

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

FROM THE SECURITY AND JUSTICE SECTOR



3

Assistance and Protection for Survivors of Trafficking in Persons



United Nations
Office on Drugs and Crime



3

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Summary

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 assistance and protection is structured into four sections. It first addresses the conceptual aspects of assistance and protection of survivors of trafficking in persons (TIP). The second section examines how to assist and protect this group using key approaches, while the third outlines the main challenges and provides recommendations and promising practices within the context of different countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Finally, the fourth section provides a checklist of key aspects to consider when providing assistance and protection.

JEL classifications: K14, K38, K40

Keywords: human trafficking; trafficking in persons; survivor of trafficking in persons; victim of trafficking in persons; Palermo Protocol; immediate assistance; ongoing or sustained assistance; non-criminalisation of survivors; specialised shelters; psychological assistance; legal assistance; Latin America and the Caribbean.

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This document was prepared by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), under the guidance of the Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Section (HTMSS), and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) under the direction of the Citizen Security Division, within the framework of the Regional Public Goods 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* (RG-T3994).

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Acknowledgments

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) wish to express their gratitude to the representatives of the institutions of each beneficiary country, as well as to the strategic partners of 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*. Appreciation is also extended to the experts whose knowledge and expertise have contributed to enhancing effective responses to trafficking in persons.

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Suggested citation: Borda-Montenegro, A., Osorto, S., Peña, N., Pérez, C. A., Piedra, P. and D. Wolfenzon. (2025). Guide 3: Assistance and Protection for Survivors of Trafficking in Persons. *Regional Action Guidelines for a Coordinated Response to Trafficking in Persons from the Security and Justice Sector*. Washington, D.C.: IDB and UNODC.

Presentation

Trafficking in persons is a crime and a serious violation of human rights that impacts millions of children, women and men around the world. 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 populations aims to ensure the effective 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 aligned with 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 operates across three pillars: (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 guides 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 and 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 them by incorporating key approaches, including a gender perspectives and consideration of the digital sphere. In addition, the documents provide specific guidance for each axis of action, supported by promising practices that can be replicated across the region to strengthen the work of police officers, prosecutors, and judges.

This third guide covers the key concepts related to the 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.

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 the 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 Combating 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

This guide on assistance and protection is structured into four sections. It first addresses the conceptual aspects of assistance and protection for survivors of trafficking in persons (TIP). The second section examines how to assist and protect this group using key approaches, while the third outlines the main challenges and provides recommendations and promising practices within the context of different countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Finally, the fourth section provides a checklist with aspects to consider when providing assistance and protection.

The following information is provided to support an understanding of assistance and protection for survivors of TIP, specifically regarding its definition, its types, and the international instruments that underpin it.



1. UNDERSTANDING ASSISTANCE AND PROTECTION OF SURVIVORS

What is Assistance and Protection

These are strategies and actions aimed at guaranteeing survivors of TIP the enjoyment and restitution of their violated rights through the coordination and articulation of the various institutional services offered by the State and its various sectors.

Such strategies and actions are intended to be comprehensive, meaning that they should include interdisciplinary components allowing for legal, psychological, social, economic, security, and institutional support. Moreover, these components must be integrated with each other throughout the different stages of the process experienced by survivors (INSYDE, 2016). As rights-holders, survivors must be at the centre of decision-making, so it is essential that they receive clear information about the care and services provided to them during the process they are going through.

Principles of the human rights-based approach (HRBA) applied to the assistance and protection of survivors of the crime of trafficking in persons (Legislative Branch of Honduras, 2012)

Thus, actions directed towards assistance and protection should incorporate various approaches, in addition to those outlined in the [Introductory Guide](#), particularly the HRBA and its principles, as illustrated in Table 3.1 below.

TABLE 3.1.
Principles Focused on the Assistance and Protection of Survivors of the Crime of Trafficking in Persons

NUM.	PRINCIPLE	DEFINITION
1	Principle of Suitability of the Measure	Assistance and protection measures must be implemented according to the particular circumstances and special needs of survivors, always for their benefit.
2	Principle of Protection	It prioritizes protecting the life, physical integrity, freedom, and security of witnesses, victims of TIP, and their dependents and relatives who are under threat before, during, and after the proceedings, without requiring the victim's collaboration with the investigation as a condition for receiving protection.
3	Principle of Information on the Measure	The opinions and the basic and specific needs of victims must be taken into consideration when making any decision that concerns their interests. In the case of children and adolescents, the right of expression must be guaranteed at every stage of the process and must always serve their best interests.
4	Best Interest of the Child	In all actions taken in relation to children, the best interests of the child must be the primary consideration for decision-making, ensuring the exercise, enjoyment, and restitution of violated rights, recognising those under 18 years of age as rights holders and giving them preference in decisions.
5	Principle of Confidentiality	All administrative or judicial information related to the protection of witnesses, victims of TIP, as well as their dependents and relatives, shall be confidential, and its use shall be reserved exclusively for the purposes of the respective investigation or legal process.

NUM.	PRINCIPLE	DEFINITION
6	Principle of Non-Discrimination	Regardless of the criminal or administrative proceedings carried out to investigate the crime of TIP, survivors of this crime must be guaranteed non-discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, sex, age, language, religion, sexual orientation, political opinion, nationality, economic position, or any other status.
7	Principle of Non-Refoulement	When a person claims to be a victim of TIP, the humanitarian principle of non-refoulement shall apply, prohibiting their return to their State of origin or any other States where they express a fear of returning.
8	Principle of Non-Criminalisation of Victims	Guideline 4 of the <i>Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking</i> of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) establishes that States should ensure that legislation prevents trafficked persons from being prosecuted, detained, or punished for their illegal entry or residence, or for unlawful acts they were compelled to commit as a direct consequence of their situation as victims of trafficking.
9	Principle of Shared Responsibility	It involves working in a way that replaces the referral of cases between institutions with an approach that builds relationships based on accountability and independence between them, in order to promote, protect, and restore rights in a comprehensive manner (SENAF, 2022).

Source: Authors' creation based on the compilation of international principles for the assistance and protection of survivors of trafficking in persons.

Types of Assistance and Protection

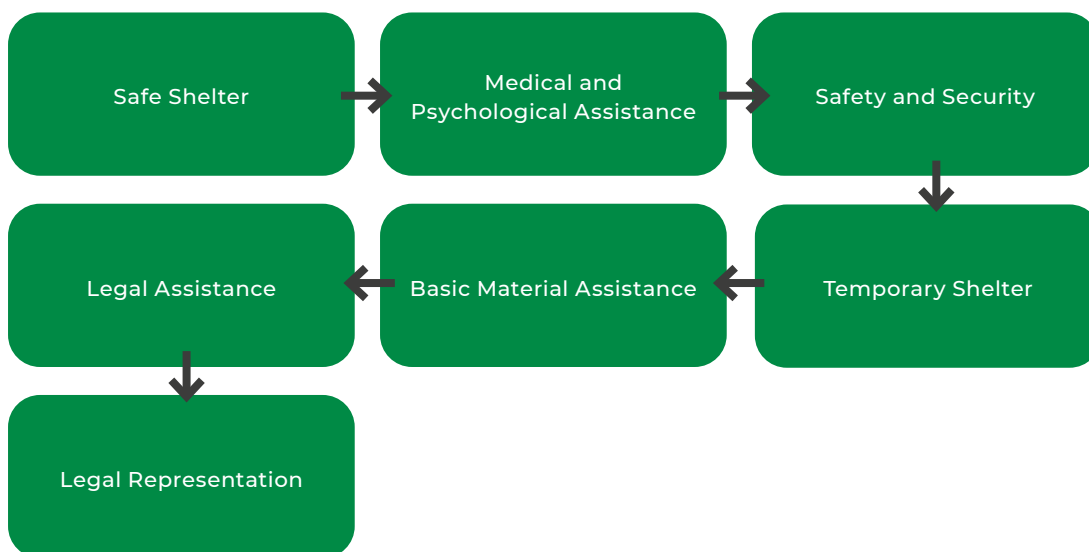
Mechanisms for the assistance and protection of survivors of TIP may vary according to specific needs and timing, allowing for a flexible application depending on individual circumstances and the time elapsed since the case was identified. Based on these variations, two main types are highlighted: immediate assistance and sustained or ongoing assistance.

Immediate assistance and protection

Immediate assistance and protection are provided on an urgent basis, with the objective of ensuring the full stabilisation of survivors. The relevant authorities at each level of the State and within each jurisdiction are responsible for directing and coordinating assistance measures.

The immediate assistance required by survivors, once identified or separated from their traffickers, must be delivered through structured support, either via specialised TIP services or through short-term services activated at the initial point of contact with survivors. These services are generally governed by a series of protocols designed to address the specific and immediate needs of survivors (Figure 3.1).

FIGURE 3.1.
Protection Framework for Immediate Assistance



Source: Author's creation based on CICESCT (n.d.).

In addition, immediate assistance encompasses, but is not limited to, the following:

- **Safe Shelter:** This assistance should be provided as soon as a person is rescued or rescues themselves, ensuring survivors are separated from any suspected traffickers and promptly moved to a safe place to stay.
- **Immediate Medical and Psychological Assistance:** This refers to medical or psychological first aid, which is delivered at two key moments. The first takes place during the rescue operation, and the second occurs when

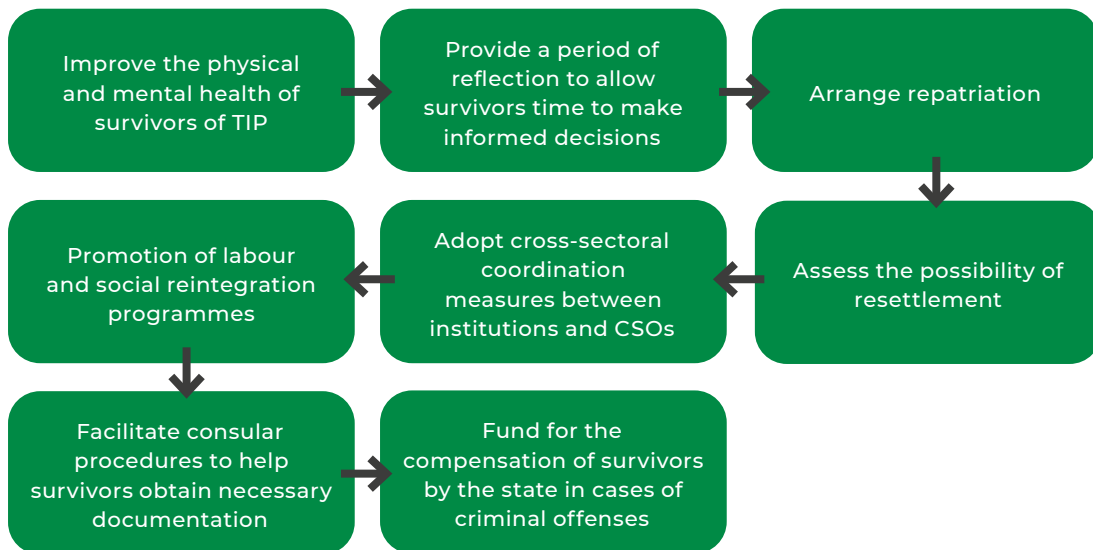
the survivor is first approached outside the operational context, whether following a self-rescue or during their transfer to a centre that offers these services.

- **Security:** From the moment of identification, the life and physical and psychological integrity of survivors must be ensured.
- **Temporary Shelter:** It is a specialised accommodation service designed to provide immediate and temporary shelter for survivors of TIP, with the aim of ensuring their personal safety.
- **Material Assistance:** This includes the provision of basic necessities, such as food, clothing, footwear, and other essential items.
- **Legal Assistance:** Survivors have the right to participate in criminal proceedings if they so choose. To do so, they must be able to receive assistance from a legal professional who will accompany them during the early stages of the criminal proceedings in order to clarify any doubts they may have and ensure that their concerns are heard by the courts.
- **Legal Representation:** Survivors of TIP have the right to be represented, if they so wish, by a legal professional who safeguards their rights in criminal, civil, or administrative proceedings arising from their situation of victimization. Such services must be provided free of charge.

Ongoing or sustained assistance and protection

Ongoing or sustained assistance, in contrast, seeks to provide measures that help break the dependence resulting from the subjugation process experienced by survivors of TIP, thereby fostering their personal and social independence. In addition, this stage of intervention seeks to build a bond of trust with survivors, moving beyond immediate and urgent aspects to develop broader lines of intervention that foster their autonomy.

At this stage, upon completion of a comprehensive assessment of their situation, survivors of TIP shall receive physical, psychological, and social care, as well as legal support to ensure the restoration of their rights. This demands effective inter-agency and cross-sectoral coordination (see Figure 3.2).

FIGURE 3.2.**Protection Framework for Ongoing or Sustained Assistance**

Source: Author's creation based on CICESCT (n.d.).

Note: TIP: trafficking in persons; CSOs: civil society organizations

This type of assistance should consider:

- **Improving the physical and mental health of survivors of TIP:** It is essential to ensure access to medical and psychological treatment to support the physical and emotional recovery of survivors.
- **Period of reflection for making informed decisions:** This involves allowing survivors time to reflect on their available options, thus enabling them to make conscious and informed decisions. An increasingly common practice among States is to offer a “period of reflection” to survivors of TIP, giving them the necessary time and space to consider their situation and determine their next steps. This concept emerged after the adoption of the Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking, marking progress in ensuring that survivors are able to make a free and informed decision about whether to cooperate, without making assistance contingent upon their cooperation (UNODC, 2009).
- **Repatriation:** When repatriation is necessary, it must always be carried out with the survivor’s informed consent. In addition, close collaboration with the relevant authorities and organisations is essential to ensure these processes are carried out effectively.
- **Resettlement:** If, after carefully reviewing the survivor’s situation, it’s clear that returning to their country of origin isn’t safe, steps should be taken to

explore resettlement, allowing them and their dependants to move to a safe third country.

- **Cross-sectoral coordination measures:** Establish coordination measures between institutions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to guarantee survivors' access to safe housing. Also educational and employment opportunities should be provided to promote their independence.
- **Labour and social reintegration programs:** This involves offering survivors employment opportunities, along with guidance and tools to support income-generating activities, helping them build sustainable livelihoods and reduce the risk of re-exploitation.
- **Documentation:** Coordinate with consular authorities to obtain national identification documents for foreign survivors who have been deprived of them, ensuring they have access to official documentation that facilitates their integration and access to services.
- **State compensation fund for survivors of TIP in cases of criminal offenses:** Provide survivors of TIP the possibility of receiving compensation for the victimisation suffered as a result of criminal acts, beyond the issuance of a conviction, allowing them to access financial support that contributes to their autonomy. Such compensation mechanisms should be accompanied by other medium-term assistance processes.

International Instruments on the Assistance and Protection of Survivors of Trafficking in Persons

In the field of assistance and protection, there is no international convention or treaty devoted exclusively to the protection of TIP survivors. In this regard, measures are addressed in a cross-cutting manner across various international instruments concerning the crime of trafficking in persons, some of which are presented in Table 3.2.

TABLE 3.2.

Instrumentos internacionales relacionados con la asistencia y protección de las personas sobrevivientes

NUM.	YEAR	INSTRUMENT	DESCRIPTION
1	1948	Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948)	<p>Article 4 establishes protection against slavery and servitude, emphasizing that slavery and the slave trade are prohibited in all their forms.</p> <p>Article 7, in turn, affirms that “All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law.”</p>
2	1973	International Labour Organization Convention No. 138 (ILO, 1973)	Articles 4, 5, and 6 set out the minimum age and criteria that States must establish domestically to determine the age at which minors may be admitted to employment.
3	1979	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (United Nations, 1979)	<p>Preamble, Paragraphs 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, Article 2, c; 4,2; 11</p> <p>It incorporates the principles set out in the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and outlines the measures required to eliminate discrimination against women in all its forms and manifestations.</p>
4	1984	Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (United Nations General Assembly, 1984)	<p>Article 3.1</p> <p>“No State Party shall expel, return (‘refouler’) or extradite a person to another State where there are substantial grounds for believing that [they] would be in danger of being subjected to torture.”</p>
5	1994	Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (OAS, 1994)	The Belém do Pará Convention marks the first recognition of women’s right to live free from all forms of violence, including trafficking in persons.

NUM.	YEAR	INSTRUMENT	DESCRIPTION
6	1999	Recommendation 190 supplementing the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (ILO Convention 182) (ILO, 1999)	<p>I. Programmes of action</p> <p>This convention denounces and brings attention to the worst forms of child exploitation, including slavery, child trafficking, debt bondage, servitude, and the recruitment of children for use in armed conflict.</p>
7	2000	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (United Nations, 2000)	<p>Concerning the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography</p> <p>Preamble paragraphs 1, 8; articles 8.5 and 9.1</p> <p>It places an obligation on States Parties to adopt legislative or other regulatory measures to criminalise the offences covered by this Protocol.</p>
8	2000	United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (United Nations General Assembly, 2000)	<p>Article 24 and 25</p> <p>It aims to foster cooperation to more effectively prevent and combat organised crime impacting the international community.</p>
9	2000	Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (UNODC, 2004)	<p>Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime</p> <p>Articles 6, 9, and 16</p> <p>Its objective is to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, with particular attention to women and children.</p> <p>It further underscores the protection of victims while guaranteeing their human rights and fostering</p> <p>cooperation among States Parties to achieve the established objectives.</p>
10	2007	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006)	<p>Articles 15, 16, 17, and 28</p> <p>It affirms that persons with disabilities are entitled to enjoy the full range of human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination.</p>

NUM.	YEAR	INSTRUMENT	DESCRIPTION
11	2006	Convenio Centroamericano para la Protección de Víctimas, Testigos, Peritos y demás Sujetos que intervienen en la Investigación y en el Proceso Penal, particularmente en la Narcoactividad y Delincuencia Organizada (Central American Convention for the Protection of Victims, Witnesses, Experts and other Individuals Involved in Investigations and Criminal Proceedings) (SICA, 2006)	Articles 1, 5, 6, and 9 It focuses on drug trafficking and organised crime.

Source: Authors' creation based on the compilation of international instruments.

As rights-holders, survivors must be at the centre of decision-making, so it is essential that they receive clear information about the care and services provided to them during the process they are going through.



2. ASSISTING AND PROTECTING BASED ON KEY APPROACHES

The assistance and protection of TIP survivors are guided by different approaches, some of which have been outlined in the [Introductory Guide](#). With respect to the action guides, two cross-cutting approaches are considered essential: the gender approach and the digital approach, which are described below.

Assisting and Protecting with a Gender Approach

Given that the various purposes of TIP are a manifestation of gender-based violence (GBV) or are rooted precisely in gender-related stereotypes, it is essential to conduct a detailed analysis when providing assistance and protection to survivors. This analysis must consider the context, characteristics, and specific needs of survivors, as well as the particular obstacles faced by women and men due to their sexual orientation and gender identity in relation to TIP. With this understanding, it becomes possible to determine the most appropriate type of intervention to apply in comprehensive assistance processes.

The gender approach, applied as an analytical framework, focuses on the meanings, relationships, and identities that are socially constructed on the basis of biological differences between the sexes. This approach is essential

for analysing the problem and understanding its contextual and structural characteristics, as well as for integrating health services (physical, mental, sexual, and reproductive) and education measures for survivors and their dependants.

Nonetheless, available data indicate that this crime predominantly affects women and girls. For example, in South America, 69% of the victims are women, 25% are men, 5% are girls, and 1% are boys. Sexual exploitation and forced labour are the most common purposes of TIP, accounting for 63% and 36% of cases, respectively (UNODC, 2022). In addition, these purposes exhibit specific gender-related dynamics, with the former more prevalent among women and the latter among men.

In this context, a key objective of the gender approach is to mitigate the risk factors that facilitate the victimisation of girls, women, and LGBTQ+ persons by trafficking networks (United Nations, n.d.), and to prevent the perpetuation of gender-related stereotypes and prejudices that may hinder the assistance and protection of survivors of TIP.

An example of a promising practice in this regard is the *Guía para la atención integral a personas LGBTIQ+ mayores de edad, víctimas de trata de personas en Guatemala* (Guide for the Comprehensive Care of LGBTIQ+ Adult Victims of Trafficking in Persons in Guatemala) (OAS, 2020). This guide sets out basic guidelines and standards for comprehensive assistance and protection, adopting a multidisciplinary and human rights-based approach for LGBTIQ+ adults who are victims of TIP. It is important to highlight that the guide considers persons with sex-gender diversity as a social group facing heightened vulnerability, emphasising intersectional characteristics for intervention.

This type of tool enables addressing the reality reflected in the figures on victims of TIP. However, according to the UNODC 2022 report (UNODC, 2022), global trends between 2004 and 2020 indicate that the proportion of children exploited primarily for participation in criminal activities and other forms of mixed exploitation rose from 3% to 17%. In the case of girls, this proportion increased from 10% to 18% over the same period.

Sexual exploitation and forced labour are the most common purposes of TIP and are closely linked to the commodification and objectification of women, as well as to the lack of economic and educational opportunities that render them vulnerable. On the other hand, the fact that traffickers are predominantly men highlights the complicity of so-called “toxic masculinities” and the chauvinistic culture that perpetuates them. In this regard, it is essential to address TIP from a gender perspective that recognises and challenges the patriarchal power structures underpinning this phenomenon.

The data also show that although women and girls continue to represent the majority of TIP victims, the number of men and boys is increasing. Thus, while

acknowledging the greater vulnerability of women, girls, and LGBTQ+ persons, it is equally important that the gender approach to assistance and protection also recognize the vulnerabilities faced by other population groups, such as men and boys. For these groups, identifying themselves as victims can be particularly challenging due to fear of stigma or loss of dignity associated with socially constructed notions of masculinity (OSCE, 2021), a factor that directly affects the accuracy of victims of TIP data.

An example of incorporating a gender approach into the assistance and protection of male survivors of trafficking in persons is the initiative implemented by Fundación Cruz Blanca of Spain (Fundación Cruz Blanca, 2024), which coordinates a comprehensive care project for men and family units who are survivors of trafficking in persons for various exploitative purposes. This project aims to transform the social and structural conditions that enable TIP.

In addition, this initiative goes beyond the provision of protective housing for survivors of TIP and addresses the issue through an integrated, multidisciplinary, and multi-agency four-phase approach: detection and outreach, holistic recovery, advocacy and networking, and training and awareness-raising.

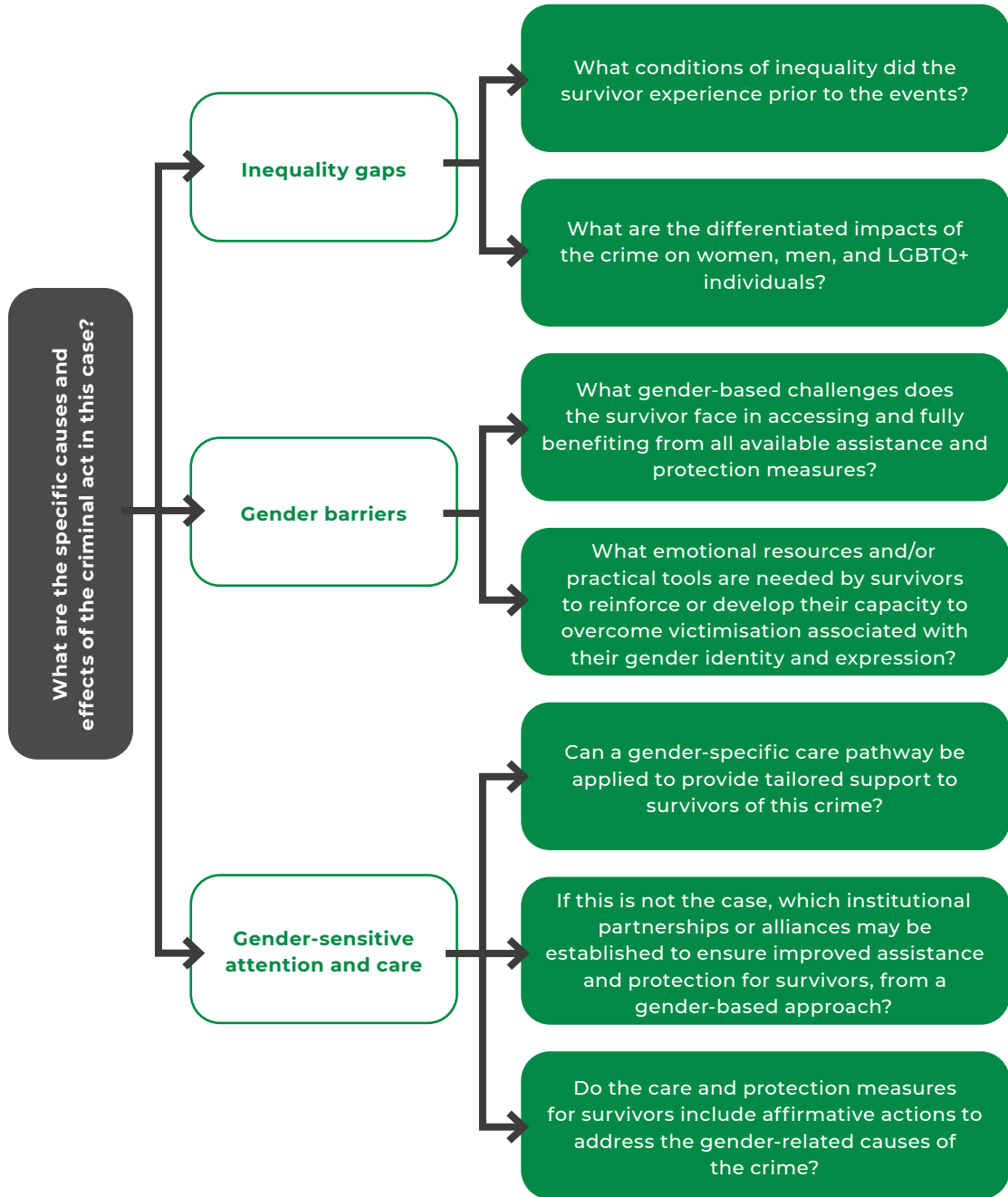
This initiative is among the few strategies specifically designed and implemented for male survivors of TIP. As reported by the United States Department of State, “Around the globe, including in the United States, there is a severe shortage of programs to meet the needs of male victims of trafficking” (United States Department of State, 2023). In light of this situation, it is necessary to intensify efforts to, among other actions, strengthen the training of security and justice sector officials to better address the specific needs of trafficking survivors, raise public awareness that this crime also affects men and boys, encourage survivors to come forward and report, and guarantee access to specialised shelters for male survivors, including boys, in need of such services.

In conclusion, it is essential to apply a gender perspective when providing assistance and protection to survivors of TIP in order to develop strategies that dismantle inequalities rather than reproduce them. Accordingly, States are urged to incorporate a gender-based approach into their mechanisms for addressing the structural factors that hinder access to these services.

This approach entails acknowledging and respecting the diversity of individual situations and needs, while combining efforts to raise awareness of human rights violations and to develop more appropriate, coherent, and effective responses. Figure 3.3 presents a set of questions that may serve as a basis for analysing TIP cases through a gender-based approach.

FIGURE 3.3.

Guiding Questions for an Analysis from a Gender-Based Approach



Source: Authors' creation based on Cortés Miguel (2020).

REFLECTION



Having been introduced to the gender approach in the assistance and protection of survivors of TIP, examine the following case and answer the accompanying questions designed to foster reflection.

Camila is a teenager from an indigenous community who was lured by a trafficker with a fake job offer. Camila was a victim of TIP for the purpose of sexual exploitation for approximately five months. During this time, she was forced to engage in sexual acts with both men and women.

After an anonymous tip-off that led to a coordinated inter-agency operation, Camila was rescued and immediately referred to assistance and protection services. However, she refused to provide a contact number for her family out of fear of being labelled a lesbian, which could lead to her being excluded from her community.

- What factors need to be considered when analysing this case? Which approaches would you apply?
- How can the gender approach be integrated into the assistance and protection provided to Camila?
- What potential risks could Camila face if her assistance and protection do not incorporate a gender approach?

Assisting and Protecting with a Digital Approach

Globalisation, in particular, advances in information and communication technologies have progressively facilitated mechanisms to prevent, detect, intervene in, and ultimately disrupt the commission of crimes.

While the use of these digital tools has primarily focused on strategies for investigating and prosecuting TIP, they have also expanded to include processes for assisting and protecting survivors. This has been achieved through various modalities that complement multidisciplinary care.

States are called upon to adapt their efforts to protect survivors of TIP by leveraging the technological tools available to them. Proposals to allocate financial resources for case referral mechanisms, facilitate access to service information on available services and strengthen cybersecurity, among other initiatives, may be included in the action plans of the various entities involved in providing assistance and protection to TIP survivors.

Figure 3.4 below illustrates some of the benefits of using digital tools for the protection of TIP survivors as part of an effective response (UNODC, 2019).

FIGURE 3.4.
Benefits of Using Digital Tools for the Protection of Survivors of Trafficking in Persons



Source: Authors' creation based on UNODC (2019).

Some examples of the application of the digital approach in the assistance and protection of survivors of trafficking include the Grace City App, the strategy implemented by the NGO, Espacios de Mujer, and initiatives of the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The first is a mobile application that provides survivors with detailed information on community resources in their area, such as social workers, medical professionals, therapists, and NGOs (United States Department of State, 2024), thereby facilitating access to these services. The second is the strategy implemented by IOM and the aforementioned NGO, financed by the United Nations Voluntary Fund and entails the development of a freely accessible virtual document on guidelines for psychosocial care for

victims of trafficking in persons (IOM and Espacios de Mujer, 2021). In addition to providing specific guidance for psychosocial professionals, the document includes recommendations for remote care, developed in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which demonstrated that technology can indeed serve as a valuable tool for psychosocial support when in-person services are not feasible.

REFLECTION



Having been introduced to the digital approach in the assistance and protection of survivors of TIP, analyze the following case and answer a few questions to facilitate reflection.

Ramiro is a survivor of TIP who was trafficked for the purpose of organ removal. He is a 38-year-old man who was lured through a dating app and survived the ordeal, despite the serious injuries caused by the removal of his left kidney. At first, he was hesitant to come forward, embarrassed by the thought of admitting he'd fallen prey to criminals while trying to find a romantic partner. This was a determining factor in his care and protection process, as he was hesitant to share the full story of what had happened. Despite this hurdle, and after initially declining assistance from other professionals, he ultimately agreed to start attending therapy sessions with a counsellor from an agency in his country's capital.

Some time later, Ramiro decided to relocate to a different area. Since it was a small town, not all government institutions had local offices; unfortunately, this included the one overseeing his psychological care. He was offered the chance to work with a new counsellor, but that meant travelling four hours once a week to the nearest city where the service was available.

Faced with this option, Ramiro thought it might be better to discontinue his psychological care altogether.

- What reasons might lead Ramiro to consider discontinuing his psychological care?
- What alternative measures could be taken to ensure that Ramiro continues to receive psychological care?



“

Many countries lack specialised shelters or refuges for female TIP survivors, LGBTQ+ individuals, and males which may put their safety at risk.



3.

CHALLENGES IN ASSISTING AND PROTECTING SURVIVORS OF TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

In the context of assistance and protection, efforts to combat TIP are met with several challenges, including:

- **Geographical inequality in the provision of services:** When services are concentrated in capital cities or urban hubs, assisting and protecting survivors in rural or remote areas becomes more difficult, limiting their ability to access support on an equal footing.
- **Ambiguity in legal provisions regarding assistance and protection:** Legal loopholes or a lack of clear guidance on how to respond to TIP cases can make it difficult to determine which institution or sector holds responsibility. This is especially evident when the survivor is a minor.
- **Limited, inconsistent, or insufficiently specialised access to free legal assistance:** Although some countries have legal provisions aimed at guaranteeing free legal assistance for TIP survivors, their implementation is not always effective, appropriate, or continuous throughout the legal process, as needed in each case.

- **Absence or insufficiency of specialised shelters or safe houses:** Many countries lack specialised shelters or refuges for female TIP survivors, LGBTQ+ individuals, and male, so some of them are placed in shelters meant for GBV victims, or simply provided with hotel rooms or other types of temporary accommodation, which may put their safety at risk.
- **Need to improve the system of financial compensation for survivors:** This is a fundamental aspect of access to justice, since survivors often face multiple challenges beyond the physical and emotional trauma. The lack of financial resources can exacerbate their situation and limit their ability to rebuild their lives and access basic rights such as housing, education, health, and employment.
- **Limitations in harm reduction strategies:** In many cases, the protocols used lack specific strategies aimed at reducing secondary victimisation. For instance, the frequent change of psychologists affects the survivor's therapeutic process, forcing them to repeatedly recount the traumatic events already discussed.
- **Difficulties in activating assistance pathways for survivors (Legislative Assembly of the Republic of Costa Rica, 2012):** The absence of care pathways and protocols (or their ineffective implementation) can lead to a disconnect between the survivor's expectations and institutional reality. This gap often results in secondary victimisation (ECPAT International, 2010), compounding psychological, social, legal, and economic harm as they engage with the criminal justice system.
- **Deficiencies in coordination among sectors and countries:** Weak coordination among the sectors responsible for delivering comprehensive protection to victims limits the capacity to fully restore survivors' rights, especially in contexts where other population groups are prioritised for assistance. In addition, it remains challenging for countries to reach agreements on visa processing and the issuance of work permits.
- **Criminalisation of survivors:** In some cases, the investigation of crimes committed by survivors within the context of their own exploitation hinders their access to assistance and protection, as they face parallel judicial proceedings in which criminal prosecution tends to be prioritised.
- **Communication barriers in the initial contact with survivors:** Due to the state of shock caused by the traumatic experiences, many survivors may be unable to react or recount what happened, particularly in cases involving sexual violence.
- **Limitations for survivors in self-identifying as victims:** A limited understanding of what constitutes exploitation in TIP can prevent victims from recognising themselves as such. This may also hinder their access to

comprehensive protection, as they might be reluctant to accept any form of support.

- **Challenges in accessing survivors' personal, family, and social resources:** Geographic conditions, prior experiences of exploitation, and family or cultural factors, among others, often restrict the survivor's access to essential resources needed for long-term social reintegration.
- **Difficulties in monitoring and evaluating actions (CICESCT, n.d.):** A lack of technical, operational, or financial resources hinders the effective monitoring and evaluation of assistance and protection measures, reducing the capacity to address survivors' needs and to implement timely improvements or adjustments.

Although assisting and protecting survivors of TIP presents challenges, these very challenges can often serve as opportunities to strengthen response mechanisms and to develop effective strategies to address them.



4. RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROMISING PRACTICES FOR THE ASSISTANCE AND PROTECTION OF SURVIVORS OF TRAFFICKING

Although assisting and protecting survivors of TIP presents challenges, these very challenges can often serve as opportunities to strengthen response mechanisms and to develop effective strategies to address them. This section presents a number of recommendations and promising practices adopted by several countries for the assistance and protection of TIP survivors.

Basic Guidance and Operational Guidelines for Action

Every State that is a signatory to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols, specifically its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (also known as the Palermo Protocol) (UNODC, 2004) has adopted strategies, measures, protocols, laws, or programmes for the assistance and protection of TIP survivors. These instruments have been formulated on the basis of identified national needs and the institutional mechanisms available to them in this regard. To complement these efforts, the guidelines below are provided to support the assistance and protection of survivors of this crime.

The guidance in this section should be framed within a survivor-centred approach that prioritises the rights, needs, and preferences of survivors, while ensuring their safety, dignity, and well-being in all assistance and protection measures (IASC, 2023).

It is essential to adopt the principle of “do no harm” (IASC, 2023), which demands a careful assessment of risks and ensures that all support provided respects the dignity and rights of the survivor. In addition, it is crucial to prevent stigmatisation and re-traumatisation by ensuring that survivors are listened to, actively participate in the processes that affect them, and feel safe and valued throughout the assistance process.

Key issues to be addressed include immediate assistance and protection, ongoing or sustained assistance and protection, as well as guidelines on intra-national and cross-sectoral coordination to ensure these rights.

Immediate assistance and protection

It should be noted that immediate assistance and protection encompass elements such as housing, food, psychological support, and legal assistance, which are described below. In addition, a number of recommendations are provided for conducting interviews, an aspect that is fundamental at the initial point of contact with the survivor.

- **Shelter (CICESCT, n.d.):** This consists of providing a safe and confidential space that meets the basic needs of survivors of TIP and ensures their protection and well-being. This type of accommodation should remain confidential and be adapted to the specific needs of each survivor. The duration of stay in this type of accommodation shall depend on the individual circumstances of each person and the applicable national regulations. However,

it is recommended that safe accommodation be provided as soon as a survivor is identified.

The main differences between this type of accommodation and the type of accommodation intended for ongoing or sustained care relate to their respective focus and duration. Whereas immediate care is directed towards a rapid response and the provision of basic services following the identification of the survivor, ongoing or sustained care accommodation entails a longer-term process that includes recovery, emotional support, and assistance in securing durable solutions, such as social reintegration and access to support services.

Under no circumstances should survivors of TIP be accommodated in penitentiary, police, or similar facilities that are designated for the detention of prosecuted or convicted persons. These shelters should offer a safe environment in which survivors can recover from the victimisation they were subjected to, with trained staff delivering both emotional and physical support, thereby facilitating their reintegration and overall recovery process.

- **Food, Hygiene, and Clothing:** It is essential that the necessary supplies be provided to meet the basic needs of survivors, including those related to personal hygiene, nutrition, health, and clothing.
- **Psychological Care (CICESCT, n.d.):** It is necessary to provide psychosocial care to survivors and their families, ensuring confidentiality and full respect for the privacy of each individual. This care should be grounded in the principles of psychological first aid rather than constituting a therapeutic process in itself. Such assistance shall be delivered in a language that the person can understand, including translation and interpretation services where required, and shall consider the survivor's nationality, customs, disability status, or any other vulnerability that may affect them.
- **Legal Services:** Survivors of TIP often encounter difficulties when taking part in criminal, civil, or administrative proceedings. Legal assistance includes guidance and information on their rights, legal representation during proceedings, and help in securing access to protection services. It is essential to prevent emotional burnout and to ensure the sustained engagement of the survivor with the justice system.
- **Other Considerations:** Assessing the situation of each survivor of TIP is essential. Therefore, immediate assistance should not be limited to what was described above. Further measures may be necessary depending on the particular circumstances of each survivor.

Interviewing survivors of trafficking

When providing assistance and protection to survivors of TIP, whether adults or minors, it is essential to act swiftly and effectively to safeguard their safety and well-being. Conducting interviews with survivors is a delicate task that calls for sensitivity, empathy, ethical conduct, and a strong focus on their well-being and protection. Figure 3.5 sets out basic recommendations for conducting interviews in an ethical and respectful manner.

FIGURE 3.5.
General Recommendations for Conducting Interviews with Survivors of Trafficking in Persons

Establish a safe and welcoming environment

It is essential to establish a safe and welcoming environment for the survivor. When engaging with a trans person, it is necessary to ask how they wish to be identified or addressed.

Engage in active listening, showing empathy

Show genuine interest in the survivor's account and lived experience.

Use of clear and understandable language

Ensure the use of clear and accessible language to facilitate communication with the survivor.

Prioritise well-being and safety

The foremost priority must be the physical and emotional well-being and safety of the survivor.

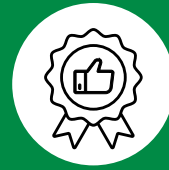
Provide information and support

Provide clear information on the resources and assistance services available to the survivor of the crime of trafficking.

Source: Authors' creation.

The promising practices outlined below are intended to facilitate the work of public officials and personnel providing assistance to TIP survivors. Their importance lies in the fact that they not only facilitate the early detection of cases but also establish a clear pathway for referring victims to the competent institutions. They also incorporate reporting procedures, which strengthen the effectiveness and coordination of the response to this crime.

PROMISING PRACTICE



Honduras

Guía para profesionales encargados de realizar entrevistas para la identificación de víctimas adultas de trata de personas en Honduras (Guide for Professionals Responsible for Conducting Interviews to Identify Adult Victims of Trafficking in Persons in Honduras) (Lawyers Without Borders, 2021).

What does it involve?

It supports officials and practitioners responsible for conducting initial interviews with potential survivors of TIP, by providing clear guidance to help identify the specific forms of exploitation involved.

Why is it considered a promising practice?

It sets out a referral pathway to the relevant institutions for comprehensive emergency assistance, as well as the procedure for filing a complaint or report.

PROMISING PRACTICE



**International
Federation of
Red Cross and
Red Crescent
Societies (IFRC)**

Orientation Guide to National Societies.
Implementing a Safe Response to Meet the
Humanitarian Needs of Trafficked People (IFRC,
2021)

**What does it
involve?**

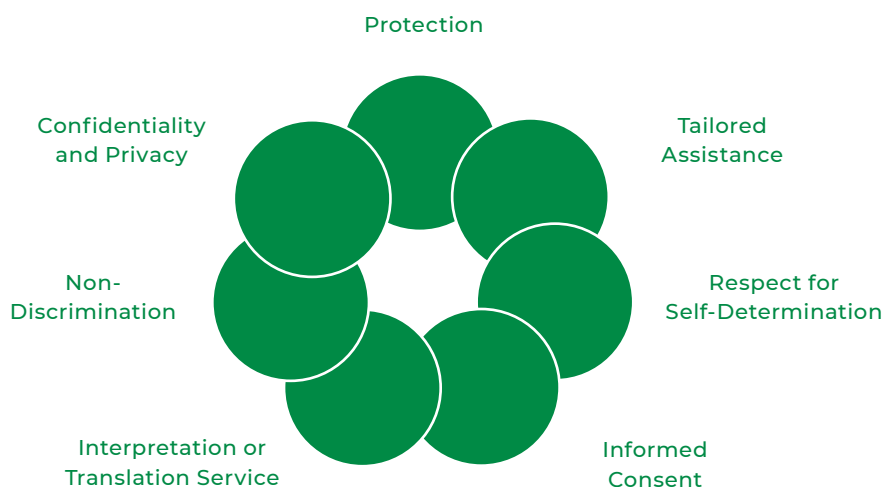
The guide assists national Red Cross societies
in laying the groundwork and provides clear
guidance on delivering initial support to survivors.

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

It provides staff with practical resources to ensure
an effective response during their initial point of
contact with survivors.

Figure 3.6 sets out specific considerations for conducting interviews with survivors of trafficking in persons.

FIGURE 3.6.
Specific Considerations for Conducting Interviews with Survivors of Trafficking in Persons



Source: Authors' creation based on CHS Alternativo and IBCR (2011).

The following considerations are aimed at ensuring that interviews with survivors are conducted respectfully, with particular attention to safeguarding their physical and emotional well-being. They also emphasise the importance of providing tailored support and respecting the self-determination and participation of survivors in the decision-making process.

- **Informed consent and other rights:** It is essential to uphold the right to informed consent, to provide interpreters where necessary, and to ensure non-discrimination and confidentiality, thereby guaranteeing dignified treatment for all persons regardless of their personal circumstances or condition.
- **Protection that guarantees physical and emotional safety:** A balance must be struck between potential risks and the need to obtain information, in order to enable the person to access protection and assistance without compromising their well-being.
- **Tailored assistance according to the needs and wishes of the survivor:** Each person faces unique circumstances, which makes it essential to provide assistance tailored to their specific needs.
- **Respect for the individual's self-determination and the promotion of their participation in decision-making throughout the assistance and protection process:** Survivors should retain control over their own lives and decisions. For this reason, it is equally important to use appropriate terminology and to conduct interviews with sensitivity, limiting questions to the information required to provide effective assistance.

- **Informed consent and the right to obtain all relevant information:** Ensuring that the survivor is fully informed of their rights requires a clear explanation of the processes, potential outcomes, and any associated risks, thereby enabling them to make informed decisions.
- **Provide an interpreter:** When a TIP survivor does not speak the local language or is a foreign national requiring the services of an interpreter or translator, such support should be provided prior to the interview to ensure that their testimony and needs are adequately addressed.
- **Non-discrimination:** This implies ensuring that all persons are treated equally, irrespective of their sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, immigration status, or other characteristics. In the case of transgender persons, it is necessary to ensure dignified treatment during interviews, including respect for the names and pronouns they have chosen, thereby ensuring that they feel recognised and validated in their identity.
- **Confidentiality and privacy:** Protect the personal information of survivors and ensure that their data is not disclosed without their explicit consent. Confidentiality is essential to safeguarding the trust and safety of victims.

An illustrative example of how to conduct interviews with victims of TIP can be found in the World Health Organization's guide *Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Interviewing Trafficked Women*.

Figure 3.7 below shows some strategies for active listening during the interview.

FIGURE 3.7.
Active Listening Strategies for Conducting Interviews with Survivors of
Trafficking in Persons



Source: Authors' creation.

In order to provide assistance and protection to TIP survivors, it is crucial to adapt interventions to the specific needs of each age group, ensuring their safety, well-being, and holistic recovery. Inter-agency and multidisciplinary collaboration are essential to ensuring an effective and coordinated response that addresses the needs of survivors.

The following is a promising practice aimed at assisting survivors of TIP, particularly in cases of sexual exploitation and forced labour. This practice provides clear and effective guidelines to strengthen coordination among institutions, ensuring a timely and adequate response for those affected by these crimes.

PROMISING PRACTICE



Argentina

Guía de orientaciones institucionales: Asistencia a las víctimas de trata de personas y explotación sexual y laboral (Institutional Guidance Handbook: Assistance for Victims of Trafficking in Persons and Sexual and Labour Exploitation) (SENAF, 2022)

What does it involve?

This is an inter-jurisdictional coordination protocol, developed in collaboration with focal points responsible for assisting survivors of trafficking in persons, sexual exploitation, and labour exploitation.

Why is it considered a promising practice?

It serves as a tool to guarantee comprehensive assistance to victims, incorporating mechanisms and procedures that uphold the human rights of those involved, along with more effective measures to enhance State intervention.

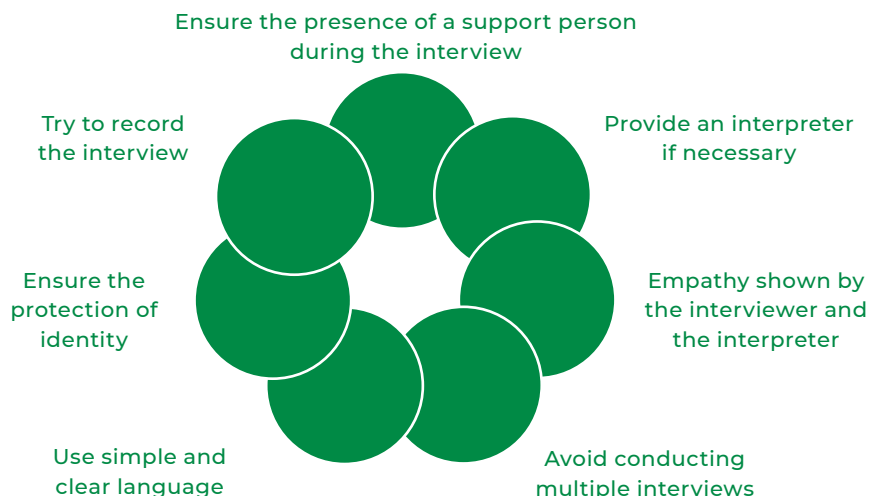
It is based on the principle of co-responsibility, moving away from past practices of merely referring cases from one institution to another, and instead fostering relationships built on shared responsibility and autonomy, with the objective of promoting, protecting, and restoring rights in a comprehensive manner.

Considerations for conducting interviews with child and adolescent survivors of trafficking in persons (CHS Alternativo and IBCR, 2011)

In the case of minors, additional considerations must be taken into account when conducting interviews. For example, post-traumatic stress may result in memory lapses regarding the events or foster an emotional attachment to the trafficker, which may in turn lead to attempts to protect them.

Figure 3.8 sets out essential considerations for conducting interviews with child and adolescent survivors of TIP, emphasising that these should be tailored and adapted to the specific needs of each survivor.

FIGURE 3.8.
Considerations for Conducting Interviews with Child and Adolescent Survivors of Trafficking in Persons



Source: Authors' creation.

- **Ensure that the child is accompanied by a support person during the interview:** If there is no suspicion of the person's involvement in the exploitation, the child may be accompanied by a family member. Otherwise, a social worker or another individual involved in the child's care since their rescue may be designated.
- **Ensure the presence of someone who can interpret for them:** This is applicable in cases where the child is a foreign national and does not speak the local language.
- **Empathy shown by both the investigator and the interpreter is essential:** Bear in mind that a child who has been a victim of TIP may feel more at ease in the presence of women. However, in some cases they may prefer to speak with men, whom they may perceive as "protective figures." Therefore, interviews with children should ideally be conducted by teams comprising specialists of both sexes.
- **Avoid conducting multiple interviews:** Whenever possible, conduct a single interview, planned in advance and in coordination with all relevant authorities.
- **Use simple language:** Always take into consideration the age, maturity, and intellectual development of the child or adolescent.
- **Identity protection:** The child must be shielded from any contact with the media.

- **Try to record the interview on video or any other electronic means:** If the interview is recorded in writing, it is essential to ensure the accuracy of the transcription by verifying the responses with the child at the conclusion of the interview.

Ongoing or sustained assistance and protection

Once the measures corresponding to immediate assistance and protection have been implemented, or when the period established in national protocols for this purpose has elapsed, actions to restore the survivor's autonomy and dignity must be initiated. These actions must be guided by a tailored assessment, identifying both risk factors and protective factors, and prioritising the person's needs to ensure they are met in a timely manner.

States, through their institutions and in cooperation with NGOs and international organisations, must ensure that survivors of trafficking in persons regain the full exercise and enjoyment of their fundamental human rights, making use of all mechanisms required for this purpose.

However, it is important to recognise that each survivor of this crime may have different needs for specialised care, depending on factors such as gender, age, or migration status, among others. Therefore, not all persons are able to achieve full social reintegration, as this may be hindered by structural factors of a social, political, economic, or cultural nature. Consequently, it is important to analyse each process on a case-by-case basis, considering each person's specific needs.

Below are a series of strategies for analysing and implementing the social reintegration process of survivors (Espacios de Mujer, 2019):

- **Psychosocial process:** This encompasses appropriate intervention mechanisms that enable survivors to redefine their life plan by recognising their strengths, individual interests, and challenges, as well as the opportunities provided by their circumstances and support networks.
- **Health:** Most TIP survivors were exposed to conditions that endangered their health as a result of situations of exploitation, making it essential to establish specialised care mechanisms tailored to their identified needs and to ensure appropriate follow-up.
- **Legal support:** It entails accompanying survivors throughout the legal process to prevent revictimisation and to ensure their access to information regarding the relevant legal procedures. This aspect also encompasses monitoring compliance with appropriate reparation measures, including those of a financial nature.

- **Financial support:** It is important to recognise that survivors require financial resources to cover their living expenses as well as specific costs related to their recovery and reintegration into the workplace.
- **Job placement training:** This includes actions to promote access to vocational training in diverse fields, enabling survivors to acquire skills and techniques that improve their employment opportunities. At the same time, it is essential to foster coordinated efforts between the public and private sectors to strengthen corporate social responsibility and thereby expand employment opportunities for survivors of the crime of trafficking in persons.
- **Income generation:** The livelihood and occupation of survivors constitute a fundamental aspect to be considered. It is therefore necessary to assess their technical, educational, training, employment, and other capabilities to implement mechanisms that promote their autonomy and self-sufficiency, whether through productive activities or access to formal employment.

In the case of children and adolescents, a set of recommendations has been formulated that should be considered for their ongoing or sustained care. These are:

- **Family reintegration:** Under the principle of the best interests of the child, the child's right to live within a family must be upheld. However, where the family's psychosocial conditions prevent reintegration, alternative care arrangements must be applied to ensure the comprehensive protection of the child, avoiding institutionalisation to the extent possible.
- **Physical, psychosocial, legal, and educational assistance:** It is necessary to establish mechanisms for providing comprehensive assistance to child survivors of TIP, including the restitution of their right to identity, access to education, specialised psychosocial care, and age-appropriate information on legal proceedings.

FIGURE 3.9.**Recommendations for the Social Reintegration of Victims of Trafficking in Persons****Analysis of a life plan**

Assistance and protection for survivors involves working with them to define a life plan that responds to their needs and objectives in the short, medium, and long term, with a view to their social reintegration.

**Analysis of socioeconomic factors**

A comprehensive social reintegration process requires conducting an analysis and assessment of the victim's socioeconomic factors (such as income, housing, and employment), using the information gathered.

**Analysis of support networks**

The examination of the victim's networks is another key element in the social reintegration process, as these constitute their sources of support and channels of communication.

Source: Authors' creation.

As illustrated in Figure 3.9, the range of actions relating to the intermediate care of TIP survivors requires a comprehensive and multidisciplinary analysis. Consequently, some countries have adopted tools to promote coordinated action among the relevant institutions.

PROMISING PRACTICE



Paraguay

Manual para la reinserción de mujeres afectadas por la Trata de Personas (Manual on the Reintegration of Women Affected by Trafficking in Persons) (IOM and Ministry of Women of Paraguay, 2013).

What does it involve?

It serves as a guiding tool for interventions by the Ministry of Women of Paraguay aimed at ensuring the real and effective social reintegration of adult and adolescent female survivors of trafficking in persons (TIP).

Why is it considered a promising practice?

It ensures the active and meaningful involvement of adult and adolescent females who have experienced victimisation, their reintegration as rights-bearing persons, and coordination among institutions to implement comprehensive social reintegration programmes.

In this regard, although various tools such as protocols, care pathways, and the strengthening of the technical capacity of public officials are essential, they must always be accompanied by the allocation of resources or by strategies to mobilise the necessary resources for their implementation. The constant monitoring of TIP dynamics and their impact, coupled with enhanced visibility, are key elements for positioning this struggle on the public agenda.

PROMISING PRACTICE



Costa Rica

National Fund for Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Survivors

What does it involve?

The National Fund against Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (FONATT) is financed by a US\$1 charge through the departure tax, as established under Law No. 8316, Ley Reguladora de los Derechos de Salida del Territorio Nacional (the Law Regulating the Exit Rights of the National Territory).

Why is it considered a promising practice?

The resources are used solely and exclusively to cover administrative and operational expenses related to prevention, investigation and prosecution, the detection of the crime of TIP, comprehensive care, protection, and the social reintegration of victims.

Guidance and Guidelines on Intranational and Cross-Sectoral Coordination

Although the actions led by each institution that forms part of the assistance pathways are essential, challenges in coordination among them sometimes hinder the provision of comprehensive assistance and protection for survivors of trafficking in persons. In addition to requiring greater efforts in coordination, such collaboration can substantially enhance the impact, scope, and effectiveness of TIP measures, particularly regarding the assistance and protection of survivors.

The importance of developing protocols and tools that promote operational coordination mechanisms for victim assistance and protection has been previously highlighted; some examples are provided below.

PROMISING PRACTICE



Guatemala

Protocolo de coordinación interinstitucional para la protección y atención de víctimas de trata de personas (Inter-Agency Coordination Protocol for the Protection and Assistance of Victims of Trafficking in Persons)

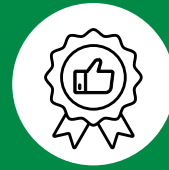
What does it involve?

Provides technical guidelines for the protection and assistance of victims of TIP, setting out specific intervention procedures for the institutions involved.

Why is it considered a promising practice?

It provides guidance to multidisciplinary teams from governmental and non-governmental institutions engaged in victim assistance and protection. It is intended to ensure the provision of care and protection for children, adolescents, and older persons.

PRÁCTICA PROMISORIA



Guatemala

Protocolo interinstitucional para la repatriación de víctimas de la trata de personas (Inter-agency Protocol for the Repatriation of Victims of Trafficking in Persons) (Ministry of External Relations of Guatemala and IOM, n.d.)

What does it involve?

It sets out two specialised repatriation assistance processes: one for minors and another for adults.

Why is it considered a promising practice?

It provides clear pathways, with corresponding guidelines, for the repatriation of Guatemalan nationals to Guatemala and of foreign nationals victimised in Guatemala to their country of origin, in order to ensure orderly, dignified, and safe repatriations without undue delay.

Some key directives and guidelines on intra-national and cross-sectoral coordination are highlighted below:

Inter-agency cooperation at the governmental level

Each country has its own protocols for the assistance and protection of survivors of TIP. However, Figure 3.10 illustrates a possible structure showing how the various sectors and institutions involved can liaise with each other when a survivor is rescued within their country (Ministry of the Interior of Ecuador, 2023).

The following is a promising practice that emphasises the assistance and protection of TIP survivors and promotes the development of campaigns using educational materials.

FIGURE 3.10.

Example of Institutional Coordination for the Assistance and Protection of Survivors of Trafficking in Persons

National Police

- Rescue of the victim(s) and, where appropriate, prosecution of the case.
- Request the judicial unit or the human rights protection board to issue protection measures for children and adolescents, allowing their admission to the shelter.

Ministry of Public Health

- Comprehensive health care for individuals and their families, with referral and counter-referral mechanisms.
- Outpatient medical and psychological services.
- Psychological care for severe mental disorders and for the problematic use of alcohol or other drugs (where identified).
- Access to specialised treatment centres for persons with problematic alcohol or drug use.
- Transfer of adults, subject to their prior consent.

Ministry of Women and Human Rights

Applies to cases concerning adult survivors

- Contact with the victim's designated reference person or persons.
- Psychosocial support.
- Support for victim(s) and family reintegration.
- Psychological first aid and emotional support.
- Territorial monitoring.
- Psychosocial visits.
- Psychological support and legal assistance.
- Placement in a shelter offering housing, meals, clothing, legal assistance, emotional support, and crisis intervention, as well as an interpreter, whenever necessary.
- Psychosocial support following departure from a shelter.

Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion

Applies to cases concerning child and adolescent survivors.

- Placement in a shelter offering housing, meals, clothing, legal assistance, emotional support, and crisis intervention, as well as an interpreter, whenever necessary.
- Assessment of the family unit.
- Follow-up on the progress of the criminal case.

Ministry of Education

- School reintegration and tailored support.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility

- Coordination of care, protection, and assisted return of foreign victim(s).
- Submission of documentation regarding immigration status.

Source: Authors' creation based on Ministry of Interior of Ecuador (2023).

The development of care pathways serves as a roadmap, informing officials about the comprehensive process and the entities with which they must exchange information or coordinate actions. At the same time, it enables survivors to remain informed and to take ownership of their process, strengthening their participation and decision-making within the framework of immediate and ongoing or sustained assistance.

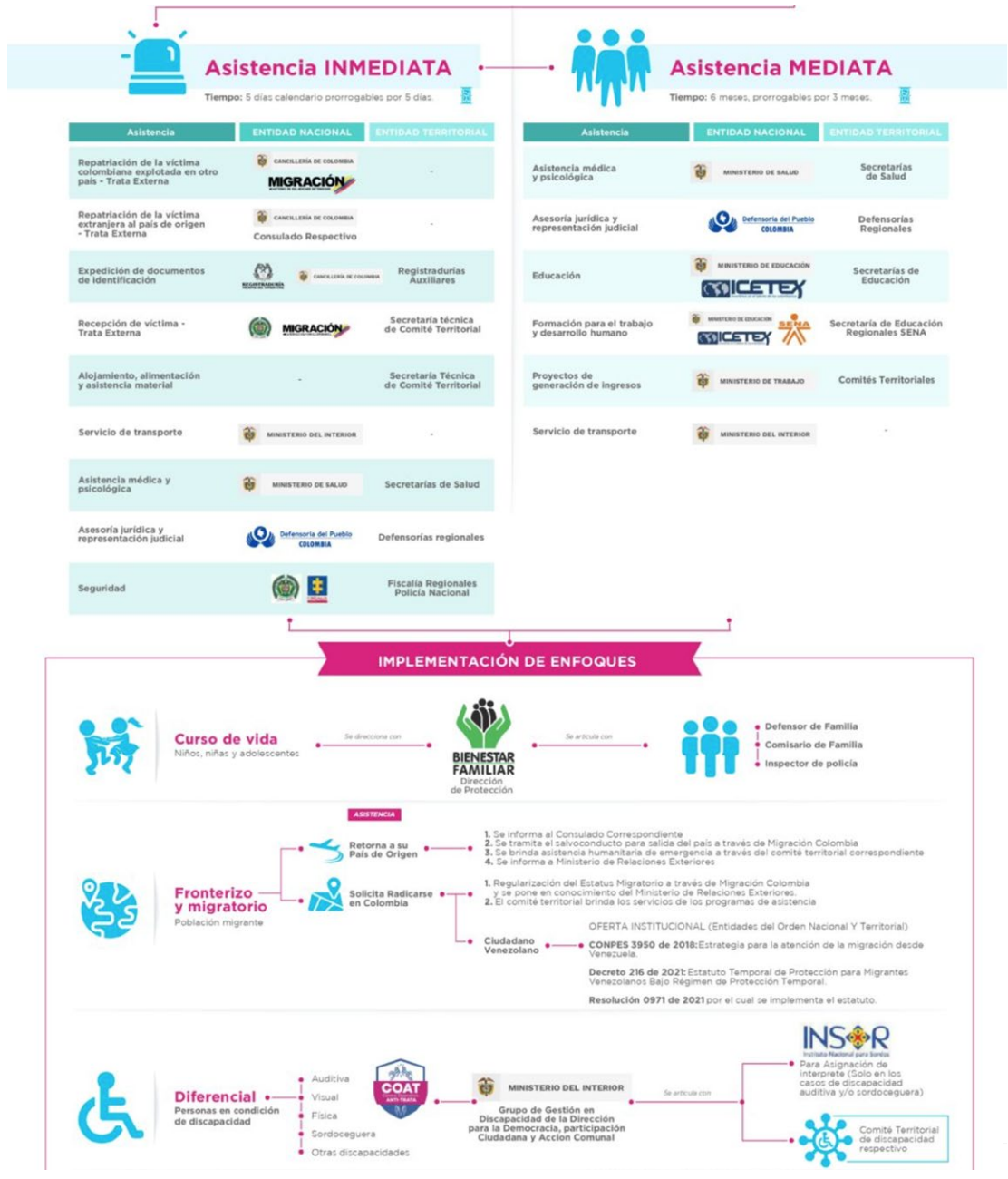
Thus, these pathways should include, at a minimum, information on:

- The step-by-step process.
- The actors involved.
- The actions to be implemented at each stage and their respective responsibilities.
- The method for ensuring process traceability.
- The specific responsibilities and institutions for particular cases, such as those involving LGBTQ+ survivors.

Such pathway must be effectively shared and disseminated in a way that makes them easy to recall and accessible to officials, survivors, and other relevant sectors. An example of this practice is the *Protection and Assistance Pathway for Victims of Trafficking in Persons* (Ministry of the Interior of Colombia, n.d.), which sets out the steps to be followed, the stakeholders involved, and their responsibilities, while also providing information and templates for follow-up on specific procedures that may be applied under different approaches (see Image 3.1).

IMAGE 3.1.

Excerpt from *Ruta de protección y asistencia para víctimas de trata de personas*, Ministry of the Interior of Colombia



Source: Website of the Ministry of the Interior of Colombia.

Note: These charts illustrate the protection and assistance pathway for victims of trafficking in persons, distinguishing between immediate assistance provided to victims and medium- to long-term assistance aimed at comprehensive recovery. In addition, they present the differentiated approaches implemented by the Ministry when delivering services to survivors of trafficking.

Participation of civil society and academia

The participation of civil society and academia is fundamental to ensuring the protection and assistance of survivors of TIP. Below are some of the ways in which civil society and academia can contribute in this regard:

- **Direct assistance to survivors:** Civil society organisations, such as NGOs, can provide direct support to survivors by offering shelter, medical and psychological care, legal assistance, and help with social reintegration.
- **Research and analysis:** Academia can carry out research and analyses on TIP, its causes and consequences, and the effectiveness of the interventions aimed at assisting survivors. Such studies can contribute to the formulation of public policies and intervention programmes.
- **Training and capacity-building for officials:** Both civil society organisations and academia can provide training to staff, professionals, and public officials involved in the assistance and protection of survivors, thereby improving the quality of the services provided.
- **Training and capacity-building for survivors:** Civil society organisations and academic institutions can offer training programs to promote entrepreneurship and employability among survivors of TIP.
- **Advocacy:** Civil society organisations can promote the improvement, reform, or creation of more effective policies and laws to ensure the assistance and protection of survivors of trafficking in persons.
- **Support networks:** Both civil society organisations and academia can collaborate in creating support networks for survivors of TIP, facilitating access to comprehensive services and strengthening solidarity and cooperation among different sectors.

Participation of the media

The media plays a crucial role in the assistance and protection of TIP survivors. They can contribute in supporting assistance and protection through actions such as:

- **Reporting:** The media can serve as a platform for reporting cases of TIP, contributing to the identification and rescue of survivors and the apprehension of traffickers.
- **Information and resources:** The media can provide guidance on how victims may seek help and access support services, while also disseminating information on organisations and hotlines.

- **Responsible coverage:** It is important that the media report on cases of TIP in a responsible manner, respecting the privacy and dignity of survivors, avoiding revictimization, and promoting accurate and respectful representation.
- **Government accountability:** Media coverage can exert constructive pressure on governments and authorities to take action against TIP and to allocate adequate resources for combating this crime.

Participation of the private sector

The assistance and protection measures formulated and implemented by each institution responsible for combating TIP are necessary and can yield positive results. However, these efforts could be strengthened through joint and coordinated action between different public entities and the private sector. The following are some of the ways in which the private sector can contribute to combating this crime:

- **Donations and funding:** The private sector can collaborate through non-profit organisations that assist TIP survivors, providing financial contributions or other material resources, as well as technical or logistical support.
- **Training and awareness-raising:** Private sector organisations can train their staff to recognise potential signs of TIP within their operations and communities.
- **Employment and livelihood opportunities:** Companies can collaborate with organisations that support TIP survivors by offering employment opportunities, as well as professional training and development programmes.
- **Promoting ethical supply chains:** Companies can review and strengthen their supply chains to ensure that no forced labour or TIP occurs at any stage of production.
- **Participation in public-private initiatives:** Companies can engage in initiatives to combat TIP, such as business alliances against trafficking or corporate social responsibility campaigns.




“

It is important to recognise that survivors require financial resources to cover their living expenses, as well as specific costs related to their recovery and reintegration into the workplace.

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5. CHECKLIST

DOES YOUR INSTITUTION AND/OR COUNTRY ALREADY IMPLEMENT IT?		YES	NO
 <p>This list may be a useful tool for considering key elements of protection in line with the Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking (OHCHR, 2010).</p>	Implement protocols or tools for inter-agency cooperation among public entities, civil society organisations, and international cooperation agencies to strengthen assistance and protection services for TIP survivors.		
	Establish national action plans to foster linkages and partnerships between civil society organisations and public institutions engaged in combating trafficking in persons or providing assistance to its victims.		
	Ensure the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into all assistance and protection measures for survivors, while also considering other intersectional factors such as ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, and gender identity, among others.		
	Safeguard the fundamental rights of all survivors in any mechanism or measure adopted for their assistance and protection.		
	Establish mechanisms to monitor the impact of laws, regulations, programmes, and activities related to survivor assistance and protection, and to ensure proper follow-up of the actions implemented.		

DOES YOUR INSTITUTION AND/OR COUNTRY ALREADY IMPLEMENT IT?		YES	NO
	Submit periodic reports to the United Nations committees that monitor human rights treaties with updates on the measures taken to prevent and combat trafficking in persons.		
	Ensure that bilateral, regional, and international cooperation agreements, as well as laws and regulations on trafficking in persons, do not undermine the rights, obligations, or responsibilities of States under public international law.		

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