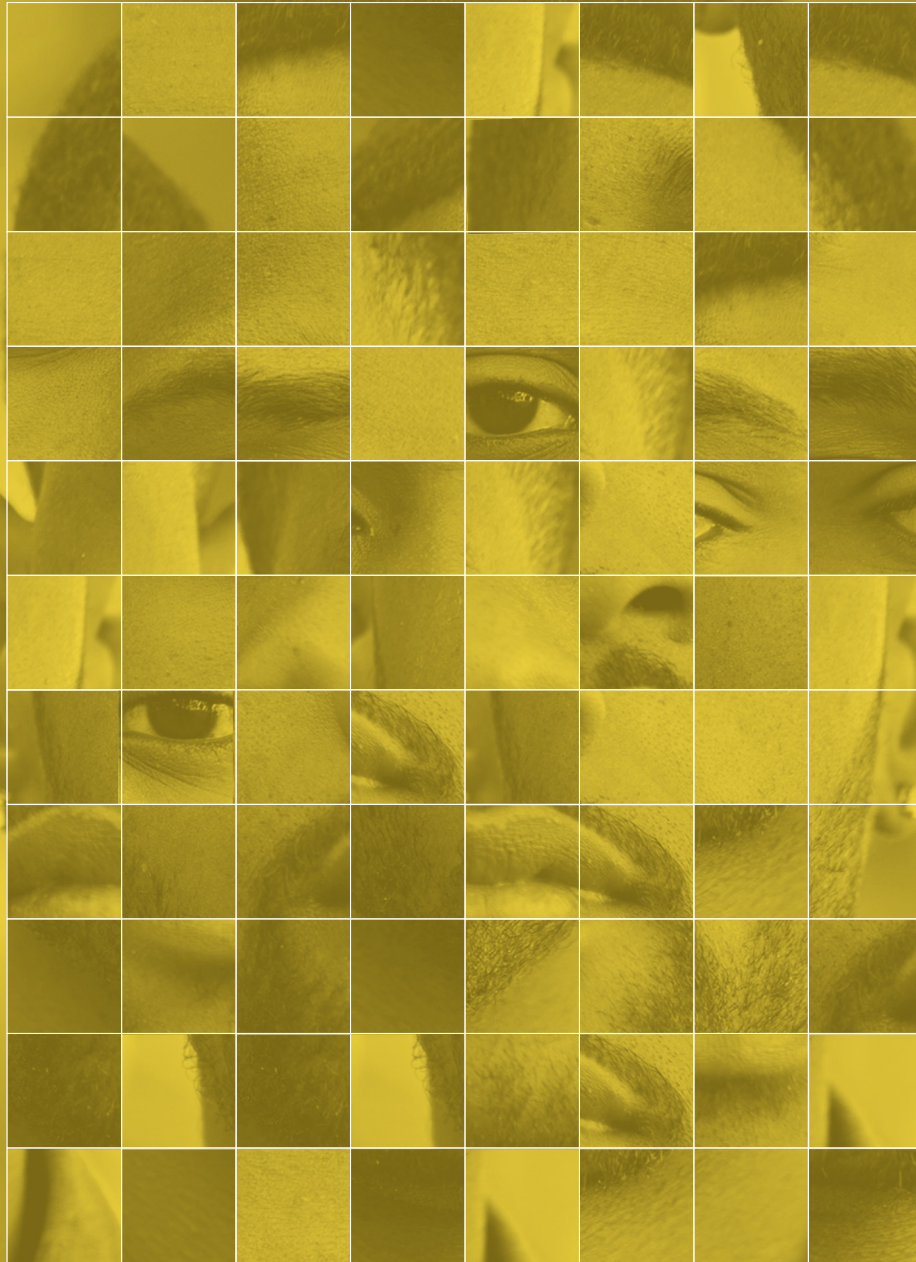


# Regional Action Guidelines for **A COORDINATED RESPONSE TO TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS**

FROM THE SECURITY AND JUSTICE SECTOR



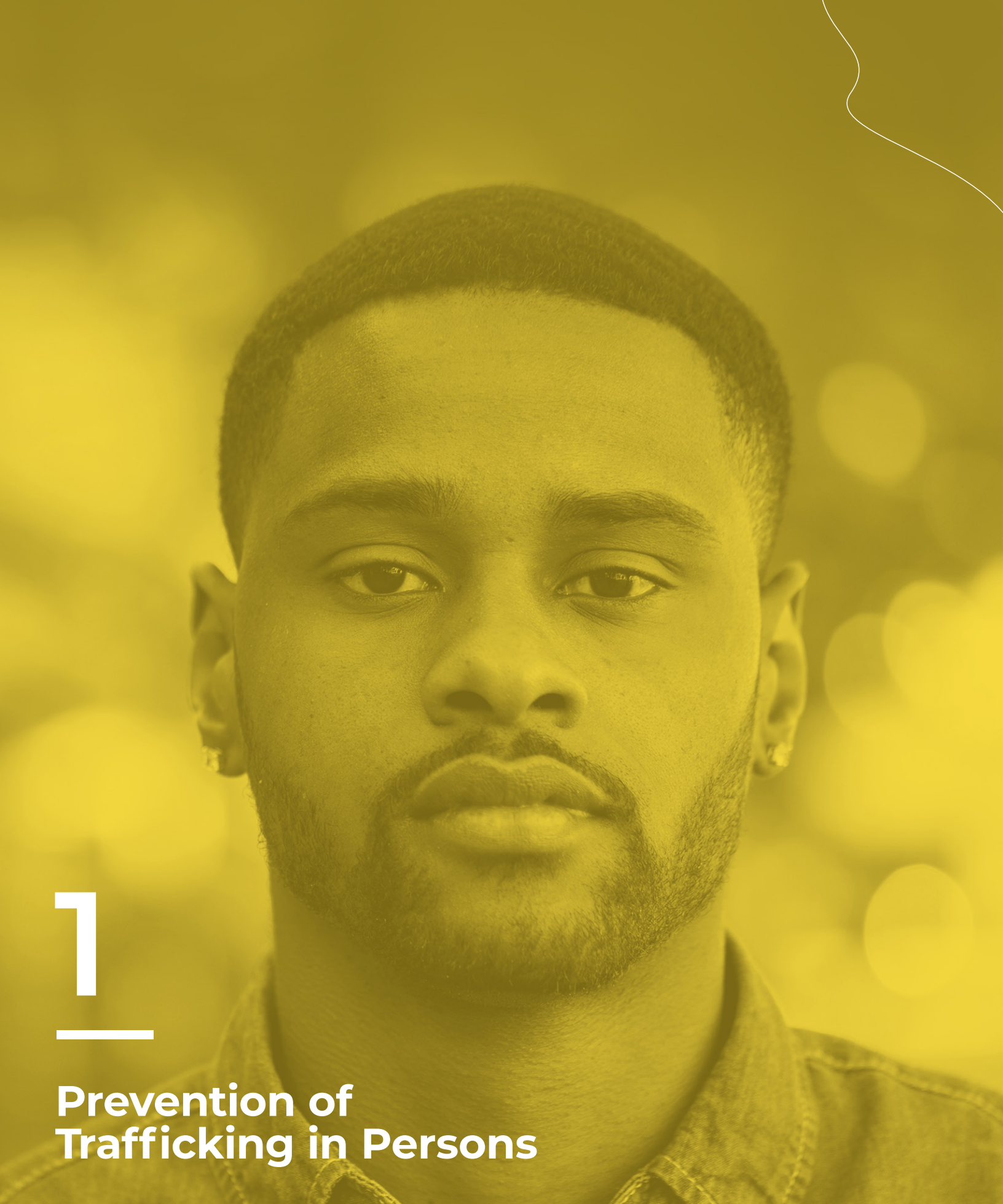
# 1

## Prevention of Trafficking in Persons



United Nations  
Office on Drugs and Crime





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# Prevention of Trafficking in Persons



**United Nations**  
Office on Drugs and Crime



## Abstract

Trafficking in persons is a crime and a grave violation of human rights that affects millions of children, women and men worldwide. This complex and multi-causal phenomenon exploits individuals' vulnerabilities and frequently arises in contexts marked by the presence of other criminal activities, illegal economies, and corruption. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) developed the Regional Action Guidelines for a Coordinated Response to Trafficking in Persons from the Security and Justice Sector, comprising five documents. This guide on prevention is structured into five sections. It begins by addressing the conceptual aspects of the different forms of prevention, followed by an outline of the principal approaches and the main challenges in this field, and subsequently presents guidance and promising practices implemented in various countries. Lastly, it presents a checklist highlighting the key aspects to be considered in the strengthening of prevention strategies.

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**JEL classifications:** K14, K38, K40

**Keywords:** human trafficking; trafficking in persons; victims of trafficking in persons; primary prevention; secondary prevention; tertiary prevention; Palermo Protocol; awareness campaigns; Latin America and the Caribbean.

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# Presentation

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Trafficking in persons is a criminal offence and a serious violation of human rights that impacts millions of children, women, and men across the globe. This complex and multi-causal phenomenon exploits individuals' vulnerabilities and frequently arises in contexts marked by the presence of other criminal activities, illegal economies, and corruption.

Combating trafficking in persons presents numerous challenges across its key areas of intervention: prevention, assistance and protection of victims, investigation and prosecution of cases, as well as inter-agency cooperation at the national and international levels. Preventing this crime is particularly challenging due, among other factors, to the lack of social awareness that perpetuates culturally permissive structures, which allow exploitation to be normalised, and prevent many victims from identifying themselves as such. It is also a particularly complex crime for the criminal justice system to investigate, as it requires in-depth understanding of the contexts in which it occurs, continuous professional training to ensure up-to-date expertise, and sustained coordination efforts at the local, national, and international levels. Assistance and protection for survivors demands an interdisciplinary and comprehensive approach that recognises the trauma caused by the crime and effectively addresses psychological, physical, emotional, and reintegration needs. Lastly, challenges in cooperation and information exchange between institutions and countries hinder coordinated action against trafficking in persons, leading to a fragmented and less effective response to this global crime.

Since 2020, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has incorporated the crime of trafficking in persons into its citizen security and justice agenda. Given the multi-causal nature of this crime and its diverse manifestations, this agenda has been developed in close collaboration with several areas, including Labor Markets, Gender and Diversity, Migration, Institutional Capacity, and IDB Invest.

The IDB's new institutional strategy, Transforming for Scale and Impact (IDBStrategy+), acknowledges that persistently high levels of crime and violence represent a major barrier to achieving its core objectives: bolstering sustainable growth, reducing poverty and inequality, and addressing climate change.

Within its operational focus area on institutional capacity, rule of law, and citizen security, the strategy places emphasis on strengthening institutional capacities to detect, prevent, address, and prosecute complex crimes, including trafficking in persons. The operational focus area on gender equality and inclusion of diverse population groups aims to ensure the meaningful inclusion of diverse groups, particularly those most vulnerable to crimes such as trafficking in persons, including women, children, adolescents, and LGBTQ+ individuals.

Addressing trafficking in persons in a coordinated manner is also among the objectives of the Alliance for Security, Justice and Development, which is aimed at developing regional, subregional, and national actions and policies to provide coordinated and effective responses to organised crime in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). To support this objective, the Alliance focuses its efforts on three strategic axes: (i) protecting the most vulnerable populations and communities; (ii) strengthening security and justice institutions; and (iii) disrupting financial flows and curbing illicit markets.

Collaboration and synergies between the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), recognised globally as the leading entity within the United Nations system in combating trafficking in persons, have contributed significantly to advancing the regional agenda on trafficking in persons. These Regional Action Guidelines were developed for the benefit of LAC countries through the project entitled *Model for Strengthening the Institutional Capacities of the Security and Justice Sector to Respond to Human Trafficking in Latin America and the Caribbean with a Gender Perspective and a Digital Approach*, funded by the IDB's Regional Public Goods (RPG) Initiative.

The objective of these guidelines is to provide information on how to deliver a more coordinated and effective response to trafficking in persons within the remit of the security and justice sectors, across the fields of prevention, protection, investigation, prosecution, and transnational cooperation. These guidelines identify the common challenges faced by countries in the region in addressing this crime and provide information on how to tackle it by incorporating key approaches, including a gender perspective and consideration of the digital sphere. In addition, these documents provide specific guidance for each axis of action, supported by promising practices that may be replicated throughout the region to strengthen the work of police, prosecutors, and judges.

This first guide introduces the concept of prevention, outlines the types of prevention (primary, secondary, and tertiary), and presents international instruments related to the prevention of this crime. It also explains how key approaches, particularly the gender and digital approaches, are applied to prevention efforts. This guide also addresses several challenges related

to the prevention of trafficking in persons, including difficulties in victim identification, the absence of unified data systems, and emerging challenges related to the use of artificial intelligence by criminal organisations. The guide then provides recommendations, and showcases promising practices, including an indicative framework for preventing the crime which begins with an analysis of how the crime occurs, followed by the definition of roles, and continues through to ensuring the presence of specialised personnel at all levels. It also includes guidelines to support compliance with national and international obligations, as well as to promote intra-national and cross-sectoral coordination aimed at strengthening strategies for the prevention of trafficking in persons.

## Series Structure

The Regional Action Guidelines consist of five guides, which are summarised below.

### INTRODUCTORY GUIDE



It provides an overview of the contents addressed throughout the series. To this end, it presents key concepts related to the crime of trafficking in persons, offers a global and regional contextual analysis, examines its various modalities and purposes, and dispels common myths by contrasting them with documented realities. It further outlines comprehensive approaches for addressing trafficking in persons, which are applied consistently across the guidelines. This serves as a conceptual foundation for adopting a comprehensive approach to addressing the crime.

### GUIDE 1: Prevention of Trafficking in Persons

This first guide introduces the concept of prevention, outlines the types of prevention (primary, secondary, and tertiary), and presents international instruments related to the prevention of this crime. It also explains how key approaches, particularly the gender and digital approaches, are applied to prevention efforts. This guide also addresses several challenges related to the prevention of trafficking in persons, including difficulties in victim

identification, the absence of unified data systems, and emerging challenges related to the use of artificial intelligence by criminal organisations. It then provides guidelines and showcases promising practices, including an indicative framework for preventing the crime which begins with an analysis of how the crime occurs, followed by the definition of roles, and continues through to ensuring the presence of specialised personnel at all levels. The guide also includes guidelines to support compliance with national and international obligations, as well as to promote intra-national and cross-sectoral coordination aimed at strengthening strategies for the prevention of trafficking in persons.

## **GUIDE 2: Investigation and Prosecution of Trafficking in Persons**



This guide introduces the concepts of investigation and prosecution, and sets out the general principles that underpin these processes (universality of human rights, proactive investigation, confidentiality, speciality, comprehensive protection, mutual legal assistance in criminal matters, coordination and expediency) along with the applicable international instruments. The guide emphasises and explains the mainstreaming of gender and digital approaches into the investigation and prosecution process, encompassing all stages from team formation and the design of investigative strategies to the implementation of reparation measures. The guide outlines some of the most pressing challenges related to investigation and prosecution, including limitations in evidence collection, proactive victim identification, the quantification of damages, engagement with victims and crimes during criminal proceedings, and the application of the principle of non-criminalisation of victims, among others. Furthermore, the guide provides recommendations and showcases promising practices, including standards for protecting the rights of victims and defendants throughout criminal proceedings, guidance on procedural representation, and a description of the duties of key actors involved, such as police officers, prosecutors, and judges. It also sets out guidelines for intra-national and cross-sectoral coordination in investigation and prosecution processes, with particular emphasis on inter-agency cooperation and the involvement of civil society, academia, the media, and the private sector.

## GUIDE 3: Assistance and Protection for Survivors of Trafficking in Persons



This guide covers the key concepts related to assistance and protection for survivors of trafficking in persons, explaining the different types of support, including immediate assistance and ongoing or sustained assistance, and outlining the main international instruments relevant to this area. It further examines how to provide comprehensive assistance and protection by integrating key approaches, such as the gender approach and the digital approach. It also analyses the main challenges in this area, including geographic disparities in service provision, the criminalisation of survivors, the lack of specialised shelters, and the need to strengthen financial redress mechanisms. In addition, the guide presents guidelines and promising practices that include key considerations for both immediate and ongoing or sustained assistance.

Lastly, it sets out guidelines for intra-national and cross-sectoral coordination in providing assistance and protection to survivors of trafficking in persons, emphasising the role of civil society organisations, academia, the private sector, the media, and other key stakeholders.

## GUIDE 4: International Cooperation to Combat Trafficking in Persons



It defines international cooperation and describes its variations based on the type of cooperating actor and the nature of support provided. It also presents the formal and informal mechanisms of international cooperation and outlines the agreements, conventions, and regional cooperation frameworks in LAC that are dedicated to combating the crime of trafficking in persons. The guide then goes on to explore how gender and digital approaches can be mainstreamed into international cooperation mechanisms through a wide range of actions, such as addressing the specific needs of survivors, facilitating the exchange of information, and ensuring that women and diverse populations are properly represented in data collection and analysis. This guide also examines the main challenges faced by international cooperation to combat trafficking in persons, including the absence of agreements to facilitate coordination for expediting the investigation and prosecution of cases, as well as persistent challenges in the identification, assistance, and protection of survivors. It also presents guidelines and promising practices to enhance international cooperation to combat trafficking in persons, focusing on three key areas: prevention of the crime, investigation and prosecution of perpetrators, and assistance and protection of survivors of trafficking in persons.

## Icons Used

To facilitate ease of reading, the following icons are used throughout the guides:



### **PROMISING PRACTICES**

This icon indicates practices devised by countries, international organisations, or other actors that may serve as a point of reference for institutions.



### **REFLECTION**

This icon encourages consideration of how the guide's content can be translated into professional practice.



### **CHECKLIST**

This icon refers to guidelines or activities that institutions may adopt, depending on the themes addressed in each guide.

# Introduction

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Dear reader, this guide is structured into five sections. It begins by addressing the conceptual aspects of the different forms of prevention, followed by an outline of the principal approaches and the main challenges in this field, and subsequently presents guidance and promising practices implemented in various countries. Lastly, it presents a checklist highlighting the key aspects to be considered in the strengthening of prevention strategies.

This guide provides essential information on the prevention of trafficking in persons (TIP), focusing on its concept, the different types of prevention, and the international instruments that underpin these efforts.



# 1. UNDERSTANDING PREVENTION

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## What is Prevention

Prevention refers to measures and actions aimed at anticipating risks or mitigating potential harm through preventive or proactive interventions. In the context of trafficking in persons, prevention entails the implementation of measures by various stakeholders within a given territory, including research initiatives, information and awareness-raising campaigns, and social and economic programmes, all aimed at preventing and combating this crime (UNODC, 2019).

In this context, prevention mechanisms focus on the design and implementation of policies, plans, and projects by States to address factors such as poverty and unequal opportunities, which heighten the vulnerability of persons to TIP. These factors, often referred to as risk factors, are essential to understanding the structural changes that can contribute to combating TIP. A selection of these factors is presented in Table 1.1.

**TABLE 1.1.**  
**Risk Factors for Trafficking in Persons**

NUM.	FACTORS	DESCRIPTION
1	Poverty	Poverty and economic vulnerability stand out as significant drivers of TIP. Economic vulnerability encompasses unemployment and limited access to equal opportunities.
2	Globalisation	Globalisation and the removal of trade barriers have facilitated the expansion of trade among nations. While globalisation offers certain benefits, it has also contributed to the trafficking and exploitation of vulnerable workers.
3	Restrictive immigration and labour laws	Restrictive immigration and labour laws may contribute to trafficking by creating barriers to lawful migration. Migrants often face heightened vulnerability when crossing international borders in pursuit of better prospects for their lives.
4	Armed conflicts, violence and criminal governance, political oppression, weak rule of law, and natural disasters	Conflict, oppression, violence and criminal governance, as well as natural disasters, drive the displacement of people, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation by traffickers and by those involved in the smuggling of migrants.
5	Corruption	Corruption facilitates TIP through multiple channels. It enables traffickers to transport and exploit victims while simultaneously obstructing efforts to investigate and prosecute them, allowing perpetrators to operate with impunity through the complicity or inaction of public officials.
6	Harmful social and cultural practices	Certain social, religious, and cultural practices increase the vulnerability of specific groups to traffickers.  Harmful social practices, such as social exclusion, marginalisation, and the lack of access to social rights, deprive groups of the benefits and protection to which all citizens are entitled.
7	Consumer demand and purchasing habits	Many consumers seek inexpensive goods and services. To meet this demand, corporations frequently resort to exploited labour, sourcing goods and services from countries regarded as poor.

Source: UNODC (2019).

## Types of Prevention: Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary

Far from being not confined to one single form, prevention encompasses a range of approaches. In this regard, the mechanisms available to States may vary considerably, depending on the needs identified. The applicability of prevention strategies is determined by the situational analysis conducted in each country, taking into account the nature of the crime and its impact on communities, with the aim of ensuring a response that is both effective and efficient.

Prevention strategies may be classified according to levels, or by the magnitude and scope of their impact. This publication applies the typology based on levels, namely primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention, as set out in Table 1.2.

**TABLE 1.2.**  
Types of Prevention of Trafficking in Persons

TYPE OF PREVENTION	DESCRIPTION
Primary Prevention	<p><b>What does it refer to?:</b> mechanisms aimed at addressing risk factors and structural causes of TIP in order to reduce the likelihood of the crime</p> <p><b>Who is the target audience?:</b> the general population</p> <p><b>Example:</b> awareness campaigns disseminating information on the dynamics of the crime of TIP through media outlets (television, radio, social media, among others)</p>
Secondary Prevention	<p><b>What does it refer to?:</b> mechanisms focused on the quick and timely detection of survivors of TIP, aimed at reducing the prevalence of the crime and strengthening efforts to combat it</p> <p><b>Who is the target audience?:</b> groups identified as vulnerable and at risk of becoming survivors of TIP</p> <p><b>Example:</b> monitoring the dissemination of potentially fraudulent job offers directed at specific at-risk populations (women, men, and adolescents within specific age groups)</p>

TYPE OF PREVENTION	DESCRIPTION
Tertiary Prevention	<p><b>What does it refer to?:</b> mechanisms closely linked to protection measures aimed at preventing, reducing, and mitigating the harm once the crime of TIP has already been committed</p> <p><b>Who is the target audience?:</b> survivors of the crime of TIP</p> <p><b>Example:</b> in coordination with assistance and protection services, strategies are developed with TIP survivors to support their social reintegration and facilitate their incorporation into livelihoods that minimise exposure to risk and vulnerability factors</p>

**Source:** Author's creation.

## International Instruments Related to the Prevention of This Crime

In the field of prevention, there is no sole convention or treaty dedicated exclusively to TIP; rather, the prevention of this crime is addressed in a cross-cutting manner across various international instruments. Table 1.3 below presents a selection of instruments related to the crime of TIP.

**TABLE 1.3.****International Instruments on the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons**

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	DESCRIPTION IN THE CONTEXT OF PREVENTION
2000	United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime	<b>Article 31 – Prevention</b> “States Parties shall endeavour to develop and evaluate national projects and to establish and promote best practices and policies aimed at the prevention of transnational organized crime.”
2000	The Palermo Protocol	<b>Article 9 – Prevention of TIP</b> “States Parties shall establish comprehensive policies, programmes and other measures: (a) To prevent and combat trafficking in persons; and (b) To protect victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, from revictimization.”
2022	Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights	<b>Part 2.2 – Prevention of TIP</b> Principle 4 and its related guidelines establish prevention through efforts to counter demand, focusing on strategies aimed at preventing TIP, on the basis that demand is regarded as one of its root causes.
2005	Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings	<b>Chapter II – Prevention, co-operation, and other measures</b> <b>Article 5 – Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings</b> “Each Party shall take measures to establish or strengthen national co-ordination between the various bodies responsible for preventing and combating trafficking in human beings.”
1949	Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others	<b>Article 16</b> “The Parties to the present Convention agree to take or to encourage, through their public and private educational, health, social, economic and other related services, measures for the prevention of prostitution and for the rehabilitation and social adjustment of the victims of prostitution and of the offences referred to in the present Convention.”

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	DESCRIPTION IN THE CONTEXT OF PREVENTION
1979	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)	<b>Article 6</b> “States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women.”
1989	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict	<b>Article 7.1</b> “States Parties shall cooperate in the implementation of the present Protocol, including in the prevention of any activity contrary thereto and in the rehabilitation and social reintegration of persons who are victims of acts contrary thereto, including through technical cooperation and financial assistance. Such assistance and cooperation will be undertaken in consultation with the States Parties concerned and the relevant international organizations.”
1994	Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (Belém do Pará Convention)	<b>Article 8</b> “The States Parties agree to undertake progressively specific measures, including programs: [...] c. to promote the education and training of all those involved in the administration of justice, police and other law enforcement officers as well as other personnel responsible for implementing policies for the prevention, punishment and eradication of violence against women.”

**Source:** Author’s creation based on the compilation of international instruments.

Approaching prevention through its different levels broadens the range of instruments that may be applied. This enables the identification of international instruments that reinforce specific prevention measures for the various purposes of TIP, while primary prevention focuses on addressing the risk factors that contribute to the commission of the crime.

For example, Table 1.4 outlines several instruments that play a role in preventing TIP for the purpose of forced labour.

**TABLE 1.4.****International Instruments Related to the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons for the Purpose of Forced Labour**

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	DESCRIPTION ON PREVENTION FOR THE PURPOSE OF FORCED LABOUR
1997	International Labor Organization (ILO) No. 181, the Private Employment Agencies Convention	<b>Article 5</b> “1. In order to promote equality of opportunity and treatment in access to employment and to particular occupations, a Member shall ensure that private employment agencies treat workers without discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction, social origin, or any other form of discrimination covered by national law and practice, such as age or disability.”
2011	Domestic Workers Convention	<b>Article 3</b> “Each Member shall, in relation to domestic workers, take the measures set out in this Convention to respect, promote and realize the fundamental principles and rights at work, namely: [...] (b) the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour [...]”
1949	ILO Convention No. 97, the Migration for Employment Convention	<b>Article 3</b> “1. Each Member for which this Convention is in force undertakes that it will, so far as national laws and regulations permit, take all appropriate steps against misleading propaganda relating to emigration and immigration.  2. For this purpose, it will where appropriate act in co-operation with other Members concerned.”
1975	ILO Convention No. 143, Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention	<b>Article 6</b> “1. Provision shall be made under national laws or regulations for the effective detection of the illegal employment of migrant workers and for the definition and the application of administrative, civil and penal sanctions, which include imprisonment in their range, in respect of the illegal employment of migrant workers, in respect of the organisation of movements of migrants for employment defined as involving the abuses referred to in Article 2 of this Convention, and in respect of knowing assistance to such movements, whether for profit or otherwise.”

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	DESCRIPTION ON PREVENTION FOR THE PURPOSE OF FORCED LABOUR
2011	General Comment No. 1 on Migrant Domestic Workers of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	<b>Conditions of work</b> “37. The rights of migrant domestic workers should be dealt with within the larger framework of decent work for domestic workers. In this regard, the Committee considers that domestic work should be properly regulated by national legislation to ensure that domestic workers enjoy the same level of protection as other workers.”
1930	ILO Convention No. 29, Forced Labour Convention	<b>Article 1</b> “1. Each Member of the International Labour Organisation which ratifies this Convention undertakes to suppress the use of forced or compulsory labour in all its forms within the shortest possible period.”
1966	The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	<b>Article 26</b> “All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.”
1990	Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	<b>Article 68</b> “1. States Parties, including States of transit, shall collaborate with a view to preventing and eliminating illegal or clandestine movements and employment of migrant workers in an irregular situation.”

**Source:** Author’s creation based on the compilation of international instruments.

In the field of prevention, there is no sole convention or treaty dedicated exclusively to TIP; rather, the prevention of this crime is addressed in a cross-cutting manner across various international instruments.



## 2. PREVENTION THROUGH KEY APPROACHES

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TIP prevention is informed by a range of approaches, including those set out in the Introductory Guide. Among these, two are considered key and cross-cutting within the framework of action: the gender approach and the digital approach, which are described below.

### Gender Approach

Prevention under this approach refers to actions that address structural gender-related factors that increase vulnerability to becoming victims of TIP and/or result in differentiated impacts of the crime. Such factors include patriarchal systems, discrimination and gender-based violence (GBV), unequal economic opportunities, gender roles and stereotypes, and asymmetrical power relations, among others (OSCE, 2021a). Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to various factors that enable the occurrence of trafficking, including limited access to education, widespread poverty, high levels of informal labour, and unequal gender norms, roles, and expectations that normalise violence against them (ICAT, 2017).

Purposes of TIP such as sexual exploitation and forced labour in sectors stereotypically associated with women, including domestic servitude and servile marriage, are rooted in GBV and reinforced by entrenched gender roles (IOM, 2012).

Mainstreaming a gender approach into prevention therefore requires analysing gender-related risk factors, gaining a deeper understanding of potential victims, including those who do not fit the traditional victim profile, and identifying their specific needs and vulnerabilities. The objective is not only to detect, prevent, and respond effectively to this crime by directing targeted prevention measures towards women, girls, and persons with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), but also to design prevention actions for other groups, including men, who may become victims of this crime for different purposes (OSCE, 2021a).

Addressing this approach requires an understanding of intersectionality, as both concepts provide theoretical and methodological frameworks that offer tools to address TIP in a comprehensive and effective manner.

The intersectional approach (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016) recognises that individuals may experience multiple and overlapping forms of oppression and discrimination, stemming from the intersection of diverse identities and social categories such as gender, nationality, economic status, sexual orientation, age, and disability, among others.

In the context of TIP, this requires an understanding of the inequalities that constitute axes of vulnerability in relation to gender-based violence. It allows for a more comprehensive analysis of the intersecting factors that exacerbate these inequalities, recognising gender-based violence as a structural issue that affects diverse groups of women throughout their lives.

### **What is the duty of States with regard to prevention with a gender approach?**

States have a duty to promote prevention projects, plans, and policies that draw attention and foster the reduction and elimination of gender-based inequalities and barriers rooted in structural risk factors linked to the social, economic, and political conditions of their territories.

Furthermore, incorporating the intersectional approach into State actions enables social, territorial, and cultural relevance in the response to gender-based violence against women, girls, and persons with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities (SOGI), recognising that such violence does not affect all women in the same way.

It is also essential to emphasise the duty of States in the prevention of violence against women.<sup>1</sup> In the Campo Algodonero case, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR, 2009) determined that States are obliged to adopt prevention policies and practices that ensure an effective response to complaints of violence against women, as well as to take preventive measures in situations where it is evident that certain women and girls may be at risk of violence.

States also have a duty to raise awareness, disseminate information, and strengthen the capacities of public officials and others under their jurisdiction with regard to the identification of the constituent elements of the crime, the available reporting channels, and the strategies for its prevention.

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<sup>1</sup> TIP and sexual exploitation constitute forms of violence against women. CEDAW specifically addresses this matter in Article 6, which provides: “States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women.”

## REFLECTION



Having recognised the importance of gender-sensitive prevention, it is necessary to consider how this knowledge can be applied in practice within your functions as a member of a security or justice institution. Some examples include:

- Anika, an official at her country's public prosecutor's office and responsible for the institution's TIP statistics, ensures that gender-related data (such as sexual orientation, gender identity, and history of gender-based violence) are consistently collected and analysed.
- Dwayne, who oversees the development of his institution's annual operational plans, ensures that resources are allocated in line with the differentiated needs of men and women; he also supports the funding of policies that promote gender equality.
- Shanice, Project Manager at the Ministry of Women's Affairs, and Keisha, Coordinator of the Directorate for Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants at the Ministry of the Interior, are developing a TIP prevention strategy targeting indigenous women in a rural area of the country. Given the community's low levels of literacy and limited fluency in English, Shanice and Keisha have decided to put on plays in the local indigenous language that focus on TIP-related issues, particularly the challenges and risks faced by indigenous women in their community. Cultural and traditional elements are incorporated to ensure the stories are meaningful and resonate with the lived experiences of women in the community. In addition, Shanice and Keisha collaborate closely with community leaders and local organisations to ensure the plays are held at accessible venues and scheduled at times that accommodate the family responsibilities and availability of indigenous women. This prevention strategy, grounded in a gender and intersectional approach, acknowledges and respects cultural diversity while addressing the specific needs of indigenous women, aiming to address the issue of TIP within their local context.

If you have participated in the formulation, implementation, or assessment of prevention strategies, do you consider that you incorporated a gender and intersectional approach? How do you plan to apply them in the next prevention strategy you take part in?

## Digital Approach

The crime of TIP has expanded into multiple spheres, including the digital realm. For this reason, mainstreaming a digital approach into TIP prevention is fundamental, particularly in the areas of primary and secondary prevention, namely mitigating risk factors and enabling the early identification of potential victims.

For example, with the rise of new technologies, traffickers have adapted their modus operandi to cyberspace, exploiting digital platforms and technological tools to identify and abuse potential victims. A number of these spaces are presented in Table 1.5 (OSCE, 2022).

**TABLE 1.5.**  
**Digital Spaces for the Recruitment of Victims of Trafficking in Persons**

EXAMPLE OF A DIGITAL SPACE	DESCRIPTION
Websites offering sexual services, including prostitution, pornography, escorting, sugar dating, and online forums	These sites explicitly describe their purpose as the provision of sexual services, allowing users to navigate according to the services they wish to consume online.
Job search websites	These are websites that advertise job offers promising substantial benefits without requiring specific skills, yet demanding immediate availability. In this way, they attract individuals seeking employment who may be in situations of need.
Social media	By creating fake profiles, traffickers feign shared interests and appear to support victims' ideas to gain their trust. At times, they convince victims that they are in love, propose marriage, and even introduce them to their families as a means of strengthening that trust.
Video chat and streaming platform	Streaming refers to the real-time transmission of multimedia content, such as video and audio, over the internet. This enables users to watch or listen to content without the need to download it in full. Traffickers exploit these platforms to identify individuals with overlapping interests and build rapport with potential victims.

**Source:** Authors' creation based on OSCE (2022).

Developing prevention strategies within identified digital spaces where victims may be recruited is essential to countering these criminal activities. Likewise, examining the dynamics of TIP in cyberspace allows for the design of prevention strategies whose content and scope ensure both effectiveness and efficiency.

An example of this digital approach is the *Sugar Free* project, which employs an automated artificial intelligence (AI) platform and a network of bots on X (formerly Twitter) to monitor potential sugar dating interactions. The bot selects and publishes responses from a database of hundreds of pre-prepared images and texts, all designed to deliver deterrent messages to onlookers. Tweets identified as predatory are reported (*Sugar Free*, 2020).

## What is the duty of States with regard to prevention with a digital approach?

States have a duty to combat this scourge effectively, which requires adapting their strategies to contemporary dynamics shaped by new technologies. Such actions may be pursued through the following two avenues (OSCE, 2020).

### **Regulatory measures aimed at promoting an internet that is safer and free from trafficking in persons<sup>2</sup>**

In its report, *Leveraging Innovation to Fight Trafficking in Human Beings: A Comprehensive Analysis of Technology Tools* (OSCE, 2020), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) highlighted several measures that can be implemented by States to enhance monitoring and security against traffickers on the internet, identifying three specific actions in particular:

- Develop and implement age verification guidelines for accessing content on sexually explicit platforms.
- Monitor online content as a key measure to detect and remove material linked to the recruitment or exploitation of victims of TIP. Content control on platforms has been guided by the basic principle that online platform companies are not obliged to monitor third-party content. Recent case law and new legislation in countries in Europe, Central Asia, and North America are reconsidering the principle of non-liability, making online platforms accountable from both civil and criminal standpoints.
- Establish transparency obligations for technology companies, requiring them to publicly disclose the volume of illicit activity occurring on their

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<sup>2</sup> The content of this section is based on OSCE (2021).

platforms, as well as the measures adopted to prevent or mitigate the misuse of their services. Although some companies already publish such reports, the current voluntary self-regulatory framework has resulted in fragmented transparency, obscuring both the scale of the crime and the responses undertaken.

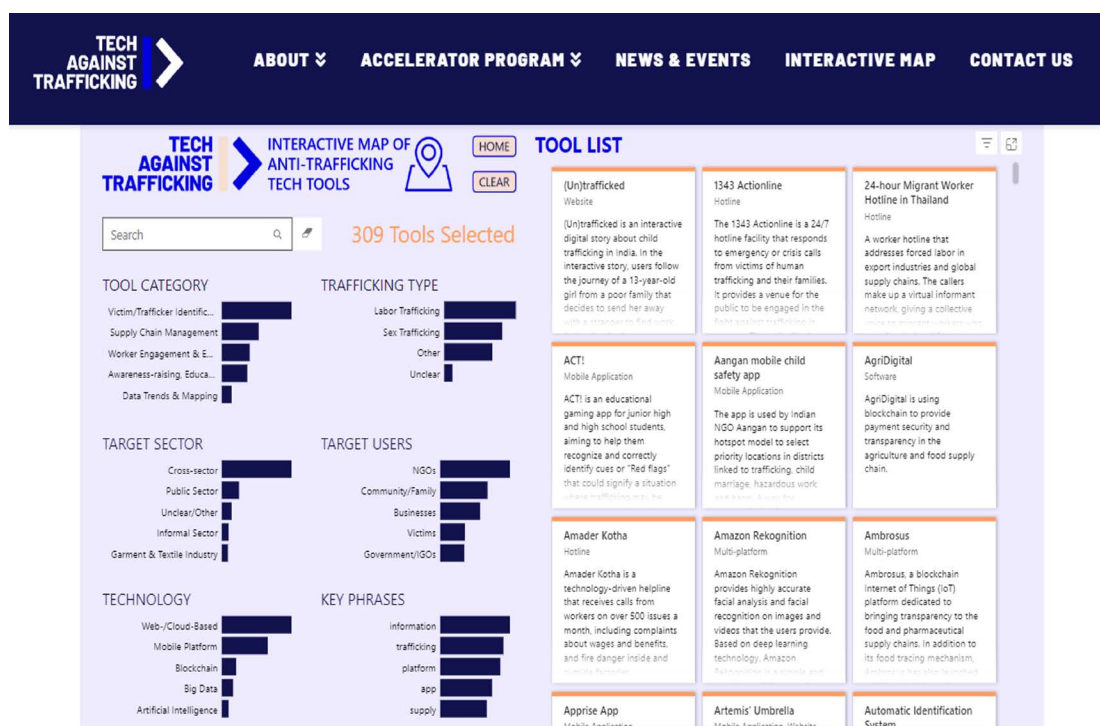
### **Solutions through new technologies**

Within this avenue, States should cooperate closely with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international partners, and private sector companies capable of contributing technological tools to strengthen the early detection of recruitment, exploitation, and control of TIP victims in digital environments.

An example of this is Tech Against Trafficking (n.d.), a coalition of technology companies and other organisations that works with global experts to help eradicate TIP through the use of technology. Its efforts include mapping technologies currently in use across different regions, identifying tools with potential for scaling up, accelerating technological solutions through resource management and strategic partnerships, and promoting the exchange of practices and innovations among member companies.

As an outcome of these efforts, the platform features an interactive map of technological initiatives for the prevention of TIP, which allows users to filter by tool category, purpose of TIP, target sector, keywords, and other criteria, as illustrated in Image 1.1.

**IMAGE 1.1.**  
Tech Against Trafficking Interactive Map



**Source:** Tech Against Trafficking, <https://techagainstrafficking.org>.

It is important to recognise that the use of technology presents a challenge for States, considering that its progress may be gradual, depending on the specific circumstances of each country. This process may begin with strengthening existing institutional capacities for the use of digital tools in TIP prevention, before progressing towards the enhancement of such tools or, alternatively, towards coordinated efforts for the development of new technological solutions.

In recent years, the private sector, governments, and research institutions have focused their efforts on addressing the risks associated with AI. In 2024, the OSCE and the Regional Support Office of the Bali Process (RSO) published a Policy Brief entitled *New Frontiers: The Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence to Facilitate Trafficking in Persons*, which outlines proactive measures and interventions that may be promoted to address AI-facilitated TIP, including the following:

- **AI models:** Design and oversee the development of AI models in a way that minimises the likelihood of their misuse for criminal purposes.
- **Digital systems:** Monitor and regulate digital platforms where people connect and interact, such as social networks, gaming platforms, and forums, as these are spaces where AI-enabled systems may engage with users.

- **People:** Implement prevention, education, and awareness initiatives to inform the public about potential threats related to AI and TIP.

## REFLECTION



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Having considered the digital tools approach in the prevention of TIP, examine the following case and identify how such tools could have contributed to its prevention.

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- Nadine was 16 years old and in the final year of her secondary education. She had progressed to her final year of studies, in part thanks to the use of technology. When restrictions on physical contact were put in place due to COVID-19, remote classes, social media, and other digital learning tools helped her navigate the challenging circumstances.

However, when it came to her personal use of digital technology, she was never supervised by an adult, meaning her online activity was entirely unsupervised despite her being a minor. One day, as she was scrolling through Instagram, she saw an ad from a so-called “modelling agency” looking for “new talent with no experience” which promised a particularly alluring salary. Nadine reached out to the Instagram account that had posted the ad and went through the application process, hoping to be selected. Sadly, the offer soon revealed its true intent, and Nadine became a victim of TIP for the purpose of sexual exploitation.



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Each country that has signed the Palermo Protocol has implemented strategies, measures, protocols, laws, or programmes for the prevention of TIP, tailored to its specific needs and existing institutional mechanisms.”



### 3.

# CHALLENGES IN PREVENTING TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

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Combating TIP requires not only affirmative measures but also the confrontation of a range of structural, individual, social, and cultural challenges, among others, that may hinder efforts to address the crime. These challenges arise to varying degrees across countries in the region, making their identification a necessary first step towards overcoming them and ensuring an effective response.

Specifically, in the field of prevention, some of these challenges involve overcoming:

- **Lack of coordinated efforts in combating TIP and tackling structural causes:** Prevention efforts require the promotion of coordinated actions both to combat TIP specifically and to address the structural factors that underpin it. The lack of such effort poses great difficulties for the sustainability and effectiveness of prevention strategies.
- **Centralisation of resources allocated for TIP prevention:** This refers to the limited dissemination of campaigns targeting vulnerable populations, as well as shortcomings in the identification of victims and in the provision of information and assistance services to populations in remote areas.
- **Limited involvement of TIP survivors in decision-making processes:** Decision-making in public policies and campaigns for the prevention of TIP

lacks adequate participation of survivors, whose experiences can provide valuable contributions.

- **Absence of a differential, intersectional, and gender-sensitive approach in the design of campaigns:** Key challenge lies in developing campaigns that effectively reach all at-risk populations identified as vulnerable to TIP, while addressing their diverse needs and profiles.
- **Lack of unified and systematized data:** There is a lack of consolidated and organised information systems that enable fully grasping the magnitude of the problem, including the populations and contexts most at risk, which is essential for its prevention.
- **Lack of inclusive indicators:** Specific indicators for diverse groups, such as LGBTQ+ persons, men, and persons with disabilities, are limited or altogether absent, hindering the adaptation of prevention strategies to their particular needs.
- **Insufficient assessment of prevention campaigns:** The absence of evaluation mechanisms for prevention campaigns makes it difficult to determine their effectiveness and to introduce adjustments for continuous improvement.
- **Stereotypes and prejudices that hinder victims from recognising themselves as such:** The perpetuation of stereotypes and norms that legitimise violence against certain population groups makes it difficult for victims to acknowledge their situation, thereby hindering their identification.
- **Insufficient visibility of the problem and the normalisation of exploitation:** On the one hand, there is a lack of information and awareness-raising campaigns targeting the most vulnerable populations regarding the risks of becoming victims of TIP; on the other, limited social awareness of the issue perpetuates cultural permissiveness and contributes to the naturalisation and normalisation of exploitation.
- **Shortage of demand-side strategies:** Efforts to address trafficking from the demand perspective remain limited, particularly in cases of forced labour. Greater emphasis is needed on initiatives that transform consumer attitudes and strengthen worker organisation.
- **Training of public officials in labour inspection:** It is necessary to enhance training and oversight mechanisms to verify actual working conditions in certain establishments, as instances of labour exploitation may occur, affecting both adults and minors.

In their 2024 policy brief, OSCE and RSO identified several challenges that countries are facing as a result of recent advances in generative AI, including:

- **Use of AI by criminal organisations:** Transnational criminal organisations are employing generative AI to engage with communities that had not previously been affected by TIP. This technology allows them to overcome cultural and linguistic barriers, thereby expanding their capacity to reach new victims.
- **Use of generative AI for recruitment:** Deception and coercion through digital platforms, facilitated by AI, are likely to become the most prevalent methods employed by traffickers in persons.
- **Insufficient security and governance efforts:** Current AI security and governance measures may be inadequate to address the risks associated with TIP, as activities such as recruitment and coercion may present themselves as seemingly harmless conversations between individuals.
- **Detection of criminal structures hindered by the use of AI:** Many generative AI models are available under open-source licences and can be freely downloaded. Advanced models are capable of operating on high-end laptops, which makes it difficult for technology companies and law enforcement authorities to detect their use by transnational criminal organisations.



## 4. GUIDANCE AND PROMISING PRACTICES FOR THE PREVENTION OF TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

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Although challenges persist in preventing the crime of TIP, these same challenges may also generate opportunities to strengthen existing crime response mechanisms and reinforce strategies to combat it. This section provides guidance and promising practices adopted by some countries for the prevention of TIP.

### **Key Directives and Guidelines for Action**

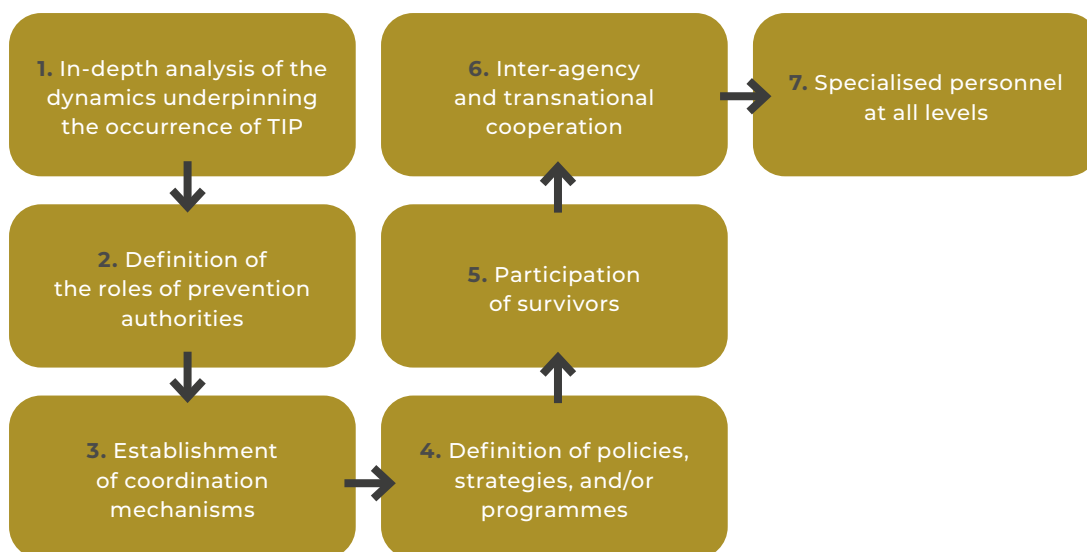
Each country that has signed the Palermo Protocol has implemented strategies, measures, protocols, laws, or programmes for the prevention of TIP, tailored to its specific needs and existing institutional mechanisms. Below, you will find an outline to help guide the design and implementation of policies, programmes, and projects focused on enhancing TIP prevention efforts.

The topics addressed include the stages of TIP prevention, the monitoring of and compliance with national and international obligations, and the formulation of data-driven policies.

## Guidance outline for the prevention of trafficking in persons

Based on the United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime (OHCHR, 1990), Figure 1.1 provides a guidance outline of the stages of TIP prevention.

**FIGURE 1.1.**  
Guidance Outline for the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons



**Source:** Authors' creation based on OHCHR (1990).

### 1. In-depth analysis of the dynamics underpinning the occurrence of TIP

This analysis should include, at a minimum, the following:

- Collection of data on TIP within the country, including forms of exploitation, trafficking routes, affected population groups, areas and territories in situations of vulnerability, as well as trends, patterns, and geographic areas where TIP is most prevalent.
- Assessment of the effectiveness of existing programmes and services for the prevention of TIP. The use of data enables the evaluation of the effectiveness of existing policies and programmes for preventing TIP, allowing for the ongoing refinement and improvement of strategies to enhance their effectiveness.

- Identification of the facilities and resources available for the prevention of TIP, including training programmes for public officials and public awareness campaigns. This will enable the efficient allocation of resources, facilitating the identification of where they are most needed and how best to deploy them to prevent TIP and protect victims.

The following is a promising practice that underscores the importance of data collection in judicial analysis for the substantiation of judicial proceedings.

## PROMISING PRACTICE



### Spain

Data collection for judicial analysis

Office of the Public Prosecutor for Immigration Matters (*Ministerio Fiscal de Extranjería*)

#### What does it involve?

The data provided by the *Ministerio Fiscal* is derived from judicial analysis, meaning it quantifies the cases that may end up in legal proceedings.

#### Why is it considered a promising practice?

The data collected by this entity provides a broader range of indicators than those of the Centre for Intelligence against Terrorism and Organised Crime (CITCO), which are used for judicial analysis.

Data collection includes:

- Data on the accused persons.
- Data on victims, including the type of exploitation, nationality, location, duration of exploitation, as well as information on reparations for victims and the amount of compensation awarded.

In addition, as illustrated in the following promising practice, certain criteria may be applied in the evaluation of public programmes and policies relating to TIP.

## PROMISING PRACTICE



### United Nations

Cross-cutting Issues

Crime Prevention Assessment Tool

#### What does it involve?

It is an assessment tool developed by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), designed to assist joint programming in countries. The instrument constitutes a significant step towards the adoption of integrated and sustainable approaches to crime prevention, as well as an important advancement in inter-agency collaboration at the national level.

Although primarily focused on crime prevention in general, the tool can be adapted for the prevention of TIP.

#### Why is it considered a promising practice?

This manual sets out guidelines for the evaluation of criminal justice, enabling the consideration of cross-cutting issues in order to measure, among other aspects:

- Overview
- National crime prevention framework and capacity
- Research and knowledge base
- Partnerships and coordination
- Specific groups and policies specifically aimed at preventing social exclusion
- Management and coordination

On the basis of this assessment, the objective is to deliver timely and effective technical assistance tailored to specific results and needs.

## **2. Definition of the roles of relevant agencies, institutions, and personnel involved in prevention activities**

The development of a comprehensive strategy to combat TIP requires the clear allocation of specific responsibilities to each agency and institution engaged in prevention. This enables a more efficient use of resources and efforts dedicated to eradicating the crime. In addition, detailed action protocols may be established to facilitate coordination between governmental and non-governmental entities, setting out clear procedures for a prompt response to TIP cases.

## **3. Establishment of coordination mechanisms**

For the purpose of coordinating actions for the prevention of TIP, it is proposed that an inter-agency committee, or another body designated in accordance with national legislation, be created. This committee or coalition would provide a structured platform to foster effective communication and collaboration among key stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, the security and justice sectors, and civil society. It would also focus on the joint development of comprehensive and effective strategies to prevent TIP, ensuring that prevention is addressed across multiple levels.

## **4. Definition of policies, strategies, and/or programmes**

It is recommended that the formulation of policies, strategies, and programmes be grounded in evidence, drawing on the results of prior analyses of the dynamics of the crime. Likewise, it is recommended that this formulation incorporate continuous monitoring and evaluation strategies to assess the effectiveness of the measures implemented.

Crime prevention by States must encompass a range of social, educational, and training programmes that target at-risk populations, with the aim of providing them with improved conditions to reduce their vulnerability to victimisation.

The development of data-driven policies is essential to prevent the crime of TIP in an effective manner, to identify and address its underlying causes, and to enhance the detection, intervention, and protection of victims.

An example of a strategy for the prevention of TIP focusing on girls is presented in Box 1.1 below.

**BOX 1.1.**  
**Kichi Tool**

Kichi is an innovative board game designed to raise awareness about TIP among vulnerable girls aged 8 to 13. Its primary objective is to help them recognise risks and dangerous situations, thereby preventing victimisation. It incorporates songs by well-known artists to grab the attention of adolescent girls and provides a distinctive educational approach to the subject.

Kichi was developed based on the Frame Innovation model (Dorst, 2015), which promotes collaboration and user-centred approaches. This methodology involves redefining problems, identifying opportunities, and creating solutions with the participation of those affected, through ongoing engagement with at-risk girls and with victims of TIP.

The assessment of Kichi showed that it had a positive impact in raising awareness among girls and adolescents about attitudes that may either increase or reduce their vulnerability to trafficking. The findings indicate that Kichi effectively informs them about safe contacts they can turn to when faced with dangerous situations, thereby strengthening their awareness and encouraging them to reconsider risky behaviours.

**Note:** You can learn more about how Kichi works at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TA...6t6mT9S-cnwhh74LpCQAdLCmcnKj/view>.

**5. Participation of survivors**

The participation of TIP survivors in the formulation of policies, programmes, and strategies is essential, as they offer a unique and valuable perspective drawn from their first-hand experience of the challenges and needs faced by victims of this crime. Involving them as advisors or consultants in the development and implementation of anti-trafficking measures helps ensure that the actions undertaken are more effective and more closely aligned with the realities and experiences of those affected.

**6. Close interdisciplinary cooperation among national, state, provincial, and municipal governments.**

It is necessary to establish cooperation mechanisms among the different levels of government to enable effective collaboration and to facilitate the exchange of information and experiences among government entities. This collaboration

is essential for the development of joint strategies that are more effective at preventing TIP. Through joint efforts, governments can more effectively identify and address the underlying causes of this crime, while implementing stronger and better coordinated preventive measures.

### **7. Specialised personnel at all levels**

Given the complexity of the crime of TIP, it is essential that officials and all those engaged in administrative or judicial processes have a clear understanding of TIP in the context of the services they provide to survivors.

Therefore, it is essential that personnel from institutions engaged in prevention receive adequate training through specialised programmes on the crime of TIP. Furthermore, the exchange of knowledge and experiences among professionals from diverse sectors should be promoted, fostering a comprehensive and global understanding of the phenomenon to ensure a more effective and timely response to survivors.

## **Monitoring and Compliance With International Obligations**

To ensure that States meet their international obligations to establish effective policies for the prevention of TIP, enact legislation that brings traffickers to justice, and provide adequate protection, assistance, and support to victims of TIP, it is essential to develop monitoring, evaluation, and reporting mechanisms at both national and international levels.

According to the United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime (OHCHR, 1990: paragraphs 2, 7–9, 16, and 19), governments at all levels should establish and sustain a context in which governmental institutions and civil society can effectively fulfil their role in crime prevention.

In addition to establishing standards for the development of effective crime prevention strategies, the guidelines also assist in identifying the needs of the most vulnerable groups within countries with regard to the provision of advisory services and the formulation of technical assistance projects (United Nations, 2010).

The following are examples for States to consider in meeting their international obligations (UNODC, 2019):

- In 2004, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights appointed a Special Rapporteur to promote and protect the human rights of victims of TIP, with particular focus on women and children. The Special Rapporteur submits an annual report containing recommendations on the measures required to uphold and protect the human rights of victims.
- Another means of monitoring State action is through the reports submitted in compliance with their international obligations under various international conventions.
- Article 6 of CEDAW provides that “States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women.” CEDAW obliges States parties to submit a report every four years detailing all legislative, judicial, and administrative measures, or measures of any other kind they have adopted to implement the provisions of the Convention, including Article 6.
- Article 35 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that “States Parties shall take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent the trafficking of children for any purpose or in any form.” The Convention on the Rights of the Child also requires States parties to report every five years on “the measures they have adopted which give effect to the rights recognized.”
- In 2018, the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) approved Resolution 9/1, entitled Establishment of the Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto, annexed to which are the procedures and rules for the functioning of the Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of UNTOC and its Protocols. Thereto the aim is to promote the exchange of experiences, lessons learned, promising practices, and challenges in implementing UNTOC and the Protocols, including the Trafficking in Persons Protocol, while also identifying technical assistance requirements.

UNODC, acting as the Secretariat of the Conference of the Parties, will prepare a general report on trends and patterns in the implementation of these instruments, including the Trafficking in Persons Protocol.

It is necessary to establish cooperation mechanisms among the different levels of government to enable effective collaboration and to facilitate the exchange of information and experiences among government entities.

## Monitoring and Compliance With National Obligations

In addition to the reports submitted to the United Nations, States should prepare national reports to monitor the status of TIP and to assess government efforts to address it.

In the Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights urges States to establish

*mechanisms to monitor the human rights impact of anti-trafficking laws, policies, programmes and interventions. Consideration should be given to assigning this role to independent national human rights institutions where such bodies exist. (OHCHR, 2010)*

Local, regional, and provincial initiatives may likewise be considered. In this regard, planning, information, training, awareness-raising, monitoring, and coordination between the various stakeholders constitute essential components of an effective prevention strategy.

Many States have established national coordination committees or inter-ministerial working groups to carry out this function, in which the participation of NGOs is essential. For example, Article 29 of the 2005 Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings calls on each State Party to consider appointing a national rapporteur or employing other mechanisms to monitor the State's efforts to implement its national legislation.

The following is a promising practice that involves consulting stakeholders from the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial branches, the Public Prosecutor's Office, private companies, and the Inter-Agency Commission against Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking in Persons (CICESCT) to assess the effectiveness of the Law on Trafficking in Persons.

## PROMISING PRACTICE



### Honduras

#### Post-legislative scrutiny

#### What does it involve?

Five years after the approval of the Law on Trafficking in Persons (decree 59-2012), in 2017, Honduras conducted its first post-legislative scrutiny on the implementation of the law, with the support of the United Kingdom and the Global Partners Governance.

#### Why is it considered a promising practice?

Through a participatory system, stakeholders from the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial branches, the Public Prosecutor's Office, private companies, and CICESCT were consulted on the effectiveness of the law. This review resulted in a series of recommendations for the various stakeholders engaged in combating TIP.

**Note:** More information in Congreso Nacional de la República de Honduras (2012).

## Key Directives and Guidelines for Intra-National and Cross-Sectoral Coordination

The prevention measures formulated and implemented by institutions responsible for combating TIP are necessary and can yield positive outcomes; however, they are further reinforced through coordinated efforts among governmental entities and the participation of various sectors.

For this reason, key directives and guidelines for intra-national and cross-sectoral coordination are outlined below. While such coordination demands greater effort, it enhances the impact, reach, and effectiveness of measures to prevent TIP.

Among the issues to be addressed are shared responsibility for preventing TIP, coordinated legislation and policies, and the participation of civil society, the media, and the private sector.

## Shared responsibility in the prevention of TIP

The prevention of TIP is a shared responsibility that requires the comprehensive engagement of the general population, civil society organisations, and public and private institutions. The Palermo Protocol sets out that:

*Policies, programmes and other measures established in accordance with this article shall, as appropriate, include cooperation with non-governmental organizations, other relevant organizations and other elements of civil society. (UNODC, 2004: art. 9)*

However, States bear the primary responsibility to adhere to the Palermo Protocol, which states the following:

*States Parties shall establish comprehensive policies, programmes and other measures to prevent and combat trafficking in persons. In this regard, it is the responsibility of State institutions, in accordance with their respective mandates, to allocate the necessary personnel and resources for the formulation of sustained plans and programmes for awareness-raising and training, as well as for the implementation of concrete measures to discourage demand, facilitate the detection of trafficking in persons, and raise awareness among the general public (in particular among officials from public and private entities) regarding the existence and impact of this criminal phenomenon. (UNODC, 2004: art. 9)*

Prevention policies and programmes must incorporate concrete and effective measures to combat TIP. These include awareness-raising campaigns in vulnerable communities, the training of officials to identify and assist survivors, and the implementation of effective action protocols. It is essential that the State lead coordination with civil society organisations to maximise the impact of preventive actions, thereby ensuring the protection of human rights and the integrity of persons at risk.

The following is a promising practice that highlights the prevention of TIP and promotes the development of campaigns using educational material.

## PROMISING PRACTICE



### Suriname

National Plan of Action for the Prevention and Response to Trafficking in Persons (2022-2023)

#### What does it involve?

This plan establishes the need to support sector-specific initiatives at the national level involving civil society, the private sector, industries, and trade unions, with the aim of developing projects that raise awareness of and provide information on the phenomenon of TIP.

#### Why is it considered a promising practice?

From a primary prevention perspective, it engages different sectors, including trade unions, to establish alliances and initiatives. It also promotes the development of campaigns with educational materials in multiple languages to ensure broad dissemination of the messages.

## Coordinated legislation and policies

It is essential to establish legal frameworks and coordinated policies at the national and inter-agency levels that address TIP in a holistic and consistent manner. In this context, emphasis is placed on the need to implement prevention procedures that take into account the protection needs of survivors and ensure full respect for their human rights. States, at all levels of governance, have the responsibility to create, maintain, and promote a context in which relevant governmental institutions and all sectors of civil society, including the business sector, can play a stronger role in crime prevention (UNODC, 2011).

This involves not only the design of public policy on the matter but also the creation of appropriate protocols and strategies for its implementation, including the establishment of mechanisms for information exchange among the different regional entities involved in combating TIP, in order to ensure an effective and coordinated response.

It is important to establish coordination mechanisms among the different government institutions involved in the prevention, investigation, and prosecution of TIP, including security forces, prosecutors' offices, and ministries of justice. Ensuring effective coordination between the justice and security systems of each State is essential for the prevention of TIP. Such collaboration enables a comprehensive response and strengthens the development of effective crime prevention strategies.

The following promising practice highlights the coordinated efforts of labour inspectors, representatives of the Ministry of Labour, the Federal Police, and the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office in the practical identification of TIP.

## PROMISING PRACTICE



### Brazil

#### Special Mobile Inspection Group (GEFM)

#### What does it involve?

Established in 1995, the GEFM includes labour inspectors, officials from the Ministry of Labour, the Federal Police, and the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office. It operates in rural areas, conducting investigations into reported cases of forced labour and providing support to the Interministerial Group for the Eradication of Forced Labour.

#### Why is it considered a promising practice?

Through secondary and tertiary prevention efforts, it contributes to the early identification of victims of TIP and the mitigation of harm; it rescues workers subjected to conditions similar to slavery and ensures their safety, labour rights, and the payment of wages owed. This is carried out through the presence of on-site auditors.

## Territorialisation

It is necessary to coordinate local, regional, and provincial initiatives. Local governments are best placed to understand their own needs and strengths, as well as the concerns of the populations under their jurisdiction. Acting in partnership with service providers, the citizenry, and other sectors may be complex, yet such alliances are likely to prove more effective than the implementation of centralised strategies. An example of local-level work and coordination is presented below.

### PROMISING PRACTICE



#### Belgium

Regular coordination meetings within each judicial district

#### What does it involve?

In Belgium, regular coordination meetings of all actors involved in combating TIP are held within each judicial district. These meetings, organised and chaired by the specialised prosecutor on TIP, are attended by the police (specialised trafficking units), the Social Inspectorate (specialised ECOSOC units), and the Labour Inspectorate. In addition, the prosecutor may invite any expert who can make a relevant contribution to investigations or prosecutions, such as representatives from the Immigration Office, the Tax Service, or shelters.

The purpose of these meetings is to discuss investigative strategies and techniques, exchange information, and evaluate and prepare multidisciplinary actions.

**Why is it considered a promising practice?**

These meetings establish a network through which information on high-risk sectors and workplaces is systematically exchanged at the local level. Through this process, partners become acquainted with one another, build mutual trust, and develop an understanding of each other's powers and priorities, thereby reducing barriers to effective collaboration.

**Note:** Further information can be found in UNODC (2019).

## Participation of Civil Society and Academia

Civil society plays a crucial role in the prevention of TIP. It is essential to coordinate actions with NGOs, universities, and research centres to deepen the understanding of TIP dynamics within territories, to provide assistance to victims, raise public awareness, and ensure more effective identification of TIP cases.

Cooperation with this sector provides significant benefits. It enables the territorialisation of prevention strategies, as NGOs are present in a wide range of territories and communities beyond those prioritised by States. It also supports the identification of potential TIP victims by establishing more direct and less institutionalised channels of communication with communities, and contributes to tertiary prevention by delivering comprehensive assistance to survivors and reducing the risk of re-victimisation.

Likewise, civil society plays a significant role in promoting policies and laws on TIP, as its presence in territories and communities enables advocacy for more effective and victim-centred prevention mechanisms.

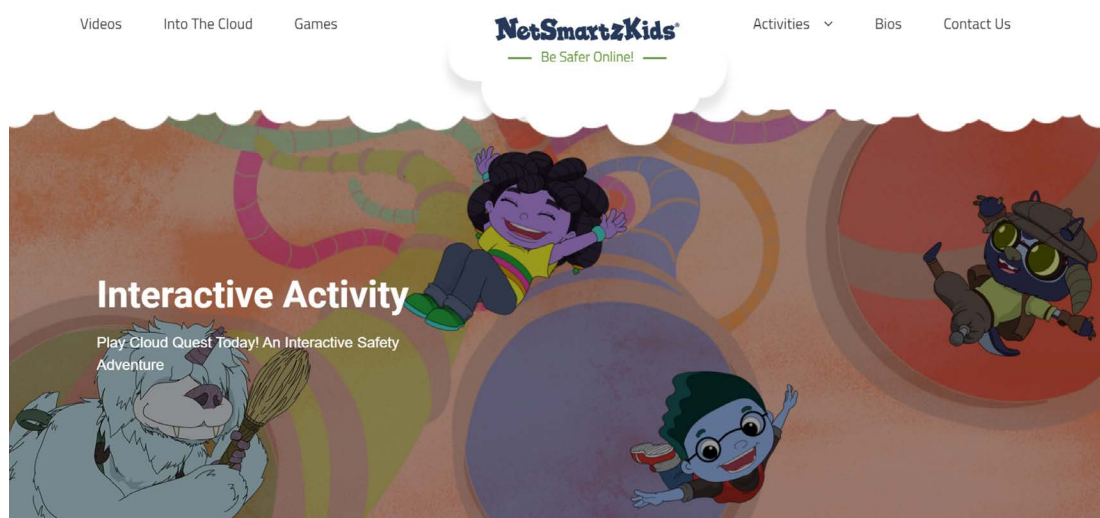
An example of this is Netsmartz<sup>3</sup>, an online safety education programme developed by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC). Through videos and activities, this programme aims to teach children how to stay safer online by increasing their awareness of potential risks and empowering them to prevent victimisation through safer decision-making both online and offline.

This programme has been disseminated worldwide through the efforts of NCMEC, in cooperation with international alliances, States, and other NGOs that have come together for the prevention of the sexual exploitation of children, both online and offline. This programme has been translated into

<sup>3</sup> Further information on this initiative is available at: <https://www.missingkids.org/netsmartz/home>.

multiple languages, creating a significant impact not only on children and adolescents but also on teachers in educational institutions, and has become a source of installed capacity in both educational establishments and State institutions (Image 1.2).

**IMAGE 1.2.**  
**Netsmartzkids.org Website**



**Source:** National Center for Missing & Exploited Children.

Civil society organisations and academia play a crucial role in generating knowledge for the prevention of TIP. Their work makes it possible to identify and analyse new modalities of this crime and to gain a deeper understanding of its complex dynamics.

A prominent example is the study published by The Mekong Club (2024) entitled *From Fake Job Postings to Human Trafficking: The Horrifying Reality of the Human Trafficking Scam Trade*, which describes a new modality of TIP. Sexual exploitation and forced labour continue to represent the most widespread and visible manifestations of TIP worldwide. In recent years, however, a new modality has emerged in regions such as Southeast Asia, where TIP has been combined with financial scams. Since 2022, this modality has expanded rapidly, affecting both individuals and financial systems across the globe.

The Human Trafficking Research Initiative (HTRI) is a five-year program funded by the Program to End Modern Slavery (PEMS)<sup>4</sup> at the U.S. Department of

<sup>4</sup> Further information on this initiative is available at: <https://poverty-action.org/research-and-learning-agenda-human-trafficking-research-initiative>.

State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP Office) and implemented by Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA). HTRI aims to enhance understanding of the key drivers of TIP and to identify the most effective evidence-based strategies for its prevention.

## Media participation

The media can make a significant contribution to the prevention of TIP by assuming an active role within society. By employing digital tools as a cross-cutting approach in their work, the media can influence knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour through awareness-raising, sensitisation, and education of the general public. This, in turn, supports efforts to combat crime and strengthens prevention mechanisms.

Furthermore, the media play an important role in promoting the proper use of terminology when referring to the crime of TIP by ensuring the use of respectful and accurate language. For example, expressions such as white slave trafficking or child prostitution should be avoided, as these situations in fact amount to the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents. The media must also contribute to combating stigma, refrain from reinforcing stereotypes, and ensure that the perspectives of affected persons are conveyed with sensitivity and respect.

In this regard, a series of actions that the media could implement for the prevention of TIP (working in coordination with other sectors) is presented below (Ruiz, Ruiz & López, 2018).

- **Education and awareness-raising:** The media can offer platforms for experts to explain what TIP is, how to recognise its dynamics, and ways in which it can be reported. This may be achieved through articles, television programmes, or online awareness campaigns, tailored to the target population group.
- **Impact stories:** Sharing real testimonies can be a powerful means of raising awareness about the gravity of the crime and its far-reaching consequences, while consistently upholding the rights of TIP survivors and ensuring their safety and dignity.
- **Collaboration and interviews with subject matter experts:** The media can work with experts to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of TIP, thereby ensuring the collection of accurate and relevant information to support prevention efforts.
- **Promotion of human rights:** The media can foster values grounded in a human rights-based approach (HRBA), such as equality and human dignity, with the purpose of nurturing societies that are more aware of this crime and its impact.

The following are selected promising practices that highlight the role of the media in preventing TIP.

## PROMISING PRACTICE



Peru

*Esclavas sin cadenas* (unchained slaves)

### What does it involve?

These are multimedia investigative reports by the *El Comercio* newspaper that use various platforms, including documentary-style videos, interviews, and social media interactions, with the aim of conveying the experiences of TIP victims following their rescue.

### Why is it considered a promising practice?

These multimedia reports not only present the stories of TIP victims from the Peruvian jungle who are receiving protection in private shelters, but also underscore the work of prosecutors in providing services to survivors, ensuring that they remain at the centre of all actions.

The title *Esclavas sin cadenas* (unchained slaves) seeks to challenge the common misconception that victims are physically chained, emphasising instead that traffickers often maintain a close bond with victims, including family ties, which they exploit to exert psychological control. In numerous instances, victims fail to recognise their own condition as victims.

**Note:** Further information in Fernández Calvo (n.d.).

## PROMISING PRACTICE



### Colombia

#### *La Promesa* Soap Opera

#### What does it involve?

It is a Colombian soap opera produced by *Caracol Televisión* that portrays the lives of three young women who are deceived with the false promise of achieving their dream life.

#### Why is it considered a promising practice?

It seeks to inform and raise awareness about the ways in which TIP networks operate to recruit their victims. This soap opera depicts the story of two Colombian women and a Mexican woman who, lured by deceit and false promises, are ensnared by an international drug trafficking network.

Including the media in combating TIP is essential, as their ability to inform and raise public awareness is a valuable tool for the prevention of this crime. This practice is regarded as promising, as it both informs the public about the recruitment methods used by the networks and illustrates how these situations of exploitation can be recognised and countered within communities.

**Note:** Further information in Caracol TV (2015).

### Private sector participation

As noted above, the prevention of TIP cannot rest solely with government and civil society. The private sector also plays a crucial role in combating this crime, with contributions that may be far-reaching, whether through convening, facilitating, or implementing prevention strategies, as illustrated in the following examples (UNODC, 2021):

- Internal institutional policies:** On a voluntary basis and in collaboration with governments or other sectors, companies can embed strategies to mitigate TIP into their internal institutional policies. Private sector companies must reject all practices that may facilitate the commission of crimes, both within their own operations and in their relations with partners and suppliers across and beyond the supply chain. For example, the hospitality and transportation sectors, including aviation, ground transport, taxis, and platforms such as Uber, are in a position to identify instances of TIP that may be facilitated or perpetrated within their sphere of activity.

The promising practices outlined below demonstrate the important role of the private sector in combating TIP.

## PROMISING PRACTICE



Audits based on international reports

**American company**

**What does it involve?**

In the retail sector, Walmart conducts audits informed by international reports to determine where risks to TIP are most significant within its supply chain.

**Why is it considered a promising practice?**

Walmart requires its vendors to provide reports on the recruitment of migrant workers in order to help ensure that they are not subjected to forced labour.

## PROMISING PRACTICE



### Dominican Republic

#### We Protect Children in Travel and Tourism

#### What does it involve?

It is a multi-sector initiative aimed at raising awareness and providing tools and support to the travel and tourism industry to prevent the sexual exploitation of children.

#### Why is it considered a promising practice?

In the Dominican Republic, the Latin American Financial Action Task Force secured the commitment of 63 tourism companies, including hotels and taxi services, to adopt a code of conduct against corruption. The company has undertaken efforts to prevent the exploitation of children, while four telecommunications companies have joined the We Protect initiative to combat violence through online technical support and awareness-raising campaigns.

**Note:** Further information at The Code.org (n.d.) and at <https://www.weprotect.org/issue/>.

- **Job creation for TIP survivors:** Companies can allocate financial resources and collaborate in international partnerships to develop strategies that promote private sector involvement in creating jobs for TIP survivors.
- **Own initiatives:** As part of their corporate social responsibility, companies can design and implement their own initiatives to prevent TIP, with technical support from the public sector and/or civil society.
- **Financial sector involvement in prevention:** The financial sector can play a crucial role in preventing TIP by offering physical and virtual platforms for the dissemination of prevention campaigns developed in coordination with the public sector and civil society. In addition, it is essential to acknowledge the role of the financial sector in identifying cases of trafficking. Examples of such collaboration include the experiences of the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada (FINTRAC) and the Bank of Montreal.

- **Information:** Companies can share relevant information with governments to support the generation of statistics on the dynamics of TIP within specific business sectors.

For more detailed information on public-private partnerships for preventing and combating TIP, see the UNODC (2021) Compendium of Promising Practices on Public-Private Partnerships to Prevent and Counter Trafficking in Persons. The following promising practices illustrate examples of these partnerships.

## PROMISING PRACTICE



### United States

#### Blue Lightning Initiative

With the support of the UNODC Blue Heart Campaign, other countries such as Mexico and Colombia have also partnered with airlines to strengthen their capacity to collaborate and report on potential cases of TIP.

#### What does it involve?

This initiative forms part of the Department of Homeland Security's Blue Campaign and is led by the Department of Transportation in collaboration with U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

The initiative involves the training of airline personnel to identify potential traffickers and victims of TIP, and to report any suspicions to federal law enforcement authorities. It also involves the development and distribution of informational materials at airports and onboard airplanes.

#### Why is it considered a promising practice?

To date, more than 350,000 aviation personnel have received training through this initiative, and law enforcement authorities continue to receive useful leads. This supports secondary prevention by facilitating the identification of potential victims. At the same time, the development of informational material constitutes a promising practice in the field of primary prevention.

**Note:** For more information, see U.S. Department of State (n.d.).

## PROMISING PRACTICE



### Project Protect

#### Canada

#### What does it involve?

Project Protect is a public-private initiative spearheaded by the Bank of Montreal, with the support of security institutions and FINTRAC. Launched in 2016, this project contributes to the fight against TIP for the purpose of sexual exploitation, with a particular focus on the money laundering dimension of this crime.

#### Why is it considered a promising practice?

This project seeks to enhance collective understanding of the crime and to strengthen the detection of money laundering linked to the proceeds of trafficking for sexual exploitation.

Based on the analysis of a sample of 100,000 transactions disclosed between 2018 and 2020 in relation to TIP for sexual exploitation, FINTRAC identified contextual patterns, transaction types, and contextual indicators that are highly valuable for the proactive identification of TIP cases through financial information.

## PROMISING PRACTICE



**SINTRATA**



Tourism and Modern Slavery: Challenges and Opportunities for Mexico's Hotel Sector in Addressing Trafficking in Persons and Exploitation (IDB Invest, 2022)

### What does it involve?

This study, prepared by the NGO Sin Trata in collaboration with IDB Invest, examines the realities of trafficking in persons and exploitation in various contexts across Mexico, drawing on the perspectives of micro, small, and medium-sized hotel enterprises (MSMEs), including hotel owners, managers, and staff.

### Why is it considered a promising practice?

This study identifies the needs, challenges, and opportunities facing the tourism sector in relation to TIP and exploitation. It highlights the specific risks confronting the hotel sector and presents existing tools and frameworks for action, together with best practices for hotels.

## Participation of international organisations

International organisations play a key role in promoting and identifying programmes and initiatives that have a significant impact on the population. By disseminating these successful experiences, they facilitate their adaptation and replication in other parts of the region, thereby enhancing their reach and effectiveness. For instance, since 2013 the IDB has awarded the Gobernarte Prize, which seeks to identify, acknowledge, support, and disseminate public management initiatives of subnational governments, including states, provinces, municipalities, and other equivalent entities in LAC.

In its eighth edition, the Gobernarte 2022 Pablo Valenti Award<sup>5</sup> included a thematic category focused on the prevention of and response to TIP. A total of 68 applications were submitted by 13 state and municipal governments across the region. A panel of four international experts selected the three winning practices in the category of public innovation against the crime of TIP.

- In the category for governments at the second-tier administrative level (states, provinces, departments, regions, or equivalent), the award was given to the project ***Programa de seguridad inteligente para prevenir el delito de TdP desde las representaciones sociales (Intelligent Security Programme to Prevent TIP Based on Social Representations)***, presented by the Province of Tucumán, Argentina.
- For municipalities with more than one million inhabitants, the initiative ***Protocolos de prevención y atención a la TdP (Protocols for the Prevention and Care of TIP)***, proposed by the city of Medellín, Colombia, was recognised.
- And lastly, in the category of municipalities with fewer than one million inhabitants, the initiative ***Prevención de la trata en comunidades educativas de Pereira: Incidencia de la organización juvenil (Prevention of Trafficking in Educational Communities in Pereira: Advocacy of Youth Organisation)***, presented by the Mayor's Office of Pereira in collaboration with the Universidad Libre, was recognised.

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<sup>5</sup> More information at: <https://www.iadb.org/es/quienes-somos/topicos/modernizacion-del-estado/iniciativas-de-modernizacion-del-estado/gobernarte-1>.



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International organisations play a key role in promoting and identifying programmes and initiatives that have a significant impact on the population. By disseminating these successful experiences, they facilitate their adaptation and replication in other parts of the region, thereby enhancing their reach and effectiveness.”



## 5. CHECKLIST

DOES YOUR INSTITUTION AND/OR COUNTRY ALREADY IMPLEMENT IT?		YES	NO
 <p>This list may serve as a useful reference for reflecting on the key elements of an effective prevention policy, in line with the United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime (United Nations, 2010).</p>	The establishment of a central authority to implement national programmes and coordinate prevention initiatives across central government, local authorities, and other relevant organisations.		
	Regular review of prevention strategies to assess actual needs, identify best practices, and adjust national and local plans accordingly.		
	Establishment of victim- and survivor-centred prevention mechanisms, incorporating cross-cutting digital tools and gender approaches.		
	Development of guides, tools, and manuals to support the dissemination of knowledge on how to prevent the crime and ensure the consistent implementation of prevention plans.		
	Central government and local administrations taking on a commitment to provide sufficient resources and ensuring the effective implementation of crime prevention programmes.		
	Establishment of cooperative partnerships or alliances with the private sector, the media, and civil society, and promotion of public participation in efforts to prevent trafficking in persons.		
	Development of public policies to combat TIP that include dedicated sections focused on the prevention of this crime.		

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**United Nations**  
Office on Drugs and Crime