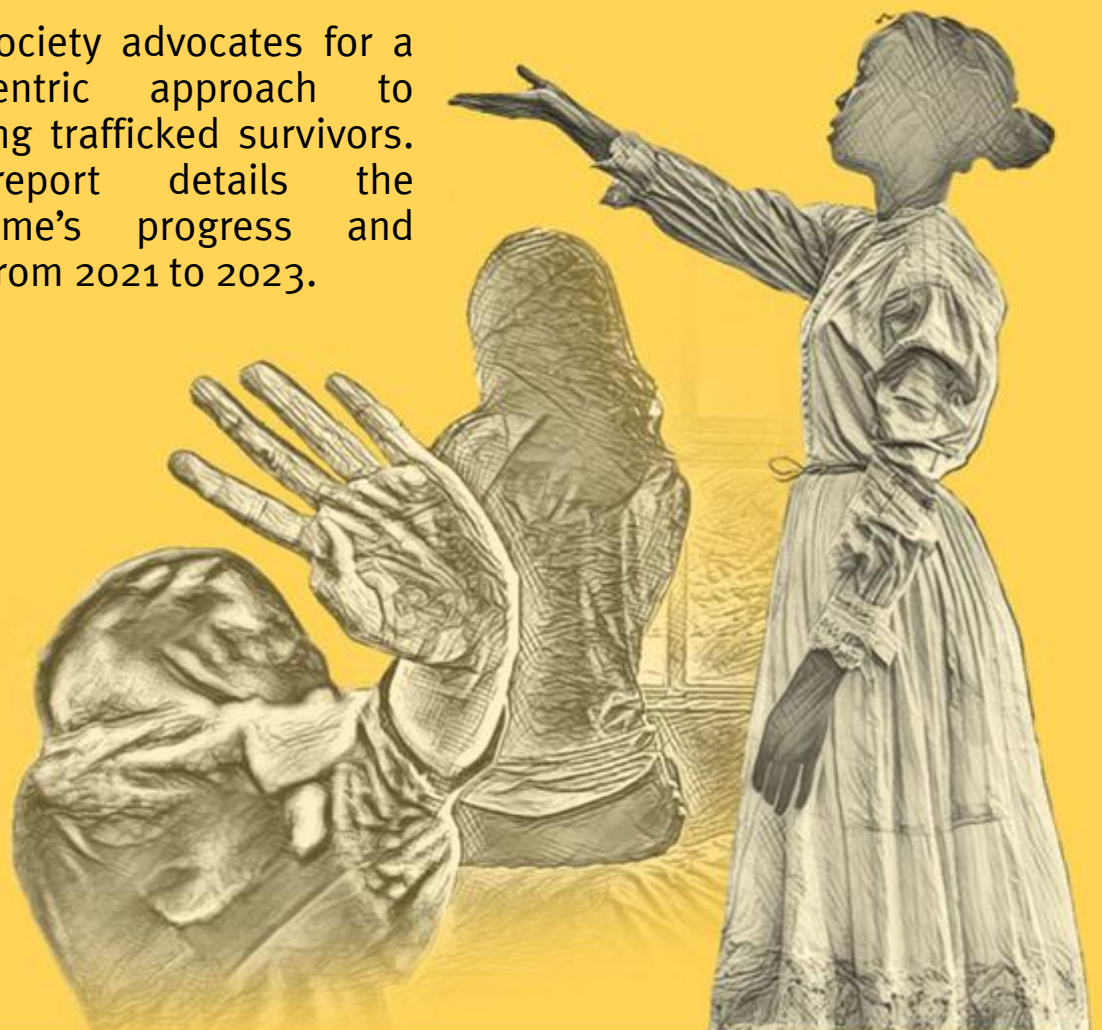


Protecting Trafficked Survivors

Report 2021-2023

Anti-trafficking In Persons

SUKA Society advocates for a victim-centric approach to protecting trafficked survivors. This report details the programme's progress and impact from 2021 to 2023.



PUTTING CHILDREN FIRST

REPORT OVERVIEW

Content	Page Number
Programme Overview	3-4
Our Impact	5
Executive Summary	6
Therapeutic Activities	7-9
Monitoring & Evaluation of Therapeutic Activities	10-11
Survivor Support And Assistance	12-14
Safe Returns Programme	15
Capacity Building & Advocacy	16-17
Testimonials	18-19
Programme Expenses	20

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Background

Human trafficking is ranked third among international crimes, after drug trafficking and the illegal arms trade. Unlike drugs and weapons, trafficked humans are treated as commodities—bought, sold, and resold multiple times.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), an estimated 27.6 million people are in situations of forced labour globally. Of this, 17.3 million are exploited in the private sector, 6.3 million are subjected to forced commercial sexual exploitation, and 3.9 million are under state-imposed forced labour.¹ These alarming figures highlight the urgent need for comprehensive action to combat human trafficking and forced labour worldwide.



Women and girls account for about 39.4% of all forced labour cases, including 4.9 million in sexual exploitation and 6 million in other sectors like agriculture, domestic work, and manufacturing.²



Children are also disproportionately affected, with over 3 million trapped in forced labour—1.7 million in commercial sexual exploitation and 1.3 million in other forced labour situations.²

The Situation in Malaysia

In 2023, Malaysia was upgraded to the Tier 2 Watch List in the U.S. State Department's Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, indicating that while the country does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, it is making significant efforts to do so.³ Despite this progress, Malaysia remains a destination, source, and transit country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking.

The government confirmed 180 trafficking victims among the 510 potential victims identified in 2023 alone. Of the 180 confirmed victims, 36 were exploited in sex trafficking and 144 were exploited in forced labour, underscoring the ongoing challenges Malaysia faces in combating human trafficking.⁴ While advancements have been made, sustained and enhanced efforts are crucial to effectively address and eradicate this dire issue.

As a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Malaysia has a duty to protect vulnerable women and children from trafficking and exploitation. Victims often endure severe physical and emotional trauma, including depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, necessitating comprehensive care, counselling, and therapy for recovery.

In addition to prevention and prosecution efforts, survivors of trafficking must be made aware of their rights and given proper assistance, including access to legal aid, safe shelter, healthcare, and psychosocial support. Educating survivors empowers them to seek justice and protects them from further harm. All support must be trauma-informed and uphold their dignity and recovery.

¹ International Labour Organization (2022). *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage*.

² U.S. Department of Labor (2023). *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor*.

³ Malay Mail. (2023). *Trafficking in Persons: Malaysia remains in Tier 2 Watch List in 2023 Report*.

⁴ U.S. State Department. (2023). *2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Malaysia*.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Programme Objectives

SUKA Society works alongside government protection shelters under the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (KPWKM) to ensure a victim-centric approach in supporting survivors of human trafficking.

Our Key Focus Areas:



Therapeutic Support

Providing trauma-informed care through art and play therapy, counselling, and confidence-building activities like yoga, martial arts, and creative expression.



Skills Development

Empowering survivors with practical skills such as sewing, cooking, and craftwork to support future employment.



Training for Shelter Officers

Equipping officers with the skills to communicate, empathise, and support survivors effectively.



Education for Children

Offering hands-on learning in English, Math, and Science to children at the Rembau shelter.



Safe Returns Programme

Facilitating the safe reunification of trafficked children with their families and ensuring follow-up care to prevent re-trafficking.



Survivor Support and Assistance

Providing specialised support in helping victims navigate both their trauma recovery and the criminal justice system.



Social Report and Case Assessment

Supporting victim protection, including case assessments, social reports, and access to essential services



Advocacy and Engagement

Pushing for policy improvements and better care standards through active participation in government, UN and NGO-related consultations and workshops.

Here is a snapshot of our impact from our Anti-Trafficking in Persons (ATIP) Project 2021 – 2023

518



Therapeutic sessions conducted for women, men and girl trafficked survivors

5



Protection shelters for children, women and men benefitting from our programme



17

Nationalities of survivors, including Malaysians, benefitting from therapeutic sessions

99.3%



Overall positive response from women survivors to both therapeutic programmes and well-being improved



89.4%

Overall positive response from children survivors to both therapeutic programmes and well-being improved

41



Cases assisted as a Victim Assistance Specialist (VAS)



113

Cases assessed and assisted as a Protection Officer (PO)



26

Survivors provided safe passage and returns to home country

7

Rounds of capacity building training for shelter officers and stakeholders



3



Rounds of International Women's Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women events

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Between 2021 and 2022, SUKA Society responded to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic by swiftly transitioning to virtual platforms for therapeutic sessions, training programs, and regional engagements.

This shift not only ensured the continuity of our services but also enabled us to remain actively involved in national anti-trafficking efforts, including contributing to the NAPTIP report and participating in the ATIP National Conference. We were also actively involved in the Joining Hands Against Modern Slavery (JHAMS) coalition and other capacity-building initiatives, reflecting our strong commitment to collaboration and shared learning.

As restrictions eased in 2022, we resumed in-person therapeutic sessions at protection shelters. At the same time, we undertook two key roles in our work—offering survivor assistance as Victim Assistance Specialists and conducting case assessments as Protection Officers. These efforts helped ensure that survivors were supported throughout their justice process as well.



In 2023, we expanded our reach by providing therapeutic services across five government protection shelters in KL, Rembau, Melaka, and Johor, emphasizing the importance of trauma-informed care for all victims of trafficking.

In addition, through our training of government protection officers, advocacy initiatives, corporate partnerships, and media engagement, we further contributed to raising awareness and fostering a deeper understanding of the needs and challenges faced by trafficking survivors.



THERAPEUTIC ACTIVITIES

SUKA Society has designed and implemented several different therapeutic activities tailored for trafficked survivors to help them heal, foster emotional expression and creativity, process trauma in a safe space and develop empowering skills. These therapeutic activities also ensure the survivors' physical health and mental well-being are supported throughout their recovery journey.

The therapeutic activities are divided into three subcategories: **Healing and Therapy**, **Health and Emotional Wellness**, and **Resident Relations Programme**. Within each subcategory, various activities are conducted to achieve the desired therapeutic effects for the survivors.

Program Categories	Year			Total
	2021	2022	2023	
Healing and Therapy	3	39	106	148
Health and Emotional Wellness	10	20	57	87
Residence Relation Programs	5	21	27	53

Healing and Therapy

We frequently conduct Art Therapy as an activity for Healing and Therapy. It focuses on helping survivors cope with pain and trauma by allowing them to interpret and express their emotions and thoughts. Art Therapy usually involves the use of basic techniques such as drawing, painting, collage, colouring, or sculpting, enabling people to express themselves artistically and facilitating emotional healing.



I imagine my mother with that sweet, warm smile of hers. I see my very familiar and comfortable home, the smell of fresh air and its colours - I started sobbing. I miss my mother and home so much. I was asked to process these feelings to put them in colours and have them coloured on the papers of Mandala Art. Colouring in circles really helped me tune in to these feelings and to have it expressed in a healthy way as I need to focus to colour within the lines of the circle. The calming background music being played helps a lot as well. I always wait for my teacher to come and do the session with me. I feel happy.

Participant from the girls' shelter in Rembau, NS



Mandala Art



THERAPEUTIC ACTIVITIES

Health and Emotional Wellness

Activities focusing on Health and Emotional Wellness offer survivors therapeutic benefits through physical activity, yoga, singing, dancing, music, and meditation. These pursuits provide survivors with a peaceful or positive way to express themselves. We also hold workshops on personal grooming and health-related topics to highlight the significance of their physical and mental well-being. We host medical awareness events and screenings on a regular basis to inform survivors and encourage a healthy lifestyle.



Survivors playing with the keyboard during a music session.



Volunteers guiding survivors through yoga, meditation and aerobic sessions.



Combing a survivors' hair during a personal grooming workshop.



“

I joined SUKA Society to hold educational activities at the government protection shelter for survivors of human trafficking. I began with music percussion lessons, singing songs and exploring different forms of music at the Malacca Protection Shelter. We played bongos, cajons, shakers, and tambourines, and shared stories of their experiences. Although my time there was short, the experience was deeply enriching, and I gained a deep respect for those working at the protection shelter. I'm grateful to SUKA Society and would encourage others to consider volunteering with them too.

”

Esmond Khoo

THERAPEUTIC ACTIVITIES

Resident Relations Programme

Activities within the Resident Relations Programme subcategories include sports, events, film screenings, and festival celebrations. The goal of these entertaining activities is to assist survivors in developing rapport and healthy connections with one another in their protective shelters. We also create activities that encourage peaceful coexistence and foster teamwork in their daily lives.



Survivors working together to create a kolam for Deepavali.



Survivors listening to an awareness talk held during International Women's Day.



Volunteer teaching survivors Joget Melayu during the Hari Raya celebration.

Additionally, cooking, baking, jewellery making, sewing, and quilting are some of the skills development programmes that help survivors integrate to their communities when they return to their native countries. Survivors find these abilities highly useful, and they can provide revenue prospects for those who want to start their own home-based business.



Survivors enjoying the Indonesian dish, Soto which they prepared.



A survivor using a sewing machine to work on a project.



Survivors working together to bake pineapple cakes during a cooking class.

MONITORING & EVALUATION OF THERAPEUTIC ACTIVITIES

As an organization, it is crucial that the work we do produces the desired improvements and change. To ensure that the support we provide translates into tangible improvements in the lives of survivors, we have integrated monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices into our therapeutic services.

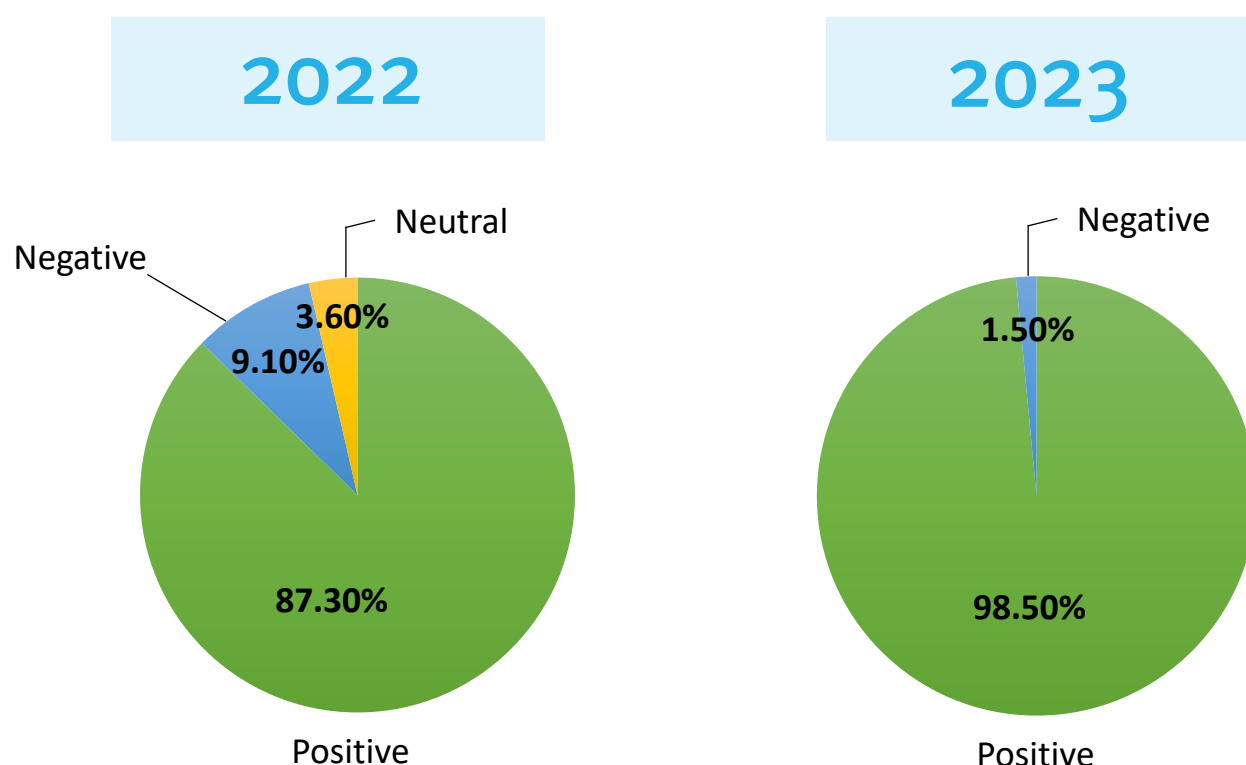
One key method of gathering feedback is through exit interviews conducted with survivors residing at our protection shelters. These interviews serve to assess the effectiveness of our services, identify areas for improvement, and understand the emotional and psychological well-being of those we serve.

It is important to note that no exit interviews were conducted in 2021 due to the limitations posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, in the years that followed, we resumed this vital process and collected data that provides insight into how our interventions have been received.

We conducted exit interviews with 3 Indonesians and 2 Malaysian survivors from the shelter in Rembau in 2022. As for 2023, a total of 48 survivors were interviewed consisting of respondents from Indonesia, Tanzania, Uganda, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines.

The following section presents a comparative analysis of the data collected from exit interviews in 2022 and 2023. This data highlights survivor feedback, with a particular focus on the therapeutic outcomes of our Anti-Trafficking in Persons (ATIP) activities.

Overall Average Percentage of Responses from Exit Interviews



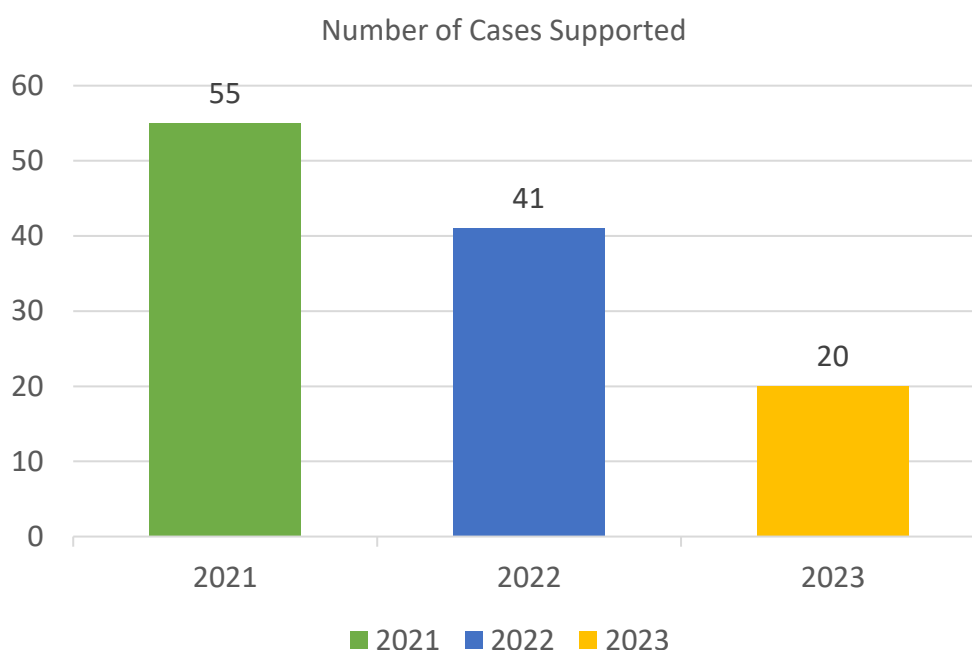
MONITORING & EVALUATION OF THERAPEUTIC ACTIVITIES

Positive Feedback	<p>2022 Findings: In 2022, the majority of survivors provided an average of 87.3% positive feedback regarding the therapeutic activities conducted by SUKA Society. Respondents highlighted the effectiveness of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons (ATIP) activities in offering temporary therapeutic relief, reducing anxiety and stress, and promoting a positive personal state.</p> <p>2023 Findings: The average percentage of positive feedback increased dramatically in 2023, with 98.5% of respondents reporting favorable outcomes. Survivors expressed high satisfaction with the ATIP programme, indicating that the activities had a positive impact on their well-being, with a marked reduction in stress and anxiety. This positive feedback was consistent across both shelters.</p>
Negative Feedback	<p>2022 Findings: An average percentage of 9.1% negative feedback from the survivors reflected their dissatisfaction with the therapeutic activities conducted by SUKA Society. Some noted disliking the activities held, however, others shared external factors affecting their mood, such as being unhappy with delays in their cases, as well as being homesick. The feedback highlighted a clear need for enhanced mental health support programs to address the emotional well-being of survivors more effectively.</p> <p>2023 Findings: Negative feedback decreased exponentially in 2023 to 1.5% of respondents still expressing unhappiness after the conducted therapeutic activities. Several shared that the delay in their court hearings for their individual legal cases affected their emotional wellbeing, resulting in continued anxiety and stress.</p>
Neutral Feedback	<p>2022 Findings: A portion of survivors expressed an average of 3.6% neutral feedback regarding the therapeutic activities conducted by SUKA Society. Respondents shared that their thoughts had still been preoccupied by the problems they were facing and the reasons for their circumstances, resulting in the lack of significant change in their emotional state and well-being in spite of the ongoing activities.</p> <p>2023 Findings: No neutral feedback was recorded in 2023.</p>

SOCIAL REPORT AND CASE ASSESSMENT

SUKA Society was appointed as a Protection Officer under Section 43 of the ATIPSOM Act 2007. This role has enabled SUKA Society to support victim protection, including case assessments, social reports, and access to essential services.

SUKA Society's Protection Officer managed over 116 cases between 2021 and 2023, ensuring trafficking victims receive safety and support.



As a Protection Officer, I carry the responsibility of ensuring the care, safety, and legal protection of trafficking victims. My role involves managing complex cases with attention, empathy, and diligence, despite challenges like mental health issues, language barriers, and trauma. While I can't solve all systemic problems, I take pride in advocating for survivors, ensuring they receive justice and a chance to rebuild their lives. I'm honoured to play a vital part in the ongoing fight against human trafficking.



Tharini Cecil James, Senior Program Coordinator

SOCIAL REPORT AND CASE ASSESSMENT

Q&A

To understand this role better, we spoke with Tharini Cecil, our Senior Programme Coordinator. As SUKA Society's Protection Officer and Victim Assistance Specialist, she shared insights into the challenges of protecting vulnerable individuals.

-
- **Q: What are the key responsibilities of a Protection Officer in handling cases of suspected human trafficking victims?**
 - A: Our duties encompass several critical responsibilities under the law. First, we conduct thorough investigations into individuals suspected of being trafficked, adhering to Section 43(2) which grants us control and responsibility over their care in shelters. This involves preparing necessary reports on trafficked persons as mandated by law. Additionally, we have the authority, when ordered by the Magistrate or directed by the Minister, to supervise trafficked persons and fulfill other duties specified by the Minister.
-
- **Q: What is the process for a Protection Officer when meeting with survivors of trafficking?**
 - A: Within 21 days of placement in a shelter, we are required to meet with survivors to conduct interviews strictly related to their background. This information is crucial for preparing social reports that play a significant role in court proceedings, helping to determine whether an individual is recognised as a victim of human trafficking.
-
- **Q: What role does a Protection Officer play in court proceedings regarding trafficking cases?**
 - A: During court proceedings, we provide essential support by submitting comprehensive social reports prior to the expiration of an IPO Protection Order. While we cannot make recommendations on the victim status—this is reserved for the Magistrate—we attend court as required, including escorting survivors and facilitating their understanding of legal processes under the Human Trafficking Act.
-
- **Q: How does a Protection Officer address challenges like mental health issues and language barriers among trafficking survivors?**
 - A: We collaborate closely with NGOs to provide interpreters trained in trafficking issues, ensuring effective communication. Documenting observations and preparing detailed social reports are vital to ensuring survivors receive necessary medical attention and support tailored to their needs. We also collaborate closely with investigating officers and other agencies to coordinate meetings and clarify legal processes in order to support the survivors through their journey.

SURVIVOR SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE

Overview

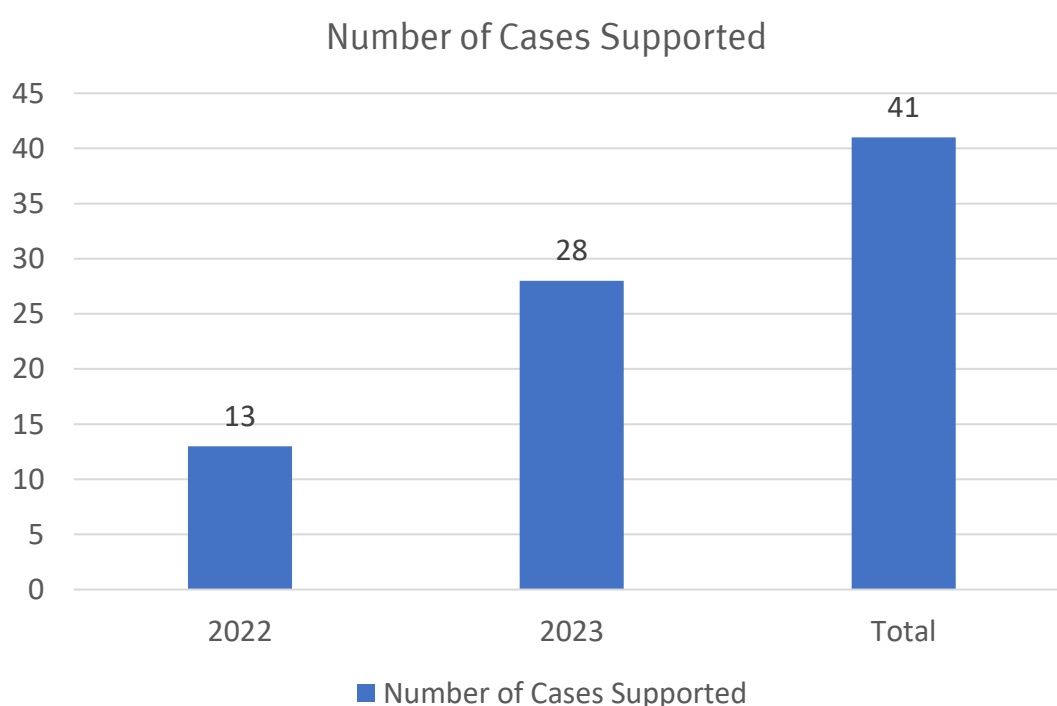
SUKA Society is also appointed as a Victim Assistance Specialist (VAS). This role has enabled SUKA Society to provide specialised support in helping victims navigate both their trauma recovery and the criminal justice system. Key responsibilities include:

- Providing urgent emotional and psychological support to victims
- Helping victims understand the legal process and what to expect
- Liaising with Case Officers to coordinate access to services such as healthcare, counselling, shelter, and legal aid
- Conducting needs assessments and acting as a bridge between victims and service providers
- Supporting victims during interviews, investigations, and court proceedings

A VAS works collaboratively with various stakeholders including law enforcement, prosecutors, social workers, NGOs, and other service providers, always advocating for the victim's best interest.

Annual Case Support Summary

Since the appointment of the VAS in 2021, SUKA Society has directly supported 41 cases involving victims of trafficking:



SAFE RETURNS PROGRAMME

Safe returns entails the repatriation and reintegration of trafficked victims with their community and ensuring they are not trafficked. Repatriation involves returning survivors to their country of origin, while reintegration ensures they can re-establish social, economic, and psychological stability.

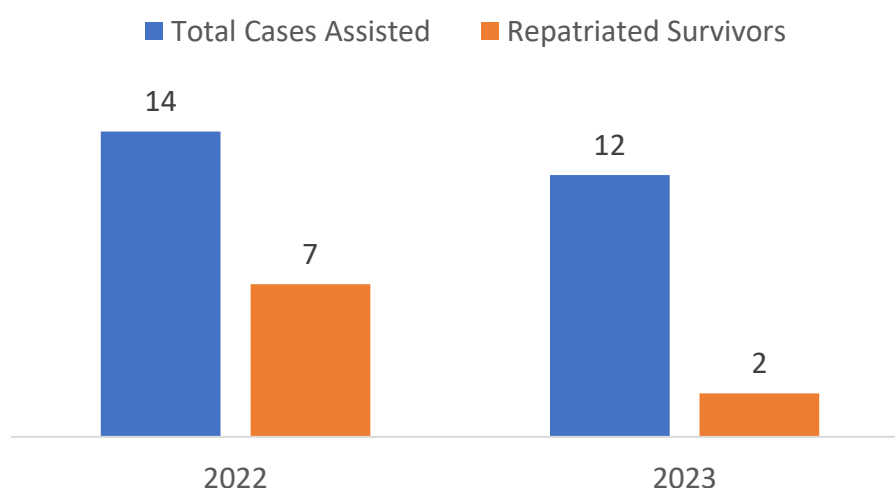
For foreign nationals, if further care is required, survivors may be placed in a safe refuge until they are ready for repatriation. For Malaysian citizens, survivors are released from protection once a Protection Order expires or is revoked.

Reintegration of survivors, whether foreign nationals or Malaysians requires comprehensive support to ensure recovery and social inclusion. SUKA Society's Support in Repatriation and Reintegration focuses on:

- **Trauma-Informed Care:** Ongoing collaboration with countries of origin to ensure survivors receive continued trauma-informed support, including medical, educational, and psychosocial care throughout the repatriation and reintegration process.
- **Information and Guidance:** Preparing survivors for return by providing clear information on factors to consider before repatriation, travel logistics, immigration procedures, and onward travel to their final destination—often requiring escorts to smaller towns or villages.
- **Service Referrals:** Supporting survivors with securing travel documents and referring them to local NGOs or services upon return, ensuring access to health, counselling, and livelihood support for sustainable reintegration.

Over the course of 2022 and 2023, SUKA Society helped with a total of 26 repatriation and reintegration cases. Of the 26 cases, nine were successfully repatriated to their respective home countries; seven Indonesian survivors in 2022, one Sri Lankan and one Indonesian survivor in 2023.

Number of Cases Supported via Repatriation & Reintegration



CAPACITY BUILDING & ADVOCACY

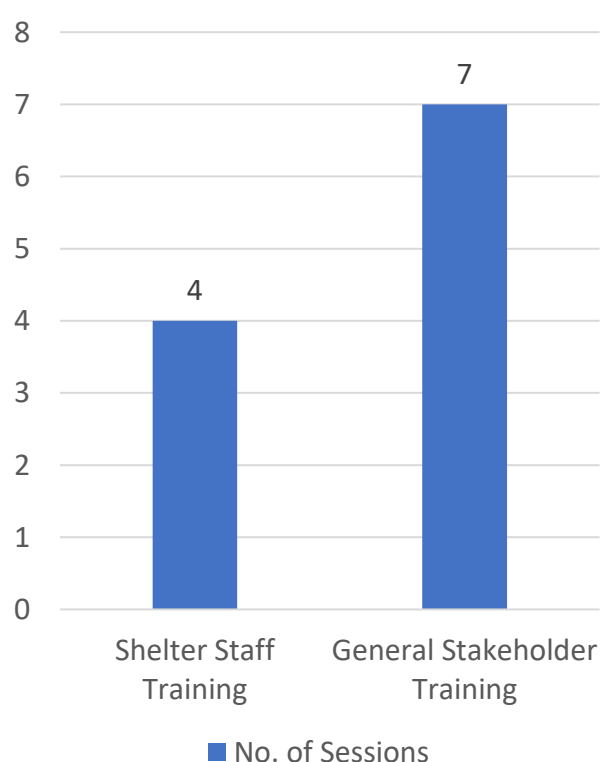
SUKA Society plays a key role in strengthening anti-trafficking efforts through targeted training, advocacy, and collaboration with key stakeholders. Through our initiatives, we aim to promote a victim-centric, trauma-informed, and rights-based approach across sectors.

Training Programmes

We conduct specialised training sessions to equip both the staff at the shelters and general stakeholders with soft and hard skills to be better caregivers to the survivors. Providing support in training shelter staff and general stakeholders is key as recovery for victims is best facilitated in their treatment towards them.

For shelter staff, training sessions such as stress and conflict management, basic helping skills and team building are held with a concentrated focus on caring for the victims at the shelters. Specialised sessions which cover topics such as victim identification, trauma-informed care and interviewing techniques are held for general stakeholders which include government protection officers, enforcement officers, NGOs, CSOs, and frontline responders.

Training Summary (2022–2023)



A training session on 'Interviewing Techniques for Trafficked Victims' for government officers

CAPACITY BUILDING & ADVOCACY

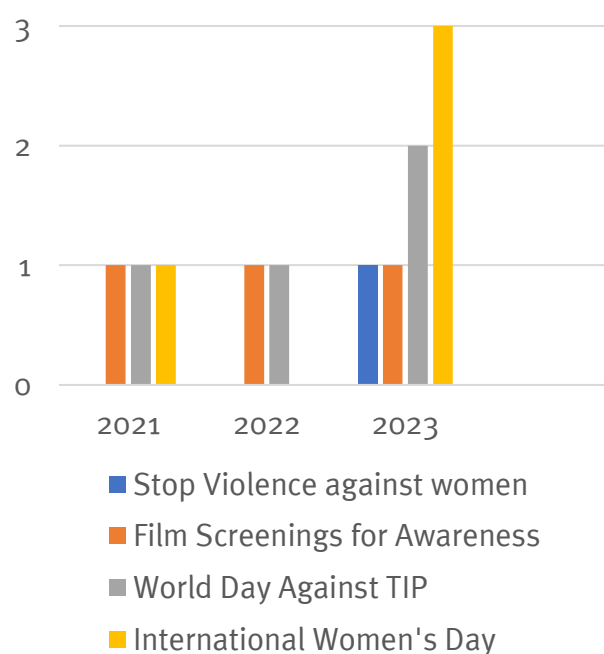
Awareness & Advocacy

SUKA Society is also committed to awareness and advocacy efforts which help support survivors and foster a more informed and responsive society.

By participating in roundtables, interviews, and speaking engagements, we raise awareness on trafficking challenges and advocate for survivor-focused responses. We have youth and community engagement efforts, delivering talks and seminars to mobilise community awareness and action against trafficking. We also collaborate with partners such as University Malaya, MOHA, MAPO, ASEAN-ACT, and the U.S. Embassy to deliver impactful training and awareness sessions.

Another important endeavour is empowering survivors to understand the issue of human trafficking and equip them to better respond to it. Our ATIP programme includes activities and campaigns such as “Stop Violence against Women”, “World Day against TIP” and film screenings to help women and children and the shelter understand what they have gone through and provide them ways to rebuild their lives after the abuse they suffered.

Empowering Events at Women & Children's Shelters



“

It's been an honour partnering with the programme to conduct workshops for staff and residents at the protection shelters. The sessions helped raise mental and emotional awareness, allowing participants to uncover underlying struggles and explore healthier ways to respond to stress. It was also a meaningful journey of growth for me as I learned alongside them.”

”

Alex Looi, Head of Training & Consultancy



TESTIMONIALS

Volunteer Expression



“

Over the past year, volunteering with SUKA Society has brought immense fulfilment and contentment to Shirlyn. Through interactions with survivors of human trafficking, Shirlyn has come to understand that everyone has the potential to effect positive change. Volunteering has expanded her perspective and deepened her sense of purpose in life. With guidance from the project coordinator, she has gained insight into trafficking prevalence in Malaysia and protection policies at the government protection shelters.

Shirlyn Choong

”

“

Volunteering with SUKA Society began as a semester break but has become a long-term commitment, teaching patience, empathy, and gratitude in Alia's life. It has introduced her to like-minded individuals and provided support and inspiration in conducting sessions at the government protection shelters for the survivors of human trafficking.

Alya Bahirah binti Izani



”

TESTIMONIALS

Volunteer Expression



“

Volunteering has given me personal growth, community support, and a deep sense of accomplishment. I joined SUKA Society in June 2023 as a long-term volunteer with the ATIP Project, supporting anti-trafficking efforts. The journey has been truly transformative. I found purpose, built meaningful connections, and was able to contribute to positive change in the lives of survivors of human trafficking. I believe that by lending a helping hand, each of us can make a difference and leave a lasting impact on the world. This experience constantly reminds me that we all have the power to change someone's life.

Nor Afizah Othman

”



Volunteers brought festive cheer to the survivors at the shelter

PROGRAMME EXPENSES

Anti-Trafficking In Persons (2021 - 2023)

No	Details	Total (MYR)
01.	Personnel Cost	322,892.00
02.	EPF	66,537.00
03.	Casual Wages	62,739.00
04.	Therapeutic Services	11,668.00
05.	SOCSSO & EIS	3,416.00
06.	Others	7,565.00
07.	Welfare	427.00
Total Yearly Programme Cost		475,244.00

How Can You Help?

There are several ways you can support our ATIP programme and make a difference in the lives of human trafficking survivors:

- Volunteer in our weekly therapeutic activity sessions.
- Donate materials for workshops, arts & crafts, or festive celebrations.
- Organise fundraising or awareness events to advocate for survivor protection and care.

Acknowledgements

SUKA Society would like to acknowledge and express our appreciation to the Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Anti-Smuggling of Migrants Council (MAPO), Kementerian Pembangunan Wanita, Keluarga dan Masyarakat (KPWKM), US Embassy, and all volunteers for their assistance, partnership and support in our efforts in combating human trafficking in Malaysia.

Contact Details

For more information regarding the ATIP programme, please contact us at enquiry@sukasociety.org.

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