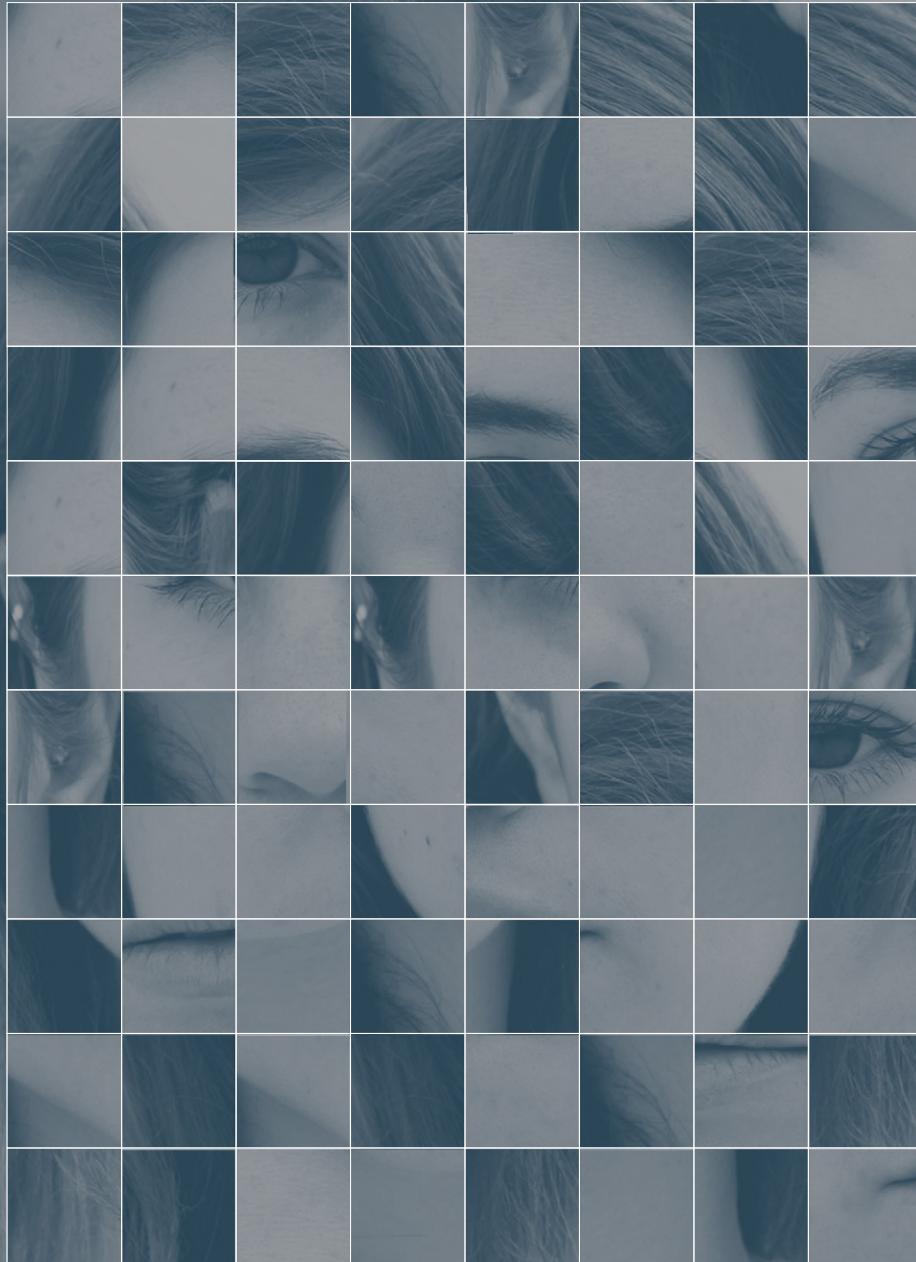


# Regional Action Guidelines for **A COORDINATED RESPONSE TO TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS**

FROM THE SECURITY AND JUSTICE SECTOR

# 4



## International Cooperation to Combat Trafficking in Persons



United Nations  
Office on Drugs and Crime



# 4

## International Cooperation to Combat Trafficking in Persons



United Nations  
Office on Drugs and Crime



## Summary

Trafficking in persons (TIP) 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 an individual's 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 international cooperation is structured into five sections. It begins by addressing the conceptual aspects of international cooperation, followed by guidance on cooperation under key approaches, an outline of the main challenges faced, and concludes with recommendations and promising practices for international cooperation in the prevention, investigation, and prosecution of cases, as well as in the provision of assistance and protection to survivors of TIP. Lastly, it includes a checklist highlighting key aspects to consider in relation to international cooperation.

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**JEL classifications:** K14, K33, K38, K40, K42

**Key words:** trafficking in persons; human trafficking; international cooperation; security; justice; digital approach; gender approach; informal cooperation mechanisms; formal cooperation mechanisms; agreements; repatriation; regional cooperation frameworks; 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 prevents 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 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, 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 fourth guide 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 incorporated 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.

## 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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This guide is composed of five sections. It begins by addressing the conceptual aspects of international cooperation, followed by guidance on cooperation under key approaches, an outline of the main challenges faced, and concludes with recommendations and promising practices for international cooperation in the prevention, investigation, and prosecution of cases, as well as in the provision of assistance and protection to survivors of trafficking in persons (TIP). Lastly, it includes a checklist highlighting key aspects to consider in relation to international cooperation.

“International cooperation refers to the relationship established between two or more countries, organisations or civil society entities, with the aim of achieving mutually agreed development objectives.”  
(RACI, 2017)



# 1. UNDERSTANDING INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

---

Relevant information for understanding cooperation to combat TIP is presented below, specifically regarding its concept, the different types of cooperation, and the international instruments that support it.

## What is International Cooperation?

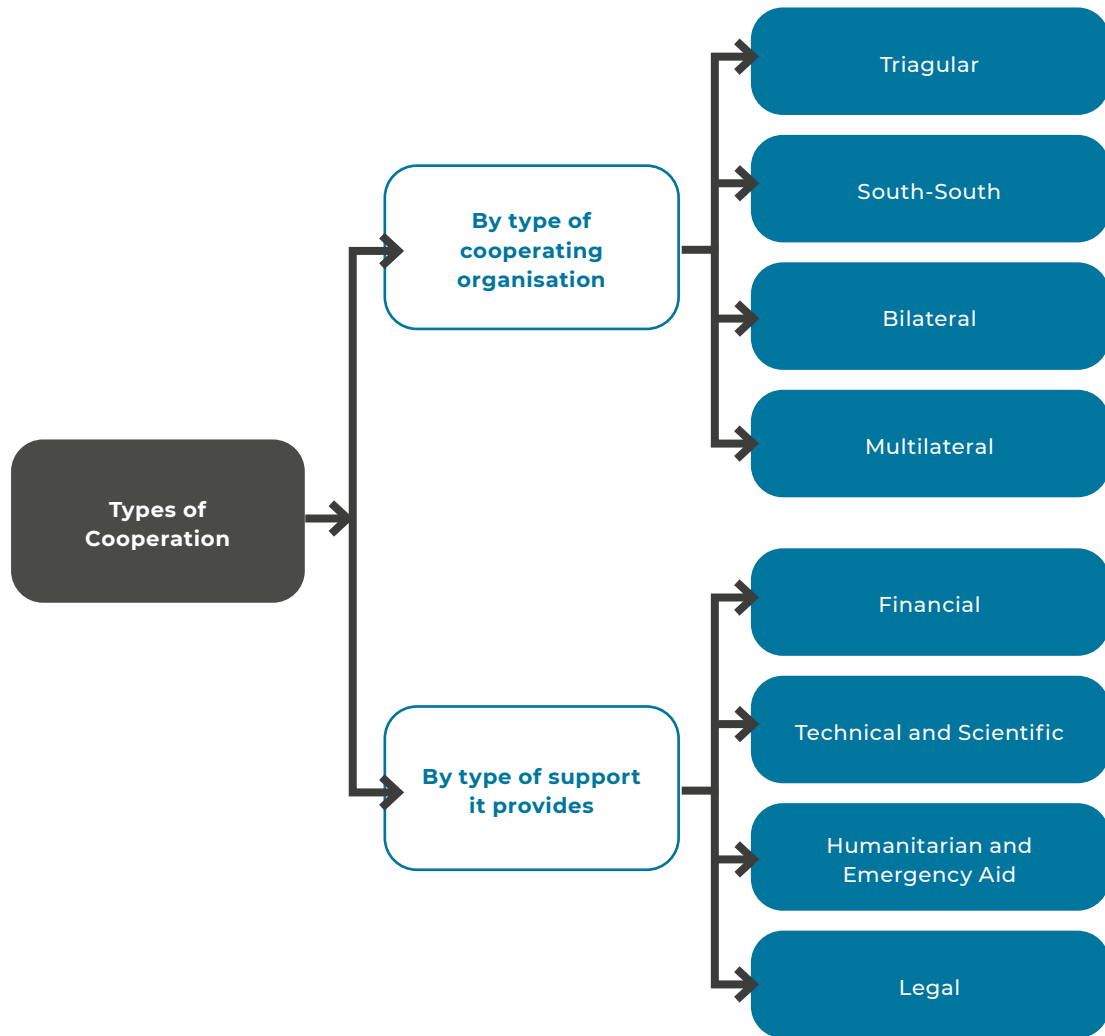
According to the Argentine Network for International Cooperation “international cooperation refers to the relationship established between two or more countries, agencies or civil society organisations, with the aim of achieving mutually agreed development objectives” (RACI, 2017). It is grounded on the exchange of resources, knowledge, technologies, and experiences, with the aim of addressing shared challenges, fostering economic, social, and environmental progress, and reinforcing peace and stability at the global level.

International cooperation encompasses a broad spectrum of areas, including humanitarian assistance, development aid, and collaboration on security, trade, environmental protection, and human rights, among other key domains essential to the well-being and prosperity of the international community.

# Types of International Cooperation

International cooperation can be classified in various ways. This publication will describe two of them: (i) by type of cooperating organisation, which refers to the relationship and characteristics of those involved, and (ii) by type of support shared through that relationship. The different mechanisms for both types of cooperation are outlined in Figure 4.1.

**FIGURE 4.1.**  
Types of International Cooperation



Source: Authors' creation based on RACI (2023).

Below is a description of each cooperation method and its potential contribution to combating TIP.

## By type of cooperating organisation

### Triangular cooperation<sup>1</sup>

This form of cooperation is of a mixed nature, combining traditional or vertical cooperation with South-South cooperation to deliver assistance to a third country. Triangular cooperation in combating TIP facilitates collaboration among a traditional donor country, an assistance recipient country, and a third partner to implement joint programmes and projects. This may encompass institutional capacity-building, the provision of specialised technical assistance, and the coordination of efforts aimed not only at identifying and protecting victims of TIP, but also at prosecuting those responsible for committing the crime.

### South-South cooperation<sup>2</sup>

This is a type of cooperation grounded in principles of horizontality, solidarity, mutual interest, and mutual benefit, aimed at jointly addressing development challenges and the key priorities of the participating countries.

In the context of combating TIP, South-South cooperation enables developing countries to exchange best practices, experiences, and strategies to prevent and combat this crime. Countries can cooperate by sharing information on trafficking routes, the purposes of exploitation, and specific cases, as well as by enhancing professional training and raising public awareness on the matter.

### Bilateral<sup>3</sup>

Bilateral cooperation is established between two countries with the aim of mutually benefiting from the exchange of resources, knowledge, and experience. Through this type of cooperation, a government offers direct support to another country to foster progress in key areas such as economic development, social advancement, and institutional strengthening.

In combating trafficking in persons, countries may engage in direct cooperation on prevention efforts, survivor protection, and the investigation

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<sup>1</sup> This section is based on Ministerio de Comercio, Industria y Turismo de Colombia (undated).

<sup>2</sup> Information sourced from the Ministerio de Comercio, Industria y Turismo de Colombia (undated).

<sup>3</sup> This section is based on RACI (2023).

and prosecution of traffickers. Bilateral agreements enable countries to collaborate on the investigation of cases, the sharing of intelligence, and the enhancement of domestic legal and policy frameworks.

### **Multilateral<sup>4</sup>**

Multilateral cooperation involves the engagement of multiple countries and international organisations in the pursuit of solutions to global challenges and the advancement of sustainable development. This form of cooperation is essential, as it enables coordination and joint action among multiple stakeholders, leading to a more substantial and effective impact on challenges that transcend national borders.

In the specific context of combating TIP, multilateral cooperation is vital for coordinating efforts at the global level, establishing international standards, and fostering collaboration among a broad range of stakeholders.

## **By type of support provided**

### **Financial<sup>5</sup>**

International cooperation in this category involves the allocation of financial resources by States, international organisations, or private entities to support projects and programmes in beneficiary countries. In efforts to combat TIP, substantial financial resources are often required to conduct investigations, carry out operations, implement prevention programmes, provide assistance to victims, and deliver training for professionals, among other essential actions.

### **Technical and scientific<sup>6</sup>**

This type of cooperation involves the transfer of technical expertise and the exchange of best practices between countries to enhance investigative capacities, data analysis, victim identification, and the tracking of criminal networks, among other key areas. Technical scientific cooperation may involve the development of technological tools to enhance the effectiveness of efforts to combat TIP.

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**4** Based on information from RACI (2023).

**5** Based on information from RACI (2023).

**6** Information sourced from RACI (2023).

### Humanitarian and emergency aid<sup>7</sup>

International cooperation in the form of humanitarian and emergency aid focuses on delivering immediate assistance to populations affected by humanitarian crises, including natural disasters, armed conflicts, pandemics, and other emergency situations. Humanitarian and emergency aid is delivered swiftly and in a coordinated manner, based on the most urgent and essential needs of the affected populations.

### Legal<sup>8</sup>

International cooperation in the field of legal support aims to strengthen legal frameworks, judicial institutions, and justice systems in recipient countries, fostering the rule of law, transparency, accountability, and respect for human rights.

## Mechanisms in International Cooperation

Once the various types of international cooperation have been identified, it becomes essential to describe the mechanisms available for their implementation. These mechanisms, which serve as practical tools to operationalise cooperation efforts, are classified into formal mechanisms, and informal mechanisms, as outlined below.

### Formal mechanisms<sup>9</sup>

Formal international cooperation mechanisms are essential instruments for fostering collaboration among countries, international organisations, and other entities in pursuit of common objectives.

These cooperation mechanisms are grounded in formal agreements between the competent agencies or the countries involved. They are regulated solely by the provisions outlined in the respective agreements and are implemented within the legal frameworks of the parties involved. They may include investigative activities and exchanging sensitive or confidential information.

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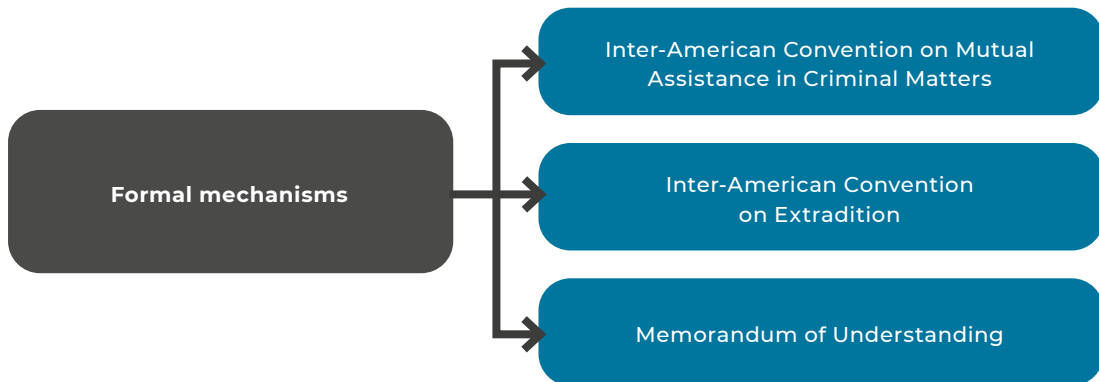
<sup>7</sup> This section is based on RACI (2023).

<sup>8</sup> Based on RACI (2023).

<sup>9</sup> Information sourced from Tassano (2014).

Formal cooperation entails agreements between various agencies and/or countries on matters of common interest. Figure 4.2 below provides examples of formal mechanisms.

**FIGURE 4.2.**  
**Formal Mechanisms for International Cooperation**



**Source:** Authors' creation based on UNODC (undated) SHERLOC.

States employ formal mechanisms to cooperate in criminal investigations in line with the principle of reciprocity. When the requesting State and the requested State are bound by a treaty, the request is made pursuant to that agreement. This principle of reciprocity facilitates the processing and execution of requests for international legal cooperation, even when no specific treaty exists between the two countries. It also provides a basis for bilateral negotiations on matters of particular interest. In the absence of a bilateral or multilateral treaty, reciprocity constitutes a fundamental requirement for the provision of international legal cooperation.

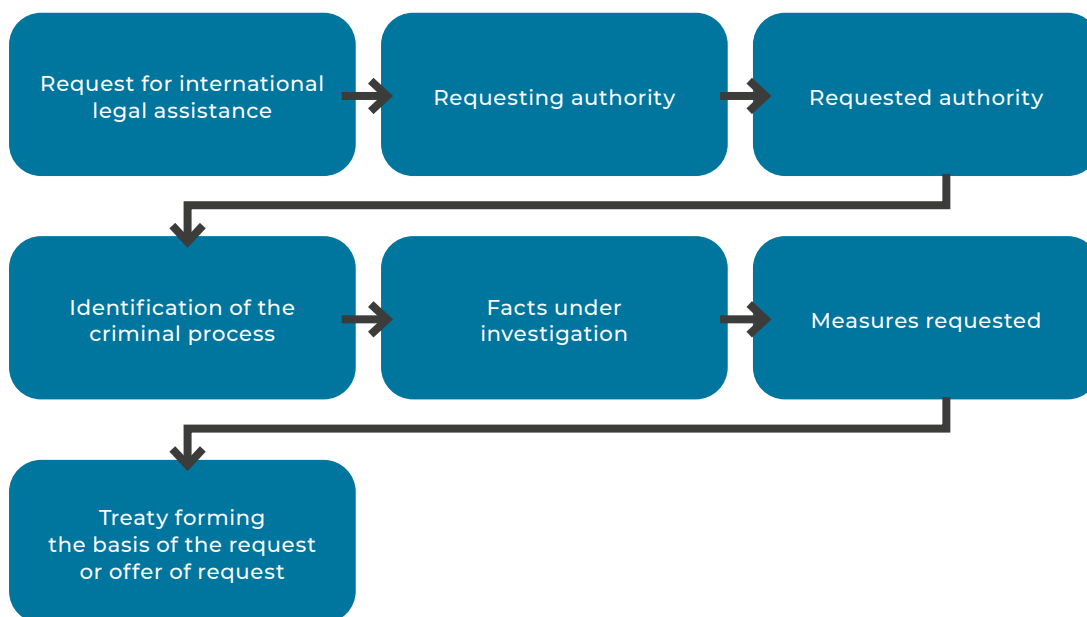
In the context of international legal assistance, this is effected through a formal request for assistance issued by a judge or prosecutor, commonly referred to as a letter rogatory. This document outlines the measures requested and the requirements established under the applicable treaty or relevant legislation and is forwarded to the relevant authorities of the requested State through the central authority (DIGCRI, 2019).

In addition, memoranda of understanding could also be used, which are assistance arrangements of a less formal nature than treaties or conventions, and may not carry binding legal force. Nevertheless, they serve a practical purpose by facilitating the implementation of specific activities within the framework of the commitments undertaken, particularly in the context of combating TIP.

It is important to note that, although this process may be slower and require more time to obtain the requested information, the letter rogatory remains the only lawful means of obtaining evidence admissible in court.

Figure 4.3 below outlines the requirements for submitting a request for international legal assistance.

**FIGURE 4.3.**  
**Request for Mutual Legal Assistance**



**Source:** Authors' creation based on DIGCRI (2019).

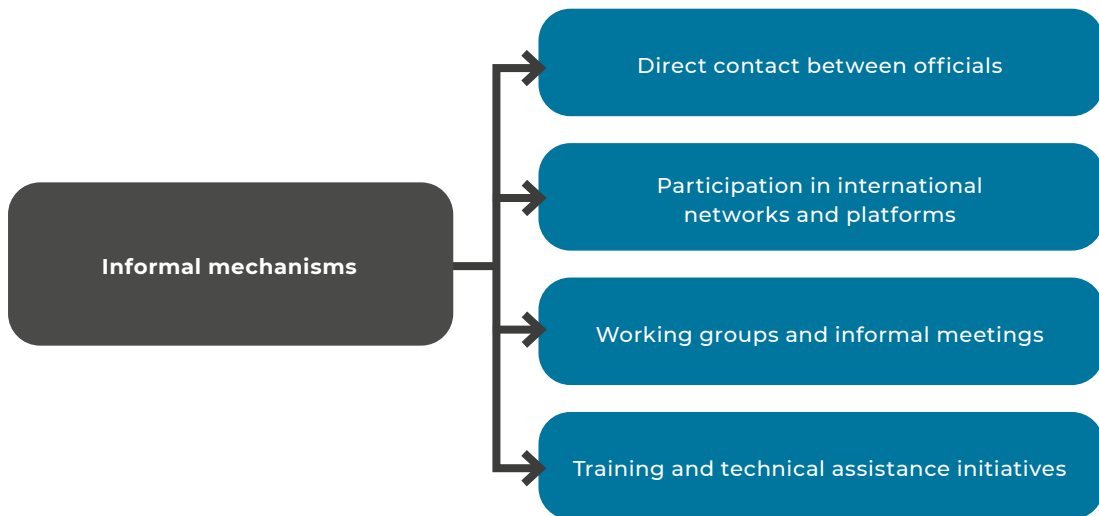
### Informal mechanisms<sup>10</sup>

Informal mechanisms between officials of agencies engaged in combating TIP constitute a key element of cooperation. These mechanisms operate outside the framework of specific agreements entered into by the countries involved. This flexible approach facilitates direct exchanges, within the bounds of applicable legal constraints, enabling a more effective and timely response. To date, telephone communication and the use of messaging applications such as WhatsApp have been the most widely utilised means for this collaboration.

Through these channels, general information is exchanged on a wide range of topics, including those illustrated in Figure 4.4.

<sup>10</sup> This section is based on Tassano (2014).

**FIGURE 4.4.**  
Informal Mechanisms for International Cooperation



**Source:** Authors' creation based on UNODC (n.d.) SHERLOC.

These mechanisms aim to streamline and facilitate communication and information sharing by enabling direct collaboration between the competent authorities of the States, which may, in turn, be integrated into broader international cooperation networks.

It is important to note that while the informal exchange of information can be valuable during the investigative stage, only information obtained through formal mechanisms is admissible in court.

## Agreements, Conventions, and Regional Cooperation Frameworks for Combating TIP

Regional mechanisms have been established to support cooperation in criminal matters in order to combat TIP. This has strengthened international integration and facilitated a coordinated response to the phenomenon involving all regional actors.

Table 4.1 below sets out some of the spaces or frameworks available to countries, in accordance with the purview of each mechanism.

**TABLE 4.1.**

**Regional Frameworks for Cooperation in Criminal Matters Related to TIP**

NUM.	NAME	WHAT IS ITS PURPOSE?	WHICH COUNTRIES/ ORGANISATIONS ARE MEMBERS?
1	Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT, 2023)	It is a policy forum established by mandate of the UN General Assembly to enhance coordination among UN agencies and other relevant international organisations, with the aim of promoting a holistic and comprehensive approach to preventing and combating trafficking in persons, including the protection and support of victims.	ILO, IOM, UNICEF, UN Women, ACNUR, and UNODC <sup>a</sup>
2	Plataforma Regional contra la Trata de Personas y el Tráfico Ilícito de Migrantes (IOM, 2023)	It functions as a regional coordination platform designed to strengthen collaboration among South American countries, with a primary focus on preventing and prosecuting transnational crimes and ensuring the reparation of victims' rights.	Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela
3	La Coalición Regional contra la Trata de Personas y el Tráfico Ilícito de Migrantes (CORETT) (undated)	It is a regional platform made up of commissions, coalitions, and national councils of the States Parties, through which initiatives, synergies, strategies, and coordinated mechanisms are promoted to prevent and prosecute TIP and the smuggling of migrants, as well as to provide comprehensive support to victims of trafficking and smuggled migrants in need of protection.	Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama

NUM.	NAME	WHAT IS ITS PURPOSE?	WHICH COUNTRIES/ ORGANISATIONS ARE MEMBERS?
4	Ibero-American Network for International Legal Cooperation (IberRed) (COMJIB, undated)	It is a cooperation tool for civil and criminal matters, available to legal practitioners in 22 Ibero-American countries, including Spain, Portugal, and Andorra, as well as the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico. Its objective is to maintain an up-to-date information system on the various legal systems within the Ibero-American Community of Nations.	Andorra, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Spain, Uruguay, and Venezuela
5	Ibero-American Network of Specialized Prosecutors on Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (REDTRAM) (Asociación Iberoamericana de Ministerios Públicos, undated)	It is a non-profit organisation composed of the public prosecution authorities of the Ibero-American region. One of its main objectives is to strengthen investigative efforts and improve the care and protection of victims of trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants across Ibero-American public prosecution authorities.	Andorra, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Spain, Uruguay, and Venezuela
6	GAFILAT Asset Recovery Network (RRAG) (GAFILAT, undated)	It seeks to promote the development and strengthening of effective systems to prevent, detect, and combat money laundering, the financing of terrorism, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, with the aim of supporting regional development, transparency, and the protection of the socioeconomic integrity of Financial Action Task Force of Latin America (GAFILAT) member countries, within a framework of continuous improvement.	Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Observers

NUM.	NAME	WHAT IS ITS PURPOSE?	WHICH COUNTRIES/ ORGANISATIONS ARE MEMBERS?
7	Hemispheric Network for Legal Cooperation on Criminal Matters (OAS, undated)	This network consists of three components: a public website, a private website, and a secure electronic communications system. The public component includes a virtual library that provides legal information on mutual assistance and extradition from the 34 Organization of American States (OAS) members.	Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, the United States, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, and Venezuela

**Source:** Authors' creation.

**Note:** <sup>a</sup> ILO: International Labour Organization, IOM: International Organization for Migration, UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund, UNIFEM: United Nations Development Fund for Women, UNDAW: United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNODC: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

In December 2024, the Alliance for Security, Justice and Development was launched with the aim developing regional, subregional, and national public policies and actions to provide coordinated and effective responses to organised crime in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). The Alliance operates based on three specific, interrelated objectives, including the prevention of and response to TIP:

- Protecting the most vulnerable populations and communities exposed to the influence of organised crime.
- Strengthening security and justice institutions, along with other key sectors such as the police, prosecution services, the judiciary, the penitentiary system, and customs and port authorities to enhance their capacity to respond to organised crime.
- Disrupt financial flows and illicit markets to weaken the operational capacity, power, influence, and perceived legitimacy of criminal groups.

The Alliance aims to complement the existing regional security and justice cooperation framework by establishing a platform for collective and comprehensive action. It also seeks to strengthen coordination between the Ministries of Security and Justice and other key actors, including multilateral and bilateral organisations, civil society, academia, and the private sector. It further aims to mobilise resources and technical support to promote the generation and exchange of knowledge, foster collective learning, and design, implement, and evaluate policies that enhance the reach and impact of interventions. It draws on the Inter-American Development Bank's (IDB) two decades of experience, knowledge, and technical capacity in addressing crime and violence in LAC through innovative, evidence-based approaches. The IDB acts as the Technical Secretariat of the Alliance.

## Agreements Among Nations in the Region

Multilateral treaties, such as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNODC, 2004a), serve as a fundamental basis for international legal cooperation. Although significant, these instruments do not fully capture the specific particularities of different domestic legal systems. Therefore, the establishment of bilateral agreements to combat TIP is both essential and highly valuable.

Table 4.2 outlines some of the agreements signed between countries in the region to combat TIP.

**TABLE 4.2.**  
**Regional Cooperation Agreements**

NUM.	NAME	WHAT DOES IT INVOLVE?	WHICH COUNTRIES ARE MEMBERS?
1	Inter-American Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters (OAS, 1993)	It aims to facilitate cooperation among justice sector institutions in the region through a legal instrument that enables mutual legal assistance in criminal matters between the Central American States, with full respect for the domestic legislation of each State.	Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama

NUM.	NAME	WHAT DOES IT INVOLVE?	WHICH COUNTRIES ARE MEMBERS?
2	Tratado centroamericano relativo a la orden de detención y extradición simplificada entre Belice, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua y República Dominicana (SICA, 2005)	It aims to strengthen cooperation, coordination, harmonisation, and convergence of security policies in the fight against crime and all threats to democratic security.	Belize, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua
3	Convenio centroamericano para la protección de víctimas, testigos, peritos y demás sujetos que intervienen en la investigación y en el proceso penal (SICA, 2014a)	Its purpose is to facilitate the implementation of protection measures for victims, witnesses, and any other person who requires safeguarding due to being at risk or in danger as a result of their involvement in the investigation of a crime or criminal proceedings, particularly in cases related to drug trafficking or organised crime.	Belize, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua
4	Convenio centroamericano para la prevención y represión de los delitos de lavado de dinero y de activos relacionados con el tráfico ilícito de drogas y delitos conexos (SICA, 2005)	Its aim is to foster the harmonisation of Central American countries' legal frameworks with the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and related offences.	Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua

NUM.	NAME	WHAT DOES IT INVOLVE?	WHICH COUNTRIES ARE MEMBERS?
5	Acuerdo de cooperación entre la UNODC y la Secretaría General del Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana (SG-SICA) (SICA, 2014b)	Its primary objective is to establish a legal framework for cooperation between UNODC and the General Secretariat of the Central American Integration System (GS-SICA) to facilitate the design, development, and financing of projects, within the remit of each party, in areas such as the rule of law (governance, security, and justice), trend analysis, forensic matters, risk and threat assessments, scientific and forensic capacities, and alternative development, in the Central American region. The overarching aim is to promote peace, freedom, democracy and development, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the Tegucigalpa Protocol.	UNODC and GS-SICA
6	Acuerdo de cooperación entre los Estados Parte del Mercado Común del Sur (Mercosur) para la prevención y el combate al tráfico ilícito de migrantes entre los Estados Parte y Asociados del Mercosur (OAS, 2008)	Its objective is to prevent and suppress the smuggling of migrants, while fostering cooperation and the exchange of information among the States Parties.	Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay as MERCOSUR Member States; Bolivia and Chile as Associate States

NUM.	NAME	WHAT DOES IT INVOLVE?	WHICH COUNTRIES ARE MEMBERS?
7	Agreement on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters (OAS, 2021)	Its objective is to provide mutual assistance in the exchange of information and evidence, as well as in the conduct of prosecutions and other proceedings related to criminal matters. Such assistance shall include, among others: a) location and identification of persons and property; b) service of judicial documents; c) transmission of judicial records and relevant information; d) execution of searches of premises and judicial inspections; e) recording of testimony and interrogation of defendants; f) summons and voluntary transfer of persons, for the purposes of this Agreement, as defendants, witnesses, or experts; g) transfer of detained persons to provide testimony in the territory of the requesting Party; and h) attachment, seizure, and forfeiture of assets.	Argentina and Peru
8	Carta de entendimiento de cooperación interinstitucional entre ministerios públicos (OAS, 2004)	Its objective is to establish mechanisms aimed at implementing and reinforcing technical and scientific cooperation and capacity-building, with a view to facilitating the exchange of experiences and knowledge in diverse fields of law and its supporting disciplines.	El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala
9	Memorando de entendimiento para la repatriación digna, ordenada, ágil y segura de nacionales de América Central migrantes vía terrestre (CRMSV, 2004)	Its objective is to establish a regional cooperation mechanism to ensure the dignified, expedited, and safe repatriation of Guatemalan, Honduran, Salvadoran, and Nicaraguan nationals under the custody of Mexican immigration authorities to their respective countries of origin.	El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and Nicaragua

NUM.	NAME	WHAT DOES IT INVOLVE?	WHICH COUNTRIES ARE MEMBERS?
10	Acuerdo marco de cooperación entre los Estados Parte del Mercosur y Estados Asociados para la creación de equipos conjuntos de investigación (Mercosur, 2010)	Its objective is to facilitate the creation of joint investigation teams in the countries that are parties to the framework agreement, in line with the national regulations of the country where the team operates.	Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay as MERCOSUR Member States; Bolivia and Ecuador as Associate
11	Tratado de Extradición entre la República Argentina y la República del Paraguay (OAS, 2000)	The States shall extend to one another the widest possible scope of mutual assistance in criminal investigations, prosecutions, and judicial proceedings.	Argentina and Paraguay

**Source:** Authors' creation.

The foregoing are merely some of the agreements established in the region. Numerous bilateral agreements, particularly between countries with shared borders, are instrumental in combating TIP, facilitating cooperation to improve understanding and action during the transit and destination phases of this crime.



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Regional mechanisms have been established to support cooperation in criminal matters in order to combat TIP. This has strengthened international integration and facilitated a coordinated response to the phenomenon involving all regional actors.”



## 2. COOPERATION UNDER KEY APPROACHES

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Cooperation in the fight against TIP is guided by various approaches, including those referenced in the [Introductory Guide](#). Two approaches are regarded as key and cross-cutting within these action guidelines: the gender approach and the digital approach, which are described below.

### Gender Approach

As noted throughout these guidelines, the conceptualisation of the gender approach is applied in a cross-cutting manner, and its relevance to international cooperation in combating TIP is no exception. In this regard, it is essential to align this work with Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5), which aims to achieve gender equality for all.

Regarding the application of the gender approach in international cooperation, the aim is to ensure that strategic cooperation plans developed in support of TIP survivors are anchored in the comprehensive exercise of human rights. These plans should consider the structural factors that are essential to overcoming challenges in the implementation of strategies focused on the needs and rights of survivors. It should be noted that all cooperation actions implemented under a gender approach are applicable across the four axes of intervention: prevention, assistance and protection of victims, investigation and prosecution of cases, as well as inter-agency cooperation.

The integration of SDG 5 into these international cooperation initiatives reinforces the gender approach and makes a significant contribution to promoting equality and safeguarding the rights of women affected by TIP.

It is essential to recognise that political action and intervention at the international level must consistently incorporate the gender approach. It is imperative to translate this approach into concrete actions at the various levels of international cooperation, as illustrated below (GIZ, 2015):

- **Identifying and addressing the differentiated needs of survivors:** It proposes that all cooperative actions in support of TIP survivors must include an analysis of individual needs and consider other intersecting gender identities. It is equally important to recognise that men and LGBTQ+ individuals can also be victims of this crime.
- **Strengthening the capacities of public officials:** It promotes holding training programmes, courses, refresher sessions, and awareness-raising initiatives on the gender approach designed and implemented for authorities and officials engaged in combating TIP.
- **Exchange of information between organisations:** It suggests establishment of expert inter-agency networks at the local, regional, and international levels to support the sharing of experiences, promote collaboration, and reinforce response mechanisms for survivors, under a comprehensive human rights lens.
- **Mainstreaming:** It refers to the inclusion of this approach into organisational processes and in every phase of designing and evaluating cooperation plans, policies, and projects, or even as a variable that measures their success. This perspective should likewise be embedded within the organisational processes of the cooperating entities.
- **Financing:** It refers not only to the process of budget analysis and allocation within an economic, political, and social context that identifies gender-specific costs in the implementation of strategies to reduce inequalities, but also to the incorporation of human resources with expertise in gender issues.
- **Enhancing visibility and disaggregated data:** It seeks to incorporate gender-related variables into data analysis on the issues of interest, with the aim of representing the differentiated realities of populations such as women and LGBTQ+ individuals. It also emphasises the use of inclusive language and the balanced inclusion of examples, as well as citations from a broad spectrum of authors in documents.

Some examples of the application of the gender approach in cooperation, drawn from Germany and Denmark, are presented in Box 4.1.

#### BOX 4.1.

#### Application of the Gender Approach in Cooperation in Germany and Denmark

In 2014, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) noted the importance of mobilising national and international resources (both bilateral and multilateral) through Gender Responsive Budgeting to address the funding gap. It also allocates fixed resources to specific funds and organisations dedicated to reducing gender inequalities. This example illustrates a promising practice in the financing of projects, plans, and policies incorporating a gender approach in international cooperation. It should be emphasised that efforts and resources may also be pooled to advance the gender approach through other forms of cooperation, including legal and technical-scientific cooperation. The fact that TIP is deeply intertwined with gender inequalities is evident in the disproportionate impact this crime has on women and girls. Providing funding for projects, plans, and policies aimed at reducing these inequalities is a crucial step in combating this crime through international cooperation.

In its 2013 best practices document, Denmark outlines its extensive experience in mainstreaming the gender perspective across the institution and its programmes. The recommendations stress the importance of addressing gender-related concepts with greater precision to improve effectiveness and to ensure a holistic and inclusive process, thereby moving beyond the perception of gender as an issue exclusively concerning women (GIZ, 2015).

It also underscores the importance of integrating concepts of sexual diversity and gender identity, including LGBTQ+, which have often been overlooked in equality plans. The key lesson identified is the necessity of adopting a cross-cutting intersectional approach to ensure greater effectiveness and equity in the actions undertaken. Integrating sexual diversity and gender identity into equality plans reinforces an inclusive approach, allowing anti-TIP strategies to more effectively respond to the specific needs of these populations. Replicating these approaches at the global level helps ensure a more comprehensive, equitable, and effective response that is capable of protecting all vulnerable communities from this crime.

## REFLECTION



Anne was a young migrant who became a victim of TIP; she was exploited for the purpose of forced begging in a foreign country. She had been deceived by a trafficking network that had initially promised her a well-paid job abroad. However, once she arrived at her destination, Anne was forced to beg in the streets and busy avenues of a foreign country that was not her own, being controlled through threats and constant coercion. Fortunately, she managed to break free and turned to a local human rights organisation that focuses on helping individuals impacted by TIP.

The local organisation quickly intervened to provide Anne with immediate assistance and protection. When Anne felt ready, the organisation supported her in reporting the case to the authorities. The authorities launched an investigation and reached out to the relevant institutions in Anne's country of origin, using the official channels established for TIP cases. They called for support and cooperation to help with the investigation and ensure that those responsible for her exploitation were brought to justice.

Soon after, the organisation reached out to an international network of groups specialising in TIP, using informal cooperation mechanisms to share information and help prevent future cases involving potential victims of TIP.

Thanks to the coordinated efforts of the local authorities, the organisation, and the international network, Anne received comprehensive support. This included legal assistance, medical care, psychological counselling, and help with her reintegration process. Her human rights were fully respected throughout, and she received support at every stage of her voluntary return journey. Arrangements were made in coordination with local authorities to ensure she could continue her psychological treatment, and follow-up support was also provided to monitor her recovery process.

Now, answer the following questions:

- 1. How did international cooperation assist in Anne's case?
- 2. How could international cooperation strategies to prevent TIP have been put into action, especially in Anne's case?
- 3. What formal and informal mechanisms do you think the authorities used in Anne's case?
- 4. How can international cooperation help ensure that the specific needs of women like Anne are addressed throughout the entire process of comprehensive support and accompaniment?

## Digital Approach

Technological advances have reinforced efforts to combat TIP and have furthered international cooperation among countries in Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC). In this regard, the use of multiple digital tools and advanced information and communications technologies (ICTs) has enhanced the effectiveness of responses in prevention, assistance and protection, and investigation and prosecution.

One example of this is found within the investigation axis. To obtain testimony or a victim statement from a person located outside the territory in which the investigation or trial is being conducted, it is no longer always necessary for the individual to appear in person, as this may be carried out via videoconference. This process is carried out through the execution of a judicial act abroad, which entails submitting a request for international legal assistance to obtain the person's statement in another country by remote means, with the necessary involvement of the relevant foreign judicial authorities.

The use of digital tools facilitates effective communication among various international actors, enabling joint actions to be undertaken without incurring significant travel costs to other countries. This also streamlines the exchange of information, which is an essential element of cooperation. Similarly, a digital approach to international cooperation supports academic research and police operations between nations, enabling real-time access to information and continuous monitoring of the phenomenon.

One example of the benefits of using the digital approach in LAC is the *Guideline on Procedures for Information-Sharing in Cases of Child Sexual Exploitation* which is used by police and judicial authorities along the borders of Brazil, Peru, and Colombia. The guideline sets out which law enforcement and judicial authorities are responsible for investigating cases of sexual exploitation, specifies the type of information that can be shared at the tri-border area, defines the scope of their responsibilities, and provides contact details for the designated officials. It also offers practical guidance to help streamline communication and information exchange through informal channels, like WhatsApp, ensuring greater expediency in the process.

Another example is the *Manual de cooperación jurídica internacional en trata de personas y tráfico ilegal de migrantes* (Manual on International Legal Cooperation in Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants), which, under Panama's current regulations, provides guidelines for strengthening technical cooperation mechanisms among various officials (police, judges, prosecutors, and victim assistance and protection providers). It also facilitates understanding of the different legal systems in the hemisphere and enables the parties to engage effectively with their counterparts in other countries.

## REFLECTION



Cecile and Albert are two government officials from a LAC country. Despite their years of experience, they encountered some difficulties in collecting information on a transnational TIP case, as the survivor had travelled through two other countries in the region, their place of origin and during transit.

In the country of origin, Cecile and Albert made efforts to interview other individuals who had received offers like the one described by the survivor. During the journey, the survivor was exploited for two days while passing through the transit country, before eventually reaching the final destination. In the transit country, a report was filed regarding the exploitation, but it was not properly followed up. As a result, the alleged traffickers were able to leave the country shortly afterwards. Obtaining the survivor's testimony and presenting them as a witness would significantly strengthen the case. However, the authorities in both countries lack the financial and logistical means to facilitate the survivor's transfer. In addition, the officials noted that communication with their counterparts in other countries has been slow and largely ineffective.

Now, answer the following questions:

- **1.** If Cecile and Albert's country were your country, which regional mechanisms could help make communication between officials from different countries more effective? Would you use any digital tools? Which one(s)?
- **2.** Would it be possible to use digital tools to obtain information from the country of origin if communication between officials were more fluid?
- **3.** Would it be possible to use digital tools to obtain information from the transit country and speak to the witness if communication between officials were more fluid?



### 3.

# CHALLENGES IN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO COMBAT TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

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It is important to emphasise that the challenges present in international cooperation affect all axes of intervention in relation to TIP, including:

- Absence of international cooperation agreements to facilitate the coordination of actions to combat TIP, a challenge compounded by existing differences in national legislation and by the varying levels of progress achieved in this area.
- Although multilateral and bilateral treaties on cooperation and mutual assistance exist, their effectiveness is constrained by the involvement of formal actors through traditional diplomatic channels, which heightens the risk of information leakage as more institutions participate in the formulation and processing of requests for support (Unidos por la Justicia Asociación Civil, 2010).
- Lack of coordination and cooperation mechanisms, which may hinder collaboration in the assistance, protection, investigation, and prosecution of TIP. This lack of coordination can result in inadequate treatment of survivors and pose obstacles to mutual legal assistance arrangements between countries.

- Absence of harmonisation of international standards in laws and regulatory frameworks among countries, which hinders efforts to combat TIP in cases involving a transnational component. This absence of harmonisation can give rise to additional challenges, including divergent interpretations of legal frameworks, lack of mutual recognition of evidence or judicial decisions, and difficulties in applying protection measures for survivors in international contexts.
- Lack of unified information systems and monitoring tools to track the dynamics, occurrence, and risk factors of TIP in each country. This is essential for understanding the phenomenon and for effectively guiding prevention efforts. It is equally crucial for directing the necessary investigative actions against organised crime groups.
- Insufficient specific agreements between countries for the prevention of TIP, linked to the inadequate allocation of human and financial resources necessary to achieve this objective.
- In some countries, limited access to advanced technologies and digital capabilities poses a challenge by hindering the collection and exchange of digital evidence in TIP cases and reducing the effectiveness of investigations and prosecutions.
- Lack of effective coordination between countries hinders the identification, assistance, and protection of TIP victims who cross borders.
- In addition, linguistic and cultural differences can pose significant barriers to communication and to the provision of appropriate assistance services for TIP victims of different nationalities.
- The lack of implementation of standardised protocols by national institutions in transnational TIP cases deprives the assistance and protection of survivors of the tools necessary to ensure a smooth and efficient process among the countries involved.

The use of digital tools facilitates effective communication among various international actors, enabling joint actions to be undertaken without incurring significant travel costs to other countries.



## 4. GUIDELINES AND PROMISING PRACTICES FOR COOPERATION TO COMBAT TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

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The challenges surrounding international cooperation in combating TIP can, despite their complexity, provide an opportunity to strengthen response mechanisms and develop strategies to address them. This section presents guidelines and promising practices adopted by certain countries in the context of international cooperation to combat TIP.

### **Guidelines and Promising Practices in International Cooperation**

International cooperation plays a vital role in combating TIP, as this crime frequently transcends borders and, therefore, demands a transnational response.

The engagement of international organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and other relevant actors is essential to prevent the crime, protect survivors, and prosecute traffickers.

In this context, the establishment of practical guidelines is imperative to effectively address TIP through the lens of international cooperation. These guidelines aim to provide a clear framework for action to ensure a comprehensive and coordinated response encompassing crime prevention, assistance and protection of survivors, as well as the prosecution and punishment of those responsible.

The following section presents promising practices in combating TIP that have been implemented in LAC by countries and international organisations.

## Selected Guidelines for Cooperation in the Prevention of TIP

The concept of prevention is grounded in

*[...] the notion that crime and victimization are driven by many causal or underlying factors. These are the result of a wide range of factors and circumstances that influence the lives of individuals and families as they grow up, and of local environments, and the situations and opportunities that facilitate victimization and offending. Determining what factors are associated with different types of crime can lead to the development of a set of strategies and programmes to change those factors, and prevent or reduce the incidence of those crimes. (UNODC, 2011)*

For this reason, crime prevention must be grounded in a data- and evidence-based approach that is tailored to the specific crime being addressed. This type of analysis forms the basis for developing effective prevention projects, plans, and policies.

It also enables the identification of risk factors and patterns of occurrence that are common to certain countries and even entire regions. This creates a favourable context for the exchange of experiences and the development of joint initiatives between, for example, transit and destination countries in cases of transnational TIP.

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Palermo Protocol highlight the importance of such joint efforts among countries and with other organisations. They underscore that international cooperation is essential for the prevention of a crime such as TIP. Article 31, paragraph 7, of the Convention states that “States Parties shall, as appropriate, collaborate with each other and relevant international and regional

organizations in promoting and developing the measures referred to in this article” (UNODC, 2004a). In the field of prevention, this translates, among others, into the following actions:

- Formulate and assess bilateral or multilateral projects aimed at the prevention of transnational organised crime.
- Reduce opportunities for organised crime to infiltrate and operate in international licit markets.
- Raise international public awareness on the existence, causes, and severity of transnational organised crime, and encourage the involvement of the public in its prevention.
- Mitigate the circumstances that render socially marginalised groups vulnerable to the activities of transnational organised crime.

In addition to these actions, in the specific context of TIP and with regard to prevention, the Palermo Protocol urges States to:

*[...] take or strengthen measures, including through bilateral or multilateral cooperation, to alleviate the factors that make persons, especially women and children, vulnerable to trafficking, such as poverty, underdevelopment and lack of equal opportunity. (UNODC, 2004a)*

This constitutes an essential element of cooperation for the structural prevention of TIP, which may be complemented by measures such as:

- Joint information and awareness-raising campaigns targeting populations of the cooperating countries, as well as migrant populations present within those countries.
- Collaboration with NGOs, intergovernmental organisations, community leaders, and other stakeholders to strengthen the capacities of cooperating countries to prevent TIP.
- Joint academic research initiatives that shed light on the landscape of cooperating countries to inform decision-making in the fight against TIP.
- Joint efforts to combat other crimes related to TIP, with the aim of undermining the operations of transnational organised crime groups.

The implementation of these measures demands diverse efforts and resources, including the establishment of bilateral, multilateral, or regional dialogue forums, the allocation of appropriate budgetary resources, the availability of international cooperation officials, and the provision of adequate technical and logistical capacity, among other elements. In this context, the following guidelines for international cooperation in the field of prevention are proposed:

- Promote your country's participation in dialogue forums with other States, intergovernmental organisations, and international cooperation entities dedicated to combating TIP. This will facilitate the exchange of experiences and the development of joint projects for the prevention of TIP.
- Promote academic research examining the risk factors, protective factors, and dynamics of TIP between your country and neighbouring States and/or other countries in the region. This will facilitate the formulation of highly effective joint projects for the prevention of TIP by providing information that offers a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.
- Within the framework of policies, ensure the inclusion and continuity of programmes and projects addressing both the national population and migrant populations, while maintaining effective communication with bordering countries and migrants' countries of origin. This will provide valuable information, including insights into cultural factors, thereby enabling the reinforcement of TIP prevention strategies targeting this population.
- Prioritise budgetary investment in international cooperation projects that include among their objectives the fight against poverty, inequality, lack of opportunities, and other risk factors for TIP. Likewise, prioritise such investment in projects specifically dedicated to the prevention of TIP, thereby ensuring the effective realisation and implementation of the proposed initiatives.
- Allocate human resources to carry out search activities and to strengthen international alliances. This will enable the strengthening of communication channels, the consolidation of dialogues and strategies, and the identification of funding opportunities for TIP prevention initiatives.
- Utilise digital tools, communication platforms, and physical spaces to facilitate meetings with other countries or organisations for the design, implementation, and evaluation of TIP prevention projects.

## PROMISING PRACTICE



### Guatemala

The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism (The Code)

#### What does it involve?

The Code is a set of principles established through a multi-sector partnership led by End Child Prostitution and Trafficking (ECPAT). It aims to raise awareness and provide tools to the travel and tourism industry to prevent the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents.

It operates as a voluntary membership initiative in which members commit to six key criteria: establishing policies against sexual exploitation, training employees, including relevant clauses into contracts, providing information to travellers, collaborating with stakeholders, and reporting annually on the implementation of the six criteria.

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

Because it promotes a comprehensive and proactive approach to combating the sexual exploitation of children in the tourism sector of countries that adopt The Code. By engaging a wide range of stakeholders and setting out clear commitments, The Code establishes an effective framework for the prevention and reporting of suspected cases. It contributes to the protection of children's rights and promotes a culture of zero tolerance towards sexual exploitation across all levels of the tourism industry.

# Selected Guidelines for Cooperation in the Investigation and Prosecution of TIP

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime provides a vital framework for international cooperation in combating organised crime in general, and TIP in particular. Its implementation by States Parties aims to remove obstacles that impede more effective collaboration among nations. The Convention thus serves as an instrument to strengthen collaboration among countries in combating TIP and protecting the rights of survivors.

UNODC oversees the knowledge management portal called Sharing Electronic Resources and Laws on Crime (SHERLOC) (UNODC, undated) to facilitate the dissemination of relevant information on the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its three supplementary protocols.

This portal provides resources, tools, and guidance to support States in strengthening their capacities to combat organised crime and to protect the rights of TIP survivors.

The following are selected guidelines on criminal justice cooperation, centred on the principal instruments for combating this crime.

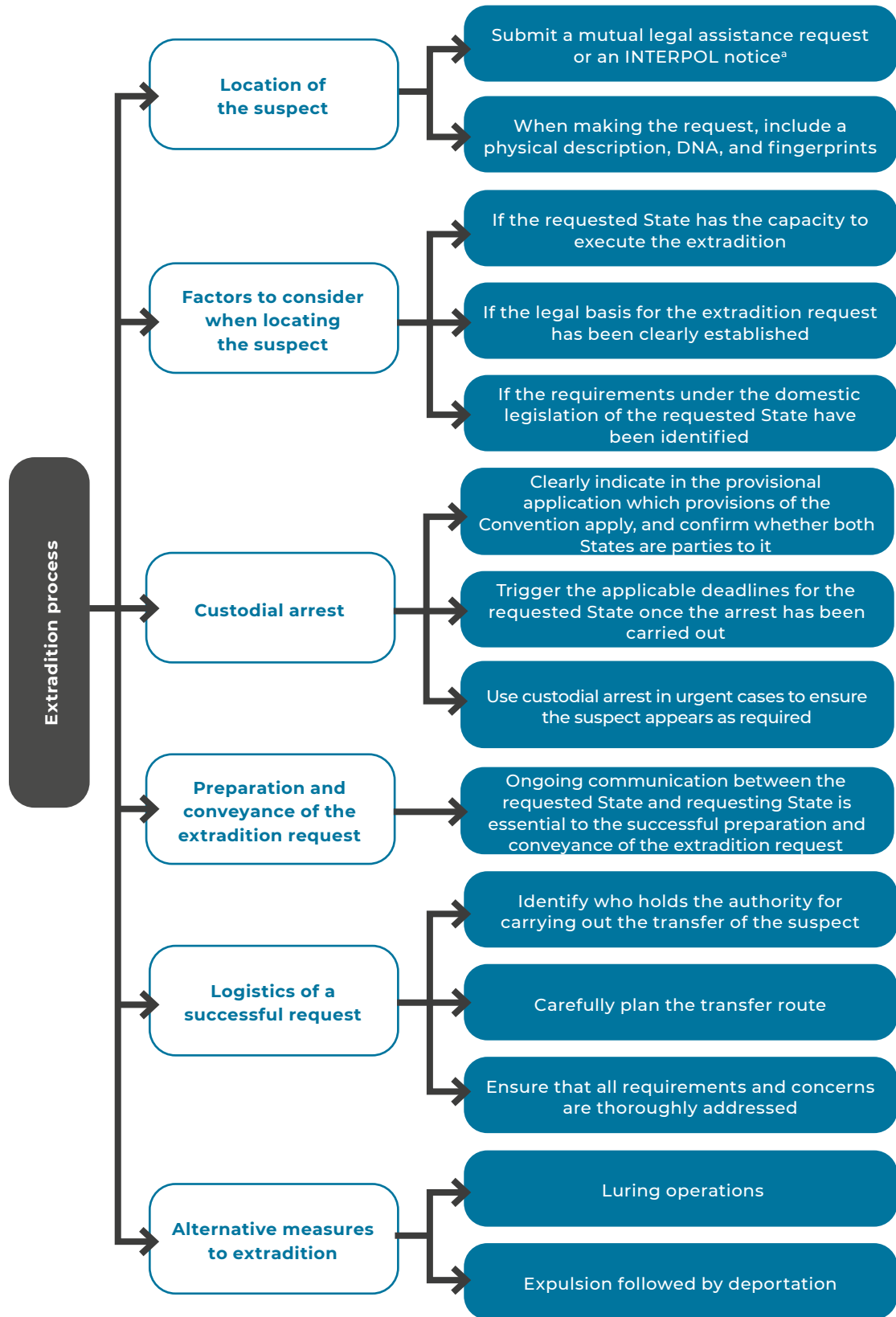
## Extradition

The process through which one State requests the transfer of a person from another State for the purpose of criminal prosecution in the requesting State.

In this request, legal rules and procedures are applied to safeguard national sovereignty, uphold the rights of the defendant, and preserve the integrity of the justice system.

Figure 4.5 outlines key requirements to be considered in an extradition process.

**FIGURE 4.5.**  
Considerations for an Extradition Process



**Source:** Authors' creation based on UNODC (2012).

**Note:** <sup>a</sup> INTERPOL: International Criminal Police Organization

## Seizure of assets and confiscation of proceeds of crime

In cases involving the seizure of assets and confiscation of proceeds of crime, and in line with Article 12 of the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, States Parties undertake to adopt, within the limits of their domestic legal systems, the necessary measures to facilitate the seizure of:

- The proceeds of offences covered by the Convention, or property of a value equivalent to such proceeds.
- Property, equipment, or other instrumentalities used or intended for use in the commission of offences covered by the Convention.

In this context, it is essential to ensure a clear understanding of the procedures and legal requirements governing the seizure of assets linked to TIP. It is equally crucial to foster collaboration with the authorities responsible for asset seizure to ensure that illicitly obtained assets are confiscated and subsequently allocated to initiatives that benefit survivors and the broader community.

### PROMISING PRACTICE



Manual for the Implementation of the Standard for Automatic Exchange of Financial Information in Tax Matters (OECD, 2022)

#### What does it involve?

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) adopted the text of the Common Reporting Standard (CRS). This standard defines the type of information to be exchanged (financial information, bank accounts, interests, mutual funds) and the financial institutions obliged to report.

## PROMISING PRACTICE



### Why is it considered a promising practice?

In investigations related to money laundering or crypto assets, the standard enables the automatic exchange of information with a wide range of jurisdictions, in contrast to other exchange mechanisms that only work upon request by the State concerned.

As of October 2022, over 4,900 bilateral exchange relationships had been established, involving over 110 jurisdictions committed to the CRS.

## Mutual legal assistance

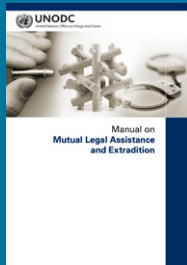
According to Article 18, paragraph 3, of the Organized Crime Convention, mutual legal assistance may be requested for the following purposes:

- Taking evidence or statements from persons.
- Effecting service of judicial document.
- Executing searches and seizures, and freezing assets.
- Analysing objects and sites.
- Providing information, evidentiary items, and expert evaluations.
- Providing originals or certified copies of relevant documents and records, including government, bank, financial, corporate, or business records. This includes identifying or tracing proceeds of crime, property, instrumentalities, or other things for evidentiary purposes.
- Facilitating the voluntary appearance of persons in the requesting State Party.
- Providing any other type of assistance authorised under the domestic law of the requested State Party.

It is essential to establish effective channels of communication with foreign authorities to facilitate mutual legal assistance, particularly in TIP cases. Regarding mutual legal assistance requests, it is important to:

- Ensure that mutual legal assistance requests in TIP cases are prioritised appropriately and handled with due diligence.
- Cooperate closely with the competent authorities to guarantee a prompt and effective response.
- Be prepared to provide and request information and evidence in a timely and efficient manner.

## PROMISING PRACTICE



Manual on Mutual Legal Assistance and Extradition  
(UNODC, 2012)

### What does it involve?

The manual provides practical, step-by-step guidance on how to effectively initiate and follow through with extradition and mutual legal assistance procedures.

### Why is it considered a promising practice?

The manual is intended for three key groups engaged in the field of mutual legal assistance:

- central and other competent national authorities
- policymakers
- criminal justice practitioners, including lawyers, investigators, judges, and magistrates, who are involved in mutual legal assistance

The objective is to respond effectively to incoming requests and to provide appropriate follow-up when acting on behalf of the requested State.

## International law enforcement cooperation

International law enforcement cooperation is essential to addressing challenges that transcend borders, such as TIP. This global phenomenon demands a coordinated approach involving multiple countries and specialised agencies.

Participation in joint operations and information exchange programmes with international agencies is a strategy to strengthen efforts to combat TIP.

These initiatives not only facilitate the planning and execution of coordinated operations but also establish communication networks that enable the exchange of information between different jurisdictions.

This collaborative approach is essential to addressing a global problem that demands a coordinated response from States.

### PROMISING PRACTICE



#### INTERPOL

INTERPOL's Specialized Operational Network  
(INTERPOL, undated)

#### What does it involve?

INTERPOL has established a Human Trafficking Expert Group and a Specialised Operational Network against the Smuggling of Migrants, open to representatives from any of its 182 member States.

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

This network fosters police cooperation and the adoption of best practices in combating crimes related to trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants. Close to 50 States participate in it, and it serves as a platform for sharing ongoing research and developments in legislation, victim protection, and law enforcement methods.

## Bilateral or multilateral agreements or arrangements

It is essential to establish and maintain bilateral and multilateral agreements or arrangements to facilitate cooperation between countries. These agreements enable a more comprehensive and coordinated approach, strengthening investigation, prevention, and enforcement capabilities in the fight against TIP. An example of this is Poder Judicial del Perú, Consejo de la Judicatura de Ecuador, and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2022).

### PROMISING PRACTICE



Ecuador



Peru

Guía de actuación del equipo binacional de respuesta inmediata (ERI) para casos de trata (Poder Judicial del Perú, Consejo de la Judicatura de Ecuador, and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2022)

#### What does it involve?

The guideline serves as a cooperation protocol between the judicial systems of Ecuador and Peru for the investigation and prosecution of TIP offences. It seeks to provide the Binational Immediate Response Team (ERI) with an operational tool to ensure specialised and immediate protection and assistance in TIP cases.

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

It sets out procedures, action guidelines, protection pathways, and specialised assistance for TIP cases between the two countries, with the aim of promoting international cooperation processes.

The establishment of bilateral or multilateral agreements is essential to strengthening international cooperation in combating TIP. Communication and collaboration channels with other States facilitate more effective and coordinated action against crime through the exchange of information and resources. Such cooperation may encompass the formulation of joint strategies, the development of operational protocols, and the implementation of training programmes for the relevant authorities.

Active participation in international meetings and forums is crucial for exchanging best practices and promoting collaboration in the investigation and prosecution of TIP. These forums provide a platform for countries to share experiences, lessons learned, and successful strategies in combating this problem.

## PROMISING PRACTICE



### Panama

*Manual de cooperación jurídica internacional en trata de personas y tráfico ilegal de migrantes* (Manual on International Legal Cooperation in Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants) (OAS, 2023)

#### What does it involve?

This manual offers tools to help understand the diverse legal systems across the continent and enables parties to engage more effectively with counterparts in other countries.

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

The manual sets out basic guidelines on international legal assistance and outlines the bilateral treaties Panama has entered into with other countries in the field of international criminal cooperation.

# Selected Guidelines for Cooperation in the Assistance and Protection of Survivors of TIP

Collaborating in the assistance and protection of TIP survivors requires following established guidelines and recommended practices. It is important to establish effective collaboration with the relevant authorities, as this can be decisive in the care and follow-up of TIP cases and in ensuring the safety and well-being of survivors.

For each of the guidelines, close cooperation with the relevant authorities, including law enforcement officials and prosecutors, as well as with specialised organisations, is essential to facilitate the identification and protection of TIP survivors.

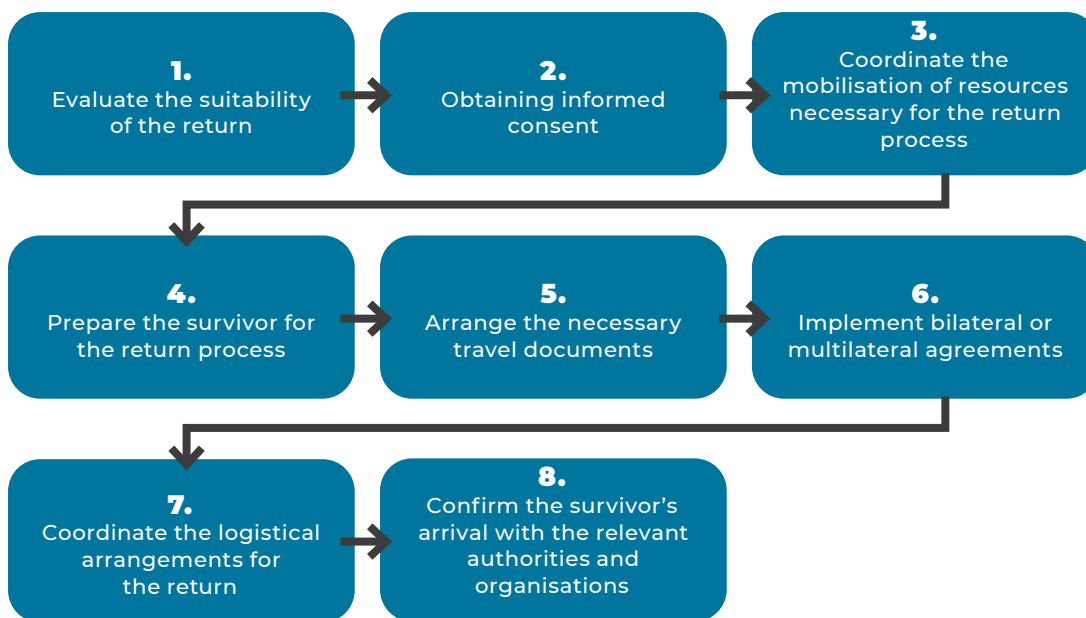
Some guidelines that focus on cooperation for assistance and protection are described below.

## Voluntary return

Voluntary return consists of the assisted return of the survivor and their dependents to their country of origin on a voluntary basis. It involves an organised, planned, and mutually agreed-upon process with the survivor for the purpose of facilitating their full recovery with full respect of their human rights. It requires a comprehensive and integrated approach, combining medical, psychological, and legal support with access to housing, education, and training, recognising that these services are ineffective if provided in isolation.

This approach aims to ensure that the survivor receives the necessary care and support in all areas essential to their recovery and successful reintegration. Voluntary return should be a collaborative process in which the survivor is actively engaged, listened to, and treated with respect at all times, while receiving the necessary support to rebuild their life in safety and with autonomy.

According to IOM (2016), there are a series of steps to be followed in the voluntary return and/or repatriation process of TIP victims (Figure 4.6).

**FIGURE 4.6.****Steps for the Voluntary Return of Survivors of Trafficking in Persons**

**Source:** Authors' creation based on IOM (2016).

### **1. Evaluate the suitability of the return**

It is essential to assess the specific risks of the case by obtaining a report on threats and vulnerabilities, enabling a clear evaluation of the survivor's situation. This request should be coordinated between the national lead agency on TIP matters and the foreign ministry authorities to ensure that the return to the country of origin does not endanger the life of the survivor or the lives of their family.

### **2. Obtaining informed consent**

The return process must be voluntary and based on the survivor's informed and written consent. It is also necessary to include a medical assessment to determine whether the survivor is physically and emotionally prepared for return.

### **3. Coordinate the mobilisation of resources necessary for the return process**

Securing the financial resources required to cover the costs of return is essential, which may involve seeking support from international cooperation agencies or civil society organisations. It is also necessary to coordinate with

public and private entities in the country of return to initiate the processes of care, protection, and reintegration.

#### **4. Prepare the survivor for the return process**

It is important to ensure that survivors are informed of their rights, the options available to them, the rules governing the process, and that they are provided with the contact information of the institutions or persons who will assist them upon arrival in the country of return. The State must ensure the allocation of financial resources to cover basic needs and guarantee the issuance of the corresponding identity documents.

#### **5. Arrange the necessary travel documents**

The consular and/or diplomatic representation must promptly issue the required travel documents.

#### **6. Implement bilateral and multilateral agreements**

Information on cooperation agreements governing the return and/or repatriation of TIP victims between the country of return and the country hosting the consular and/or diplomatic representation should be readily available.

#### **7. Coordinate the logistical arrangements for the return journey**

The consular and/or diplomatic representative shall monitor and verify the entire return process with the relevant authorities until the survivor's arrival in the country of destination. They shall also provide official and confidential notification of the survivor's arrival to their Secretariat or Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as to their diplomatic mission.

#### **8. Confirm the survivor's arrival with the relevant authorities and organisations**

The follow-up of TIP survivors upon their return to their country of origin is a fundamental process that requires careful attention and coordination by the relevant authorities. Collaboration with institutions and NGOs in the survivor's country of origin is essential.

These entities play a vital role in establishing support networks that facilitate social and economic reintegration. This includes providing vocational training, education, and employment opportunities that enable survivors to acquire skills and secure sustainable sources of income.

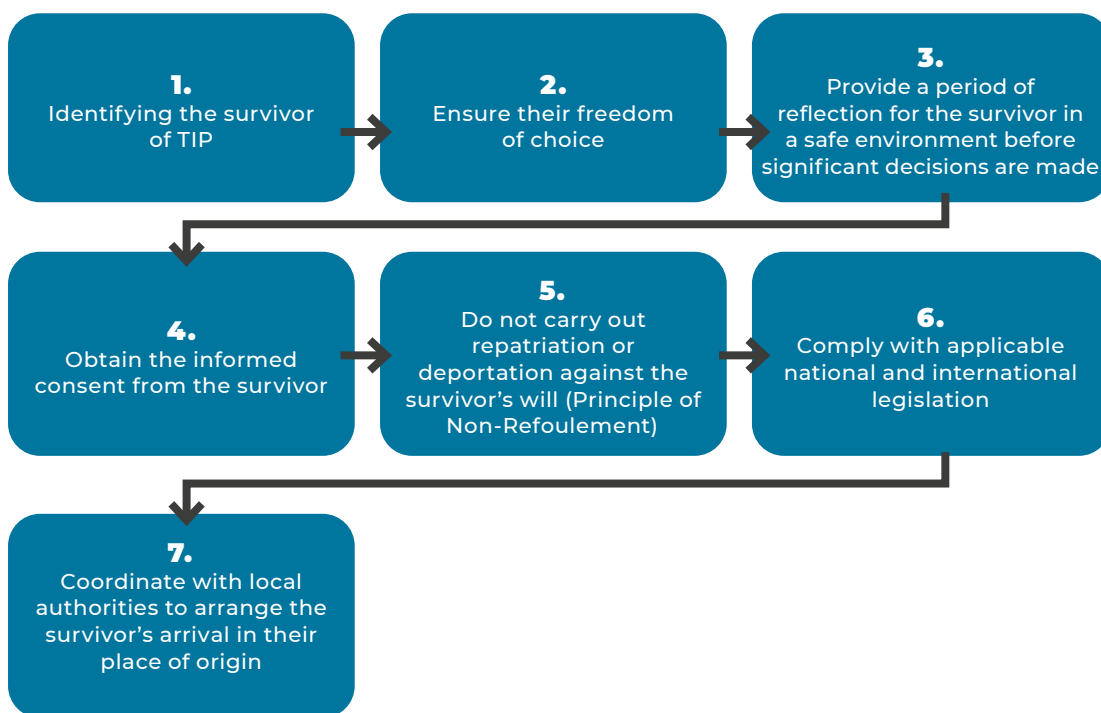
## Repatriation

Before the repatriation process can commence for a TIP survivor and their dependants, it is essential to obtain their informed consent, in full compliance with national and international law.

It is imperative to uphold the principle that survivors of TIP-related crimes must not be deported or repatriated against their will. They must also be granted a period of reflection in a safe and stable environment, enabling them to carefully consider their options before making any significant decisions.

Figure 4.7 below presents guidance for the repatriation of a TIP survivor.

**FIGURE 4.7.**  
Considerations for the Repatriation Process



**Source:** Authors' creation based on Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería (2018).

### 1. Identifying the survivor of trafficking in persons

Conducting a comprehensive and specialised assessment is necessary to clearly and accurately identify survivors of TIP, using protocols that incorporate physical, psychological, and social indicators.

## **2. Ensure their freedom of choice**

The autonomy and will of the survivor must be respected at all times, avoiding any form of pressure or coercion. They should also be provided clear and objective information on the available options to support survivors in making informed decisions.

## **3. Provide the survivor time for reflection**

Sufficient time must be provided to the survivor to process the information received, seek guidance from legal or trusted advisers, and make informed, voluntary decisions.

## **4. Obtain the informed consent from the survivor**

It is necessary to confirm that the survivor has a full understanding of the repatriation process and its implications. Also, before moving forward with repatriation, ensure that the survivor has given their informed consent.

## **5. Do not carry out repatriation or deportation against the survivor's will (Principle of Non-Refoulement)**

The internationally recognised principle of non-refoulement must be respected. This principle prohibits repatriating or deporting survivors against their will, as doing so may place them at a greater risk of revictimization.

## **6. Comply with applicable national and international legislation**

It is imperative to ensure that the entire repatriation process is carried out in full compliance with the national and international legislation on TIP and human rights currently in force.

## **7. Coordinate with local authorities to arrange the survivor's arrival in their place of origin**

It is essential to establish effective coordination with local authorities to guarantee the survivor's safe and dignified return to their place of origin. In addition, support and accompaniment should be provided throughout the repatriation process to ensure that the survivor's rights and integrity are upheld at all times.

The above guidelines aim to safeguard the rights and dignity of TIP survivors during the repatriation process, ensuring their safety and well-being at all times.

## PROMISING PRACTICE



Costa Rica

*Guía para la repatriación de costarricenses en el exterior* (Guideline for the Repatriation of Costa Ricans Abroad) (Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería, 2018)

### What does it involve?

The guideline outlines procedures and operational measures for the repatriation of Costa Ricans who find themselves in vulnerable situations.

### Why is it considered a promising practice?

The guideline defines the procedures and operational guidelines for the authorities responsible for these processes, adopting a survivor-centred approach to TIP.

## Resettlement

Resettlement is a measure applied when the TIP survivor or their dependants cannot return to their country of origin or residence due to threats that endanger their life, safety, or personal freedom. In these circumstances, resettlement in a third country becomes a viable alternative. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for collaborating in this process by providing the necessary information to identify countries available for resettlement, based on existing resettlement treaties.

The time required to organise the resettlement journey will depend on the physical and psychological condition of each individual. It is therefore essential to prioritise the welfare and safety of the person concerned throughout the pre-transfer stage. It is imperative that, throughout the entire reintegration process, the human rights of the survivor and their dependants are upheld, ensuring that their views are taken into account and that the confidentiality of their status as survivors is maintained. International cooperation plays a crucial role in these processes by ensuring that resettled persons receive adequate protection and support, in full compliance with the principles established in the relevant international treaties.

## PROMISING PRACTICE



UNHCR Resettlement Handbook (2011).

### UNHCR

#### What does it involve?

The handbook serves as a key reference on global resettlement policies and practices, supporting the efforts of resettlement countries, NGOs, and other partners.

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

This handbook outlines the key stages of the resettlement process, beginning with the identification of refugees in need of resettlement consideration, followed by the assessment of individual resettlement needs and the preparation of a resettlement case submission. It then proceeds to the UNHCR submission decision and the decision of the resettlement country, concluding with pre-departure arrangements and monitoring.




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Voluntary return refers to an assisted repatriation that involves an organised, planned, and mutually agreed-upon process with the survivor for the purpose of facilitating their full recovery with full respect of their human rights.



## 5. CHECKLIST

DOES YOUR INSTITUTION AND/OR COUNTRY ALREADY IMPLEMENT IT?	YES	NO
 <p>This list may be useful for reflecting on certain elements of international cooperation on TIP.</p>	Are there formal international cooperation mechanisms currently in place in your country?	
	Has your institution submitted any requests for mutual legal assistance?	
	Are there established protocols in your country for the repatriation of TIP survivors?	
	Has your country entered into extradition treaties related to transnational organised crime?	
	Is your country, or the institution you work for, involved in international cooperation initiatives aimed at preventing TIP?	
	Does your country's legislation allow the use of specialised digital investigative techniques? If not, what challenges has this posed for international cooperation?	
	Do you consider that legislative changes are necessary in your country to enhance international cooperation on TIP between relevant authorities?	

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