

GUIDELINES FOR THE PERSON REQUESTING SURVIVOR SPEAKERS

In consultation with survivors of prostitution and human trafficking



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Drafted By

National *freedom* Network

BACKGROUND CONTEXT:

Survivors of the system of prostitution and human trafficking are often asked to speak at events, take part in interviews and / or share their stories. These opportunities are important as they can help with further understanding of these issues and related ones, shine a light on challenges faced during and after rescue or exit from the industry, as well as provide hope to others.

However, in some instances sharing of one's experiences can be harmful, leading to damage and further setbacks in recovery, healing and reintegration. If one is not careful, these "opportunities" can also become situations where one might be triggered and re-traumatized, or which bring about further exploitation.

As such, this set of guidelines has been designed in partnership with survivors, for those requesting a survivor speaker. This could be for an awareness or fundraising event, an interview for a press release or cover story, or for research purposes. This document aims to offer some guiding questions and considerations to assist you in making decisions and an offer that considers above all, the survivor and their best interests.



GUIDING CONSIDERATIONS FOR REQUESTORS OF SURVIVOR SPEAKERS

SECTION 1: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS:

While everyone is different, global best practice states that a survivor should not be approached for any kind of public speaking engagement unless they have been out of their situation for at least two years and have been through a healing and restorative journey with professional help.

The survivor needs to feel strong enough to stand up and speak / share their story with others; they need to be aware of things that might trigger them; and to be ready to face the reactions of the audience.

Allow the survivor opportunity to present any limitations or Terms and Conditions they may have, for example showing their face or using their full real name may not be safe for them to do.



SECTION 2: PERSONAL CONSIDERATIONS:



Motivation

What is your motivation for requesting a survivor to speak or share their story, and does it align with the survivor's motivation?

Survivor's advice: Consider what your purpose for the request is: why the survivor's story matters and what difference it will make. Are you using the opportunity for entertainment, emotional benefit or for raising awareness and advocacy?

Consider further whether you are looking for a story or actively want to make a change by allowing the survivor to dictate what should be shared with the world.



Knowledge

Do you as the organiser and/or facilitator have a basic understanding of Human Trafficking or will the event perpetuate a false narrative of the crime?

Survivor's advice: When planning to create awareness around Human Trafficking, it is important that you understand what the basic elements of Human Trafficking are (Act, Means, Purpose).

SECTION 3: SURVIVOR CONSIDERATIONS:



Purpose

Ensure that you provide as much information as possible to the survivor, around the purpose of the meeting / event.

Survivor's advice: It is always helpful for a specific topic or guiding brief to be given to a survivor.



Emotional

Has the survivor been out of their situation for at least two years, and have they been through a healing and restorative journey with professional help that ensures they feel strong enough to stand up and speak or share their story with others?

If possible, listen to the survivor's story before exposing them to an audience to determine if they are emotionally ready for it.



Psycho-social support

Clarify whether the survivor has a support structure in place, and whether they require someone with whom to debrief before, during or after the event. You might need to source this support person or accommodate an extra “safety and/or support” person to accompany the survivor.



Financial

Will the survivor be fairly compensated for their time and intellectual property? Have all their costs and expenses been considered? Some examples could include transport to and from the airport; accommodation; data costs if it is a virtual event; a voucher or some cash if they need to buy food at an expensive restaurant etc.



Safety

The survivor’s safety is of utmost importance, and consideration needs to be given should the survivor feel the need to be protected. If so, do they have your full support as the organiser of the event? Find out what the survivor requires in order to feel safe and then consider whether or not you are able to meet their requests.



Motivational

If possible, try to ascertain the reason behind why the survivor is willing to tell their story – is it for financial gain, to express their own hurt, to gain sympathy or for awareness and educational purposes?



Opportunity

When presenting an opportunity, always know that it is perfectly within reason for the survivor to ask as many questions as they feel are necessary in order to gain understanding of the full scope and context of the opportunity.

Survivor's advice: Provide the survivor with guiding questions prior to the meeting or event and screen questions during the event by allowing attendees to write questions down instead of directly confronting the survivor. This way the survivor can select the questions they are comfortable answering.





Setting

Ensure that you provide as much information as possible to the survivor around the setting and environment that they can expect.

Be clear on whether the session will be recorded and / or aired, and on which platforms, as this may influence the survivor's decision as to whether or not they will accept the opportunity.

Ensure that the survivor understands who will be present and will hear their story, as this will affect their preparation, what they communicate and the way in which they will communicate.

If someone is going to be guiding the session – for example in the case of a panel discussion or Question & Answer (Q&A) session – is this facilitator someone who has worked with survivors before, or are they trauma informed and able to ask questions in a sensitive manner? Are they able to see the value of educating the audience over and above simply having the survivor share parts of their own experiences?

Survivor's advice: Briefing the survivor in terms of set up and what to expect is so important.



Audience

Ensure that you as the organiser / facilitator are careful when deciding upon an audience and be transparent with the survivor on the type of audience they can expect. It should be considered who the audience will mainly consist of as this will determine how the survivor will deliver their story and what aspects will rather be withheld or disclosed. Find out what group size and gender mix the survivor will be comfortable with.



SECTION 4: LEGAL AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS:



Identity

Ensure that you understand the legal and ethical conditions surrounding the privacy and identity of a survivor when deciding who you want to invite.



Sub Judice

A survivor involved in a pending or ongoing court case may not be invited to an event, in the interest of justice and to protect the survivor's identity.

SECTION 5: OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT



Terminology

Be mindful of the language and terminology you or the facilitator use. It could be helpful to ask the survivor what they might prefer: how they would like to be introduced and referred to, for example. Another aspect to consider is whether the survivor might require a translator.

If the event you are organising promotes work against Human Trafficking, please ensure that the organiser and / or interviewer / facilitator has at least a basic understanding of the elements and definitions; you do not want to be perpetuating myths, misconceptions and confusion around an already complex issue.



Discernment

If the opportunity is one where a facilitator will be engaging with the survivor, for example in a panel discussion or Q&A setting, ensure that this person can be mindful of how they engage with the survivor. They need to note their body language, non-verbal communication and tone of voice.

Survivor's advice: **Be mindful of whether the survivor wants to continue or perhaps needs to stop for a break.**



Structure & Timing

Ensure the survivor is fully aware of the structure of the opportunity – for example whether they are the sole guest speaker or will be sharing the platform with others. It is always a good idea to share the agenda or programme of the day, with the survivor, well in advance.

Be clear in how much time the survivor will have available, should time limit be an issue.

If you are planning a Q&A session afterwards, ensure that the survivor is comfortable with this – it can be daunting if it's not expected and they haven't had time to prepare for it. Also be flexible in terms of how this session might run, for example taking a short break after the talk so that people can submit questions, and the survivor can then choose a few that they are comfortable answering.



Content

Clarify what the survivor is being expected to share so that they can go in feeling confident and prepared. Remember though that they also have the right to determine what they are comfortable with sharing, and how much they are willing to share. Do not pressure the survivor into providing details that they are uncomfortable with sharing; and be respectful if the survivor at any point indicates or seems to feel that they are uncomfortable answering a specific question.

A brief or some guiding questions from you as the organiser can assist with preparation and shaping of what the survivor will be sharing.

Survivor's advice: **Do not expect the survivor to compromise on their faith or end story; if they cannot tell the truth then don't ask them to share their story.**

SECTION 6: SPECIFIC RESOURCES:

FOR RESEARCHERS:

There are specific ethical clearance requirements for researchers wishing to access victims and survivors. These are in place to protect participants and ascertain whether the research project meets minimum ethical requirements as stipulated by the [WMA Declaration of Helsinki](#), the [Belmont Report](#) and the [Singapore Statement on Research Integrity](#).

FOR JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA CONTACTS:

There are specific resources available for journalists and other media personnel, with regards to interviewing survivors of sexual violence and reporting on human trafficking.

- [Media Best Practices](#) and [Media Reporting on Human Trafficking](#), - US JTIP Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons.
- [Ethical Storytelling](#)
- [10 Do's and Don'ts on how to Interview Sexualized Violence Survivors](#) - Women's Media Centre



SECTION 7: RECEIVING YOUR ANSWER:

DECLINING YOUR OFFER:

It is perfectly acceptable for the person to turn down the opportunity, should they feel hesitant, uncomfortable or just not in the right frame of mind for it at the time. No one should be pushed or pressurized into sharing their story, and survivors are not obligated to continue communicating with you as the requester once they have clearly informed you of their decision not to accept.

The person may decide that it's just not the right time for them – for any reason – but they might be open to considering it at a later date. Be flexible if you are able.

ACCEPTING AN OPPORTUNITY:

If the person has decided to take the opportunity you have offered, ensure that there is a written agreement in place, and that both you and they are comfortable with everything stated in it before signing. This agreement should also stipulate whether there are any contractual boundaries or exclusivity rights that either party needs to be aware of.