

Safe Return and Reintegration of Trafficked Persons:

Quality Standards for Risk Assessment and Monitoring

The Vienna-based LEFÖ-Intervention Center for Trafficked Women (LEFÖ-IBF) has been working as a recognized victim protection organization providing support for victims of human trafficking throughout Austria since 1998. LEFÖ-IBF works with human rights-based and feminist empowerment approaches to advise, guide and support women and girls.

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Introduction

Trafficking in human beings, in particular, trafficking in women, is a severe violation of human rights, which manifests in multiple and complex forms of violence and abuse. Violence against women in this context must be addressed from several angles, as trafficking in women emerges at the intersection of different forms of discrimination:

- Women are trafficked because they do not have full equality due to societal structures.
- Women are trafficked because they live in poverty and are promised a better life, and they feel responsible for providing a better life for their children.
- Women are trafficked because they belong to a minority which itself is structurally marginalized or they are trafficked because they flee from (sexualized) violence and find themselves in a particularly vulnerable position.

With more than 25 years of experience, the LEFÖ-IBF Intervention Center for Trafficked Women has specialized in providing support to women and girls. Therefore, gender-sensitive factors pertaining to human trafficking are considered in the following sections of this handbook.

Gender plays a special role in the context of human trafficking and must be considered likewise when defining the necessary support measures. Against the backdrop of socially constructed, powerful gender roles, trafficked women and girls face different challenges than men and boys. Women's and girls' individual needs as well as their community's expectations, both defined by their role within the family, community and society (in the country of destination and the country of origin), and the specific risk potential they might be facing are factors that must be taken into consideration when providing counseling and guidance services for the women and girls concerned.

The return and reintegration of trafficked women and girls is fraught with many risks and dangers. A safe return of trafficked women and girls requires extensive preparation. Trafficked women and girls usually left their homes with the economic goal of giving themselves and their families a better future. To return as a victim of trafficking in women, which is a violation of human rights difficult to communicate, can pose enormous challenges to the victims. Above all, the fact of arriving “empty-handed” in the country of origin is particularly burdensome. Upon returning, many trafficked women and girls are confronted with stigmatization within their family, community and society—in addition to the burden of traumatic experiences. However, experience shows that the degree and complexity of stigmatization decline when returnees are able to achieve economic independence.¹ Successful economic (re-) integration also facilitates psychosocial stabilization and integration in social networks.

Achieving economic independence, though, requires extensive preparation in which NGOs (non-governmental organizations), public authorities and trusted advisors play a central role. In addition, fostering psychosocial integration and inclusion in social networks can provide a basis for an optimal economic situation. (Re)integration is a complex process unfolding on a psychological, social and economic level, varying significantly by a person’s individual situation and their country of origin.

This Handbook on the Safe and Voluntary Return of Trafficked Persons aims to prevent re-trafficking in women and girls and to prevent other violations of human rights pertaining to it. To provide individually tailored and effective support the LEFÖ-IBF counseling organization employs monitoring processes. Through monitoring processes support measures can be adapted continually, ensuring that they are taken in an optimal order and at an adequate pace and that they meet the needs of the trafficked person. Monitoring not only helps to optimize the support for trafficked persons, but also provides long-term insights into the effectiveness of reintegration measures. Monitoring thus fosters continued evaluation and improvement of measures and services. This handbook focuses primarily on the perspective of victim protection and support organizations. However, the insights gained can be used beyond the scope of these organizations.

¹ cf. GAATW 2015

Disclaimer on Case Studies

This handbook shows different case studies of women to highlight various aspects of safe and voluntary return. All the women share the experience of being trafficked through fraud, violence, and exploitation. All names have been changed. All information enabling the retracing of the individuals concerned has been altered.

Note on the use of language

In this handbook, “women” refers to all persons who identify as women and therefore includes trans and cis women.

Glossary

Voluntary return: Voluntary return means that the trafficked person has actively and deliberately decided to return to their country of origin as opposed to forced repatriation possibly caused by legal or political reasons. The return of trafficked persons should always be voluntary. This means that the trafficked person is involved in the decision-making process and that the person's safety, well-being and autonomy can be guaranteed during their return. Returning must be voluntary, thereby ensuring that returnees return to their communities without force and with due support. The process of voluntary return is of particular importance as the women concerned are often traumatized and suspicious of authorities and communities, which, in turn, can have an impact on their choices.

Voluntary return in this context means that 1) the women concerned make free choices, 2) they are provided information and support by NGOs, 3) they are guaranteed safety and protection, 4) they are provided return and reintegration support measures, 5) stigmatization is prevented, 6) voluntariness is guaranteed as a central prerequisite.

Risk assessment: Risk assessment relates to the systematic process of identifying and evaluating the potential risks and dangers for the trafficked person—in particular, a woman having become a victim of human trafficking—upon return to the country of origin or another region. A risk assessment is aimed at achieving a sound evaluation of persisting risks the trafficked person might be facing and how these risks could be mitigated or prevented by targeted measures. Risk assessment may provide a comprehensive picture of the potential risks the trafficked person could encounter upon their return. Safety measures and counseling and support services can then be defined accordingly. Conducting a sound risk assessment is thus a crucial part of voluntary return and reintegration planning in order to guarantee the safety and well-being of the trafficked person and to prevent their revictimization.

Country of origin: The country of origin is the country from which the trafficked person originally comes, hence the country in which they were born or in which they had their place of residence prior to becoming a victim of human trafficking. It can be a country marked by poverty, conflicts or other societal problems which may have contributed to the fact that the trafficked person became a victim of human trafficking. In the process of return, during the reintegration phase, there is usually an evaluation of how the trafficked person can return safely to their country of origin and reintegrate in the local community.

Integration: Integration denotes the long-term process of a person blending into a new society, thereby participating actively in its social, economic and cultural sphere. Integration is thus a long-term, multi-dimensional process aimed at enabling the trafficked person to become an equal member of society and lead a self-determined life.

Monitoring: Monitoring is the continuous process of observing, guiding and evaluating returnees upon their return to the country of origin. Monitoring is aimed at tracking the effectiveness of reintegration measures, identifying possible risks early on and taking supportive measures to foster the social, economic and legal integration of the trafficked person and to protect them from further dangers. Monitoring should help to consolidate successful reintegration and long-term integration of returnees in their communities. Monitoring not only serves as a means of tracking success, but also of identifying challenges and risks early on to make targeted interventions. Monitoring is thus an ongoing, flexible process orientated at the respective needs and circumstances of the trafficked person.

Reintegration: Reintegration is the long-term process by which the trafficked person is reintegrated into the society of their country of origin. It encompasses the social, economic and psychosocial aspects of the process of return and aims at helping the trafficked person to lead their life in self-determination, safety and with dignity. Measures of reintegration include guidance on the resumption of social relations, securing safe housing and employment, overcoming stigmatization or discrimination and receiving access to healthcare services and legal advice.

Reintegration is often a long-term process requiring the support of NGOs, public institutions and other organizations to secure the successful integration of the trafficked person in their country of origin and to avoid potential risks such as the recurrence of exploitation or re-trafficking.

Re-Trafficking: Re-trafficking, in the context of return, occurs when a person, after being released from trafficking and returning to the country of origin, or after moving to another place, again becomes a victim of human trafficking. This can happen when trafficked persons are not protected or supported sufficiently upon their return, thereby finding themselves again in dangerous situations or facing re-exploitation by human traffickers. The risk of re-trafficking is particularly high when countries of origin lack the social, economic or legal structures for a sustainable reintegration of trafficked persons. Therefore, an effective monitoring of return and reintegration is important to identify and prevent risks of re-trafficking early on.

Return: Return refers to the process in which a trafficked person moves from the country of destination back to their country of origin. Return can happen voluntarily or be forced and includes the physical and administrative procedures required to repatriate the person to their country of origin. A forced return or deportation is usually performed by the public authorities in the country of destination or due to legal conditions (e.g. a rejected application for asylum).

Country of destination: The country of destination is the country in which the trafficked person lives after migrating from the country of origin—either during the period of trafficking or during the preparatory phase of return and reintegration. In the country of destination, the trafficked person receives help from public institutions, NGOs and other advocacy organizations, providing them with support for the preparation and implementation of their return to the country of origin. The support provided includes legal advice, psychosocial care, training and workshops, medical care and possibly also material help.

Identification

A prerequisite of a safe and voluntary return and successful reintegration is to identify and recognize the trafficked person as a victim of human trafficking, so that they are not at risk of being deported. From the point of official identification, the trafficked person must be given legal residence for the country of destination, as this is a central prerequisite for a safe return. Based on these preconditions, return counseling and applicable measures for reintegration can be carried out. To identify victims of human trafficking, a clear definition of the term human trafficking or trafficking in women is necessary. In 2005, a consistent definition based on the UN Additional Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (2000) was established within the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. This definition was further clarified and extended by the EU Directive from 2011. In 2024, the definition was extended to encompass new forms of exploitation such as illegal adoption, forced marriage and surrogacy:

Article 2: Offences concerning trafficking in human beings

(1) Member States shall take the necessary measures to ensure that the following intentional acts are punishable: The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or reception of persons, including the exchange or transfer of control over those 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.

(2) A position of vulnerability means a situation in which the person concerned has no real or acceptable alternative but to submit to the abuse involved.

(3) Exploitation shall include, as a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, including begging, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the exploitation of criminal activities, or the removal of organs, or the exploitation of surrogacy, of forced marriage, or of illegal adoption ²

Since 1996, the organization LEFÖ has been working with a definition of trafficking in women that complies with the international standards established in 2000 under the framework of the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children:

Trafficking in women is,

- when a woman engages in migration due to deception and false promises and then finds herself in a coercive situation in the country of destination,
- when a woman finds herself in a situation where she has no rights and is forced to provide certain services,
- when a woman is deprived of her dignity, personal or sexual integrity by a husband or employer.³

In Austrian criminal law trafficking in women is covered by the criminal offences **§104a of the Austrian Criminal Code (StGB) on Human Trafficking** or **§217 of the Austrian Criminal Code (StGB) on Cross-border trafficking for purposes of prostitution** or **§116 of the Aliens' Police Law (FPG) on forced labor of foreigners**. These criminal offences anchored in the Austrian legal system form the basis for identifying victims of trafficking in women. However, failures in identification have been documented internationally, often resulting in deportations to countries of origin. These deportations are considered the primary cause of re-trafficking in women or other violations of human rights.⁴

² Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings

³ cf. Boidi et al. 1996

⁴ cf. OSCE/ODIHR 2014; ICMPD 2009

Therefore, the identification of a trafficked person is the central prerequisite for an efficient risk assessment.

The following indicators focus on central aspects of trafficking in women and the exploitation pertaining to it, thus serving as a basis for the identification of victims of trafficking in women:⁵

- Poor physical condition, such as visible and invisible signs of violence
- Passport/ID was confiscated, often under the pretext of “a safe storage”
- Trafficked person shows signs of intimidation, fear (e.g. of revenge), depression or apathy
- Social Isolation – trafficked person has hardly friends in the country of destination, no geographical orientation, no or little knowledge of the official language of the country of destination
- Control by removing the mobile phone and installing surveillance apps on existing devices
- The person’s freedom of movement was infringed by being locked up or put under constant control, often by threatening to report the person to authorities in the country of destination, or to inform their family about the person’s work and other uncomfortable details; also, the person was forced to commit criminal acts.

Exploitation

- Excessive number of working hours, no days off, no annual leave
- No remuneration at all or payment was below the minimum wage
- No possibility to quit the job; dependency
- Extremely bad working conditions (e.g. in domestic work: not permitted to use the washing machine, in case of sex work: not permitted to use condoms, no control over the number and type of clients or the sexual services offered, etc.)
- No employment contract, service card or similar documents
- Threat of or use of violence (e.g. economic, physical, psychological) against the trafficked person, also against the person’s family members

⁵ cf. LEFÖ-IBF Indicators; ILO 2009; ICMPD 2009

CASE STUDY I

Ella, a 15-year-old girl from Eritrea, was offered a job as a housemaid for Mrs. H. in Vienna through a family acquaintance. As Ella did not know her rights and the conditions of her immigration, Mrs. H. took over the organization of Ella's trip. They had neither talked about an employment contract nor remuneration before Ella's departure. Upon her arrival in Vienna, Ella had her passport immediately taken from her. Ella had to work not only in the household of Mrs. H., but also in that of Mrs. H.'s daughter, for seven days a week under constant control. She was not allowed to leave the house alone and suffered a lot from being kept isolated. Furthermore, Mrs. H. threatened Ella that she knew many important people in Eritrea and could harm Ella's family. Ella was allowed to call her family only two to three times a year solely under the control of Mrs. H. Also, Ella suffered physically from the lack of rest, as she was given only irregular and short breaks. After five years of exploitation, as Ella's health had been deteriorating drastically, she could not work anymore and was hospitalized. At the hospital, she confided in the staff and was referred to LEFÖ-IBF.

As soon as a suspicion based on the above-mentioned indicators arises, in Austria, a reflection period of 30 days must be observed, during which no deportation to the country of origin may take place (Departmental Note of the year 2014).⁶

During this reflection period of 30 days, the following in-depth indicators are to be applied for identification:

- **Deception in the process of recruitment:**

The trafficked person did not know that they were supposed to do this kind of job or believed that they would earn more. The trafficked person did not know anything about the other circumstances related to their immigration and about the living conditions in the country of destination. The trafficked person has/had to work longer hours for less remuneration than agreed. The trafficked person has/had to share their room with several other people. The trafficked person earns/earned less payment than agreed.

⁶ cf. GRETA 2015

The trafficked person was incorrectly informed about their status and legal situation as a (female) migrant in the country of destination. Possibly, the trafficked person was promised to receive training or education in the country of destination.

- **Force in the process of recruitment, threat or use of violence already during recruitment:** The trafficked person may have been threatened with the disclosure of information to their family or with the commitment of violent acts against their family
- **Recruitment by taking advantage of the special vulnerability of the trafficked person:**
The trafficked person has no family supporting them. The trafficked person may need to care for several children or other relatives. The trafficked person does not have any, or only basic education and no sufficient income, or high debts in the country of origin. The trafficked person's country of origin is politically unstable or at war. The trafficked person has no access to information about the country of destination or is unable to organize their migration themselves. The trafficked person has been deliberately misinformed about their rights in the country of destination to harbor mistrust towards and fear of local authorities. The trafficked person might be emotionally unstable. Pressure may be / may have been exerted on the trafficked person by exploiting their religious or cultural beliefs.

After identification of the trafficked person, different further steps are to be taken. It is crucial to clarify whether a safe return to the country of origin is possible. To ensure that the trafficked person is protected and can return safely, a comprehensive and effective risk assessment must be carried out in advance by an expert NGO such as LEFÖ-IBF in close collaboration with governmental institutions.

Right to Safe Return

The right of return for migrants is manifested in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:⁷

Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

The right of return for victims of human trafficking is manifested in further international agreements⁸, e.g. in Article 16 “Repatriation and return of victims” of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings:⁹

(1) The Party of which a victim is a national or in which that person had the right of permanent residence at the time of entry into the territory of the receiving Party shall, with due regard for his or her rights, safety and dignity, facilitate and accept, his or her return without undue or unreasonable delay. (2) When a Party returns a victim to another State, such return shall be with due regard for the rights, safety and dignity of that person and for the status of any legal proceedings related to the fact that the person is a victim, and shall preferably be voluntary.

Hence, the return of victims of human trafficking can be executed safely and voluntarily only based on an informed decision. The term “safe return” not only refers to safe transportation and transit to the country of origin, but also to the safety of the entire process of return.¹⁰

Support from NGOs for the decision-making and return process is therefore essential.

⁷ Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN 1948): Article 13/2

⁸ cf. UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons (2000): Art. 8

⁹ Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings 2005: Art. 16

¹⁰ cf. OSCE/ODIHR 2014

Return Counseling and Measures of Reintegration

Studies show that persons who do not return voluntarily¹¹ are exposed to a high risk of being re-trafficked or becoming victims of other violations of human rights.¹² According to the findings of experts monitoring human trafficking in Germany, for a safe and voluntary return that fulfills the necessary safety requirements a preparation period of at least two to three months must be taken into account.¹³

The following standards of return counseling for a sustainable reintegration must be considered:

The guiding principle is to guarantee standards of quality and transparency and to adopt a sensitive, victim-centered approach in delivering information to the trafficked person. Counseling ought to focus on providing comprehensive support to the trafficked person with the aim of ensuring a voluntary and safe return to the country of origin. Likewise, counseling must strive for sustainable reintegration, ensuring long-term safety and stability.

Support services prior to return

- Return counseling: In return counseling, prospects (of residence) in the country of destination and prospects in the country of origin are addressed.

¹¹ A voluntary decision concerning the return of trafficked persons to their country of origin is defined as follows: Legal residence in the country of destination must be provided as an alternative option. No external constraints may influence the decision of a trafficked person to return to their country of origin.

¹² cf. OSCE/ODIHR 2009; ICMPD 2009; La Strada Moldova 2007; UNHCR 2009

¹³ cf. OSCE/ODIHR 2010; OSCE/ODIHR 2014

When the trafficked person expresses the wish to return

- **Assessment of the wish for return:** The wish for return is assessed in terms of the subjective, psychological, physical, economic and labor market related needs of the trafficked person. Both push- and pull-factors that may have an influence on the person's choice are analyzed.
- **Information on return and reintegration:** Counseling encompasses various dimensions of reintegration, such as family reintegration, reintegration in the local community (if needed, through support groups), economic reintegration (e.g. job market qualifications and further education options in the country of destination and origin) as well as cultural (e.g. knowledge of language and traditions) and religious reintegration. Further decisive factors of successful reintegration are physical and mental health.

Preparation

- **Assessment of the specific case:** A comprehensive assessment of the person's specific case and of the situation prevailing in the country of origin is carried out.
- **Individual return and reintegration plan:** An individually tailored plan for return and reintegration (including support and safety measures) is developed, taking potential security scenarios into consideration.¹⁴

Support services in the country of destination prior to return

- **Accommodation:** Provision of safe accommodation.
- **Financial and material support:** Cover costs for transportation and transit, food and commodities necessary for the return.
- **Medical care:** Provide access to healthcare and other medical services.

¹⁴ To ensure that victims of human trafficking can return voluntarily and safely to their countries of origin, they must be given the option of supported return to the country of destination when feeling at risk in their countries of origin.

- Legal and administrative support: Organize travel documents, legal counseling on information retrieval and foster empowerment of the trafficked person to assert their own rights such as access to compensatory damages.
- Programs for economic reintegration: These may include job-related further education opportunities, small loans for setting up a business, specialized job trainings and cooperations with employers so that the persons concerned can obtain valid references to demonstrate their work experience.
- Guidance during transportation and transit: Organize accompanied return, provide guidance during the transit.
- Establish ties with the country of origin: Upon request, get in touch with family, friends or local NGOs to facilitate the process of return.

CASE STUDY 2

Maria, who was referred by the police to LEFÖ-IBF, expressed her wish for an immediate return to Serbia in the first counseling session. The psychosocial counselor took her wish into account, explained the process and the possibilities of support in case of a return, and informed Maria about the minimum preparation period of one week. Maria agreed and was housed in the LEFÖ-IBF shelter. There, she finally could get some rest. With noticeable stabilization, Maria asked for more time to think about her return. During this period, she received intensive crisis intervention care and counseling twice a week. After three weeks, her request for return was certain. Being granted a reflection period and safe shelter as well as receiving intensive guidance and counseling helped Maria to make an informed choice to return to Serbia.

Risk Assessment

The assessment of potential risks pertaining to a voluntary and safe return and subsequent reintegration of trafficked persons must be done on two levels:

- **Individual risks:** These are acute risks which affect the trafficked person directly and are related to their return and reintegration. Individual risks include the threat posed by perpetrators who may induce life-threatening situations, as well as health risks and other individual risks.
- **Societal risks:** These are long-term risks pertaining to the general perception of trafficked women, such as marginalization and stigmatization. Although they may not appear to be acute in the given situation, they must nevertheless be considered, as, in the longer term, they can lead to re-trafficking in women or other violations of human rights.

To ensure a safe and voluntary return of trafficked persons, increased cooperation between many different actors such as NGOs and public authorities is essential. Human trafficking as an international crime and a violation of human rights implies the accountability of states to protect and support trafficked persons, thereby participating actively in the process of return.

The following actors are to be interviewed in the risk assessment process:

- **The trafficked persons themselves:** Assessment carried out by the NGO in charge.
- **Governmental authorities in the country of origin:** Contacts established by Austrian public authorities.
- **NGOs in the country of origin:** Contacts established via NGOs in the country of destination.
- **International organizations:** Contacts established via NGOs in the country of destination.

The following three steps are pivotal for risk assessment prior to the voluntary and safe return of a trafficked person:

STEP I

History of the trafficked person

Aim: To compile all possible essential individual facts and experiences from the person's own perspective, which can then be supplemented by additional general research about the country of origin in step 2.

It is of vital importance to consider the individual vulnerability trafficked women. Perpetrators and criminal organizations usually pose the biggest threats, however, also the political and economic situation of the trafficked persons in their country of origin may heighten their individual vulnerability. Therefore, an effective risk assessment must first investigate the individual history of the trafficked person.

Analyzing the history of the trafficked person

Analyzing a trafficked person's history requires a relationship of trust between the trafficked person and the NGO-employee, which does not exist a-priori, but usually takes some time to develop.¹⁵

The aim is to grasp and analyze the trafficked person's history to the greatest extent and to identify possible risks. Considering the trafficked person's biography is likewise relevant for an effective risk assessment. It is important to evaluate the person's subjective fears against objectifiable risks. Potential risks should be considered on the following levels:

¹⁵ cf. GAATW 2015

Risks arising from the biography of the woman concerned:

- **Assessment of the family:** How does the woman's immediate environment look like? What is the economic situation of her family? Whom of her family or close relations can she trust? Is her family at risk, possibly also due to the trafficking experience of the woman concerned? Does her family have debts or does the trafficked woman owe debts to her family? How is her family handling the woman's trafficking experience? Could this induce further risks for the woman or her family?
- **Circumstances in the country of origin:** Does the woman concerned belong to a political or any other kind of minority facing particular risks in the country of origin? Is she at risk of facing persecution, punishment or discrimination due to her identity or affiliation? These circumstances may significantly increase the risk of re-trafficking or other violations of human rights.

Risks caused by the trafficking process:

- **Criminal organizations of the perpetrators:** Who is involved? Which ties are pertaining to criminal networks in the country of origin? How likely is it that perpetrators will take revenge in case of return? How does the criminal organization of the perpetrators look like? How strong is the perpetrators' influence? These questions are particularly relevant when assessing the risk of return for the woman concerned, as criminal networks are often highly influential, posing a considerable safety risk to the woman concerned.
- **Assessment of family and friends in the country of origin:** Where can the woman's family and friends be found? Are they possibly in danger themselves? Is it safe for a woman to stay with her family upon her return, or is she at risk of being tracked down by the perpetrators there? Has the woman's family already moved to another place? Is the woman's family itself possibly involved in trafficking? It is essential to answer these questions to assess whether returning to her family and immediate environment poses additional risks to the woman concerned.

Risk of stigmatization:

- To what extent can the woman concerned be reintegrated in the local community and in the labor market? Is the woman concerned at risk of facing social exclusion due to her previous migration or work in sex work/prostitution? In many societies, the mere fact of a woman associated with the experience of trafficking returning to her local community can lead to stigmatization, social exclusion and further violations of human rights.
- **Analyzing the woman's living conditions in the country of origin:** What are the possibilities for social and economic reintegration in the country of origin considering the woman's biography? How might she be perceived by the local community? Is there a risk that she will be rejected or excluded due to her trafficking experiences? Analyzing these questions helps to identify the risks of remarginalization and social isolation.

STEP 2

Additional research

In addition to the information obtained from interviewing the trafficked person, further reliable sources about the country of origin must be researched. This requires thorough evaluation of country reports and additional research on the internet. Consulting local experts who have specific knowledge of local circumstances is likewise important. For these research activities, NGOs should use all accessible and reliable sources of information. Furthermore, all existing ties and cooperations with governmental authorities should be yielded to gain the most comprehensive picture of the situation in the country possible and to assess the risks of a safe and voluntary return of the woman concerned.

- **General research on the legal situation:** Are people being punished for irregular migration? What are the legal grounds concerning sex work and prostitution in the country of origin?
- **Search for potential contacts:** Which governmental authorities in the country of origin can be contacted to gain information without putting the trafficked person at risk? It is important to draw on the knowledge of governmental authorities in the countries of

origin, however, always consider that the trafficked person must be protected at all times.

- **Information from specialized local NGOs:** How do experts from countries of origin assess the security situation and chances of reintegration? How do they assess the risk of stigmatization of returnees? Local NGOs can also provide information on existing support services for physical and mental recovery and on specialized aid programs for trafficked persons.
- **Information from international organizations:** To gain a more comprehensive picture of the country of origin, international organizations working in the country of origin and/or providing specific data on the country of origin should be consulted.

The first two steps are aimed at achieving a comprehensive identification of all potential risks pertaining to the return of the woman concerned. It is not until all relevant information on the subjective, social, legal and political risks has been gathered that an informed decision can be made on the measures to be taken in the third step. A thorough risk assessment is decisive for ensuring the security and well-being of the woman concerned.

STEP 3

Developing security scenarios

This step requires close cooperation between the NGO carrying out the first two steps of the risk assessment and governmental authorities. The latter must contribute their knowledge of the level of security in the respective country of origin as well as their ties with local authorities. The trafficked women themselves must be actively involved in the development of security scenarios, as they know their specific needs and potential risks best.

In principle, the return of trafficked persons entails the risk of re-trafficking. Therefore, when the woman concerned expresses the wish to return, it is crucial to develop a safety plan. This plan must be tailored carefully to the individual biography and specific risks of the woman concerned. Only by considering the individual circumstances of the woman concerned, the safest and most sustainable return possible can be ensured.

Special support from state authorities is required in the following areas:

- **Safe transportation and transit:** Ensure safe and escorted transportation and transit to the country of origin to minimize the risk of security threats.
- **Data protection:** Ensure the protection of the woman's personal data to conceal her identity and place of return, thereby protecting her from being persecuted by perpetrators.
- **Security measures pertaining to perpetrators:** Develop strategies to reduce the risk of revenge attacks or further assaults by perpetrators including security measures in the country of origin.

Taking these targeted and coordinated steps, the safest and most sustainable return possible can be planned and implemented for the woman concerned.

Safe and trustworthy resources in the country of origin:

- Are there trustworthy NGOs or family members who were not involved in the trafficking process and can serve as safe harbors?
- Would it be advisable for the woman concerned to consider resettling to another part of her country, out of the orbit of the perpetrators?

Safe transportation and transit:

- An escort is to be organized to ensure the woman's security.
- Which measures are to be taken to ensure cross-border security, particularly if there is no valid travel document, e.g. passport?
- Are there security measures to be taken during the transit?
- If necessary and upon the woman's request: Organize a safe escort from the airport in the country of origin to the woman's place of residence.

Data protection to prevent stigmatization:

- Which information should be withheld to minimize the risk of stigmatization or potential punishment due to the political situation in the country of origin?
- In principle, only strictly essential information with explicit consent of the woman concerned may be disclosed.

Possibilities for reintegration in the local community and labor market:

- Which social networks does the woman concerned already have?
- If returning to these networks is not advisable, which other possibilities of social inclusion are there?
- What chances of integration in the job market are there in the country of origin?
- Which opportunities for obtaining educational or vocational qualifications are there in the country of destination or country of origin that might foster sustainable reintegration?

Physical and mental recovery:

- Can the trafficked person receive efficient support for her physical and mental recovery in the country of origin?
- What support services are available in the country of origin?
- Which stages of recovery should be achieved in the country of destination due to limited resources in the country of origin?

Ensuring safety in case of potential perpetrators in the country of origin:

- If perpetrators are suspected to be in the country of origin, how can the woman concerned avoid them?
- Which measures are necessary to ensure the safety of the trafficked person?
- If a safe return does not seem possible, but the woman concerned does not want to stay in the country of destination due to the fact that she is traumatized:
- Would resettling in a third country be an option for her?
- Which countries might be taken into consideration for the trafficked person?

Following these considerations and planning stages, it is absolutely essential to reassess all previously elaborated aspects, ensuring that no new risks have arisen and that the planned security and reintegration measures still meet the current needs and situation of the woman concerned. It is only by regular assessment and adaptation of measures that a safe, voluntary return and sustainable, successful reintegration can be guaranteed.

Cases where safe return is not possible:

- The trafficked person does not want to return. However, due to negative prospects in the country of destination, the decision to return was made.
- Returning to her country of destination would put the trafficked person at greater risk due to her testifying in criminal proceedings: Perpetrators might wait for her return to take revenge.
- The perpetrators' criminal organization has possibly strong influence on police or other governmental authorities in the country of origin.
- There is a high level of risk due to the involvement of the woman's family or immediate environment in the trafficking process.
- The trafficked person is severely traumatized.
- There is no possibility of reintegration in the local community.

In all these cases, there is a high risk of re-trafficking or other hazards and violations of human rights.

Monitoring Standards

Why Monitoring?

International documents¹⁶ point out to the accountability of governments for the return and reintegration of victims of human trafficking. “Receiving states must facilitate return by, for example, [...] undertaking risk and social-inclusion assessments prior to a trafficked victim’s return [...]”¹⁷. The same document emphasizes the need for cooperation between states, and collaboration with victim protection organizations, authorities, trade unions and employer associations to ensure the security of the victims during return and reintegration.

Monitoring of return and reintegration measures is at the core of international cooperation, as return and reintegration represent exceptionally sensitive phases in the biography of the affected person. It is often emphasized that—with the consent of the trafficked person—monitoring measures must be set up in both countries of origin and destination. These activities are to be carried out in close cooperation with victim protection organizations and should continue for at least one year after return. Providing comprehensive return counseling and conducting a thorough risk analysis as described in the first part of this handbook, are the fundamental prerequisites of a successful and safe return.

Counseling and guidance provided by the responsible institutions do not end on arrival in the country of origin. Continued support is required to ensure a sustainable reintegration and the personal safety of the trafficked person.

However, if counseling and guidance are terminated upon an trafficked person’s arrival in her country of origin, this may have serious consequences. Due to the particular vulnerability of the trafficked persons, they are at risk of becoming victims of re-trafficking or other violations of human rights. To avoid these risks, it is essential to proceed with a qualitative monitoring of the return and reintegration process. The

¹⁶ cf. OSCE/ODIHR 2014; UNODC 2008

¹⁷ OSCE/ODIHR 2014

main aim of the monitoring is to prevent further trafficking in women, by focusing especially on the empowerment of the trafficked person.

As every case is highly individual, there is no schematic structure for its monitoring. Nevertheless, a qualitative assessment of the situation by means of monitoring standards can function as an essential guideline for counselors in NGOs and civil servants in public authorities who work with vulnerable persons. If risks prevail upon return in the country of origin, the woman concerned should be given the option of returning to the country of destination and receive support there.

Definition Monitoring

The UNODC toolkit (2008)¹⁸ describes monitoring applied in the work with victims of human trafficking as “continuing function” with the aim of collecting data on a regular basis by means of specific indicators. The aim of monitoring is to yield information on whether the defined objectives have been met and how funds have been allocated. Thus, monitoring helps to identify the progress and evaluate the effectiveness of the measures taken.

Surtees (2008) defined the monitoring of return and reintegration of trafficked persons as “continuous oversight of the implementation of project activities, assessing progress”¹⁹ and as identification of difficulties and recommendations. Furthermore, according to Surtees, “monitoring is aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of a project and ensures that activities are transformed into results/output (...)”²⁰

From the perspective of a counseling and support institution, monitoring the return and reintegration of trafficked persons implies systematic observation and evaluation of the individual reintegration plans that have been developed in advance together with the women concerned.²¹

Monitoring includes the evaluation of the outcome of reintegration activities in order to accomplish the goal of successful reintegration in

¹⁸ cf. UNODC 2008

¹⁹ Surtees 2008

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ cf. Surtees 2009

the best way possible. Monitoring focuses on measuring the effectiveness of individual reintegration based on meeting the relevant monitoring standards.

Return and reintegration can be considered a successful process if social inclusion of the trafficked person in the country of origin has taken place. Social inclusion comprises economic and psychosocial integration as well as inclusion in the respective social networks.²² Social inclusion requires that the trafficked person is able to achieve sustainable recovery and stabilization both on a personal and societal level. It also entails the development of new perspectives, which consider both the person's economic and emotional needs.

²² cf. van Houte/de Koning 2008

Successful Return and Sustainable Reintegration

Successful return and sustainable reintegration of trafficked women are influenced to a large degree by a multitude of individual and structural factors:

Individual factors

Individual factors such as age, gender, social and economic status significantly influence the experience of trafficked women, both before and after their return.

Due to socially constructed gender roles, women often have other motivations and are confronted with different challenges and expectations in their country of origin than men. The exceedingly high risk of social marginalization and discrimination upon return and reintegration of trafficked women is exemplary of these socially constructed norms. Trafficked women are particularly exposed to marginalization and discrimination when associated with sex work. This observation often made by victim support organizations has been confirmed by the findings of the GAATW (Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women) paper “Towards Greater Accountability: Participatory Monitoring of Anti-Trafficking Initiatives” (2015).²³ They indicate that in many societies, women having survived trafficking and sexual exploitation are confronted with specific, often negative expectations and challenges which hamper their reintegration.

Furthermore, the paper shows that improving the economic situation of the women concerned can significantly reduce marginalization and discrimination. If the women concerned are given economic opportunities and can improve their social reintegration, societal barriers after return are significantly mitigated.

Age is a further factor in the process of return. In his study of young migrants, Gmelch (1980)²⁴ found that younger migrants, due to their

²³ cf. GAATW 2015

²⁴ cf. Gmelch 1980

relatively long stay in the countries of destination, had to tackle bigger challenges when they returned. According to van Houte/de Koning (2008), this observation is applicable to the return situation of trafficked women.²⁵ Women having been trafficked at a young age usually have to cope with additional mental and social stress, as their experiences in the countries of destination and the adaption to a new lifestyle have had a bigger impact on them than the return to their country of origin. This can impede their reintegration in the local community.

Support measures and services

It is important to understand that counseling and guidance do not end on arrival in the country of origin, but support is to be provided continually and has ideally been prepared during the process of return.

A successful return and sustainable reintegration of trafficked persons requires continued, holistic support.

However, in actual practice the prevailing assumption is that return implies “coming home”, and the support measures from counseling and support institutions be terminated on arrival in the country of origin. This approach leads to a lack of knowledge of the specific challenges and needs of returnees and limits the agency and scope of action of victim protection organizations. Without continued guidance and support there is a risk of re-victimization and stigmatization of the woman concerned.

²⁵ cf. van Houte/de Koning 2008

Continued support must thus be adapted to the individual situation of the woman concerned.

Key measures are:

- **Financial support:** Cover transit costs, provide small allowances and other financial resources to facilitate the process of return.
- **Material support:** Provide access to medical care, give safe shelter, provide opportunities for vocational training or further education to receive qualifications and foster reintegration in the job market.
- **Immaterial support:** Provide psychosocial counseling services, crisis intervention, assistance with governmental authorities, escort to train stations or airports and information about relevant legal rights and possibilities for reintegration.
- **Customized risk assessment and safety measures:** Identify potential risks such as re-trafficking, stigmatization or discrimination, and take adequate protection measures.

It is essential that these support measures are tailored to the specific needs of the trafficked person. This includes an individual risk assessment, taking into consideration both the personal and the societal circumstances of the country of origin and the country of destination. Furthermore, support is to be provided in close cooperation with institutions of the country of destination and origin to ensure a sustainable reintegration and to protect the returnee from further risks.

It is essential to provide these comprehensive support measures to ensure that the woman concerned is reintegrated in the local community. Therefore, support is to be continued after the initial process of return to guarantee the long-term safety and well-being of the woman concerned.

This customized support is of vital importance to guarantee sustainable reintegration and to minimize the risk of re-victimization.

To maximize the social inclusion of returnees in their countries of origin, close cooperation between the relevant actors is required. This cooperation encompasses the coordination between victim protection and advocacy organizations, state institutions, local authorities and other relevant organizations to create a comprehensive and sustainable support network.

Overall, support measures must be aimed not only at fostering the process of return logistically but also ensuring the long-term stability and safety of the trafficked person.

CASE STUDY 3

Before Ruby's return, LEFÖ-IBF contacts their partner NGOs in the country of origin (the Philippines) and informs Ruby about support services available in the Philippines.

Furthermore, Ruby is given the chance to have a telephone call with a counselor from one of the Philippine NGOs. Ruby can thus make sure that the local support services indeed exist and will continue to do so in the country of origin. Through established international cooperations Ruby can be escorted safely from the airport in Manila to her hometown.

Now Ruby attends a job training twice a week, which has been organized by the local NGO.

Social inclusion

The successful return and reintegration of trafficked persons is a complex process encompassing not only their economic, but also their social participation in society. Participation denotes the ability to act independently and self-determinedly in society. The psychosocial dimension of this process is of particular importance: The returnee concerned must find their individual position in society and develop a sense of belonging to become a lasting member of the community.

Regarding the return and reintegration of trafficked persons, there are several key factors relevant to the psychosocial dimension:

Mental health and well-being

This pertains to the person's emotional and mental well-being which may have been strongly influenced by traumatic experiences of exploitation, mistreatment, abuse and displacement. For reintegration to be successful, it is essential to provide psychotherapy or other forms of psychosocial support to help trafficked persons cope with trauma and develop resilience.

Sense of belonging and identity

A central part of the psychosocial dimension is to restore a positive self-image and foster a sense of belonging within a community. This implies that the trafficked person needs to rebuild a stable identity not only shaped by their negative experiences of human trafficking but also by their active participation and integration in the community.

Social relations and networks

Social attachments play a central role in psychosocial reintegration. A robust social network, be it through family, friends or supportive communities, can help the trafficked person to stabilize in their new environment, build trust and receive emotional support.

Societal integration

This term refers to the person's ability to adopt the societal norms and values of their country of origin or to integrate in a new society, without being socially excluded or discriminated against. Successful integration means that the trafficked person perceives themselves as an equal member of society and participates actively in social, cultural and economic activities.

Overall, the psychosocial dimension refers to internal and external processes of integration not only encompassing material and economic aspects but also the mental recovery and restoring of social and emotional attachments. It is a decisive indicator whether the trafficked person is able to orientate themselves self-determinedly in society and to feel a sense of social belonging.

From this perspective, the monitoring of return and reintegration must be regarded as a continued, qualitative process of counseling and support that not only considers the economic but also the psychosocial dimension. Thus, the implementation of monitoring cannot be handled as a merely quantitative fact-check, as the beforementioned international documents suggest. It should rather be understood as a continuous, dialogue-intensive and qualitative process of counseling and guidance responding to the individual needs and challenges of the returnees. Monitoring should support persons in their social and psychological reintegration, helping them establish an independent position within their community.

Implementation of Monitoring

(From the perspective of victim protection and advocacy organizations)

Actors involved

Monitoring of return and reintegration processes for trafficked persons must be regarded as continued, systematic process. Various actors play a decisive part in this process, ensuring that the return and subsequent reintegration will be successful both on mental and emotional as well as social and economic levels. The principle of voluntary return is of vital importance: The trafficked person must be actively involved in the monitoring process, their explicit consent being a prerequisite of all further steps. It is essential to maintain this guiding principle as the autonomy and empowerment of the trafficked person are to be preserved.

I. Trafficked person

The trafficked person is at the core of the monitoring. Based on their needs, wishes and perspectives all further monitoring measures are developed and taken. The process of monitoring is not a merely technical task to be fulfilled but must be regarded as a dynamic process of guidance centered around the individual needs of the trafficked person. Every measure, be it about mental health, social inclusion or economic stabilization, may be taken solely with the explicit consent of the trafficked person. It is important to ask the trafficked person regularly about their experiences and needs to ensure that they are actively involved in their own reintegration.

2. NGOs in countries of destination and origin

NGOs play a central role in the monitoring process. In the countries of destination, NGOs are usually the first contacts for counseling and guidance for returnees. Not only do they offer practical support for integration but also provide psychosocial guidance and counseling services. NGOs in the countries of origin are likewise important, as they help the trafficked person to reintegrate into their social and cultural environments. NGOs function as interfaces between the trafficked person and other actors, in particular governmental authorities, employers and social institutions. NGOs ensure that all steps in the monitoring process—from risk assessment to measurement of progress in social and economic reintegration—are documented carefully and evaluated continually.

In some cases, external supervisors can give valuable support, thereby accompanying the counselors, supervising the quality of counseling and sharing additional expertise. External supervisors are responsible for providing support to the counselors and for ensuring that the monitoring is carried out in an objective, sensitive and professional way.

3. Governmental authorities and other institutions in the countries of destination and origin

Governmental authorities and other state institutions both in the country of destination and origin play a central role in the monitoring process. Their task is to execute the formalities, e.g. they procure documents and organize the provision of legal, healthcare or social services. NGOs escort the trafficked person to governmental offices, thereby safeguarding the person's rights. Close cooperation between NGOs and state agencies is necessary to ensure that returnees receive access to medical aid, psychological counseling and measures for obtaining qualifications.

Reports and feedback from authorities and agencies on the progress of reintegration, health or participation in social programs are essential in gaining a comprehensive picture of the reintegration process. The information gained must be incorporated regularly in the monitoring. However, data protection and the personal safety of the trafficked person are to be ensured at any time. If returnees wish to remain anonymous for safety reasons, this must be respected.

4. Additional actors and networks

Apart from the aforementioned actors, other stakeholders, e.g. employers, vocational education and job training centers or local community organizations can play a vital part in the monitoring process. These organizations offer support for economic reintegration, e.g. through job placement or measures for obtaining qualifications. Integration in the labor market is a central pillar of successful reintegration and can serve as a further monitoring criterion.

Cooperation between the various actors must be coordinated to ensure that the trafficked person receives continued support and no service or measure is overlooked. Therefore, an integrative approach must be adopted, enabling all involved actors to contribute their specific resources and expertise to the monitoring process.

Monitoring measures

To ensure successful and sustainable reintegration, the progress of the trafficked person must be assessed on a regular basis. This encompasses:

- Holding regular talks with the trafficked person to reflect on their experiences and needs.
- Documenting the progress made in different areas such as health, social inclusion or economic stability.
- Evaluating the feedback received by the various actors, such as NGOs, governmental authorities and institutions.
- Adapting measures to meet the changing needs of the trafficked person.

Upon return: Implementation of monitoring and support

1. Establishing contact with the trafficked person

After the trafficked person has returned to their country of origin it is essential that counselors keep in contact with them. By taking this step, the trafficked person receives support and continued guidance immediately upon return. The first conversations should center around the person's current health and living situation, encompassing both the psychosocial and the socioeconomic situation of the trafficked person to plan the necessary further steps for ensuring continued support and reintegration. The conversations should cover the following thematic areas, which were defined as success indicators in the monitoring process:

- Mental health (e.g. traumatization, anxieties and fears, adaptation problems)
- Social integration (e.g. relationships, sense of belonging and identity, support from family or community)
- Economic situation (e.g. job opportunities, financial independence)

2. Counseling and care provided by trusted persons, NGOs and government authorities in the country of origin

Counseling and care must be continued in close cooperation with NGOs and government authorities in the country of origin. This close cooperation not only includes regular conversations initiated by the counselors, but also sharing new findings and information gained during reintegration. Furthermore, NGOs in the country of origin can also implement visits to the social environment of the trafficked person to better evaluate their social integration and living situation. These visits enable the counselors to interact directly with the trafficked person and their immediate family or environment and to identify potential challenges early on.

3. Prerequisites of successful follow-up support and monitoring

To ensure that follow-up support and monitoring are effective, several prerequisites must be met:

- **Joint coordination in advance:** It is essential that all actors involved (the trafficked person, counselors, NGOs, local authorities) are informed well in advance about the follow-up support procedures and the aims to be achieved. Communication must be precise, and coordination of responsibilities is vital.
- **Joint preparation:** The trafficked person should develop an individual strategy for their reintegration, considering their personal needs, together with the supporting institutions. This includes the joint planning of the next steps and definition of resources available for support.
- **Voluntary participation:** Participation in further monitoring measures must be voluntary. The trafficked person must be involved in the monitoring process at any time and be fully informed about their rights. The monitoring process should be considered as help for fostering self-help and not as mandatory measure.
- **Planning of resources:** Implementing the follow-up and monitoring procedures often requires additional resources, e.g. financial means, personnel or time. The actors involved must ensure that these resources are organized in advance and that an adequate time frame for preparation and implementation of follow-up care is accounted for.

Success Indicators for Monitoring of Return and Reintegration

The following success indicators are central to the monitoring of return and reintegration processes of the trafficked person. Depending on the individual situation of the trafficked person and the specific circumstances in the country of origin, some indicators might be more relevant than others. These indicators serve as guidelines for planning measures to be taken, for communicating with the trafficked person and for assessing the success of the entire reintegration process.

Motivation and participation in the reintegration process

- Implementation of the reintegration plan: To what extent and how consistently has the trafficked person implemented their individual reintegration plan?
- Active participation: Has the trafficked person participated actively in the planned programs and activities?
- Self-evaluation: How does the trafficked person evaluate their progress in and success of the reintegration plan?
- Use of additional services: Has the trafficked person made use of additional programs or researched these independently?
- Vocational education and job training: Has the trafficked person attended vocational education courses, job training and/or obtained qualifications to foster their independence?
- Fostering autonomy: Has attendance at courses of further education led to a significant increase in the person's living situation and raised their level of autonomy?

Safe and adequate accommodation

- Housing situation: What does the current housing situation of the trafficked person look like? Does it provide a safe shelter suitable for a long-term reintegration?
- Security: Do accommodation and immediate environment serve as a safe shelter, protecting the trafficked person from potential perpetrators? Are there any noticeable risks for the person's safety?

Legal status in terms of social and criminal law

- Legal residence: Does the trafficked person have legal residence in the country of origin?
- Documents: Did the trafficked person get back important personal documents (e.g. passport, ID)?
- Criminal prosecution: Is there a chance of criminal prosecution, be it in the country of origin or destination?
- Legal custody of children: In case of children: Has there been appointed a legal guardian?

Labor market opportunities

- Job market situation: What does the job market situation for the trafficked person look like? Does the person have access to the job market?
- Employment: Has the trafficked person found a job? If so, does the trafficked person receive sufficient remuneration to make an independent living?
- Prospects for the future: What are the long-term job prospects for the trafficked person? Are further support or qualification measures necessary?

Opportunities for further education and qualification measures

- Access to further education: Does the trafficked person have access to further education or measures to gain qualifications?
- Increase in qualifications: Does further education or vocational training improve the employability of the trafficked person?
- Positive effects of further education: What other positive effects of further education on the trafficked person can be observed (e.g. empowerment, increase of social network)?

Security

- Fear of repressions: Does the trafficked person have legitimate fear of revenge attacks or repressions carried out by the perpetrators?
- Re-encountering the perpetrators: What are the chances of re-encountering the perpetrators in the immediate social environment? How can re-encounters be avoided?
- Strategies for avoiding dangerous situations: Which preventive measures and strategies are there to ensure that the trafficked person will not find themselves in dangerous situations again?

Supportive social environment (no discrimination, no marginalization)

- Social environment: Does the social environment of the trafficked person nourish acceptance and support?
- Discrimination and stigmatization: Is the trafficked person discriminated against or stigmatized because of their experiences in trafficking in women, especially, if they were involved in sex work?
- Treatment of trafficking history: Does the local community know about the person's history? If so, how do they treat this information? Is there exclusion or integration?
- Empowerment: How does the trafficked person deal with their own history? Has the person developed the capacity to assert themselves in their social environment?

Positive relationships

- Relationship to family and friends: How has the relationship to family and friends changed upon return? Are there positive or negative changes?
- Evaluation of return: How has the trafficked person been received by the local community upon return? Were there challenges to be tackled or was the person offered support?
- New social relations: Has the trafficked person established new relations aside from the reintegration plan, e.g. through work, neighborhood or measures for obtaining qualifications?

Economic situation

- Financial situation: How robust is the financial situation of the trafficked person? Does the person have sufficient income to cover their cost of living independently?
- Integration in the labor market: Has the trafficked person managed to integrate in the job market? What kind of employment does the person have and how much payment do they receive?
- Prospects for the future: What are the prospects for the future regarding the person's finances and employment?
- Return aid programs: Are there return aid programs providing financial support for the trafficked person?

Physical well-being

- Physical recovery: Has the woman concerned physically recovered from the traumatic experiences and physical stress induced by trafficking?
- Access to medical care: Has the woman concerned access to essential medical care? Has there been adequate treatment?
- Process of recovery: Has the woman's health improved and are there signs of a lasting recovery?
- Ability to travel back: Is the woman able to travel back to her country of origin?

Mental well-being

- Traumatization: How has the person's mental health been developing? Can a sustainable healing from the mental stress caused by traumatization be expected?
- Access to psychological counseling: Has the person access to psychological care or psychotherapy?
- Social integration and autonomy: Can the trafficked person tackle independently challenges of everyday life and be integrated in society?

Access to counseling and support organizations

- Continued access to support: Has the trafficked person continued access to professional support, e.g. psychosocial counseling or other support services?
- Availability of support institutions: Are there suitable institutions in the immediate environment of the trafficked person which could help them in the process of reintegration?

Legal affairs relating to ongoing criminal proceedings

- Damages and legal advice: Has the trafficked person been awarded compensatory damages, and how do they handle the money received?
- Continuation of criminal proceedings: Are ongoing criminal proceedings continued and how is the person involved in them? Does the person seek legal advice?
- Independent participation in court proceedings: Does the trafficked person proactively contact relevant authorities or express their wish to participate in the proceedings?

Guidance or counseling of secondary victims

- Guidance of the social environment: Has the social environment of the trafficked person (e.g. family, friends) also received counseling to strengthen their role in the reintegration process?
- Effects on the social environment: Which effects has counseling had on the social environment, regarding levels of understanding, acceptance and support?

Duration of Monitoring and the Phases of Reintegration

International documents and academic publications state that monitoring in the process of reintegration should last from a minimum of one year to a maximum of three years upon arrival in the country of origin. However, this time span is flexible and can vary depending on individual situation, personal experiences and the circumstances in the country of origin. Monitoring can basically be separated into three phases upon return in the country of origin:

0-3 months: Crisis intervention, stabilization, recovery from traumatization

This initial phase upon return is centered around rapid crisis intervention and stabilization of the trafficked person. After a long period of stress and traumatization induced by trafficking in women or other forms of abuse it is vital to give the woman concerned the necessary support to recover from her experiences. The first months should be aimed at stabilizing the immediate living situation and providing first psychosocial aid to strengthen trust in return and reintegration.

Aims:

- Immediate support in emergency situations
- First aid and crisis intervention
- Acute psychological and medical care
- Stabilization of the trafficked person in their new environment

4-12 months: Period of transition

The period of transition is centered around the gradual integration of the trafficked person in their new living situation. Initial stabilization is to be preserved, and further aid measures are to be initiated to ensure long-term reintegration. These measures include providing support in the placement of adequate accommodation, clarification of legal affairs (e.g. legal residence, travel documents, ID) and in the social inclusion and integration in the labor market. In this phase it is likewise important to offer intensive support and guidance to promote mental and physical recovery.

Aims:

- Integration in society on a social and economic level
- Support in securing a legal residence and stable environment
- Participation in further education and qualification measures
- Escort to authorities and medical appointments
- Establishing a stable social network and positive relationships

13-36 months: Reintegration, social inclusion

This long-term phase is dedicated to achieving comprehensive reintegration of the trafficked person in their social and economic environment. The person's autonomy and self-determination are to be fostered, and they should be empowered to lead an independent life. Measures not only include integration in the job market and further education, but also the fostering of social attachments and a stable social environment. This phase is aimed at offering the trafficked person a long-term perspective and at preventing them from relapsing into old risk-inducing habits.

Aims:

- Long-term social inclusion and active participation in society
- Strengthen economic independence and facilitate access to the labor market
- Fostering of positive relationships and integration in the social environment
- Prevention of relapses during crisis and securing of long-term well-being

Factors influencing duration and success of monitoring

The actual duration and course of monitoring depend on various factors that have an impact at both the macro and micro level:

- **Macro level:** The macro level is characterized by general political and societal conditions, such as residence policies and access to social services in the country of destination as well as the overall political and societal situation prevailing in the country of origin. A stable situation in the country of origin can favor successful reintegration, whereas political instability or insecurity can impede reintegration.
- **Micro level:** The micro level is about the specific circumstances of the person's life, including the type of support available in the country of destination, the person's individual reasons for their return, their motivation and, likewise, the support given by their family and social community in the country of origin. Further factors impacting the process of reintegration at the micro level: How did the trafficked person prepare themselves for their return and what resources were available?

Interrelations between support given in the country of destination and the phases of reintegration

The more intensive and effective the support was during the stay in the country of destination, the shorter and less intensive the monitoring phases can be after the return. Carefully planned and thoroughly implemented crisis intervention and stabilization measures in the country of destination contribute to preparing the trafficked person for the challenges entailed by their return. Monitoring ideally aims at helping the trafficked person to overcome phases of crisis upon their return more easily, which, in turn, facilitates and accelerates the overall reintegration process.

Return itself brings about repeatedly new challenges, however, thorough preparation and support in the country of destination may help to cope with them more rapidly and effectively, thereby enabling the trafficked person to adapt to their new living situation.

CASE STUDY 4

Adriana returned to the Republic of Moldova with the support of LEFÖ-IBF. Through existing cooperation structures Adriana could resume psychosocial counseling in her country of origin. She started a training course in fashion and clothing technology financed by the Safe Return project. Adriana now lives with her three children in Chişinău and works for a dressmaker. LEFÖ-IBF continues to support her by providing psychosocial and legal counseling to assert her right for compensatory damages.

Return and Reintegration of Vulnerable Persons

As vulnerable persons are particularly at risk, their return and reintegration require especially careful and intensive counseling, support and monitoring. Vulnerable persons face specific risk potentials pertaining to their individual living conditions and special needs. These risks must be considered with the utmost sensitivity and caution to guarantee successful reintegration.

Groups of vulnerable persons at risk:

- **Trafficked persons with disabilities:** Due to physical or intellectual disabilities, these persons may face additional challenges in their reintegration. Support services must be customized to overcome barriers pertaining to communication, mobility and participation in society. Special focus must be placed on providing support and ensuring the accessibility of social services, healthcare and legal services.
- **Trafficked persons with drug problems:** People with drug problems need specific therapeutic measures ensuring their sustainable reintegration. Access to specialized addiction treatment and rehabilitation programs as well as continued psychosocial counseling and care are decisive factors for a successful long-term reintegration.
- **Trafficked persons with mental illnesses:** Persons with mental illnesses who have been traumatized by the experience of human trafficking need intensive psychological care and long-term therapeutic support. Counseling should be aimed not only at providing coping strategies for acute crisis, but also at ensuring long-term stabilization of mental health to foster integration and participation in society.
- **Trafficked persons facing security threats:** There may be cases in which the trafficked person must be taken to a safe shelter to ensure they are protected from potential attacks committed by the perpetrators. Aside from providing a safe shelter for the person at risk, security services may be engaged for the person's safe escort. Protecting the person from reprisals and ensuring that their bodily integrity is preserved and protected are essential factors for successful reintegration.

- **Trafficked persons without support from their families:** Lack of support from their family and immediate environment can impede a person's return and reintegration. In these cases, it is particularly important to identify and establish contacts with alternative networks or support organizations (e.g. local NGOs, support groups for self-help and empowerment, other community-based support institutions) which can offer safety and support to the trafficked person.
- **Trafficked persons facing social marginalization:** Returnees who encounter social marginalization in their country of origin need special support to be able to reintegrate in the local community. In particular, this pertains to trafficked persons who are stigmatized due to their trafficking history or who live in precarious social conditions. Reintegration measures should thus focus on fostering social inclusion and fighting discrimination.

Additional Support and Monitoring Measures

The aforementioned groups of vulnerable people require tailored support measures. Their monitoring must be implemented with special sensitivity and carefulness to identify potential risks and relapses early on and take adequate measures of prevention. Counselors and assisting institutions need to keep in contact with the trafficked person to monitor their progress and consider their individual needs.

Aside from general counseling, these groups of vulnerable people require specialized, multiprofessional support teams encompassing social workers, psychologists, doctors and legal counselors. These teams must work jointly towards a stable support network tailored to the special needs of the respective person, ensuring that comprehensive support is provided.

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