



DevelopmentAid Dialogues

Episode 13: Limited Funding, Resource Gaps, and Systemic Biases Can't Stop Positive Outcomes for Human Trafficking Survivors | A Conversation with Angie Staley | DevelopmentAid Dialogues

Procurement notices, funding and grants opportunities, lists of potential partners, insights into market trends, databases of development professionals, webinars, latest news, and much more. Visit developmentaid.org today, and see how we can help you achieve your sustainable development goals together. Hello, everyone, and welcome to DevelopmentAid Dialogues.

Hisham Allam

I'm your host, Hisham Allam. Today, we have the privilege of speaking with Angie Staley, a leading expert in anti-human trafficking and transitional housing. Angie brings a wealth of experience in supporting survivors with a strong focus on providing safe and secure housing options essential for recovery and independence. Hello, Angie, how are you doing?

Angie Staley

I'm good, Hisham. Thank you for asking. How are you?

Hisham Allam

I'm fine. Angie, could you shed light on the most common systematic failures that survivors encounter when they seek help, especially in health care, legal aid, and housing?

Angie Staley

It's a big question, and it's complex, right? Because every state's different, every location is different, but I think overall census is the availability of funds to provide the necessary housing, to get that initial step for safety, to have a safe house, stability to start working on their life moving forward. It's, in my experience, as I can speak from, is there's just so many variables regarding availability of funds, but also resources for not only just housing, transportation,



DevelopmentAid Dialogues

food, and medical. And when an individual comes into a system or a place as seeking help, the difficulties lie with the availability of people, resources, and the economy that we live in, especially now these days. The quality of support staff, availability for therapeutic services, transportation, consistency or lack of in the medical system. Not only that, there's prejudice, injustice that threads throughout the system.

Unfortunately, people who work in the system, because there's a lot of amazing organizations, right? There's, you know, you've got your paid staff, advocates, the therapist, program managers, you've also got law enforcement, but the consistency or lack thereof lies within people themselves, either not having the resources to provide to the individuals or just not enough people to be available to support the individuals, if that makes sense.

Hisham Allam

That looks like there are a lot of barriers. How do these affect not just the immediate safety of survivors, but also their long-term mental health and overall well-being?

Angie Staley

Boy, that's a great question, and that could be a discussion for days that we're going to talk to. So, in my experience, I've worked in a safe house for survivors, teenagers 12 to 18, roughly. Also, as a victim advocate, there were situations, I worked at the Greeley Police Department for six years. But then also, when I moved to Florida in the last probably three, what, two years, I worked for Goodwill Pathways Forward, which was a program to provide life coaching, advocacy, resources, and we worked hand-in-hand with United Way, their anti-trafficking transitional housing program.

So, I worked on both sides of those programs. I guess to keep it simple, if you call it simple, is each individual comes with a different story, right? Each person is a Waukee story with various backgrounds, whether they were homeless, escaping, which can mean that they've come from one state and hijacked all the way across to the United States to a different location. You've got familial trafficking, and what that means is their own parents or cousins or uncles are the perpetrators. So, those are just several examples, and that's sex trafficking being pimped out, but there's also drug trafficking. And a lot of times, those go hand-in-hand, and you really have to identify each individual and the needs that they have. And not everybody needs housing.



DevelopmentAid Dialogues

Not everybody needs transportation. Not everybody needs medical. You have to identify what their needs are, and safety is a huge barrier because when you start breaking down the safety aspect of it, somebody looking for a home or a shelter or somewhere away from where they've been in the game, they've been running away from family, or there's so many various ways that somebody comes to us as a point of entry, right, to move forward in their life.

Hisham Allam

How can people come to you? How do they reach you?

Angie Staley

There's, yeah, there's multiple ways for that. So, when I was working for United Way, we would get calls from individuals because they were on the street and they were looking for help, and those were less infrequent.

What seemed to be more frequent is from law enforcement calling to see if we had funds to provide an individual either on the run, escaping a situation, or just homeless, trying to get away and start their life. We would provide up to seven days of hotel stay, and middle of the night, during the week, it didn't matter. We would work with law enforcement, different NGOs. We get calls from advocates looking for a place. If we had availability of funds to provide temporary housing, which we would call it, which would be a hotel stay, and so that they could have somewhere safe to be for a short time.

Hisham Allam

And what often? What's often?

Angie Staley

Well, that becomes a lot of ways that can go. We provided the hotel stay that temporary. We also provided up to a year of case management. We would pay for rent for an individual who was a survivor of human trafficking and would be able to demonstrate that they were ready for



DevelopmentAid Dialogues

that next level of independence. We would get them into a rental property. They would be provided case management, life coaching, and then we would work with them for a year, really helping them to rebuild their lives with them, not for them, you know, really discussing their needs. Some people, they needed more visits, phone calls, advocacy throughout that time, and sometimes they need a lot of medical issues due to their circumstances or looking for a job, trying to get certifications so they can attain a job.

Transportation, it's a real problem. And so we would work with each individual specifically to their needs. And it's not about enabling, it's about supporting where they're at. And we have to consider the trauma that they've experienced in life. It's not focusing on it, but it's finding ways with them to move forward, you know, in the day-to-day routines and rebuilding their life and that getting a job, being gainfully employed, going to school, maybe some trainings. Maybe they're trying to get their driver's license. And there's barriers there too, because if they have a record, you know, if they've been caught up or they've served time in jail for prostitution or felonies or something, we're looking at other aspects of that.

And that's, you know, we had opportunity to work with some really great advocates and lawyers who provided free legal.

Hisham Allam

You are doing the same process, whatever the case or the survivor is, an individual or a family?

Angie Staley

It would be specifically the individual. And if they had children, they were, as long as they were with a mom, they would be able to get into the rental property. They could have a child, their children with them, you know, and of course, then there's another aspect of the family where you're supporting child care. Do they need to get signed up for school or their medical care? And sometimes I spent time with the client and the children, just getting to know them and finding out what their needs are.

It's really that one-on-one time to evaluate what their needs are. And it's very complicated and discouraging for a lot of them.



DevelopmentAid Dialogues

Hisham Allam

Angie, can you share some strategies that organizations can adopt to collaborate more effectively and avoid duplicating services, ensuring that survivors receive comprehensive support?

Angie Staley

Good question. So when I was working in the programs, I was on a couple task force, the boards called Tampa Bay Task Force. I also was on the United Way Task Force board. And then I would attend other meetings and working within the community with advocates, law enforcement programs.

And it really takes a lot of work. The community in itself, not everybody's aware of what's going on, but it's really taking those leadership roles to hold meetings to include the community. And then also behavioral centers, United Way, law enforcement, other NGOs, other agencies that provide housing, residential housing for survivors. We've not just worked, we have meetings and there's communication, there's dialogue, talking about the scarcity, talking about where the needs are, what needs to happen and who's going to do what, if that makes sense. So to give you a new example, I worked with Goodwill. One thing they're really good at was not duplicating services. So what was offered the clients in that program I built up with our career navigator is we offered the life coach, but we also offer case management services, but in that case management service.

Hisham Allam

What do you mean by clients?

Angie Staley

Clients are human trafficking survivors. It's really being cognizant of their situation and not calling out them. When you have a relationship with a client, with somebody you've built trust with, you want to be really respectful of who you're speaking to, like when in meetings or in your community that we call them by name, we try to really minimize calling on clients.



DevelopmentAid Dialogues

Hisham Allam

How can communities contact through needs assessment to pinpoint service gaps and ensure resources are allocated where they are needed most?

Angie Staley

That's a really good question. So when I was working in Florida, they have grants that each organization has to apply for.

The grants will provide specifically for the program. For example, if you're going to provide for United Way transitional housing, there's a certain amount of money allocated per month for, let's just say 20 people, 30 people who are in need of a hotel stay. There's money allocated each month for that. A grant has to be written. They apply for it. It has to clearly state what is going to be provided, what is the reasons, and then you get the money. Then it's still limited, but 20 to maybe 20, 30, 40 clients can be served in a month depending on the need, and maybe it's only 10.

It just varies. So the grant with Goodwill Pathways Forward, we provided case management, life coaching, advocacy, and then in that, it's very specific what you're asking the money for. It has to be qualified in this grant itself in order to obtain that funding, but it's very specific, and it depends on, it might be for two to three years, and you have to reapply.

Hisham Allam

Are you providing rehabilitation for drug traffickers?

Angie Staley

We don't. That's a whole other aspect of drug trafficking. I know that there's concerted efforts, and there are a couple, if not several organizations like I know in Florida that are working with inmates to rehabilitate their lives in whatever capacity that is so that they can gain employment and be a productive citizen in the society.



DevelopmentAid Dialogues

It's really complicated, and the system's broken, and the problem is the prison systems themselves. I've also worked with ladies at Tampa Bay Corrections that was part of Goodwill, and what that looked like in terms of kind of bringing it back around to your question is the executive or the director of corrections created an assessment based on talking to the ladies there in corrections on their history. She started seeing a pattern in re-evaluating how these ladies were being treated in terms of or thereof because of their history, because they kept repeating cycles of coming back into corrections, leaving, coming back in, and there's obviously a history. It's complex trauma. It's things in their life that they haven't been able to really heal from, so they keep repeating behaviors, whether it's being sex trafficked, drug trafficking, or just felonies. So it's a much deeper issue. We're not just looking at people's criminal minds.

We're working with people with lives that have been broken early on and haven't been able to successfully move forward from it, and there's just not enough people in the system to provide real, tangible, holistic healing opportunities, and it's there. It's just, again, it goes back to money. It goes back to time and back to people.

Hisham Allam

Did I understand you correctly that all your clients are ladies?

Angie Staley

Most of them. I did work with a few transgender gentlemen and other gentlemen, so yes, I've worked with a variety of individuals, different backgrounds, different ethnicities, different races. Nobody's left out.

There are different states or different areas that might work with a larger population, but the problem is there, and it's understated.



DevelopmentAid Dialogues

Hisham Allam

Angie, what are some effective communication channels that could be established to enhance coordination and information sharing among different organizations working on the same field?

Angie Staley

So there's multiple parts to that. From experience as a case manager, obviously we can't share each client's information. What we can take general is general information, and when we go to these task meetings, when we go to networking meetings, we connect with other agencies that are supporting clients who provide housing or residential or opportunities to enhance their education or legal. So the connection happens in the community, and there's a lot of leaders that are really working hard to bring people together, to collaborate. I believe still the bottom line is it's the money, and that's also complex in itself, you know what I mean?

But when you have the right people who have the right heart and the wisdom and willing to make changes in the system, the results are there, but it's just like a slow-moving train, you know?

Hisham Allam

I understand your point, but I'm asking this question because housing is very essential, and nobody can survive without it, but there are also other essentials. So do you coordinate with other organizations to complete the task, the job?

Angie Staley

That's a great question. You've got to work with each individual specifically and find out what their needs are, right? It is getting that housing, which is very difficult because of the economy and the lack of funding or just not enough to provide. But once this person gets into this housing, for example, then I establish that relationship with them, and hopefully I can do that before they get in the house. So I establish this relationship and build this trust with this individual because they come in with a lot of trust issues, and they've already been on the streets, and they've already been struggling to get support financially and medically, food



DevelopmentAid Dialogues

scarcities, right? So my job to go in is spend time with that individual. Sometimes I could spend up to five hours with them, depending like in the very beginning, and it's really getting to know somebody.

What is it they need, and how do we If they don't have insurance, then we go to the site and work with them so that they're independent with support to apply for an insurance, and that takes a little bit as well. Sometimes there's medical needs. They have to be able to apply for jobs. So in that process, jobs are scarce, especially if you have a felony background, if you have prostitution charges, if you have theft. It just depends on each person, right, what they've been in life to survive. And so in that time, I will spend whatever time is needed to identify the lack and the scarcities, but also what is their dreams? What is it they want to do?

Where do they want to go? Do they, you know what I mean? So it's like rebuilding their life with them, but not for them. And really, it's not just sitting there and encouraging them because it's helping them find tangible results. Again, it goes back to if you have a felony record, and if you have any issues with law enforcement or in any state, getting a job is very difficult, but it can happen. It's persistence. It's making sure they have transportation to get where they need to be, and that is getting a bus pass.

On occasion, we can do Ubers to get somebody to a medical appointment. So it's really, it's a continual assessment of what the person means. It doesn't stop the minute they walk in that door in that house. It's building that trust and getting to know who they are, what they need. And a lot of times, I'm not a licensed counselor, but because of my experience and my own life experiences, I'm able just to be there and listen to their story. And a lot of times, it's working through that and just being heard. It's being able to help them move forward in those moments.

Sometimes it's just that emotional barrier, that pain, that trauma, and fear. They deal with a lot of fear. And you have to think about your own life, the things that you need in your life. It isn't just somebody who you just drop off at the door and say, hey, call me when you need something. It doesn't work that way. We're working with human beings with complex desires and needs and just need help. And sometimes I'll answer the phone 10 o'clock, 11 o'clock at night and have a couple of our conversations.

It's just somebody needs to move through the fears, the stress, the complex trauma. And you wouldn't believe the amount of stuff that people go through. And it's without judgment. And sometimes it just helps to make that next step, making another phone call, to look for another



DevelopmentAid Dialogues

job. I've worked with girls who are pregnant. And if they're a different ethnicity, they have difficulty getting into the doctor's office. They experienced it with them.

So then you make a call after call until you get that answer. And in my opinion, that's what it takes. We have to be persistent with them. And the struggle is real. And then also food scarcities, waiting on getting their SNAP cards, their food benefits. They've been indigent for a while. So they're trying to get established.

And so you've got to fill out the paperwork. We'll get that food card. And then they also, at times, organizations can provide a gift card just to get them through. And that's not sufficient.

Hisham Allam

Yeah, this is very clear. And I like what you have said that you are building the lives of them, not for them. And this is reflecting the case completely. Building on this and from your perspective, what does success look like in your job?

Angie Staley

Success is individually stated. It can be based on as collectively as a team, right? But success looks like to me, after working with so many girls and spending so much time with somebody who's had to talk through their traumas, talk through the things they've gone through, and to see them keep moving forward and go to that next step to seek a job. And they get into that job and maybe it doesn't work out, but they don't stop. It's watching somebody as they talk through their hardships and trusting. And for me, success is building a trust with somebody to trust the information I'm giving them, the trust that I am not going to overpower them.

I'm not here to take control. I'm here to empower you to find who you are as a person. What is it your hearts and desires and dreams and not giving up on them. To watch somebody blossom in their own journey, whether they are consistent and are able to stay in that, that they keep moving forward. They keep finding in their own journey, the power that they hold within them to keep pursuing. Whether it's justice, whether it's getting a job, whether it's getting their education. If they're a single mom, they're getting a home set up so they can get a place of safety so they can rebuild their lives.



DevelopmentAid Dialogues

Hisham Allam

How do we define success in terms of healing and recovery and the ability to rebuild their lives?

Angie Staley

It's a long process. The success for them is getting through a day, getting through those phone calls, finding a job. It's small steps and then sometimes they lead to bigger steps. It's not going backwards into a life that they've been trying to run away from or trying to find stability. Success comes from an individual journey and it's being able to move forward with that tenacity and that strength that they got them through their situations and knowing that they have a future in front of them that they have to look forward to. And success in the day might be they finally have food in their cabinets and they have a bed to sleep on and they have an opportunity to talk through their things and now we can make phone calls and help them find a job, help them get transportation.

I mean, to be honest with you, there's still a lot of them are still in their survival and so success is going to look different for everybody. But I believe a lot of amazing people are advocates, program managers, law enforcement, those who are really invested in a person themselves, not just because we're focusing on the sex trafficking and the harm that they've been through and the life that they've went through. It's focusing on the person.

Hisham Allam

How can leaders be held accountable for fostering a supportive environment for survivors?

Angie Staley

Leaders can be from the ground up, right, in different positions, but those who have the opportunity to make decisions on how such as a residential home runs, right, a safe house, it's leadership really needs to be aware of the complexities of how to run a home. As a residential coordinator, I've got about 12 years of experience of constant involvement, I should say. Leaders have the opportunity to hire individuals who have the ability to be great



DevelopmentAid Dialogues

advocates, residential coordinators, honest, authentic, who are diverse in their direction, willing to change direction when there's problems.

If a house isn't running correctly, like you've got five girls living in a five-bedroom house and there's a therapist on board, there's a paraprofessional on board, there's a teacher on board, there's a residential coordinator. When you don't foster, when you can foster an environment that you bring your team together, you can hold each other accountable, but you're also the support system, but you're looking for ways to improve situations within the house and the way that it evolves. It's very complex because you're looking at each individual who comes in, as a residential coordinator, you're working with each individual client within the home, as well as with the other professionals. Communication is a necessity. If there's issues, I need to communicate with the therapist, and what that means is that therapist and I will work together, I can relay some of the issues going on in the house during the day, and then she can work with that individual client at the time that's designated for them. She would know the issues that are going on in the house if that coordinator is not present and is not paying attention to the details and the issues with the house, because you're working with so many individuals, right, and who are also going through their journey. So being responsible, like the responsibility of the financial aspect of it.

If you don't have enough money to run a house, the difficulties lie with having the right support staff, and if you're not training your staff properly, if you're not discussing the issues, if you're not discussing the great things that are working, there's not a lot of longevity of the time that this house may remain open, and that's another house that is not available to people, to clients, to have a place to live. Does that make sense?

Hisham Allam

Yeah, totally. What are some of the most persistent obstacles you have faced, and how have you adopted your strategies to overcome them?

Angie Staley

Resources and time, the amount of people that need help and support. The next step would be to call other agencies to see if they have any housing that's residential. Does somebody have to go to rehab, or is there another state that this person could go to, or is it another city?



DevelopmentAid Dialogues

So it's just that constant digging for, what is the next step? Who can I call? Who offers these resources? And we do hit walls where sometimes a person's just not ready to get the help that they need, or they can't handle that independence, but then again, it's the housing aspect, and sometimes the other residential houses in different cities are full, so we're running into limited availability.

Hisham Allam

Your work in anti-human trafficking and transitional housing is truly commendable. The impact you have had in supporting survivors or clients as you prefer to call them and helping them rebuild their lives is nothing short of extraordinary.

Today we have had the privilege of speaking with a leading expert in anti-human trafficking and transitional housing. Stay tuned for another insightful conversation and DevelopmentAid Dialogues. Until next time, this is your host Hisham Alam signing off. Goodbye.