



A Guide on Trafficking of Women



Advice for victims of human trafficking



Proposals to organizations who offer help to victims

Advice given by women who were, themselves, victims of human trafficking



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This guide is part of the international project, *Mujer Frontera* ('Border Woman'), which was launched in 2008 with the aim of empowering immigrant women who have been victims of human trafficking.

The main objectives of the *Mujer Frontera*/ *Border Woman* project are: To establish victims of trafficking as members of society with the ability to consider and to act. To make sure that their considerations and proposals are registered by social and institutional initiatives that work to prevent trafficking and to help its victims. It also seeks to assist and support other victims of trafficking.

This guide is based on the experiences and obligations of the women both during, and following, their trafficking. Putting this guide together has been a long, emotionally taxing process.

The women who have contributed are from Colombia, Brazil, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Mexico, El Salvador, Argentina, Romania, the Philippines, Senegal, Bolivia, Morocco and the Dominican Republic. It is founded on their experiences and proposals as victims of human trafficking in North America, Europe and Asia.

We would like to thank Helga for the careful and patient work she has carried out from Barcelona, translating and weaving together what each of us, from different countries and cultures, and in different languages, have said.

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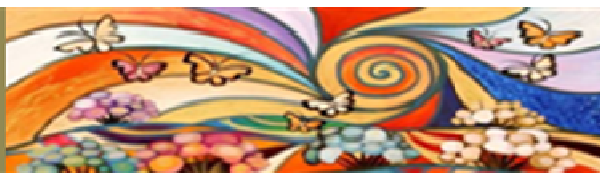


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WHAT IS TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN?

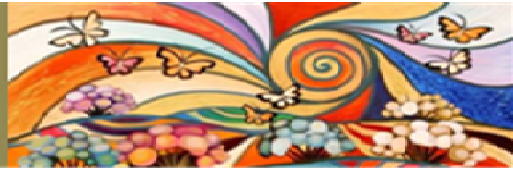


- We believe that the trafficking of women is SLAVERY. To dominate, control, exploit or subjugate women or girls.
- Our experiences as victims are related to immigration, what is known as international trafficking or external trafficking. In these cases, the victims of trafficking have been abducted or deceived either in their home country, on the journey across borders, or having already arrived in the foreign country. They are threatened, controlled or isolated, becoming enslaved, sold, or exchanged for goods such as drugs and weapons.

THE DEFINITION PROPOSED BY THE U.N.

- Article 3, paragraph (a) of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons defines Trafficking in Persons as: *the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.*
- We are delighted that such a broad definition exists today, and we hope that it continues to be revised and deepened. Even so, we believe that the above definition ought not to be accepted word for word, as happens in many countries that maintain that trafficking only occurs in the given order (recruitment, transportation, transfer). However, this approach makes identifying victims more difficult for authorities and excludes victims from situation that they are, in reality, suffering.

FORMS OF TRAFFICKING (forms of slavery)



Sexual Exploitation

- When a woman or girl is forced into prostitution or appearing in pornography, in public or private places.
- When women are transferred to a place in order to be raped. For example, in zones of armed conflict or illegal immigration routes.

Forced and/or Servile Marriage

- When a woman or girl is married without her consent, either as part of a deal to pay off a debt or to restore her family's damaged honour.
- When a woman marries a foreigner and lives in conditions of slavery, violence and isolation. Generally, contact is initiated over the internet, through a marriage agency, or because the woman has paid to marry the man to acquire citizenship in that country.

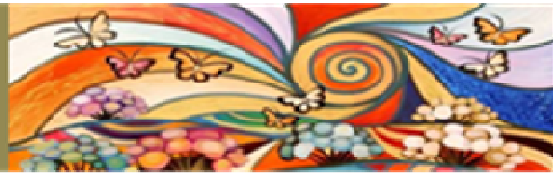
Removal of Organs

- When a woman is enslaved in order to have parts of her body removed and sold against her will (blood, liver, kidney, ova, tissues, etc.)
- We have decided to include in this section: when a woman is raped and impregnated, in order for the child to be removed and sold.

Forced Labour Under Conditions of Slavery

- Forced labour under conditions of slavery is characterised by violent and inhuman living or working conditions. Workers are paid nothing or very little. Work is generally domestic, factory, field or mining work.
- We also include forced begging, where a woman is forced to beg on another's behalf, and more often than not, made to steal or sell drugs.

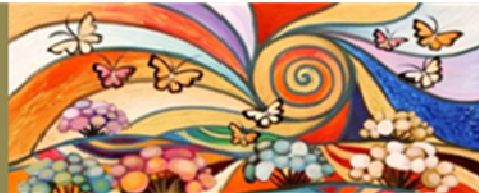
HOW DOES IT BEGIN?



Against their will: through abduction, or when the woman or girl is sold by her own family. Potentially through a kidnapping situation in which the victim herself must pay for “freedom”. In these cases, women are generally unaware of the location they have been taken to.

When the woman is looking to immigrate: in these cases, women are deceived by empty promises about work, the destination or about living and working conditions.

MOST COMMONLY-USED METHODS OF TRAFFICKING WOMEN



Recruitment:

- The aim of the traffickers is to select potential candidates to immigrate and carry out a particular job abroad
- Adverts are placed in the press, around neighborhoods, in universities etc. In most cases, traffickers use names of recruitment agencies for domestic work, marriage agencies or modeling agencies. One of the characteristics of “recruitment” is making the women believe that they were “selected”.
- In warzones, the word "recruit" is associated with convincing people to become part of a military regime, but when the recruitment is forced or carried out under threat by a mediator, we would also consider this trafficking, given that its objective is to enslave.

Enticement:

To contact a woman and offer her work in another country. A loan is commonly offered for the processes involved, including travel. Captors will make contact with women in places such as airports, nightclubs, schools or beauty contests, etc.

Deception:

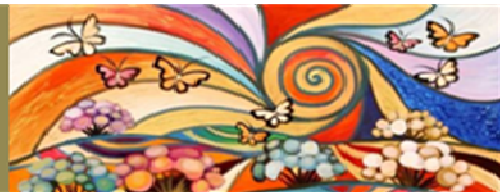
Of course, we recognize that deception is a constant in each of the stages of trafficking, and it is used to conceal the non-existence of, or truth about: the destination, job, working conditions, living conditions, “promised love”, or the period that the woman must serve to pay off her debt to the traffickers.

In our view, deception has two stages: the initial lie on the part of the captors, and the moment we realised we had been tricked.

Consent:

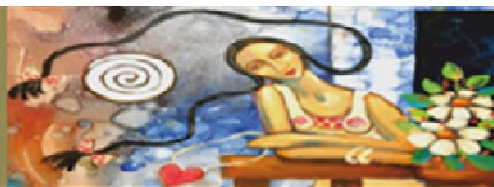
Consent is when the woman permits or accepts what the captors propose to her, either before or during her trafficking. This consent is false, being a result of deception, or in some cases, forced by threats, violence or the use of drugs.

HOW WOMEN ARE CONTROLLED DURING THEIR CAPTURE



- Women are deprived of their liberty, isolated in places where they do not know the language, forbidden to speak, or what they say to others is controlled by the traffickers; for example, on the phone. What they do is also controlled, or they are forced to consume alcohol or take drugs. Captors use physical or psychological pressure to evoke fear and create doubts in the victim's mind, in order to prevent them from seeking help.
- Threats are the most commonly used weapon against captives. Traffickers threaten to harm, or kill the families, women or girls with whom they live whilst enslaved.
- They are stripped of their passport, return flight ticket and money. In many cases, they are given false documentation, which adds to their fears through feeling forced to commit a crime.

HOW TO COME OUT?



The Rescue:

The police and/or an NGO will carry out rescues. When rescued, captives are given medical attention, legal services and the possibility of returning to their home country, depending on the country in which the rescue takes place.

One of the main risks involved arises when the rescue is part of a police raid to find illegal immigrants. In this case, the captive may be sent to a prison for immigrants until proven a victim of trafficking. Here, victims may be re-enslaved, since, in most cases, they are imprisoned alongside their captors. **WARNING:** this situation is becoming more and more common and must be reported.

Escape:

For many victims, run away is the only option. Especially for those living in forced marriages and working in households under conditions of slavery. Escaping may involve placing one's life at risk, searching for help, and in many cases, keeping the ordeal a secret.

Being Abandoned:

Abandoning the victim in front of, or in police stations, hospitals and consulates is a practice that traffickers use to make sure that the woman is deported; especially in countries where she will be forced to return to her country of origin.

ADVICE FOR POTENTIAL VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING



Dear woman,

If you are worried about trafficking...now is the time to put an end to it. Or perhaps you are going through it now. We want to be there for you and encourage you to find your way out, to leave it behind you, as each of us did. It is not easy, but it can be done!

Although you may feel very weak, if you feel anything, do not let the light inside you go out. Let it drive you, and believe in yourself.

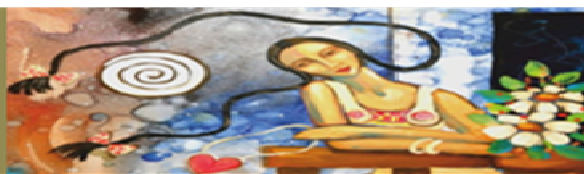
Having been through it, we want to tell you to never give up fighting for your freedom.

You can get out, and you will be able to rebuild your life. Use your intelligence, your wisdom, your patience and your creativity.

We want nothing more than for our advice, based on our own experiences, to help you. We will be the light to guide you down this dark path...

Women of Border Woman

HOW TO AVOID IT



If you have been offered the chance to move to another country, you must first make sure:

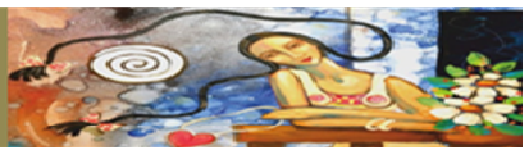
- That they are not tricking you with job or marriage offers that seem like a dream, but could potentially be your worst nightmare.
- If they offer you a passport, other false documentation or a different identity, you are one step away from falling into the trap.
- If they propose a trip that is “kept a secret” from your family or if they tell you not to tell anyone else, do not trust them. You may well be in contact with someone who belongs to a trafficking network. Be careful; these people often come across as very kind and friendly in order to be convincing.
- If you find yourself financially indebted to strangers, who suggest that you pay it off by working abroad – be careful! Ask for written confirmation of the working conditions, interest on the debt and the exact way in which it will be repaid.
- Be most careful if you already know that they are deceiving you, and you think you are more astute than your captors, thinking you can deceive them. You may be putting your life at risk!

Before travelling:

- We advise that you make photocopies of your documents (passport, ID, tickets and travel cards) and if possible, save a photo of the person who is “helping you” with the move. Send them all to your own email address and to avoid suspicions if they ever open your mail, write a prayer or a long poem with the important information included at the end; that is, names of people you have spoken to, agreed meeting places and point of arrival. Leave photocopies of these documents with someone you trust.
- Just in case, memorise the phone number and the address of your country’s embassy or consulate closest to where you think you will be living. If there is not one nearby, look for the embassy of a country that speaks your own language.

- Search for information about organisations and services that exist for woman or for immigrants in the country where you will be living.
- On a small piece of paper, write down emergency addresses and telephone numbers in case you need help. Cover it with laminate or in a plastic folder so it does not smudge or tear. Hide it in the clothes that you are thinking of wearing for the journey. Do not forget to bring foreign currency so you are able to make calls.
- If you are going to a country where you cannot speak the language, or the script is different to your own, memorise the words for “fear”, “help”, “kidnap” and “human trafficking” in the foreign language, and keep them written on a piece of paper.

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU ARE A VICTIM?



Signs that you are a victim of trafficking:

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The first sign is that you feel that you are being enslaved or kidnapped. Other warning signs include:

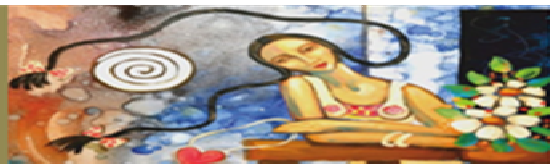
- ✓ They confiscate your passport and other documents
- ✓ They force you to use a false identity (someone else's passport or ID)
- ✓ They force you to work or to do something you DO NOT want to do, or they put your life at risk
- ✓ They threaten you or people close to you so you do what they ask, or so you do not speak
- ✓ They submit you to physical violence or psychological pressure (beating, rape, starvation, intimidation, etc...)
- ✓ They have you confined
- ✓ You have no access to means of communication
- ✓ They force you to live in conditions of squalor; for example, you sleep on the same floor that you work on. They drug you, or you work without rest or pay

- ✓ They monitor everything you do or say - you are always accompanied when you go out, someone is always listening to, or influencing what you say on the phone etc.
- ✓ They force to you do a different job than the one you were originally offered
- ✓ They force you to travel
- ✓ You married someone in another country, but you feel that your husband or his family are oppressive or they abuse you
- ✓ They are exploiting your body for organ trafficking, pornography, drug or weapon smuggling etc.
- ✓ Remember: the main warning signs are **force**, **threats** and **control**!

Who is your captor?

The captor is the person who sells, deceives or enslaves you. It may be someone from your family, someone who lives locally, a stranger, a friend or someone you married and live with abroad. Or indeed, anyone you have paid to take you from one country to another. Remember the word “captor”, and if there are more than one of them, “human trafficking network”.

IF YOU
BECOME A
VICTIM...



It is not only important to be alert before you travel. Sometimes the ordeal begins during the journey, or after you have arrived. What is essential is that you react quickly!

To react and to make decisions that may help you escape, you must calculate the risks and the opportunities. The weather, the time of day, if you are in a public or private space, the situation, the culture, the language...all of this must be taken into account when attempting to escape, to ask for help, to speak, to shout or to be silent.

During the journey:

If you feel pressured, threatened or deceived during your journey, make the most of the airports or marine ports to escape or ask for help. You can do this in your country of departure, whilst taking a connection, or when you arrive. Do whatever you can to escape unnoticed, or if the circumstances allow, try to speak to immigration police or flight attendants, write the word “help” on your hand and show it to them, or pretend to pass out. The most important thing is to attract attention and to be able to speak. If the traffickers are with you when you ask for help, shout or explain that you cannot be left alone with them. Once you have started to ask for help, **do not stop**. If you stop because you are being threatened or feel scared, you may be risking your life.

When you arrive:

When you arrive at your destination, two things may happen: You realise that you have been tricked and you are a victim of trafficking. Or, in your search for work in the country you have moved to, you fall into the hands of people who make you a victim of the trade.

Realising you are a victim:

Sometimes it is difficult to identify yourself as a victim when you are living in a foreign country, where you are aware of racism, classism, misogyny and discrimination against immigrants. It is therefore important that you recognise that you are a victim of trafficking so that you can react and look for help in the right place, as your life is in danger.

Protect yourself, take care of yourself:

- You must take good care of yourself (eat and sleep) in order to have enough strength for the day you escape or the day you are rescued.
- If they hit you, protect your head. Try to make sure that there is always a blanket, cushions, cardboard or pan lid by your side, which you could use to soften the impact of the blow.
- See that your captor eats a lot so that he feels tired or moves slowly.

- Hide objects that could be used to harm you.
- Use all of your creativity to defend yourself.
- Shout, ask for help. Someone may hear you. Or act like a ghost; no-one can see or hear you.
- Try to regain control of your life. It is normal that you feel different, perhaps weak. Do not let it get to you and make decisions with conviction.



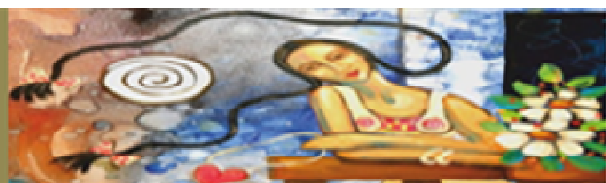
For most victims of trafficking, the only way to put an end to their slavery is by escaping. Most of us ran away, using a variety of strategies. The following advice is to give you strength in your decision to escape and to remind you that you are not alone:

Getting ready to flee:

- Prepare yourself mentally: remember that you are a brave, creative and astute woman.
- You must be very observant: take note of everything, every place, where you live and where you spend time. Pay attention to the day to day movements and timetables of the person, or people who you live with. Identify the time when these people are most tired, busiest, or sleeping.
- Find your passport and hide it. Or tear out the page with your information on. Fold it several times so that it can be hidden in your clothes or shoes. If you were given false documents, DO NOT use them.
- Hide some money. A safe place is the inside of your clothes, where you can sew or tie on a small plastic bag to hold the money and the documents. You can also hide them in your hair.
- If you can, pack a small bag with clothes, documents and water, then hide it until the day of your escape.

- If you have a camera phone, take pictures of the place, of the people or of any document that contains the names of the captors and the address to which you were confined. This information will be useful if you wish to make a report.
- Choose a place to go to, think about how to get there. You have to get to somewhere official; for example, a consulate, police station, church or hospital. In this way, you will not feel lost and you will be able to ask for help more quickly. If you doubt yourself at any point during the escape then you are losing time!
- Create a diversion when you escape: leave the bathroom door locked, a bulge in the bed to make it look like you are sleeping, a pot bubbling on a low flame...things that make it seem as though you are there. This way, they will not notice your escape for longer.
- If you choose to escape in a crowded place (shopping centre, airport, hospital etc.) create a distraction by pretending to pass out, or by shouting for a doctor or the police. If you then look for a place to hide in order to escape, do not hide in the bathroom, since this is the first place they will look. Hide in an office, a shop, a changing room or a kitchen.
- When you escape, you do not know how long you will be in the same clothes. Therefore, if you can plan ahead, wear shoes without high heels (you can pretend to have a sore ankle if they force you to wear heels), and clothes in which you would feel comfortable searching for help. Sometimes, the way a woman is dressed can make her feel too ashamed to ask for help, but remember that the priority is saving your life, so you must ask for help regardless of how self-conscious you may feel.

THE RESCUE



Unfortunately, the chances of someone rescuing you are slim. Generally, rescues are carried out in places of prostitution or places like factories, workshops or farms where there may be people working illegally. Many rescues take place when the police are inspecting workplaces or looking for immigrants without a work permit. In this case, the police discover people who are clearly enslaved (tied up, locked up), or someone asks for help, explaining that they are a victim of trafficking. It is important that you take advantage of these moments to ask for help.

When someone is rescued, one of three things may happen:

1. They may be taken to a centre for attending to immigrants or victims of trafficking, where they would have shelter, along with medical and psychological assistance for a few days. If it is clear that they do not understand your situation, request asylum; in this way, they will try to put you in contact with other professionals who may better understand how serious your situation is.
2. They may be held in a prison or in a centre to accommodate immigrants until they are expelled from the country or deported. Warning! If this happens, you must alert the officials that you are a victim of trafficking so that they take you somewhere else and attend to you differently. It is also common that they hold you until they can prove that you are truly a victim of trafficking. Be patient during these interrogations! Often, they may treat you first as a suspect, before identifying you as a victim.
3. They may be deported to their home country, or in the worst case scenario, deported to another country. In cases like these, the person must strongly insist that they are a victim of trafficking so that they have the choice whether to return to their home country or not.

You can also try to bring about a rescue, by calling the police or your country's embassy. You could ask someone else to do it for you. If you are confined with other people, we recommend that you make a call asking for help (without giving your name) or call to report that there are victims of kidnapping or underage workers where you are, so that the authorities are alerted to the situation and are sent to investigate.

You must have the address of where you live, or at the very least, a reference point, so that they can locate you. It can be very intimidating when the police enter the property, so you will have to be confident enough to ask for help when they approach you.

In some countries there are services devoted to women who are abused by their partner; you could also ask these for help or rescue.

HOW TO FIND HELP?



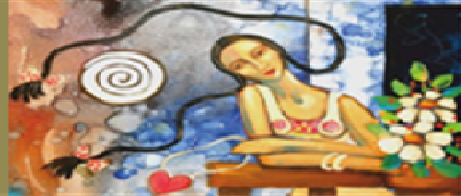
To break free, you need help to escape or to be rescued, as well as to avoid falling back into the hands of those who captured you.

- Identify the people who can help you. If you do not trust anyone close-by, do not risk it. It all depends on your situation.
- We believe it is important that you ask for help in busy places such as police stations, hospitals, churches, schools, shopping centres, airports, etc. According to where you are, we think it is essential that you are not alone and that there are other people who can see that you are seeking help. If you are afraid of explaining that you have been a victim of trafficking, say instead that you have been kidnapped or that you are seriously ill.
- After asking for help in a safe place, try to have someone put you in contact with your national embassy, the country's social services or any organisation would be able to help you, such as the Red Cross, Amnesty International, International Organization for Migration (IOM), women's associations or any union.
- Never tell them the place where you were living in case they take you back. Tell them instead that you do not know. Only tell them when you are sure that you have been saved.
- If you are in a country where you cannot speak the language, do everything in your power to communicate. For example, ask them to let you speak using the internet; search for an online translator like www.translate.google.com where what you write in English can be translated into the local language, allowing others to read what you say.
- Use few words when asking for help. For example "I have been kidnapped", "they want to kill me". With phrases like these, you will be able to attract attention. Afterwards, you can explain what you have been through. Remember that many people do not know what human trafficking is, so when escaping, do not waste time explaining details that people may not even understand. It is better to use words that make people react to your situation.
- Concentrate on being direct and "to the point". Do not tell your story to anyone until you are sure that they can help you. Repeat again and again

that you need help and in what form you need it; for example, contact with the police, a doctor, your embassy, your family or an NGO

- If you decide not to tell anyone, find some company nonetheless so you do not have to get over your ordeal alone. For example, go to a meeting place for women, immigrants etc.

IF YOU WANT TO PRESS CHARGES



- Once free from capture, you can press charges against your kidnappers through the police or a lawyer. Filing a criminal complaint means starting a long and sometimes painful legal process, as you will have to relive again and again what happened, but it can be useful for you.
- Do not file a complaint if you feel that you are being obligated or forced to do so. You have the right to reflect on the advantages and disadvantages which making a criminal complaint will bring to your life.
- In many countries, help is only offered to victims who make a formal complaint.
- You must have information about your captors or regarding the location where you were held. It is therefore important that you have and remember a lot of information.
- When you make a complaint, as well as being a victim, it is possible that you will be called upon to stand as a witness.
- Once a complaint is filed, attention will become focused on capturing and bringing the captor or network to justice, and as a consequence, you will feel that your needs and security are no longer their priority. You must therefore make sure that neither they nor you are forgotten about, what is most important is your wellbeing.
- Do not hesitate to ask for assistance to fulfill your basic needs such as recovering from physical injuries, detoxing from drug addiction, eating

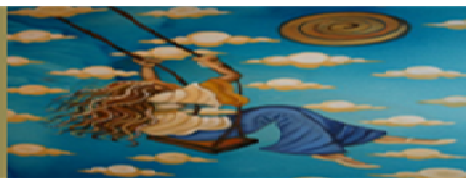
properly and having access to comfortable clothes and toiletries. It is also important to remain accompanied and not be isolated.

- You can stop the criminal proceedings of your complaint if you feel threatened or unprotected.
- When you ask for help and make a complaint, it is possible that you will be advised to tell your story in front of other people, and through various means of communication. Take time to think about this before acting, as it can have even more effect on your psychological state and the process of rebuilding your social life, and in return, you can be making money for others who will sell your story. We believe that it is important that many stories come out in public, but we also wish to draw attention to the risks and damage which they can cause to some victims.

HOW TO CARE FOR A VICTIM



WHY ARE GIVING ADVICE?



Through our experiences as victims, we can see that the fight against human trafficking is not being made effectively, and that resources for attending to victims are scarce. The good intentions expressed by countries in the international sphere and through the media are of little use when there are no resources or effective, concrete action is being taken to take care of victims of trafficking. We want to incorporate their voice into the global dialogue surrounding trafficking and women.

Our recommendations are a call to attention to professionals who have developed guidelines, protocols, policies and recommendations regarding trafficking, especially relating to the care of victims of trafficking, those who have imagined victims rather than communicate in open dialogue with them, and with those who provide care for them, in order to have a real understanding of their needs. We believe that the result of recommendations based on an *imagined victim* result in policies which are difficult to implement, and which are ineffective in practice.

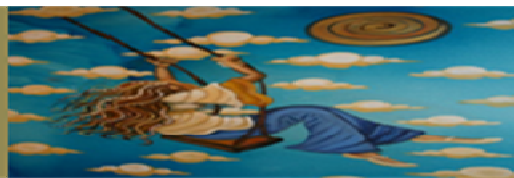
These recommendations are aimed at two groups:

1. People and organizations which work in finding, caring for and protecting possible victims of trafficking.
2. People that work or collaborate in places where victims can come to seek help, such as hospitals, churches, immigrant groups, community centres, women's shelters, schools, etc. We have identified that these places are where victims will come asking implicitly or explicitly for help, which can be problematic when these places do not understand the issues of trafficking, and can therefore be difficult for them to identify it, or they are unaware of the support that exists for these cases.

Our training efforts need to be extended to these two groups.

We hope that our recommendations will be understood as an effort to invite people to become further aware of the victims of trafficking, and the particular circumstances that each person may have.

IDENTIFYING A VICTIM



In order to be able to identify a victim, one must avoid the idea that each victim will be the same as others, or that they will always appear badly dressed, bruised and silent.

There are three situations which determine the way one can identify a victim and how to speak with her:

1. If she has been rescued:

In general, this means that the woman was not prepared to ask for help, and it will be difficult to identify her as a victim. You will need to have more time to start to speak. After a rescue the person is in a state of shock caused by fear and tension, most of all when she ignores what will happen to her after the rescue.

When the rescue takes place during a political action or a workplace inspection which shows indications of trafficking having taken place, it is necessary to isolate the presumed bosses in order to be able to question the women if they are there voluntarily, or if they need help to leave the place.

After identifying them, we suggest that they are left to collect their belongings so that they don't feel that they are being taken out as criminals. They should also be given time to change clothes if they are wearing work uniforms or are semi-nude.

If they are directly asked if they are victims of trafficking, it is possible that a response will not be given, since the word is not well known. We suggest that they are asked if they feel kidnapped or enslaved.

After a rescue of a number of people, it is important to be aware that they may be a level of mistrust amongst them. This attitude will determine what they say as well as their attitude to the police and professionals offering help.

When a group has been rescued together, there will always be one person who feels more victimized than the others, or one who is judged harshly or rejected by the others. For this reason, we recommend that the first interactions with them be done individually.

We wish to draw attention to the negative consequences which can arise from the mis-identification of a victim, as in these circumstances the person can be detained or deported. We have also noted that the chances of falling back into the control of their captors is high.

If women are found in a place have been beaten or drugged, it is likely that they are slaves, but will also definitely be paralyzed by fear and the effects of drugs, and will not be capable of asking for help or responding to questions.

Remember that silence or the fear of talking much can be an indicator that a woman is drugged, and therefore answering questions correctly will be impossible. In this case, please give them time, or look for answers from other indications.

Before removing a rescued woman, please make sure that there are no children of theirs in the place that would be separated from them, and in great danger.

The physical signs of violence, extreme tiredness, malnutrition or lack of cleanliness can lead to the identification of a victim. We advise that the women are asked about where they sleep, eat and bathe, as generally with victims of trafficking, they sleep, eat and work in the same place.

It is difficult to rescue women when they suffer from particular forms of trafficking such as forced marital servitude, domestic labour as part of slavery etc, which take place in private spaces such as within the 'family home.' For this reason it is important to find a way of reaching potential victims in these spaces.

2. If she has escaped:

A woman who has escaped on her own has needed to call upon her own bravery and intelligence, and has survived thanks to her creativity. For this reason, conversing with her will be different from cases where a woman

has been rescued. Her attitude can reflect the feeling that she is taking back control of her life and wants to participate in the decisions which affect her. However, even women in this position will be fearful and harbour feelings of fragility.

We want these feelings of bravery and self-determination by victims to be recognized attitudes, as occasionally it is recommended that scepticism is shown towards victims that act in a controlling or overconfident way. We are against the encouragement of the idea of a 'perfect victim' who acts according to the ideas and assumed needs of institutions which offer aid (such as when someone needs to cry, to speak or keep silent.)

Women that escape are afraid. Some cry, other clearly understand the help they require, and some appear 'absent'. The strength they have needed to call upon to escape can give way to complex emotional and physical reactions, such as anxiety, depression, euphoria, anger, etc...

Victims who escape try immediately to seek help or come to a place without knowing what to say. Some can end up sleeping on the street while trying to find someone who speaks their language.

The most common places where they go are: police stations, hospitals (they often sit across from an office waiting for someone to ask them something) churches, community centers, airports, ports, bus stations, embassies. etc. Some also choose to ask for help from people on the street, generally from women or immigrants.

Unfortunately, many people are unaware of trafficking. Even so, we have witnessed the creativity which many people have shown to help women in spite of ignoring the problem or the risks that they ran.

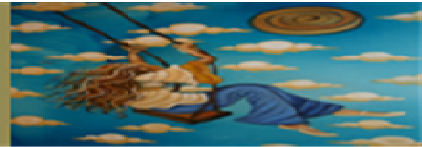
3. If she has been abandoned by her kidnapper:

A victim is abandoned by their kidnapper when they are no longer of use to them and they need to remove them from their territory. Generally, the same captor will take her and leave her at an embassy or with the immigration police, saying for example, that she is a thief or an undocumented immigrant so that she will be locked up or deported.

When a victim is abandoned, she is frequently disorientated, drugged, beaten or nude so that she doesn't leave the place, humiliated and with her self-esteem affected. They are unaware of how to ask for help, and are afraid of being sent to jail.

Please, calm her down, explain to her she has been a victim of trafficking, or slavery. Please don't treat her like a delinquent, and give her the chance to explain the conditions in which she was living so that you can identify the conditions of trafficking.

ABOUT THE INTERVIEW



The initial interview needs to be well thought out so as to better help the woman physically and psychologically, and the woman should not be coerced into making a denunciation.

Before beginning the interview:

- Assure the woman she is protected and will have a place to rest.
- Provide her with facilities to heal physical wounds.
- Give her something to eat and drink.
- Identify if the woman is in a state of shock or if she is drugged, showing the symptoms of mental absence, and help her to become stable. If she is interviewed before being stabilized, it is possible that she will confuse things, or that she will later forget what she said in the interview.
- Have patience if the woman prefers to remain silent, cry or speak angrily, wanting specific aid or making demands.
- Help her to identify urgent needs, and keep in mind that it can be difficult for her to ask for help.

During the interview:

- Remember that the victim many not know the legal concepts to define her situation. Be flexible with the concepts that you are both using.

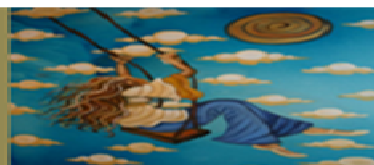
- Please do not create false hope in the woman in order to make her talk.
- Treat her like a possible victim and not a possible criminal.
- It is recommendable that the interview is conducted by women.
- Facilitate communication through a translator.
- Ensure that the first interview is only done once and do not put her under pressure to explain her situation over and over again to different groups, for example, the police, NGOs, with a doctor, a psychologist, a social worker etc.
- Do not undertake an interview with the central focus of identifying the kidnappers. Begin by asking about what she needs and how she feels.
- If a woman doesn't want to deal with the police, put her in contact with an organization that will serve a mediator to the police.
- If the woman shows symptoms of fear, consider the possibility that they could be brought about by religious matters or magic, like Voodoo.
- When you speak to her, do not use the word *victim* much, try to find alternative words which speak to her experience. (*When were you captured? During your abduction or mistreatment, were you abused?*) We find that this allows the woman to focus on what was done to her and not feel trapped in the word 'victim'. When a woman is in the process of retaking control of her life and the important decisions in her life, the concept of victimhood can be a barrier to the healing process, and time must be taken for her to recognize this as it is.
- Recognize her positive characteristics and remind her of how brave she has been.
- Use encouraging adjectives when referring to her, and negative ones for her kidnappers. In this way she will not feel challenged.
- Some trafficked women do not want to be looked after by services specializing in providing care to trafficking victims, as they feel there is a social stigma attached to it in their communities. Therefore, they prefer receive aid, for example, from services specializing in victims of domestic abuse, or services for immigrants. For this reason, it is important that there are links between different organizations that provide social care.

- The importance of *honour* in the cultures of many women must be taken into account, and what this implies when they are talking or remaining quiet. Honour should also be considered when designing help for people.

Pressing charges:

- Do not oblige her to make a criminal complaint.
- Explain the advantages and disadvantages of making a complaint.
- Victims can feel personally guilty for what has happened to them, and can fear being brought to court as if they had committed a crime. This perception is related to their conception of *consent*. For this reason it's important to explain to them that in cases of trafficking, consent is not taken into account since they were forced or the result of deception.
- Offer them alternatives to making a criminal complaint.
- Some fears which can affect their decision to make a complaint range from fear of racial discrimination, religious beliefs, the fact that they are women, or the fact that they are immigrants.
- The 'time for reflection' exists in some countries and allows the woman at least a month in which to make their decision to make a criminal complaint. We consider this to be a useful process and should be applied in all countries.
- Offering aid should not be held on the condition that a criminal complaint is made. We disagree with the practice of some countries which deport or forcibly remove victims who do not want to press charges against their captors. In the case of trafficking, returning people to their countries should be on a voluntary basis, and not forced.
- Allow the victim to see the use of a criminal complaint not as a form of revenge, but rather a way to find justice and regain their rights.

THE NEEDS OF THE VICTIM



Victims have both immediate as well as long-term needs. It is important to offer initial help, but also help her begin to imagine a better future, something which is essential for their recovery.

- Offer protection so that her kidnappers will not find her again, or bring harm to their family.
- Offer housing, medical attention, psychological and spiritual help.
- Help them to get a form of identification, a passport of their country of origin, a residence or work permit in the country they live in.
- The victim needs to feel that the justice system is acting to help her, which will help her to recover her sense of identity as a citizen. She must also feel solidarity with other people to regain her trust in other people.
- People and organizations offering help need to allow victims to take control of their own lives, permitting them to participate in making decisions and do not force certain behaviours upon them.
- Finding work is a priority.
- Women prefer to explain what happened to them, rather than answer questions. If you see that a woman is willing to talk, take the opportunity to begin a dialogue, and do not force her to go into greater detail regarding points which are more important to you than to her. Identify appropriate moments to have an interview or to begin a dialogue.
- Victims need to regain trust. Help her to feel comfortable with herself and where she lives. She must be able to dress as she likes and decorate her spaces how she feels is best.
- Victims need to think positively, and will often need to be shown affection, however, do not treat her like a child, but as a woman.
- Humor and spirituality help to heal wounds.

- An urgent need for victims as well as those who have not escaped from trafficking is finding information on what to do and when to go in the city where they find themselves. We find that many awareness campaigns are not focused on informing people about trafficking, but on publicity for the organization who is 'creating awareness'.
- It is important to spread information creatively and in different places. It is also necessary that the media becomes aware of the issues of the trafficking of women, its many forms, and the help which exists for its victims.



“A tree which falls,
makes more noise
than a growing forest!”

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<http://www.monicalignelli.com>

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<http://www.mundo-lingua.org>

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