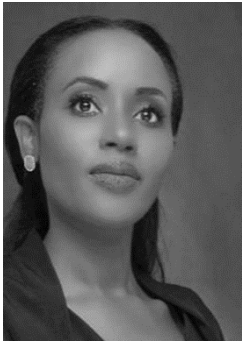




Bios of the Members of the International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council – second cohort (ISTAC)



Jeanne Celestine Lakin (US) is the Chair of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights for International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council ODIHR/ISTAC and an award-winning author of *A Voice in the Darkness: Memoir of a Rwandan Genocide*, where she shares her journey as a survivor of the Rwandan genocide against the Tutsis. A dynamic public speaker and human rights advocate, Jeanne's dedication to improving the lives of children led her to found the NGO One Million Orphans, an initiative providing sustainable aid to the world's most vulnerable children. Jeanne is a fierce advocate for people with disabilities, working tirelessly to ensure they have equal access to academic opportunities. She is involved in Kids in Need of Defence (KIND), serving on its Keeping Kids Safe Campaign Leadership Council, and is a member of the Interparliamentary Taskforce on Human Trafficking, focusing on shaping policies to stop human trafficking. Her story of survival and advocacy has been featured across prominent media outlets including The Today Show, NPR, KPRC, Fox News, and numerous universities and faith-based organizations. In recognition of her resilience, President George W. Bush painted Jeanne's portrait, honoring her in his book *Out of Many, One: Portraits of America's Immigrants*. Jeanne has also testified at the U.S. Congress Committee Hearing on the trafficking of migrant children and has spoken at high-level global platforms like the United Nations, the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference and ICAT. Jeanne holds a Master's degree in Public Administration and Public Policy, as well as a Bachelor's degree in International Affairs from Eastern Washington University.



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 has a layer of co-creation as well as managing various tasks, organizing and planning. Alina is a member of ISTAC.



Itohan Okundaye (Finland) is a survivor leader of human trafficking of sexual exploitation, a human rights activist, a consultant, and an advocate, and 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 societal impact by organizing seminars and events, 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 is a member of ISTAC.



Jane Lasonder (UK) is Vice Chair of ISTAC and Chair of Hope for Justice's International Survivor Council. Jane is a member of the MSPEC's (Modern Slavery, human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre working with Oxford University) Lived Experience Advisory Panel (LEAP). She has contributed to the work of the European Parliament, the UN, OSCE/ODIHR, WHO and the media on human trafficking, amongst others. Jane is also an author and has published three books, the latest called [Health and Slavery](#) - a guide book for health care workers on awareness, published internationally by Springer publishers. She is an award-winning photographer too. Jane is a member of the Inter Parliamentary Task Force on Human Trafficking (ITHT), the first global consortium to convene leading lawmakers, government leaders, stakeholders and lived-experience experts committed to stopping the human suffering caused by human trafficking through partnership in policy solutions. Jane is an international speaker. As a survivor of child trafficking, Jane shares her expertise with organisations and groups interested in increasing their knowledge of modern slavery and human trafficking, including school-age children, teens and medical students. She is also working with the British Embassy in Budapest and partners in Romania, developing training material and providing training to health care workers. She has also given training to border force guards, police, health care workers, UN soldiers and youth in schools. Jane is the winner of the Marsh award and Human Trafficking Foundation from UK Parliament 2024 for outstanding contribution to the fight against modern slavery in the category [Empowering Survivors' Voices](#). She is setting up with the Independent anti-slavery commissioner in the UK a national survivors council. She has many published articles including one in the international journal of Cambridge University, and has contributed her expertise to research publications for MSPEC/Oxford University and 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' 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. Lydia is a member of ISTAC.



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. Maria is a member of ISTAC.



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 with 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. Mariaam is a member of ISTAC.