



Gender-Specific Integration Model (GeSIM)

Guidebook for practitioners working with
women victims of human trafficking on
gender-specific integration



Funded by the European Union's
Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund

Authors

Jennifer Okeke, Mary Henderson (Immigrant Council of Ireland), Ruby Till (Associazione IROKO Onlus) & Anja Wells (SOLWODI Deutschland e.V.)

Research team

Domenica Mammì, Esohe Aghatise (Associazione IROKO Onlus), Aria Louis (CARITAS), Katarzyna Evripidou, Melani Zinonos (Cyprus Refugee Council), Iluta Lace, Irina Mazurika and Lelde Svarca (MARTA Centre), Christina Kaili (Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies), Linda Greiter, Rita Hieble, Veronika Richler-Yareji (SOLWODI Deutschland e.V.).

Publication Date: November 2021

Disclaimer

The content of this guidebook represents the views of the author only and is his/ her sole responsibility. The European Commission does not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains

Imprint Copyright in this publication is held by the Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI), Associazione IROKO Onlus (IROKO) and SOLWODI Deutschland e.V. (SOLWODI). Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

Graphic design: ENOMW and Immigrant Council of Ireland

Acknowledgements

We thank the consortium members for sharing their best practices in supporting the integration process of women VoT and their willingness to provide insights into their daily lives.

List of abbreviations

ASSIST	Gender-Specific Legal Assistance and Integration Support for Third Country National Female Victims of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation
ATR	African Traditional Religion
CCM-GBV	Co-creating a counselling method for refugee women GBV victims
COALESCE	Legal, psycho-social and economic empowerment for the integration of women third country nationals (TCN) victims of human trafficking (VoT) for sexual exploitation and abuse
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease
CyRC	Cyprus Refugee Council
EEM	Economic Empowerment Model
ELI	Early Legal Intervention
ENOMW	European Network of Migrant Women
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GeSIM	Gender-Specific Integration Model
ICI	Immigrant Council of Ireland
INTAP	Intersectional approach to the process of integration in Europe for survivors of human trafficking (sexual exploitation) from Nigeria and China, particularly women and mothers
LIBES	Life Beyond the Shelter - long-term support for survivors of human trafficking transitioning from shelter life to independence
KSPSC	Klaipeda Social and Psychological Services Center
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MIGS	Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies
PLM	Psycho-social Legal Support Model
PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder
SAFE HOUSES	Support and assistance before the exploitation in hosting countries of third country national victims of trafficking for sexual purposes
SARAH	Safe, Aware, Resilient, Able and Heard – protecting and supporting migrant women victims of gender-based violence
SISA	Strengthening the Identification and Integration of Survivors of Sex Trafficking from West Africa, the Dublin-Pre-Return Counselling Manual in the German-Italian context
SoT	Survivor of Trafficking
TCN	Third-Country National(s)
TRACKS	Identification of Trafficked Asylum Seekers' Special Needs
TRIPS	Trafficked International Protection Beneficiaries' Special Needs
VCA	Victim-centred approach
VoT	Victim(s) of Trafficking

Table of Contents

List of abbreviations	3
1. Introduction.....	5
1.1. The COALESCE project.....	5
1.2. Structure & aim of the GeSIM guidebook.....	6
1.3. Methodology.....	7
2. The Gender Specific Integration Model.....	8
2.1. Psycho-social Legal Support Model (PLM) definition.....	9
2.2. EEM definition.....	9
2.3. Common barriers to integration	10
2.4. General Principles for Best Practice in Gender-Specific Support.....	12
2.5. The Psycho-social and Legal Model	18
2.6. Economic Empowerment.....	33
3. Summary	38
4. References.....	39
5. Annexes	43
Annex 1 - Best practice template	43

1. Introduction

Trafficking in Human Beings (THB) is a gender-specific crime. According to EU data, 60% of victims detected in the EU have been trafficked for sexual exploitation, and 92% of these victims are women and girls. Women and girls not only constitute the majority of victims of trafficking (VoT), but are also trafficked because gender inequality and gender-based violence (GBV) constitute root causes for THB. The nature of the trafficking is also determined by their sex: women and girls constitute 96% of the victims trafficked for purposes of sexual exploitation. More than 70% of traffickers are men, which reflects how trafficking for sexual exploitation is rooted in gender inequality. Women VoT also experience gender-specific consequences from their trafficking experience: there are severe, brutal, long-term, gender-specific physical, gynaecological and mental health harms, risks to life and traumas from THB for purposes of sexual exploitation (Walby et al. 2016: 7-8; Robin et al. 2021: 19; ICAT 2017: 1).

Integration programmes for third-country nationals (TCN) greatly differ between EU Member States and are often unfit to meet the gender-specific as well as culturally-sensitive needs of women VoT. There are hardly any specific programmes in place targeting VoT. Special consideration must be given to the difficulties these women face, since many are traumatised from their human trafficking experience (Blöcher et al. 2020: 9). The COVID-19 pandemic has established more barriers for VoT in accessing support services and integration programmes, which need to be addressed in offering gender-specific support services to VoT (Robin et al. 2021: 33; Wells 2021: 5).

Offering gender-specific support services implies “[...] focus[ing] on the importance of the female perspective, plac[ing] value on the lived experience, [...] and empower[ing] females to reach their full potential“ (Hardy et al. 2020: 58). Thereby other forms of disadvantage and vulnerability need to be taken into account (Walby et al. 2016: 7-8). This is especially the case for TCN women, who might lack a required residence permit to receive support services, face difficulties in accessing health care, are at heightened risk of isolation, etc. (see subchapter 2.3). Integration programmes need to take account of this gender specificity and offer individually tailored support, as VoT have different needs. Integration programmes that are gender-sensitive and are aimed at the empowerment of women VoT are thus decisive (ECRE 2016).

In order to effectively implement gender-specific integration programmes for TCN women VoT, victim service providers need to integrate gender as well as cultural sensitivity into their everyday work. This guidebook is a step towards strengthening victim support service providers and your individual capacity as practitioner in taking gender-specific approaches and setting up gender-specific support programmes for women VoT.

1.1. The COALESCE project

This guidebook is produced in the framework of the EU-funded project *“COALESCE: Legal, Psycho-social and economic empowerment for the integration of women third country nationals (TCN) victims of human trafficking (VoT) for sexual exploitation and abuse”* (AMIF: 958133), coordinated by the **Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies** (MIGS) (Cyprus), in partnership with the **Immigrant**

Council of Ireland (ICI) (Ireland), **Caritas Cyprus** (Caritas), **Cyprus Refugee Council** (CyRC), **SOLWODI Deutschland e.V.** (SOLWODI) (Germany), **Associazione IROKO Onlus** (IROKO) (Italy), **Association Marta Centre** (Marta Centre) (Latvia), **Klaipeda Social and Psychological Services Center** (KSPSC) (Lithuania), and the **European Network of Migrant Women** (ENOMW) – a European platform based in Belgium. COALESCE aims at supporting VoT by:

- Providing gender-specific psycho-social, legal and economic support and assistance to affected TCN women;
- Developing synergies and complementarities in facilitating needs identification, assistance and support; and
- Improving transnational cooperation among frontline professionals and practitioners.

COALESCE's aim is to place the voices and authentic opinions of women VoT at the centre of implementation. The project thereby focuses on the distinct **experiences of women VoT, who have experienced human trafficking for sexual exploitation and abuse. Voices of these women** are included in the COALESCE Report through interviews with VoT women in the ***Mind the Gap* reports**¹ and **blog posts** written by VoT women, supported in the COALESCE project.²

1 At the beginning of the project, a situation analysis on gender-specific integration practices and barriers to integration for TCN VoT women was conducted by the service-providing consortium partners. The situation analysis was published in country-specific *Mind the Gap* reports. The *Mind the Gap* reports for the countries Cyprus, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia and Lithuania can be found here: [https://medinstgenderstudies.org/launch-of-mind-the-gap-report-coalesce-for-supporting-](https://medinstgenderstudies.org/launch-of-mind-the-gap-report-coalesce-for-supporting-female-third-country-national-victims-of-trafficking-for-sexual-exploitation/)

1.2. Structure & aim of the GeSIM guidebook

After briefly describing the aim of this guidebook in this subchapter, Chapter 2 explains the GeSIM model.

Attention will be paid to common barriers in supporting women VoT in their integration process and will give practical guidelines on how gender-specific integration approaches and best practices can be implemented by victim support service providers. Chapter 3 summarises the main points.

The aim of the GeSIM guidebook is to provide practitioners with essential information on how to work with and support women VoT in a gender- and culturally-sensitive way. The purpose of this handbook is, therefore, fourfold. To serve:

1. **As a practical guide** to improve the capacity of victim support organisations across the EU to provide gender-specific support services (incl. psycho-social, legal and economic empowerment) tailored to the needs of TCN women VoT for sexual exploitation/abuse contributing also to their early identification.
2. **As a means of promoting national and transnational knowledge exchange** between relevant actors on the benefits of and commitment to the GeSIM, nurturing collaborative

female-third-country-national-victims-of-trafficking-for-sexual-exploitation/

2 Aim of the blog posts is to use the project's European platform to feature the voices and perspectives of migrant women VoT and to sensitise stakeholders and the project on human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and abuse as well as gender-specific integration needs, barriers and best practices. The blog posts can be found here: <https://medinstgenderstudies.org/blog-post-1-unforgettable-i-started-from-scratch/>

approaches benefitting women VoT.

3. **As a resource for governmental, non- as well as inter-governmental organisations** to enhance the access to support services for TCN women VoT by setting up gender-specific integration programmes.
4. **As a tool for other readers** interested in the project findings – such as people working as volunteers, from academia or the general public – to foster their knowledge on the topic of THB and a gender-specific approach to integration.

This guidebook gives practitioners working with women VoT a voice, as the collected best practices are based on their extensive experience in providing gender-specific support to the project beneficiaries. As THB occurs globally and refugee movements are a matter of international concern (UNHCR 2007: 1-2), the GeSIM guidebook can also be used by practitioners beyond the EU, who are confronted with similar challenges, as a practical resource for implementing gender-specific support programmes for women VoT.

1.3. Methodology

The COALESCE consortium has adopted a common methodology to ensure coherence of the collection of the general principles of gender-specific support and best practices across the partner countries. The method used for the collection of the

best practices and the general principles include:

- Findings from the **Gender-Specific Legal Assistance and Integration Support for Third Country National Female Victims of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation (ASSIST)** project³, from which the project builds upon an existing transnational analysis of gender-specific measures on trafficking;
- General barriers identified in the national **Mind the Gap reports**, issued at the beginning of the project (January – May 2021);
- A **best practice template (Annex 1)** submitted to each partner, which was completed by the consortium victim support service providers Caritas Cyprus, Cyprus Refugee Council, ICI, IROKO, Marta Centre, and SOLWODI between June – July 2021;
- General principles and best practices identified in the **consortium roundtable discussion** held on 01/06/2021.

The results of the data collection feed directly into the design and development of the GeSIM guidebook, which you will be introduced to in the following chapter.

3 <https://www.migrantwomennetwork.org/2020/12/22/best-practice-principles-of-assistance-for-trafficked-women/> Three consortium members (ICI, ENOMW, SOLWODI) were part of the ASSIST project, so that key findings are used from this project. The ASSIST

project promoted and provided gender-specific legal and psycho-social support to third-country national women, who have been trafficked for sexual exploitation, in order to assist with their integration. (Yonkova et al. 2020: 6- 8).

2. The Gender Specific Integration Model

The Gender-Specific Integration Model (GeSIM) has been elaborated to guide the implementation of the COALESCE project. It sets out the general gender-specific integration principles that are applied by all consortium members in their service delivery and will be applied during the implementation phase of the project. It also identifies specific best practices for integration that consortium members have developed and follow within their area of expertise and service provision, and which will be put into practice and evaluated during the implementation of the GeSIM model by four of the COALESCE partners: SOLWODI (Germany), ICI (Ireland), IROKO (Italy), CyRC (Cyprus).

The ASS/ST project identified 11 principles⁴ in delivering legal and psycho-social services to women VoT. See section 2.4 below about the principles developed during that project. The GeSIM builds on them to elaborate gender-specific integration principles in the delivery of those services, and incorporates an economic empowerment approach to better facilitate integration. The GeSIM describes these as the Psycho-social Legal Model (PLM) and the Economic Empowerment Model (EEM).

The PLM Model focuses on the delivery of two distinct areas of support services to VoT. Subsection 2.1 draws on the principles established by the ASS/ST project. The COALESCE consortium decided

to include economic empowerment as a service provision category in the GeSIM model because our experiences across the countries we operate in is that this is an element often overlooked and under-funded when it comes to provisions for VoT (see *Mind the Gap* reports for further information). But it must be a fundamental element of such programmes, if they are going to be effective long-term and achieve effective social integration of VoT.

Definitions of the PLM and EEM are expanded in subchapters 2.1 and 2.2 below. Subchapter 2.3 acknowledges common barriers to integration identified by the consortium members. Subchapter 2.4 outlines some general principles for best practices that apply across all service provision areas, both identified as part of consortium member best practices, and through the roundtable knowledge exchange on cultural mediation. Subchapter 2.5 sets out the PLM, detailing best practices in the delivery of legal and psycho-social services to VoT. Subchapter 2.6 focuses on the EEM and provides tools to encourage economic independence.

The combination of the two models seeks to achieve a holistic guide to better serve the integration needs of women VoT. The best practices presented in this model are complementary and form part of a comprehensive, holistic approach to integration support for VoT, but service providers can choose specific practices and principles to implement. It is not necessary for each service provider to implement such a model in its entirety, as it

4 The principles identified are: Access to and duration of assistance; Specialised legal assistance; Attention to motherhood and children; Safe and appropriate accommodation; Psychological assistance; Medical assistance; Training and education; Borrowing good practices from other areas of response to

violence against women; Feminist independent services; Voices of victims-survivors; Peer-to-peer support. See *Assisting Trafficked Women: Best Practice Principles of Assistance to Migrant Female Victims of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation* ASS/ST-Report-Web.pdf (migrantwomennetwork.org)

must be adapted to the local context and based on the capacity and competences of each provider within their local network. The GeSIM is meant as a guiding tool from which you as practitioners can learn to expand and improve your integration support. Therefore, the GeSIM is intended as a flexible model, from which you can select appropriate principles and best practice activities to implement according to your national context and expertise.

As the best practices were gathered during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the best practices introduced in subchapters 2.5 and 2.6 also show alternatives of how to implement the best practices when exceptional external circumstances arise, such as restrictions to in-person services.

2.1. Psycho-social Legal Support Model (PLM) definition

Psycho-social and legal support is understood as the provision of gender-specific psycho-social and legal services that aid the rehabilitation and social integration of VoT. The PLM brings together the principles and best practices followed by consortium members in their delivery of psycho-social and legal support to women VoT. It must be stressed that psycho-social support is interwoven with legal support. Therefore, we are implementing a psycho-social and legal support model (PLM) as part of the GeSIM model.

The legal support aspect of the model is a description of how legal services for VoT should be delivered. This has a strong emphasis on a victim-centred approach which takes account of the diverse legal needs of survivors, and ensures that the

delivery of such services is conducted in a manner that takes account of the additional issues that a legal practitioner should be aware of when providing legal advice and representation to a survivor of trafficking (SoT).

The other part of the PLM model is the aspect of psycho-social support. Psycho-social counselling

“is a multidisciplinary approach in which [...] women who have been victims of gender-based violence are offered a multitude of support, including [...] information on their rights and assistance in fulfilling their everyday needs. The aim of counselling is to support clients in different areas of life, not just with incidents connected with gender-based violence. [...] Their practical needs such as sustenance, housing and medical needs are mapped and, when needed, they are referred to other service providers. At a more in-depth level, counsellors describe counselling as a process of moving from shame, fear and self-blame to building confidence, empowerment and integration” (Lilja 2019: 43).

Best practices in the area of the PLM can be found in subchapter 2.5.

2.2. EEM definition

Economic empowerment (EEM) is “the capacity of women and men to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways that recognise the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth”. (*Women’s Economic Empowerment*, Issues Paper 2011, p.6). The concept of women’s economic

independence recognises that women are economic actors who contribute to economic activity and should be able to benefit from it on an equal basis with men, and that financial independence can have an important role in strengthening the position of women in society and within the household. Economic independence refers to having access to the full range of economic opportunities and resources – including employment, services, and sufficient disposable income – so they can shape and exercise control over their lives, meet their own needs and those of their dependents, and make conscious choices (Pesce et. al., 2017, p.13).

“[E]conomically empowering women is a win-win that can benefit not only women, but society more broadly. It promotes women’s ability to achieve their rights and well-being while also reducing household poverty, increasing economic growth and productivity, and increasing efficiency.”
(Golla et. al. 2011: 3)

Economic empowerment is about enabling economic independence and includes these indicative themes and indicators:

- Employment opportunities;
- Education and professional training (job orientation training and access to

5 Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32011L0036>; Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1421925131614&uri=CELEX:32012L0029>; and Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26

entrepreneurship, business plans, access to resources);

- Access to technology/digital skills;
- Welfare and social benefits;
- Housing and direct or indirect financial services.

Best practices in the area of the EEM can be found in subchapter 2.6.

2.3. Common barriers to integration

All EU Member States are required to comply with the terms and provisions of the *EU Anti-Trafficking Directive 2011/36/EU*, the *Victims’ Rights Directive 2012/29/EU* and the *Reception Conditions Directive 2013/33/EU* (“the Directives”).⁵ These Directives require EU Member States to take measures to address the crime of THB and to provide certain minimum standards when dealing with VoT.⁶ While member states have chosen differing methods to give effect to the provisions of the Directives, when the consortium members reviewed the systems and services in place in their countries of operation many common barriers to integration were identified. It is important for you as a service provider to know about the most common barriers, as these are the ones you are likely to be confronted with when offering support to female VoT. Knowing about barriers will

June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (recast) <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013L0033>
6 See the Third Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings (2020) as required under Article 20 of Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims available at https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/third_progress_report.pdf (last accessed 01/11/2021).

ensure that you can learn how to circumvent and/or deal with them, as described in more detail in subchapter 2.5 and 2.6. Additional barriers that are context-specific or specific to particular areas of service provision are also outlined in subchapters 2.5 and 2.6.

The most significant barrier is the **failure of national authorities to identify VoT**. This was reported by consortium members as occurring in multiple instances, despite the presence of indicators that a national authority ought to have recognised as evidence that a person is a VoT. A failure to identify a VoT will reduce the possibility that the crime of THB is reported or investigated and therefore significantly reduce the likelihood that the crime will be prosecuted, allowing impunity for human traffickers. Where a person is not formally identified as a VoT, it is possible that they will not access any support services and will be at continued risk of exploitation or re-trafficking.

The systems adopted by national authorities to identify VoT were also commonly noted as insufficient. In many EU Member States formal identification is only carried out by policing authorities and as a result, a victim may be required to provide a criminal complaint to the police, prior to them receiving information about human trafficking and the supports that may be available to them. Interviews conducted as part of the *Mind the Gap* reports highlighted also that there are discrepancies between the services that national authorities describe as being available to VoT

and the services that are actually delivered.⁷

When VoT are identified, the biggest barriers to integration they are then faced with are **accessing the services and supports that they require to overcome their experience**. Supports are sometimes limited in duration or dependent on the type of residence permit a victim of trafficking holds. The services that victims identified as being necessary for their continued recovery and integration included medical care, language classes, free legal advice, financial support and support to enter employment such as appropriate childcare. General information about human trafficking and the availability of services and supports should be widespread. It is essential that this information is provided in an accessible manner and that interpretation services are available to ensure that women who do not speak the local language or have literacy challenges can access the supports they need.

One of the most common barriers to integration was the ability for women to **access suitable accommodation**. Difficulties with accommodation provision were reported in all consortium EU Member States ranging from the unsuitability of shared living space, with no private space whatsoever to concerns around exploitative and discriminatory practices in the private rental market. Safe and secure accommodation is a priority to enable a victim to move on and the failure by EU Member States to ensure the standard of safe and appropriate accommodation is met is significantly hampering integration.

⁷ For example, it was noted in Cyprus that the identification and assessment of vulnerable persons by the Asylum Service have markedly improved with the support of EASO (2021), UNHCR, and the Cyprus Refugee Council. However, the efforts are not gender-specific and often neither consistent nor systematic. This

leads to cases still going unidentified, and the needs of female VoT not being met. https://medinstgenderstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/COALESCE_Mind-the-Gap-Report_-Cyprus_FINAL_EN.pdf

Finally, **access to employment and proper treatment when employed** was also noted as a barrier to integration. The risk of exploitation in discriminatory labour markets or where a victim is not a native or fluent speaker of the local language exposes victims to continued isolation and prevents integration.

2.4. General Principles for Best Practice in Gender-Specific Support

The COALESCE project sought to build on the learning from the *ASSIST best practice principles of gender-specific legal assistance and integration supports to third country national female victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation*, by applying some of the key principles of best practice when working with female VoT. While gathering best practices for VoT integration from the COALESCE consortium (see subchapters 2.5 onwards), some additional principles were identified that all partners apply in their front-line work, across all areas of service provision. Alongside the *ASSIST* principles, these general principles were generated through the best practice templates (See subchapter 2.4.1 for these general principles).

Further best practice principles were identified in the consortium's roundtable discussion, held amongst project partners to exchange knowledge and best practices, on 1st June 2021. During this discussion, representatives from IROKO and ICI shared their experience and expertise on cultural mediation in integration support services, paying specific attention to the importance of race and religion. See subchapter 2.4.2 for more information.

The principles listed below may already be implemented as part of your support services. If this is not the case, the COALESCE project encourages you to consider implementing them as a means of enabling gender-specific and culturally sensitive integration support to women VoT.

2.4.1. General principles gathered from ASSIST Project and across the consortium

- **Victim-centred approach (VCA) and trauma-informed approach.** These involve an individual needs assessment conducted by qualified psychologists and social workers, securing referrals to the appropriate support mechanisms, and involving beneficiaries directly in every stage of the process. This approach has been formalised in the *guide: Victim-Centred Approach Front-Line Professionals Working With Trafficking In Human Beings*,⁸ issued under the EU project **SAFE HOUSES – Support and Assistance before the Exploitation in Hosting countries of third country national victims of trafficking for Sexual purposes.**
- **Feminist support services** to ensure gender-specific and sensitive support. This includes, for example, the provision of female-only housing, but also the importance of services provided by female practitioners. Where services cannot be provided exclusively by female practitioners, women must always be given

⁸ <https://www.cyrefugeecouncil.org/guide-victim-centered-approach/>

the option to request female practitioners (Yonkova, 2020).

- **Intersectional integration approach.** Integration support programmes should consider the specific needs of individual survivors instead of assuming they all need the same services on the path to recovery (Blöcher et al. 2020: 21-42). It is important to recognise “intersecting factors, such as age, disability, illness, substance abuse, homelessness, ethnicity or racial belonging, and sexual orientation” (Robin et al. 2021: 9). This is key for avoiding the risk of further victimisation that can occur “as a result of victim-blaming attitudes and discrimination in the delivery of assistance and justice. This can be done by combating stereotypes and designing assistance programmes based on the actual needs of victims” (Ibid.)
- **Informed consent.** It is important the VoT always gives their consent on service provision. In order for consent to be obtained, each stage of the support process must be explained clearly in a language the VoT understands, before they can give their consent to participate (Yonkova et. al., 2020: 30).
- Ensure **voices and experiences of VoT and survivors** are taken into account in all project planning and work. For example, VoT were interviewed by all consortium members when compiling the COALESCE *Mind the Gap* reports, to

understand the legal systems and support services available across the countries represented by the consortium. To ensure VoT are heard, blog posts written by VoT have been published by the consortium (see subchapter 1.3 above for additional details of this aspect of the project).

- **Attention to motherhood and children.** Motherhood and pregnancy represent a predominantly gender-specific situation, which need to be incorporated into the assistance considerations due to its key importance for the recovery process. Whether a VoT is pregnant, has children with her in the country of residence or where children are still resident in the country of origin, motherhood can affect every decision made (Yonkova 2020: 8-9).
- **Regular staff training.** All staff involved in service provision for VoT, including for example medical and legal specialists as well as mediators and educators, should be provided with regular training and workshops on gender-related issues and approaches and any changing laws or trends in the field of migration and trafficking⁹. Training is an important tool in increasing professionals’ awareness and understanding of VoT’s reactions and needs in the aftermath of GBV in line with the *Budapest Roadmap* (Resolution of the Council of the European Union, 2011). Such training could be offered internally by staff with

9 In the *Mind the Gap* reports (see footnote 2 above), the importance of training and expertise/knowledge on THB was highlighted as

an area where state agencies often are not up-to-date, and should be an area for improvement across EU Member States.

specialist knowledge, or external organisations could be contacted to offer a broader perspective. As a way to keep training costs down, online tools are available (for example, using tools such as the **INTAP project – Intersectional approach to the process of integration in Europe for survivors of human trafficking (sexual exploitation) from Nigeria and China, particularly women and mothers**¹⁰ handbooks for practitioners¹¹ or outputs from other international projects), or similar organisations could group together to request such external training collectively.

- **Language sensitivity.** For the purposes of official documents and project planning and reporting, the consortium uses the term “victim of trafficking” (VoT), which reflects the legal reality that our beneficiaries are victims of a crime. However, we recognise that many VoT do not identify with the term victim and prefer to be referred to as survivors, or even with different terminology. It is important to respect these preferences in communication with beneficiaries as part of service delivery. We also encourage the use of the term survivor rather than victim as it communicates the strength to overcome their ordeal and focuses on empowerment (Yonkova 2020: 18).

- **Access to information** in a format that VoT can understand, linked to the right to understand and be understood. Before being able to offer support, it is important to inform VoT about their rights as VoT. As many women VoT have a low level of education and literacy, it is the responsibility of service providers to make sure that information is furnished in an appropriate way for each individual to understand. For example, **flyers with pictograms** have been used by the **Co-creating a Counselling Method for refugee women GBV victims (CCM-GBV) project**,¹² which involved the consortium partners **SOLWODI, ENOMW and the CyRC**, to inform illiterate and less literate women about their rights. The ICI¹³ and SOLWODI¹⁴ developed **information flyers** in the course of the **ASSIST project** in order to inform VoT women about their rights as VoT and access to support services. Another alternative method of communication is also used by SOLWODI in the **Safe, Aware, Resilient, Able and Heard – protecting and supporting migrant women victims of gender-based violence (SARAH) project**,¹⁵ in which **podcasts** on GBV in five migrant/refugee languages have been produced, including women’s voices.¹⁶
- The importance of **monitoring and evaluation (M&E)** - see

10 <https://intap-europe.eu/?lang=de>

11 <https://intap-europe.eu/handbooks/>

12 <https://www.solwodi.de/seite/492994/eu-project-rec-ccm-gbv.html>

13 *ASSIST* brochure - web version EN.pdf (immigrantcouncil.ie)

14 <https://www.solwodi.de/seite/492996/eu-project-amif-assist.html>

15 <https://www.solwodi.de/seite/501646/eu-project-rec-sarah.html>

16 <https://soundcloud.com/sarahproject> or <https://open.spotify.com/show/1Z4asFz5p5uHjprjX4KEKc>

subchapter 2.4.2.

- The importance of **cultural mediation** - see subchapter 2.4.3.

2.4.2. The Importance of M&E

In order to assess whether your integration support is beneficial to VoT, it is important that you regularly monitor and evaluate your strategies. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) will help you to improve your strategies, indicate which measures are effective for empowerment and identify what needs to be changed. It will also help you assess how to allocate resources in order to achieve optimal impact (ILO 2020: 84-85; Aninoşanu et al. 2016: 56).

An M&E plan should be established from the beginning of the implementation of your service provision and applied throughout the duration of an activity or project. The plan should include the objective of the strategy and how the impact will be measured. Your M&E plan should therefore include qualitative and quantitative data collection from beneficiaries and service providers. Tools could include:

- Statistical data on the number of beneficiaries assisted per year/type of service provided/type of assistance;
- Indicators measuring the beneficiaries' process in various areas and various stages of the assistance;
- Narrative progress reports by case managers.

It may be useful to develop a set of indicators to measure the impact of

your project or activity. The indicators suitable for one area or programme may not be relevant elsewhere. No universal set of indicators is appropriate for every project, in every sector and in every context. For M&E purposes, a project should measure only what it will reasonably change (Golla et. al., 2011: 6).

When planning M&E strategies to assess the impact of the integration of women VoT for sexual exploitation, it is crucial to ensure gender sensitivity, meaning a gender perspective needs to be integrated in the responsibilities of the evaluation team. To this end, the IOM has developed **Guidance for Addressing Gender in Evaluations**.¹⁷ This impact tool could help you to assess the gender sensitivity and gender perspective in your integration services for VoT.

In the framework of the SARAH project, the **Toolkit for enhancing counselling for victims of gender-based violence – Empowering counsellors and beneficiaries to assess the needs and the impact of counselling with women in migration (short: Impact Tool)**¹⁸ was developed to evaluate the impact of counselling (Lietonen & Lilja 2021: 5-28). This impact tool could help you to assess how successful counselling for VoT actually is.

2.4.3. Mediation Roundtable Results: Importance of Cultural Mediation

A roundtable knowledge exchange was held on 1st June, 2021. During the shared experiences of this discussion, the relevance of cultural mediation in the integration of support services to VoT was highlighted. Cultural

17 <https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/about-iom/evaluation/iom-gender-and-evaluation-guidance-2018.pdf>

18 <https://heuni.fi/-/sarah-impact-toolkit>

mediation can be described as the process through which a trained cultural mediator facilitates appropriate communication and dialogue between two parties who would otherwise experience difficulties in communication due to their different cultural backgrounds, or simply working together with the two parties to facilitate understanding without any conflict. Oftentimes, such culturally-appropriate communication entails adjusting methods and approaches, as well as identifying appropriate resources such as cultural mediators, who are not simply interpreters, to ensure individuals not only communicate their needs but that the needs are equally understood (Ruiz et al. 2019: 48).

A cultural mediator acts as a bridge of communication that decodes the cultural contents and context of language/behaviour/attitude and permits both parties - the service provider and service user - to communicate efficiently and understand each other. In the asymmetrical relationship between the service providers and service users, the role of the cultural mediator is essential to ensure that the weaker partner - the service user - is adequately served during the process of service provision. In order to adequately provide such decoding, a trained cultural mediator must maintain a high level of professionalism and follow a strict code of conduct to ensure smooth communication between the parties and avoidance of conflict. A professional attitude, neutrality, cultural sensitivity and awareness as well as accuracy, maintenance of strict confidentiality, respect and adherence to personal and professional boundaries are some of the essential elements that are indispensable in a competent cultural mediator. The importance and

delicate balance needed in the role can therefore never be overstated.

Cultural mediation allows women's voices to be heard (Rokovica & Janovitz 2021: 7) and it is essential that it be professionally carried out to enable this. In working with women VoT who are migrants, it is important to recognise that their cultural backgrounds, as with anyone else, affect not only their ways of thinking and views, but also their attitudes and behaviour. In certain contexts, especially medical ones for instance, a female service user may refuse to be assisted by a male service provider. In such a situation, the needs of the woman must be prioritised and it is not the duty of the cultural mediator to convince her to accept what would constitute a new source of trauma to her. The cultural mediator's duty in such a context, would be to explain the cultural context and motivation behind her refusal to the service provider, so as to ensure that her requests and needs are not ignored. In such a context, adopting culturally sensitive and appropriate communication that takes those considerations into account is vital. It is important to note that cultural mediators may sometimes act as interpreters, where language is a greater barrier, but interpreters cannot do the same as they are not cultural mediators. It is evident from the above that cultural mediators could hold an essential key in adequate service provision in services. It is thus equally important that they are also trained to refrain from abuse of their positions of power in that communication bridge between the service provider and service user.

During our roundtable discussions, specific attention was also paid to the intersection between race and religion/spirituality. This was discussed within the context of how

cultural mediators can facilitate that intersectionality, particularly when dealing with VoT from cultural contexts such as the Nigerian one, for example, as these are often fundamental to a holistic integration process for such women. Also highlighted were:

- The lack of acknowledgement and understanding of religions that are not Eurocentric, such as the Shango, Mamiwater and the Orisha religions in Nigeria, which are distinct belief system within the African Traditional Religion¹⁹ that remains under-researched in the west. It was noted that being informed of these non-Eurocentric religions ensures that the context in which VoT from certain cultures find themselves is better understood by service providers.
- The misconception and misrepresentation of these non-Eurocentric religions and the frequent refusal by European service providers to accept their psychological impact on the women who believe in them.
- The relevance of religion/spirituality to these women, as this ensures that the women's religious belief is never denied and that the codes behind these beliefs are understood. Refusal to accept

the women's religious belief amounts to denying the trauma caused by the use of such beliefs to exploit them.

- The recognition that VoT from some cultures sometimes come with extremely complex situations, which take time, patience and expertise to decode. It is very difficult for service providers to handle such complex situations without a competent cultural mediator to assist them in decoding the cultural contents and contexts of such situations.
- Western counselling codes very often are not in a position to satisfy the complex issues brought by these women, as the codes do not comprehend how women from these cultures deal with stress and trauma. This includes the significance of music and dancing in dealing with such stress and trauma. Indeed, western counselling may give the exact opposite response to such use. This is because the mode in which these women use music and dance to deal with stress and trauma is often seen by western counselling codes as an indication of a high level of mental health disorder, instead of an answer to them. This could lead to an extreme approach, which seeks to 'cure' the women from the very tools,

19 African Traditional Religion (ATR) is the collective term used to describe the religious tradition of Africans before the coming of Christianity and Islam (Omotoye, 2011). Most autochthon religions on the African continent show similarities in their belief systems as well as in religious practices. These similarities of belief and practices is often referred to as African Traditional Religion (ATR). Since African culture and religion are often intertwined, many have argued that ATR is something more akin to

a worldview than a particular religion. Though Africans believe in one benevolent God who is the creator of humanity and the universe, most traditions still give significant relevance to the role of various intermediaries such as deities, ancestors, as well as rituals, medicines, and other spiritual beings. These beings are seen as expressions of the high God's grace and derive their life and power from God, especially to enforce justice and morality (Blöcher et al., 2020: 5).

which in their own cultural context, are meant to relieve their mental health issues.

Since it was founded, **IROKO** has offered and continues to offer ethno-clinical and cross-cultural psychological support services, recognising cultural differences that have a huge impact on the women's approach to support and therefore its efficacy. For example, the women's traditional and often strong religious beliefs were always accepted, respected and supported. IROKO has an in-house psychologist who also works in collaboration with the Frantz Fanon Centre, a local partner specialised in psychological support for migrant women. IROKO continues to provide cultural mediation as a standard service, alongside its other services to the women they assist. This is in order to guarantee effective access and a culturally-sensitive approach, enabling them to build a trusting relationship with the women who access their services.

You should therefore consider working with trained cultural mediators in your support programmes for women VoT. Generally, it is important that your organisation engages a trained cultural mediator. At a minimum, you should ensure that your employees/colleagues learn the appropriate skills, as identified in the **INTAP project**, in which **SOLWODI** was a project partner. In the project, the following skills were highlighted that are needed for working with female VoT:

- **(Inter-)cultural competence/awareness/sensitivity;**
- **(Inter-)religious competence;**
- **Communication skills;**
- **Social and emotional competencies.**

What these competences entail can be read up in the ***Handbook for Practitioners – The Integration of Female Nigerian Survivors of Human Trafficking for the Purpose of Sexual Exploitation***. Best practices hereby include interreligious cooperation and dialogue, cultural lessons, etc. (Blöcher et al. 2020: 18-20; 36-41). These findings can offer you a good starting point in establishing (inter-)religious competence in your daily work with VoT.

2.5. The Psycho-social and Legal Model

As described in subchapter 2.1, the PLM has two components: Legal and psycho-social principles and best practices. The PLM brings these distinct areas of professional services together under one model; however, the specific principles and best practices relating to these areas of service delivery are set out below. The psycho-social support aspect of this model relates to how services such as individual and group counselling are delivered. The legal support aspect of the model is a description of how legal services for VoT are delivered. Each of these components are elaborated in more detail below in the subchapters 2.5.1 and 2.5.2.

2.5.1. The Legal Support Model

The Legal Support Model is an overview of best practices in the delivery of legal services to VoT. Legal practitioners have professional duties and obligations to all of their clients. When advising and representing VoT they must be aware of their clients potential additional needs and adopt a victim-centred approach. The principles and practices set out in this model seek to ensure that approach is adopted.

This model is holistic and is not only applicable when dealing with issues related to a VoT's experience of trafficking. A survivor of human trafficking may need to be given extra support and attention due to vulnerabilities arising from the exploitation they have experienced. There are specific best practices set out below with regard to identification as a VoT and accessing compensation. These matters are recognised as often being fundamental to a VoT gaining access to appropriate support. If these systems and practices are not in place in your country of operation, legal support may facilitate advocating for access to the minimum standards that are guaranteed by the Directives.

For the purpose of delivering legal support, regard should be had to this model. Barriers to meet the standards set out should be recorded for the purpose of addressing the gaps in delivering best practice in legal support to VoT. The principles elaborated below build on the experience of the **ICI** in delivering legal services to VoT and working in partnership with other expert organisations on numerous transnational projects.²⁰

Please note that the term “client” in this section refers to a woman VoT to whom you are delivering legal services

Main principles of legal support to victims/ survivors of human trafficking

The main principles which guide the delivery of legal support to VoT are:

- Early access to and ongoing availability of free specialised legal advice;
- Victim-centred approach;
- Gender-specific approach.

The **availability of confidential, free legal services before, during and after** the reporting of human trafficking by a victim is essential to realising best practice and should not be conditional on reporting to authorities. This allows the re-assertion of personal agency of the individual and ensures all decisions of the individual are made on the basis of informed consent.

As noted above in the general principles for best practice at subchapter 2.4, ensuring that a **gender-specific, trauma-informed approach** is applied facilitates the disclosure of relevant information so the legal advice and representation can be accurate and best serve the clients' needs. At a minimum a VoT ought to be able to request a female legal advisor and request the attendance of a support worker at the appointments. When commencing any appointment, the legal advisor should explain that the VoT as the client can take frequent breaks or, if preferred, that the appointment can be held over a number of separate meetings. This is to aim to make the process as client-friendly as possible and to minimise re-traumatisation. It also encourages agency by putting the client at the centre of the process and allowing them to control the flow of a meeting to whatever extent is practical.²¹

20 See Trafficking of Women and Girls | Immigrant Council of Ireland for information on the many transnational projects addressing

human trafficking of women and girls that the ICI has led and participated in.

21 For guidance on safe and ethical interviewing techniques refer to Toolkit Chapter 6.12 of the

Recognising the **importance of family and motherhood** to women victims of trafficking has been identified as of great importance as issues regarding the care of children and access to **family reunification** can dictate a client's preferred course of action. This is particularly so where children are still resident in the country of origin and even more so when traffickers have made threats against the woman's family. Ensuring that a client is properly advised on access to family reunification and related matters from the outset is important to ensure that the client can make decisions in the best interests of themselves and their family members (Yonkova et al: 2020, page 26).

When a client's children are living with them, it is important to remember all issues that impact the children will also impact the client. While ensuring that the children have access to appropriate care and education falls within the broader psycho-social area (see subchapter 2.5.2); legal advice may be required where children are not getting access to such care. When engaging with clients who have children, it is important to permit mothers to have their children with them at meetings (with due regard to the children's age and whether it is appropriate for them to listen to sensitive or distressing information) or to ensure that childcare can be arranged to facilitate the client's attendance at the appointment.

Clear and straightforward communication between a lawyer and their client is necessary for the successful delivery of legal advice

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime online Toolkit to Combat Trafficking in Persons https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/Toolkit-files/08-58296_tool_6-12.pdf See *ASSIST* principles (at Footnote 5 above) on the importance of holistic legal advice and also see *RE-JUST* Action Plan, in which SOLWODI partnered, developed to give ideas and examples

and a good lawyer/client relationship. Interpretation and translation should be available where required to ensure clear communications and should be understood as a necessary expense in the delivery of legal advice (see general principles in subchapter 2.4.1).²² Cultural mediation can be an additional resource to facilitate better and clearer instructions from a client, as explained in subchapter 2.4.2.

Lawyers must be aware of the **risks** posed where there are very small communities of nationalities both with regard to confidentiality, privacy and risks to personal safety. Clients and interpreters should be welcomed in separate waiting rooms in advance of appointments and clients should be advised that if they are not happy with the interpretation being provided that they can stop a meeting and request an alternative.

Interpreters or the companies that they work for must have confidentiality agreements in place and should have experience of interpreting for legal matters and an understanding of the potential for distressing material to be discussed during appointments. Equally, legal advisors must be aware of the risk of vicarious or secondary trauma and systems must be in place to provide support to legal advisors on these issues if required (Blackwell: 2020).

While a service may be recognised as a specialist in certain areas relating to advising VoT it is acknowledged that where specialist skills or knowledge outside of the remit of the lawyer are required that such expertise ought to be available. In

for developing victim-centred and trauma-informed criminal justice systems. <http://re-just.prorefugiu.eu/action-plan-for-developing-victim-centred-and-trauma-informed-criminal-justice-systems/>
²² See Chapter 3 of the *RE-JUST* Action Plan (at footnote 21 above).

those cases the lawyer, always acting with the informed consent of the client, should seek such appropriate expert advice for their clients or refer such matters to other legal services.²³

As noted above there are common barriers identified in achieving best practice in the delivery of services to VoT. The issue of identification, or the failure to correctly identify VoT, elaborated above in the general barriers section, is clearly a barrier to accessing legal rights. Some of the tools that can assist a VoT be identified, that have been developed by consortium members are elaborated below.

Specific legal best practices

Early legal intervention

Best practice identifies that a suspected VoT is provided with early legal advice in order that they can make an informed decision based on expert legal advice. Such advice should include before a suspected victim has made any report to national authorities. A first meeting with a legal advisor provides information and advice on legal options regarding rights and entitlements, what courses of action may be available to obtain a desired result either through a statutory, administrative or discretionary procedure and what the attendant risks may be.

The ***Upholding Rights! Early Legal Intervention for Victims of Trafficking*** project²⁴, in which the **ICI** and **KSPSC** participated, established best practice in securing the protection of

victims of human trafficking through early legal intervention (ELI). Core principles identified by that project included the importance of good relationships between partner organisations and legal advisors, emphasising the need for strong links between organisations delivering legal and psycho-social support. The project also noted the importance that ELI can have in securing evidence from a client, both to support their applications and to better assist criminal investigations.

Detailed elaboration on the approach to cases is set out in the ***Upholding Rights! Early Legal Intervention for Victims of Trafficking – Best Practice Principles*** and can be consulted as a clear user guide for lawyers working with VoT.

Identification

The early identification of VoT is crucial to promptly assist, support and protect VoT and enable police and prosecution authorities to better investigate and punish traffickers. The Anti-Trafficking Directive obliges EU Member States to ensure that a person is provided with assistance and support as soon as the competent authorities have a reasonable-grounds indication for believing that he or she might be a victim of trafficking.²⁵ Consortium members noted the **identification systems that do not rely on formal criminal reports by the VoT to the national authorities** as best practice, notably the systems that incorporate the use of civil society organisations, such systems are in place in Italy and in Latvia²⁶ for EU and national VoT.

23 See Chapter 2 of the *RE-JUST* Action Plan on Multidisciplinary co-operation and referrals

24 See information on the project here <https://www.immigrantcouncil.ie/campaign/ending-human-trafficking/early-legal-intervention>

25 Article 11 Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on

Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Protecting Its Victims, and Replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA, O J L 101, 15. 4.2011, p. 1

26 (“Regulations Regarding the Procedures by Which the Victims of the Trafficking in Human Beings Receive Social Rehabilitation Service, and

These systems follow a victim-centred approach: those who do not want to collaborate with police and go through a formal criminal complaint process can be identified through an NGO and receive social services without participation in criminal proceedings. If they change their mind at a later stage, it is possible to report to the police at any time. The national regulations setting out this procedure in Latvia are detailed online.²⁷ Providing multiple routes to identification ensures that a victim is not required to cooperate with an investigation for the purpose of accessing support services.

The *Mind the Gap* reports show TCN women VoT are often asylum seekers. VoT may make applications for international protection before ever having access to support services or legal advice relating to their experience of THB. The project **TRACKS - Identification of Trafficked Asylum Seekers Special Needs**²⁸ developed a **toolkit**,²⁹ which aims to advise practitioners in direct contact with asylum seekers how to detect

the Criteria for the Recognition of a Person as a Victim of the Trafficking in Human Beings” <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/308253>) where it prescribes the procedures, by which a person who has been recognised a victim of the trafficking in human beings shall receive social rehabilitation services for the State budget funds, and the criteria for the recognition of a person as a victim of human trafficking.

27 See the national Latvian website on the subject of human trafficking [Cilvektirdzniecība, cilvēku tirdzniecība, HESTIA \(cilvektirdznieciba.lv\)](http://cilvektirdznieciba.lv)

28 **TRACKS** identification of TRafficked Asylum seeKers' Special needs Identification of TRafficked Asylum seeKers' Special needs | Together Against Trafficking in Human Beings (europa.eu), HOME/2014/AMIF/AG/ASYL/7849, was a two-year project implemented by Forum réfugiés-Cosi, the project coordinator, and its European partners British Red Cross (BRC), Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), Spanish Commission for Refugees (CEAR), Immigrant Council of Ireland, Italian Red Cross (ItRC) and Action for Equality, Support, Antiracism (KISA), in association with the Swiss Refugee Council (OSAR), UNHCR Europe office, the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless persons (OFPRA), Amicale du Nid

VoT in the asylum process; how to react when such suspicions arise; and to offer suggestions for referees not familiar with the concept and the practical consequences of THB, and the special needs that VoT may have.

The **TRafficked International Protection Beneficiaries' Special Needs (TRIPS) project**³⁰ in which ICI is a partner, continues the work of TRACKS to better identify the long-term needs of VoT who are beneficiaries of international protection. As part of this process, the project partners have developed a **toolkit**³¹ that will assist integration and other professionals, including legal advisors, who encounter VoT beneficiaries of international protection, to better recognise their ongoing special needs arising from the experience of THB. It provides guidance and checklists to refer to when engaging with VoT and emphasises an individualised approach. The version linked below has specific references to the Irish context but the guidance can be adapted for any national context. You

Rhône, UK Institute for Migration Research and the Human Trafficking Foundation were associated partners to this project which focused on identifying the special needs of women VoT in the asylum process.

29 **TRACKS** *Identification of Trafficked Asylum Seekers' Special Needs* Training Toolkit; Keegan, Edward, <https://www.immigrantcouncil.ie/sites/default/files/2018-02/Immigrant%20Council%20of%20Ireland%20TRACKS%20Trafficking%20and%20Asylum%20Toolkit.pdf>

30 For further information on this project see <https://www.forumrefugies.org/s-informer/publications/articles-d-actualites/en-europe/642-projet-europeen-trips-mieux-accompagner-les-victimes-de-traite-beneficiaires-de-protection-internationale-dans-leur-processus-d-integration> and in English <https://www.immigrantcouncil.ie/campaign/ending-human-trafficking/trips>

31 This is the general information page on this project from ICI and the toolkit will be linked here:

<https://www.immigrantcouncil.ie/campaign/ending-human-trafficking/trips>

can consider using this toolkit when engaging with clients who have experienced THB to understand that special needs may arise long after identification as a VoT has occurred, or a person has secured international protection.

Access to compensation

VoT suffer gross violations of their human rights. In addition to severe physical and psychological trauma, they may suffer economic loss as a result of the crimes committed against them. The Anti-Trafficking Directive requires member states to ensure that victims of human trafficking have access to existing schemes of compensation to victims of violent crimes of intent. Access to compensation can play an important role in the recovery of survivors of human trafficking and best practices in this area are identified by the **MARTA Centre**, where in Latvia it is possible to obtain two types of compensation: from the State and from the perpetrator.

Information about state compensation is available on the website of Legal Aids Administration.³² State compensation can be applied for personally and free of charge to Legal Aids Administration, the state department administering this scheme. The victim is entitled to seek state compensation even when the person committing the criminal offence has not been established or is not held criminally liable, in accordance with

32 <https://jpa.gov.lv/state-compensation-eng> and a leaflet https://jpa.gov.lv/uploads/filedir/buklets_eng_140819.pdf.

33 Leaflet in Latvian about state compensation is available here https://jpa.gov.lv/uploads/filedir/kompensacija%20cietusajiem_1.pdf Other informative materials about state compensation <https://jpa.gov.lv/informative-materials-eng>

34 *Towards Fair and Effective Compensation Scheme to Victims of Sexual Violence in Short*

the Criminal Law of Latvia. It is possible to receive state compensation also when the trial process is not concluded.

The **MARTA Centre provides legal support** to obtain all the necessary documents and assists **applications for compensation**. If a victim considers that state compensation does not fully reimburse physical, economic and psychological injuries, it is possible to file a claim for additional compensation against the offender as part of the criminal trial. This part of compensation is paid only after the criminal proceedings are finished.³³ The MARTA Centre has successfully advocated on behalf of clients that compensation obtained for victims of crime should not be considered as revenue for the purposes of calculating entitlement to social welfare.

The **MARTA Centre** worked on the **FAIRCOM project**,³⁴ which aimed to establish and promote an efficient and effective model for fair and appropriate compensation to victims of sexual crimes in the EU. It has developed a **handbook regarding compensation**.³⁵ This handbook was provided to police and/or providers of victim support services so they could inform VoT about their rights in a language that they can understand. It is enough with an official document that confirms the status of a victim.

A note on litigation

“FAIRCOM”. — JUST-AG-2018/JUST-JACC-AG-2018 See the project website <https://sexualviolencejustice.eu/faircom-project>
35 See here, <https://marta.lv/files/research/FAIRCOM%20HANDBOOK%20Latvian.pdf> this document is also available in Dutch, Spanish, Italian and Greek at the FAIRCOM website Information on Compensation - FAIRCOM & RE-TREAT Projects (sexualviolencejustice.eu)

Court proceedings can be drawn out and very stressful for any litigant but given the vulnerability of VoT this can be an even more difficult process to consider. Where a matter requires formal court proceedings to be initiated (for example to overturn or demand a decision of a state body) the client must be advised fully with regard to the implications of doing so. Any risks to the client associated with bringing litigation must be clearly set out. While this is a typical requirement of all practising lawyers, it is always worth repeating. A client must comprehend any action that is initiated on her behalf and no action should ever be initiated without her express instructions to do so.

Although there may be a legal course of action available to the client to challenge a decision made in relation to her, if she does not want to pursue it she must never be pressured into doing so. A client's best interests are only served when she is happy to engage in a process.

If and when litigation is initiated, it is particularly important that the client is happy with any external advisors that are engaged. Additionally if experts, such as medico-legal experts, are required it is also important that they will understand the vulnerability of the client and also deal with them in an appropriately sensitive manner.³⁶

Referrals to other professionals, including lawyers with other areas of expertise, should only be made with the express consent of the client. It is important that gender sensitivity is addressed and if the client prefers, to only refer matters to female legal advisors (provided they are available) and similarly refer to female experts with experience of applying a trauma

informed approach (e.g. medico-legal experts, interpreters, etc.). The **TRACKS toolkit** can facilitate cooperation between relevant stakeholders providing support to victims of trafficking in the asylum process by ensuring all stakeholders have an expert knowledge of THB and the special needs of VoT. While it is developed for working in the Irish context, it can be adapted to apply in your national context.

Legal support model checklist

- Employ safe and ethical interviewing techniques in a victim-centred approach.
- Ensure client understands the purpose and limits of legal advice and representation.
- Provide client with a letter describing services and terms and conditions.
- Provide information about the availability of and access to compensation.
- Set out the next steps and a case plan to the client.
- Record appointment details in accordance with professional standard and duty.
- Ensure client is fully advised of risks of any course of action.
- Provide ongoing updates to the client.
- Refer to external advisors when appropriate and seek women advisors and experts if preferred by client.

³⁶ Chapter 2 of the *RE-JUST* Action plan can provide guidance on best practice in referrals

2.5.2. Psycho-social best practices

VoT often experience feelings of guilt, shame or anger with themselves or others because the latter did not help or were unable to rescue them from this situation. Therefore, it is important for them to learn to trust other people again, to build healthy relationships and to develop an individually tailored integration plan. To facilitate this process, the women need low-threshold access to psycho-social support (ILO 2020: 53; Yonkova 2020: 21-25; Aninoşanu et al. 2016: 54-55). With this support, they learn to overcome the aforementioned feelings and to have a safe place where they can confront their traumatic experiences, in order to regain control over their lives.

Support should thereby be offered holistically. Our consortium partner **MARTA Centre** offers holistic support in its **state-funded social rehabilitation services**, which are available to all persons who are recognised as VoT regardless the age or sex of a person. The aim of the social rehabilitation is to prevent or to reduce the negative social consequences caused by trafficking. Rehabilitation is provided by NGOs who have an expertise in work with this target group (one of them is MARTA Centre) and includes a set of social services, such as:

- A course of social rehabilitation (individual consultations of a social worker, psychologist, medical personal, individual consultations on legal matters) up to 180 days;
- Five consultations of a social service provider for the family members of children victims of trafficking in human beings;

- Professional psycho-social support (individual consultations of a social worker and psychologist; individual consultations on legal matters) and other services such as translation, preparation of legal documents and legal representation in court if a victim participates in a criminal case as either a victim or a witness;
- Vocational trainings, leisure activities, integration activities;
- Five individual consultations of a social service provider after a course of social rehabilitation is completed for those victims who don't receive professional psycho-social support in terms of participating in a criminal case as either a victim or witness;
- Organising the return (including accompaniment) of a victim or a person who might potentially be recognised as a victim (hereinafter - a potential victim) and children accompanied by a victim or a potential victim;
- First necessity things and food, shelter.

Good practice of state-funded services is that they do not depend on projects and can be provided continuously without interruption; hence, they are always available. MARTA Centre put a lot of effort into advocacy and development of the programme. Procedures by which victims of trafficking in human beings receive the State-funded social rehabilitation services are set in the

Regulation Nr.344 of Cabinet of Ministers.³⁷

This subchapter seeks to present best practice approaches and methods with regard to psycho-social counselling. It also aims to set out practices that could support overcoming the barriers that are in place to women VoT accessing the psycho-social services they require.

Psycho-social support can be provided in individual counselling sessions or in the form of group counselling, a best practice identified by the project consortium. These can be organised in different formats; e.g. as:

- **Info cafés.** Info cafés were used in the **CCM-GBV project** - in which three project beneficiaries partnered in (**SOLWODI, ENOMW and the CyRC**) – as empowering sessions, in which the women could speak about their experienced violence, talk about women’s rights in their home country and the destination country, and get to know women from different cultures, etc³⁸. Different techniques were used to enable group bonding, such as e.g. using COPE cards, painting, etc. You could use techniques such as info cafés to inform women about their psycho-social rights, inform them on child upbringing techniques etc.
- **Stabilisation groups.** This method is e.g. provided by the **SOLWODI help centre Augsburg**. The stabilisation group is an offer for traumatised women. On the

one hand, it is about explaining the topic of "trauma" to the women and thus being able to better classify the symptoms. On the other hand, it is about introducing the women to methods and techniques for psychological stabilisation. It is important that women can use these exercises for body awareness, stress reduction and mindfulness independently. This strengthens their self-confidence and self-efficacy. The offer is also aimed at women who do not currently have a residence permit in Germany. For these women, access to medical help, psychological or psychotherapeutic support is very difficult. The aim of the stabilisation group is to accompany the women on their way to self-determination with knowledge about psychological stabilisation. At the beginning and end of each meeting, the women are asked how they were doing. In comparison, most of the women say that they felt better at the end. In a similar vein, the **CyRC** offers **trauma therapy in group counselling sessions**.

Accommodation

Accommodation assistance is essential firstly, to ensure that victims can escape from the situation of exploitation and secondly, for the commencement of recovery and reflection in a safe environment conducive to healing (Yonkova 2020: 10). It is important for you to look at the accommodation forms available in your country for such women, who

37 <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/308253>

38 The info café technique and tools used in the info cafés can be found in the project handbook

on counselling asylum seeking and refugee women victims of gender-based violence (EN version pages 75-81).

often are treated as asylum seekers. Most EU Member States have two primary forms of housing available for asylum seekers: reception centres for new arrivals and at least one other form of collective accommodation as a follow-up shelter. Throughout the EU, reception centres and collective accommodations have often received criticism for their inadequacy to provide safety and meet health requirements due to over crowdedness, for example. Some official accommodation centres for vulnerable asylum seekers (as e.g. VoT) are also available, but they often lack space (Blöcher et al. 2020: 26).

VoT women should be housed in accommodation specially designed for vulnerable women. Help centres and NGOs commonly are confronted with many barriers in enabling VoT full access to such lack of funding, lack of available places for women (and their children), favouring the accommodation of VoT cooperating in criminal investigations in comparison to victims who do not participate in investigations (Yonkova 2020: 10-11).

- Your NGO might have its own **sheltered housing** in which VoT can be accommodated. **MARTA Centre** is the only NGO in Latvia which provides assistance to VoT and have available anonymous protected flats. Currently, MARTA Centre has two anonymous flats of which the addresses are known only to social workers who work with the victims. Flats are provided with a security button which calls security guards. VoT are not allowed to invite their friends and acquaintances; the address should stay secret to guarantee safety of all accommodated VoT. The protected flats are equipped with all the necessary things. According to individual needs,

more things and furniture can be bought. If you do not have your own accommodation for VoT, you should consider **making referrals and build up a network with gender-specific sheltered housing providers.**

- Offering **transiting support** to women moving out from shelters. Our project partner **Caritas** has designated staff members regularly visiting the shelter and supporting the women housed there (**in-house transition support**). Part of the support offered within the shelter includes life skills mentoring, the organisation and support of women in obtaining documents as well as other administrative support services with the goal of achieving a smooth and informed transition to independent living. This ranges from providing information about how to purchase food, to how to alert the authorities of an emergency and some basic household administration aiming to bridge any cultural divides. Caritas's intervention in the shelter also facilitates access to activities happening outside of the shelter, such as group therapy sessions, art classes, yoga classes, church services and other recreational activities within the local community prior to their transition out of the shelter (**out-client support**). This type of in-house or ambulant transition support are best practices you could consider in your organisation. You might even want to go further and establish a transition house. You could even go further and consider establishing a **transition house** for women VoT moving from a sheltered housing to a private

accommodation. This has also proven to be a best practice in the **Life Beyond the Shelter (LIBES) project - long-term support for survivors of human trafficking transitioning from shelter life to independence.**³⁹ The publication "**Living on your own" - A printable vademecum with practical tips for people moving out of the shelter,**⁴⁰ which our consortium partner **SOLWODI** used during the LIBES project implementation, can also be a suitable tool for you to adapt to your national context and hand over to clients transiting from (your) sheltered housing to a private accommodation. You can also build up on the pilot transition house and read the **case study "Transition housing for trafficked persons"**.⁴¹

Medical support

VoT for the purpose of sexual exploitation often develop serious conditions and experience acute medical needs, because they are a direct result of the way their bodies have been sexually abused over a period of time. This is an area that requires a markedly gender-specific approach, centred on the recovery from a physical trauma and conditions associated with sexual exploitation, including treatment of sexually-transmitted diseases, consequences of repeat abortions, pelvic infections, infertility, throat infections and other specific conditions. The gynaecological examination and treatment must be a priority in the early assistance offered to trafficked migrant women and must be carried out in a trauma and culturally-sensitive manner. However,

third country national VoT often lack access to such services, because of their residence permit, language barriers between e.g. project staff and the affected women, and stigma attached to women-specific medical issues, for example (Yonkova 2020: 13-14; Sander 2020: 23-24). In order to overcome these barriers, the consortium has some best practices you could consider implementing in your organisation/help centre:

- **Making agreements with a local hospital.** For a number of years, **IROKO** had an agreement with a local hospital that they would offer regular appointments every month to migrant women (especially victims of trafficking and pregnant women) without needing any ID documents or records. Three specialist doctors offered their services and the hospital where they practised offered the use of their facilities. **IROKO** made cultural mediators (see subchapter 2.4.2) available on request by doctors or beneficiaries and had regular contact with those accessing these appointments to follow up and support them to complete their course of treatment.
- **Sex education** given by counselling NGOs or specialised NGOs for sexual and reproductive health rights offers positive implications for the integration of VoT women. The findings from the **INTAP project**, in which **SOLWODI** was a project beneficiary, show that sex education helps VoT to get to know their bodies,

39 <https://libes.org/results/>

40 <https://libes.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Living-on-your-own-NEW.pdf>

41 <https://libes.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/LIBES-Transition-housing-case-study.pdf>

learn to decide if and when they want to get pregnant, etc. and can hence follow up on their planned integration goals (Blöcher et al. 2020: 35). You could also consider carrying out a training on this topic (for more information see the section on other integration support below).

- **Informing VoT about pandemics or other health emergencies.** In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has also proven to be important to inform VoT about new COVID-19 regulations and hygiene rules. **Providing VoT with protective equipment and developing in-house hygiene concepts** also has proven to be decisive in **SOLWODI's COVID-19 project**⁴² (Wells 2021: 12; 16; 24–25). Such a best practice is also something you could consider implementing in the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic or in future pandemics. In Italy, **IROKO** has also been providing information on the ongoing COVID-19 vaccination programme to its beneficiaries, to make sure they have equal access to his prevention programme.

Psychological support

The need for not just physical but also mental recovery is dictated by the complex exposure to abuse, betrayal, domination and control that VoT experience. Many VoT show several symptoms of complex traumatisation as a repeated reliving of traumatic events through involuntary images or flashbacks, nightmares, concentration disorders or difficulties with emotion

regulation. Although psychological support is among the essential services that EU Member States should provide to SoT as stated in Article 11(7) of the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive, this is often not the norm. This deficiency is mainly related to the asylum status and not having a residence permit. In addition to the shortage of available trauma therapy, practitioners often lack the knowledge needed to navigate the trauma related to sex trafficking or trauma pedagogic skills. The traditional concept of therapy poses another challenge for VoT to seek psychological support, as the country of origin culture has different views on health and especially mental illness, which leads to VoT not accepting psychological support and to a repression of the issues (Yonkova 2020: 12; Blöcher et al. 2020: 32; Sander 2020: 24). It is therefore important that you implement psychological support programmes to enable the integration of VoT. Here are the best practices we have identified:

- **Trauma therapy and trauma pedagogics** prove to be beneficial for VoT in their recovery process from their traumatic experiences. This can be achieved through trauma therapists, social workers skilled in trauma pedagogics (**e.g. Trauma Releasing Exercises**) and interactions with friends as assistance for recovery, as found in the **INTAP project** (Blöcher et al. 2020: 33). **Trauma therapy** helps to rebuild the women's confidence in themselves and the skills to regain control over their lives. This approach has been formalised in the **Guide: Victim-Centred Approach**

42 <https://www.solwodi.de/seite/494947/council-of-europe-covid-19-project.html>

Front-Line Professionals Working With Trafficking In Human Beings (see subchapter 2.4) and the **Didactic Tool – The Victim Centred Approach With Case Studies – For Front-Line Officers working with Trafficking in Human Beings**,⁴³ developed in the **SAFE HOUSES project** implemented by the **CyRC**.

- You could try to offer **in-house trauma therapy** such as by the **Cyprus Refugee Council**, as therapy rebuilds people’s confidence in themselves and the skills to regain control over their lives. You could also use their **Guide: Victim-Centred Approach Front-Line Professionals Working With Trafficking in Human Beings** in your work with VoT (for more details see section on best practices approaches above).
- If your organisation/help centre does not offer in-house therapy, you should try to **refer VoT to psychologists/psychiatrists**. However, there are only a handful of available therapists, long waiting times and difficulties associated with native-language therapy. In general, hardly any funding is provided for therapy (Yonkova et al. 2020: 16). It is therefore advisable that you build up a **psychological support network**, in which you can refer VoT to, if you do not offer in-house therapy. For example, the **SOLWODI project counselling centre in Bad Kissingen** accompanies clients to Wildwasser e.V. in Würzburg,⁴⁴ which employs a trauma therapist. The

SOLWODI specialised counselling centre in Augsburg puts clients in touch with the Hilfsnetzwerk für besonders schutzbedürftige Flüchtlinge (Help Network for Particularly Vulnerable Refugees - HiFF)⁴⁵ (Caritas) and offers them a mental stabilisation group in the premises of the specialised counselling centre. Both specialised counselling centres support the clients in crisis situations by **using donations** to pay for several hours of stabilisation therapy with therapists who are not approved by a health insurance fund (Wells et al. 2021: 25).

Mother-child integration

Motherhood and pregnancy represent a predominantly gender-specific situation, which need to be incorporated into the assistance considerations due to its key importance for the recovery process and the significant scale in which it occurs. Commonly, (expectant) mothers need psycho-social support with the following: acquiring mothering skills, material assistance, psychological assistance, finding childcare opportunities, inter alia (Yonkova 2020: 8-9). Children can act as bridges to integration, as mothers commonly seek help when raising their children. So, the counselling/work with mothers has a huge impact on integration of mothers which the consortium sees can be done **in one-on-one counselling, group counselling (separated mothers and children) or accompanied mother-child-activities**. The **INTAP project** has thereby identified the following best practices as **mother-child integration support services**:

43 <https://www.cyrefugeecouncil.org/safehouses-didactic-tool/>

44 <https://wildwasserwuerzburg.beranet.info/>

45 <https://www.caritas-augsburg.de/hilfeberatung/migrationsundfluechtlingsberatung/hiff-projekt/hiff-projekt>

- **“Intercultural parental work** helps to explain childcare techniques within the EU host countries in the [...] [VoT’s] mother tongue and facilitates their integration process.”
- **“Mother-child integration and language classes** enable [...] [VoT] to e.g. foster their country of residence language skills, while their children are looked after” (Blöcher et al. 2020: 35).

You can consider these ideas as impulses for **setting up mother-child psycho-social support programmes** in your help centre/organisation.

Other integration support services

Alongside the categories identified as psycho-social integration areas in the *ASS/ST* project, there are other integration support services, which were showcased as best practices by the consortium and you can consider implementing into your work with women VoT.

VoT trainings

VoT training sessions are also a method you can consider implementing into your gender-specific integration programme for VoT. Through trainings, VoT become more comfortable with the integration process and specific daily topics (e.g. dealing with doctors). **IROKO** used this best practice in the form of **medical trainings**, in which VoT women were informed about the prevention of common health problems, and about how to access

46 http://www.associazioneIROKO.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Topic-Family-planning.docx_compressed.pdf

local healthcare services, including the government’s cancer-prevention programme, and how to access healthcare services without identity or residence permit documents. This was done by our consortium member IROKO. All women were given small cards to keep in their wallets with details of services they can access. These sessions were held with small groups of women who speak a common language other than Italian, with a medical practitioner facilitating who also speaks that language, alongside a cultural mediator. Sessions were largely held in Italian, by trained medical experts and nurses from Médecins Sans Frontières, but all written material was provided in both languages, and any questions or clarifications could be explained in the appropriate language. The sessions were informal and we managed to create a positive and open atmosphere between participants, given the sometimes embarrassing or taboo nature of the subject of sexual health. Médecins Sans Frontières created the written material on general access to healthcare services, as well as family planning⁴⁶ and other areas of maternal health.

In the **LIBES project, SOLWODI** trained TCN women VoT during their **transitioning phase from sheltered to private housing**. Training topics included: public administration; house hunting; housing and household management; finances; economic inclusion; social communication skills; addressing family-related matters and self-care. The training curriculum **Independent Living Skills Training for Survivors of Human Trafficking**⁴⁷ can be downloaded from the project website and can be adapted by you into your country-specific context. You can e.g. think of

47 <https://libes.org/results/>

offering **individual or group trainings**. During the COVID-19 pandemic, individual training sessions proved to be a helpful alternative in the *LIBES* project and also added to an even higher individualised training programme. Illiteracy was also considered in the development of the training materials to also train less-literate/illiterate VoT (De Cnodder et al. 2021: 7-8).

Deportation and Dublin return best practices

When dealing with third-country national female VoT, there is always the risk of deportation to the home country, or “Dublin returns.” The project beneficiary **SOLWODI** offers return counselling to women and/or mothers. SOLWODI’s deportation counselling e.g. is offered to two types of clients: 1) women that want to return home or 2) women that are forced to return back to the first country of entry based on the Dublin III Regulation (EU Regulation 604/2013).⁴⁸ **Gender-specific return counselling** should thereby not “push” for an active return. Offering such counselling is something anti-trafficking and feminist organisations do not like to do. Nonetheless, it is important to know how and to gender-sensitively deal with VoT women who have to return back to a Dublin country or country of origin, so that they can receive gender-specific support after their return.⁴⁹ Here are best practices, you could build up on:

- **Setting-up your own return project.** SOLWODI offers

48 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32013R0604>

49 As a consortium, we agree with the statement by the authors of the manual, which state: “Unfortunately, due to the current political situation, Dublin returns of trafficked people [...] still take place and therefore we consider this manual as necessary. Nevertheless, we take a clear position against involuntary Dublin returns to Italy in general (due to the poor reception

gender-specific return support through its **own return project**. GBV victims, such as VoT, are thereby supported through networking and financial support.⁵⁰

- **Make referrals to gender-sensitive return programmes** in your country.
- **Reach out to EU feminist NGO partners in the case of Dublin returnees.** Within the framework of the **SISA project – Strengthening the Identification and Integration of Survivors of Sex Trafficking from West Africa**, in which **SOLWODI** is partnering, the **Transnational Dublin-Return Assistance Network (T-DAN)** is being established. This NGO support system creates a platform for trained individuals in the Dublin returning country to virtually accompany survivors through active Dublin transfer experience, providing psycho-social support during the process in real time via phone and text messaging, encouraging cooperation with authorities through the deportation process and minimising negative impacts.
- **Support clients returning under the Dublin regulation.** You can use and adapt **SISA’s Dublin-Pre-Return Counselling Manual in the German-Italian context**⁵¹ in your counselling sessions. The manual helps

conditions for returnees [...] and against the forced return of trafficked persons in particular (due to the widespread trafficking networks [...] where returnees are often known [...]. “(Eyselein et al. 2021: 8).

50 <https://www.solwodi.de/seite/353222/r%C3%BCckkehrberatung.html> (link is only available in German, whereas the project flyer is also available in other languages)

51 <https://sisa-europe.eu/manual/>

practitioners to walk VoT through the transfer process and pre-emptively connect them to someone in the destination country who can receive them once transfer authorities have completed the border crossing.

Mentoring

An equally important best practice on the psycho-social level can be offered through the establishment of a **mentoring programme**. Mentoring can be defined as:

“A structured, non-judgemental relationship with mutual benefits for all parties involved, in which a more experienced individual (mentor) voluntarily gives time to support and encourage a less experienced person (mentee)” (Lamonaca & del Savio 2021: 9).

In the **ASSIST** and **LIBES** projects, mentoring projects were implemented, in which clients are supported by **former/long-term clients – called survivors (ASSIST) – and/or local volunteers – called buddies (LIBES)**. The involvement of survivors or volunteers is recommended as a means of enhancing the effectiveness of integration services and as such it is of central importance to effective gender-specific assistance promoting the integration of trafficked migrant women (Yonkova 2020: 19). In **SOLWODI**'s mentoring programme in the **ASSIST project**, the mentors and mentees discussed the following topics in their mentoring sessions: authorities, letters/documents, "rules of conduct"/"code of conduct" and

integration into social life in Germany - finding social contacts and leisure activities.⁵² They also learned how different training tools are used, for example brainstorming, emotion cards, and painting. In the **LIBES project**, focus was placed on buddies supporting VoT in their long-term integration by e.g. carrying out or introducing them to leisure activities.⁵³ Local volunteers prove to be helpful mentors, as they can give clients a better feeling of safety and sense of belonging to the community of the given EU society (Lamonaca & del Savio 2021: 22).

In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, **E-Mentoring** can offer an alternative. In the **LIBES** project, **E-Mentoring Tips - Starting mentoring programs to support victims of human trafficking during COVID-19**⁵⁴ were summarised.

2.6. Economic Empowerment

In the short-term, assistance must focus on the material needs of VoT, including their physical and psychological healthcare and legal needs (for relevant best practices see subchapters 2.5.1 and 2.5.2), which can also be very complex. Longer-term assistance must also include a focus on economic empowerment in order to equip VoT with the skills and knowledge they need to become truly independent and participate fully in the society in their country of residence without the constant worry and fear that accompany economic instability, including the risk of re-trafficking or re-victimisation. Our experience shows that women's effective independence also has an

52 https://daten2.verwaltungsportal.de/dateien/seitengenerator/0832ea4e327556b1629db18c84df6f0f186819/solwodi_assist_de_web_neu_1.pdf

53 https://libes.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Mentoring-for-trafficking-survivors_ebookEN.pdf

54 https://libes.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/E-mentoring-Tips_.pdf

impact on their families, in particular their children.

An important aspect of economic empowerment is employment. Employment directly promotes economic independence, as well as facilitating contact with country of residence nationals, language acquisition and increased self-esteem⁵⁵. Findings from the *INTAP* research report, carried out by **SOLWODI**, showed that some VoT had found work as cooks, tailors or cleaning ladies or had become self-employed, e.g. as a tailor. Other VoT dream about being employed and would like to find employment as fashion designers, cleaners, midwives, tailors, hairdressers, or make-up artists in the country of residence. Gaining work experience, e.g. through an internship or completing vocational training in the EU, is also beneficial to integration, as VoT are prepared for the EU labour market.

Employment is therefore a critical element for independence, especially from the welfare state.

2.6.1. Barriers to Economic Empowerment

A significant number of VoT face challenges within the employment market due to their immigration status, with some not having the required residence permit to be able to work. A further problem for VoT regarding the labour market is a frequent lack of education and work experience in their home country before their victimisation in human trafficking. Furthermore, both discrimination from and mistrust toward employers pose further obstacles (Blöcher et. al., 2020, p.30). VoT who are mothers find it especially challenging to integrate

into the labour market due to the lack of childcare opportunities. Other identified hindrances are lacking the language skills of the country of residence and perceiving men as the primary contributors to the household income (ibid.).

Some VoT arrive in the EU with previous qualifications and professional experience from their countries of origin. It can often be a challenge to have such qualifications recognised by the EU Member State where they live, and so these important skills and knowledge unfortunately do not always put them in a position to find work in their country of residence (Blöcher et. al., 2020, p.18).

Experience across the consortium shows that professions such as cleaning, childcare and elderly care are often the only areas in which many women VoT find opportunities, regardless of their experience or the work they would wish to do. These jobs are often considered unskilled and undesirable for EU nationals. While this consortium recognises the importance of such roles, we also know that VoT aspire to a variety of different professions, and so education and training are key to expanding the work opportunities they can access, while also offering insight into the different sectors and careers they might like to pursue.

Although jobs such as those mentioned above might be available in the country of residence, they are often offered on a short-term, unstable or even undocumented/uncontracted basis. Earning a living is crucial, and so many women are unlikely to demand better working conditions, but such circumstances do not foster the long-term economic stability of VoT. For example, in Italy,

⁵⁵ African Educational Trust 1998; Bloch 1999 cited in Ager and Strang 2008

many cleaning and care jobs are paid cash-in-hand, without any taxes or contributions being paid by the employer or the employee. Even when a contract is offered, it is often short-term and does not include employer contributions to the welfare state. The result is that people in such jobs do not have adequate protections or support from the welfare state, such as paid sick leave or paid maternity leave.

2.6.2. Economic Empowerment Best Practices

Employment Opportunities

IROKO organised a **peer-to-peer service exchange** between women beneficiaries. They noticed that many women were looking for work experience and many others had needs, such as cleaning or childcare. So they arranged for some women to offer such services to others, at a rate subsidised by IROKO (the organisation covered two thirds of their pay, with the remaining third covered by the service receiver). Thus some women were able to access services that they often couldn't afford otherwise. In the case of childcare, this also allowed them to be more active in searching for work themselves. At the same time other women earned money and gained valuable skills and work experience to put on their CVs. This was a way of giving economic assistance, while also fostering independence. There were fortnightly check-ins between staff and the women receiving and providing services to ensure smooth running of this service exchange. Before beginning the service, the women were required to go through a 1 week training course with staff.

Education and Professional Training

For three years **IROKO** had a **partnership agreement** with the

Piedmont Regional Council to **'convert' education and experience in women's countries of origin into recognised course credits**. In this way women were allowed to complete training courses in Italy in a reduced amount of time and begin to search for a job, particularly as accounting clerks and surveyors. Additionally, IROKO also signed an agreement with the employment agency ADECCO to facilitate the insertion of women into training schemes and internships and lead them to direct job opportunities in the chocolate/confectionery industry in a region of Italy that specialises in this kind of production. This is a project that could be adapted to other geographical areas that specialise in different kinds of production, by establishing links with groups of large-scale employers who need staff with similar skills and training. Such links prove invaluable for ensuring that training courses undertaken will directly lead to stable employment.

The **MARTA Centre** provides a state-funded programme, which includes participation in **vocational training or courses of study**, based on the evaluation of individual needs of a beneficiary. Firstly, a social rehabilitator carries out a consultation about the Latvian labour market and potential job opportunities. They also help the beneficiary to prepare a CV and evaluate each individual's education and experience. They can then advise the beneficiary on any relevant training or educational courses that they could attend, and support in enrolment if the beneficiary wishes to participate.

The choice of a training course does not include any gender-specific element, but is based on individual needs. The MARTA Centre does not support gender stereotypes and tries to empower the VoT to have a broader perspective and choose what

she wants, rather than what she may feel is expected of her. If she has small children who don't attend kindergarten and no family members or other appropriate support system to look after them, MARTA Centre can pay for day-care during the course, or offer short-time volunteer babysitters.

Access to Technology/Digital Skills

In Cyprus, **digital skills workshops** are provided to VoT (and asylum seeking) women. These take the form of workshops in order to support the development of skills relating to the use of digital technology and how this can aid their development of life skills. These workshops are practical and include teaching people how to use internet research skills, Google Maps and translation apps, which in turn affect their integration experience.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, **IROKO** and **SOLWODI** noticed that the rapid switch to socially-distanced service provision posed an extra challenge to many VoT. Services offered in Italy by the local authority, grants available to support with online schooling, and even banking services, all moved suddenly online. As many of the organisations' beneficiaries do not have a computer at home and have limited digital skills, this presented a significant barrier to access. IROKO staff kept in contact with beneficiaries largely over the phone, or in person where necessary, and advised on accessing these new services or accessed them on beneficiaries' behalf, e.g. to make appointments or submit applications online. This service will continue, including offering 1:1 support to enable beneficiaries to learn how to access specific online services independently in the future, and giving them access to a computer and Wi-Fi in IROKO's office.

Welfare and Social Benefits

Although direct assistance is provided by most EU states to asylum seekers and VoT, in the consortium's experience this often does not last for long enough to achieve independence. For those women who are successful in gaining visas and residency permits, other social benefits may be available in the country of residence, but accessing these can prove challenging. For example, in Italy there are state and regional support programmes, but they often involve a large amount of bureaucracy, which is almost always in Italian. Our partners report a similar situation in Cyprus, where documents are often only available in Greek and some service providers have even refused to communicate with non-Greek speakers.

IROKO has a **partnership with a local fiscal assistance centre (CAF)** where their beneficiaries can go, alongside a cultural and linguistic mediator where necessary, to complete the important documentation that acts as proof of household income (this is often requested for any means-tested services, such as exemptions from paying for some healthcare services, or when applying for discounts on parking permits or travel passes), as well as a general consultation to understand their situation and advise on any benefits they may qualify for and how to apply for them. During the COVID-19 lockdown there was limited state support for people who did not have permanent work contracts, but this service was also able to advise IROKO's beneficiaries on whether and how they could receive such support. Another benefit of this project is that with such administrative support, women can resolve and even avoid some of the administrative problems - often linked to taxes or employment - which can become barriers to

residency permit renewal/conversion in the future.

This partnership also includes periodic **EEM training sessions** for VoT, where the CAF staff - alongside cultural and linguistic mediators - offer general information to groups of VoT about various financial and administrative topics. These sessions can be followed up with 1:1 appointments where appropriate.

Housing Services and Economic Support

IROKO managed two **shelters** in Italy, which were categorised as third-level. One shelter housed up to three women at a time, while the other housed up to six women, for up to 12 months. Third-level refers to the period after the official support funded by the government as part of the anti-trafficking provisions. Unfortunately, this period is often too short to achieve effective independence, and so IROKO provided the stepping stone support to avoid such women falling into the trap of re-trafficking, being pushed (back) into prostitution, or ending up on the streets.

Housing support in these shelters was also accompanied by mandatory enrolment in a supported savings scheme, and regular monitoring interviews and support sessions, including help to search for jobs and permanent housing, and referrals to any other services, such as for health needs or psychological support.

The **supported savings scheme** involved signing an agreement with IROKO outlining how much money each beneficiary could realistically save each month, and then IROKO accompanied them for the

appointment in the post office/bank to open their savings account in their own name.

These savings that they kept throughout their stay in IROKO's shelters were to facilitate their eventual economic independence, allowing them to pay the deposit or buy any furniture/other items necessary when they moved into their own permanent accommodation. Although IROKO had no access to their money, staff kept track of the savings to make sure they were actively participating in the project as part of the regular interviews carried out.

In an initial interview with women before inviting them to stay in their shelters, IROKO staff agreed on an amount each beneficiary was willing and able to contribute towards the rent, alongside the savings as part of the supported savings scheme. IROKO **subsidised** the remaining **rent**, but bills were paid by residents. An **emergency fund** was made available for them to request one-off financial support in times of particular difficulty.

In their **COVID-19 project**⁵⁶ **SOLWODI** also set up an emergency fund with the help of the Council of Europe, which allowed them to provide vouchers for food and hygiene products or pay household bills for 22 of their 85 counselled women. You should consider setting up such an emergency fund for particularly vulnerable VoT.

⁵⁶ https://daten2.verwaltungsportal.de/dateien/seitengenerator/0832ea4e327556b1629db18c84df6f0f186819/solwodi_coe_en_web_1.pdf

3. Summary

This guidebook provides you with practical guidance to support women VoT for sexual exploitation, according to the needs of each individual. It is intended to be adapted into your national context. We hope that the GeSIM guidebook gives you a better understanding of integrational challenges facing women VoT and helps you to develop new skills as well as motivation to assist these women. We equally hope that the GeSIM guidebook will be widely used and support practitioners in their everyday work with women VoT.

As the COALESCE consortium specialises in service provision for women VoT for sexual exploitation and includes the voices of VoT and feminist service providers, this model is informed by and seeks to highlight the female perspective and the importance of gender-specific support services. The model can also serve as guidance for any service provision to women, irrespective of nationality or residence status, who have experienced GBV in particular, but you could also adapt it for service provision to men.

Based on the best practices shared by the consortium partners - we believe that in order to be effective - service provision for women VoT should take into account the different but complementary types of support outlined in this model - legal, psycho-social and economic empowerment. So if you focus on one type of support, if it is feasible you could consider expanding services or collaborate with local networks of experts to strengthen the provision of gender-specific, culturally-sensitive integration support at a local level.

The consortium members providing frontline services in Italy, Cyprus, Ireland and Germany will apply this

model in practice during the implementation phase of the COALESCE project by involving women VoT in the delivery of practical integration work focused on both legal/psychosocial support and economic empowerment support. Partners will implement specific elements of the model depending on their national contexts and their existing services and expertise.

The implementation of the best practices identified in the GeSIM guide will be evaluated using both qualitative and quantitative methods, according to the M&E considerations laid out in subchapter 2.4.2.

4. References

Aninoșanu, Livia; Marțiș, Daniela; Stoian, Gina; D'Amico, Marcello & Sales Gutiérrez, Laura (2016): Why is gender an important factor in the process of trafficking for sexual exploitation? - Guide for professionals, with a special focus on the trafficking of sexual exploitation of Romanian women and girls. Bucharest: CPE - Centrul Parteneriat pentru Egalitate. Available from: https://www.cpe.ro/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Training-manual_English.pdf [Retrieved 30/11/2021]

Blackwell, Noeline (10th September 2020): "Rise like a phoenix", Law Society of Ireland Gazette. Available from <https://www.lawsociety.ie/gazette/in-depth/trauma-aftermath/> [Retrieved 30/11/2021]

Blöcher, Jessica; Eyselein, Luisa; Kolbe, Simon & Wells, Anja (2020): Handbook for Practitioners – The Integration of Female Nigerian Survivors of Human Trafficking for the Purpose of Sexual Exploitation. Available from: <https://intap-europe.eu/handbooks/> [Retrieved 30/11/2021]

CISS, MPDL, CyRC & ALC (n.d.): Guide - Victim-Centred Approach for Frontline Professionals Working with Trafficking in Human Beings. Available from: <https://www.cyrefugeecouncil.org/guide-victim-centered-approach/> [Retrieved 30/11/2021]

De Cnodder, Erik; Bisconti, Silvia; Ricci, Elisa; Verhasselt, Anthony; Lamonaca, Silvia; Del Savio, Emanuela; Haneke, Sophia; Richler-Yazeji, Veronika; Schad, Daniela; Wells, Anja; Parés Martín, Laura; Sales Gutiérrez & Diniz, Tatiana (2021): Independent Living Skills Training for

Survivors of Human Trafficking. Available from: <https://libes.org/results/> [Retrieved 30/11/2021]

ECRE - European Council of Refugees and Exiles (2016): EP study calls for more inclusive and gender-specific integration policies. Available from: <https://ecre.org/ep-study-calls-for-more-inclusive-and-gender-specific-integration-policies/> [Retrieved 30/11/2021]

Eyselein, Luisa; Ciambezi, Irene & Kolbe, Simon (2021): Dublin-Pre-Return Counselling Manual in the German-Italian Context – For Social Workers working with West African Female Survivors of Human Trafficking for the Purpose of Sexual Exploitation. Available from: <https://sisa-europe.eu/manual/> [Retrieved 30/11/2021]

Golla, Anne Marie; Malhotra, Anju; Nanda, Priya; Mehra, Rekha (2011): Understanding and Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment: Definition, Framework and Indicators. Available from: <https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Understanding-measuring-womens-economic-empowerment.pdf> [Retrieved 30/11/2021]

Hardy, Veronica; Locklear, Alice Kay & Crable, April (2020): Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Adolescents: Gender-Specific and Trauma-Informed Care Implications, *Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics*, Volume 17, Number 1 (2020), pp. 55-62.

ICAT - The Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (2017): The Gender Dimensions of Human Trafficking. Available from: <https://icat.un.org/sites/default/files/publications/icat-ib-04-v.1.pdf> [Retrieved 30/11/2021]

ILO – International Labour Organization (2020): Global guidelines on the economic reintegration of victims of forced labour through lifelong learning and skills development approaches. Geneva: ILO. Available from: https://www.ilo.org/skills/areas/skills-for-youth-employment/WCMS_762709/lang-en/index.htm [Retrieved 30/11/2021]

Lamonaca, Silvia & del Savio, Emanuela (2021): Mentoring for human trafficking survivors. Available from: https://libes.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Mentoring-for-trafficking-survivors_ebookEN.pdf [Retrieved 30/11/2021]

Lietonen, Anni & Lilja, Inka (2021): A toolkit for enhancing counselling for victims of gender-based violence - Empowering counsellors and beneficiaries to assess the needs and the impact of counselling with women in migration. Available from: <https://heuni.fi/-/sarah-impact-toolkit> [Retrieved 30/11/2021]

Lilja, Inka (2019): Handbook on counselling asylum seeking and refugee women victims of gender-based violence – Helping her to reclaim her story. Helsinki: HEUNI. Available from: <https://www.solwodi.de/seite/353264/eu-projekt-rec-ccm-gbv.html> [Retrieved 30/11/2021]

Napolitano, Kara (2017): Intersectionality and Human Trafficking Survivorship. Available from: <https://combathumantrafficking.org/2017/05/intersectionality-human-trafficking-survivorship> [Retrieved 30/11/2021]

Omotoye, Rotimi Williams (2011) The Study of African Traditional Religion and its Challenges in Contemporary Times. Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies. Vol.1 No.2, 2011, Pp.21-40 Studies.

On the Road Cooperativa Sociale, Payoke, CAW, SOLWODI Deutschland e.V & Fondation Surt (2020): "A World I Can Trust" - The needs of third country national victims of trafficking transitioning from shelter to independent living. San Benedetto del Tronto: On the Road Cooperativa Sociale. Available from: <https://libes.org/results/> [Retrieved 30/11/2021]

Pesce, Flavia; Christodoulou, Josie (2017): Women's Economic Independence, the Way Out of Intimate Partner Violence: Theory and Practice in the EU. Available from: <https://www.wegoproject.eu/sites/default/files/media/Comparative-Research-Analysis-Final-Report.pdf> [Retrieved 30/11/2021]

Rakovica, Blodina; Ianovitz, Sara (2021) Cultural Mediation: An Inclusive Solution to Help Reduce the Cultural and Language Barriers experienced by Survivors of Trafficking. Available from: https://www.criminaljusticealliance.org/wp-content/uploads/Hibiscus_Cultural-Mediation-Report_A4_Final_digital.pdf [Retrieved 30/11/2021]

Robin, Anne-Lise; van Andrichem, Maaïke; Baghirova, Tarana; Elam, Jerome; Kotlyarenko, Tatiana; Kyrylenko, Oleksandr; Rekasius, Ignas; Rudenko, Tetiana; Andjelković, Marija; Henderson, Angela; Smiragina-Ingelstrom, Polnina & Peck-Kubaczek, Cynthia (2021): Applying Gender-Sensitive Approaches in Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. Available from:

https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/7/4/486700_1.pdf

[Retrieved 30/11/2021]

Ruiz, Camille; Stiplosek, Danijela; Tortel, Emilien; Machobva, Jitka; Vudric, Nives (2019): The Identification of Victim of Human Trafficking in Transit and Destination Countries in Europe. A practical Guideline for Frontline Workers. Available from:

<https://www.trafficking-response.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/The-identification-of-victims-of-human-trafficking-in-transit-and-destination-countries-in-Europe-English.pdf>

[Retrieved 30/11/2021]

Sander, Caroline (2020): Handbook for Practitioners – The Integration of Female Survivors of Human Trafficking from China. Available from:

<https://intap-europe.eu/handbooks/>

[Retrieved 30/11/2021]

Thompson, Kirsty (2015): Upholding Rights! Early Legal Intervention for Victims of Trafficking – Best Practice Principles. Available from

<https://www.immigrantcouncil.ie/sites/default/files/2021-03/ELI-Best-Practice-Report2.pdf>

[Retrieved 30/11/2021]

UNHCR (2007): UNHCR, Refugee Protection and International Migration. Available from:

<https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/4a24ef0ca2.pdf>

[Retrieved 30/11/2021]

Walby, Sylvia; Apitzsch, Birgit; Armstrong, Jo; Balderston, Susie; Follis, Karolina; Francis, Brian; Kelly, Loz; May-Chahal, Corinne; Rashid, Awais; Shire, Karen; Towers, Jude & Tünste, Markus (2016): Study on the gender dimension of trafficking in human beings - Final report. Available from:

https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/default/files/study_on_the_gender_dimension_of_trafficking_in_human_beings_final_report.pdf

[Retrieved 30/11/2021]

Wells, Anja (2021): Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on female adult victims of human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and anti-trafficking operators – The case study Germany. Available from:

<https://www.solwodi.de/seite/494947/council-of-europe-covid-19-project.html>

[Retrieved 30/11/2021]

Wells, Anja; Greiter, Linda & Richler-Yazeji (2021): Mind the Gap Report – COALESCE for Support in Germany. Available from:

<https://www.solwodi.de/seite/501869/eu-project-amif-coalesce.html>

[Retrieved 30/11/2021]

Wells, Anja; Freudenberg, Dagmar & Levander, Mari (2019): Gender-Based Violence Against Refugee & Asylum-Seeking Women – A Training Tool – Training Manual CCM-GBV Project. Available from:

<https://www.solwodi.de/seite/492994/eu-project-rec-ccm-gbv.html>

[Retrieved 30/11/2021]

Women's Economic Empowerment, Issues Paper (2011), prepared by DAC Network on Gender Equality. Available from:

<https://www.oecd.org/social/gender-development/47561694.pdf>

[Retrieved 30/11/2021]

Yonkova, Dr Nusha (2020): Best Practice Principles of Assistance for Female Migrant Victims of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation. Available from:

<https://www.migrantwomennetwork.org/2020/12/22/best-practice-principles-of-assistance-for-trafficked-women/>

[Retrieved 30/11/2021]

Yonkova, Dr Nusha; Henderson, Mary; Campbell, Jennifer Okeke (2020): Assisting Trafficked Women: Best practice principles of gender-specific legal assistance and integration supports to third country national female victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. Available from

<https://immigrantcouncil.ie/index.php/campaign/ending-human-trafficking/assist>

[Retrieved 30/11/2021]

5. Annexes

Annex 1 - Best practice template

Partner activities/Best practices for GeSIM Model

Here is a list of various activities that fit into the 3 categories of service covered by our model (taken from the WP2 research protocol). This should give you an idea of what to include in the best practices you share for the GeSIM model, but please share anything you feel is relevant for these categories, even if not listed here.

PLM

Legal support:

- Identification and recognition as a victim of trafficking;
- Obtaining and/or renewal of the necessary immigration permits;
- International protection-related matters;
- Any other immigration-related matters;
- Criminal matters;
- Family-related matters;
- Compensation.

Psycho-social support:

- Securing access to appropriate housing (provision of shelters and protected flats);
- Medical assistance;
- Access to material assistance;
- Psychological support;
- Other integration initiatives.

EEM

- Employment opportunities;
- Education and professional training (job orientation training and access to entrepreneurship, business plans, access to resources);
- Resource mobilisation: funding schemes (start-ups, small business);
- Access to technology/digital skills;
- Mentoring;
- Care services;
- Welfare and social benefits;
- Housing and transportation services;
- Direct or indirect financial services;

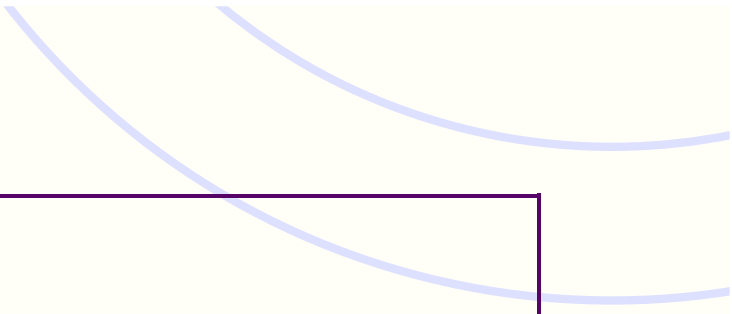
For each activity/best practice that you share for the development of the GeSIM model, please copy the table and fill it in with relevant details.

ONE TABLE PER ACTIVITY/BEST PRACTICE.

Name of organisation:

Contact person for any follow-up to this template:

Category of activity/best practice 1: PLM / EEM?
Type of activity/best practice (from list above or something additional):
Indicators covered in service delivery (either from the table above, or other indicators you use):
Indicators of success:
Description of activity/service (you can also send attachments of existing documents if you prefer - please indicate documents here):



--

How do you make sure this service/activity is gender-specific?

--

Sample materials - please indicate any sample materials/documents you can share with us for this activity/best practice:

--

Evaluation methodology - please describe how you evaluate this activity/best practice (including any evaluation documents/materials to be indicated here):

--

Any other info to share (e.g. website/photos/other to show your implementation of this activity/best practice):