

VOL. I & II

# Support Manual for Survivors of Trafficking in Persons

PRACTICAL  
GUIDELINES FOR  
REINTEGRATION



FOCUS ON ONLINE SCAM OPERATIONS  
& FORCED CRIMINALITY

# Foreword

Survivors of forced criminality face unique challenges that require specialised care. Unlike other trafficking survivors, those coerced into criminal activities often grapple with a dual identity—seen by society as both victims and perpetrators. This complex psychological burden makes it particularly difficult for them to view themselves as survivors deserving of help. It also amplifies the trauma they carry, rooted not just in the exploitation they endured but also in the actions they were forced to take.

Adding to this complexity is the misconception of the “perfect victim.” Many survivors may not fit the traditional narrative. Some had minor criminal records before their trafficking experience; others may have initially entered the fraudulent industry willingly, lured by false promises of quick earnings. As the violent and coercive nature of their situations became clear, they were trapped in exploitation. Despite their past actions, their experiences of coercion make them no less worthy of care. In fact, their unique circumstances often require more urgent and focused support.

**This manual challenges the notion of what a “worthy” survivor looks like, emphasising that all survivors deserve dignity, healing, and reintegration, regardless of their past.** Caregivers and communities must adopt best practices that drop preconceived ideas and focus instead on survivors’ current needs. The trauma, shame and anger these survivors experience are deep and often unprocessed, which if left untreated, can have delayed and far-reaching effects, not only on the survivors themselves but also on the community.

**To ensure effective reintegration, this manual outlines a comprehensive approach, focusing on long-term, sustainable solutions that go beyond initial aftercare.** It addresses survivors’ mental health, foster economic stability, and promotes community support, fulfilling both protection and prevention. By addressing the deeper layers of trauma and the societal stigma that often accompanies survivors of forced criminality, this manual aims to help them rebuild their lives with dignity and security.

Ultimately, the need for this manual is rooted in the urgency to provide survivors with the holistic, specialized care they require to truly heal. It is a **guide for practitioners, communities, and caregivers** to understand the complexities of forced criminality cases and to respond with empathy, respect, and a commitment to sustained, meaningful support. **By focusing on survivors’ present needs rather than their past actions, we can ensure that no one is left behind.**

# Acknowledgements

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# Introduction

This manual serves as a resource for communities and NGOs addressing the unique challenges faced by survivors of cyber scams and forced criminality. Survivors often require specialised care due to the dual burden of being exploited while also perceived as perpetrators.

This manual provides a comprehensive framework for supporting their reintegration with an emphasis on long-term, sustainable solutions that go beyond initial aftercare.

**Asia Freedom Network (AFN), in partnership with local organisations, will assist in training and offer ongoing guidance to equip community leaders with the necessary tools and knowledge.**

Support leaders in each country will coordinate reintegration efforts through regular collaboration, culturally sensitive training programmes, and monthly support groups, ensuring survivors receive effective and dignified care within their communities.

## How We Will Implement the Manual

- **Identify Local Partners:** Working with local NGOs, AFN maps and selects community-based organisations or community leaders in areas where survivors are repatriated.
- **Build Collaboration:** AFN connects these organisations with NGOs to form a strong support network.
- **Provide Training:** Culturally relevant training, conducted in the local language, is provided to community leaders and teams.
- **Support Implementation:** Training will equip communities to understand and apply the manual effectively, ensuring trauma-informed and sensitive care.



VOL. I

# PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR REINTEGRATION



FOCUS ON ONLINE SCAM OPERATIONS  
& FORCED CRIMINALITY

# Volume I

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## 1.1 Purpose of the Manual

The purpose of this manual is to provide practical, actionable guidelines for community leaders and NGOs working with repatriated survivors of forced criminality, particularly from scamming compounds and pig butchering schemes.

The manual focuses on trauma-informed, shame-informed, and anger management approaches, offering detailed strategies to address survivors' mental health needs, restore their self-worth, and ensure sustainable reintegration. By adopting these practices, organisations can empower survivors to rebuild their lives with dignity, achieve economic stability, and foster a sense of belonging.

The ultimate goal is to enable survivors to heal fully and reintegrate successfully, contributing positively to their communities and reducing the risk of future exploitation.

## 1.2 What are Forced Criminalities and Why Do They Matter?

Forced criminalities in Southeast Asia, operating through scamming compounds and (a lot of times referred to as pig butchering schemes), involve the coercion of individuals into participating in illegal activities. Vulnerable individuals are often deceived with false promises of legitimate employment and subsequently forced into criminal operations under the threat of violence or other forms of coercion. This form of exploitation is marked by the dual identity survivors face—as victims of trafficking and, in some cases, as perceived perpetrators of the crimes they were compelled to commit. This duality presents significant challenges to their recovery and reintegration into society.



## 1.3 The Journey from Rescue to Repatriation

The rescue or escape of survivors from forced criminality is often a harrowing process, marked by uncertainty and fear. Many survivors flee under dangerous conditions, risking retaliation from traffickers, while others are rescued through coordinated efforts by law enforcement or NGOs. Upon being freed, survivors may face immediate detention or questioning by local authorities due to their coerced involvement in criminal activities. This period can be traumatising, as survivors are often treated with suspicion rather than as victims, further complicating their emotional state.

The reality is that many survivors are not officially recognised as victims by governments and may instead be charged with immigration violations, leading to further detention or even imprisonment. Even those identified as victims often endure lengthy stays in shelters, awaiting the resolution of legal and bureaucratic hurdles before being allowed to return home. During this time, survivors are left without income, causing their existing debts and family pressures to mount, further exacerbating their mental and emotional distress.

Once cleared and ready for repatriation, survivors face additional challenges, such as navigating complex processes to secure identification documents and arranging safe transportation. This journey, while necessary, often leaves survivors physically and emotionally drained, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive, long-term care to help them rebuild their lives and reintegrate into society.

## PROFILES OF SURVIVORS

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### DIVERSE DEMOGRAPHICS

Survivors can be men, women and children from various socioeconomic backgrounds.

### DECEPTIVE RECRUITMENT

Often (but not always) lured by false promises of legitimate employment opportunities.

### EXPLOITATION

Trapped in criminal operations, with little or no means of escape.

### ABUSE

Subjected to severe physical, psychological and emotional abuse during captivity. Survivors often exhibit symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety and other mental health issues. Prolonged exposure to coercion and violence can significantly impact their psychological well-being. The trauma experienced can lead to long-lasting effects on their mental health, requiring specialised after care and support.

## 1.4 Who are the Survivors and What are Their Needs?

It's also important to move away from the concept of the "perfect victim." Some survivors may have minor criminal records before their trafficking experience, or they might have initially joined the fraud industry willingly, seeking to earn commissions. Over time, they realize the reality is far more violent and coercive than they could have imagined. Even though some survivors may not fit the traditional narrative of an innocent victim, their experiences of exploitation make them no less deserving of care. In fact, their unique situations might make them even more urgently in need of support.

By focusing on their exploitation and current needs rather than past actions, we ensure that no one is excluded from the care they require. Best practice encourages communities and caregivers to drop preconceived ideas about how a "worthy" survivor should look and respond to each of their unique stories with empathy and dignity.

Communities and families frequently struggle to grasp the complexities of survivors' experiences, particularly when societal or familial expectations clash with the realities of their trauma. Families, in particular, often face significant challenges in reconciling the survivor's past involvement in forced criminality with the stigma and shame it brings. Beyond economic pressures, the weight of familial disappointment and judgment can further alienate survivors, compounding their feelings of guilt and isolation.

Every survivor, regardless of their background or the challenges they face with their communities or families, is entitled to protection, healing, and reintegration into society. Addressing these barriers with empathy and culturally sensitive approaches is key to fostering an environment where survivors can truly rebuild their lives.

## 1.5 Stigma & Shame

**Dual Identity:** Survivors often face the dual burden of being seen both as victims and as perpetrators.

**Stigma and Shame:** Their dual identity leads to significant societal stigma and deep self-imposed shame. Survivors may feel blamed for their exploitation, especially in cases where they initially joined the criminal enterprise under false pretences. The internalised shame can be as damaging as the trauma itself, compounding the difficulties in their recovery and reintegration.

**Impact on Reintegration:** Stigma can severely hinder reintegration efforts, as survivors may avoid seeking help or participating in community life for fear of judgment. This social isolation can intensify their psychological distress, making it harder for them to access the care and support they need.

**Community Perception:** Communities frequently struggle to grasp the complexities of these situations, resulting in further marginalization of survivors. Often, community members may oversimplify the survivor's journey by focusing on perceived complicity in criminal activities, without understanding the coercion, manipulation, and violence that forced them into these situations.

Additionally, there is an urgent need to challenge the notion of the "perfect victim." As mentioned earlier, some survivors may have prior criminal records or may have willingly joined the fraudulent industry before realising the exploitative and violent nature of the work.

*Regardless of their past, survivors deserve empathy and care. The focus should always remain on their current situation as victims of forced criminality and their need for healing and reintegration.*

## 1.6 About Shame-Informed Care

Shame is a significant barrier to recovery and reintegration for survivors of forced criminality. It often manifests as self-blame, unworthiness and isolation, making it harder for survivors to seek and accept support. Addressing this toxic shame is essential to helping survivors rebuild their self-worth and reintegrate into society with dignity.

This manual provides foundational guidelines on shame-informed care, offering practical strategies for community leaders and care providers to understand and respond effectively to the complexities of survivor shame.

To further support this approach, **Volume III** on "**Shame, Anger, and Trauma Care: Advanced Guidelines for Survivor Support**" has been developed. It delves deeper into the principles and practices needed to address the unique emotional challenges faced by survivors.

*By equipping community leaders and care providers with these specialised strategies, we aim to foster a compassionate and supportive environment where survivors feel safe to express their emotions, heal and reintegrate into society.*

## 2.1 Initial Reception and Assessment

### HOW TO CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR SURVIVORS

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#### PROVIDE PRIVATE AND COMFORTABLE SPACES

- Ensure a confidential setting for initial interviews and assessments, free from distractions or interruptions.

#### FOSTER A WELCOMING ATMOSPHERE

- Ensure a confidential setting for initial interviews and assessments, free from distractions or interruptions.

#### TRAIN STAFF IN TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

- Equip staff with the skills to handle sensitive disclosures with empathy, understanding, and professionalism.

#### PRIORITISE EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL SAFETY

- Address immediate safety needs and ensure survivors feel protected and supported throughout the reintegration process.

#### COMMUNICATE CLEARLY AND RESPECTFULLY

- Use simple, respectful language to explain the reintegration steps and reassure survivors of their rights and agency in the process.



## 2.2 How to Conduct Effective Assessments

Provide for comprehensive health and psychological assessments using appropriate tools to identify both immediate and long-term needs. These assessments are crucial for developing personalised care plans tailored to each survivor.

### **Respect Survivors' Choices**

It's essential to respect survivors' individual choices regarding how they wish to share their stories. Survivors of forced criminality may have different perspectives from those involved in other forms of trafficking, such as sex trafficking. While some survivors may prefer to keep their experiences private, many actively want to share their stories to raise awareness. Support groups and communities should respect these preferences, offering flexibility in how survivors choose to engage.

For instance, some survivors may prefer more confidential support, such as spending time privately with NGO leaders or trusted community leaders. Others may feel empowered by sharing their journey more openly. When survivors are ready, sharing their experiences—whether informally with community members during tea breaks or publicly with a larger audience—can be empowering and help raise the awareness this topic needs.

It's important to remember that survivors are not a homogeneous group, and everyone will have a different approach to their healing. The key is to listen to every survivor and honour their personal choices about how they want to share their story or remain private. This creates an environment where survivors feel supported, respected, and empowered to take control of their healing journey.

It's equally important to ensure that survivors are not pressured into sharing their experiences, especially if they seem reluctant. Asking too many questions can be intrusive and may feel like an interrogation, even if unintentional. This behaviour often stems from the questioner's curiosity rather than a genuine effort to support the survivor. Survivors should be given the space to share their stories at their own pace and comfort level, without fear of judgment or intrusion.

## 2.3 Why is Maintaining Confidentiality Crucial?

Confidentiality refers to the ethical and professional practice of protecting private information shared by survivors, ensuring it is not disclosed without their consent. This creates a safe environment where survivors can trust that their personal details and experiences are safeguarded and used solely for their benefit.

While respecting survivors' choices about sharing their stories, it is equally important to safeguard the privacy of those who prefer confidentiality. Strict confidentiality should be maintained in all private interactions and records. This is crucial for building trust, ensuring their safety, and fostering a secure and supportive environment where survivors feel protected.

It is also essential to recognise that definitions and practices of confidentiality may vary across cultures. Clearly defining confidentiality in the context of survivor care ensures a consistent approach while respecting cultural sensitivities and expectations.

# PRACTICAL WAYS TO MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY

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## CASE DISCUSSIONS

- Share case details strictly on a need-to-know basis, ensuring they are discussed only with those directly involved in providing care or support.
- Always conduct these discussions in private spaces where others cannot overhear sensitive information.

## RECORD KEEPING

- Keep written notes or physical case files securely stored in a locked cabinet, accessible only to authorised personnel.
- Use code names or identifiers instead of full names when writing notes, especially for public or semi-public reports.

## ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

- Send case details only via secure messaging systems designed for confidentiality, such as encrypted communication platforms.
- When using shared computers, ensure all files are password-protected and accessible only by authorised staff.
- Avoid storing sensitive data on unsecured devices or public cloud systems.

## CONSENT

- Always seek survivors' **explicit consent** before sharing any details of their case, even within the organisation.
- Make sure survivors fully understand how their information will be used and who will have access to it.

## TEAM TRAINING

- Train all staff and volunteers on the importance of maintaining confidentiality and the specific protocols they need to follow.

By implementing these measures, organisations and community groups can ensure survivors feel safe and respected, building a foundation of trust that is essential for their healing and reintegration.

*Confidentiality is not just a practice—it's a commitment to protecting survivors' dignity and supporting their recovery with the utmost care.*

## 3.1 Trauma-Informed Care

Trauma-informed care is a critical approach when working with survivors of forced criminality. This method prioritises safety, trustworthiness, peer support, collaboration, empowerment, and cultural sensitivity. These principles are essential to ensure that all interactions with survivors are supportive and conducive to healing.

### SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA

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Understanding trauma is the first step to incorporating trauma-informed care. To help community groups better understand and prepare for working with survivors, it's important to recognise some common symptoms of trauma.

**SURVIVORS MAY EXHIBIT A VARIETY OF RESPONSES, INCLUDING:**

#### EMOTIONAL NUMBNESS OR DETACHMENT

Survivors may withdraw emotionally as a defence mechanism, becoming unresponsive or detached from others.

#### IRRITABILITY AND ANGER

Survivors may feel easily frustrated, irritated, or angry, sometimes without an obvious cause. This is a common response to trauma and should be approached with empathy.

#### HYPERVIGILANCE

A heightened state of alertness is a common symptom. This presents where survivors may feel constantly on edge.

#### DIFFICULTY CONCENTRATING

Trauma can affect cognitive functions, making it hard for survivors to focus, remember information, or concentrate on tasks. Patience and understanding are key when survivors are struggling with these challenges.

#### INTRUSIVE THOUGHTS OR FLASHBACKS

Survivors may also relive their traumatic experiences through flashbacks or unwanted memories, which can cause severe distress.

## **3.2 Training and Additional Resources**

To ensure community leaders are fully equipped, training will be provided. This training will delve deeper into how to apply these principles in daily interactions with survivors and address how to recognise and respond to trauma symptoms appropriately.

Additional notes on trauma-informed care, including specific strategies for managing trauma symptoms, are included in the other Volumes.



VOL. II

# PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR REINTEGRATION



A FOCUS ON FORCED CRIMINALITY

# Vol. II Introduction

Volume II is designed for community members who wish to support survivors of forced criminality to reintegrate into their communities. While formal organisational membership or specialised training is not required to use this guide, it is highly recommended that individuals belong to a wider community group, such as a faith-based organisation or a local social group. Partnering with an established local NGO is important as it ensures that the necessary support systems, resources, and expertise are in place to effectively assist survivors.

These collaborations provide a structured framework, enhance accountability, and ensure that survivors receive comprehensive, coordinated care within their communities. The goal is to provide practical, straightforward strategies to help survivors feel welcome, safe, and supported on their journey to reintegration.

This section covers the fundamentals of mental health; Volume III expands on this by delving deeper into topics such as trauma, shame, anger, and guilt.

# 1.1 Understanding the Unique Needs of Survivors

Survivors of forced criminality are individuals who were coerced, manipulated, or threatened into engaging in criminal activities against their will. Most of them have experienced violence. Even if some initially joined under different circumstances, the harsh conditions within scam centres inevitably lead to abuse, coercion, and manipulation over time. These experiences leave deep emotional, psychological, and social scars that can severely impact their ability to reintegrate.

## 1.2 Key Challenges Survivors Face

### Trauma and Psychological Distress

- Survivors often endure prolonged abuse, threats, and violence, resulting in deep psychological scars.
- Many experience complex trauma from repeated traumatic events, leading to severe anxiety, depression, and trust issues.
- Common symptoms include flashbacks, hypervigilance, nightmares, and emotional numbness.
- Over time, these symptoms can develop into more severe conditions like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), significantly impacting their ability to reintegrate.
- Survivors may also struggle with emotional regulation, finding it difficult to manage feelings of anger, fear, or sadness, complicating their recovery.

### Social Stigma and Isolation

- Social stigma is a major barrier, especially for survivors coerced into criminal activities, as they may be viewed with suspicion or judgment.
- Communities may see them as complicit, not as victims, which deepens feelings of guilt and shame.

- The fear of judgment can lead to self-imposed isolation, preventing survivors from accessing support networks.
- Lack of social acceptance makes it challenging to form new relationships, find employment, or engage with community resources.

## **Economic Instability**

- Many survivors lack formal education, job skills, or relevant work experience, making it difficult to secure stable employment.
- Stigma associated with their experience can deter potential employers, trapping survivors in cycles of poverty and vulnerability.
- Economic instability increases the risk of re-exploitation, especially if survivors are desperate to support themselves or their families.
- Access to vocational training, job placement services, and financial literacy programmes is crucial to break this cycle.

## **Physical Health Concerns**

- Harsh conditions during exploitation often result in untreated injuries, chronic illnesses, and overall poor health.
- Survivors may have experienced physical abuse, malnutrition, and inadequate medical care.
- Many delay seeking medical help post-rescue due to distrust of healthcare providers or fear of being judged.
- Somatic symptoms (e.g., chronic pain, fatigue, gastrointestinal issues) can stem from psychological trauma.
- Long-term health issues can impact survivors' ability to work, engage in community activities, and fully participate in rehabilitation programmes.

These challenges underline the importance of comprehensive, long-term support systems that address not only immediate safety and physical needs but also mental health, social reintegration, and economic stability. *By understanding these key challenges, community organisations and care providers can develop trauma-informed, holistic approaches to support survivors in rebuilding their lives with dignity.*

## 2.1 Creating a Safe and Supportive Environment

### CREATING A SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Principles of Trauma-Informed Support (with practical examples)

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#### #1 SAFETY

- Ensure physical and emotional safety
  - Speak in a calm and consistent tone, especially during stressful or emotional discussions.
  - Maintain eye level with survivors during conversations to avoid appearing intimidating.
- Create safe spaces
  - Use private rooms for discussions, ensuring no interruptions or overhearing by others.
- Establish clear boundaries
  - Explain each step of the support process in advance to avoid surprises that might trigger trauma responses.

#### #2 TRUST

- Build trust through actions
  - Always arrive on time for appointments, showing reliability and respect for the survivor's time.
  - Follow through on promises, even for small commitments.
- Maintain confidentiality
  - Never discuss survivors' stories in public or semi-public settings.
  - Use anonymised details if discussing cases with other professionals.



# CREATING A SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

## #3 EMPOWERMENT

- Support survivor-led decisions
  - Provide survivors with a list of options for care or participation, allowing them to choose what is best for them.
  - Encourage survivors to set small, achievable goals for their recovery.
- Promote self-advocacy
  - Help survivors create a personal recovery plan that aligns with their strengths and aspirations.

## #4 COLLABORATION

- Involve survivors in decisions
  - Use phrases like, “What do you think would work best for you?” to invite their input.
  - Check in regularly to ensure survivors feel their inputs are heard.
- Work with partners
  - Coordinate with local NGOs, medical providers, or legal teams to offer a holistic support network

These principles form the foundation of trauma-informed support, ensuring that survivors are treated with the dignity, respect, and understanding they deserve. By applying these principles, caregivers and community leaders can create an environment where survivors feel safe to heal, regain their sense of self-worth, and work towards reintegration into society.



## 2.2 Cultural Adaptation in Survivor Support

### **Understanding the Role of Culture**

Culture shapes how individuals view the world, process trauma, and engage with recovery efforts. For survivors of forced criminality, addressing cultural nuances is crucial to creating an environment where they feel respected, understood, and empowered. By culturally adapting support approaches, caregivers and community leaders can build trust, reduce stigma, and enhance the survivor's sense of safety and belonging.

## 2.3 Principles of Cultural Adaptation

### 6 PRINCIPLES OF CULTURAL ADAPTATION

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#### #1 RESPECT CULTURAL NORMS AND VALUES

Survivors come from diverse backgrounds, each with unique traditions and social expectations. Respecting these norms fosters connection and trust.

- Example: In cultures where family plays a central role, allow survivors to include trusted family members in counselling sessions or discussions, as long as they are comfortable with it.
- Example: Be mindful of culturally appropriate greetings and personal space, adapting your approach based on what the survivor finds respectful and comfortable.

#### #2 LANGUAGE ACCESSIBILITY

Language barriers can hinder effective communication and lead to misunderstandings.

- Always provide interpreters or bilingual staff to ensure survivors can express themselves fully.
- Example: Translate key materials such as care plans, legal rights, or programme outlines into the survivor's preferred language to make them more accessible and inclusive.

#### #3 GENDER SENSITIVITY

Survivors may have preferences for interacting with people of a specific gender, particularly in counseling or during interviews.

- Example: Offer the option of a male or female counsellor or case manager, depending on what the survivor is most comfortable with.
- Example: Be aware of cultural norms around gender roles and adapt group settings or activities accordingly, ensuring survivors feel safe and included.

## 6 PRINCIPLES OF CULTURAL ADAPTATION

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### #4 INCORPORATE TRADITIONAL PRACTICES

For many survivors, traditional or spiritual practices can be an important part of healing.

- Example: If meditation, traditional ceremonies, or specific forms of prayer are culturally significant, consider including these options in recovery plans.
- Example: Acknowledge and honour survivors' spiritual beliefs by providing time and space for prayer or reflection during meetings or events.

### #5 ADAPT COMMUNITY REINTEGRATION EFFORTS

Reintegration must align with cultural expectations around work, family, and community roles.

- Example: In cultures where public knowledge of trauma might result in stigma, ensure reintegration efforts are discreet and protective of the survivor's privacy.
- Example: Work with local leaders to create community initiatives that align with cultural practices, such as organising mentoring programmes, community support groups, or collaborative events that bring people together for shared goals.

### #6 PROVIDE CULTURALLY RELEVANT TRAINING FOR STAFF

Caregivers and community leaders must be equipped to navigate cultural nuances sensitively.

- Example: Include role-playing scenarios in training to explore how cultural differences may affect interactions with survivors.
- Example: Offer workshops on local customs, religious practices, and gender norms to help staff avoid unintentional missteps.



## 2.4 Recognising Symptoms of Trauma

### RECOGNISING SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA

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Understanding the signs of trauma is crucial in providing effective support to survivors. Trauma can manifest in various ways, often impacting a person's emotional, behavioural, and physical well-being. Recognising these symptoms early on can help caregivers and community leaders respond more effectively and tailor their support to meet the specific needs of survivors.

#### EMOTIONAL SIGNS

- **Anxiety:** Survivors may experience intense, overwhelming feelings of worry or fear. This can manifest as a constant state of tension, nervousness, or even panic attacks. They may feel on edge and have difficulty calming down, especially when reminded of past trauma.
- **Sadness and Depression:** Persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, or numbness are common. Survivors might express a lack of interest in activities they once enjoyed, indicating a deeper emotional struggle.
- **Mood Swings:** Rapid changes in mood can occur without a clear trigger. Survivors might shift from feeling okay to suddenly experiencing intense anger, sadness, or frustration. These emotional fluctuations can be confusing both for the survivors and those around them.

#### BEHAVIOURAL SIGNS

- **Withdrawal and Isolation:** Survivors might avoid social interactions, retreating into themselves to protect against perceived threats or judgment. This self-isolation often stems from feelings of shame, guilt, or fear of being misunderstood.
- **Aggression or Irritability:** Survivors may exhibit uncharacteristic aggression or irritability, often as a way to defend against feelings of vulnerability. This can sometimes be a reaction to feeling overwhelmed or out of control.
- **Hypervigilance:** Constantly being on high alert, even in safe environments, is a common response to trauma. Survivors may be overly aware of their surroundings, frequently scanning for threats, which can lead to exhaustion and heightened stress.

# RECOGNISING SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA

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## PHYSICAL SIGNS

- **Fatigue:** Chronic tiredness is a common symptom of trauma. The emotional and mental strain of processing traumatic experiences can drain a person's energy, leaving them feeling perpetually exhausted.
- **Headaches and Body Aches:** Survivors often experience psychosomatic symptoms—physical pain linked to emotional distress. Headaches, muscle tension, and unexplained body aches are frequently reported.
- **Difficulty Sleeping:** Trauma can disrupt normal sleep patterns, leading to insomnia, nightmares, or restless sleep. Survivors may struggle to fall asleep or stay asleep due to recurring memories or fears, further impacting their physical and mental health.

## 2.5 Why Recognising These Symptoms Matters

Identifying these signs allows caregivers and support workers to provide timely, trauma-informed interventions. It ensures that survivors receive the empathetic, tailored care they need to begin healing. By understanding the full spectrum of trauma responses, we can create a safer environment where survivors feel understood, respected, and supported in their recovery journey.

This deeper awareness not only improves the immediate support provided but also fosters a long-term healing process that addresses the root causes of trauma, ultimately aiding in the survivor's reintegration into society.

## 3.1 Steps for Community Engagement and Support

### **Welcoming Survivors Back into the Community**

- Find a way to acknowledge the survivor in your neighbourhood – either through a personal call or visit or even an invitation to a small group gathering.
- Assign a trusted community member as a mentor to help the survivor adjust.
- Provide informal spaces where survivors can connect with others, like community centres or local cafes.

### **Organising Community Support Circles**

- Host regular support circle meetings where survivors can share experiences in a safe environment.
- Establish confidentiality rules to protect survivors' privacy.
- Encourage open discussion but allow survivors to participate at their own pace.

### **Empowering Local Leaders to Act as Mentors**

- Train local leaders who have the capacity & time on trauma-informed care.
- Encourage leaders to focus on listening and providing non-judgemental support.
- Create a network of peer mentors who can receive adequate training to help new survivors adjust.

## 4.1 Supporting Survivors' Mental Health and Well-being

### **Basic Mental Health First Aid for Community Members**

- Be present and listen without judgement.



- Use grounding techniques like deep breathing exercises to reduce anxiety (details in Volume III – Trauma manual)
- Encourage survivors to engage in community activities that bring joy, such as sports or art.

## Techniques for Providing Emotional Support

- Create safe spaces where survivors can talk openly.
- Offer consistent, compassionate support to make survivors feel valued.
- Use positive reinforcement to build survivors' self-esteem.

## What to avoid

- Do not force survivors to share their past experiences.
- Avoid saying “move on” or “forget about it”; instead, use phrases like “take your time” or “we are here for you.”

# 5.1 Facilitating Economic Reintegration

## Supporting Skills Training and Employment

- **Work with Local Businesses:** Collaborate with businesses to provide apprenticeships or job placements tailored to survivors' abilities and needs.
- **Partner with NGOs:** Organise community-driven vocational training sessions or work with NGOs that specialise in equipping survivors with practical skills.
- **Trauma-Informed Employment Opportunities:** Engage local businesses to develop trauma-informed roles in fields like hospitality, retail, and community services, ensuring workplaces are sensitive to survivors' experiences.
- **Mentorship Programmes:** Establish mentorship initiatives where experienced employees guide survivors, helping them adjust to professional environments at a comfortable pace.
- **Raise Awareness:** Educate employers about the value survivors bring to the workforce, promoting inclusion and reducing stigma.

- **Job Skills and Interview Training:** Offer workshops to enhance survivors' skills in job applications, CV writing, and interview techniques.
- **Safe Employment Training:** Provide survivors with training on recognising and avoiding exploitative workplaces, equipping them with tools to protect themselves from re-trafficking.
- **Develop CVs and Records:** Assist survivors in creating CVs and employment histories to improve their chances of securing sustainable jobs.

## 6.1 Safety and Emergency Response

### Creating Safety Plans with Survivors

- **Establish Clear Communication Channels**  
Ensure survivors know how to quickly contact a trusted individual, organisation, or emergency service. Provide them with mobile phones or other accessible communication tools if needed.
- **Use Pre-Prepared Emergency Contact Cards**  
Give survivors laminated cards with emergency numbers, addresses of safe shelters, and local support organisations. These should be small and discreet for easy carrying.
- **Train Survivors to Recognise Situations Requiring Emergency Action**  
Focus on helping survivors identify when they might need to seek immediate help and empower them to take action without hesitation.

*This approach ensures survivors have practical and reliable methods of reaching help in an emergency, without requiring overly complicated or potentially unsafe strategies.*

### Responding to Crises and Immediate Threats

- Remain calm; your composure can help de-escalate the situation.
- Remove the survivor from triggers, if possible, and move them to a safe space.
- Contact local NGOs you are connected with and if necessary mental health hotlines or legal aid.

Refer to Volume IV for a detailed Emergency Protocol.

## **Community Safety Networks**

- **Develop a Local Support Network**  
Identify and collaborate with trusted individuals and organisations within the community who can offer immediate assistance or guidance during challenging situations.
- **Strengthen Relationships with Local Services**  
Maintain a directory of reliable local services, such as healthcare providers, counselling centres, and NGOs, to ensure survivors have easy access to the support they need.
- **Provide Training for Community Members**  
Offer basic training for key community members to enhance their understanding of how to respond to survivors' immediate needs with sensitivity and care.

## **7.1 Monitoring Progress and Ensuring Sustainability**

### **Community Self-Monitoring Tools**

- **Track Participation**  
Use simple checklists to document survivors' involvement in programmes, training, or community activities.
- **Gather Feedback**  
Conduct informal surveys or one-on-one conversations to understand survivors' well-being and identify areas for improvement.
- **Regular Reviews**  
Organise community meetings to discuss progress, share updates, and address any challenges faced by survivors or support teams.

## 8.1 Establishing Local Support Committees

- **Coordinate Support Efforts**  
Create committees made up of community members to oversee and streamline survivor support activities.
- **Define Roles and Responsibilities**  
Assign specific tasks such as mentoring, organising events, or ensuring safety within the community.
- **Quarterly Reviews and Strategy Adjustments**  
Hold quarterly meetings to evaluate progress, assess the effectiveness of strategies, and make adjustments to improve outcomes.
- **Empowering Survivors to Become Mentors**  
Encourage survivors who are ready and willing to share their experiences to become mentors, guiding others through their reintegration journey.

*This structured and community-driven approach ensures that survivor support remains consistent, adaptable, and sustainable over time.*

## 9.1 Resources for Further Support

*(to be provided at training sessions)*

- **Local and National Resources**  
Contacts for health clinics, NGOs, and job training centres.
- **Worksheets and Checklists**  
Printable resources for organising support activities.
- **Further Reading**  
Books and articles on trauma-informed care and reintegration; training and resource materials are provided by AFN.

*Volume III provides details and step-by-step guides to Mental Healthcare.*