frontline professionals. These trainings are fundamental to ensure that frontline professionals understand and apply a victim-centred approach in order to safeguard the identification process and support identified survivors. Additionally, these sessions also train frontline workers to create effective prevention programs, and assist in any ensuing criminal investigation and prosecution.

The proper investigation of a case and support of survivors can lead to relevant information resulting in the discovery of other trafficking victims, as well as other offenses committed by the traffickers. In conjunction with the Cambodian Government, A21 Cambodia also provided specialised training on interviewing and interacting with child-survivors, taking into consideration the important differences between a child and an adult, as well as the various stages of a child’s development. This specialised training included amongst other things, employing a trauma-informed, child-centred approach, the importance of a child forensic interview in obtaining reliable information from a child, and the characteristics of victimisation.
THE CHILD ADVOCACY CENTRE

The CAC is a safe and child-friendly facility where a child is able to speak to a trained forensic interviewer about the exploitation that a child has experienced, and receive direct trauma-informed aftercare services. While trauma affects individuals of all ages, obtaining reliable information from children who have experienced trauma for purposes of criminal prosecution presents unique problems. In addition to providing a trauma-informed, victim-centred approach to interviews of children, the CAC offers a centralised system for all stakeholders, through the MDT. The MDT collaborates and coordinates services to minimise trauma to the child-survivor during any ensuing criminal investigation in addition to ensuring child-survivors receive the aftercare services necessary for restoration. Potential victims of trafficking are referred to the CAC by law enforcement, government partners, partner NGOs and from the general community. A21’s Siem Reap CAC officially opened in December 2019 and remained open throughout most of the pandemic in 2020, except for limited periods of time consistent with government mandated restrictions. As the first CAC in Cambodia, the concept of child forensic interviews underlying A21’s Siem Reap CAC being fairly new to Cambodian government officials, resulted in initially few interview referrals. However, after receiving specialised training about child-survivors and gaining familiarity with the interviewing technique, government referrals for child-interviews increased, resulting in successful child forensic interviews and the Siem Reap CAC quickly becoming a cornerstone for safeguarding children in Siem Reap and adjoining regions. Where potential child-victims located in more remote regions could not travel to Siem Reap to be forensically interviewed, A21 staff with specialised training in interviewing children would accompany government authorities to visit the child and conduct the interviews. As a result, children were properly interviewed in a trauma-informed manner, and government officials witnessed the proper process first-hand.

Collaboration and cooperation between government, NGOs, and other stakeholders, and continued training on current trends, are essential in order to effectively combat human trafficking and exploitation. In furtherance of these efforts, in 2020, A21 Cambodia provided training on the CAC model and its strategy to combat human trafficking at the first ever Cambodia Crimes Against Children Conference hosted by U.S. Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), which provided the government and local stakeholders with specialised training in the area of investigation and prosecution of crimes against children from experts in the field.

Aftercare Services

A21 Cambodia facilitates a community-based aftercare program which works with local service providers to provide individualised care and services for each survivor. Throughout the pandemic restrictions, A21 received ongoing referrals for direct services, evincing that victims were still being identified and referred, and that trafficking continued during the pandemic. COVID-19 restrictions promulgated by the Ministry of Social Affairs, however, precluded a number of existing shelters and foster care programs from accepting new survivors into their aftercare programs, resulting in increased referrals to A21. In 2020, A21 Cambodia supported 32 survivors of human trafficking and child exploitation, of which 17 were new survivors entering into the Aftercare program. Survivors who entered into A21’s Aftercare program experienced a range of exploitation types including sex trafficking (24%), forced labour (16%), forced begging (48%), domestic servitude (8%) and other types of trafficking (4%). A21 Cambodia reported two core recruitment methods for the above, primarily being tricked, exploited, or sold by a family member (84%) and false job opportunities (16%). Victims of forced begging and forced labour were most commonly linked to recruitment from a family member, whereas a significant number of those victimised by sex trafficking and domestic servitude were recruited through false job opportunities.
Consistent with prior years, all survivors who entered A21’s Aftercare program in 2020 were ethnically Cambodian, trafficked either domestically within Cambodia or repatriated after being exploited in another nation, substantiating Cambodia as predominantly a source country in A21’s experience. Fifteen per cent of these survivors were male, and 85% were female, whereas in 2019, 37.50% of survivors were male and 62.50% female. Minors comprised over 75% of survivors who entered into A21 Cambodia’s Aftercare program in 2020, with the majority being exploited through forced begging cases. Upon identification as a trafficking victim and entry into A21’s Aftercare program, survivors have access to direct services. A21 social workers develop individually tailored case management plans according to each survivor’s needs and goals, which may include: education sponsorship (primary through to university); psychological services, by an A21 psychologist or partner organisation; safe housing through foster care sponsorship or assisted rent; A21’s life skills programs; dental and medical support; and other community-based care.

In 2020 compared to past years, A21 Cambodia observed an increase of children begging for money on city streets across the country. Eighty per cent of the street children interviewed during ‘CAC outreaches’¹³ reported that family members forced them to beg for money. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a lack of job availability and financial security appeared to increase pressure for individuals to take extra risks to find employment. One new survivor in A21’s Aftercare program, repatriated back to Cambodia in 2020 after being recruited through a false job scheme and sex trafficked, amidst the pandemic contemplated returning to the same foreign country on another job prospect. Due to job losses, family members pressured the survivor to find employment regardless of the possible danger. Fortunately, A21 assisted the survivor to find job training in Cambodia and worked with the family to ensure the survivor’s safety and security.

SURVIVORS RECRUITED THROUGH FALSE MARRIAGE ASSISTED

Transnational trafficking of girls and women through use of false marriage is a prevalent recruitment method in Cambodia. These false marriage recruitment cases resemble the traditional false employment type of trafficking schemes. Brokers approach Cambodian women and girls with information about the availability of marriage to wealthy husbands in certain countries, who could financially support both them and their families in Cambodia. Upon arrival in the destination country however, the women and girls realise that they have been victimised and trafficked. In 2020, several new survivors trafficked through a false marriage recruitment scheme entered into A21 Cambodia’s Aftercare program for the first time. These scenarios, like most in such trafficking cases, showed signs of force, fraud or coercion.

Many survivors were sexually assaulted, manipulated and controlled, with some resulting in pregnancy and the birth of their abusers’ baby. Although these survivors escaped and returned back to Cambodia in 2020, their children remain in the custody of their abusers. These survivors were all referred to A21’s Aftercare program after local Cambodian authorities officially identified them as victims of human trafficking. A21 Cambodia has supported the survivors with community-based aftercare services, including psychological and medical treatment, sponsorship for salon vocational training, and support for small business establishments.

Criminal prosecutions involving two survivors in A21’s Aftercare program commenced during this time period as well. While fewer criminal cases were processed during the strict lockdown periods, local authorities maintained momentum in their prosecution efforts throughout the year.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, A21 Cambodia adapted its Aftercare programs to include online classes and computer training. Where survivors lacked electronic devices, A21 Cambodia purchased smartphones and laptops to facilitate remote services. To mitigate against pandemic related economic impact, A21 supported some survivors with small food cart businesses from their homes. A21 Cambodia also delivered essential items, food and care packages to survivors living independently in the community who were isolated during lockdown. Social isolation also proved concerning to survivors, who expressed an eagerness to connect regularly with A21’s social work staff. When COVID-19 restrictions eased, survivors preferred to meet their counsellor in person, or study online at A21’s CAC. A significant number of children enrolled in A21’s Aftercare program relied on the CAC as a safe place to receive support throughout the pandemic; many routinely requested to come to the CAC when schools, business and community centres were closed.

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Ages of Survivors in A21’s Aftercare Program

![Pie chart showing the distribution of ages among survivors in A21’s Aftercare Program.](chart.png)

- 0-13 yrs old: 61.55%
- 14-17 yrs old: 15.38%
- 18-25 yrs old: 15.38%
- 26-35 yrs old: 7.69%
- 26-35 yrs old: 7.69%
Disclosure from a Child Forensic Interview at the CAC Results in a Successful Prosecution

In 2020, A21 received a call from local law enforcement requesting assistance with a severe case of child abuse. The young girl had grown up in a vulnerable community and was often placed in high-risk situations, and ultimately subjected to familial trafficking.

Although she escaped to an extended family member’s house, when she reported her rape, her family attempted to force her to marry the perpetrator to maintain a positive reputation within the community. Local authorities became aware of her situation and after the child was identified, brought her to the Siem Reap CAC, where A21’s trained staff conducted a recorded child forensic interview. A21 provided key information conveyed from the forensic interview to local authorities who then conducted a further investigation, resulting in the successful prosecution of the perpetrator. The child is now safe and has entered into A21’s Aftercare program where A21’s social workers are working closely with her to develop and pursue her goals for the future. A21 has sponsored the child-survivor’s return to school and provides tutoring from the CAC to help build confidence. As a result of this survivor’s disclosure, A21’s prevention staff subsequently partnered with the village leader of her home community to conduct human trafficking prevention and awareness training to educate other children in the community about human trafficking and child exploitation, as well as to provide them with prevention and awareness resources in order to strengthen safeguarding practices within the community.
Greece is primarily a transit and destination country for victims of human trafficking. Perpetrators transport victims into the country to be exploited in mainland Greece or the accompanying islands as the final destination, or via Greece through migration routes with the intent to ultimately traffic individuals into Western Europe.

Although prostitution is legal in Greece, many illegal and unregistered brothels continue to operate, particularly in the larger cities of Athens and Thessaloniki. These illegal brothels operate in private accommodations or in certain commercial premises such as bars, strip clubs and massage parlours. While victims of trafficking can be found both in legal and illegal brothels, the majority of cases of sex trafficking and forced prostitution appear to originate from illegal brothels. One of the most prevalent forms of trafficking in Greece is sex trafficking of women. Although victims of sex trafficking in Greece come from a broad array of countries including Greece, in A21's experience, most cases of confirmed victims of trafficking originate from Eastern and Southern Europe. Victims of sex trafficking are also reported from China, Iraq, Nigeria, and Russia. Traffickers operating in Greece are primarily Greeks and other Western and Eastern Europeans, or from the Caucasus and Central Asia. The migrant and refugee population, including those who ultimately reside in Greece, as well as those currently residing in Greece seeking employment abroad, are particularly vulnerable to exploitation through false job opportunities. In recent years, there has been a stark rise in unaccompanied minors in Greece, causing considerable safeguarding concerns regarding the potential risk of exploitation.

THE ILLEGAL SEX TRADE CONTINUES

While the COVID-19 pandemic brought most of society to a standstill, the pandemic and ensuing restrictions merely resulted in traffickers seeking alternative methods to recruit and exploit victims. As national lockdown measures mandated the closure of all non-essential businesses, including legal brothels, there were numerous reports that illegal brothels continued to operate in private and temporary accommodations such as rental residences and even in motorhomes. This corroborates observations from A21 Greece and partner organisations that traffickers continued their exploits despite the lockdown. In fact, traffickers forced victims to provide sexual services during lockdown to compensate for lost finances due to the closure of brothels, notwithstanding the health concerns posed by COVID-19. As the pandemic drove prostitution further underground, this only accentuated the vulnerability and isolation of victims, making it more difficult to escape exploitative situations or for the public to report suspicions. In light of this, the A21 operated national human trafficking hotline (‘1109 Hotline’) experienced a significant decrease in the usual reports from clients of legal brothels as the closure of brothels left clients unable to report potential trafficking situations. In previous years, clients of brothels accounted for a significant number of reports to the 1109 Hotline. As any brothel operating during the pandemic however was clearly doing so illegally, the 1109 Hotline did not receive reports from these ‘clients’.
RESTRICTIONS INCREASE REFUGEE VULNERABILITY TO TRAFFICKING

The 1109 Hotline received many reports and assistance requests concerning the refugee and migrant population where there were significant trafficking and safeguarding concerns. Overpopulation is a particular concern in the refugee camps situated on the Greek islands, with one island housing approximately 13,000 people in a camp designed to host 3,000. Those situated in the camps rely predominantly on assistance from government and non-governmental organisations to provide basic necessities such as food, medicine, and hygiene products. The national lockdown also applied to refugees situated in camps on the islands, limiting their movements under the ensuing travel restrictions. The travel restrictions imposed to combat the COVID-19 pandemic created concerns that potential victims were further isolated and potentially confined in the same location as their traffickers or other potential exploiters.

The pandemic also affected organisations working in the camps as forced staffing reduction caused significant delays in providing services. For example, the COVID-19 restrictions limited the number of government officials permitted to work on-site for issuing or renewing legal papers, causing week or month long delays and postponements on asylum decisions. A devastating fire outbreak in the camps and an earthquake on the islands caused further disruption throughout 2020 that left the population severely under-resourced and requiring the provision of food, shelter, and other necessities. A21 Greece organised specialised support and an earthquake on the islands caused further disruption throughout 2020, A21 Greece provided this same support for the refugee and migrant community who entered camps as forced staffing reduction caused significant delays in providing services. For example, the COVID-19 restrictions limited the number of government officials permitted to work on-site for issuing or renewing legal papers, causing week or month long delays and postponements on asylum decisions. A devastating fire outbreak in the camps and an earthquake on the islands caused further disruption throughout 2020 that left the population severely under-resourced and requiring the provision of food, shelter, and other necessities. A21 Greece organised specialised support for the refugee and migrant community who entered A21’s Aftercare program remotely, with supplies including sleeping bags for those housed in unsuitable accommodation such as containers or tents. While COVID-19 restrictions limited access to the islands, when lockdown restrictions permitted travel, A21 Greece visited Lesvos island to provide professional training to partner organisations working with the refugee population to support the identification and safeguarding of potential trafficked victims situated in refugee camps. During periods of national lockdown throughout 2020, A21 Greece provided this same training via online means to support partner organisations, such as The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Médecins Sans Frontières, to raise awareness of the 1109 Hotline and its support services.

Over the lockdown period, partner organisations experienced a significant rise in domestic abuse cases resulting in many government service providers operating at full capacity. Understaffing and reduced capacity operations caused significant delays in services, particularly for trafficking survivors. Suitable housing placement for survivors of human trafficking was increasingly difficult during the COVID-19 pandemic, with resources diverted. In many cases, due to travel restrictions and COVID-19 related health measures, survivors were housed temporarily in hotels and hostels.

A21’s Response

A21 has operated in Greece since 2008 and adopts a holistic anti-trafficking strategy: prevention and awareness to reduce the prevalence of trafficking, intervention and identification of victims including through the A21 managed 1109 Hotline, survivor legal representation in both criminal and civil proceedings and restorative after-care services and reintegration support for survivors of trafficking. The COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing restrictions caused unprecedented challenges to outwork this operational strategy and required shifts in approach to enable the delivery of uninterrupted services.

Prevention & Awareness

A21 Greece’s prevention and awareness programs aim to educate the general public, students, marginalised and vulnerable populations on human trafficking. As the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting lockdown restrictions disrupted all in-person events and activities, A21 Greece adapted programs to be facilitated online. This strategy focused on utilising online platforms, including web-based video platforms and social media channels, to reach potentially vulnerable groups and increase awareness of human trafficking. A new social media campaign made existing educational resources available in digital formats and helped raise awareness of the 1109 Hotline during the pandemic. In partnership with a marketing company, A21 Greece launched an online survey to gauge the level of understanding of human trafficking in Greece. Notably, one finding showed that out of 300 participants, 49% of the sample considered ‘human trafficking’ as simply a synonym for sex trafficking, illustrating the need for increased awareness of other forms of exploitation. These results highlighted areas of deficiency in the basic understanding of human trafficking by the general public, and formed in part the basis of A21’s public awareness strategy in Greece in 2020 to raise awareness of the lesser known types of human trafficking; current perceptions and misconceptions; and providing information and tools to increase public engagement and reporting. A21 Greece outworked part of its strategy by delivering numerous Facebook-live sessions on the different types of human trafficking,
partnering with the cyber safety organisation Cyberno to host a Facebook-live event on the topic of online safety and human trafficking, and participating in several online community awareness events, including an interview on the topic of sex trafficking for an online festival concerning gender-based violence, reaching 50,000 young people. Given the increased online presence as a result of the pandemic, A21 Greece also utilised social media to raise awareness on child online exploitation and provided accompanying resources such as digital safety guides specifically targeted to parents and teenagers.

A21 Greece also targeted awareness efforts on the people groups most vulnerable to exploitation in Greece, namely female sex workers and the refugee, migrant, and homeless populations. A21 Greece partnered with a well-known cosmetics company to produce 1,000 hand sanitisers displaying the 1109 Hotline, and then distributed these products along with an informational leaflet to homeless individuals, female sex workers, brothel clients, and unaccompanied minors in Athens to raise awareness of the 1109 Hotline’s services. A21 Greece received numerous requests from organisations working in the refugee camps for educational material to distribute to vulnerable groups there, resulting in the distribution of anti-trafficking prevention and awareness materials to 3,161 refugee adults and 865 minors.

Identification & Intervention

Efforts

COVID-19 REGULATIONS IMPEDE VICTIM RECOVERY EFFORTS

The COVID-19 pandemic and ensuring restrictions resulted in substantial challenges for identification and intervention efforts, requiring adaptations in strategy and approach. The introduction of new measures requiring isolation and a negative COVID-19 test to access most services for newly identified survivors proved challenging to effectuate successful interventions and provide immediate assistance. The challenges in overcoming COVID-19 related obstacles were evident during A21’s efforts to coordinate the safe recovery of a male victim of labour trafficking who contacted the 1109 Hotline for assistance. The national lockdown in Greece restricted the victim’s ability to leave the location of exploitation to travel to a police station. When the 1109 Hotline contacted the proper local police to request assistance, the police were unclear on the correct COVID-19 protocols to be able to provide support. Ultimately, the 1109 Hotline had to escalate the case to national law enforcement to resolve the issue. National law enforcement responded by arranging for the survivor to be transported to a hospital to complete the required COVID-19 test. During this interim, A21 Greece supported the basic needs of the now isolated survivor by coordinating with a local organisation to provide short-term assistance of food and clothing. Upon receipt of a negative COVID-19 test result, the police supported the survivor to safety where A21 Greece then provided legal and medical support for the survivor through its Freedom Centre.

ASSISTING REFUGEES

The 1109 Hotline received numerous calls from partner organisations working with the migrant and refugee communities requesting support during the COVID-19 pandemic. The travel restrictions imposed to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 created significant barriers in facilitating the movement of potential victims of trafficking from the refugee camps on the Greek islands to the mainland and vice versa. A21’s 1109 Hotline often received reports that due to the travel restrictions, potential victims of human trafficking were confined within the camp, potentially in the same camp or location as their exploiters. Due to travel restrictions, A21 Greece supported refugee cases remotely and in partnership with other organisations located within the camp on the island. Remote support included regular communication through weekly calls and provision of supply packages with essential toiletries and food parcels to identified refugee-survivors of trafficking. A21 Greece supported two refugee-survivors in its Aftercare program situated in camps who, despite their vulnerability as survivors of trafficking and their specific health issues, experienced significant setbacks due to COVID-19. For example, one of these refugee trafficking survivors was initially denied travel to the mainland despite the need for medical assistance. Only after A21 took legal action and re-applied on behalf of the refugee-survivor, was the transportation restriction lifted.

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

A21 Greece regularly partners with professionals working in key frontline roles to provide training on identification and response to potential human trafficking situations. Despite the pandemic, A21 Greece facilitated and delivered specialised victim-centred identification training to 250 frontline professionals from a range of different sectors, including law enforcement, social workers, immigration and border officials,
legal, and medical professionals. Due to travel restrictions and lockdown measures limiting in-person gatherings, A21 adjusted the majority of its training sessions to online formats. When restrictions eased however, A21 resumed in-person training, albeit with necessary social distancing measures in place throughout to ensure the safety of all participants. Initially, many organisations expressed reluctance to participate in online training with the belief that the pandemic would be temporary. However, as the pandemic continued well into 2020, the various organisations were more amenable to participating online. Even with the challenges presented in 2020, A21 Greece partnered with seven new organisations to deliver specialist identification and safeguarding training including several non-governmental organisations (NGO), the British Embassy and two municipalities in Athens to raise awareness of the 1109 Hotline and associated services. Interestingly, the normalisation of online webinars allowed A21 Greece the opportunity to engage and provide training to newer physically distant entities that would normally require travel.

**Aftercare Services**

Through its tiered support model, A21 Greece delivers a range of holistic aftercare programs and services for survivors of human trafficking, including accommodation and counselling support. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted all survivors in A21's Aftercare program, albeit in differing ways. A21 Greece supported more survivors with children than ever before, with 12 children supported alongside their parents and one survivor even giving birth during the pandemic. A21 Greece also observed an increase in support of male survivors as compared with previous years, as well as diversity in the types of trafficking experienced by male survivors in A21’s Aftercare program to include sexual exploitation, labour exploitation and domestic servitude. From initial operations in 2008 through 2020, A21 Greece has assisted survivors originating from over 45 countries. In 2020, survivors originated from 16 different countries, showing the wide array of source countries of victims trafficked into and through Greece. While 2020 was a challenging year for providing holistic support to survivors, A21 Greece delivered aftercare services to 44 survivors, of which 20 represented new survivors entering into A21’s Aftercare program, and 24 continuing on from 2019.

**ACCOMMODATION PROGRAMS**

A21 Greece’s Aftercare program provides three types of accommodation assistance. The first, the ‘A21 Home’, is an emergency shelter that accommodates survivors of human trafficking in the initial months following their identification and recovery. The A21 Home offers trauma-informed care in a safe and warm environment that enables survivors to rest, stabilise and plan the next steps towards restoration and independence. ‘Emergency Accommodation’ provides survivors of human trafficking with safe short-term temporary accommodation. Lastly, A21’s ‘Long-Term Accommodation’ provides survivors with safe and stable affordable housing that includes independent apartments financed and leased by A21 and rent assistance for survivors who had secured their own housing. The Long-Term Accommodation program provides survivors with an extended period of time to focus on establishing health and wellness, build community, and pursue education and employment pathways that will enable them to live a life of freedom and independence without housing concerns.

One significant challenge in 2020 was the placement and housing of survivors, with many shelters limiting the intake of new residents due to COVID-19 government mandated closures or health concerns. This resulted in survivors being transported to shelters in locations further away or being placed in temporary accommodation such as hotels and hostels. Categories of survivors, such as males, who historically had placement challenges pre-pandemic, were having even more difficulty finding accommodations during the pandemic due to the aforementioned restrictions. Despite this, A21 Greece successfully granted 20 accommodation requests in 2020. Four survivors were housed in A21’s emergency shelter during the pandemic, with alternative temporary accommodation including hotels and hostels arranged for nine survivors, and seven survivors assisted with long-term accommodation through the provision of an independent apartment rented by A21. In one case, after becoming suddenly homeless, a pregnant survivor received temporary emergency housing in a safe hotel before being transferred to independent long-term housing in an A21 apartment.

**SURVIVORS SUPPORTED WITH SELF-CARE PACKAGES TO ASSIST WITH ISOLATION**

Throughout 2020, A21 Greece expanded its services to address specific survivor needs created by the pandemic. As the already detrimental financial burden of COVID-19 meant essential products were often outside of survivors’ personal budget, A21 Greece took steps to provide personal protective equipment, cleaning and sanitation products to survivors. While A21 Greece has historically provided care packages to survivors according to need, in 2020 this service proved to be even more crucial due to increased isolation and economic hardship on survivors caused by COVID-19. In response to issues caused by the pandemic, A21 Greece distributed 332 emergency support packages containing food, toiletries, and practical wellbeing activities to help ease the financial and emotional burden on survivors living remotely. In addition to basic needs packages, understanding the detrimental psychological effects of lockdown, A21 Greece took preemptive measures by regularly distributing self-care packages every 10 days. The self-care packages helped to maintain regular communication between survivors and A21 caseworkers, and created the positive expectation of packages arriving regularly with the overall purpose to promote and protect the mental health and wellbeing of survivors.
of survivors. These packages included different practical activities, such as arts and craft kits that would help pass time and advance practical skills during lockdown. Further mental health support was provided through A21’s Life Programs in addition to individual sessions with caseworkers offered via phone or video calls. Digital resources were also distributed including updates on the changing COVID-19 regulations and personal support materials such as a daily routine schedule to help individuals keep a positive consistent routine during lockdown. Additionally A21 Greece provided digital devices including phones or tablets and internet data packages to ensure accessibility of online support services to all survivors in its Aftercare program. A21 Greece continued to provide funds and referrals for medical care for survivors, including COVID-19 tests throughout 2020.

THE FREEDOM CENTRE MODIFIED TO PROVIDE REMOTE SUPPORT

In addition to the services above, A21 Greece provides services to survivors through the Freedom Centre, a day centre aiming to support independence, reduce vulnerability and limit the risk of re-trafficking. The COVID-19 pandemic forced the brief closure of the Freedom Centre during the mandatory lockdown periods in 2020; however, A21 ensured continuous contact with survivors in its Aftercare program through remote support. Social isolation and mental wellbeing were a particular concern for the survivors in A21’s Aftercare program, as the COVID-19 pandemic removed many of the supportive environments and networks that aid rehabilitation. To remedy this, A21 Greece transferred services including case management, life skills training, peer support programs, language lessons and counselling to be accessible online. The lack of job opportunities as a result of the pandemic was a significant challenge for many survivors who were unemployed. National lockdowns and restrictions significantly decreased employment opportunities, leaving survivors unable to take the necessary steps towards their independence. A21 Greece worked with survivors in A21’s Aftercare program to build vocational skills and to support survivors applying for employment. Such support included providing Greek language lessons and facilitating the necessary work documentation including work permits, job search assistance, resume drafting and interview preparation. A21’s employment preparation training aims to support survivors in building confidence and vocational skills, and educating through informative sessions on recognising safe and legitimate employment opportunities. A21 Greece also offers job training where necessary, based on the individual’s skills and interests. For example, in 2020 one survivor completed job training in the hospitality industry, and successfully acquired employment with a large hotel chain. Despite the pandemic and the resulting increase in national unemployment, 10 survivors in the A21 Greece Aftercare program successfully obtained seasonal jobs, five of which were a result of partnerships between A21 Greece and potential employers in the hospitality sector, the local manufacturing industry, and the cleaning industry.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

A21 Greece offers a robust legal assistance program to survivors in A21’s Aftercare program. A number of survivors receiving direct services from A21 Greece often have corresponding criminal prosecutions where they are the named victim-witnesses in prosecutions against their traffickers, and often serve as key witnesses in the case. Due to this critical role, and in furtherance of obtaining justice on behalf of survivors enrolled in A21’s Aftercare program, A21 Greece provides survivors with an attorney who represents the victim’s interests in criminal prosecution. Despite the fact that the victim’s interests are often aligned with the prosecutors’ role towards the criminal conviction and subsequent imprisonment of the traffickers, in many cases prosecutors may not always be familiar with the details of the relevant legislative framework provided for the offence of trafficking against human beings or the relevant laws governing victims’ rights. Hence, the attorney representing the survivors, having specialised knowledge of trafficking in human beings, is able to effectively assist and safeguard their rights during the criminal prosecution proceedings, thus contributing to the enhancement of prosecution and administration of justice. Moreover, A21’s attorney works directly with the survivor, with the support of A21 staff to ensure that survivors are prepared in all aspects to provide the court with their testimony. In the current legal system, survivors often bear the full responsibility for arranging travel, accommodation and other support needed for victim-witnesses in a case. Consequently, criminal prosecutions are often dismissed due to a lack of victim testimony. A21 not only provides survivors with a victim’s attorney for in-court representation, but also provides all necessary travel and lodging for every court hearing. As court cases can span a number of years, many survivors must travel from their country of origin, back to Greece for their court hearing. A21 Greece provides comprehensive aftercare services simultaneously with legal representation. Understanding the difficulty and trauma that can be triggered by testifying against a trafficker, A21 strives to work with the survivor to ensure that they are in the emotional position to be able to provide testimony. Where possible, A21 provides survivors with the necessary professional therapy services as support throughout the prosecution.
including in preparation for their in-court testimony. In addition to criminal prosecution representation, A21 also provides civil legal representation in Greece, often assisting survivors with immigration and applications for international protection. In 2020, as a result of the pandemic, the court adjourned the majority of criminal proceedings, including human trafficking cases involving A21 survivors. Only cases with defendants in pre-trial detention continued forth in compliance with the laws governing detained cases. In 2020, A21 legally represented 26 survivors as victim-witnesses in pending prosecutions, notwithstanding the forced postponement of many of the court cases due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the second lockdown, 12 of the criminal prosecutions that A21 supported were adjourned due to the pandemic. Despite courts being closed in November, cases with detained defendants resumed as required under law. One such case involving A21 represented survivors resulted in the criminal conviction of four defendants on charges of trafficking, forgery and participation in a criminal organisation, with sentences ranging from five to 12 years imprisonment.

### Potential Human Trafficking Deterred

In 2020, the Greek police received information from law enforcement in a transnational collaboration, about the strong likelihood of the recruitment and trafficking of two Greek women, for exploitative sham marriages.

In response, the police requested A21’s assistance and provided A21 identity and flight information in order to schedule an intervention. On the date of travel, A21 set up an anti-trafficking information booth and organised a prevention and awareness event at the airport. A21 specifically targeted the passengers of this flight, including these two potential victims, to provide education on human trafficking and recruitment methods as well as to supply safeguarding materials. The Greek authorities were able to alert the police in the destination country to arrange another safeguarding stop on arrival. As a result of the two interventions, one of the women decided not to continue her travels, but to return to Greece. This successful deterrence only occurred through the intergovernmental collaborative efforts of the relevant government entities, as well as with NGOs such as A21, evincing that when stakeholders work collaboratively in their sphere of expertise, human trafficking can be prevented.

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1 European Commission, Together Against Trafficking in Human Beings, Greece [https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/member-states/Greece](https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/member-states/Greece)
2 EU Commission, Together Against Trafficking in Human Beings, Greece
4 US State Dep’t, 2020 TIP Report (Greece)
About the 1109 National Human Trafficking Hotline

The 1109 National Human Trafficking Hotline (‘1109 Hotline’) is a dedicated service to support victims of human trafficking and provide advice and assistance on human trafficking issues to the general public in Greece. The 1109 Hotline receives enquiries 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and has the ability to respond to calls in over 200 languages through a tele-interpretation service. The 1109 Hotline has been operated by A21 Greece since 2012 and works in close partnership with all national institutions and other service providers to ensure a rapid response in every case.

‘During the lockdown, we called 1109 regarding a suspicion we had about one of our persons of concern. After a series of calls that we weren’t able to reach the appropriate services, 1109 was there to support us and guide us through the process. The operators answered all our questions and we felt supported to deal with future incidents too.’

—Social Worker from a partner organisation

The Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in unprecedented challenges for the 1109 National Human Trafficking Hotline in 2020. During the first national lockdown period from March 2020, the 1109 Hotline experienced a decrease in the number of contacts. Several factors are likely to have influenced contact rates throughout the year, including lockdown measures in Greece limiting victims’ ability to seek assistance and placing trafficking victims even further out of sight. Notably, one survivor who ultimately entered A21’s Aftercare program, explained that she had previously attempted to signal for help from the balcony of the apartment where she was being held captive. However, as lockdown measures restricted people from leaving their homes, there were no passers-by to notice her signals. Despite the limitations caused by COVID-19, 1109 Hotline services operated continuously throughout 2020. Reports continued to be referred to law enforcement leading to the successful identification of victims, trafficked both within Greece and internationally.

Executive Summary

• The 1109 Hotline received a total of 1095 CONTACTS
• The 1109 Hotline identified & assisted a minimum of 25 confirmed victims of trafficking with 20 SURVIVORS entering A21’s Aftercare program
• Over half of the reports to the 1109 Hotline were regarding ADULT victims (77.2%)
• SEX TRAFFICKING comprised three-quarters of cases reported to the 1109 Hotline (75%)  
• The majority of reports to the 1109 Hotline related to FEMALE victims (70%)
• Reports to the 1109 Hotline noted potential victims from 16 DIFFERENT NATIONALITIES
• COMMUNITY MEMBERS constituted the main callers to the 1109 Hotline (46.8%)

‘Contacts’ to the Hotline include all forms of incoming enquiries, made via various channels, such as by telephone, email or other online means. ‘Contacts’ include reports on a potential human trafficking situation, related and unrelated crimes as well as more general enquiries about human trafficking, requests for assistance or job vetting requests. Non-substantive ‘contacts’ are excluded from this report.

‘Reports’ refer to contacts to the Hotline relating to a potential human trafficking situation, via any communication channel.

The following statistics in this report are based solely on substantive contacts related to human trafficking made to the Hotline from January-December 2020. Substantive contacts exclude hang-ups, missed calls, wrong numbers and instances where the reason for calling is unknown. Disaggregated data has been collected on each individual case on descriptive factors including gender, age, type of trafficking, methods of control and recruitment methods. The below data is based on the cases where the information was available. In the majority of cases, the call specialists were unable to glean full or specific details about the case. Therefore the data below is based on cases where the specified information was made available.
Overview of Data

In 2020, the 1109 National Human Trafficking Hotline received a total of 1095 contacts, a 23% increase from the previous year. These ‘contacts’ include all calls and reports through online means and follow up calls on existing cases regarding assistance and general requests for information.¹

Caller Demographics

The 1109 Hotline receives reports of suspected human trafficking from potential victims, concerned friends or family members, non-governmental organisations, law enforcement partners and members of the public. Community Members, comprised of members of the public, family members or friends of victims and victims of trafficking, continued to make up the majority of callers in 2020, which is consistent with previous reporting periods. In 2020, the majority of reports to the 1109 Hotline were from residents or neighbours reporting suspicious activities in their residences and local communities, whereas, in previous years, most calls involved commercial businesses. That is, the majority of reports were from clients of legal brothels or observations from commercial businesses, or involved reports against commercial businesses for suspected exploitation. In a number of reports in 2020, the potential victim contacted the 1109 Hotline directly (8.5%). Non-governmental organisations also accounted for many of the calls, with the 1109 Hotline receiving numerous reports from partner organisations working predominantly with the migrant and refugee community. In 2020, reports to the 1109 Hotline by non-governmental organisations resulting in positive victim identifications accounted for one-third of survivors ultimately referred into A21’s Aftercare program.

Victim Demographics

In 2020, after responding to various reports of potential human trafficking situations, the Hotline confirmed that at least 25 victims of trafficking were identified and assisted.

Age and Gender

In 2020 the majority of victims reported to the 1109 Hotline were adults. The overwhelming majority of reports related to female victims, with sex trafficking as the predominant form of exploitation. From the reports involving male victims, the majority of cases involved labour trafficking (45%).

Victim Nationality

The 1109 Hotline identified and assisted victims from 16 different nationalities in 2020. While the most reported known nationality of potential victims was Greek, with the exception of one, all other confirmed victims assisted by the 1109 Hotline were foreign nationals.
Methods of Control

Traffickers use certain means of control to manipulate and force their victims into staying in an exploitative situation. The methods of control that are reported here include threat\(^\text{2}\), isolation\(^\text{3}\), emotional, physical or economic\(^\text{4}\) abuse and withholding of personal identification documentation, amongst others. From the data available from reports made to the 1109 Hotline, the most common method of control used by traffickers was physical abuse. However, the 1109 Hotline rarely observes a singular method of control, as traffickers use a variety of different tactics to coerce and manipulate victims. Other reported methods of control included sexual and substance abuse, isolation and withholding of personal identification documents.

Recruitment Methods

Traffickers use certain recruitment methods to deceive and coerce victims into exploitation. Based on reports to the 1109 Hotline, the most prominent tactic used to recruit individuals was through false job opportunities. However, other recruitment methods were reported such as false promises or victims being promised a better life and in some cases, victims being sold or exploited by their family.

Exploitation Type

Reports of sex trafficking comprised the majority of reports to the 1109 Hotline (79%). While in previous years, reports of sexual exploitation predominantly related to brothels, the forced closure of brothels due to the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a shift to callers reporting sexual exploitation in illegal brothels within private residences and temporary accommodations, demonstrating that the pandemic and ensuing lockdowns did not decrease sexual exploitation but merely modified its presentation. Labour exploitation cases accounted for a few reports mainly concerning exploitation in factories or in the agricultural sector.

The observations contained in this report is limited to information communicated to the 1109 National Human Trafficking Hotline during the reporting period. Nothing arising from the data should be interpreted as showing the full extent or prevalence of human trafficking in Greece.

The 1109 National Human Trafficking Hotline
1109 or 0030 2310019880
info@1109.gr
www.1109.gr

\(^1\) To ensure data integrity, the data presented is extracted from reports submitted to the 1109 Hotline consisting mainly of those confirmed and assisted as identified victims of trafficking. Therefore, this report takes a conservative approach in presenting the 1109 Hotline data and analysis, for the most part omitting reports of potential victims of human trafficking which were unable to be substantiated or confirmed.

\(^2\) Threat includes threatening to harm the victim, the victim’s family or other persons, threat to expose or shame the victim and threat to report the victim to the police or immigration.

\(^3\) Isolation may include physical isolation or deprivation of liberty, denying access to medical support, surveillance or control of the victim in public, or isolating the victim by moving the victim frequently from place to place.

\(^4\) Economic abuse includes situations of debt bondage or where traffickers limit the finances of the victim either in whole or in part.
South Africa is predominantly a destination country for human trafficking with the most common types of exploitation being sex trafficking and forced labour in both commercial and domestic sectors.

While South Africa is largely a destination country, it is also a country of origin and transit, where traffickers use routes through the country from the African continent into Europe and North America. Victims of human trafficking may be domestic citizens or foreign nationals. South Africans are vulnerable to trafficking due to systemic issues such as high levels of unemployment and lack of access to higher education by many, which increases vulnerability for exploitation within the country’s borders. Often foreign nationals trafficked into South Africa are lured to the country on the promise of a better life. While men, women and children are all affected by human trafficking, women and children are disproportionately affected. Victims are commonly recruited by the promise of a job opportunity or by someone they know. Trafficking predominantly occurs in the larger South African cities such as Cape Town and Johannesburg, where victims are typically recruited from impoverished or less-resourced areas to these larger urban areas.

Travel Restrictions & Economic Hardship

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted South Africa in 2020, with mandatory lockdown measures enforced nationally and internationally, and interprovincial travel restricted for several months across the year. The effect of COVID-19 globally on migration patterns and the exacerbation of vulnerabilities and inequities also impacted how the crime of human trafficking presented itself in South Africa. Lockdown and COVID-19 related restrictions resulted in a rise in unemployment, increasing vulnerability to exploitation and trafficking. Economic desperation caused individuals to accept employment offers despite having limited details of the role. Some individuals pursued employment opportunities across the country or even abroad, despite questions of legitimacy given travel restrictions and border closures. At the height of lockdown, Level 5 in South Africa, regulations generally restricted individuals to their residences except for essential services, such as groceries or medical appointments.

COVID-19 Impact on Human Trafficking

As the pandemic forced both adults and children to resort to online formats for work, schooling and entertainment activities, A21 South Africa observed an increase in the use of online platforms to recruit and further exploit victims. Likely perpetrators advertised false job opportunities on social media and in one case used social media accounts to ‘auction’ off women for sexual services as a ‘companion’ for lockdown. ‘Companion’ services were advertised as a ‘charitable contribution’ for women in need of work due to loss of wages resulting from lockdown restrictions. The pandemic also affected anti-trafficking efforts by both government and civil society entities. Law enforcement officers at all levels, from local to national, were tasked with enforcing the mandatory lockdown, resulting in shortages of law enforcement services in all other areas, including responding to human trafficking cases. Victims who were actively being trafficked, and requested assistance to leave their situation, often received delayed or no response from law enforcement.
The lockdown measures also presented unique challenges for potential victims of human trafficking and survivors who had successfully exited their exploitative situation and transitioned to living independently or in safe houses. Survivors living independently had limited ways of earning an income with many losing their jobs due to the pandemic.

**A21’s Response**

A21 has operated in South Africa since 2013 and adopts a holistic three-pronged anti-trafficking strategy focusing on prevention and awareness to reduce the prevalence of trafficking, intervention and identification of victims through the A21 operated National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTH), and restorative aftercare services and reintegration support for survivors of trafficking. While COVID-19 brought much of society to a standstill, trafficking in persons continued in South Africa and around the world. In response to imposed mandatory lockdown and travel restrictions, traffickers sought alternative methods to recruit, exploit and traffic victims. In response, A21 South Africa adjusted its operational programs and activities accordingly to ensure the continuation of services.

**Prevention & Awareness**

In response to the increase of exploitation online, A21 South Africa focused on increasing awareness and providing online educational materials on human trafficking and online exploitation. A21 South Africa worked with the Western Cape Education Department to create lesson plans for ages 10-18 that provided information on vulnerability to online exploitation. With this resource there was a potential reach of 680,000 students across the province. Other projects included the creation of short educational videos on the dangers of online grooming tailored for teachers and educational professionals. Additionally, A21 South Africa collaborated with Opvoed Pret, an online platform for parents to access information and activity ideas for children, and created online digital safety videos available to download for the 40,000 predominantly Afrikaans speaking parents across South Africa registered on the platform. While the pandemic forced the cancellation of all in-person events, the majority of presentations and trainings were successfully transferred to online platforms. Towards the latter part of 2020 when restrictions permitted modified in-person presentations, A21 South Africa conducted in-person presentations on human trafficking to a few thousand students and parents. In addition to formal presentations, prevention efforts were expanded online through targeted activity, particularly through social media.

A21 South Africa strongly encourages communities to report suspicious activity and utilises public awareness campaigns to raise awareness of human trafficking and report concerns to the NHTH. Understanding that collective efforts by stakeholders through collaboration is essential to combat human trafficking, the NHTH emphasises building strong partnerships with other anti-trafficking organisations across South Africa. Many of these partner organisations as well as local businesses, highlight the NHTH number in their operations, and prevention and awareness programs. This brings a strength of collaboration not just in awareness of the hotline number but also in a network of partners to respond to cases or requests that arise from the NHTH. In addition to awareness campaigns and hotline advertisements by other stakeholders, A21 South Africa also continues its ‘Can You See Me?’ (CYSM)³ public awareness campaign which educates the public on common types of human trafficking occurring in South Africa, and prompts viewers to report any suspicious activity to the NHTH. During the pandemic, the campaign helped to raise awareness of the continued operation of the NHTH during the lockdown period when in-person events and training were not possible. The NHTH utilises the CYSM campaign through partnerships with organisations, to educate, equip and empower professionals in identifying and reporting suspicions to the NHTH, as well as to provide general awareness training on the issue. For example, in 2020 A21 South Africa participated alongside South Africa’s largest electricity public utility in a webinar for Eskom staff in the Eastern Cape, where all campaign films were featured. Other examples of these partnerships have included local airline carriers, and the Department of Health in the Western Cape, where health professionals were trained and given the CYSM material to utilise and distribute.

**Identification & Intervention Efforts**

A21 South Africa provides a range of identification services including the operation of the National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTH) which receives reports on possible cases of human trafficking, conducts any necessary follow-up, and ultimately compiles a report which is then submitted to relevant investigative authorities and Trafficking in Persons Task Teams. Additionally, A21 caseworkers assist law enforcement in conducting
screenings of potential victims of trafficking, and facilitate initial access to essential services such as medical, shelter and psycho-social care. Throughout the pandemic, the South African NHTH continued to receive reports on human trafficking and other high-risk crimes. In contrast to previous years, A21 South Africa experienced fewer human trafficking victims successfully identified through the NHTH, especially during the lockdown period from March 2020. The NHTH successfully identified and assisted the recovery of 22 confirmed victims of trafficking out of 178 trafficking in persons cases reported to the relevant investigative bodies, illustrating the difficulties faced with identification and intervention, which was further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In many cases, a basic identification screening was not conducted due either to the potential victim’s unwillingness, or the inability of the responsible government agencies to adequately respond due to capacity challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. These challenges included redirection of law enforcement to monitor and assist with COVID-19 restrictions; quarantining of law enforcement either due to infection or possible exposure to COVID-19; and general law enforcement human resource shortages that were exacerbated by COVID-19.

During the pandemic, the Department of Social Development in a publication included the NHTH number as an essential phone number for the general public, amongst others. This publication was the first time that the South African Government publicly promoted the NHTH as a central number for all human trafficking cases in the country. Such initiative not only showcased the government’s willingness to work more collaboratively, but also acknowledged the need for such a centralised resource. This promotion resulted in increased calls and reports to the NHTH exposing new human trafficking trends emerging throughout the pandemic. These findings are further expounded on in the accompanying Annual Hotline Report.

While A21 South Africa continued to support the facilitation of international repatriations of survivors in 2020, A21 encountered COVID-19 related challenges and complications. Travel and border closures resulted in delays in arranging repatriation flights while international departures were restricted. Cancelled flights to certain countries resulted in indefinite postponement of repatriations and survivors remaining in temporary accommodation or prolonged shelter stays. Even after obtaining flights, COVID-19 health concerns required survivors to complete certain medical tests in advance of departure and within certain time limits for which A21 facilitated in all respects. For example, in one case, a COVID-19 test had to be arranged for a survivor on short notice to be completed 36 hours before the flight. Moreover, COVID-19 restrictions prohibited A21 case-workers from entering the airport to escort survivors and facilitate the travel, as only travellers were permitted to enter the airport terminal. Due to the nature of travel, rather than a passport, many survivors are issued emergency travel documents, and in many cases, this may be the first time a survivor has navigated an airport alone. Based on A21’s experience, this additional stress can compound the emotional distress that survivors are already experiencing.

A21 regularly delivers training sessions to those working in frontline professions most likely to first encounter a victim or potential victim of trafficking, such as law enforcement and the hospitality industry. Due to the restrictions on in-person meetings, these sessions were delivered using online platforms. In 2020, A21 South Africa trained approximately 500 frontline professionals, with 94 frontline professionals trained online in the last quarter. Of these online trainings, of significance were training sessions conducted in November 2020 of 48 government social workers from the Department of Social Development, as they signified the first time that the South African Government requested online training of their social workers. The online nature of the training provided A21 South Africa access to train social workers from more rural parts of the province that would normally require several days of travel to facilitate if conducted in-person. Requests by the government for such human trafficking training evinces progress as many officials have indicated that they were not familiar with anti-human trafficking legislation, the process of identifying a victim of trafficking, and the appropriate approach and response upon identification.

**Aftercare Services**

Observations of the profiles of survivors who entered A21 South Africa’s Aftercare program in 2020 revealed an increase in domestic trafficking compared to previous years, with far fewer survivors originating from surrounding African nations or further abroad. This is consistent with the closed borders in South Africa for a large portion of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. One trend observed from the profile of survivors assisted by A21 in 2020 was the change in recruitment methods by traffickers.⁴ Previously, the most common method of recruiting victims was via the
'loverboy' scheme, where traffickers groom and form relationships with victims to exploit them. However, none of the survivors identified and recovered with A21's assistance or who entered A21's Aftercare program in 2020, reported recruitment through the 'loverboy' scheme, but rather recruitment by family members or through false job opportunities.

COVID-19 placed numerous barriers in facilitating the transportation and placement of survivors after identification. As many shelters and safehouses closed to new admissions due to government-mandated closures or health concerns, survivors had to be housed in temporary accommodation such as hotels and hostels. Such facilities proved to be problematic as they lacked the support services and care that survivors may need in their first few days or weeks after exiting exploitation. Moreover, such accommodations also posed a security risk for survivors. Placement of survivors in the first few weeks of exiting exploitation normally takes into consideration the high risk of contact by their traffickers. Such a risk must be seriously considered and mitigated. A designated safehouse takes these risks into consideration, and attempts to reduce the risks through built in security as well as staff training. Hostels and hotels however lack staff specifically trained to protect survivors from these risks or to support traumatised individuals. The free flowing nature of a hostel or hotel could easily grant a trafficker access to survivors. The pandemic also caused significant challenges with the delivery of comprehensive services to support survivors’ recovery as most support services had to be modified and facilitated remotely during this time. Furthermore, certain categories of survivors, such as males, who historically had placement challenges pre-pandemic, were having even more difficulty finding accommodations during the pandemic due to the aforementioned restrictions. In one case from the NHTH, the only male shelter located in the Western Cape were unable to support placement of one male survivor leaving scarce options for housing.

Despite challenges to A21’s Aftercare program, A21 South Africa adjusted its services so that survivors received adequate support while still abiding by the government’s strict mandate, as well as commencing new services for survivors. The usual counselling services continued telephonically or through online messaging and video platforms to ensure these essential support services continued, and to minimise any disruptions caused by the pandemic. At the start of the pandemic, A21 South Africa partnered with a local grocery chain to issue relief parcels and provisions to all survivors in A21’s Aftercare program living remotely, as many had lost their jobs and were unable to work. Relief parcels to survivors included personal protective equipment and sanitising packs, which may not have been within the budget of survivors living alone or in larger safehouses, as well as emotional and mental well-being ‘activity boxes’ with journaling and relaxation activities. Additional support included arranging and paying for COVID-19 tests and supporting survivors in obtaining employment in the midst of limited opportunities, with one survivor starting an internship at a local coffee shop.

In the midst of the challenges posed by COVID-19, it quickly became clear that the pandemic was not curtailing human trafficking and exploitation, but rather increasing obstacles in the successful identification and recovery of survivors.

As the urgency of survivor needs became more apparent, A21 South Africa extended its services to ensure that it continued to serve the needs of survivors, especially newly identified survivors, and to push forth in spite of the challenges. In December 2020, A21 South Africa launched its first Freedom Centre in South Africa. The Freedom Centre acts as a drop-in centre to provide support for survivors of human trafficking on their journey to independence and minimise the risk of re-trafficking. The centre offers a safe place where survivors have the opportunity to receive case management support, counselling, engage in restorative group programs, receive educational and vocational training and participate in peer support activities. As part of the provided services, A21 South Africa provides funding and referrals for medical, dental and psychological support, accommodation and other basic needs such as food and clothing. Survivors were received in a safe and controlled manner, provided the necessary sanitation equipment and social distancing measures, with the health and safety of those using the Centre being of the utmost importance. A21 considers the coordinated services offered by the Freedom Centre as a vital second stage service to immediately follow the initial safehouse, as these services are designed to assist a survivor towards restoration and independence. Due to the limited availability of such coordinated services in South Africa, the opening of the Freedom Centre enables survivors with more resources to support survivors in experiencing wellness, reintegrating into the community and reaching independence.
The Strength of Collaboration

Collective efforts of anti-trafficking stakeholders in South Africa have resulted in the increased dissemination of the NHTH number and its services directly to victims of trafficking, leading to further identification and support in safely exiting the exploitative situation.

One such situation arose in the summer of 2020 where a male victim of labour trafficking noticed the NHTH number being promoted by a partner organisation at a local shopping center where he was being exploited. The victim was being trafficked at one of the stores, where he was forced to work long hours for seven days a week continuously. The victim was threatened, his documents were confiscated and he was exploited through debt bondage. Notably, the victim’s work was in part public facing, as he was required to spend time interacting with customers who were unaware of the victim’s exploitative situation while he assisted them. The victim became aware of the NHTH and its services through a partner organisation’s awareness efforts, and asked for the organisation’s assistance in calling the NHTH which the organisation facilitated. After completing an initial screening, the NHTH continued communicating with the victim to establish trust, and to coordinate his extraction from the exploitative situation in the safest manner possible. Soon thereafter, the NHTH was able to coordinate the intervention of law enforcement who worked with the survivor to swiftly transport him to meet with A21’s Aftercare case-workers who then provided emergency accommodation, supplies, social support and ultimately supported the survivor’s successful repatriation. This case illustrates the power of collaboration. When a community of stakeholders works together to raise awareness and provide services, victims are provided with the necessary support to be able to successfully exit their exploitation, with a reduced likelihood of being re-trafficked.

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3. The ‘Can You See Me?’ (CYSM) campaign is a global anti-human trafficking public awareness campaign of A21. The concept behind CYSM focuses on the ‘hidden but in plain sight’ reality that underlies human trafficking. This campaign seeks to educate the public with the subtle indicators of human trafficking in order to expose a seemingly innocuous situation with the reality of the human trafficking that is occurring. As the campaign is country or region-specific, various iterations of the campaign exist specific to the country/region of distribution. In each country, CYSM focuses on collaborating with relevant stakeholders and provides a call to action and the relevant hotline number.
4. While the cause of the shift in recruitment method is unknown, interestingly, reports of gender based violence (GBV) increased exponentially in South Africa during the height of lockdown, with reports of intimate partner killings and child murders within family environments reaching the news regularly. Robust awareness campaigns providing education on GBV and available services increased drastically across the country in response, and many cases initially presenting as GBV after further investigation revealed some elements of human trafficking as well.
About the South African National Human Trafficking Hotline

The South African National Human Trafficking Hotline ('NHTH') is a dedicated service to support victims of human trafficking and provide advice and assistance on human trafficking issues. The NHTH is operated by A21 South Africa and is available to receive reports of suspected trafficking 24 hours a day, seven days a week, as well as provide crisis intervention, information and referrals to various entities including law enforcement and community support agencies. The NHTH works in close partnership with national institutions to ensure a rapid response in reporting cases to the correct authorities or nodal point coordinators who are tasked to respond to Trafficking in Persons (TIP) and monitor the effectiveness of the response.

‘Teamwork, support, 24-hour service and victim-centered approach. These are just a few of the amazing characteristics displayed by the team at the National Human Trafficking Hotline. Despite the challenges of being in lockdown and increasing infection rates, service delivery to the public continued to be rolled out. The integrity, empathy and work ethic of the trained professionals at the NHTH ensure that we maintain our work ethos when working with victims as seen in the detailed reports per case given and feedback cards sent through.’

—Adelle Phillips, DSD Gauteng

The Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic caused unprecedented challenges for the South African National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTH) in 2020. Despite these challenges, the NHTH remained fully operational and continued to refer reports to law enforcement leading to the successful identification of victims of human trafficking. During the lockdown period, the NHTH was promoted by the South African government as an essential phone number for public dissemination, causing an increase of reports to the NHTH. Through these reports, the NHTH was able to observe trends of exploitation emerging throughout the pandemic. Notably, while the NHTH saw an increase in the number of human trafficking reports received, the NHTH observed a slight decrease in the number of victims successfully identified and assisted in 2020.

Executive Summary

- The NHTH received a TOTAL OF 4,847 CONTACTS
- The NHTH experienced an INCREASE in the number of human trafficking-related reports received as compared to 2019 (46.5%)
- 696 POTENTIAL VICTIMS of trafficking were reported to the NHTH
- 22 VICTIMS were able to be directly identified and supported by the NHTH
- FEMALES constituted the majority of victims reported to the NHTH (82%)
- MINORS comprised over a third of reports of potential victims to the NHTH (34.8%)
- The PREDOMINANT NATIONALITY of victims identified by the NHTH were overwhelmingly SOUTH AFRICAN (71%)
- The NHTH experienced a 367.5% increase in EMPLOYMENT SCREENING requests from October through December 2020

‘Contacts’ to the Hotline include all forms of incoming enquiries, made via various channels, such as by telephone, email or other online means. ‘Contacts’ include reports on a potential human trafficking situation, related and unrelated crimes as well as more general enquiries about human trafficking, requests for assistance or job vetting requests. Non-substantive ‘contacts’ are excluded from this report.

‘Reports’ refer to contacts to the Hotline relating to a potential human trafficking situation, via any communication channel.

The following statistics are based solely on substantive contacts related to human trafficking made to the NHTH from January - December 2020. Substantive contacts exclude hang-ups, missed calls, wrong numbers and instances where the caller’s reason for calling is unknown.

Disaggregated data has been collected on each individual case on descriptive factors including gender, age, type of trafficking, methods of control and recruitment methods. The below data is based on the cases where the information was available. In the majority of cases, the call specialists were unable to glean full or specific details about the case. Therefore the data below is based on cases where the specified information was made available.
### Overview of Data

Between the period of 1 January to 31 December 2020, the NHTH received 4847 contacts, reflecting a 46.5% increase from the total number of human trafficking-related contacts received in 2019. The NHTH also observed a 22% increase in reports through online means which could reasonably be attributed to an increase in online communication as a result of lockdown restrictions.

### Caller Demographics

Over the years of operation, the NHTH has received calls from potential victims, concerned friends or family members, law enforcement partners and members of the general public. In 2020, Community Members continued to comprise the majority of callers to the NHTH, which is consistent with previous reporting periods. For purposes of this report, community members are categorised as members of the public, family members or friends of victims and victims of trafficking. Victims contacted the NHTH directly in 4% of the reports received in 2020.

### Victim Nationality

The NHTH received reports involving potential trafficking of individuals from countries including South Africa, Nigeria, Mozambique, Pakistan and Zimbabwe. However, in 2020, reports involving the exploitation of foreign nationals accounted for just 45% of victim identifications as compared with just under 60% in 2019. The decrease in reports involving foreign nationals may be due to the global travel restrictions implemented as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic limiting entry into South Africa.

### Victim Demographics

In 2020, the NHTH managed a total of 178 cases of trafficking in persons, involving a total of 696 potential victims. The NHTH successfully identified and assisted 22 confirmed victims of trafficking out of these cases.

### Age and Gender

In 2020, the majority of victims reported to the NHTH were female adults (82%). The NHTH also manages reports of child trafficking with 73 minors reported in 2020. Cases of child trafficking varied, with one case involving a minor sold by her family and another reporting an alleged child trafficking ring producing child sexual abuse imagery. In one case, a social worker contacted the NHTH regarding a potential child trafficking case. Intervention was difficult in this case due to the close-knit community and risk management concerns about the alleged trafficker. Despite this challenge, the NHTH successfully escalated this matter to ensure the minor was removed to a place of safety, and requested further investigation from the Family Violence and Child Protection (FCS) unit.

### Exploitation Type

The NHTH managed reports of 363 potential victims of forced labour in 2020. Calls to the NHTH have historically involved large groups of potential victims in situations of labour exploitation on farms, in factories or mines. For example, in 2019, the NHTH received a report of forced labour in a factory in Gauteng. This case resulted in the identification and recovery of 91
In 2020, out of the reports made to the NHTH the top reported recruitment methods were the use of false job opportunities and the ‘loverboy’ method, where traffickers form intimate relationships to manipulate victims. However, interestingly, reports to the NHTH resulting in successful victim identification and recovery did not involve recruitment through the ‘loverboy’ method, but rather recruitment and exploitation by family members or through false job opportunities. These false opportunities often involved promises of job or educational opportunities as well as promises of a better life. The NHTH experienced a spike in job vetting requests from October 2020, with 271 requests submitted in the final three months of 2020. These cases included callers contacting the NHTH with concerns regarding job advertisements and requesting support in investigating the legitimacy of proposed work opportunities. Upon further investigation, many reports displayed concerning indicators of risk that had the potential to lead to exploitative situations. The NHTH reported suspicious cases to a trusted partner organisation, ‘Prevention Vs Cure,’ who manages the job vetting procedures.

Cases from the NHTH identified Gauteng and the Western Cape as the top two provinces where reports originated and where potential victims of trafficking were identified. While this may be for several reasons, one reason may be the strong partnerships the NHTH holds with investigative authorities and civil society entities in those provinces. The majority of identifications took place in the Western Cape province, where A21 South Africa has been appointed by the government as the designated stakeholder to conduct screenings with potential victims of trafficking.
The South African National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTH)
0800 222 777
info@0800222777.org.za
www.0800222777.org.za

From the data available to the NHTH in 2020, the top reported method of control used by traffickers was economic abuse. Other common control methods reported were induced substance abuse, where traffickers use drug or alcohol addiction as a means of coercion, and sexual abuse. These tactics are most typically seen in cases of sex trafficking. The NHTH also received reports where traffickers were threatening, shaming or instilling fear in victims or their families. Other cases reported that traffickers were threatening to report victims to the police or immigration to prevent them from reporting the traffickers to the authorities.

‘NHTH plays a vital role in the fight against trafficking in persons (TIP) and related crimes. Their absolute enthusiasm, active and motivated attitude to get things done and serving the community is a vocation and not just another job to them! Definitely an essential partner of SAPS.’

—Captain J de Wit-Horn, South African Police Service: Head Office Detectives, Crime Stop

Based on reports to the NHTH, an overwhelming majority of known traffickers and recruiters were reported to be Nigerian. This is consistent with existing knowledge of Nigerian nationals and crime syndicates operating as recruiters, traffickers and controllers throughout South Africa.³ It is to be noted that in some cases more than one nationality was reported to be working together in the same syndicates.

The observations contained in this report is limited to information communicated to the South African National Human Trafficking Hotline during the reporting period. Nothing arising from the data should be interpreted as showing the full extent or prevalence of human trafficking in South Africa.

¹ To ensure data integrity, the data presented is extracted from reports submitted to the NHTH consisting of those identified as victims and potential victims of trafficking. Therefore, this report takes a conservative approach in presenting Hotline data and analysis, omitting reports of potential victims of human trafficking which were unable to be substantiated or confirmed where necessary.
² Department of Labour, Workers were forced to work 7 days a week at R65 a day – trial of Chinese nationals accused of human trafficking and child labour, April 29, 2021, http://www.labour.gov.za/workers-were-forced-to-work-7-days-a-week-at-r65-a-day-%E2%80%93-trial-of-chinese-nationals-accused-of-human-trafficking-and-child
The Kingdom of Thailand’s (Thailand) upper-middle-income status and geographical location in Southeast Asia makes the nation a prime destination, source and transit country for human trafficking among its neighbours. For this reason, the issue of human trafficking in Thailand is intertwined with the complexities accompanying migration. Women, children and migrant workers, particularly undocumented workers with irregular migrant status, remain the most vulnerable to trafficking in Thailand.

The government of Thailand recognises the issue of human trafficking and has committed to a ‘national agenda of zero tolerance towards human trafficking’. This commitment is coupled with robust anti-trafficking legislation and infrastructure within Thailand to support victims. A gap however exists for migrants seeking refuge or asylum, with limited anti-trafficking services for this population, and consequently many irregular migrants are at risk of exploitation. Interestingly, Thailand’s main human trafficking statute includes the offence of ‘production or distribution of pornographic materials’, allowing authorities to pursue certain online sexual exploitation and child sexual abuse materials (CSAM) as human trafficking cases. The government’s legal recognition of the link between the online world and human trafficking has allowed Thai authorities to successfully pursue online exploitation cases in their anti-trafficking efforts, which The A21 Foundation (‘A21 Thailand’) has observed at times, results in evidence of related off-line hands-on offenses as well. A21 Thailand has also observed an increasing trend locally of perpetrators approaching minors via online platforms and then tricking, coercing or blackmailing the minors into sharing sexually explicit images, videos and/or other CSAM. This has become of increasing concern with more people, especially children, engaging in online use due to the COVID-19 pandemic and nationwide lockdowns, increasing an already ‘high internet usage’ in Thailand and the potential risks of online abuses.

COVID-19 Impact on Human Trafficking

TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS AND ECONOMIC HARDSHIPS

Thailand was the first nation outside of China to officially confirm a local case of COVID-19 in 2020, placing the country into an early lockdown in March 2020, closing all land border points and severely restricting international travel. Likewise, restriction of interprovincial travel resulted in the cancellation of most domestic flights. Government restrictions resulted in the shutdown of most businesses in order to curtail rising COVID-19 cases. The travel restrictions and business closures resulted in increased unemployment and greater economic hardships, with an estimated reduction of 6.5% of the Thai economy in 2020.

Strict lockdowns, travel restrictions and closures of certain businesses in response to COVID-19 significantly affected the migrant community. The sudden border closures prompted a mass exodus of migrant workers attempting to return home to Myanmar, Cambodia and other nations, while simultaneously leaving many others stranded in Thailand. Many migrants also lost their jobs from forced closures across businesses and the entertainment, hospitality and tourism sectors. The government attempted to mitigate this issue by extending amnesty to all migrants (including expatriates) which offered some security and protection for stranded migrants. The adverse economic ramifications of COVID-19 border closures and restrictions affected not only migrants but Thai citizens as well, with many citizens throughout Thailand suddenly unemployed. Vulnerable groups in particular, desperate to find employment, were placed in very precarious situations susceptible to high-risk, and false job opportunities.

Thailand | 41
**IMPACT ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

Due to a considerably low severity of COVID-19 transmissions throughout 2020 in comparison to other nations, the pandemic had little adverse effect on the Thai Government’s efforts to monitor and coordinate their anti-trafficking efforts and responses. A21 Thailand, anti-trafficking officials and agencies, along with other stakeholders in Thailand, continued to actively monitor and collaborate on human trafficking cases and support potential victims of trafficking throughout the pandemic, even when COVID-19 cases began to increase. The Thai Government, assisted by A21 in some cases, continued to conduct victim identification operations during COVID-19, utilising strict COVID-19 safety measures. Despite efforts, the Thai Government identified a total of 131 trafficking victims in 2020, a considerably smaller number compared to 288 victims in 2019. Although the cause is unknown, the reduction in victims identified might be attributed at least in part, to a lower number of trafficking victims in Thailand or simply less overt trafficking activity as a result of the border closures, travel restrictions and closure of entertainment venues. Conversely, in 2020, A21 Thailand observed a rising trend in online child sexual exploitation cases compared to the previous year, consistent with the general increase of online activity during the pandemic.

**IMPACT ON LEGAL CASES**

Many court hearings in 2020 transitioned to online platforms or were postponed indefinitely due to COVID-19 restrictions, delaying the legal process for many survivors. These delays adversely affected the wellbeing of many survivors in A21’s Aftercare program with pending legal cases. Some survivors cited the legal case postponement as the main source of their anxiety and frequently inquired about the status of their legal case. In one case, as a result of court delays, a survivor remained in a Thai Government shelter for over a year. In contrast, most survivors are typically housed in a government shelter for approximately six to seven months. This prolonged stay caused the survivor a considerable amount of anxiety despite receiving adequate shelter and A21 Thailand staff support.

**A21’s Response**

A21 Thailand has operated in Thailand since 2016, opening its Bangkok office in 2016, and its Pattaya office subsequently in 2017. A21 Thailand pursues a three-pronged operational strategy in its anti-trafficking approach within the country: prevention, awareness and professional training to reduce the prevalence of trafficking; interventions to identify and assist those at-risk or currently being exploited; and restorative aftercare services and reintegration support, including repatriation services, for survivors of trafficking. The aforementioned services are tailored to both adults and children, with minors comprising approximately 63% of the survivor population in A21 Thailand’s Aftercare program in 2020. With challenges presented by COVID-19, A21 Thailand adjusted its operations accordingly with many prevention and awareness, and aftercare programs transferring online. While A21 Thailand collaborated with law enforcement throughout the year, the vast majority of joint victim identification operations occurred in the earlier part of 2020.

Throughout the peak of COVID-19, A21 Thailand continued to assist partner organisations with case support and training, as well as participating in a national crisis relief campaign, hosted by the Child Advocacy Centre (CAC) network (comprised of the five CACs across the country) and multi-disciplinary team (MDT) networks. This campaign aimed to raise funds and support for children and officials in child protection shelters, government and private welfare protection centres for victims of trafficking, hospitals and at-risk communities during the lockdown. Through this campaign, A21 Thailand, along with other organisations, provided personal protective equipment, along with human trafficking prevention and awareness materials for the targeted groups.

**Prevention & Awareness**

A core component of A21 Thailand’s operational strategy involves conducting prevention and awareness programs with at-risk and vulnerable groups, as well as general presentations with schools and universities. Due to strict travel restrictions and school closures, A21 Thailand, precluded from conducting in-person prevention and awareness programs for more than half the year, redirected efforts to online prevention and awareness. A21 Thailand developed online safety resources, including a digital safety campaign on social media, and safety guides for children and parents. In addition to facilitating A21’s Primary Prevention Program (PPP), A21 Thailand also conducted online safety workshops with schools, delivering child-appropriate prevention resources to more than 7,000+ children and youth, in-person and online throughout the year.

During COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions, requests for anti-trafficking resources and workshops by schools, community and religious groups
Identification & Intervention Efforts

Due to the large number of child victims of trafficking and exploitation in the region, A21 Thailand operates a CAC in the coastal city of Pattaya. A21’s CAC, which opened in 2017, is designed to reduce the re-traumatisation of children within a safe, child-friendly and trauma-informed environment as they undergo forensic interviews, in addition to courtroom preparation, victim advocacy, case management, and therapeutic services. In addition to providing direct services to children, the Pattaya CAC historically has hosted MDT meetings between numerous stakeholders in Pattaya bringing together law enforcement, anti-trafficking and health care professionals to support each survivor throughout their legal and criminal justice process, as well as to collaborate on aftercare efforts. In 2020, A21 Thailand, through its CAC, participated in numerous community outreaches, including victim identification operations, with both Thai and foreign law enforcement, resulting in the identification of both minor and adult victims, as well as members of the vulnerable population at risk for trafficking. A21 staff both conducted and were involved in the forensic interviews of child trafficking and exploitation victims.¹²

COVID-19 restrictions impacted A21 Thailand’s victim identification efforts, with less participation in law enforcement operations than the previous year. The Thai Government in its annual report noted a decrease of trafficking victims identified compared to previous years due to the travel limitations and other barriers.¹³ A21 Thailand also noted a decrease of victims identified with its assistance in 2020 compared to the previous year, which might in part be due to COVID-19 restrictions on cross-border travel, general travel and social distancing requirements. During the pandemic, A21 Thailand observed a significant increase in online sexual exploitation cases, accounting for almost 40% of new survivors entering into A21’s Aftercare program in 2020. Likewise, the Thai Government observed a significant increase in CSAM violations originating from Thailand in 2020, as reported by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).¹⁴ The increase in online sexual exploitation cases may be attributed in part to travel restrictions and economic hardships brought on by the pandemic. In a number of cases, survivors within A21 Thailand’s Aftercare program explained they went online for the purpose of finding a job, only to be groomed, manipulated and exploited by a perpetrator who lured them under false pretense to exchange their CSAM or other sexually provocative materials for a false job opportunity. This is a common tactic A21 Thailand has observed with a number of survivors in A21’s Aftercare program. Despite best efforts to curtail the spread of CSAM, or other sexually explicit materials, many survivors of online sexual exploitation often experience ongoing re-victimisation as their sexual abuse images are shared repeatedly online, which
forms of exploitation

Sex Trafficking: 56.2%
Labour Trafficking: 8.3%
Online Sexual Exploitation: 37.5%

prolongs their trauma and increases their psychological distress. Many of these survivors require comprehensive aftercare services, including psychological support, to address their continuing online exploitation from such distribution.

As part of A21’s intervention efforts, A21 Thailand typically conducts professional training to frontline professionals most likely to encounter victims of trafficking, such as law enforcement officials, healthcare providers, hospitality staff, and teachers. Due to social distancing measures and limitations on in-person meetings, A21 Thailand facilitated a total of three in-person professional trainings in 2020, including a training for 82 educators of Chonburi Primary Educational Service Area Office 1 in cooperation with TICAC (Thailand Internet Crimes Against Children) Taskforce.

**Aftercare Services**

A21 Thailand offers a broad spectrum of holistic, trauma-informed restorative aftercare services to trafficking survivors. Facilitated by A21 social workers and caseworkers, A21’s Aftercare program provides survivors with counselling and life skills designed to provide knowledge, skills, and strategies to overcome trauma with the ultimate goal of restoration and independent living. Aftercare services offered includes but is not limited to: accommodation, medical care, psychological treatment, education support, vocational training, employment assistance, financial support, care packages, and access to community services, with each survivor receiving individualised support tailored to specific needs and goals. Additionally, A21 Thailand facilitates both domestic relocation and international repatriations for survivors in collaboration with relevant government agencies, as well as connecting repatriated survivors to a worldwide referral network of aftercare services for their ongoing care.

In 2020, new survivors entering into A21 Thailand’s Aftercare program were overwhelmingly Thai nationals (93.75%), in contrast to 2019 where Thai nationals only comprised 55.4% of new survivors. This significant difference highlights the potential impact of closed borders due to COVID-19, a possible decrease in foreign national victims in Thailand, difficulty identifying foreign national victims, or most likely, a combination of all these factors in 2020. Of the new survivors, 56.2% were survivors of sex trafficking, 37.5% of online sexual exploitation, and 6.3% labour trafficking. Minors comprised approximately one-third (31.25%) of the new survivors entering into A21’s Aftercare program in 2020. By the conclusion of 2020, A21’s Aftercare Program had 58.6% child survivors, 11.4% of which were online child exploitation cases. This is a decrease in child survivors from 2019 (70.5%), however the number of online child exploitation cases remained similar (11.4%).

COVID-19 restrictions and lockdown prevented A21 Thailand social workers from visiting survivors in distant provinces, or from obtaining visitation permission for survivors in temporary government shelters. In response, A21 staff transitioned to remote services, including coordinating with government shelter partners or other local service providers when necessary to facilitate certain services, as well as engaging with each survivor and/or their respective family members by phone and through online means. Remote case management of child-survivors under the age of 12 proved to present additional challenges due to lack of phone access, difficulty with virtual communication, or dependence on their guardians in order to engage with A21 staff. Despite these challenges, A21 staff found alternative ways to maintain continuous communication with the very young child-survivors, including conducting video calls and, with a survivor’s permission, communicating periodically with the survivor’s trusted friend/family member who provided updates on the child-survivor’s wellbeing, as well as coordination with trusted service provider partners in the area when possible.

The border closures and restrictions on travel also significantly delayed the repatriation of foreign national survivors. In one instance, due to the cancellation of most international flights, A21 Thailand facilitated a repatriation via a specially arranged charter flight, which required extensive coordination with relevant government agencies, immigration and the embassy of the origin country. Thai survivors awaiting repatriation back to Thailand experienced similar delays and hardships. Moreover, upon repatriation, survivors were required to quarantine. Some survivors, originally prepared to phase out of A21 Thailand’s programs into independence, were delayed due to unexpected financial hardship as a result of the economic impact of COVID-19. Repatriation delays and financial hardship contributed to an increase in anxiety and distress for survivors and necessitated an extension of A21 Aftercare support.
National Collaboration with the Ministry of Education

In July 2020, A21 Thailand presented A21’s work in prevention, awareness and education, and in particular, A21’s Primary Prevention Program (PPP), to the National Director of Student Protection and Rescue Centre, under the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) of the Ministry of Education.

The Director highlighted the importance of educating children on human trafficking and exploitation, and the need for resource programs such as the PPP to be made available for Thailand’s education staff who are most likely to encounter victims and potential victims in the course of their daily work. Thereafter, A21 Thailand was invited to provide a training on human trafficking and the PPP to 150 student council presidents, 43 head teachers and 42 government officials from all around Thailand at an OBEC organised workshop in August 2020. At that training A21 Thailand provided information on current trends and patterns of trafficking in Thailand, and the role of educators in working symbiotically to find a solution to this very issue. The overwhelmingly positive feedback resulted in another OBEC invitation for A21 to facilitate a workshop in September 2020 to a targeted audience of 250 school psychologists from across Thailand. At this workshop, A21 conducted a full facilitator training of the PPP to school psychologists to enhance understanding and increase their ability to identify instances of child trafficking and exploitation in their respective educational service areas. These school psychologists work daily with children and families experiencing situations of abuse and violence, including exploitation and trafficking, and therefore are in key positions to function as first responders. Notwithstanding the many other challenges of the pandemic, A21 Thailand was able to forge its first national partnership with the Ministry of Education in 2020.

8 Thailand had a total of 6,690 reported cases and 61 deaths at the end of 2020. See World Health Organisation (WHO) ‘Coronavirus COVID-19 dashboard’ December 2020 https://covid19.who.int/table?tableChartType=heatStableDay-yesterday
10 The PPP is designed to empower children ages 6-12 to protect themselves and others from human trafficking and other risks to children, through child-centred and play-based activities.
11 The ‘Can You See Me?’ (CYSM) campaign is a global anti-human trafficking public awareness campaign of A21. The concept behind CYSM focuses on the “hidden but in plain sight” reality that underlies modern-day slavery. This campaign seeks to educate the public with the subtle indicators of human trafficking in order to expose a seemingly innocuous situation with the reality of the human trafficking that is occurring. As the campaign is country or region-specific, various iterations of the campaign exist specific to the country/region of distribution. CYSM focuses on collaborating with relevant stakeholders in the particular country. In each country, CYSM has a call to action, and provides the relevant hotline for that country.
12 A21 social workers were involved with forensic interviews of potential victims of trafficking and exploitation to various degrees. Only A21 social workers who received proper child forensic interviewing training conducted interviews of potential child-victims and witnesses. Interviews conducted by these A21 social workers at A21’s Pattaya CAC were done in accordance with A21’s guidelines. Many interviews were conducted by Thai officials in accordance with the governing Thai laws and regulations with the participation or support of A21 social workers.
14 Office of the Prime Minister’s Policy Administration, Prime Minister Delivery Unit, Timeline the Royal Thai government combating CSAM and OCSE, last updated April 2020 https://www.pmdu.go.th/timeline-ticac/
Impact Report 2020

UKRAINE

Consistent with prior years, Ukraine remains primarily a source country for victims of human trafficking. Individuals are most commonly exploited through sex trafficking and forced labour domestically in Ukraine as well as in Russia, Poland, Germany, Turkey, and other countries of Asia, and the Middle East. Recently, the number of Ukrainian victims of forced labour has increased, with individuals exploited both domestically and abroad in a variety of sectors, including construction, agriculture, manufacturing, domestic work, and begging.

Ukraine hosts a set of factors that render its population particularly vulnerable. A generally low economic standard, large numbers of low skilled labourers, and more than 100,000 minors institutionalised in state-run care create groups vulnerable to exploitation and reflect the trafficking trends in recent years. Additionally, the ongoing armed conflict on Ukraine’s eastern border has displaced more than three million people.¹ This displaced population, both in government reports and in the experience of A21 Ukraine, is especially vulnerable to trafficking and has constituted large victim groups since the inception of the conflict. Traffickers exploit this displacement and insecurity in the region, abducting women from the conflict zones for sex and labour trafficking, both locally and abroad predominantly in Russia, and trafficking men for forced labour and criminal acts, such as couriering of contraband and drug trafficking.²

COVID-19 Impact on Human Trafficking

Like much of the world, Ukraine initiated lockdown procedures in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Most educational and governmental institutions moved online, with employees working remotely from home. Public establishments were closed, and public transportation restricted. From March to June 2020, the borders of Ukraine were completely closed for exit and entry for citizens of foreign states.

Due to the effect of the COVID-19 related lockdown, an unprecedented number of Ukrainian citizens experienced unemployment. Unofficial reports estimate almost three million people were unemployed by the first half of 2020, amounting to roughly 15% of the working population.³ With so many searching for income, this created a rather desperate situation and heightened vulnerability. Concurrently, borders with the European Union (EU) were closed for Ukrainians. Taking advantage of this, illegitimate ‘employment agencies’ began to offer employment abroad, falsely claiming that they were able to circumnavigate COVID-19 travel restrictions and the illegal crossing of borders, and able to provide legal documentation and employment in the countries of the EU. A21 Ukraine was able to successfully intervene and assist a few of such cases. The consequences of these fraudulent employment abroad schemes will only fully manifest in the next few years.

COVID-19 related restrictions significantly limited anti-trafficking efforts in Ukraine. Prevention events, seminars, awareness campaigns, and professional training could not take place in person. Service providers encountered increased difficulty in reaching potential victims to conduct screenings and identifications. Trafficking survivors had difficulty accessing both government and health services for many months, hindering the necessary placements of survivors in government shelters or facilities due to lowered capacity and COVID-19 related requirements and restrictions.

A21’s Response

A21 Ukraine’s operational response in the country includes a full spectrum of strategic activities, including prevention and awareness, education, professional training, victim identification, international repatriations, as well as a holistic and comprehensive aftercare program.
Prevention & Awareness

Since its inception in 2010, A21 Ukraine has heavily focused on prevention and awareness activities, reaching many thousands across the country, largely through in-person presentations. Typically, A21 Ukraine outworks prevention and awareness efforts in a variety of ways, including school presentations, interactive games and summer camps for youth, awareness campaigns, amongst others. COVID-19 restrictions prevented in-person prevention and awareness presentations, requiring A21 Ukraine to adapt its anti-trafficking prevention and safeguarding materials to continue to reach vulnerable groups and provide resources to educators. A21 Ukraine adapted resources to be usable in an online format and shifted focus to training educators and interested parties online. A21 Ukraine also disseminated its newly reformatted resources to be usable in an online format and shifted focus to training educators and interested parties online. A21 Ukraine also disseminated its newly reformatted resources to educational institutions, government, and nongovernmental organisation (NGO) partners to utilise to continue to spread awareness consistent with COVID-19 restrictions.

With the cooperation and approval of the Ukrainian Ministry of Education, A21 Ukraine created an anti-trafficking Secondary Prevention Program entitled ‘Live Free’ to be used in schools. This program contains anti-trafficking information in an interactive and game format for children, teaching them safe behaviours and about human trafficking within their context. A21 Ukraine also created an accompanying video training for teachers on the use and delivery of the program. In the second half of 2020, school successfully implemented the A21 Live Free Secondary Prevention Program to reach students without needing the in-person participation of A21 Ukraine. To date, this training has been attended by 4,600 teachers online. Educators can access this training online through YouTube and the educational program directly from the Ministry of Education website.

Despite COVID-19 realities, A21 Ukraine accomplished significant national impact in the execution of an artistic and informational public exhibition, called 'Expectations vs Reality'. The exhibition depicted different trafficking scenarios with the aim of preventing labour exploitation. The exhibition, conducted with the partnership and support of the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the OSCE - Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine, was held in central parks around the country for viewing by passersby at the proper social distance mandated by COVID-19 restrictions. Each exhibit posted a QR code that could be scanned to access more in-depth anti-trafficking information. From July 30th to December 2nd, the exhibition travelled to sixteen different cities across the country and was televised. An estimated 55,000 people have viewed the content of the exhibit in-person, and several hundred thousand people via national and local media views.

COVID-19 limitations also prompted A21 Ukraine to adopt new methods to reach vulnerable populations via online platforms. Ukraine historically has had difficulty with unemployment, which COVID-19 further exacerbated. In light of this crisis, A21 Ukraine created a webinar targeting the unemployed to educate on false jobs exploitation risks, as well as safe employment standards. The Kyiv and Mariupol Municipal Employment services, who co-created this training, made the training accessible online as well as disseminated it to its subscribers and constituents. This resulted in direct engagement with 850 vulnerable and unemployed individuals, as well many more through the social pages of each institution. This focus on teaching safe employment standards was strategically important, as 70% of survivors in A21 Ukraine’s Aftercare program were trafficked for labour exploitation, with 77% of those being recruited through false job offers.

A21 Ukraine also utilised its own online social media platform to continue its prevention and awareness efforts during the government-mandated lockdown, launching the program '21 Minutes with A21', broadcasted live on Instagram. During this broadcast, A21 Ukraine hosted seven different online sessions with different professional guests covering important topics related to human trafficking. For the European Day against Trafficking on October 18th, A21 Ukraine translated the A21 Global Freedom Summit Broadcast into Ukrainian and Russian, adapted the content to reflect the region’s human trafficking context, as well as further contextualised locally with the participation of the Ministry of Social Policy. The Ministry then posted the broadcast on government channels and online platforms, as part of a national awareness campaign devoted to the European Day against Trafficking.

Despite COVID-19 restrictions, A21 Ukraine successfully shifted its strategy in order to continue raising awareness and educating the general population about human trafficking. In 2020, A21 Ukraine reached 16,721 individuals with prevention, awareness, and education material, including 6,421 individuals A21 engaged with in-person at schools or events either before or after lockdown periods. A21 Ukraine also reached an estimated 55,562 through its 'Expectation vs Reality' exhibition. The media reach of A21 Ukraine’s two national awareness campaigns, A21’s Global Freedom Summit and ‘Expectations vs Reality’ exhibition, via TV, radio and online channels is an estimated five million people. The adaptation from in-person to broadcast and online prevention and awareness efforts resulted in A21 Ukraine effectively engaging more people in anti-trafficking information in 2020, than in 2019.
Identification & Intervention Efforts

A21 Ukraine also conducts victim identification training for frontline professionals, in order to increase interventions and identifications of both trafficking and potential trafficking victims who these frontline professionals are likely to encounter as part of their normal course of duty. In lieu of in-person training, A21 Ukraine shifted to conduct professional training online through online meeting platforms and pre-recorded webinars for much of 2020. A21 Ukraine conducted 19 training sessions, training 247 professionals in detection, screening, and identification of potential victims of trafficking, among them Radisson Hotels network employees, educators and facilitators from different regions, NGO employees from bordering countries, social workers in Kyiv and many professionals from the local territorial communities of the Kyiv region.

In response to requests by law enforcement, A21 Ukraine either on its own, or in collaboration with other organisations such as IOM Ukraine, have conducted victim identification screenings of individuals exploited as a consequence of the armed conflict on Ukraine’s eastern border. Identification screening interviews often reveal that male Ukrainian citizens are trafficked for non-combat positions with the pro-Russian military forces there, whereas female Ukrainians endure both labour and sexual exploitation around their military camps. A21 provides aftercare services for those identified as survivors of human trafficking as a result of the armed conflict.

Despite COVID-related challenges, A21 Ukraine was involved in more successful identifications of victims of trafficking in 2020 than the previous year, with 58 identified victims in 2020 as opposed to 31 in 2019. A21 Ukraine attributes this increase to the growing cooperation between government institutions and NGOs, necessitated by COVID-19 challenges requiring more resources. In particular, cooperation with law enforcement and the Police Department of Migration increased, resulting in more survivors referred to A21 Ukraine for assistance in 2020 than in any previous year. A21 Ukraine also assists with the identification and repatriation of survivors identified abroad, and despite border closures and general travel restrictions, successfully facilitated three international repatriations and five domestic relocations of survivors in 2020.

Aftercare Services

To support survivors, especially those vulnerable to COVID-19, A21 Ukraine shifted its aftercare focus to the most imminent needs caused by the pandemic, including providing accommodation for safe quarantine, access to medical care and food for survivors during the periods of lockdown. Due to COVID-19, the healthcare system in Ukraine faced enormous difficulties, revealing the weakest points of the system such as the critical shortage of qualified medical staff, the lack of emergency medical care facilities, and the limited number of available hospital beds. As a consequence, this adversely affected the ability of government agencies to provide guaranteed emergency medical care to survivors of trafficking. As trafficking survivors were unable to independently access medical and institutional services due to COVID-19 quarantines and lockdown, A21’s focus shifted to assisting survivors in its Aftercare program with navigating all aspects of the new realities, including the additional bureaucracy and difficulties in accessing aftercare services caused by the pandemic.

A21 Ukraine faced difficulty in navigating the existing institutions and procedures to secure medical services, identity documents, and residential facilities for survivors in its Aftercare program as a result of issues caused by the pandemic. For instance, due to the COVID-19 instigated lockdown of various bureaucratic institutions, restoring identity documents for one survivor took more than five months. A21 Ukraine also faced difficulties in arranging placement of survivors into government centres and rehabilitation centres, as such facilities were either closed or not accepting new individuals due to COVID-19 related space limitations. As a result, A21 provided survivors with safe accommodation through placement in safe housing and the provision of financial assistance for rent.

In 2020, A21 Ukraine provided independent emergency accommodation for five survivors, and long-term accommodation for nine survivors. A21 Ukraine’s aftercare services also focused on ensuring current and past survivors had all necessary supplies needed for safe isolation as well as personal protective equipment. In 2020, 17 new survivors entered A21 Ukraine’s Aftercare program. A21 Ukraine provided access to COVID-19 tests for six survivors who either exhibited COVID-19 symptoms or required a negative test to begin employment. In total, in 2020, A21 Ukraine assisted 168 survivors with material support, including food, medicine, clothing, disinfectant, and masks. In the face of massive unemployment due to COVID-related lockdowns, A21 Ukraine focused on teaching life skills and providing job readiness training to improve employment opportunities for survivors. Specifically, A21 taught computer and technology skills to survivors, resulting in multiple survivors successfully finding new employment, despite high nationwide unemployment levels. Throughout 2020, A21 Ukraine’s caseworkers consistently provided emotional support, guiding current and former survivors.
through insecurities caused by COVID-19 realities and its impact on the Ukrainian economy. For survivors, many of whom were already struggling with existing trauma, the COVID-19 pandemic compounded their stress and anxiety, causing general insecurity, a lack of confidence in the future, as well as fear of contracting the COVID-19 virus and being unable to provide for their families. Consequently, A21 Ukraine provided more psychological assistance for survivors through professional psychologists in 2020 than in any other year.

COVID-19 Challenges Prompt Reform & Greater Collaboration

Despite a difficult year full of unexpected challenges, a greater level of collaboration between government institutions and like-minded NGOs manifested during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Ukrainian government admirably coordinated efforts to fulfill the nationwide anti-trafficking mandate through wide-scale collaboration and actively sought to effectuate anti-trafficking activities and programs through collaboration with NGOs. A21 experienced this heightened collaboration consistently with different government bodies across various projects throughout the year. Different government authorities and institutions invited A21 Ukraine to participate in roundtables and numerous webinars. Through these avenues, A21 Ukraine had the opportunity to discuss the effect of human trafficking not only locally in Kyiv, but nationally throughout various parts of Ukraine. Along this vein, A21 Ukraine became the implementing partner of a Government initiated and IOM sponsored anti-trafficking project which provided training on best practices to combat human trafficking in the Kyiv region. This joint project with IOM spanned from November to December 2020, where A21 Ukraine met with key local government officials to provide a briefing on the urgent state of human trafficking in the area, including exacerbations created by the pandemic, and the need to create multidisciplinary groups to quickly identify victims, provide any urgent assistance, and generate referrals to specific law enforcement agencies and NGOs. During this project, A21 Ukraine conducted best practices training in combatting human trafficking in the 12 territorial communities. A21 Ukraine developed two national awareness campaigns together with The Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, who also invited A21 to participate in the governmental press briefing to the campaign ‘16 Days Without Violence’ on the 26th of November. The Ministry of Education both collaborated, supported, and disseminated A21’s Secondary Prevention Program in schools. The OSCE, IOM, Ukrainian Government and A21 Ukraine partnered together in the nationwide awareness exhibit, ‘Expectations vs Reality’, that successfully reached individuals in 18 major cities of Ukraine during five months in 2020.

In March 2020, the government implemented several reforms, including simplifying the process of restoring identity documents to survivors, and facilitating the process to be completed online. Additionally, the reforms now allowed survivors to restore their documents either centrally in Kyiv or their place of residence, and not at the place of birth or official registration, as previously required. These reforms of the State Migration Service will hopefully be prolonged after the COVID-19 period. Lastly, as government institutions began working remotely in 2020, this provided the opportunity to facilitate online training, seminars, and meetings with officials and professionals that otherwise would not have occurred. Through this, A21 Ukraine forged new relationships with many local administrations across Ukraine to enable stronger anti-trafficking efforts throughout the country.

2 US State Dep’t, 2020 TIP Report (Ukraine).
5 This number represents the cumulative total in 2020 of those who confirmed engagement with A21 Ukraine’s prevention and awareness programs by either attending a training, participating in an online course, and heard a presentation or awareness piece.
6 This number was calculated based on reports from exhibition partners and tracked visits to the exhibit website to obtain anti-trafficking information, per QR code scans provided on-site at the exhibition.
7 Numbers for viewers of content are calculated by in-country media outlets based on industry methods for reach calculation and thereafter provided to A21.
8 These 19 trainings reflect both in-person and online facilitated training sessions. In-person training training conducted in the latter part of 2020 when permitted were conducted in compliance with COVID-19 restrictions and required precautions.
UNITED KINGDOM

The United Kingdom (UK) has predominantly been considered a destination country for human trafficking, with both domestic and foreign nationals trafficked into or within the country. While victims are reported from a variety of source countries, the most commonly reported nationalities are British, Albanian and Vietnamese. In recent years, there have been increasing reports of domestic trafficking of UK nationals trafficked for labour or criminal exploitation.

Overall, for victimised adults, labour exploitation remains the most common exploitation type reported, involving a wide variety of industries including agriculture, cannabis cultivation, construction, food processing, domestic services, nail salons, hospitality and car washes.¹ Reports of trafficking of minors have increased over the last few years with just under half of referrals into the National Referral Mechanism in 2020 concerning potential child victims.² A substantial number (40%)³ of these referrals involved children forced into criminal exploitation through county lines.⁴

COVID-19 Impact on Human Trafficking

Commencing March 2020, the UK Government enforced mandatory lockdown measures, imposing a stay-at-home order and forcing all non-essential businesses, schools and workplaces to close. While schools initially reopened in early September, regional tiered restrictions were re-imposed with a nationwide lockdown enforced for the final three months of 2020. Throughout the pandemic, the government banned all non-essential travel, with restrictions in travelling to and from certain countries, but the UK border was not officially closed at any point in 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic gave rise to significant concerns for exploited individuals and certain vulnerable groups in the UK. Enforced restrictions risked further isolating victims and detrimentally affecting the most vulnerable, including migrants, those working in the informal sector, and minors.⁸ In 2020, the majority of potential victims disclosed their exploitation occurred in the UK, with two-thirds of reports in the final quarter of 2020 involving domestic exploitation.⁶ This noted trend differs from previous years, where individuals typically reported that they had been exploited elsewhere prior to their voluntary relocation into the UK. This increase in domestic exploitation might be attributed to stringent COVID-19 travel regulations restricting movement across international borders. Consequently, vulnerability of those already victimised in the UK became further magnified as perpetrators ‘increased reliance on the existing victim pool in the UK’ and sought to ‘re-engage with victims from whom they were not able to profit over lockdown’.⁷ The COVID-19 pandemic also highlighted and exacerbated vulnerabilities to trafficking and exploitation generally. Due to increased unemployment, individuals appeared more willing to pursue potentially false or illegitimate job opportunities.

The pandemic also severely impacted already vulnerable workers, particularly undocumented migrants placed at increased risk of exploitation by virtue of working illegally, and the general shifting informal labour economy.⁹ Often, these individuals do not report their exploitation for fear of legal ramifications due to their immigration status, permitting employers to continue to exploit them without repercussions. The COVID-19 travel restrictions in the UK exacerbated these already existing vulnerabilities, with migrant workers unable to work due to government-mandated closures of non-essential business, but also unable to return to their home countries. Reports suggest that the closure of such workplaces did not cease the exploitation, but merely resulted in transferring these same migrants to work in other sectors, including cannabis cultivation, factories or agricultural work.⁹
A21’s Response

A21 has operated in the UK since 2012, and combats human trafficking through prevention and awareness, training of frontline professionals, victim identification operations and supporting international repatriations and referrals. The COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing restrictions required A21 UK to readjust its strategy to comply with the constantly changing measures and ensure the continuation of programs and services.

Prevention & Awareness

A21 UK’s prevention and awareness programs provide information on human trafficking in the UK through educational sessions in schools, targeted media campaigns and community-based awareness presentations to increase prevention and safeguarding efforts within specific communities. Due to the cancellation of most in-person events, consistent with COVID-19 restrictions, A21 UK adapted its programs to be delivered via online means. These prevention and awareness sessions were presented to students, businesses and community groups through various online platforms to educate on human trafficking and encourage public reporting. Additionally, as a part of its awareness efforts during the pandemic, A21 UK participated in a radio station interview with an estimated audience of tens of thousands to provide basic information about recognising and reporting human trafficking in the UK.

A21 UK works actively in schools to present the topic of human trafficking to both students and educators across various levels of education. School closures resulted in the increased use of online platforms for educational and entertainment purposes, which both provided new opportunities but also heightened vulnerability to online exploitation as perpetrators also increased their presence on online platforms. With schools closed intermittently throughout 2020, A21 UK adjusted its approach and provided resources through online sessions delivered to school groups on human trafficking and the dangers of online exploitation. A21 also provided other educational materials, adapting already existing resources into online modified versions including the ‘Bodies Are Not Commodities curriculum’ (BANC). All A21 programs including the Human Trafficking Awareness Program (HTAP) and the ‘Can You See Me?’ campaign videos and accompanying educational material were made available and distributed to educators during the pandemic for use in their online classes. Through the shift to online efforts, A21 UK delivered prevention and awareness activities to 16 UK schools, educating over 5,000 students from ages ten to eighteen nationwide in 2020.

A21 first launched its global ‘Can You See Me?’ (CYSM) public awareness campaign in the UK in 2016, and since then the campaign materials have been distributed and utilised by partner organisations at local, regional, national and global levels. Through partnerships with government bodies, NGOs, and public and private businesses, the CYSM campaign has been broadly utilised across multiple channels. One notable example is the use of the campaign materials across numerous UK airports, including Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted, and other transportation hubs in the UK, such as local train stations, as both a prevention and reporting mechanism to be able to highlight the reality of human trafficking occurring across the transportation sector. In light of the increase in reports of domestic violence and exploitative practices in the UK during the pandemic, A21 UK released an additional campaign scenario highlighting domestic violence in the context of human trafficking, and distributed these new materials to key partners in the UK to raise awareness.

Given the cancellation of all in-person events, social media provided an opportune way of reaching large audience base with key information and resources on human trafficking. A21 UK shared awareness materials, such as the digital online safety brochure, on social media channels to raise awareness of the dangers of online exploitation. In response to the pandemic, A21 UK developed a new targeted prevention campaign highlighting prevalent vulnerability factors, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, that were known to underlie common trafficking and exploitation situations. The development of this new social media campaign, provided timely information at the start of lockdown, highlighting the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in increasing vulnerability factors including unemployment, poverty and online exploitation. This campaign utilised both informational grid posts and accompanying Instagram stories to discuss in detail a different vulnerability factor, and to explain the intersection of that vulnerability and the potential exploitation. The two week campaign resulted in a potential estimated reach of 10,000 viewers across social media channels, presenting both important prevention information and the proper reporting mechanism. Throughout the pandemic, A21 UK utilised social media to partner with key organisations and supporters virtually with events such as the London Marathon 2.6 challenge raising awareness of human trafficking, reaching...
34,406 viewers across a week-long event. A21 UK also increased online activity through designated social media channels, hosting live events on Instagram featuring different topics including online child exploitation and the impact of COVID-19 on A21’s work globally. A total of 50,000 people were reached through these live events.

**Identification & Intervention Efforts**

The identification and intervention of victims of human trafficking encompasses A21 UK’s operational activity. These efforts are predominantly outworked through supporting proactive identification activities and delivering professional training to those working in key frontline sectors. In 2020 however, the majority of these activities were either postponed, cancelled, or significantly scaled-down due to national COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. Consequently, A21 UK experienced a decrease in the identification of both victims and potential victims of trafficking as well as a decrease in referrals for support, such as repatriation assistance, in 2020.

**PROFESSIONAL FRONTLINE TRAINING**

A21 UK regularly delivers professional training to various frontline sectors to support the identification of victims of human trafficking. In 2020, A21 UK trained frontline professionals from law enforcement, healthcare, immigration and transportation sectors. As the COVID-19 pandemic limited most in-person training, A21 delivered training sessions via online platforms. While certain challenges accompanied web-based training, the adaptation to online sessions provided the flexibility to increase attendance and granted access to those whose schedules or locations would not normally permit in-person attendance. The versatility of online sessions increased the attendance of healthcare professionals in particular whose rigorous and diverse schedules often resulted in certain attendance limitations. A21 UK historically has provided training to UK Border Force as well as a number of health care providers. In 2020, A21 UK continued to provide training as part of mandatory Safeguarding Level 3 training across the healthcare sector. In addition to continuing to provide training for new UK Border Force recruits, A21 UK also trained two new law enforcement partners based across various major UK airports and transportation hubs. In 2020, A21 UK trained 214 UK Border Force officers to identify, engage with and safeguard potential victims of trafficking. The delivery of these training sessions in 2020 ensured that frontline professionals were aware of developing human trafficking trends and increased vulnerabilities resulting from COVID-19 restrictions. Law enforcement and healthcare professionals in particular greatly benefitted from these sessions, where discussions around recent cases increased understanding of heightened vulnerability factors and barriers to identification. These sessions coupled with hands-on operations during the pandemic assisted frontline professionals to be informed of new safeguarding strategies.

**COVID-19 IMPACT ON IDENTIFICATION AND PROACTIVE OPERATIONS**

A21 UK regularly supports a range of identification and intervention efforts in collaboration with various frontline entities, with the purpose to identify and provide support to victims and potential victims of human trafficking in the UK. The majority of identifications from A21 UK originate from proactive operations supporting law enforcement and frontline officials, where active profiling often leads to encountering potential victims of trafficking. A21 UK has been supporting these proactive identification operations for six years, providing assistance in several ways from providing interpretation, advising on cases and assisting with victim identification screenings. When coordinating these operations, utilising a victim-centred approach may involve working with a non-governmental organisation (NGO) to assist in the identification and provide any necessary support for potential victims encountered. Often exploited individuals may be hesitant to speak directly to law enforcement due to their immigration status, involvement in criminal activity while trafficked, or simply due to a general distrust of law enforcement based on past experiences in their home country. In these unique situations, non-governmental organisations can assist as an ‘advocate’ to support potential victims’ immediate needs and provide any necessary subsequent support. Through this approach, A21 UK has been able to increase the likelihood of successful interventions initiated by law enforcement.

While the UK border did not close at any point during the COVID-19 pandemic, certain travel restrictions enforced throughout 2020 significantly affected passenger numbers. At the outset of the pandemic, government-mandated lockdown and travel restrictions

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limited A21’s ability to participate in proactive operations to identify and safeguard potential victims. However, when select law enforcement-led lockdown-exempt activities were permitted, A21 UK continued to work in partnership with law enforcement upon request.

A21 UK experienced this first hand while providing support in one multi-agency operation at an airport amid the pandemic in 2020 where a trafficker was apprehended and five potential victims of trafficking safeguarded while attempting to enter the UK.

A21 UK routinely supports identification screenings as part of these activities. These screenings seek to establish whether or not a situation constitutes a possible exploitative situation, to identify potential victims, assess the need for care and coordinate any necessary services. Screenings often reveal certain vulnerabilities and safeguarding concerns that help to determine elements of force, fraud or coercion. In A21’s experience, a screening interview for example may reveal that a third-party facilitated travel arrangements, or provided identity documents or passports. Several cases supported by A21 UK involved potentially exploitative job opportunities where individuals were recruited into vulnerable employment situations, lacking any substantial details of employment or living arrangements. In many cases, employers told individuals that jobs had been arranged but did not provide basic details or an employment contract. Individuals are often willing to travel to the UK without being provided with basic information including the location of the prospective employment, specific wages, or even the industry in which they will be working. Many had limited funds or lacked the financial means to support themselves, making them reliant on others. These indicators often place individuals at higher risk of exploitation or debt bondage situations, where the victimised is coerced into staying in an exploitative situation to pay off the ‘debt’ incurred for the initial cost to enter the UK, such as for travel expenses or rent.

A21 UK also regularly provides trained interpreters at no cost during these operations, to both interact directly with the potential victim and to provide interpretation for law enforcement. Interpretation continues to be an important part of safeguarding efforts in providing the opportunity for individuals to speak in their preferred first language, as many potential victims are foreign nationals. Often the interpreters are of the same ethnicity as the potential victim and can create familiarity and comfort as well as provide cultural context to law enforcement. A21 UK continued to provide interpretation services in 2020, although the availability of in-person translation proved challenging at times due to the pandemic. On occasion when confronted with such a shortage, A21 UK was able to provide translation by connecting with the A21 office in the potential victim’s home country. A21 UK first utilised this approach in 2020 when confronted with translation needs for Bulgarian nationals encountered during a victim identification operation. A21 UK contacted the A21 operated National Human Trafficking Hotline in Bulgaria and the potential victims successfully received translation over the phone from Bulgarian call specialists. The immediate availability of an interpreter to engage in the individual’s first language exemplifies a victim-centred approach, helps to build trust, and creates a safe environment that encourages disclosure.

**Repatriation & Aftercare Services**

Upon identification, A21 UK often facilitates the repatriation of survivors and potential victims from pre-departure to post-arrival. As A21 operates in numerous countries, including common origin and transit countries, A21 UK is often well positioned to coordinate support services. When facilitating repatriation services, A21 UK takes into consideration any safeguarding concerns upon return, such as the risk of re-trafficking. These risks could exist if for example a family member or neighbour originally trafficked the individual, and therefore the potential victim’s return to the same community would heighten the risk of re-victimisation. In these cases, A21 UK will often arrange for either the A21 office in that country or a trusted partner organisation to facilitate on-the-ground support post-repatriation to ensure the individual is properly assisted and safeguarded. In one case in 2020, where due to safeguarding concerns a ‘family’ of adults and minors were going to be refused entry to the UK and returned, A21 UK proactively coordinated holistic support with the A21 office in Bulgaria, facilitating assistance from pre-departure to post-arrival. This support included interpretation and screening assistance, engaging law enforcement in both countries and coordinating ongoing support once returned. This holistic approach to repatriation encompasses a victim-centred approach, ensuring support at every stage throughout the process. In the past, A21 UK has received ongoing referral requests to provide repatriation or other services. However, due to COVID-19 and border closures, A21 UK noticed limited requests for referrals and a visible decrease in the number of repatriations facilitated.

A21 UK has historically supported survivors of human trafficking residing in partner shelters, safe-house accommodation and those living independently in the community, by providing gift hampers over
the Christmas period. In 2020, A21 UK distributed 36 hampers to survivors, 14 hampers to children of survivors, as well as extra emergency supply packs to shelters and partner organisations. These hampers include personal gift items, including confectionery, clothing and beauty gift sets to bring enjoyment, provide a sense of comfort and alleviate isolation and loneliness, especially in light of the isolation experienced by so many in 2020. The children’s hampers were customised to be age and gender appropriate, consisting of clothing and nappies as well as soft toys and gift items. These hampers were especially important in 2020 as lockdown restrictions isolated many survivors, and the economic impact of COVID-19 caused many survivors to struggle both financially and emotionally. Additionally, A21 UK provided emergency packs to partner shelters consisting of basic essentials including toiletries and hygiene items.

**Collaboration Results in a Successful Intervention**

A21 UK’s operational activities include supporting outreach activities to identify and safeguard potential victims of human trafficking. These operations seek to bring together relevant stakeholders to support identification efforts including law enforcement, government agencies and non-governmental organisations.

A21 is often invited to these operations to act as an advocate in assisting the identification and safeguarding of potential victims of trafficking who may be encountered. In one operation in 2020, A21 UK supported UK law enforcement with the screening of Bulgarian nationals, with translation support provided telephonically by A21 Bulgaria. As significant safeguarding concerns were raised during this encounter, A21 UK and A21 Bulgaria, alongside law enforcement in the respective countries, were able to support repatriation efforts. A21 UK worked closely with UK law enforcement to coordinate contact on arrival of the repatriated survivors with A21 Bulgaria. Simultaneously, A21 Bulgaria worked closely with the Bulgarian authorities to provide further on-the-ground safeguarding assistance for the survivors post-arrival. In this case, the global nature of A21’s work proved invaluable to support both survivors of trafficking and authorities on the ground across two countries, thus providing bilateral support in both the destination and origin countries. This particular case illustrates that given the often transnational nature of the crime of human trafficking, through collaboration of key stakeholders in the relevant countries, and the ability to provide holistic support throughout the different stages of an exploited individual’s journey, successful intervention of human trafficking can occur.

3 ‘County lines’ is the term used to refer to the illicit drug trade by highly organised crime groups that recruit vulnerable young people to transport drugs across the country and use dedicated mobile phone ‘lines’ to communicate.
5 Home Office, Modern Slavery: National Referral Mechanism and Duty to Notify Statistics UK, Quarter 4 2020 – October to December 2020
8 Focus On Labour Exploitation (FLEX). Briefing: No Worker Left Behind: Protecting Vulnerable Workers From Exploitation During And After The Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic 2020
10 The ‘Can You See Me?’ (CYSM) campaign is a global anti-human trafficking public awareness campaign of A21. The concept behind CYSM focuses on the ‘hidden but in plain sight’ reality that underlies human trafficking. This campaign seeks to educate the public with the subtle indicators of human trafficking in order to expose a seemingly innocuous situation with the reality of the human trafficking that is occurring. As the campaign is country or region-specific, various iterations of the campaign exist specific to the country/region of distribution. CYSM focuses on collaborating with relevant stakeholders in the particular country. In each country, CYSM has a call to action and provides the relevant hotline for that country.
11 Section 12.12 of the UK Modern Slavery Act 2015 Statutory Guidance for England and Wales published by the UK Home Office states that it is imperative that ‘individuals acting as First Responders have adequate training to ensure they are clear about the steps they should take in the event that they identify a possible victim or victims of modern slavery’ as well as ‘all relevant frontline staff have received basic awareness training on what modern slavery and human trafficking is, identifying indicators of modern slavery and human trafficking and groups at particular risk.’ Healthcare workers for purposes of this Act are considered to be First Responders.
Historically, the United States of America (United States) had been considered a destination country for human trafficking, without due consideration of domestic trafficking within its borders.¹ With the increased visibility of human trafficking however, along with a better understanding of the crime, it is clear that the victimised in the United States include both domestic, as well as foreign nationals.

According to the U.S. State Department Trafficking in Persons Report, prevalent forms of human trafficking in the United States include commercial sex, and labour exploitation in both legitimate and illicit areas, including but not limited to hospitality, travelling sales crews, agriculture, janitorial services, construction, landscaping, restaurants, factories, care for persons with disabilities, salon services, massage parlors, retail, fairs and carnivals, peddling and begging, drug smuggling and distribution, religious institutions, child care, and domestic work.² The State Department has identified the top three origin countries for survivors of human trafficking in the U.S. federal system as the United States, Mexico, and Honduras.³

While individuals are trafficked both in commercial sex and labour, historically sex trafficking has been more predominantly identified, and labour trafficking under-represented at all stages.⁴ A21’s experience is consistent with these findings. A21’s operational programs in the United States are primarily administered in North Carolina (NC). In 2020, 69% of survivors assisted by A21 were victims of sexual exploitation, whereas 19% involved forced labour, with the remaining 12% categorised as ‘other.’ Seventy-three percent of survivors in A21 North Carolina’s Aftercare program in 2020 were domestically trafficked, whereas 27% are foreign national survivors. Of the foreign national survivors, 76% of survivors originated from the Central American region, 14% from Africa, with the remaining 10% categorised as other/unknown.

Vulnerability factors disclosed by survivors in 2020 include but are not limited to, homelessness, substance misuse, legal status and/or poverty.

COVID-19 affected all parts of the United States in varying degrees of travel restrictions and lockdowns. The United States officially declared a national emergency as a result of COVID-19 in mid-March 2020.⁵ On March 10, 2020, the state of North Carolina declared a state of emergency, resulting in shut-down of facilities including A21 NC’s ‘Freedom Centre,’ the primary avenue by which A21 NC provides in-person services to survivors. Consequently, the Freedom Centre moved services to virtual platforms. Restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in significant economic impact in the United States, including both the temporary and permanent closure of non-essential businesses resulting in unemployment, increased homelessness, and poverty, all noted vulnerability factors for human trafficking.⁶ In 2020, use of public transportation decreased significantly in stark contrast with previous years, although with less disparity in private vehicle use.⁷ Mandatory quarantines and forced distance learning of children required use of the internet, and electronic devices, access to which is often contingent on individuals’ economic situation.
Distance learning

As a result of the pandemic, schools across the United States effectively shut down in-person classes commencing in March 2020, such that “[n]early every state either ordered or recommended that schools remain closed through the end of the 2019-20 school year.”^9 The vast majority of students in the United States engaged in ‘distance learning’ through use of online resources. As A21’s educational materials are created for in-class use, A21 modified its curriculum for online use in response to COVID-19 restrictions.

A21’s Response

A21 works nationally in the United States through general public awareness and targeted education programs, and locally in the Southeastern region of the United States in its intervention and holistic aftercare efforts. A21 has operated in the United States as a direct service provider for survivors of human trafficking since 2012, originally opening its Aftercare program in South Carolina, and then moving to North Carolina in 2016. As a result of the pandemic, and the various lockdown measures taken throughout the United States in 2020, A21 adjusted its operational programs to ensure the continuation of services while still complying with newly issued and ever-changing government rules and regulations.

MODIFYING EDUCATION EFFORTS

Upon the imposition of COVID-19 restrictions, A21 tailored its human trafficking curriculum, ‘Bodies Are Not Commodities’ (BANC) from the original in-person instruction to a digital platform. Although Dallas Independent School District (ISD) had anticipated delivering BANC in-person to an estimated 160,000 students in 2020, due to COVID-19, Dallas ISD reported only approximately 1,500 students were able to receive the condensed online version created by A21. A21 also created a hybrid instruction plan for Texas and Florida classrooms that included online powerpoint presentations and videos to accommodate distance learning, and explored a partnership with private entities to create an updated K-12 digital curriculum. A21’s additional work in

Awareness & Intervention Efforts

In the earlier part of 2020, prior to the full impact of the pandemic in the United States, A21 in its capacity as founding partner worked with the ‘It’s A Penalty’ Campaign to raise awareness about human trafficking during Super Bowl LIV in Miami, Florida. Over 60 local Hilton hotel staff and management were trained to recognise human trafficking and exploitation. Three training sessions in both English and Spanish were provided to hundreds of Uber drivers and staff. These combined efforts reached 378.1 million people with awareness about human trafficking through media, and social media, and resulted in the physical distribution of 170,000 educational materials in Miami.

Impact on Survivors

The life adjustments caused by the pandemic and ensuing restrictions also greatly affected survivors of human trafficking by creating additional barriers to overcome. Mental wellbeing, economic empowerment and education, social support, and physical wellbeing, amongst others, are critical components in determining risk of revictimisation for survivors of violence and exploitation. The uncertainty, emotional stress and trauma imposed by the pandemic’s restrictions became an additional layer of difficulty to overcome in addition to the trauma and ramifications from being trafficked. A number of survivors in A21 NC’s Aftercare program diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of their trafficking and childhood traumas, found that mandatory lockdown and solitude retriggered their PTSD, as increased isolation echoed their traffickers’ use of isolation as a means of control. Survivors with children also faced childcare challenges as schools closed, and distance learning was implemented. While all parents across the United States had these same challenges, often survivors experienced other extenuating circumstances such as being a single parent, single income, and/or economic instability.

Increase in unemployment as a result of the pandemic also impacted initially employed survivors, subsequently laid off due to business closures, and without any financial assistance while awaiting unemployment benefits. COVID-19 also resulted in a noticeable shortage of emergency housing for often newly identified survivors. A number of previously available shelters ceased admitting any new survivors due to COVID-19 restrictions, with often no alternative option provided. In one case, A21 NC exhausted options after consulting with 15 different shelters that refused admission for a newly identified survivor, and ultimately paid for a hotel to serve as the survivor’s emergency housing. All of these additional pandemic-related barriers contributed to a general detrimental impact on survivors, compounding pre-existing emotional trauma.
specialists from the U.S. Department of Justice, Internet through an educational webinar featuring a panel of Exploited Children (NCMEC). A21 launched this scenario (NGO) the National Center for Missing and Abduction Education (NCMEC) the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). A21 launched this scenario featuring a panel of specialists from the U.S. Department of Justice, Internet Prevention and Awareness, and Intervention efforts. In response to the pandemic, lockdown, and general restrictions resulting in increased activity online in both prevention and awareness, and intervention efforts. In May 2020, A21 introduced a new CYSM USA scenario focusing on educating the general public on recognising and reporting suspected human trafficking. Launched in the United States in 2018 with the support of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), the CYSM USA campaign recognises transportation hubs as not only significant in the facilitation of human trafficking, but also as avenues of communication to the general public. In 2020 as a result of the pandemic, 22% of the general public modified their travel plans from flying to driving. Notably, research suggests the top three methods of transportation used in facilitating human trafficking in the United States all involve roadways. In response to these trends, in the Fall of 2020, CYSM USA focused awareness efforts on roadways through a partnership with Lamar Advertising resulting in 300 donated digital billboards on the roadways, and 400 physical billboards from partnerships with Lamar Advertising, Clear Channel, Renfroe Outdoor, and reduced printing costs provided by Circle Graphics and Out of Home for Good. Through a partnership with Orange Barrel Media, interactive digital kiosks featuring CYSM video clips were distributed throughout various cities throughout the country primarily at public transportation access stops such as bus stops and metro transit rails. The CYSM materials continue to be used as public service announcements in various airports throughout the United States.

RESPONDING TO ROAD TRAVEL AS THE PREFERRED METHOD OF TRANSPORT

A21’s ‘Can You See Me?’ (CYSM) public awareness campaign focuses on educating the general public on recognising and reporting suspected human trafficking. Launched in the United States in 2018 with the support of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), the CYSM USA campaign recognises transportation hubs as not only significant in the facilitation of human trafficking, but also as avenues of communication to the general public. In 2020 as a result of the pandemic, 22% of the general public modified their travel plans from flying to driving. Notably, research suggests the top three methods of transportation used in facilitating human trafficking in the United States all involve roadways. In response to these trends, in the Fall of 2020, CYSM USA focused awareness efforts on roadways through a partnership with Lamar Advertising resulting in 300 donated digital billboards on the roadways, and 400 physical billboards from partnerships with Lamar Advertising, Clear Channel, Renfroe Outdoor, and reduced printing costs provided by Circle Graphics and Out of Home for Good. Through a partnership with Orange Barrel Media, interactive digital kiosks featuring CYSM video clips were distributed throughout various cities throughout the country primarily at public transportation access stops such as bus stops and metro transit rails. The CYSM materials continue to be used as public service announcements in various airports throughout the United States.

PROACTIVE VICTIM IDENTIFICATION EFFORTS DECREASE

In previous years, A21 regularly supported law enforcement efforts to proactively identify victims of human trafficking through law enforcement-led ‘outreach’ efforts where law enforcement would often arrange a situation resulting in the identification of victimised and potential victims of trafficking. A21 staff would accompany law enforcement, and be available to engage with the potential victim upon request. Historically, A21 NC has assisted law enforcement with at least one coordinated identification outreach effort each quarter, other government and intergovernmental conferences also regrouped online in the latter part of 2020. The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Transportation Working Group’s anti-trafficking efforts spearheaded by the USDOT, refocused efforts to an online platform, and sponsored two online webinars featuring panellists, including A21, to discuss collaborative efforts to combat human trafficking in the transportation sector in the APEC region. In December 2020, the USDOT sponsored an end-year webinar with panellists including A21, focused on transportation sector counter-trafficking efforts in the United States. Continuing with virtual webinars and gatherings, A21 participated in a virtual panel discussion with the White House, hosted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Task Force to Eradicate Human Trafficking, to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on human trafficking. The more than 180,000 participants were educated on basic human trafficking and provided with access to prevention resources.

UTILISATION OF ONLINE WEBINARS DURING THE PANDEMIC

The pandemic, lockdown, and general restrictions resulted in A21’s increased activity online in both prevention and awareness, and intervention efforts. In May 2020, A21 introduced a new CYSM USA scenario featuring the dangers of online child sexual exploitation in collaboration with non-governmental organisation (NGO) the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). A21 launched this scenario through an educational webinar featuring a panel of specialists from the U.S. Department of Justice, Internet Crimes Against Children, and NCMEC. Moderated by A21, the webinar discussed the increase of online child sexual exploitation correlated to the lockdown, as well as provided key prevention information and downloadable resources for parents and children. Thereafter, A21 conducted a Facebook and Instagram online campaign from July to September 2020, targeting minors and educating viewers on online child sexual exploitation, and encouraging reports to the NCMEC CyberTipline. The online campaign resulted in 24.4 million impressions, reaching 9.6 million unique viewers, with over 100,000 clicks to the CYSM website, which contained additional related resources. NCMEC confirmed that at least 20 reports were submitted to its CyberTipline as a direct result of the online campaign. Canceled in-person government and intergovernmental conferences also regrouped online in the latter part of 2020. The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Transportation Working Group’s anti-trafficking efforts spearheaded by the USDOT, refocused efforts to an online platform, and sponsored two online webinars featuring panellists, including A21, to discuss collaborative efforts to combat human trafficking in the transportation sector in the APEC region. In December 2020, the USDOT sponsored an end-year webinar with panellists including A21, focused on transportation sector counter-trafficking efforts in the United States. Continuing with virtual webinars and gatherings, A21 participated in a virtual panel discussion with the White House, hosted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Task Force to Eradicate Human Trafficking, to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on human trafficking. The more than 180,000 participants were educated on basic human trafficking and provided with access to prevention resources.
resulting in numerous in-person victim identification screenings, and opportunities to provide direct services.

In 2020 however, due to the pandemic, law enforcement did not request A21’s assistance in any proactive identification efforts whereas, in 2019, A21 NC participated in four such proactive outreach efforts. Notably, in 2019, A21 NC was involved in the identification of 48 survivors of trafficking through law enforcement outreach operations, unsolicited calls, and emails to A21, which also resulted in survivor referrals to the A21 NC Aftercare program. In 2020, identifications from these same sources continued, albeit with a decrease to 29. Overall in 2020, as a direct result of the pandemic, A21 NC noticed a visible decrease in survivors identified as well as referred to A21’s Aftercare program, not just by law enforcement but by other referral sources such as hospitals. In particular, one hospital that operated its own internal human trafficking identification program effectively ceased operations during the pandemic. Referrals of newly identified survivors from hospitals into A21’s Aftercare program consequently decreased from 22 in 2019 to 14 in 2020. In sum, 26 new survivors entered into A21’s Aftercare program in 2020, in contrast to 36 new survivors in the preceding year.

**A21 North Carolina Operations**

A21 North Carolina provides a holistic aftercare program utilising trauma-informed services uniquely designed to meet the different needs of individual participants through its comprehensive restorative services and reintegration support for survivors of trafficking. Understanding that any recovery plan is not limited to just survivors, but also their families, A21 NC provides the two-generation approach to aftercare services, taking the needs of certain survivors’ family members into consideration when developing their individualised plans. The two-generation approach as applied in A21 NC’s Aftercare program encompasses equal and intentional services and opportunities for the survivor, both adult and minor, and their respective children or adult guardian(s). A21 NC caseworkers address any hardships that a qualifying family member, either adult guardian of a minor survivor or minor child of a survivor, may be experiencing that impacts the survivor’s ultimate wellbeing and the chance of long-term success in the survivor’s individualised case management plan, by articulating and tracking outcomes for both children and adults simultaneously. In 2020, A21 NC assisted 33 qualifying family members of survivors in its Aftercare program, including minor children of survivors as well as guardians of minor survivors. A21 NC also assists survivors both with domestic relocation support within the United States, as well as international repatriation for foreign national survivors.

**THE FREEDOM CENTRE**

A21 NC outworks most of its aftercare case management through the A21 Freedom Centre, which functions as a drop-in center. At the Freedom Centre, A21 NC caseworkers work alongside survivors to create personal goals, and then individualised plans, noting the necessary life skills and emotional support to reach a survivor’s self-set life goals. In addition to case management, the Freedom Centre provides meals, a child-friendly space for survivors’ children to use while survivors receive services, technology services in the form of laptops and tablets, referrals to free and low-cost resources in the surrounding community, and no-cost access to essential items, such as clothing, toiletries, pantry items, school supplies, etc., from the ‘Grab N’ Go Room.’

While the vast majority of survivors in A21 NC’s Aftercare program reside in North Carolina or nearby states such as South Carolina, some survivors receive case management services remotely. Many of these survivors initially entered A21’s Aftercare program in North Carolina, but after relocating elsewhere in the United States have chosen to remain in the program. Similarly, survivors trafficked elsewhere in the United States can receive services in-person from A21 NC should they wish to relocate to North Carolina or engage in remote case management services.¹⁶ To maintain a personal connection for those enrolled in remote case management services, A21 NC regularly utilises video conferencing with survivors. Similar to the in-person support provided, A21 NC caseworkers provide support to survivors receiving remote case management through consistent encouraging messages via text messages, phone calls, or video meetings. While outside services for survivors engaged in remote case management services may be more limited, when possible, A21 NC coordinates services with resources in the survivor’s respective community. For example, several survivors enrolled in remote case management were struggling with grocery budgets and lack of transportation due to their remote locations. In response, A21 NC partnered with a local service provider who coordinated meal deliveries, and provided transportation services to medical appointments and other key locations within the community. Such partnerships enable A21 NC to provide a sense of community and support regardless of physical distance. Finally, A21 NC staff takes proactive steps to celebrate all major events, such as by mailing gifts on birthdays, to maintain intimacy and care with survivors being supported remotely.
immediately with the new COVID-19 guidelines. Consistent with the government mandate, A21 NC closed its Freedom Centre on March 16 but continued its services to survivors virtually, similar to its remote case management services. Recognising the emotional neglect produced by the pandemic, A21 NC made a concerted effort to provide an intense level of support to meet the emotional well-being and needs of each survivor and their families. Noting the specific needs of 2020, a generous donation of laptops enabled A21 NC to gift these laptops directly to survivors in its Aftercare program in need of such electronic devices. A21 NC re-directed additional funding to purchase any additional laptops/tablets needed, as well as internet service, to ensure that each survivor enrolled in A21’s Aftercare program had continued access to services through virtual means, including continued communication with their caseworkers. Caseworkers also provided survivors with training sessions on use of equipment and relevant programs. A21 NC also provided an array of different streaming packages, in-home activities, paid for virtual counselling sessions with licensed professionals and much more to decrease feelings of isolation. Through the use of these devices, survivors in A21’s Aftercare program continued to engage in online case management services with A21 caseworkers, access counselling, education, and vocational training, as well as have a mechanism by which to connect with the world during the mandated lockdown period. Despite the emotional struggles induced by the pandemic, through efforts to prioritise the emotional wellbeing of survivors, A21 NC staff did not encounter any major mental health emergencies, such as mental health related hospitalisations, substance overdoses, or suicide threats, with survivors during the difficult period of the most restrictive portions of the governor’s ‘Stay At Home’ order.

A21 NC’s biggest challenge during the pandemic was the availability of appropriate housing for survivors. Many shelters simply ceased admitting new individuals. The few shelters that had availability changed their intake process to require a 14-day mandatory quarantine at a hotel as a prerequisite to shelter admission, and/or required a negative COVID-19 test prior to admission. In spite of these hurdles and limited availability of resources, A21 NC successfully assisted all referred survivors in 2020, either through entry into its Aftercare program or through emergency transitional support. For each new survivor entering into its Aftercare program, A21 NC provided both access to and funding for COVID-19 testing, as well as temporary hotel accommodations while awaiting admission into a shelter. A21 NC also mitigated against the risk of potential homelessness of survivors in its Aftercare program due to emergent housing needs and economic strife during this critical time, through constant interactions to address these issues and financial support for emergency housing as needed.

A21 NC’s Freedom Centre reopened on September 1, 2020 to permit in-person meetings between A21 caseworkers and survivors with mandatory safety regulations, consistent with recommendations issued by the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, in place. Survivors were given the option of attending in-person meetings with A21 caseworkers, subject to compliance with safety guidelines, and limited to one survivor at a time, or to continue receiving support remotely. Social distancing and safety precautions were successfully implemented, and many survivors chose to attend in-person meetings at the Freedom Centre after its reopening.

THE TRAFFICKING VICTIM ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Despite the additional hurdles, through appropriate modifications, A21 NC continued to offer its holistic support to survivors in its Aftercare program with eight survivors effectively graduating and exiting out of A21’s Aftercare program in 2020, and survivors in A21’s Aftercare program successfully obtaining a total of 36 jobs. While 2020 held unexpected challenges, A21 NC’s Aftercare program continued growing especially in the demographics of the survivor population assisted. In the Fall of 2019, the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants who administers the U.S. Health & Human Services (HHS) Trafficking Victim Assistance Program (TVAP), which provides assistance to foreign national adults and minors who have experienced trafficking and are pursuing official certification, approached A21 NC to engage in its program, after noticing a void in case management services for this sect of human trafficking survivors in North Carolina.¹⁸ As a consequence of this engagement, A21 NC began accepting TVAP survivors into its Aftercare program commencing in August of 2020, resulting in a significant increase in the percentage of both foreign national survivors and forced labour trafficking survivors in A21 NC’s Aftercare program. Labour trafficking survivors in A21 NC’s Aftercare program increased from 6% in 2019 to 19% in 2020, and foreign national survivor program participants increased from 11% to 27%.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE COORDINATION

Amidst the pandemic, prosecutions continued forth throughout 2020 at times through remote court hearings, and later in-person with safety precautions. In 2020, two defendants were successfully convicted in federal court for numerous criminal violations, including sex trafficking.
This prosecution was especially significant, as it involved eight survivors in A21’s Aftercare program, who served as victim-witnesses in the prosecution. A21 supported each of these survivors through trial preparation, including accompanying the survivors to court for their testimony. After the conviction, A21 NC staff provided emotional support, transportation assistance, and in-court support during sentencing. Survivors participated in-person at the sentencing by either reading their victim impact statements aloud or having their statements read aloud by the prosecutor. This process provided the court with the necessary information to thoughtfully consider the impact of the perpetrators’ criminal acts on each individual survivor; to employ a victim-centred approach during the sentencing proceeding; and ultimately impose a sentence of life imprisonment against both defendants. A21 NC also continued to support survivors who are named victim-witnesses in various stages of other pending prosecutions against their perpetrators.

In addition to providing support to survivors in ongoing criminal prosecutions of their traffickers, A21 NC provides survivors in its Aftercare program support in their civil legal cases. Upon determining a survivor’s civil legal need, such as child custody or immigration issues for example, A21 NC provides referrals to trusted pro bono attorneys who represent survivors in court, assist in legal applications, and provide legal counsel as necessary. In the past, A21 NC staff attended civil hearings to emotionally support survivors and at times provided letters of support outlining the services provided to the survivor from A21’s Aftercare program. Ultimately, the submission of such evidence assists survivors’ legal position in their civil cases. In 2020, in compliance with COVID-19 adjustments, A21 NC attended civil court proceedings virtually with survivors when permitted, as well as continued to liaise survivors with pro bono legal providers.

As evidenced throughout this report, combating human trafficking is multi-faceted, encompassing prevention and awareness, proactive intervention efforts, and the provision of restorative aftercare services. A21 NC strives to always recognise the individuality of each person when administering services. Therefore, restorative aftercare services are unique to each survivor’s needs as each survivor is unique. The exceptional work of A21 NC was recognised as one of the 2020 recipients of the Presidential Award for Extraordinary Efforts to Combat Trafficking in Persons for its work to reduce vulnerability and provide essential aftercare services to survivors.

Partnerships with Pro Bono Attorneys Ensure Access to Justice for Survivors of Trafficking in North Carolina

Access to justice and protection under the law is a fundamental part of the restoration process for survivors of human trafficking. Successfully combating human trafficking is never done alone, but in concert with other stakeholders.

A21 NC works closely with prosecutors and law enforcement during the criminal justice process to advocate for and ensure that survivors are afforded every protection under the law. Often, survivors’ intersection with the legal system is not only in relation to the prosecution of their trafficker, but also to ensure that they are not prosecuted themselves for acts committed while being trafficked. A21 staff works with survivors who have been not only victimised but also coerced to recruit others by their trafficker. A21 NC advocates not only for survivors’ protection from prosecution but whenever possible to qualify as a ‘victim’ under the relevant statutes to afford them every protection and right under the law. Due to distrust of law enforcement and the legal system which often have failed survivors, A21 often works as an intermediary between law enforcement/prosecutors and survivors to bridge miscommunication and establish trust. Notwithstanding involvement in the trafficking prosecution, survivors are often faced with other pending legal issues, ranging from child custody matters, smaller criminal infractions committed while being trafficked, immigration, and even traffic court. In such situations, through partnerships with pro bono legal NGOs or pro bono attorneys and law firms, survivors are provided with legal representation at no cost. A21 extends gratitude and recognition to the Battered Immigrant Project of Legal Aid of North Carolina and to Moore and Van Allen’s Human Trafficking Pro Bono Project, whose pro bono legal services to survivors ensured access to justice for the most vulnerable. A21 NC partners with these attorneys when survivors in its Aftercare program need criminal or civil legal representation or general legal advice. These attorneys have provided, and continue to provide indispensable legal advice to survivors officially designated as named victim-witnesses in the criminal prosecution against their perpetrators. In the past,
these pro bono attorneys have assisted survivors with expungement of criminal records accrued during their trafficking situation, domestic violence court hearings, child custody, credit restoration, guidance on victim-impact statements, coordination of assessments needed to determine restitution, immigration status, and much more. In 2020, A21 North Carolina’s pro bono attorneys provided legal assistance to 22 survivors enrolled in A21’s Aftercare program, resulting in survivors obtaining custody of their children, being awarded domestic violence protective orders against violent partners, receiving T-VISAs to obtain legal status in the United States, and qualifying for disability vouchers to assist with income, amongst others.

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⁴ Leila Miller, Why Labor Trafficking is So Hard to Track, April 24, 2018, PBS Website https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/why-labor-trafficking-is-so-hard-to-track/


⁷ The National Academies of Sciences Engineering Medicine, COVID-19 Trends Impacting the Future of Transportation Planning and Research, Aug. 17, 2020 (updated Jan. 27, 2021), https://www.nationalacademies.org/trb/blog/covid-19-trends-impacting-the-future-of-transportation-planning-and-research. The “Can You See Me?” (CYSM) campaign is a global anti-human trafficking public awareness campaign of A21. The concept behind CYSM focuses on the “hidden but in plain sight” reality that underlies modern-day slavery. This campaign seeks to educate the public with the subtle indicators of human trafficking in order to expose a seemingly innocuous situation with the reality of the human trafficking that is occurring. As the campaign is country or region-specific, various iterations of the campaign exist specific to the country/region of distribution. CYSM focuses on collaborating with relevant stakeholders in the particular country. In each country, CYSM has a call to action and provides the relevant hotline number for that country.

⁸ The “It’s a Penalty” (IAP) NGO is a global public awareness campaign that harnesses the power of sports to raise awareness about child exploitation and human trafficking. Understanding that human trafficking and child exploitation necessarily crosses borders, IAP raises awareness globally and has run campaigns for the World Cup, Olympics, Ruby Sevens, Commonwealth Games, and the Super Bowl.

⁹ The “Can You See Me?” (CYSM) campaign is a global anti-human trafficking public awareness campaign of A21. The concept behind CYSM focuses on the “hidden but in plain sight” reality that underlies modern-day slavery. This campaign seeks to educate the public with the subtle indicators of human trafficking in order to expose a seemingly innocuous situation with the reality of the human trafficking that is occurring. As the campaign is country or region-specific, various iterations of the campaign exist specific to the country/region of distribution. CYSM focuses on collaborating with relevant stakeholders in the particular country. In each country, CYSM has a call to action and provides the relevant hotline number for that country.


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¹³ Kenneth Kiesnoski, Travel changed after 9/11: Here’s how it will look after the Covid-19 pandemic finally recedes, CNBC (May 10, 2020, 10:50am EDT).

¹⁴ Brittany Anthony, et. al., On-Ramps, Intersections, and Exit Routes: A Roadmap for Systems and Industries to Prevent and Disrupt Human Trafficking at the World Cup, Olympics, Ruby Sevens, Commonwealth Games, and the Super Bowl.

¹⁵ Due to the nature of the evidence generated by an online child sexual exploitation report, even one report to NCMEC’s CyberTipline can result in the identification of countless children and perpetrators worldwide, after further investigation.

¹⁶ Survivors who receive case management services remotely from A21 NC are typically referred to A21 from a number of different federal agencies or other NGOs.

¹⁷ Some survivors found multiple employment opportunities after holding a position for a short period of time.

A21’s ‘Reach’ operational strategy recognises that the most effective way to prevent human trafficking and exploitation is through prevention, awareness, and education strategies outworked with at-risk populations, vulnerable communities, as well as within the broader general population. A21’s Reach strategy exists to disrupt the cycle of exploitation by reducing risk factors and providing safeguarding information, training, and awareness tools. Furthermore, it aims to provide resources with accessible and tangible reporting methods as a practical tool to encourage the general population to report suspected human trafficking. The ‘Reach’ operational strategy includes all of A21’s prevention programs, awareness campaigns, and education curriculum, as well as professional development training for educators, with the aim of safeguarding those who are vulnerable to human trafficking. There is no single profile for trafficked individuals; adults and minors in rural, suburban, and urban communities across the world experience and are vulnerable to human trafficking. Those victimised by human trafficking have diverse socio-economic backgrounds, varied levels of education, and may be documented or undocumented. While human trafficking spans all demographics, there are risk factors that lead to a higher susceptibility to victimisation, including job and family instability, violence and abuse, lower education, substance misuse, poverty, homelessness, unemployment, and isolation. These factors can weaken defensive measures and make individuals more vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation.

**PREVENTION**

A21’s prevention resources are designed specifically to reach vulnerable populations, including asylum seekers, refugees, stateless persons, migrants, children in foster care, homeless, and those in group homes and orphanages. These resources include the Primary Prevention Program (PPP), prevention comic books, Parent Guides (for children and teens), Safe Employment Guides and presentations. Often A21’s prevention programs are physically conducted in-person with the most vulnerable, poor, ostracised, stigmatised, socially removed populations in communities. Within every resource, presentation and community visit, A21 staff ensures national hotline numbers are shared, practical assistance is provided, and intervention and assistance is available through referral to local authorities.

**PRIMARY PREVENTION PROGRAM**

A21’s Primary Prevention Program (PPP) is comprised of three child-centred, play-based sessions designed to empower children and champion their young voices to make informed decisions to protect themselves and others from trafficking scenarios. The program is research-based and includes three core sessions: Values and Child Rights; Safe and Unsafe Migration; and Human Trafficking and Exploitation. These sessions are designed for children ages 6-12 and are currently available on A21’s website in seven different languages. Each ‘country-specific’ version of the program has been contextualised to be relevant for the local region and to incorporate local laws.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

A21 produced a digital ‘Safe Employment Guide’ to educate the general public on recognising and preventing labour trafficking, utilising reporting information, safety tips, and red flags. These guides highlight indicators of safe and unsafe job opportunities and give the reader practical tools and resources to assess potential employment. A21 also launched new ‘Parent Guides’ for caretakers of both younger children (6-12) and teenagers (13-17) with key information to help prevent online child exploitation and human trafficking. These guides give practical steps on how to safeguard children while online. They are designed to help parents of children and teenagers start conversations about human trafficking generally. All versions have been translated into seven languages and are available online.

**AWARENESS: Presentations**

A21’s awareness resources and presentations explain human trafficking to diverse audiences, and the various ways in which the general public can be involved in counter-trafficking efforts. They are individually designed for specific audiences, including: children and young people (C&YP), university students, adult populations in communities, government agency or task forces, and faith-based groups or organisations/businesses. All of A21’s awareness resources and presentations are translated into local languages and contextualised by A21’s country offices, to include local laws, customs, trends and observations. A21’s awareness resources and presentations include A21’s Online E-Training Module, the Global Freedom Summit (GFS) Broadcast, the Human Trafficking Awareness Program (ages 13+) and Walk For Freedom (WFF).
HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS PROGRAM

A21’s Human Trafficking Awareness Program (HTAP) includes three sessions of videos, activities, and information that can be used to educate and mobilise groups of people to action. The focus of HTAP is to educate participants on the issue of human trafficking, equip individuals on how to recognise and report suspected cases of human trafficking, and empower them to take action in their own communities. HTAP has been contextualised and translated into 13 versions and is being used around the world in schools, universities and communities.

THE ‘CAN YOU SEE ME?’ CAMPAIGN

The ‘Can You See Me?’ (CYSM) campaign is a global anti-human trafficking public awareness and identification campaign of A21. The concept behind CYSM focuses on the ‘hidden but in plain sight’ reality that underlies human trafficking. This campaign seeks to educate the public with the subtle indicators of human trafficking in order to expose a seemingly innocuous situation with the reality of the human trafficking that is occurring. In 2020, A21’s CYSM campaign videos, billboards, posters and additional resources had an estimated reach of more than 688,500,000 people across the world. As the campaign is country-specific, CYSM requires collaboration with the government and local NGOs to ascertain the specific type of exploitation that is most prevalent in that particular country. As the campaign seeks to train the viewer on recognising and reporting potential trafficking in that country, CYSM has a call to action, and provides the relevant hotline in that country.

Best Practices from A21’s Can You See Me? Public Awareness Campaign are as follows:

- Dual purpose – (1) as a tool for identification of the victimised; & (2) general awareness & education tool
- Broad target audience – (1) exploited individuals; (2) general public; and (3) industry employees
- Specific to the local issues – (1) tailored to the prevalent human trafficking issues in the country/locality; and (2) industry specific
- Time sensitive - as most public service announcements only have 30 or 60 seconds to relay a message, within that allotted time, the videos seek to include:
  - The current seemingly ‘normal’ situation where an individual is being exploited;
  - The backstory that led up to that situation;
  - A call to action on part of the viewer;
  - A united front from all the partners to the campaign (NGOs, hotlines, governments, industry, etc.)

CYSM materials are provided free of charge in multiple formats.

EDUCATION: Curriculum

The A21 ‘Bodies Are Not Commodities’ (BANC) standards-based curriculum was originally created for 9th and 10th-grade students in the United States in 2013. It is a researched-based curriculum designed to equip educators and their students with human trafficking awareness and prevention tools and offer engagement pathways to be a part of the solution to end human trafficking. There are five multimedia, interactive sessions designed for cross-disciplinary teaching. Each session includes interactive learning labs for extended inquiry-based experience to cultivate authentic connectedness to the real world, substantive conversation skills, social support, enhances critical thinking, and utilises ongoing evaluation throughout the learning process. A21’s BANC curriculum addresses essential human rights, self concepts, online safety, and human trafficking questions, engaging students in the classroom to understand, recognise, and respond to the threat of human trafficking. A21’s BANC curriculum and accompanying educational resources contain targeted content aligned with nationally contextualised education standards for each country.
Appendix B

RESCUE – Intervention & Survivor Legal Assistance

A21’s ‘Rescue’ operational strategy incorporates all of A21’s intervention and legal assistance efforts. Individuals may or may not realise that they are being trafficked or exploited, or may not want their victimisation to be recognised for several reasons, including psychological factors. The lack of this recognition often enables the continuity of the exploitation. Such self-recognition is important however to realise certain rights, that are only available to recognised ‘victims’ under the law. Once identified, services can be employed to bring justice. This may include a formal classification as a human trafficking victim under the law of the relevant country, which generally confers a certain status resulting in special treatment and assistance available only to such classified individuals. While benefits will vary by country, they can include amongst others, legal immigration status, financial restitution, housing assistance, and protection from criminal prosecution for acts committed while trafficked.

Identification of victimised individuals involves both education and a mechanism to facilitate proper identification. Due to the controlling nature of traffickers, and the high-risk taken to be placed in a position to be identified, identification of potential victims and those being actively trafficked, is likely one of the most challenging parts of a successful intervention. Additionally, there are often significant barriers to identification commonly stemming from an unwillingness or fear of engaging with law enforcement, or due to the lack of understanding of their victimisation. Identification requires proactive efforts which commence before even encountering a potential victim of trafficking. These efforts include education to the general public, and specialised training to frontline professionals placed in key positions to first encounter potential victims of trafficking, merely through the nature of their employment, such as transportation or hospitality industry employees, or key government officials responsible for the laws and policies surrounding the creation and enforcement of human trafficking laws, such as government or those in the legal profession.

A21’s intervention efforts are outworked through a focus on identification through professional training, targeted identification operations, national human trafficking hotlines, and Child Advocacy Centres (CAC). A21’s legal assistance program recognises the vital importance that access to justice impacts survivors’ restoration and recovery, and to that end whenever feasible strives to support survivors through that process either through the provision of an attorney, or assistance in accessing legal services.

Professional Training

A21’s Professional Training programs recognise that certain frontline professionals have the highest likelihood of encountering a potential victim of human trafficking due to the intersection between human trafficking and their profession. These professionals may be required legislatively to proactively detect potential victims of human trafficking or may be required to do so under their employment description. These professionals may also have no explicit duty to uncover potential victims but might be in the best position due to the nature of their employment. Such individuals include professionals in the transportation industries, for example airport and airline personnel, the hospitality industry, such as hotel employees, border officials, medical service providers, including emergency room nurses and practitioners, immigration officials, patrol officers, and the like. As these professionals are first responders, they are in the best position to first engage with potential victims. Moreover, many of these officials are in positions where traffickers will have a heightened sense of possible apprehension, such as initial entry into another country, or at a medical provider as a result of an injury caused by the trafficker. Because of the unique positions of these professionals, A21’s Professional Training program trains these frontline workers on basic principles underlying human trafficking generally, recognising human trafficking in their country, utilising a survivor-centred approach and any nuances specific to the targeted industry.

Identification Operations

Comprehensive identification of potential victims as well as the victimised, requires both a passive and proactive approach. Because of the unlikeliness of self-identification, a key aspect of identification is to create the opportunity to proactively encounter both those being trafficked as well as potential victims. A21 engages in such proactive identification efforts in conjunction with government entities, with other NGOs, or on A21’s own initiative. In the past A21 has engaged in proactive identification operations with law enforcement, border force, and airport authorities, amongst others. Working collaboratively with frontline professionals has provided various professions such as law enforcement, to engage in a victim-centric approach when engaging with potential victims of human trafficking. Many exploited individuals who for a myriad of reasons are reluctant to speak to law enforcement, may be more likely to engage with NGOs, and upon
request for assistance, can receive immediate assistance from language interpretation, emergency housing, and any other support services.

Hotlines

A21 operates the national human trafficking hotlines in Greece, South Africa and Bulgaria, and are the only reporting mechanism in each respective country to solely receive and manage reports of human trafficking. These Hotlines provide a national focal point for reporting trafficking-related concerns and are specifically designated to receive reports of suspected human trafficking, both over the phone and online, as well as to provide resources for trafficking survivors who self-identify or are otherwise identified as needing assistance. Hotlines are therefore a key tool in providing effective service delivery to survivors as well as to the general public with trafficking-related issues, serving as a central point for the receipt, management and referral of reports. These toll-free Hotlines operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and offer interpretation services in numerous languages. In addition to accepting phone calls, all three A21 operated Hotlines receive reports and requests for assistance through online means of communication, including web-based reports. After receiving a report of suspected trafficking, the call specialists respond by submitting requests for follow-up to law enforcement, other government agencies, or other service providers. Often A21 operated Hotlines conduct extensive follow-up before submitting a referral. Call specialists combine subject matter and technical expertise with knowledge of the specificities of local services and referral pathways, ensuring that every report is met with an appropriate response and action. Hotlines also foster cross-sector working and cooperation, bringing together different entities including government, law enforcement and NGOs to facilitate a holistic approach to tackling human trafficking and other inter-related crimes. In this way, Hotlines rely on strong partnerships and collaboration with key stakeholders and partner organisations to be able to quickly and effectively refer cases when needed to the appropriate authorities.

Child Advocacy Centres

Child Advocacy Centres (CAC) (or Children’s Advocacy Centres) and the ideas and methodologies embodied at CACs, are a fairly new concept that arose in the mid-1980s in the United States as the need to coordinate responses in child abuse cases quickly became apparent. Since then, CACs have become the standard for best practices in the United States and around the world in responding to a child’s disclosure of abuse, including human trafficking and other exploitation. CACs often serve a dual function by invoking the investigatory response to child exploitation through child forensic interviews and multidisciplinary team meetings (MDT), as well as to house aftercare services specific to children. Child forensic interviews are a fairly new concept introduced in the last quarter of the 20th century in response to research reflecting the best way to elicit accurate information from children about traumatic abuse they have experienced. MDTs within the context of a CAC gathers a ‘group of professionals from specific, distinct disciplines that collaborates from the point of report [of abuse] and throughout a child and family’s involvement with the CAC’ in order to reduce trauma and coordinate services that will best serve the child. Prior to the creation of the CAC and the MDT, abused children would be interviewed on multiple occasions by various professionals individually such as law enforcement for purposes of criminal investigation, medical personnel for medical purposes, child protective services for social services reasons, etc., resulting in one child being interviewed on multiple occasions, invariably about the same issue. Moreover, prior to the creation of the CAC and MDT, the professionals did not share information about their particular role, which ultimately resulted in duplicating efforts, miscommunication, and constant re-traumatisation of the child-survivors. CACs revolutionised the response of professionals to child abuse through the use of recorded child forensic interviews and the creation of a Multidisciplinary Team approach to an allegation of child exploitation. While the resources to support a CAC differs by country, and even regions within that country, A21 attempts to mimic the model CAC to the best of the available resources, and in accordance with the applicable laws within that country. A21 strategically opens CACs in its locations where there is a demonstrable need for child-specific services. A21 administers its relevant Aftercare program for child-survivors, in its CACs.

Legal Assistance

Legal Assistance at A21 either involves direct ‘Legal Representation’ or ‘Legal Assistance Coordination’ to survivors enrolled in A21’s Aftercare program. A21 seeks to provide holistic care to survivors of trafficking. Understanding that healing is multi-faceted, supporting survivors to obtain justice against their traffickers is a key component to the recovery of survivors of trafficking. In addition to providing a sense of justice to survivors, the arrest and subsequent successful prosecution of their traffickers can provide survivors with comfort against the fear of re-trafficking or retaliation by that trafficker. A number of survivors receiving direct services from A21 often have corresponding criminal prosecutions where they are the named victim-witnesses in prosecutions against their traffickers. In these cases, the survivors’ preliminary statements comprise a significant basis for the initial arrest of the trafficker, and their later in-court testimony is often crucial to the success of the prosecution. The complexities of human trafficking generally, as often reflected in the dynamics between trafficker and the victimised, the lack of understanding about the
practical outworking of human trafficking in the legal system, as well as the necessary burden of proof in such prosecutions, often result in traffickers either not being prosecuted, or in failed prosecutions. To address this gap, and in furtherance of obtaining justice on behalf of survivors enrolled in A21’s Aftercare program, A21 may provide survivors with legal representation in the form of a ‘victim’s attorney’ who represents the survivor’s interests in criminal prosecution. In these cases, A21’s attorney works directly with the survivor, with the support of A21 staff to ensure that survivors are prepared in all aspects to provide the court with their testimony. A21 also contracts attorneys for civil legal representation when needed to assist in civil matters such as family law or immigration.

Legal Assistance Coordination services provided by A21 ranges from coordinating legal services with a local pro bono legal provider either in the criminal proceeding as a victim’s attorney, or more often civil proceedings. In this type of assistance, A21 staff assists the survivor and pro bono attorney as needed to support the survivor’s legal position in court. Assistance can range from submitting an affidavit in support of an immigration application to accompanying survivors to civil court hearings to demonstrate the existence of a survivor’s support network. Legal Assistance Coordination services also includes cases where A21 serves as an advocate on behalf of the survivor in a criminal prosecution against the trafficker. In these cases, A21 staff ensures that the survivor is sufficiently resourced and supported both materially and psychologically to walk through the court process, including but not limited to providing basic needs, transportation to the courthouse, court appropriate attire, and in-court support. Where possible, A21 provides survivors with the necessary professional therapy services as support throughout the prosecution, including in preparation for their in-court testimony and post-court debriefing. At times when survivors in A21’s Aftercare program may potentially face criminal liability for acts coerced by the trafficker or be considered only a witness rather than a victim under the law, A21 works directly with the survivor and law enforcement to clarify facts and provide evidentiary proof so that the survivor can be treated as a named-victim under the law. On occasion in response to official inquiry from the court, A21 has testified in a quasi-expert capacity on human trafficking generally.

³ National Children’s Alliance, Standard for Accredited Members, at 12, 2017 Ed...
⁴ When discussing legal cases, ‘victim’ rather than ‘survivor’ is used at times to reflect the language in the legal proceeding.
A21 Restore offers a trauma-informed, survivor-centred aftercare program to survivors of human trafficking in Bulgaria, Cambodia, Greece, South Africa, Thailand, Ukraine, and the United States. A21’s Aftercare program focuses on outworking its strategy in the survivor’s community, and engaging local services as the primary avenue of support for survivor’s successful reintegration into the community. The ‘Restore’ operational strategy embodies all of A21’s aftercare programs which aim to assist survivors in achieving restoration, reintegration into their community, and independence by providing comprehensive individualised services, including case management, medical, dental, and psychological treatment, accommodation, domestic and international relocation and repatriation, education, and employment support, and financial assistance. A21 defines restoration as a survivor exhibiting low vulnerability to the risk of re-victimisation. Through the provision of holistic aftercare services, survivors within A21’s Aftercare program are empowered to live independently, having addressed over time and with assistance, the factors that made them vulnerable to trafficking, thus reducing the likelihood of re-victimisation. A21’s global Restore caseworker teams are staffed by qualified social workers, psychologists, and other allied health professionals, who offer case management and support survivors in their journey to restoration and independence. Psychological assessment and therapy is provided to survivors primarily through external psychologists and psychiatrists within the public and private health sector to those who wish to engage in mental health services. Various iterations of the following A21 Aftercare programs are outworked in each active ‘Restore’ country.

Survivors are referred to A21’s Aftercare program through A21’s Hotlines and Child Advocacy Centres, local law enforcement and partner organisations. Upon referral, an A21 caseworker conducts a screening interview with the potential victim of trafficking to determine whether the individual has been victimised. Following admittance into the program, survivors receive services according to their needed level of care in A21’s Tiered Aftercare Support model.

**Community Model and Freedom Centres**

A21 bases its Aftercare program on a community model of service provision that assists survivors to reintegrate safely and independently back into their community utilising local services centralised through A21’s Freedom Centres, a drop-in day centre, which serve as the primary avenue for survivors to receive direct case management support. Freedom Centres offer survivors a safe place to meet with their caseworker, build community with other survivors, and access A21 aftercare services, which may include but are not limited to, Life Programs, job readiness and vocational training, language lessons, tutoring, cooking classes, creative activities, counselling, and access to meals. Freedom Centres are strategically located within close proximity to public transportation for ease of access, and within a close radius of various affordable accommodation, medical and psychological services, educational institutions and employment opportunities, to provide survivors ease of access to essential services and assist in reaching independence.

**Tiered Aftercare**

A21’s Tiered Aftercare model provides a continuum of trauma-informed aftercare services that adapt to survivors’ specific and unique set of needs, to provide assistance at each stage in the progression to independence. Comprising four levels, the first level offers crisis intervention for survivors in the initial stages following their identification and recovery from trafficking situations. At Level 1, a survivor’s short-term immediate needs are provided for, with support such as a care package, emergency accommodation, medical consultation, psychological assessment, transportation, and relocation or repatriation. Survivors within Level 2 receive practical support tailored to their needs, including remote or face-to-face meetings with an A21 caseworker, an individualised A21 Case Management Plan, the opportunity to participate in A21’s Life Programs, financial assistance for accommodation, living costs, health care and basic needs, ongoing medical, psychological and dental treatment, education and employment support, and legal assistance. Remote case management support is offered to survivors unable to conduct in-person case management meetings, or residing in a distant location from an A21 Freedom Centre or office. Level 3 offers more comprehensive holistic aftercare services that aim to bring a survivor to a place of stability, independent living, and engagement with their community. Level 3 services are provided to survivors who live within close proximity to an A21 Freedom Centre or office to enable more comprehensive support and engagement with the program, and include services offered at Level 2. Level 4 supports survivors transitioning to independent living in the community, and prepares a survivor to graduate and exit from the A21 Aftercare program. Graduation
signifies that a survivor has built the necessary skills and foundation to live independently without further assistance from A21. Following graduation, caseworkers provide follow-up to support and assist in sustained restoration as needed.

**Case Management Plans**

An individual survivor case management plan is developed for survivors who require aftercare support beyond Level 1 crisis intervention. Case management plans are written by caseworkers, often in collaboration with the survivor, to identify the survivor’s unique goals and needs in the areas of accommodation, medical and psychological treatment, employment, education, social support, legal assistance, A21 Life Programs, financial assistance, and relocation and repatriation. A survivor’s initial Assessment of Survivor Outcomes (ASO) scores identify their strengths and vulnerabilities and inform their direct service provision needs that are outlined in their initial case management plan. Case management plans are reviewed and updated every six months to ensure that the support being provided is appropriate to the survivor’s progress and to take into consideration any changes in circumstances or needs. When a survivor enters Level 4, an Independence Plan is written to review any areas of functioning where a survivor may require additional support to bring them to a place of independence prior to graduating from the program.

**Life Programs**

A21’s Life Programs are a collection of strengths-based, trauma-informed group and individual programs, designed to equip and empower survivors with the knowledge, skills and strategies to overcome trauma and move towards living a life of restoration and independence. Key programs include i) Life Skills - an A21 curriculum developed to provide basic and practical living skills to assist survivors reintegrating into the community; ii) Flourish - a survivor-created peer support program; and iii) Brave Hearts, Strong Minds - an A21 group based program which equips child and adolescent survivors of trafficking and exploitation with strategies to enhance their emotional resilience. Facilitated by A21 caseworkers and peer support coordinators, Life Programs may be completed in person, online, or via phone, individually or in a group setting with other survivors within A21’s Aftercare program.

**Accommodation**

A21 provides various accommodation options to support survivors’ unique housing needs. The A21 Home is an emergency shelter that accommodates survivors in the initial months following their identification and recovery. Within the A21 Home, survivors have the opportunity to rest and stabilise while receiving support and assistance 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in planning their next steps and assessing further assistance options. A21 Emergency Accommodation provides survivors with safe short-term temporary accommodation such as hotels and hostels. Finally, A21 Long-Term Accommodation support is offered to survivors through financial rent assistance, or an A21 apartment. A21 apartments are leased by A21 and located within close proximity to a Freedom Centre, providing survivors with safe and stable independent accommodation for up to 12 months to allow them the opportunity to focus on establishing health and wellness, build community, and pursue education and employment pathways to help prepare them for graduating from the A21 Aftercare Program and living independently. For minor survivors within A21’s Cambodia operations, if it is determined that it is not safe for the child to return to or remain in their home following their identification as a survivor of trafficking, A21 assists in placing the child in a safe foster care home in collaboration with a partner foster care agency. This prevents placement of minors in long-term sheltered-based care and allows them to experience family-based care. A21 may support the foster care family financially, and provides comprehensive aftercare services to the child according to their identified needs.

**A21 Survivor Relocation Services**

A21 Survivor Relocation Services (A21 SRS) provides safe transportation for survivors who require domestic and international relocation and repatriation. A21 SRS offers comprehensive services according to identified needs, including any legal assistance required to facilitate a relocation or repatriation, such as procuring identification; safe transportation; suitable accommodation; and referral to partner organisations at their end destination.

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1 The Assessment of Survivor Outcomes (ASO), developed by International Justice Mission (IJM), serves as a tool to measure the progress that survivors of violence (including but not limited to forced labour, commercial sexual exploitation, child sexual assault, and online sexual exploitation of children) make toward restoration. The ASO serves as a case management tool that assists to identify a survivor’s areas of strengths and vulnerabilities, enabling caseworkers to develop an individually tailored Survivor Case Management Plan; and as an impact measurement tool that provides data on the effectiveness of aftercare programming by assessing survivor progress. The ASO tool assesses a survivor in six key domains of functioning that are critical to their restoration: Safety, Legal Protection, Mental Wellbeing, Economic Empowerment and Education, Social Support, and Physical Wellbeing. A21 caseworkers complete the ASO at case intake to get a baseline understanding of a survivor’s functioning, at case closure to assess whether a survivor has achieved restoration and if they require additional services, and at a 12 month follow-up to identify whether the survivor’s restoration is sustained.