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***The United States Agency for International Development and research partners releases the first report from a larger authoritative research study on the scope and nature of human trafficking in South Africa.***

**Pretoria, South Africa** – LASER PULSE, Purdue University, the School of Human and Community Development at the University of the Witwatersrand and Khulisa Management Services, supported by the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), today released the first report from a comprehensive multi-year, multi-sectoral, and multidisciplinary Trafficking in Person (TIP) study that was conducted between 2020 and 2022. The study aims to provide evidence on the nature and magnitude of TIP in South Africa to policy makers in the Government of South Africa (GOSA) and to development partners, implementing partners and service providers. The evidence of the comprehensive study (*scheduled for release in March*) will elevate data into a more prominent role in public-policy debates and amplify South African institutional capacity to participate in and lead this process through partnership with US institutions and engagement with the GOSA.

The report released today, entitled ['Research Into The Nature And Scope Of Trafficking In Persons In South Africa: Prevalence Insights from the Criminal Justice System and Relevant Reporting Mechanisms'](#), documented available data and/or lived experiences related to incidents of human trafficking in South Africa that overlapped, connected with, and/or was reported to any aspect of South Africa's Criminal Justice System. Data sources include a quantitative analysis of media reports; reporting by three national human trafficking Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) who have a presence on the provincial and national human trafficking task teams, and one national NGO that works in the area of missing persons; available statistics by the South African Police Service for the period 2007 to 2021; ongoing human trafficking prosecutions in South African courts during 2021, and successfully prosecuted human trafficking cases in South African courts for the period 2007 to 2022.

Findings from the research confirm that sex trafficking continues to make up most of both reported cases and prosecutions of TIP, while labour trafficking prosecutions, similar to trends observed internationally, are severely lacking. Victims and perpetrators of human trafficking are significantly undercounted in both research and practice. Extreme violence are meted out by traffickers while places where exploitation occurs are embedded in communities and operate for protracted periods without any meaningful law enforcement intervention. Civil society reports and evidence in several successful prosecutions confirmed indifference, corruption and complicity by law enforcement officials. The prominence of consumer-level demand for commercial sex was evident in potentially thousands of sex buyers who "used the services" of adult and child victims of sex trafficking. Despite adequate laws to address this dimension of TIP in South Africa, sex buyers continue to exploit women and children with impunity. Several adult websites, some advertised on public roadways, are repeatedly implicated in ongoing and successful sex trafficking prosecutions, yet none have been prosecuted. Victims and perpetrators of human trafficking are nationals from several countries. The failure to employ the legally binding definition of the Prevention and

Combatting of Trafficking in Persons (PACOTIP) Act in several research studies, contributed to the undercounting of trafficking victims.

Despite significant challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the lack of an official centralized human trafficking database, and consistent challenges with engagement at some levels, the research was able to produce several important recommendations which the government should prioritize to address this growing crime. Recommendations for immediate attention include establishing the integrated information system to provide evidence on TIP prevalence, facilitate the effective monitoring and implementation of the PACOTIP Act, as detailed in Section 41(1)(b); employ Section 7 of the PACOTIP Act and Sections 11 and 17 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 32 of 2007 as legislative interventions to discourage the demand that fosters trafficking for sexual exploitation; fully implement and comply with South African Police Service National Instruction 4 of 2015 related to detectives at police stations, data integrity, and the capturing of TIP and related matters on the SAPS crime administration system; create dedicated capacity for proactive, intelligence-led, and court-driven investigations alongside financial investigations, asset forfeiture, and a counter-corruption strategy; prioritise the legally binding TIP definition and 'abuse of vulnerability' as defined in the PACOTIP Act in research and policy discussions related to prostitution and pornography, gender-based violence, child abuse, labour violations, and irregular migration, as a means to correctly identify and prevent the undercounting of TIP cases among these phenomena and; recognise the National Human Trafficking Hotline as an official TIP reporting mechanism that supplements other official reporting structures in South Africa.

Findings and recommendations were presented to the GOSA during several online briefings in 2022, and research reports along with all research tools will be formally presented to the government for implementation.

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