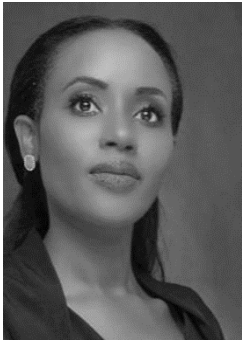




Bios of the Members of the International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council – second cohort (ISTAC), dated 28 March 2024



Jeanne Celestine Lakin (US) is an award-winning author of *A Voice in the Darkness: Memoir of a Rwandan Genocide*, which she wrote as a survivor of genocide in Rwanda. She obtained her MA in Public Administration and Public Policy from Eastern Washington University. Jeanne is a Human Rights Advocate. Passionate about the unmet needs of children, Jeanne founded an NGO “One Million Orphans” an initiative dedicated to providing sustainable support to the world's most vulnerable children. Jeanne has shared her story through various media outlets such as the Today Show, NPR, KPRC, Fox News, universities, faith-based organizations, and others. Her story was also recently featured in President Bush’s book, 'Out of Many, One: Portraits of America’s Immigrants.'

She has spoken at high-level events for the the UN, OSCE and [ICAT](#) and is a member of the [Washington Speakers Bureau](#). Jeanne Celestine is the Chair of ISTAC.



Alina Catrinel Gheorghe (Romania) is the Educational Program Officer of eLiberare Association, an NGO working on preventing and combating human trafficking and sexual exploitation in Romania. The organization is defined by five priorities: preventive education, capacity building, assistance, advocacy, public policies, and awareness campaigns. In this capacity, she coordinates the Educational Program. Her role at eLiberare also involves co-creation, as well as managing various tasks, organizing, and planning.



Itohan Okundaye (Finland) is a survivor leader of human trafficking and sexual exploitation, a human rights activist, a consultant, and an advocate. She has worked and volunteered in several anti-trafficking organizations. The NGO Finnish Women in Development started an anti-trafficking campaign, 'Toisenlaisia tarinoita' (Different Stories), based on Okundaye's initiative in 2018. She provides awareness-raising about human trafficking and its societal impact by organizing seminars and events, delivering public speeches, giving interviews, and fundraising. Her autobiography was published in 2020. In 2022, Okundaye founded an NGO called Shinning Hope Foundation against human trafficking in Benin City, Nigeria. She is a member of the International Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Survivor Network and was a member of the 1st ISTAC.



Jane Lasonder (UK) is a founding member of the Red Alert Task Force, a multi-disciplinary task force designed to raise awareness of modern slavery and human trafficking. She is also the author of “Red Alert: The Inside Story of Prostitution and Human Trafficking” and a photographer. As a survivor of child trafficking, Jane shares her expertise with organizations and groups interested in increasing their knowledge of modern slavery and human trafficking, including school-age children, teens, and medical students. She has contributed to the work of the European Parliament, the UN, OSCE/ODIHR, the WHO, and the media on human trafficking, among others.



Lydia Osifo Festus (Spain) is a Nigerian activist, survivor and Agent of Change on behalf of the CSO's Accion Contra la Trata – ACT (Action Against Human Trafficking in Persons) and the group called Las Poderosas (Women in Power) in Pamplona, Navarre, Spain. As an Agent of Change, Lydia leads conferences and participates in public events to share her own experience related to the origin and consequences of human trafficking for sexual exploitation. Lydia's story was published in the book “Libres para soñar” (Free to Dream, 2021, Spain). Lydia is also part of the start-up company called "Costura Poderosa - COPO", an occupational company created by Las Poderosas and Accion Contra la Trata - ACT to provide employment opportunities to women, which can be seen in the Costura Poderosa short film.



Maria Kirdan (France/Russian Federation) is an art and community worker, activist, and queer person, originally from Russia and currently residing in France. She is a survivor of child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation from the ages of 12 to 15. In 2021, Maria embarked on a documentary project, delving into the pervasive issue of commercial sexual exploitation of children in her home country. She conducted interviews with survivors from various regions, age groups, and genders, aiming to shed light on their experiences. Unfortunately, her project was disrupted by the ongoing Russian military aggression against Ukraine, as she had to leave Russia. She believes that her professional expertise in public relations, community management, and project coordination, coupled with her personal trafficking experience, can be effectively channelled into the fight against this grave issue.



Mariaam Bhatti (Ireland) is an experienced campaigner, community work and social policy practitioner, a migrant woman, survivor of trafficking and co-founder of the Great Care Co-op. For nearly 8 years she campaigned on behalf of Migrant Rights Centre Ireland's Domestic Workers Action Group which became a dynamic campaigning group for the rights of domestic workers working in Ireland. She was one of the 23 workers who campaigned successfully for the criminalization of forced labour in 2013. She was one of the 25 core group of 500 migrant domestic workers, who campaigned to get Ireland to ratify the ILO Convention C189 in 2014 and in the same year got the Department of Foreign Affairs to design a policy that protected domestic workers employed in diplomatic households in Ireland. She holds a BA (Hons)

in Community and Youth Work; a Master in Rights and Social Policy from Maynooth University and a postgrad in European Union Policy Making from Vrije Universiteit Brussels. In 2019, she was selected as one of the 12 people globally to take part in an intensive three week UN Fellowship for People of African Descent, which was recognised by the UN General Assembly as (and added to the list of) 100 Most Influential people of African Descent under 40 Worldwide. She was a member of the 1st ISTAC.