

Uganda Overseas Labor Recruitment (OLR) COVID-19 Situational Analysis Global Fund to End Modern Slavery (GFEMS)

July 2021

This publication was produced for review by the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery. It was prepared by The Department of Social Work and Social Administration at Makerere University and ICF Macro, Inc.



This research study was commissioned by the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery, in partnership with Makerere University and ICF. A gift of the United States Government.

This research was funded by a cooperative agreement with the United States Department of State. The opinions, findings, and conclusions stated herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Department of State.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CSO	civil society organization
GFEMS	Global Fund to End Modern Slavery
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
IAWJ	International Association of Women Judges
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRIS	International Recruitment Integrity System
OLR	overseas labor recruitment
PRA	private recruitment agency
SWOT	Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats
SOP	standard operating procedure
TIP	trafficking in persons
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UAERA	Uganda Association of External Recruitment Agencies

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Global Fund to End Modern Slavery (GFEMS) commissioned ICF to conduct a situational analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on the implementation of three projects in Uganda, under the leadership of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Willow International, and the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ). In March 2021, ICF's subcontractor, Makerere University Department of Social Work and Social Administration, conducted fieldwork in Kampala with key staff drawn from implementing organizations, government officials, and vulnerable populations targeted by the interventions. The study sought to establish the likely impact of COVID-19 on the implementation of the overseas labor recruitment (OLR) projects supported by GFEMS in Uganda. In specific terms, the study aimed to:

- Determine how the COVID-19 pandemic in Uganda, including the ensuing COVID-19 policies, would impact GFEMS's subrecipients' implementation of OLR projects in Uganda.
- Identify the immediate, short-term, and long-term impacts of COVID-19 on the targeted vulnerable populations in the OLR project areas.
- Provide practical recommendations to help in successful implementation of OLR projects.

The study was conducted at a time when most of the COVID-19 lockdown measures, introduced in March 2020, had been reduced, but not entirely lifted. The study was implemented among agencies whose main area of implementation is Kampala city, with some of the survivors of labor recruitment also accessed in neighboring districts such as Wakiso. Overall, the study included three broad categories of study participants:

- Project staff of subrecipients of GFEMS's OLR projects, selected private recruitment agencies, and civil society organizations that advocate for the rights of survivors
- National and district-level actors, including government and non-government officials who support policy development and implementation of national projects for ethical labor recruitment, including staff from law enforcement agencies
- Survivors of labor exploitation and trafficking, and individuals identified to be at risk of labor exploitation

The overall approach was highly iterative and participatory in nature. The study team received input from GFEMS, and refinement of the final design was also informed by input from the document review, project staff, and the analytical process. The study team employed qualitative methods of data collection including focus group discussions, group interviews, in-depth interviews, and key informant interviews, to understand participants' opinions and experiences of the impact of COVID-19 on GFEMS-supported projects. The focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were conducted through face-to-face interactions while adhering to the COVID-19 standard operating procedures. A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis was also used as a conceptual tool to guide data collection. SWOT analysis was conducted with project staff of IOM, Willow International, and IAWJ through a participatory process. A wide range of issues emerged from the discussions, specifically how COVID-19 has affected project implementation and mitigation measures on how to address the effects of the pandemic.

Discussions with participants show varying degrees of experiences before and during COVID-19. Some survivors shared their experiences while in the Gulf Cooperation Council during COVID-19, others returned during COVID-19, and others were already in Uganda during COVID-19. Their experiences varied but included experiences of loss of employment, mistreatment, increased risk and vulnerability, and mental health challenges. Overall, the organizations (IOM, Willow International, and IAWJ) implementing OLR projects were gravely affected by lockdown measures, which affect the realization of project outputs. Discussions with project staff indicate that some project activities were planned when

the COVID-19 pandemic had started, so the projects were able to plan with COVID-19 in mind. However, projects were faced with disruptions in their implementation plans, increased project costs, and the need to adapt to the pandemic.

Findings shows that the effects of COVID-19 have increased the vulnerabilities of survivors of OLR, exacerbating their exposure to risk factors that increase labor exploitation. For most project implementers, the COVID-19 pandemic presents new challenges that affect implementation. However, projects have found ways to adapt and continue implementation in the midst of the pandemic. The study recommendations were centered around the following:

- Technological adaptations and innovations: Training staff on how to use virtual platforms, optimizing training materials and resources for virtual platforms, implementing capacity-building initiatives focused on technology, investing in the use of technological innovations, and ensuring data security and protection
- Project-related adaptations: Refocusing project activities and interventions, and leveraging savings
- COVID-19-specific changes: Incorporating COVID-19 prevention and response into programming, using structures created in response to COVID-19 for project delivery, revisiting standard operating procedures and protocols in light of COVID-19, and continuing to strategize and plan for project implementation in response to COVID

I. INTRODUCTION

The Global Fund to End Modern Slavery (GFEMS) commissioned ICF to conduct a situational analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on the implementation of projects supported by GFEMS in Uganda. In March 2021, ICF's subcontractor, Makerere University Department of Social Work and Social Administration, conducted fieldwork in Kampala with key staff drawn from implementing organizations, government officials, and vulnerable populations targeted by the interventions. This report contains the findings from the situational analysis on the impact of COVID-19 on GFEMS-supported projects aimed at ending overseas labor recruitment (OLR) in Uganda.

The study was conducted at a time when most of the COVID-19 lockdown measures, introduced in March 2020, had been reduced, though not entirely lifted. In particular, at the time of this report, travel restrictions were limited to a 9 p.m. to 5:30 a.m. night curfew, although in practice, this measure was irregularly enforced. There were restrictions pertaining to the number of participants at gatherings, not exceeding 200 for any social events or meetings, and all meetings had to comply with requirements such as wearing a mask and maintaining social distancing. Entertainment performances in closed and open spaces and operating bars were still prohibited. A phased re-opening of academic institutions had been adopted, but certain government services, such as court hearings, were still restricted to a few concerned parties in attendance. International travel restrictions had been lifted for travelers who met the health requirements, such as having been tested for COVID-19 within a specific time frame and presenting a negative test result. Although the findings on the impact of COVID-19 on the implementation of GFEMS-supported projects on ending OLR in Uganda are presented within this context, at the time of writing this report, the government had reintroduced a total lockdown during a resurgence in COVID-19 cases in the country. In addition to the restrictions that existed at the time of data collection, many restrictions that were adopted earlier in March 2020 were reintroduced on June 6, 2021.¹

¹ <https://www.africanews.com/2021/06/07/uganda-imposes-another-lockdown-what-are-the-restrictions/%200701499785>

II. BACKGROUND

There is a long history of overseas migration from Uganda, with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimating in a 2013 study that as many as 3 million Ugandans live in diaspora communities.² Neighboring countries and particularly Kenya have consistently been popular destinations for both skilled and unskilled migrants. For highly skilled migrants, the United States, the United Kingdom, and parts of Europe have been historically sought-after destinations.³ Over the past decade, the Middle East and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have become increasingly common destinations for migrants emigrating from Uganda in search of employment. Countries such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Oman have specifically seen larger numbers of migrants from Ugandan moving for unskilled and semi-skilled jobs.^{4,5} There are varying reports about the number of workers working in the Gulf countries and the Middle East generally. Some estimate that the numbers have increased from more than 9,900 in 2010 to about 21,000 by 2018,⁶ and others have put the figure to as high as more than 100,000 Ugandans working in the Gulf countries.⁷ High unemployment in Uganda and the prospects of better pay in the Gulf countries have been cited as the main drivers of increased interest among workers in Uganda to export their labor. For example, a domestic worker in Saudi Arabia is reported to earn between \$225 to \$500 a month; a factory worker in Qatar, UAE, and Saudi Arabi earns between \$350 and \$700 a month; and a security guard in these countries could earn between \$300 and \$900 a month.⁸ Although these workers may not actually take home this amount, they would still fare better than some of the skilled workers employed in Uganda's public service. For example, the salary structure from the Uganda's Ministry of Public Service for the financial year 2020-2021⁹ puts the salary of a nursing, theatre, lab, and dental assistant at Ushs313,832 (approximately USD85); and the highest paid primary school teacher would earn Ushs980,122 (approximately USD264). These salaries are far below the monthly salary of a domestic worker in Saudi Arabia. In addition, the exportation of labor has benefits to the economy. It is estimated that remittances to Uganda's economy from people working in the Middle East increased from \$51.4 million in 2010 to \$309.2 million in 2018.¹⁰ The overall remittances from the Middle East contributed 23 percent of the country's total earnings from remittances in 2018.¹¹

When Uganda confirmed the first case of COVID-19 in March 2020, it is reported that the supply and demand dynamics in the external labor market were disrupted. In the context of the external labor market, the Government of Uganda immediately suspended labor export services,¹² creating some level of uncertainty in the labor export services until November 2020, when the government lifted the suspension on international travel and labor export.¹³ Closed borders limited or placed additional risks on recruitment efforts.

Recent programming documents have taken into consideration the impact of COVID-19 on project implementation, noting potential risks to implementation in light of the pandemic, such as implementation delays, travel restrictions, limitations on social gatherings, and the need to plan for virtual meetings. The pandemic has also had an effect on economies, resulting in a massive loss of

² IOM. (2013)

³ GFEMS call for concept notes

⁴ Center for Policy Analysis and Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Youth Affairs, [The State of Youth Report](#)

⁵ Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women. (2020). [Women's Labour Migration on the Africa-Middle East Corridor: Experiences of Migrant Domestic Workers from Uganda](#)

⁶ Nattabi, A. K., Mbowa, S., Guloba, M., & Kasirye, I. (2020).

⁷ <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/more-than-100-000-ugandans-working-in-gulf-states-1824966>

⁸ Nattabi, A. K., Mbowa, S., Guloba, M., & Kasirye, I. (2020)

⁹ See CSI No. 8 of 2020 on Public Service Salary Structure for FY 2020-2021—with Schedules. Available at: <https://publicservice.go.ug/download/csi-no-8-of-2020-on-public-service-salary-structure-for-fy-2020-2021-with-schedules/>.

¹⁰ Nattabi, A. K., Mbowa, S., Guloba, M., & Kasirye, I. (2020)

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Otim, D. (2020)

¹³ http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-11/10/c_139506536.htm

employment. It was reported that travel restrictions curtailed the travel of recruits, with more than 960 Ugandan migrant workers forced to return during transit due to travel restrictions imposed in what would be destination countries.¹⁴

COVID-19 could also serve as a catalyst for enhanced demand for participation in OLR and the risk of labor exploitation as a result of the desperate economic situation of the migrants. Indeed, the opening of air travel has witnessed a surge in the recruitment of potential labor migrants, particularly to countries in the Middle East. For example, it is reported that a total of 25,605 women and 2,628 men left for various jobs in the Middle East over the five-month period between December 2020 and April 2021.¹⁵

It is important to bear in mind that the Government of Uganda has worked together with international organizations to address the problem of trafficking in persons (TIP), which often manifests in OLR. Some of the actions include enactment of legislation, such as the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act, 2009, and working with labor recruitment organizations, destination countries, and development partners to put in place systems that ensure ethical labor recruitment and protection of the migrants. GFEMS’s efforts geared at eliminating TIP sit squarely within the ongoing government priorities as reflected in the Uganda Employment Act of 2006, which highlights TIP as an area of priority action.

Objective of the situational analysis

Broadly, this study sought to establish the likely impact of COVID-19 on the implementation of the OLR projects supported by GFEMS in Uganda. In specific terms, the study aimed to:

- Determine how the COVID-19 pandemic in Uganda, including the ensuing COVID-19 policies, would impact GFEMS’s subrecipients’ implementation of OLR projects in Uganda.
- Identify the immediate, short-term, and long-term impacts of COVID-19 on the targeted vulnerable populations in the OLR project areas.
- Provide practical recommendations to help in successful implementation of OLR projects.

Overview of GFEMS-supported OLR projects

This study examined the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on the implementation of three projects, under the leadership of IOM, Willow International, and the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ) (Exhibit I).

Exhibit I: OLR Project Overviews

Organization	Project Title	Project Overview	Implementation Location	Target Populations
IOM	Promoting Ethical Labor Recruitment Policies and Practices	Aims to bolster ethical recruitment policies and practices to enhance safe and orderly labor migration pathways, prevent exploitation, and better protect migrant workers from Uganda	Nationwide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private recruitment agencies and government counterparts • Civil society organizations • Migrant workers
Willow International	Rehabilitation and Reintegration for Survivors of Trafficking and	Aims for trafficking victims and at-risk individuals to experience resilience and be less likely to be trafficked or re-trafficked	Kampala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victims of labor trafficking • At-risk individuals and trafficking survivors

¹⁴Mukundane, R (July 23, 2020)
¹⁵ Kagolo, F. (2021)

Organization	Project Title	Project Overview	Implementation Location	Target Populations
	At-Risk Populations			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-trafficking agencies/civil society organizations—Coalition Against Trafficking in Persons Uganda
IAWJ	Women Judges Leading Efforts to Improve Justice Sector Effectiveness in Combating Trafficking	Aims to bolster justice sector response to labor trafficking, implement victim-centered responses, and strengthen cross-border coordination and networks among justice sector actors	Nationwide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judicial officers (judges and justices) • Multi-sector stakeholders

COVID-19 and response measures in Uganda

The first case of COVID-19 in Uganda was recorded in March 2020. By the end of March 2021, the country had registered about 40,000 cumulative cases. However, following the resurgence in COVID-19 infections, the number of cases almost doubled during May and June 2021. By June 21, 2021, the cumulative cases had increased to 74,260, with more than 750 deaths.¹⁶ The Government of Uganda had already introduced preventative measures prior to recording a single case of COVID-19, including closure of schools and religious worship services. In the weeks and months that followed and as more cases were recorded, the prevention and response measures became more stringent, and their enforcement was backed by the security forces. A summary of the measures introduced follows.

Measures introduced in March 2020:

- Closure of all schools and academic institutions
- Closure of faith-based prayer institutions, including churches and mosques
- Suspension of public transport and closure of the airport to international passenger flights
- Ban on public entertainment
- Directives on social distancing, wearing masks, and placing handwashing and sanitizing stations in all public places (March 2020–present)

Measures introduced in April 2020:

- Suspension of nonessential services
- Suspension or closure of some government offices
- Restrictions on the number of persons attending burials
- Implementation of stay-home directives and imposition of night curfew

Measures introduced in May 2020:

- Distribution of food assistance to poor families in urban settings (May–July 2020)

From mid-July 2020 to June 2021, most of these measures eased. Those remaining in place included the night curfew (9 p.m. until 5:30 a.m.), social distancing measures, a ban on school attendance for young children in pre-primary, a ban on public entertainment, and closure of bars. Within this period, public awareness and educational campaigns related to COVID-19 intensified through radio and television, print media, and social media. These measures were to some degree credited with slowing down the

¹⁶ <https://www.health.go.ug/covid/>

number of COVID-19 cases in Uganda. However, they have also been blamed for the loss of thousands of jobs and deaths from other diseases due to poverty or lack of mobility, which hindered access to health and other services. As a result of the lockdown, many families lost their sources of livelihoods, and children and youth, especially girls and young women, became vulnerable to risky behavior, which has led to an increase in teenage pregnancies and early marriages across Uganda.^{17,18} These issues, over the mid-term and longer term, increase the risk to exploitative labor recruitment, leading to situations of heightened vulnerability in the destination localities and or countries. It was expected that with students largely learning from home and many formal sector workers resorting to working at home through the internet, reducing internet data costs would provide a big relief to hard-pressed families. However, cost of internet remains high in Uganda, and effective July 1, 2021 the government introduced a 12% internet data levy, which critics argue will stifle online access¹⁹. Studies show that one in two school-going children have not had any form of learning during the time schools were closed²⁰. Overall, lockdown measures had an effect on all actors as well as on social and economic sectors.

Moreover, the resurgence occurred a few weeks after Uganda had started its vaccination program, with 834,271 individuals vaccinated.²¹ The new wave of COVID-19 cases forced the government to reintroduce the lockdown, which meant that all the measures that had been put in place between March 2020 and May 2020 were reintroduced.²² In addition, on June 10 2021, UAE, where some of the migrants from Uganda travel, suspend entry for travelers from Uganda,²³ and on June 25, 2021, the United Kingdom placed Uganda on “the UK travel ban list.”²⁴

It is important to examine these measures in relation to agencies implementing GFEMS projects on the commercial sexual exploitation of children and the elimination of TIP.

The current study

The COVID-19 global health pandemic has had a significant impact on mobility and travel. These restrictions as well as the economic impacts of the pandemic, have implications for OLR. Closed borders limit or place additional risks on recruitment efforts. Further, migrants may have greater exposure to and risk of contracting the virus.

The current study was conceptualized out of the perceived short-term, mid-term, and long-term impacts of COVID-19, not only on the targeted participants of GFEMS-supported projects (labor migrants and vulnerable families), but also on the implementing organizations. This exploratory study sheds light on how COVID-19 has impacted the internal functioning of the organizations, their vulnerability and resilience, and their ability to adjust their projects and meet the needs of the targeted communities in light of the emerging impacts of COVID-19. Although the data are primarily intended to support improved programming for GFEMS implementing partners, this study also provides sufficient data to inform other civil society organizations (CSOs) and government agencies that directly work with labor migrants. At the same time, it provides recommendations on how systems strengthening for government and non-government institutions could be adjusted in times of pandemic and other emergencies to effectively improve the protection of and response to labor exploitation.

¹⁷ Africa Child Policy Forum. (2020)

¹⁸ Makerere University (DSWSA). (2020)

¹⁹ See <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/uganda-introduces-12-internet-data-levy-critics-say-move-will-stifle-online-2021-04-30/>.

²⁰ Musinguzi, L.K. (2021)

²¹ <https://www.health.go.ug/covid/#>

²² <https://www.africanews.com/2021/06/07/uganda-imposes-another-lockdown-what-are-the-restrictions/>

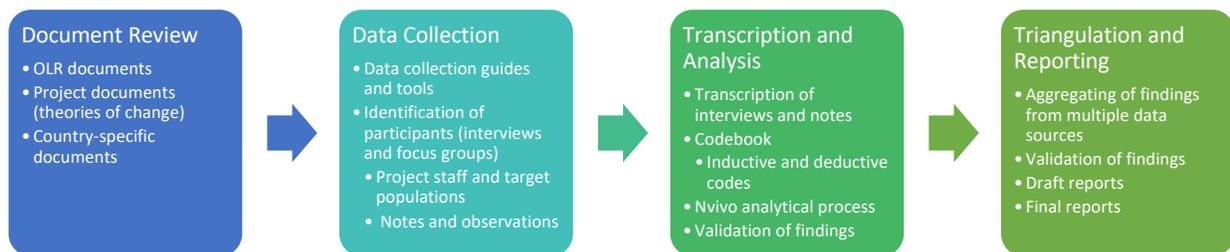
²³ Daily Monitor, June 10, 2021. UAE bans travellers from Uganda over Covid-19. Accessible on <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/uae-bans-travellers-from-uganda-over-covid-19-3431910>.

²⁴ Daily Monitor. (2021, June 25). Uganda placed on UK travel ban list. <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/uganda-placed-on-uk-travel-ban-list-3449892>.

II. METHODOLOGY

This situational analysis aimed at examining the immediate, short-term, and long-term impacts of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations in project areas and providing practical recommendations on how projects can be tailored to better address these impacts. It was implemented through a multi-stage exploratory study design (Exhibit 2). The overall approach was iterative, starting with a critical review of project documents from implementing organizations of GFEMS-supported projects. Discussions were also held with project staff and participants. At the conceptualization phase, GFEMS provided critical input into the process of refining the design.

Exhibit 2: Study Design Overview



Study areas and study population

The study was implemented among agencies whose main area of implementation is Kampala city, with some of the survivors of labor recruitment also accessed in neighboring districts such as Wakiso. Overall, the study included these three broad categories of study participants:

- Project staff of subrecipients of GFEM’s OLR projects, selected private recruitment agencies (PRAs), and CSOs that advocate for the rights of survivors
- National and district-level actors, including government and non-government officials who support policy development and implementation of national projects for ethical labor recruitment, including staff from law enforcement agencies
- Survivors of labor exploitation and trafficking, and individuals identified to be at risk of labor exploitation

The study was implemented in the areas where GFEMS’s subrecipients will be implementing OLR projects. Some projects implemented by Willow International and IOM are likely to be localized in Kampala, and IAWJ’s project has a nationwide reach. These areas were therefore purposively selected.

Selection of study participants

The primary study population consisted of two categories of study participants: the staff who are involved in the implementation of the GFEMS-supported projects and the targeted participants who are defined as the vulnerable populations and participants in the projects. Others were recruited as key informants.

Identification and selection of project staff: Staff were purposively selected from participating organizations at the level of project managers and supervisors. In addition, in each participating organization, community workers or field-based staff attached to the projects were also recruited and participated in the study. Community workers or field-based staff included social workers, counselors, case managers, and project officers who directly provide services to survivors of OLR and trafficking.

Identification and selection of target participants: The target participants were also trafficking survivors or vulnerable populations who were also defined as the direct participants of the GFEMS-

supported interventions and the families considered to be at risk. The study employed a purposeful sampling approach driven by a focus on the project objectives and goals as a criterion in the selection of participants. Project staff interviewed as part of the study and the agencies involved in the implementation of the GFEMS projects played a critical role in guiding the selection and recruitment of the target participants, because they had expert knowledge of who the projects were targeting. The study team discussed the recruitment criteria for the target group with the project staff in the implementing agencies. In all cases, the agencies preferred to first explain to the target group what the study was about and seek their consent before the study teams were allowed to hold the discussions, partly to ensure that the survivors were willing to take part in the study²⁵. Selection of the participants focused on age 15 as the minimum.

Identification and selection of key informants: Other key stakeholders, particularly policy makers, were identified based on recommendations from project staff in the participating agencies. These individuals were identified at district and community levels. These key informants were interviewed for additional information on key issues affecting project implementation during COVID-19.

²⁵ There were no cases of refusals that the team was made aware of. There was however a back-and-forth discussion between agencies and data collection teams as the participants tried to clearly understand why this study was conducted and how their participation would be valuable.

III. STUDY IMPLEMENTATION

Interviews and discussions with participants

The study team employed qualitative methods of data collection, including focus group discussions, group interviews, in-depth interviews, and key informant interviews, to understand their opinions and experiences of the impact of COVID-19 on GFEMS-supported projects. To obtain feedback from trafficking survivors, the study team conducted a focus group discussion and an in-depth interview. Willow International purposively selected and recruited youth at risk of trafficking, recruiting six female participants between 15 and 17 years of age to participate in a focus group discussion in Kampala. The moderator, with support of a focus group discussion guide, engaged the participants in a discussion asking open-ended questions about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on OLR and the well-being of the participants. In addition, an in-depth interview was carried out with a male survivor of trafficking, to understand his experiences regarding the impact of COVID-19 on OLR. To ensure that the interviews did not cause any harm, part of the interviewers' training included managing trauma and efforts to ensure that the process did not cause re-traumatization. During interviews, the interviewers worked closely with the implementing agencies and discussed steps to take in case an interviewee showed signs of trauma. While the teams were prepared to handle cases of trauma, there were no cases reported during the entire process. The focus group discussion and in-depth interview were conducted through face-to-face interactions and adhered to the COVID-19 standard operating procedures (SOPs).

Exhibit 3: Interview and Focus Group Discussion with Trafficking Survivors

Interview Type	Participant Type (Number)
Focus group discussion	Female at-risk individuals/trafficking survivors/participants (6)
In-depth interview	Male trafficking survivor/participant (1)

Interviews with key informants and project staff

A key informant interview was conducted with the public relations officer for the Uganda Association of External Recruitment Agencies (UAERA) in Kampala as well as the chief executive officer and operations manager from Make a Child Smile, an NGO that acts against human trafficking, child sacrifice and abuse. Using a key informant interview schedule through a face-to-face interaction, open-ended questions were asked to gain an understanding of how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected OLR, specifically for organizations that export labor in the GCC.

Exhibit 4: Key Informant Interviews

Organization	Position
Uganda Association of External Recruitment Agencies	Public Relations Officer
Make a Child Smile	Chief Executive Officer
	Operations Manager

The study team also conducted group discussions and in-depth interviews with project staff.

Exhibit 5: Group and In-depth Interviews with Project Staff

Organization	Position (Number)
IOM	Monitoring and Evaluation Officer
	Senior Project Assistant
Willow International	Counselors (4)
	Case Managers (3)
	Director of Administrative Operations
	Program Director
	Assistant Program Director
IAWJ	Lady Justice

	Director of Curriculum Assistant
	Project Assistant
	Senior Program Officer
	Monitoring and Evaluation Officer

SWOT analysis with project staff

A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis was used as a conceptual tool to guide data collection. The study team conducted the SWOT analysis with the project staff of IOM, Willow International, and IAWJ through a participatory process. Some discussions were held virtually due to COVID-19, and others were face-to-face interactions following the COVID-19 SOPs. Study staff used SWOT analysis guides, and a wide range of issues emerged regarding how COVID-19 has affected project implementation and mitigation measures on how to address effects.

Exhibit 6: SWOT Analysis Participants

Organization	Position (Number)
IOM	Senior Project Assistant
	Monitoring and Evaluation Officer
Willow International	Case Managers (2)
	Counselor
	Program Director
	Director of Administrative Operations
	Assistant Program Director
IAWJ	Director of Curriculum Development
	Project Assistant
	Senior Program Officer
	Monitoring and Evaluation Officer

The detailed SWOT tables are presented in Annex I.

Document review

The study team began with a review of OLR background and country-specific documents and project documents. This review generated context information and further helped inform the study design. A key component of the document review was understanding the theories of change for each of the projects. The theories of change were reviewed to also understand the potential impact of COVID-19 on the project outputs, outcomes, and long-term outcomes. An attempt was made to ensure that the interview questions were tailored to each project (see Annex II for interview guides). Findings from the document review were used in the process of triangulation and reporting whenever possible.

Ethical considerations

This situational analysis study received ethical review and clearance from the local Institutional Review Board at the Makerere University School of Social Sciences and later with the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology. In addition to the formal ethical approvals and processes, the study followed all the established ethical procedures and processes. Discussions were held after participants provided consent. All participants are anonymized, and confidential information about the participants is not displayed. All audio recordings were destroyed immediately after transcribing the discussions or interviews. All survivors who participated in the study were first briefed by the implementing agency about the study. After survivors agreed to participate, they were also asked to provide consent to participate in the study. Discussions and interviews were conducted in spaces in which the participants were comfortable and felt safe.

IV. FINDINGS

Impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable population in project areas

Discussions with participants show varying degrees of experiences before and during COVID-19. Some survivors were in the GCC during COVID-19, others returned during COVID-19, and others were already in Uganda during COVID-19. Their experiences varied, but they included experiences of loss of employment, mistreatment, increased risk and vulnerability, and mental health challenges.

Loss of employment among migrant workers

Overall, the pandemic has augmented the socioeconomic vulnerability of people dependent on mobility for survival. As previously noted, it was reported that more than 960 new recruits from Uganda were forced to return during transit because of travel restrictions imposed in the Middle East at the start of the pandemic.²⁶ In the context of labor export, the economic crisis induced by COVID-19 is perceived to have affected key sectors, such as domestic work, hotels, and transportation, in which majority of the migrant workers are employed in the Middle East countries.²⁷ These sectors are particularly negatively affected by national lockdowns, internal containment measures, and minimal social safety nets.²⁸ This inevitably reduced jobs available for migrant workers as more opportunities became available in professions such as health that require highly skilled and specialized personnel. COVID-19 control measures also affected private sector recruitment due to reduced business activities.²⁹ Reports show that migrant workers were more impacted by the loss of jobs and wages than native workers.³⁰ There have been reports of widespread job loss among Ugandan migrant communities in the Middle East, which has exacerbated their vulnerability to unemployment and poverty and continued hardship amid travel restrictions that limited their search for alternative work. In a statement issued by to the Ugandan Parliament in June 2020, UAERA reported that many Ugandan migrants in the Middle East had been laid off from their jobs and were not only stranded but largely becoming beggars, highly dependent on the goodwill of donations from friends and good Samaritans.³¹ In addition, there have also been reports of xenophobic and discriminatory treatment against migrant workers as a result of COVID-19.³²

Survivor mistreatment

It appears however that the level of mistreatment that survivors experienced and reported during COVID-19 did not vary significantly with experiences narrated before COVID-19. Survivors mentioned that they were mistreated, worked for no pay, and were raped by their employers before COVID-19, and they also had similar experiences during COVID-19.

Mistreatment of survivors of labor export

In addition to loss of employment for migrant workers in the Middle East, those who kept their jobs also mentioned experiencing heightened abuse, including failure to receive their pay, threats of poisoning and general mistreatment. Some of these challenges were reported even before COVID-19 and therefore are not unique to COVID-19, but the evidence available suggests that COVID-19 exacerbated the challenges. Indeed, some of the abuse experienced by some of the survivors was reported to have started with onset of COVID-19. As Begum (2020) notes, some of the COVID-19 restrictions meant that employers had to “demand more cleaning and disinfecting of their homes,” and most “domestic workers are often not provided with protective equipment or adequate instructions and have suffered

²⁶ Mukundane, R. (2020)

²⁷ World Bank. (2020).

²⁸ Benton, M., Batalova, J., Davidoff-Gore, S., & Schmidt, T. (2021)

²⁹ Nattabi, A. K., Mbowa, S., Guloba, M., & Kasirye, I. (2020)

³⁰ World Bank. (2020)

³¹ UAERA Statement to Parliament on Ugandans Stranded Abroad, 3 June 2020. <https://www.mediacentre.go.ug/media/statement-parliament-ugandans-stranded-abroad-due-outbreak-covid19>.

³² Nattabi, A. K., Mbowa, S., Guloba, M., & Kasirye, I. (2020)

burns or injuries from harsh cleaning products.”³³ One participant mentioned that when COVID-19 happened, her employers attempted to poison her as she demanded her payment from her employers, who were also probably not working at the time due to COVID-19 restrictions. During focus group discussions with some of the survivors, they revealed threats and abuses experienced at the hands of their employers.

Participant 4: When COVID 19 came, that is when they started trying to poison me.

Interviewer: Poison, why?

Participant 4: I was demanding my money. They (employers) had not paid me 2 months' salary and they were saying they would not pay me because I was becoming stubborn. Good enough, I was friends with their last born. She used to tell me whatever they said about me and what they were planning. She used to come and tell me they were planning to kill me (...)

Interviewer: Why did they want to kill you?

Participant 4: It was all about the money. They never wanted to pay me...

Participant 3: I lost five million [Ugandan Shillings] during that time. I worked for 5 months without pay and I had to run away.

Participant 5: For me, payment was not easy because they were also not working during COVID-19 and I was not working. What helped me is that I ran to the embassy and the embassy put a lot of pressure on them up to when they paid my money.

Risk associated with escaping abuse among migrant workers

Findings indicate that migrant workers faced challenges seeking support during COVID-19, and for those who wanted to return, closure of airports made it even more difficult. For example, survivors mentioned facing challenges connecting to their agents and other duty bearers for help before COVID-19, and this worsened during COVID-19, when movements were also restricted. Further, closure of airports and restricted movements also meant that those survivors who needed help could not easily find it. It became difficult to rescue participants who needed help and difficult to identify survivors experiencing abuse. In particular, although the closure of airports may have reduced avenues for transnational human trafficking and OLR, reports suggest that some of the Ugandan nationals trafficked for exploitation abroad faced risks associated with identification.³⁴ Highlighting the plight of Ugandan workers stranded in the Middle East during COVID-19, UAERA's statement to the Ugandan Parliament noted that, "In the Middle East, many Ugandans were unable to return home despite obtaining air tickets from their former employers."³⁵

Closing of the airport meant that we had few participants coming in. This also means that we had few participants being rescued to come back to their home country, because the airports were totally locked down, yes. And with my experience interacting and counseling the majority of the participants, you are going to realize that one of the unforgettable stories is the COVID-19 time when they were still in those Gulf countries. So, you will likely hear they were tortured, slept outside, had to do a test. They couldn't be rescued because the airport was closed. So they either had to succumb and remain in the household where they were tortured or go to the embassy. Again, the embassy couldn't help because they kept saying; "wait, until the airport is opened." (Staff, Willow International)

Mental health challenges during COVID-19

Reports have shown that migrant workers experience a myriad of abuses at the hands of their employers even before COVID-19. Such experiences trigger mental health problems, and COVID-19

³³ Begum, R. (2020)

³⁴ Refugee Law Project (2020)

³⁵ UAERA Statement to Parliament on Ugandans Stranded Abroad, 3 June 2020. <https://www.mediacentre.go.ug/media/statement-parliament-ugandans-stranded-abroad-due-outbreak-covid19>.

has exacerbated and heightened mental health challenges for survivors. Discussions with participants in some of the GFEMS-supported projects revealed amplified mental health risks, which has increased the demand and need for psychosocial support services and even stretched the existing services.

Most survivors reported heightened anxiety and depression and a dire need for psychosocial services during COVID-19. Discussions with staff at Willow International suggest that there have been increased cases of anxiety among participants due to COVID-19 and its restrictions, even when the organization prides itself on having an experienced cadre of psychosocial support officers to provide support to participants. For many participants or survivors, COVID-19 simply re-triggered already sad experiences and exacerbated their vulnerabilities.

They (survivors) already had underlying factors of mental illnesses. With us, they were beginning to stabilize but with all these anxieties, uncertainties from COVID-19 situation, being unable to reach out to their families it was hard. Before COVID-19, they would do family visits back and forth but all this was cut. So all this, you know, triggered mental issues and we didn't have control. (Staff, Willow International)

Although survivors had been receiving support and services from agencies like Willow International and IOM, it was observed that restrictions in movement, limited interactions with the participants, and costs associated with travel have made service delivery challenging. In most cases, offices were also operating for reduced hours and access to medical support services was also limited.

At the onset of COVID, we were like okay, participants are going to access services from wherever they are in their villages. We didn't think that at that particular time there could be access limitation to transportation means. We thought they would get access to government facilities. But we didn't assess and say that has this distance to the health centre II or III, we didn't put that into perspective. Therefore, that became a challenge for most of the survivors. (Staff, Willow International)

Risk of re-trafficking and migration back to the GCC

Emerging evidence shows a mix of critical concerns about the potential for increased trafficking and re-trafficking of persons. First, many participants are seeking opportunities to travel to the GCC to work, although this may not necessarily be solely due to COVID-19, but it is possible that this is linked to the pandemic due to the loss of employment, limited economic opportunities, and increased costs.

Because of the COVID situations, people are working less time. So, I think also it has affected Willow as an organization how they do their work. I think it's not the same also like the way they used to do without COVID. It's challenging now. It's so expensive because for me I don't have money, personal car. People used to travel 14 (people) in the taxi now there are 7 or 8 (people). So it becomes so expensive to even afford the transport, so it affects my movements, even buying masks every time. Every time you go out you buy one it is 2000shs. So that is money you can be losing on just COVID. (Interview with a beneficiary of Willow International, also an OLR survivor)

Available reports predict a gloomy picture regarding the impact of the pandemic on job loss in the formal and informal sector. For example, in June 2020, the International Labour Organization estimated that the world lost more than 155 million jobs in the first quarter of 2020 and 400 million jobs in the second quarter of 2020.³⁶ This suggests that many people are likely to be pushed into poverty, particularly migrants who depend on travel. In Uganda, the lockdown measures have resulted in closures of businesses. Private schools, hotel owners, and lodge operators, among others, suffered huge losses due to COVID-19 restrictions. Results from a business climate survey by the Economic Policy Research Centre based at Makerere University found that due to COVID-19 control measures, businesses reduced their activity by more than 50 percent, implying that majority were working at less than full capacity.³⁷ Indeed, at the start of the pandemic, it was predicted that Uganda risked losing more than 400,000 jobs in the hospitality industry due to COVID-19 control measures.³⁸ All these compound

³⁶ ILO. (2020).

³⁷ Economic Policy Research Centre. (2020).

³⁸ <https://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/Covid19-400000-jobs-risk-hotels-close-flights-taxes/688334-5506346-di4dj9z/index.html>

Uganda's unemployment problem and predictably lead to desperation and a greater desire to seek job prospects elsewhere and particularly in the Middle East. It is therefore not surprising that when the government eased travel restrictions in September 2020, many individuals traveled to the GCC for work. Between December 2020 and April 2021, it is estimated that more than 25,000 people moved from Uganda to the Middle East³⁹. The second lockdown imposed by the government is likely to make the economic situation even worse. Focus group participants highlight how the challenging economic situation in Uganda is a primary reason for migration.

Participant 5: ...they are going in large numbers. The situation is tough here and they do not know what is on the other side.

Participant 3: For me, my sister even warned me at first but I thought she did not want good for me and that she only wanted to make the money alone. So, it is the same situation with the people who are going right now. When we narrate our experiences, they think we are just making up the stories.

Participant 1: For me, I have a friend who had just returned from Saudi but decided to go back. Reason being she used all the money she got to clear the expenses she used when she was going because she just borrowed that money. So, she still didn't change anything in her life. She knows the situation that is there but again she has no hope in Uganda but she has to go back.

Further, although it is evident that COVID-19 restriction have exacerbated economic hardships and created conditions for people to want to move, it is also clear that increased poverty and general economic deprivation, coupled with travel restrictions, are likely to push migrant workers into trying out dangerous alternative travel options. For example, it has been predicted that this will fuel migrant workers' dependence on and exploitation by "intermediaries and facilitators, from employment agencies to smugglers, in part because it has been difficult to access reliable information about fast-changing migration routes."⁴⁰ Travel restrictions have already increased the demand for smuggling services among desperate people facing economic deprivation.⁴¹ Under such travel restrictions, smugglers adopt underground methods of smuggling and trafficking people, including dangerous routes that increase the risk of exploitation and trafficking. Specifically, for Uganda, there have been cases of people being smuggled through porous borders with Kenya and South Sudan. With the recent ban of travelers from Uganda to the UAE,⁴² this trend is likely to increase, with many more people facing risks. There are also media reports that suggest that migrant workers travelling to the middle east are probably "faking" COVID-19 results⁴³, to get the opportunity to travel. This may prove to be challenging for projects seeking to address TIP.

Impact of COVID-19 on project implementation

In addition to the negative impact that COVID-19 had on vulnerable populations and survivors, it also affected project implementation, limiting opportunities for mitigation and service provision. However, projects did pivot to continue to provide services during the pandemic. As previously mentioned, under the OLR component, GFEMS is supporting three projects: the Rehabilitation and Reintegration for Survivors of Trafficking and At-Risk Populations, implemented by Willow International; Women Judges Leading Efforts to Improve Justice Sector Effectiveness in Combating Trafficking, implemented by IAWJ; and Bolstering Ethical Recruitment Policies and Practice to Enhance Safe and Orderly Labor Migration Pathways, Prevent Exploitation, and Better Protect Migrant Workers from Uganda, implemented by IOM. It would appear that the OLR agencies that are internationally based have very strong systems that include communication protocols, databases for staff and partner agencies, and a solid network of partners, which have made it possible for these agencies to continue working online during COVID-19.

³⁹ Kagolo, F. (2021)

⁴⁰ Benton, M., Batalova, J., Davidoff-Gore, S., & Schmidt, T. (2021).

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Daily Monitor. (2021, June 10). UAE bans travellers from Uganda over Covid-19. <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/uae-bans-travellers-from-uganda-over-covid-19-3431910>.

⁴³ Muhame, G (July, 2021)

The existence of on-going projects imply that some agencies already have enough expertise regarding effective project implementation. This may become important when implementing GFEMS supported projects, which ultimately also makes the work of the implementing agencies easier.

Overall, agencies implementing OLR projects were gravely affected by lockdown measures. For example, these measures have impacted how government departments operate, which plays a central role in achieving project outputs, building data systems with government, and supporting survivors in the court systems, among others. The greatest weakness identified is reliance on donor funding with COVID-19 creating uncertainty. Yet, the agencies have limited influence over the actions of donors. Although they have limited scope to mobilize resources from a variety of sources, many of these agencies appear to have capacity to leverage resources from other outside sources; however, the funding environment appears to almost work against many of the implementing agencies particularly as it has become unpredictable due to effects of COVID-19 on the global economy.

Activities planned in light of COVID-19

Discussions with project staff indicate that some project activities had been planned when the COVID-19 pandemic had started. Thus, the projects were able to plan with COVID-19 in mind. Exhibit 7 7 summarizes part of the process that IAWJ staff undertook and continue to undertake as they implement during the pandemic.

Exhibit 7: Reflections from IAWJ Staff on COVID-19 Project Implementation

Preparations  • We wrote the grand plan with the pandemic in mind. The early activities are all virtual and maybe later on we hope will be having physical (activities). So, we planned the project while the pandemic had already started, so we assumed the training of trainers has to be virtual.

Plans  • We are still not anticipating in doing any in person activities I think until 2022. We only have two training; one with the judges and the other with the multi sector stakeholders and all of them are still in the air. I mean, it all depends on where we are with the virus in the spring in Uganda. I mean September and October 2021.

Adaptations  • Even though we have planned and we have had some experience in implementing virtual trainings, it changes the dynamic and there are all kinds of things you don't expect or don't know about before you engage in this format. We have had our lessons learnt in other projects and we will be carrying that with us.

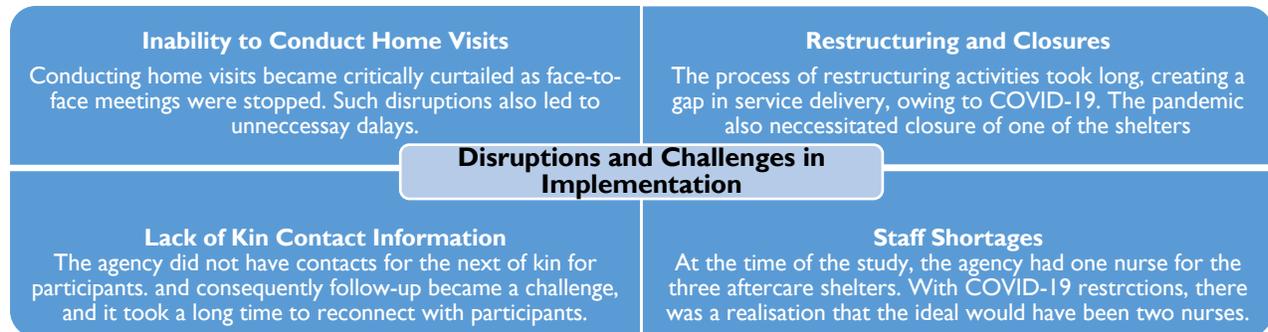
Challenges  • Again, we have plans to do physical training for each of the categories but that is all in the air. This is still a new avenue for most judges that will be participating and not so many people have done virtual meetings and it is still very new for many people.

During discussions with IAWJ staff, they mentioned that the project activities considered the COVID-19 situation. However, even when organizations considered COVID-19 in their planning, the realities of what it means to implement a project during the pandemic and the resulting challenges were not well envisaged. For example, some activities are planned to take place in person, such as IAWJ’s in-person trainings with judges and other stakeholders scheduled for 2022. For other activities, however, the plans to conduct in-person meetings were disrupted by COVID-19, and these in-person meetings were replaced with virtual meetings, which had some challenges. For some organizations and staff, virtual trainings and meetings as a result of the pandemic are likely to slow down the scale and speed at which some activities will be implemented. Specifically, for projects under IAWJ, connecting people involved across different countries is envisaged to be challenging under the new COVID-19 restrictions (see Exhibit 11 in Annex I for detailed analysis).

Disruption in implementation plans

For organizations like Willow International that have direct contact with communities, COVID-19 meant significant disruptions in the work schedules and interactions with communities. The activities were not stopped because of COVID-19, but the pandemic created delays and disruptions in routine home visits and contacts with the families they support. Some activities at the Willow International shelters were also affected and disrupted. Such disruptions also meant limited connection with the survivors. Consequently, a lot of services had to be scaled back, including some that were offered at the shelters with the survivors.

Exhibit 8: Willow International Implementation Disruptions



Disruptions in implementation were also directly experienced by staff who, due to COVID-19 restrictions, had to work from home and online, especially when there was closure of workspaces. Even when workspaces were opened and people were allowed to move, for some staff it appears this also became a challenge. In addition, transport costs increased, and many staff were unable to regularly go to work.

*We got, as Willow, a challenge whereby staff are affected when it comes to transport. **Transport fares doubled; you know. Yet someone has to come to office or to work.** As an organization, we cannot extend financial help, like any salary advance or any even salary increment. So it's a big challenge. (Staff, Willow International)*

Other COVID-19-related implementation challenges

In addition to the challenges faced because of implementation disruptions and challenges, project staff discussed several other COVID-related implementation challenges. Project staff indicated that as a result of COVID-19, there has been a tendency to approach issues in a rushed manner. The rushed implementation has possible consequences for the long-term benefits to survivors, specifically the possibility of a relapse when survivors are rushed and leave rehabilitation without proper preparation.

*You find that for us as counselors, when these clients come back, they are really traumatized. So, it is a process to help them process the trauma, the unfinished business and everything. But because of COVID, **there is a way COVID has made everybody really to work so fast, rushing the project, rushing the process and everything. They go home when they are not ready.** (Focus group discussion, field staff, Willow International)*

Even when agencies have adopted technology to provide and extend services to the survivors and keep service provision at the required standard, significant challenges emerged from the use of new technologies. For example, there were concerns that online counseling was not effective and that some challenges existed with the practice of online counseling.

***Phone counselling was not 100% effective.** It limited opportunity of having a one-on-one session where you observe the verbal, the non-verbal. Talking on phone means you are missing out an element of empathy that would be extended. For some participants, **online counselling made them feel they lost touch with Willow.** (Staff, Willow International)*

There was also a concern about a risk of having disparate knowledge capacity building because of the virtual approach to training, which may be a result of poor connection, online meeting fatigue, or the need to attend to other issues at the same time. In a country in which there is low internet coverage, costly internet connectivity, the use of online platforms may prove more challenging and costly for the survivors and service providers.

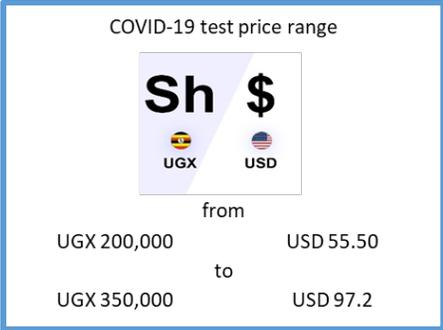
COVID-19 also affected the core components of some projects. During discussions with IOM, the study team learned that the core component of the project requires capacity building through training PRAs in the IRIS. However, due to the effects of COVID-19, the PRAs are downsizing their activities. This ultimately means that there is a danger that some of the targets of the project may not be achieved.

*COVID-19 affected their (private recruitment agencies) businesses (...) Some of the identified private recruitment agencies that were very strong before and were being recommended by the UAERA executive board to participate in the IRIS training have been affected. Instead of sending two members of staff, they were sending one. **COVID-19 forced them to restructure their company operations and reduced staff.** (Project staff, IOM)*

As most PRAs try to recover from the COVID-19 shocks, there is also a danger that some of the expected innovations may never be realized. For example, the study team learned that the Minister of Gender, Labor and Social Development had established a reception desk where all returning migrants, especially those returning in distress, would register and their concerns could be addressed. The day-to-day operations of the center were envisaged to be financed from resources pooled from PRAs. With COVID-19 forcing some projects to scale down, the center has not resumed operations because association membership contributions have not been realized. In addition, reduced business for PRAs means that recruitment through individuals and unlicensed or unregulated labor actors is likely to increase. If this happens, there is likely to be an increase in vulnerability to trafficking, given that companies are still trying to stabilize following the disruptions caused by the pandemic. Even those companies that are willing to go through the proposed training on ethical recruitment practices may not be able to financially do so. The difficult economic times may challenge the patience of those intending to migrate because they may also be desperate to travel and obtain work. The risk of falling into the wrong hands, including traffickers and exploitative employers, without any sense of recourse is a serious concern. On the part of the recruitment companies, the pressure to recover from the shocks of the pandemic may curtail any due diligence on their part, paving way for unethical practices that risk the well-being of migrant workers.

Increased project costs

In addition to disrupted work routines, discussions with project staff suggest that COVID-19 increased costs of undertaking project activities. Implementation of project activities requires adhering to the COVID-19 SOPs. COVID-19 mitigation measures, such as routine testing for and social isolation to ensure that the participants are protected from COVID-19, especially those in shelters, result in increased costs. Depending on the numbers to be tested, the costs can be prohibitive.



Additional costs, such as for hand sanitizer, handwashing facilities, and personal protective equipment, are a challenge, and most agencies have not budgeted for them. In addition, most organizations are under immense pressure to upgrade their technology capacity, including staff training and acquiring software that supports virtual activities, such as Zoom accounts. In some cases, staff also require computer equipment and regular access to internet, which all require

resources. Uganda has the highest cost of internet in East Africa,⁴⁴ which means that organizations that rely on the internet to run project activities will incur high costs.

While costs are increasing, the development assistance environment from which most of the agencies receive funding remains uncertain due to COVID-19. Some organizations will be able make savings on expenses on activities that may not be possible because of COVID-19. Because most activities are moving online, organizations are able to save on transporting staff to places of work or paying for physical spaces during workshops or meetings. Discussions with IAWJ staff indicate that they anticipate savings on travel because some of the planned trips have been affected by COVID-19 travel restrictions. However, it appears that none of the project implementing agencies has been able to conduct a cost-saving study to document the likely costs that will accrue from implementing COVID-19 SOPs and how any related savings would be used.

Adaptions to COVID-19 and emerging opportunities

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought many challenges to project implementation, but projects have also been able to adapt and have implemented some innovations that will have lasting benefits. Some have adapted positively while others have adapted negatively. For example, some organizations like IAWJ are already seeing opportunities that come with online trainings, which have resulted in expanded access to many individuals during virtual meetings and savings on costs related to food and housing that are no longer required. Some organizations are already harnessing and leveraging these opportunities, equipping and training their staff on online communication and engagement, which also has the advantage of getting things done rather quickly. In fact, some of the survivors have been trained online to undertake some critical projects during COVID-19 to enhance their livelihood. The assumption is that COVID-19 created new windows of opportunities that some of the organizations have taken advantage of to improve the lives of the survivors. Other agencies have been able to strengthen their organizations and put in place systems to ensure continued functionality. There has been a change in thinking and a mindset shift among project staff on how projects can be implemented. Consequently, this has occasioned a critical sense of adaptation. For example, while it was difficult to imagine court outside the courtroom, during the COVID-19 period, court and court sessions were conducted outside the traditional courtroom setting and sometimes through Zoom. Prisoners did not have to move from prisons and magistrates did not have to be in court chambers to preside over cases. This resulted in a shift and change in mindset on how to dispense justice. As already noted, some organizations were forced to scale down some operations to be able to adapt to the new changes. For example, the team learnt that Willow International closed one of the aftercare shelters during the pandemic to adapt to the challenges emerging. Exhibit 9 presents reflections by project staff on COVID-19 adaptations.

Exhibit 9: Reflections on COVID Adaptations

Greater Reach	New Mindset
You can actually train many more people. One of the things is that it's really very expensive to train people face to face like renting a hotel, the meals, the transport for them to and from the venues. All these are costs. Doing it virtually gives a little more flexibility and more people including those that are a little more isolated might be able to partake. (Staff, IAWJ)	In some instances, we have to move out of the court hall and have the hearing. I think it (COVID-19) has changed the old way of thinking that justice is in the court hall. You now know that you can have court outside and you still deliver justice. In other instances, we have had to move court to prison; we had pre bargaining sessions in the prisons. (Staff, IAWJ)
Online Presence	Growth Opportunities
COVID really taught people to go online, to do everything online. What happened is that they made their employees who are the participants, everyone to at least	Maybe the other opportunity is that, COVID-19 gave us a chance to grow when it comes to technology. We learnt how to organize for a Zoom

⁴⁴ <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/business/prosper/why-uganda-s-internet-cost-is-highest-in-east-africa-1873090>

have access or buy a smart phone. Now orders would come or they would tell them what to do using the smart phone, so they would receive orders. They all left with some supplies on how to make their jewelry and then they would meet on the Zoom meeting. They would meet online, of course they taught their employees and those are our participants, like this is what you are supposed to do and trust me their jobs or their work was also not affected. (Staff, Willow International)

meeting, how to, you know, invite, doing everything electronic, without you physically visiting someone, so it was really a blessing in disguise. Even when it comes to counseling like I shared that, the Tele-counseling, we had to organize ourselves in order for us to maintain and keep on doing the right thing. (Staff, Willow International)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report documented findings of a study that sought to examine the likely impact of COVID-19 on the implementation of OLR projects supported by GFEMS in Uganda. The report shows that the effects of COVID-19 have increased the vulnerabilities of survivors of OLR, exacerbating exposure to risk factors that increase labor exploitation. For most project implementers, the COVID-19 pandemic presents new challenges that affect implementation. However, projects have found ways to adapt and continue implementation in the midst of the pandemic. Based on findings from the interviews, focus group discussions, and the SWOT analysis, the study offers several recommendations that projects can incorporate to improve implementation in light of COVID-19 and the impact it has had target communities.

	<p>Dedicate resources to training staff on how to better use virtual platforms, tools, and resources. Given the impact of COVID-19, there is an overreliance on virtual and digital platforms. However, not all staff are well equipped to effectively use such platforms.</p>
	<p>Adapt training materials and resources to virtual platforms. Although the design of the projects happened when COVID-19 had already been confirmed, the actual impact of COVID-19 was never anticipated. Ensure that project staff adapt to the “new normal” of doing business, including conducting meetings and providing services to participants. Training materials and resources that were originally designed for physical delivery should, therefore, be revisited and adapted to the current situation.</p>
	<p>Refocus project activities and interventions. Through discussions with project staff, we found that the needs of some survivors are evolving. For example, discussions with Willow International suggest that increased cases of domestic violence reported by survivors diverted attention from looking at the wellness of the client to resolving family-related violence. This might require that while not abandoning the wellness of survivors, particularly their mental health, it is important for projects to extend services that were not previously anticipated that have been occasioned by COVID-19. This may require additional skills of maintaining good mental health during the pandemic, including avoiding negative news and providing information on additional sources of support for issues that participants mention, which the agency may not be able to manage. It also requires that agencies like Willow International begin to proactively seek partnerships with other agencies that offer services that are needed by the participants beyond what is currently provided.</p>
	<p>Implement capacity-building initiatives focused on technology for project participants and partners as a way to foster better service provision. For example, one of the major concerns raised by IOM is that the PRAs have demonstrated limitations in the use and adaptation of technology, which is now an increasing part of COVID-19 adaptations. It is therefore critical that efforts are equally directed toward supporting such partners and building their technological capacity.</p>
	<p>Invest in the use of technological innovations and monitor their use and scalability. For example, Willow International was reported to have started providing tele-counseling to survivors to ensure continuous flow of services. Yet, little was mentioned in terms of the effectiveness of tele-counseling or what modifications are needed to make it more effective.</p>

	<p>Leverage savings that could accrue from use of communication technologies, and blend community visits with the use of virtual platforms as applicable. Although there are increases in costs, government SOPs, and other requirements, there are potential ways in which costs could be reduced because of COVID-19. For example, projects with budgets for physical trainings, transport, and other activities that have been scaled down because of COVID-19 should be restructured to support a blend of virtual and physical delivery of services.</p>
	<p>Redeploy resources toward understanding how OLR has evolved in the context of COVID-19. For example, COVID-19 has limited employment opportunities, which leads to seeking opportunities outside the country.</p>
	<p>Incorporate COVID-19 prevention and response in programming. This requires flexible budgeting and allocation of resources to meet these emerging needs.</p>
	<p>Use existing and new structures created in response to COVID-19 to support delivery of OLR-related activities. As a response mechanism, the government created COVID-19 task forces at the district and sub-county levels. Projects should creatively engage these structures to deliver messages on the dangers of trafficking in OLR that can easily reach target communities. One way to do this is to deliberately build community/village-level relationships and networks as a means to identify challenges and as avenues for service provision, especially in instances in which traditional institutions such as schools are impacted by COVID-19.</p>
	<p>Revisit SOPs, protocols, and procedures, considering COVID-19. Projects should consider documenting indicators with COVID-19-related disaggregates. Although projects have adjusted their work methods in response to COVID-19 challenges, it is unclear whether and how these efforts are being documented. Performance indicators and other measures should be revisited to account for and track COVID-19-related efforts. Some indicators, even at the output level, could include documenting information about the number of participants reached with personal protective equipment, number of tests conducted, and COVID-19-specific or related trainings.</p>
	<p>Ensure data security and protection for information and activities conducted on digital spaces. As more project work is digitalized and conducted online, projects should focus on ensuring data security and protection for information and activities conducted on digital spaces. Where possible, projects should revisit data security and protection SOPs and protocols.</p>
	<p>As new COVID-19 variants and strains are being reported elsewhere, it is likely that Uganda may also experience another wave or phase of COVID-19 that would demand new response measures. Such measures may also have significant impact on project implementation. Projects should therefore create strategies and systems for regular meetings focused on strategizing and troubleshooting.</p>

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ANNEX I: SWOT ANALYSIS

The Global Fund to End Modern Slavery (GFEMS) is supporting three projects: the Rehabilitation and Reintegration for Survivors of Trafficking and At-Risk Populations, implemented by Willow international; Women Judges Leading Efforts to Improve Justice Sector Effectiveness in Combating Trafficking, implemented by the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ); and Bolstering Ethical Recruitment Policies and Practice to Enhance Safe and Orderly Labor Migration Pathways, Prevent Exploitation, and Better Protect Migrant Workers from Uganda, implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). It would appear that the agencies focusing on overseas labor recruitment (OLR) and commercial sexual exploitation of children that are internationally based have very strong systems that include communication protocols, databases for staff and partner agencies, and a solid network of partners, which have made it possible for these agencies to continue working online during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Overall, agencies implementing OLR projects were gravely affected by lockdown measures. For example, these measures have impacted how government departments operate, which plays a central role in achieving project outputs, building data systems with government, and supporting survivors in the court systems, among others. The greatest weakness identified is reliance on donor funding, and the agencies have limited influence over the actions of donors. Although they have limited scope to mobilize resources from a variety of sources, many of these agencies appear to have capacity to leverage resources from other outside sources; however, the funding environment appears to almost work against many of the implementing agencies due to the unpredictability made worse by effects of COVID-19 on the global economy.

A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis was used as a conceptual tool to guide data collection. The study team conducted the SWOT analysis with the project staff of Willow International, IAWJ, and IOM through a participatory process. Some discussions were held virtually due to COVID-19, and others were face-to-face interactions following the COVID-19 standard operating procedures (SOPs). Research staff used SWOT analysis guides, and a wide range of issues emerged regarding how COVID-19 has affected project implementation and mitigation measures on how to address effects.

SWOT analysis for project on Bolstering Ethical Recruitment Policies and Practice to Enhance Safe and Orderly Labor Migration Pathways, Prevent Exploitation, and Better Protect Migrant Workers from Uganda

IOM’s project seeks to bolster ethical recruitment policies and practice to enhance safe and orderly labor migration pathways, prevent exploitation, and better protect migrant workers from Uganda. The project “was designed under the assumption that providing Ugandan migrant workers with greater access to ethical recruitment channels and safe labor migration pathways through enhanced ethical recruitment practices based on the International Recruitment Integrity System (IRIS) Standard, will place them at lower risk of various practices associated with Trafficking in Persons (TIP) and labor exploitation.”⁴⁵ It is also based on the assumption that “adoption of ethical recruitment practices among the private recruitment agencies and associations will become more effective, standardized, and sustainable if widely supported by a government enabling environment.”⁴⁶ The project, which directly benefit 320 participants from both private recruitment agencies (PRAs) and government, seeks to achieve two main outcomes:

- Strengthening commitments and actions of PRAs to create consensus, cooperation, and an enabling environment for ethical recruitment across the industry
- Improving policy, regulatory, and enforcement frameworks at national and local levels to enhance migrant protection and promote ethical recruitment

Like other projects under evaluation, the current project was conceived in the COVID-19 period and the focus includes the need to prepare agencies for a post-crisis situation. It is important that agencies “are prepared to provide recruitment services that respond to the increased demand of employers who want to return to ‘business as usual’ as quickly as possible.”⁴⁷ Results of the SWOT analysis for this project are summarized in Exhibit 12.

⁴⁵ Bolstering ethical recruitment policies and practice to enhance safe and orderly labour migration pathways, prevent exploitation and better protect migrant workers from Uganda; narrative proposal IOM

⁴⁶ ibid

⁴⁷ Ibid

Exhibit 10: SWOT Analysis for IOM’s Bolstering Ethical Recruitment Policies and Practice to Enhance Safe and Orderly Labor Migration Pathways, Prevent Exploitation and Better Protect Migrant Workers from Uganda Project

IOM	Issues Emerging as a Result of COVID-19	
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of a tool from which to develop and implement guided papers • Expressed interest from PRAs in participating in International Recruitment Integrity System standards training following IOM’s first outreach activity to introduce the training program to the Uganda Association of External Recruitment Agencies membership • Strategies to ensure that the activity flow and timelines in activity implementation are met • Built-in monthly review meeting strategy for the project • Strong and focused team showing commitment from the project design phase through to the launch and implementation • Strong online presence for both project management information system and computer-based project management systems • Performance indicator tracking and clear data quality assurance principal standards and practices that guide day-to-day project implementation, reflections, and management information systems that facilitate knowledge transfer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>With new developments in the COVID-19 fight, the interest from PRAs is increasing.</i> • <i>The strategy was decided upon with the COVID-19 context in mind (e.g., adherence to the SOPs, especially not overcrowding participants, to minimize the spread of the virus).</i> • <i>The monthly review meetings provide an opportunity to reflect and address COVID-19-related issues that may impact project implementation.</i> • <i>The team provides strength and ingenuity to navigate implications that COVID-19 may have on project implementation and progress.</i> • <i>Project composition makes it easy to bridge any gaps in staffing that would emerge as a result of the current COVID-19 pandemic.</i> • <i>A strong online system has helped in the area of information receiving and sharing, including continued engagement with partners during the pandemic.</i> • <i>Existence of a strong data management system has made it easier to adapt to conducting activities online in the context of COVID-19.</i> • <i>There is a possibility of detecting the incremental impact of the pandemic on implementation progress from the monthly performance dashboards.</i>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strategy to organize training of PRAs in the morning and another group in the afternoon has the possibility to over-stretch and also bring stress to staff involved in facilitating the training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>This may impact the quality of training delivered and may also necessitate bringing extra facilitators on board.</i>
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of venues for full days for multiple purposes • Opportunities to work with other donors and partners to strengthen project implementation and refine project plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Specific arrangements made with venue service providers enable the planned activities (especially the training of PRAs) to progress without any additional final cost implication for the project while adhering to COVID-19 SOPs.</i> • <i>The willingness of the donor to engage around the implications of COVID-19 on project implementation and progress is an opportunity to deliberate, find, and track any unanticipated challenges and gaps brought about by the pandemic.</i>
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some PRAs have limited capacity in the use of technology, particularly conducting online engagements, including the use of online tools like Zoom. • Lengthened training period due to COVID-19 restrictions and limitations on numbers of individuals that can be in trainings is challenging, especially in instances when numerous trainings were planned. • The process of leading on national policy under the government stream requires a lot of consultations/coordination with different stakeholders. • The project anticipated to train at least two staff from each participating PRA, but some PRAs are not able to send in the expected numbers of participants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bringing the PRAs together in the context of COVID-19 requires that all stakeholders have some level of appreciation of the use of technology, but some PRAs are limited in their technological capacity.</i> • <i>There was a need to modify planned training strategies to align with COVID-19 SOPs.</i> • <i>Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the consultation may be limited and the benefit from physical consultation may be lost in the process.</i> • <i>Due to COVID-19, most PRAs closed, sent employees home, and are currently struggling to stabilize as the situation normalizes, which may affect the targets.</i>

SWOT analysis for project on Rehabilitation and Reintegration for Survivors of Trafficking and At-Risk Populations

Willow International's project on rehabilitation and reintegration of survivors of trafficking and at-risk populations seeks to offer holistic aftercare and psychosocial support and legal advocacy services to labor trafficking victims. The project will also expand the provision of educational, vocational, and economic opportunities for more than 860 survivors of labor trafficking and at-risk individuals, empowering them with the skills and resources needed to become economically stable and reintegrate successfully back into community and family. Between November 1, 2020, and July 31, 2022, Willow International intends to achieve the following:

- 260 victims of labor trafficking will receive holistic aftercare, psychosocial care services, and legal support and experience improved physical and mental well-being.
- 260 victims of labor trafficking will receive vocational training, entrepreneurship training, or access to employment.
- 247 victims of trafficking will be successfully reintegrated back into community/family through family tracing and counseling services to ensure that they have a safe family or community in which to integrate.
- 600 at-risk individuals and trafficking survivors will be given the opportunity to participate in the economy through self-employment after completing a comprehensive entrepreneurship training project.

The SWOT analysis for the project, and particularly within the context of COVID-19, suggests that the challenges of COVID-19 notwithstanding, Willow International will be able to deliver on the project. Willow International has a clear sense of the challenges ahead in managing the shelter and providing a holistic aftercare in the community. Results of the SWOT analysis summarized in Exhibit 10 show that Willow International is also able to leverage the opportunities presented by the COVID-19 situation, including equipping staff with the necessary technological skills to manage during the pandemic.

Exhibit II: SWOT Analysis for Willow International’s Rehabilitation and Reintegration for Survivors of Trafficking and At-Risk Populations Project

	Willow International	Issues Emerging as a Result of COVID-19
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of effective and well-trained staff in trauma-informed care, case management, and provision of psychosocial support services • Working relationship with a private hospital, thereby increasing access to health services for survivors • Existence of a referral network of health service providers for survivors • Existence of a well-tailored procedure on how to run a shelter, including an inventory management system for basic needs at the shelter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willow has security guards who guarded shelters during COVID-19. • An online case management system helped staff adapt to conducting activities online. • Staff were trained to provide online and tele-counseling. • Some activities like meetings are already happening using various online platforms. • A qualified in-house nurse stationed at the shelter addressed medical and health needs of survivors. • Project activities slowed but did not stop completely; most are being implemented as planned following COVID-19 SOPs.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few staff, especially nurses, at shelters; currently only two nurses for three aftercare shelters • Limited control over what partners can or cannot do • A memorandum of understanding with one medical service provider limits coverage and the ability to provide treatment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No transport provision for staff was a critical concern during COVID-19. • Delays in reorganizing work according to COVID-19 situations created a gap in services delivery. • There was restricted physical contact among Willow International staff because most work is done online. • There was a failure to offer proper guidance to staff on how to operate during COVID-19. • Direct contact between staff and participants was limited due to COVID-19 restrictions. • Tracing and supporting survivors during COVID-19 was challenging due to insufficient information kept in the survivors’ files. • Staff faced an increased workload, especially for those who remained in the office.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An emergency fund created to support survivors • Existence of government structures, specifically hospitals, that linked with Willow International to continue to provide services to survivors • A strong working relationship with the Criminal Investigation Department of the police, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, especially the Uganda Coalition against trafficking in persons (UCATIP) office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An emergency fund was established from partners as a result of COVID-19. • COVID-19 was an opportunity for growth in technology expertise. • Training staff on the use of available technological platforms improved technology skills for staff, thereby easing engagements and communication with participants and partners. • COVID-19 provided an opportunity to re-think, evaluate, and redesign organization roles. • COVID-19 provided an opportunity to expand the Community Basic Care program. • Willow International was recognized by Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development for the work done to support survivors during COVID-19, thereby increasing organizational visibility.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mushrooming recruitment agencies that entice and sometimes traffic young people to the Gulf Cooperation Council • Political activities/government interference in non-governmental organization operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curfew occasioned by COVID-19 and restrictions made work difficult. • Airport closure made rescue efforts almost impossible. • COVID-19 affected networking with other agencies. • Increased cases of domestic violence reported by survivors diverted attention from looking at the wellness of the client to resolving family-related violence. • Cases of re-trafficking increased (e.g., when air travel restrictions were lifted and the airport opened, some girls were re-trafficked back to the Gulf Cooperation Council). • An increase in the number of people with mental health challenges occasioned by COVID-19 exerted pressure on the demand for counseling and other mental health services.

SWOT analysis for project on Women Judges Leading Efforts to Improve Justice Sector Effectiveness in Combating Trafficking

This project seeks to promote that the effective prosecution of trafficking offenders and the creation of greater certainty that offenders will be arrested, tried, and punished are key to raising the costs of crime, thereby deterring potential traffickers and reducing the prevalence of trafficking. IAWJ’s project is a 21-month effort that will (1) bolster the justice sector response to labor trafficking and implement victim-centered responses (project outcome 1), and (2) strengthen cross-border coordination and networks among justice sector actors (project outcome 2).⁴⁸

IAWJ proposes activities that build on work that has been done by other implementers, leverage the insights and relationships of Kenyan and Ugandan women judges, and introduce victim-centered approaches. However, IAWJ and its member associations’ approach to training differs from other efforts in three distinct ways: building criminal justice actors’ capacity to develop and deliver trainings; introducing and incorporating victim-centered approaches in the trainings; and tailoring the trainings to the specific needs identified by front-line practitioners, who are grappling with human trafficking cases.⁴⁹

IAWJ’s model is centered on efforts that are locally owned, locally responsive, and locally led by women judges.⁵⁰ Trainings are developed and led by judges because judges prefer to be trained by other judges. The IAWJ uses a train-the-trainers model, which seeks to create teams of dedicated, knowledgeable trainers who can work to ensure that the training becomes locally embedded.⁵¹

Results of the SWOT analysis for this project summarized in Exhibit 11 indicate that the project approach is not only relevant but fills an important gap that was clearly articulated. Discussions and review of evidence show that the project was conceived bearing in mind the “lingering risks related to COVID-19 and the inability of IAWJ staff and members to travel, conduct trainings, or host regional events.”⁵² Some aspects of the project were identified as likely to benefit from in-person engagement, and although this might prove a challenge in the times of COVID-19, IAWJ’s expansive global network means that it will still be able to continue with the work of the project successfully.

⁴⁸ International Association of Women Judges – Proposal Narrative. Women Judges Leading Efforts To Improve Justice Sector Effectiveness in Combating Trafficking

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² Ibid

Exhibit 12: SWOT Analysis for IAWJ's Women Judges Leading Efforts to Improve Justice Sector Effectiveness in Combating Trafficking Project

IAWJ		Issues Emerging as a Result of COVID-19
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience in the justice sector, knowledge of how courts and judges function, and experience in training judges in Uganda since early 2000s • Strong membership and leverage in exercising soft power over its members, increasing organizational leadership • Existence of training materials, including a trainers' trainer module • Established working relationship with the National Judge Training Institutes that increases local ownership and leadership • Experience in managing similar projects in Latin America and the Caribbean, making the current project a replication of success in other programming efforts on trafficking • A clear understanding of a multi-sectoral approach in the enforcement of local trafficking statutes • Strong cross-sectoral and cross-country collaboration, ensuring harmonization of processes across countries, particularly on issues of presentation of evidence in courts, challenges faced by prosecutors, and training needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Activities to be conducted in the first quarter are largely virtual. The project was designed with this in mind.</i> • <i>Since this is a multi-country project, organizing online meetings favors the context rather than any attempt to organize physical meetings, for the initial phases.</i>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delays in conducting country assessments • Difficulty in coordinating a large number of stakeholder groups • Court emergencies are beyond the control of the judges; participants may not make it for every hour, and leverage and momentum are lost. • Demands related to coordinating a multi-country project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>In-person/physical trainings that were planned have been affected by COVID-19 disruptions.</i> • <i>Conducting virtual meetings is still very new for many people, including cases of Zoom fatigue.</i> • <i>COVID-19 has stretched the capacity of the association; trainings have to be spread out more when conducted virtually than when conducted physically. For example, an all-day meeting in-person cannot be successfully converted into an all-day virtual meeting and rather would need to be spread across multiple days.</i>
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness from other stakeholders to be part of the work to share experiences, knowledge, and provide support to each other. For example, interaction has been fostered with various groups, such as the Human Trafficking Institute, which has been working with the Director of Public Prosecution, police, and prosecutors in Uganda. • Strong support from and coordination of donors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Virtual training meetings occasioned by COVID-19 offer flexibility, and more people are reached.</i> • <i>There is a possibility for cost savings because virtual meetings and trainings are less costly.</i>
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure by other actors to access training modules • Delays in conducting country assessments • Absence of tools to determine effectiveness of training of judges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>IAWJ anticipates that given that COVID-19 does not seem to have an immediate cure, the control measures in place may continue to affect smooth operations of the agency.</i>

ANNEX II: INTERVIEW GUIDES

Interview guide: Project staff (CSEC and OLR)

To get started I would like to hear about the project you work on and what your role(s) on that project.

- What project do you work for?
 - What is your current role/responsibilities for the project? How long have you been in this role? Have you held similar roles/responsibilities before coming to this project?
- What is the purpose of the project? What are the main goals of the project? What activities are being conducted to meet these goals?
- Can you describe the main activities/milestones that the project intends to implement?
 - What are the immediate and short term goals?
 - What are the long term goals?
- *[If not already discussed- ask] What would success/a successful project look like? (if applicable participant can make reference to similar or previous projects)*
- What are some factors that can impede the success of the project? *(if applicable participant can make reference to similar or previous projects)*
 - Probe for general factors, not associated with COVID-19
 - Once factors are established- introduce COVID-19/corona virus

[As you may be aware the first case of COVID-19 in Uganda was confirmed in mid-March 2020, since then there have been over 33 thousand cases and 200 deaths. To help contain the spread of the virus the government issued a lockdown and has also recommended the public take certain measures such as wearing a face mask and washing hands. We would now like to discuss in more depth, the effect the COVID-19 pandemic has or will have on project implementation. If your project has not yet begun implementation, we can discuss based on your thoughts and experience with similar projects.]

- How does the COVID-19 pandemic factor into the project implementation?
 - Probe on impacts to **staffing** (who was available to work), **service delivery** (changes in what was provide or how it was provides) and **service recipients** (changes in who was able to access the services)
- How did it impact project activities? Are there any services or activities that you did not continue? If so, which ones?
- Can you describe changes you made to services or activities?
 - How do you think these changes impacted outcomes?
 - What could the project have done differently? What resources or supports would your project need to do things differently?
- What, if any, have been some challenges associated with COVID-19 *[continue to probe until participant cannot think of any more challenges]*. If participant cannot think of any current challenges, ask them to think about anticipated challenges.
 - What, if anything, has the project been doing to address these challenges?
 - What is needed for the project to better address these challenges?
- What did the project do well in response to COVID? What were some successes ('positive aspects') what were some lessons learned? *[continue to probe until participant cannot think of any more successes]*
- Is there anything else you would like to share as we consider recommendations for the project implementation considering the COVID-19 pandemic?

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview.

Group discussion: Project staff (CSEC and OLR) [handout to facilitate completion of SWOT template]

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this group discussion. We expect this discussion to be participatory and interactive. We would like to gather a range of opinions and perspectives, so it is very important that we hear from everyone and we give everyone space to share their opinions. If there is anyone that is not comfortable speaking out loud there will also be opportunities to write down responses.

The focus of this discussion will be to understand the Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats to project implementation in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is okay to bring into the discussion your experiences with similar projects.

First let's have a general discussion about the project and some of the key activities that you are planning to implement

Facilitate discussion about the projects' theory of change [Note: handout of the projects theory of change will be used to guide this discussion]

- In thinking about the various aspects of the theory of change facilitate SWOT discussion
 - Project outputs
 - Project outcomes
 - Long term outcomes
 - Impact

- Guiding questions include:
 - How would/is COVID-19 affecting this?
 - Did the project make changes to policies/procedures? If so, how?
 - Did COVID affect staff capacity to work as usual? If so, how?
 - What services continued? What didn't?
 - Were there changes in how the services were provided? If so, describe.
 - How did these changes impact program outcomes?
 - How did COVID affect the target population?
 - Was there a change in who received services? Who was left out?
 - What were challenges for the project? What were benefits for the project ?
 - Given the impact of COVID-19 what are the SWOTs?

	Positive	Negative
Internal	Strengths	Weaknesses
External	Opportunities	Threats

- Is there anything else you would like to share as we consider recommendations for the project implementation in light of the COVID-19 pandemic?

[Thank you for your time and participation]

Interview guide: Stakeholder group (CSEC and OLR) (project focused (i.e., CATIPU, CSO/NGO staff)

In this interview I would like to talk to you a bit about your organization and specifically the work that you do around [Commercial and Sexual Exploitation of Children, or CSEC/Overseas Labor Recruitment and Migration]

Can you tell me about your organization/group you work for and your role?

- Probe can you provide examples of the activities that your organization does to address CSEC/OLR? [ask for details about activities related to CSEC/OLR]
- What are some challenges that you've encountered doing these activities?
- How has COVID changed the way you've done these activities

I would like us to know talk a little bit more about [PROJECT NAME]. Before we start, have you heard about [PROJECT NAME]?

- If so, can you tell me about them and your understanding of the project goals?

[if participant is not familiar, provide a brief description of the project, its goals and how they intend to work with the group/organization]

- What are the specific ways in which your organization/group works or will work with [PROJECT NAME]?
- Can you give examples of how you work or will work together?
 - Probe: any shared activities? Resources? Training?

[if participant is not able to mention or does not provide all details- facilitator to provide information on the project goals as they relate to the specific stakeholder group]

- What is the goal of the collaboration between your organization and [PROJECT NAME]?
 - What might help meet this goal?
 - What might interfere with reaching this goal?
 - What role do you foresee COVID-19 playing in the implementation of [PROJECT NAME]?
 - Probe: how has COVID-19 affected the collaboration? What are some challenges? What are some opportunities?
- Is there anything else you would like to share as we consider recommendations for the project implementation in light of the COVID-19 pandemic?

[Thank you for your time and participation]

Interview guide: Stakeholder group (CSEC and OLR)—non-project focused (i.e., practitioners, school administrators/teacher, council member/law enforcement, government counterparts)

In this interview I would like to talk to you a bit about your organization and specifically the work that you do around [Commercial and Sexual Exploitation of Children, or CSEC/Oversees Labor Recruitment and Migration]

- Can you tell me a bit about your organization/group and what you do?
 - Probe on range of activities, however, ask for details about activities related to CSEC/OLR (CSEC survivors and at-risk children/migrants)

What role does your organization/group play regarding CSEC/OLR?

- What are some challenges that you face?

[I would now like to have more of a discussion about the CSEC survivors and at risk children/ migrants that you work with and the impact of COVID-19. As you may be aware the first case of COVID-19 in Uganda was confirmed in mid-March 2020, since then there have been over 33 thousand cases and 200 deaths. To help contain the spread of the virus the government issued a lockdown and has also recommended the public take certain measures such as wearing a face mask and washing hands.]

- How does your organization/group engage with CSEC survivors and at-risk children/OLR agencies/migrants?
- What are some of the ways that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected your work with CSEC survivors and at-risk children/OLR agencies/migrants?
- Can you describe any challenges you've encountered engaging CSEC survivors and at-risk children/OLR agencies/migrants as a result of COVID-19?
 - What is being done to address these challenges?
- What are some ways that you anticipate that the COVID-19 pandemic will impact your work in the future?
- What are some things that can be done to help you better work with CSEC survivors and at-risk children/OLR agencies/migrants [*Probe: what types of supports? What types or resources?*]

CSEC Only: [We would now like to specifically ask you about younger populations, those between the ages of 7 and 14. Since children between the ages of 7-14 are of particular interest to the projects, we would like to have a better understanding of how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted this group]

- How has the pandemic affected the lives of children ages 7-14?
 - Please describe any major differences you've noticed in the 7-10 age group versus the 11-14 age group.
- What might projects do to better reach or respond to the needs of this population during the pandemic?
 - Probe: What needs do you see unmet or emerging due to the pandemic? (e.g., unstable living situation, transportation, safety, food security, emotional vulnerability)
- Is there anything else you would like to share as we consider recommendations for the project implementation in light of the COVID-19 pandemic?

[Introduction and consent statement]

- Can you tell me a bit about your organization/group and what you do?
 - Probe on range of activities, however, ask for details about activities related to CSEC/OLR (CSEC survivors and at-risk children)
- What role does your organization/group play regarding CSEC/OLR?
 - What are some challenges that you face?

[We would now like to have more of a discussion about the vulnerable populations that you work with and the impact of COVID-19. As you may be aware the first case of COVID-19 in Uganda was confirmed in mid-March 2020, since then there have been over 33 thousand cases and 200 deaths. To help contain the spread of the virus the government issued a lockdown and has also recommended the public take certain measures such as wearing a face mask and washing hands]

- What are some of the ways that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted your work with vulnerable populations (CSEC survivors and at risk children/migrants)
- What are some ways that you anticipate that the COVID-19 pandemic will impact your work in the future?
- What are some things that can be done to help you better work with CSEC survivors and at risk children/migrants, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic?

CSEC only*[We would now like to specifically ask you about younger populations, those between the ages of 7 and 14. Children between the ages of 7-14 are of particular interest to the projects, we would like to have a better understanding of how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted this group]*

- In what ways have the lives of children between the ages of 7-14 changed as a result of the pandemic?
 - Probe- any differences in the age of the children, younger vs older?
- What are some things that projects should be aware of as they work with these populations?
 - Probe for things specifically related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Is there anything else you would like to share as we consider recommendations for the project implementation in light of the COVID-19 pandemic?

[Thank you for your time and participation]

Group discussion: Target population (at-risk youth—CSEC only)

[Introduction and consent statement]

[age/culturally appreciate ice breaker]

Today we are going to talk about a very sensitive topic (*facilitator to reiterate consent statement, confidentiality, and ability to withdraw from discussion at any time*).

Have you heard of the term, commercial and sexual exploitation? If so, can you tell me in your own words what this means?

[if participants are not able to define- use the definition below]

Sometimes bad things that are sexual in nature [touching private parts] are committed against young people. People do these bad things for money, or to get other things such as food, shelter, drugs or because someone told them to. We call this Commercial and Sexual Exploitation of Children.

- What do you think are some of the reasons that people your age would become victims of CSEC
 - What do you think are some things that can be done to help them not become victims?
 - Probe for several reasons/solution

-ask- have you heard about COVID-19 or the coronavirus? [if yes, ask the group to tell you what they know about it, if not provide a brief description)

- How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted young people like yourselves?
- What are some things that you are doing differently now because of the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - Why are you doing things differently?
- If the COVID-19 pandemic gets worse, what do you think would change? Why?
- If the COVID-19 pandemic gets better, what do you think would change? Why?

Is there anything else you would like to share about this discussion?

[Thank you for your time and participation]

Group Discussion: Target Population (migrant workers/populations at risk for trafficking)

[Introduction and consent statement]

- Have you heard of the term overseas labor recruitment (OLR)? What does this mean to you?
- Can you provide me with some examples of OLR?
 - Why do these things occur?
- What do you think are some of the reasons that people participate in OLR or migration as a result of recruitment?
 - What are some benefits?
 - What are some challenges?
- Where do people tend to migrate? Why to these locations?
- What have you heard about people's experiences with migration?
 - Probe for several examples of different experience and background of the individuals associated with those experiences.

-ask- have you heard about COVID-19 or the coronavirus? [if yes, ask the group to tell you what they know about it, if not provide a brief description]

[As you may be aware the first case of COVID-19 in Uganda was confirmed in mid-March 2020, since then there have been over 33 thousand cases and 200 deaths. To help contain the spread of the virus the government issued a lockdown and has also recommended the public take certain measures such as wearing a face mask and washing hands. We would now like to discuss in more depth, how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted individuals that have either migrated or are at risk for migrating]

- Has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted you? If so, can you share how it has impacted you?
 - Probe: mental, social and economic aspects.
- Do you think that COVID-19 pandemic has impacted individuals that would want to migrate? Why or why not?
 - Probe to find out what ways these individuals have been impacted.
- What about organizations that try to recruit individuals to migrate, how has the COVID-19 pandemic affected them?
 - Probe Has this resulted in more recruitment efforts?

Is there anything else you would like to share about the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact?

[Thank you for your time and participation]