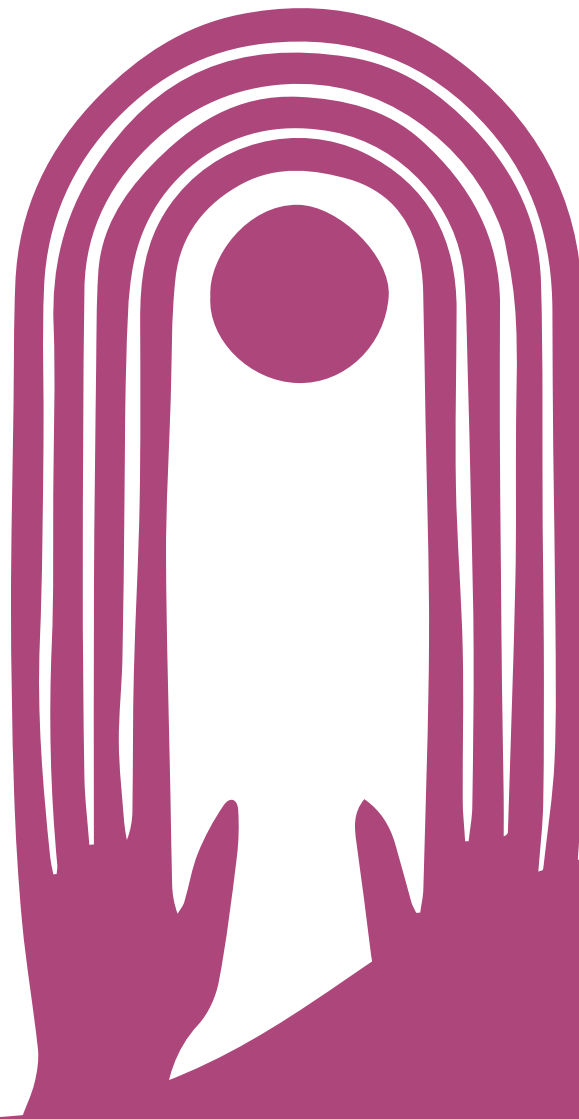




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GUIDE: VICTIM-CENTERED APPROACH

FOR FRONT-LINE PROFESSIONALS WORKING
WITH TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

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Preface

This guide is prepared in the framework of the AMIF project titled “**SAFE HOUSES-Support and Assistance before the Exploitation in Hosting countries of third country national victims of trafficking for Sexual purposeS**”. The project intervenes in transit migration areas to support the integration of women and girls who are third-country nationals (TCNs) and are victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

The project strengthens the capacities of civil society, local authorities, law enforcement agencies, and other supporting organizations in Sicily (Italy), Cyprus, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (France), Madrid (Spain).

A first axis of intervention of the project is in fact directed to enhance the capacities of the above-mentioned stakeholders in providing appropriate assistance and support to women and girls who are TCNs as soon as there are reasonable grounds to believe that they are victims of trafficking.

A second component of the project strengthens the capacities of social workers and professionals working in shelters and reception centres for refugees, asylum seekers, UAM and THB victims in adopting victim-centred approaches which guarantee gender-specific and child sensitive assistance and support measures and take into account specific needs of the victims.

Finally, the project fosters the exchange of experiences and good practices related to the ground work for integrating women and girls who are victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation taking into account the perspective of the victims, their empowerment and self-determination.

The action applies Participatory methodologies and a victim-centred approach, which have been integrated in the preparation work leading to the formulation of the present guide.

The project is promoted by:



CISS - International South South Cooperation (www.cissong.org) is an Italian no profit association funded in 1985 with the objective to address development issues in favour of the most marginalized population groups living in the Global South as well as in southern Italy.



MPDL - Movimiento por la Paz, el Desarme y la Libertad (www.mpdl.org) is a non-profit organisation created in 1983, present in 11 countries and based in Spain where, through its Social Affairs Department, provides support to migrants and refugees. Since 2002 MPDL runs an emergency shelter for migrant women victims of GBV in Madrid.



The CyRC - Cyprus Refugee Council (www.cyrefugeecouncil.org) is the first NGO in Cyprus to focus primarily on refugees. The team of CyRC follows an inter-disciplinary approach, by providing individualized legal, social and psychological support to persons of concern with the aim to ensure access to rights. The team is made up of dedicated professionals with extensive experience working directly with refugees, asylum seekers, detainees, trafficking victims and survivors of torture.



ALC - Accompagnement Lieu d'Accueil (<http://association-alc.net>) has more than 50 years of experience in the provision of social services and in the protection of vulnerable groups; based in a transit migration area, in Nice, since 2001 ALC is coordinating the National Network Ac. S, an integral part of the means of protection available to victims of human trafficking in France

Who is this guide for?

The purpose of this guide is to describe the Victim-centered Approach (VCA) for assisting asylum seekers and refugees who are potential or recognized victims of trafficking. It is meant to be a practical guide for front line officers at police or other governmental departments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) staff who encounter potential victims through their work.

The information in this guide is mainly derived from the years of professional experience in using the victim-centered approach, in an attempt to transfer knowledge and assist in the efficacy of supporting victims of trafficking. This is not a training manual and cannot be used alone, without appropriate training for working with victims of trafficking. It is short and practical, as it is understood that time is valuable and meant to be spent for support of the victims.

Therefore, this guide is appropriate for social workers, psychologists, lawyers, front-line officers like immigration, migration, social defense officers, NGO officers, other governmental officers and police.

It should be noted that a trafficking victim can be anyone, either coming from another country or from the local community, be male or female and be exploited for labor, sexual exploitation or organ collection. This guide focuses only to women trafficking victims for sexual exploitation that are asylum seekers or refugees.

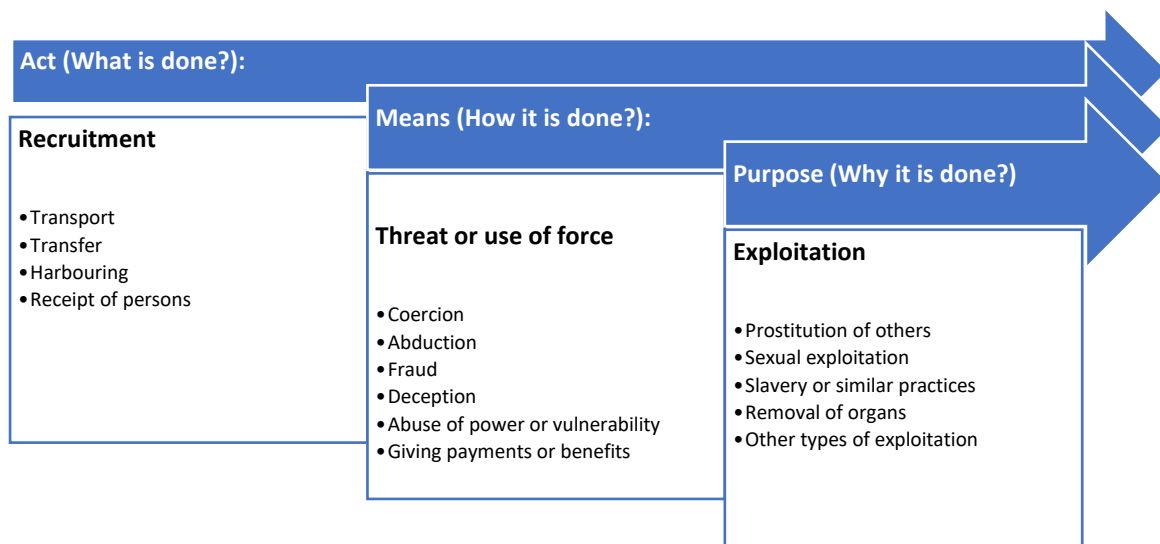
1. Who is a victim of trafficking?

1.1 What is trafficking in human beings (THB)?

According to the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 55/25, the definition of trafficking is as follows:

“trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation. Transfer, harboring or receipt of person, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;”

Therefore, trafficking in human beings is a crime and is comprised of three elements: a specific act, using certain means, for a specific purpose. Below are examples of the three elements.



While speaking of trafficking in human beings, it is very important to differentiate between smuggling as many can confuse it with THB.

Human smuggling is defined as *“the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the legal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or permanent resident”* (UNDC, 2000). Therefore, it is not the same as human trafficking, as it involves the **consent** of a person to be transferred from one place to the other and just that. To be smuggled, people will pay the smuggler large amounts of money, while once they have crossed the international borders are left on their own way. These people often pay large sums of money to be smuggled across international borders. Smuggling becomes trafficking when the element of force or coercion is introduced.

Trafficked person/Victim of trafficking – A person who is subject to the crime of trafficking in person. While the use of the term “victim” may somehow suggest person’s diminished agency, it does designate the serious crime and human rights violations that person has been subjected to – irrespective of whether a trafficker is identified, apprehended, prosecuted or convicted, and regardless of any family or other relationship between the victim and the alleged trafficker.

1.2 Types of trafficking in human beings

The most common forms of trafficking are for forced labor, sexual exploitation, begging and “other” forms. Other forms can constitute removal of organs, which is reported as a form with the smaller percentage.

Below the types of trafficking are listed along with the purpose. Important to emphasize is that other forms of trafficking may exist or are being developed that are not known yet.

Forms of Exploitation: Purpose of the Act

Sexual exploitation	Obtaining financial gain or other benefits from the prostitution of another person or through sexual violence carried out against another person, including through pornography (adults) and child sexual abuse imagery (children).
Forced Labour/ Labour Exploitation	“A work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily” (ILO Convention no. 29, 1930).
Domestic Servitude	This means to subject a person to labor exploitation or excessive working hours, or to subject them to degrading working conditions, in the domestic sphere.
Forced/Servile/Early Marriage	Servile marriage is when a trafficked person is married to someone who promises a healthy marital relationship but who then obliges the person to carry out household chores and/or to have sexual relations with them, even against their will. Forced marriage is when a party does not validly consent to a marriage, while early marriage is when a party has not yet reached the minimum legal age for marriage.
Removal of Organs, Tissue or Human Body Parts	Exploitation by removing a trafficked person’s organs, skin tissue or body parts, without their valid consent or that of their relatives.
Illegal Adoption	Exploitation of a child being transferred to another person without observing the legal formalities for an adoption process.
Criminal Activities	Exploitation of a person, forcing them to practice criminal activities, such as transporting narcotics from one place to another, petty theft, etc.
Exploitation of Begging	The exploitation of begging, whereby begging indicates various activities through which a person asks a stranger for money, on the basis of their poverty or for the benefit of religious institutions or charity (classic begging). The sale of token items such as flowers and sweets at traffic lights, the price of which is not in accordance with the value of the product, is also considered as an act of seeking alms, and offering small services such as washing car windscreens, parking cars, helping with shopping at the supermarket, circus tricks and playing musical instruments on the streets may also be considered as a form of begging (auxiliary begging activities) (Healy & Rogoz, 2012)

1.3 According to latest reports...

Global Report by the UN (2018), states that the overall number of reported trafficking victims has increased. This can mean two things: either that more people are being trafficked, or that national capacities for detecting the crime and identifying the victims have been improved. Following the UN Protocol against Trafficking in Persons, which entered into force in 2003, more than 65 countries now have institutions that systematically collect and disseminate data on trafficking cases.

Similarly, increasing trends in the numbers of convictions have also been identified. There has also been identified a variety of measures applied in different countries, such as revision or creation of relevant legislation, adoption of national action plans, strengthening of the investigation and prosecutorial procedures, classification of trafficking as a serious criminal offence and other measures which recognize, support and protect victims of trafficking. The increased effectiveness of these measures shows that the combat system against trafficking in human beings has generally been strengthened in the past years.

Detected trafficking flows mainly towards affluent countries, especially in Western and Southern Europe and in North America. Illustrative of this trend is the fact that in Western and Southern Europe, victims from 124 different nationalities were detected, while, for example in South Asia, only 7 nationalities were detected.

Moreover, the general profile of the victims differs according from region to region and according to the trafficking purposes. The majority of the victims detected in general are females, both adult women and girls, while most of the trafficked victims of sexual exploitation specifically, are, statistically speaking, also females. In contrast, more than half of the overall number of victims detected for purposes of forced labor, are men. Other trafficking purposes detected are illegal adoption of children or use of children as armed combatants, forced criminality, production of pornographic material, and organ removal. Trafficking for sexual exploitation is, however, the most detected form.

Any person who has been through recruitment, coercion and labor or sexual exploitation can be a victim of trafficking, regardless of race, gender or status.

Currently most victims detected are females as sexual exploitation is the most common form of trafficking. Particularly, according to the report (Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, 2018), 59% of the detected victims in 2016 were for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

Section sources:

Healy & Rogoz (2012). *Report for the Study on a Typology and Policy Responses to Child Begging in Europe*. Vienna: ICMPD, project funded by the European Commission).

UN General Assembly, *United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime : resolution / adopted by the General Assembly*, 8 January 2001, A/RES/55/25, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3b00f55b0.html> [accessed 16 July 2019]

UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2018* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.19.IV.2). https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2018/GLOTIP_2018_BOOK_web_small.pdf

www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_norm/@declaration/documents/publication/wcms_105023.pdf; www.unodc.org/pdf/HT_indicators_E_LOWRES.pdf.

2. Psychological profile of a victim and indicators

There is not one profile for the victim of trafficking. As mentioned above, any person can fall into the traps of traffickers. Therefore, it is difficult to identify a victim if they have not clearly stated that they were victimized. However, there are some characteristics common among the victims seen when we work with them. It is important to have these characteristics in mind as they can help in understanding the victim while they will also be helpful when creating an action plan.

2.1 Risk factors

Even though there is not a standard profile for victims of trafficking, reports show some risk factors for children and adults.

Personal vulnerabilities

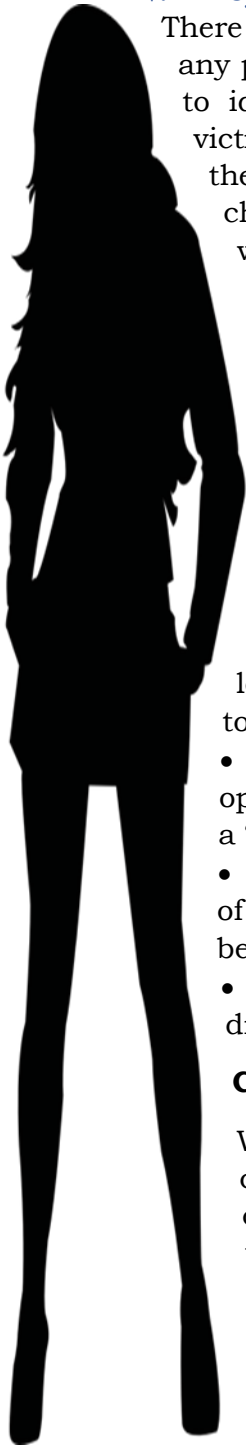
- Runaway youth: Youth who are running away from their home are found to be homeless and are in need of a new family.
- Experience of trauma or abuse: When a person has experienced trauma or abuse in their lives, she may have low self-esteem and low self-worth as a result of that, making it easier for the traffickers to manipulate and coerce them into becoming victims.
- Living in poverty: Poverty pushes people to search for new opportunities for a better life. Traffickers take advantage of this to offer a “better life” by tricking women to travel for work to other countries.
- Rejection from family or the community: Especially in the cases of LGBTI+ individuals, women will try to go to other countries where being LGBTI+ is not illegal or more acceptable.
- Psychiatric disorders: Certain psychiatric disorders and other disabilities make women vulnerable to coercion.

Country vulnerabilities

We see an increased number of victims of trafficking who come from countries of conflict or war. Examples are women trying to flee their country as their area is not safe anymore or running to flee because they are prosecuted due to their family’s (husband or father) involvement in the conflict.

Being an asylum seeker

Being an asylum seeker in a new country where the person may not speak the language makes it easier for traffickers to give false information and exploit. Furthermore, procedures of being granted international protection take time, often more than 6 months, making conditions of living very difficult. Specifically, being an asylum seeker may mean that the person cannot sustain herself financially, find a job or be integrated into the society. With these difficulties very often, women are forced to engage in activities that are dangerous in order to get money or be part of a community and as a result may be trafficked in the host country.



2.2 Psychological indicators of a victim of trafficking

When a person goes through an experience where she was captive, sexually abused and afraid for her life, there is a great effect on the physical and psychological state. The person feels humiliated, lost her dignity and sense of self. She will not be able to trust anyone as being abused and manipulated became the new “natural” to her. A percentage of the women who have been victims of trafficking will suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder or/and anxiety, depression or other disorders. To diagnose these disorders a psychological assessment is necessary from a trained psychologist or psychiatrist. However, it is essential for every front-line officer to understand what trauma means for a person as well as what are the symptoms a victim will probably have.

Trauma

Any event that threatens the person either physically or psychologically can be considered as a traumatic event. According to the Diagnostic Manual of Mental Health Disorders (APA, 2013), a traumatic event is any event where a person has lived through or was under the impression that she was living through a life threatening situation or has watched or heard that a significant other was going through it. As being a trafficking victim most of the times constitutes threats, coercion, violence and confinement, it can be considered as a continuous (depending on the amount of time the person is kept) traumatic experience.

Therefore, when a person goes through a traumatic event, almost always this comes with psychological consequences. During the experience of trauma, the person goes into a “fight or flight” mode where the brain releases stress related hormones to keep the body alert and ready to react to the danger. This results to the heart beating faster so that more blood is sent to the other parts of the body and the brain stops operating some of the tasks like short-term memory.

The days after a victim has found safety, experiences intense feelings of fear, guilt, shame, sadness or grief. Usually, these feelings subside when some days have passed, the person has time to process what happened and receive support from friends and family. In the case of the trafficking victim, the part of support may not exist at that point. A small percentage will not be able to work through this experience and develop mental health disorder(s) related to the trauma like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, alcohol and drug use as well as significant impairment of their functionality. While, not all persons will fulfill criteria for different disorders, in the case of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation, it was found that percentages of PTSD, anxiety and depression are much higher than others (Hossain, M., Zimmerman, C., Abas, M., Light, M., & Watts, C., 2010).

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

When a person develops PTSD, this means that the brain continues to operate in the “flight or fight” mode, in the same way as it was while the person was going through the traumatic experience. The part of the brain overworking is amygdala, the part responsible for managing fear and emotion, while hippocampus, the part of the brain that handles memory, is underworking. If PTSD is not treated early, the morphology of the brain changes as well, with amygdala becoming bigger and hippocampus becoming smaller. As a consequence, the victim experiences difficulties in memory, sleep, relationships and daily activities, intense fear as if the event is still happening

Behavior	Thoughts	Emotion	Physical symptoms
✓ Isolation	✓ Pessimistic thinking	✓ Fear	✓ headaches
✓ on edge	✓ Hopelessness	✓ anxiety	✓ dizziness
✓ distant	✓ suspicious thinking	✓ depressive feelings	✓ insomnia
✓ reluctant to ask for assistance	✓ worthlessness	✓ sense of insecurity	✓ loss /gain of weight
✓ low tone of voice		✓ hypervigilance	
✓ slow rhythm of speech		✓ flat emotion	
✓ incoherent speech			
✓ depressive/closed posture			
✓ empty look			
✓ dissociation			

Section Sources:

American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). Arlington, VA: Author.

Hossain, M., Zimmerman, C., Abas, M., Light, M., & Watts, C. (2010). The relationship of trauma to mental disorders among trafficked and sexually exploited girls and women. *American journal of public health, 100*(12), 2442-2449. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2009.173229

UNODC, Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2018 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.19.IV.2). https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2018/GLOTiP_2018_BOOK_web_small.pdf

3. What is a Victim-Centered Approach (VCA)?

A victim-centered approach is a methodology common among the not-profit organizations working with victims of violence in general. It is also the preferred approach from the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture (under which victims of trafficking fall) (Report, April 2017). The VCA is suggested not only for NGO officers but also for the judicial system (Gromet, D. M., Okimoto, T. G., Wenzel, M., & Darley, J. M., 2012), the welfare system and in general to everyone who works with victims.

The VCA is a holistic approach that has the victim in the center, from where her wishes, safety, empowerment and general well-being take priority, no matter on which phase the criminal case is. It is characterized by the systematic focus on the concerns and needs of the victim so that delivery of services is achieved in a compassionate, sensitive and non-judgmental way and tailored to the person's vulnerabilities. This way, VCA aims to also minimize re-traumatization throughout the judicial and rehabilitation process.

Why would there be a specific approach for victims of trafficking?

Victims are considered an especially vulnerable group because of the recent traumatic experience they have been through. As we have seen earlier in this guide, the psychological state of a victim is very fragile and needs special attention. This special attention most often entails the support from different governmental or non-governmental services and meetings with many different people. Police, prosecutors, social workers and others request information so that they will give their support as the international guidelines portray. Too often, there is a long waiting period before these services are offered. This may be due to limited resources or the overload of the authorities. When many officers are involved in a case, or in the case when there are big caseloads, the needs of a victim are often overlooked, and procedures become automatic and mechanical without paying attention to the victim's wishes or needs. As a result, even though the person will receive the minimum rights as per the law of each country, the victim feels lonely, dehumanized and dependent during this process. Moreover, as the victim does not have the chance to express what she wants, or many times does not know what the process is as she receives little information, she takes longer to overcome the psychological consequences the trafficking experience brings. An approach that pays special attention to the victim's personalized vulnerabilities is essential for the safe and smooth rehabilitation of the person.

Professionals working with victims need to be trained to work with this population and be able to work with the VCA. Each professional needs to work with and follow the person on their path to rehabilitation and empowerment. Imagine you are walking alongside the person as an empowerment coach, stepping in when necessary and encouraging the person to take matters on her own hands. You can see at the graph below that the person is in the center and other professionals are around the person as well as communicate with each other.

Communication among the professionals is imperative as it has been shown that when there is regular communication and coordination between the authorities and

NGO officers, the case was a success in terms of the criminal case as well as the psychological state and functionality of the person. The diversity of service skills that the approach brings (social resources, cultural knowledge, legal and psychological services) makes it better in assessing the needs of the victim as well as having a more holistic and critical support.

The VCA also encourages partnerships and collaboration with other NGOs, governmental services or community groups that will complement the current services of the organization, like language and activity centers, as long as they are sensitive to human trafficking and promote the same values.



The VCA is based on these important objectives:

- *Ensure safety:* safety should be the first step when a person encounters a potential victim of trafficking. You may encounter a victim at different stages of the process where you need to ensure that the person is not in danger either from the traffickers or from the living conditions. For example, a victim could still be in contact with her trafficker or may still live with him/her.
- *Victims are not asking for a favor* when are approaching for assistance, NGOs and governmental organizations have the responsibility to aid!
- *Protect confidentiality:* Confidentiality does not only relate to the danger of being found by the trafficker, but also to the respect of the person, their rights and privacy.
- *Do not discriminate/judge:* Personal beliefs, expectations or statistics may lead us to come to some conclusions that may not be valid for the person that is in front of us at that moment. As every person is different and hence, perceives and understands situations differently, a VCA practitioner should be very careful not to show judgement or discriminate.
- *Follow a person's wishes.* What is priority for the criminal case, or the service provider may not be priority for the victim. Assistance must be provided in an empowering way that respects a person's decisions.

- *“Do no harm” approach:* The “do no harm” principle is a humanitarian principle and should be followed by anyone who works in the humanitarian sector. It obliges the person and organization to prevent and lessen any negative impact from its actions on the population working for. In this case, it means that actions should be carefully done in a way that do not harm the trafficked victim.

Criminal Process necessary?

Support given to the victim should be irrespective of whether the victim will participate in the criminal justice process.

As very often the victims are afraid to go through the criminal justice, this does not mean that they have not gone through exploitation and trauma. Therefore, support is needed for the person to be able to recover and gain the strength to start a new life again.



3.1 Characteristics of a VCA practitioner

A person who practices the victim-centred approach does not only apply a method or implements an intervention but carries this approach as a part of the personality and frame of mind.

It is understandable that in different organizations there is a certain culture and environment that may or may not encourage this approach. Nonetheless, a VCA practitioner can make efforts to apply this approach in every activity involving victims of trafficking or any other population, without affecting the organization.

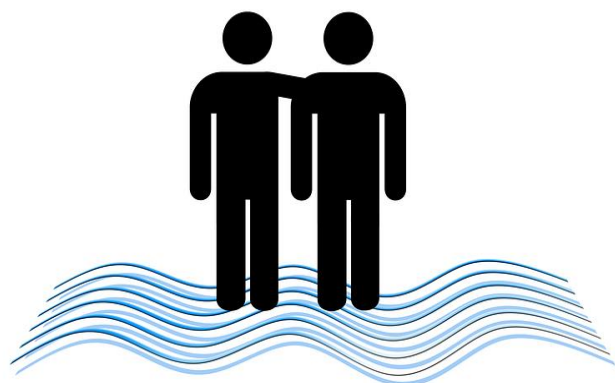
So, a VCA practitioner needs to practice:

Empathy

We have all heard about empathy many times and probably studied it during our studies. While we think we practice empathy automatically, we need to constantly check ourselves and reflect on whether we practice it with every person. Empathy is defined as recognizing emotions in others and being able to understand and put yourself in their position.

It entails:

- Being open, to listen to anything the person wants to say
- Putting your beliefs and viewpoint aside



- Validating what the other person feels
- Examining your attitude towards the other
- Listen actively

Empathy should not become *sympathy* which means feeling what the other person is feeling, because this can make the service provider vulnerable and possibly unable to help.

Active listening

Active listening involves listening with all your senses. It is an active process when a decision is taken to listen and understand what the other person is saying.

Active listening requires:

1. *Paying attention:* Looking at the person directly shows that we are giving our full attention. Note that in the population of refugees we come across a lot of different cultures, where some of them do not consider eye contact as important or respectful. Nonetheless, the officer needs to show that the attention is on them and direct eye contact should be done even for a few seconds at a time.

Also, paying full attention means that you are not distracted by other stimuli or other thoughts. Sometimes we are distracted placing our focus on the answer we will give instead of listening; this happens often to the people still practicing on their interviewing skills. To fully understand, our minds need to be completely focused. Lastly, we also listen to the body language of the person and not just the words, so make sure you pay attention to that as well.

2. *Actively showing that you are listening* by nodding occasionally and giving verbal cues like “uh-hah”. Also, to have an “open” posture is important as it invites the person to feel comfortable and talk. An “open” posture is when we have our arms apart, rested on the sides and slightly lean the body towards the person that talks.

3. *Provide feedback:* We provide feedback by summarizing what the other person said after they finish and as questions to clarify. An example would be “So let me see if I understood correctly, you said that, can you please explain again how you...”

Consider the best interest of the person

This not only entails giving the person all the information that she needs or connecting them with the relevant services but also 1. Adjusting the way you talk to them to be to their level of understanding, 2. Adjusting the setting; where will they seat for the meeting, 3. Adjusting your schedule if there are specific requirements (e.g. if a person has sleeping difficulties and sleeps more in the morning then the meeting should not be early in the morning), 4. Being consistent with the time, place you meet and to what you promise to do.

Choose an appropriate interpreter

It is important to train the interpreter if they do not follow the same philosophy. We will discuss the importance of the interpreter in the next section.

Self-care

A VCA practitioner needs to take care of his or herself to be able to maintain all the characteristics of a VCA practitioner. Taking care of ourselves involves taking care of our bodies and our minds, so that we will be able to feel alert, strong and maintain a stable psychological state.

Professionals working with traumatized individuals run a risk of burnout and vicarious traumatization.

Burnout occurs after a person feels overwhelmed by prolonged stress and demands of his/her job and it is characterized by feeling exhausted emotionally, physically and mentally.

Vicarious traumatization is a condition usually experienced by professionals in mental health and it is characterized of going through trauma symptoms from repeatedly listening to other people's trauma and their stories of traumatic events.

Some tips on how to self-care in order to avoid the above:

- Supervision; regular supervision helps prevent burnout and vicarious traumatization as a supervisor will listen to you and also notice when you are overdoing it.
- Promoting/ creating a pleasant working environment
- Recognizing and understanding when work is overwhelming
- Taking regular breaks and vacation days (as much as work permits)
- Engaging in pleasurable activities outside work
- Maintaining a healthy social network
- Practice relaxation techniques/yoga
- Exercise

3.2 Interpreters

Interpreters are an important part of our work as they are usually the third person in the room. Therefore, choosing an appropriate interpreter for each victim you meet, will play a role in the relationship and effectiveness of your work. Here is some best practice advice for choosing an interpreter:

1. Make sure the interpreter has signed a confidentiality form, bounded by law, to protect the information said.
2. Make sure the interpreter is accepted by the victim in relation to the openness she will have to talk. For example, a female interpreter is usually preferred when dealing with victims of trafficking. Also, consider whether the victim would feel comfortable having an interpreter from the same community, as the person may consider this as bridge of the confidentiality. Finally, it is not recommended to use a friend or a family member for translating what the person says as this will limit the details of the events, as they may not want them to hear it.
3. Have a meeting with the interpreter beforehand so you can discuss and agree on sitting arrangements, relevant terminology you may use and boundaries.
4. Keep in mind that interpreters may also be affected by the narratives they hear and may need your support.

5. It is preferable to have only trained and trauma – informed interpreters if this is possible.



Section

https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Torture/UNVFVT/UNVFVT_ExpertWorkshop2017.pdf

Sources:

Gromet, D. M., Okimoto, T. G., Wenzel, M., & Darley, J. M. (2012). A victim-centered approach to justice? Victim satisfaction effects on third-party punishments. *Law and Human Behavior*, 36(5), 375-389.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/h0093922>

4. First meeting

The first contact with a victim of trafficking is very important as it is critical to gain her trust and create an environment where she feels comfortable to express herself. A VCA practitioner needs to always have in mind that the victim will most probably be consumed with fear and think that every person who talks to her may want to hurt, manipulate, lie to her.

As first-line officers, who usually provide services not only to victims of trafficking, we know that the first meeting is not always for the reason of disclosing information about the trafficking case. A person may come for the first time to ask for information irrelevant to this, as they many times do not know that they can ask for help. Therefore, many times a victim of trafficking will come to the offices reluctant to talk about it and it depends on the skills and the attitude of the officer on whether the person will open up.

What do we do at the first meeting?

Initiate Conversation in private

In the case when you notice a woman sitting in the reception area waiting to speak to someone and you notice characteristics like the ones we have seen in section 5, it is very important that you initiate conversation in private. For example, you can ask the woman or girl to come to your office or another private space so you can assist her. This way, she will feel safe as she will be away from other people to bother or listen to what she has to say.



Posture, attitude, voice

Speaking in a warm, low voice makes the person feel comfortable and not threatened. Also, be aware of how your posture is so that it is not negative or “closed”. Try to show warmth with a smile.

Setting

The setting, meaning the space you will hold the meeting, plays a role in the rapport and relationship that will be developed among you and the victim. If possible, it needs to be decorated in a way to provide warmth. Some settings do not have the luxury to be decorated like the police department offices for example, but each officer can decorate the desk with something small (e.g. flowers, or candy). Moreover, the way the chairs are set can affect the openness of the person. Due to the negative feelings a victim has, especially shame, they will not want to constantly make eye contact. To aid with this you can place the chairs to slightly look away (45 degrees away from you) so that the person has the option to also look elsewhere.

Confidentiality

Victims of trafficking have the need to hear about confidentiality as they are terrified of what their traffickers will do if they find out. As we have mentioned before, victims have difficulty trusting so talking about confidentiality will help the victim trust you and the process. Therefore, talking about your organization's confidentiality policy and explaining to the person at what times you need to break confidentiality is important.

When do we break confidentiality? As front-line officers working in the social sciences, we are obligated to break the confidentiality when we have evidence that the person will harm themselves or someone else, in the case of the person being in immediate danger, and in the case of children being abused, neglected or otherwise in danger by their parents or others.

Consent

Moreover, there are occasions when we will need to talk about the case to colleagues or other authorities, which is something the victim needs to know beforehand as well. You can give a consent form at the meeting where the person gives her consent to you to share information within the organization or relevant services. Even though the person will sign the consent, you always discuss with her when sharing information. You can find an example of a consent form in the Appendix.

Also keep in mind...

- A person may not come back after the first meeting, so make sure to inform them about their rights in terms of the trafficking or in general.
- Assess how safe the person is at the current moment. Are they still living with the trafficker? Are they homeless and at risk of being re-traumatized?
- After the assessment decide whether the person is in such danger so that you need to break confidentiality and alert the authorities.
- Are there any urgent actions you need to take until your next meeting? E.g. communicate with material assistance department or other organizations.

Does she know her rights?

Is she safe right now?

Assess whether you need to break confidentiality

Assess what (urgent) actions you will take until their next meeting

5. Social History Intake

In different disciplines this can be called “personal history”, “background history” or “background information”, as each professional has her/his own guidelines on how to take information and what kind of questions to ask. In any case though, taking information about the person’s life up to the point of their trafficking experience helps with the overall management of their case as well as the understanding of their abilities to support themselves.

Important note!

Not everyone in the same organization need to take the social history from the same person as it can be tiring, frustrating and possibly cause re-traumatization. As helpful as the social history is for the case, it is more important to protect the person’s psychological state. Therefore, if you think that someone else from the same organization already took the history, you do not need to do it again. VCA approach promotes the cooperation and coordination between all professionals, so if you know that the social history was taken from another organization, you can get the person’s permission to ask for it.

How you take a social history plays a role!

A trauma-informed, victim-centered method of interviewing the victim of trafficking plays a role in many ways. First, it protects the person from being re-traumatized as the questions may very easily trigger the trauma they have been through. Second, it helps the person to be more cooperative and open to discuss as well as be honest about their story; as we have seen in many cases, fear of being punished pushes the victims of trafficking to lie. Lastly, a carefully set interviewing method keeps the level of distress of the victim low through this process as they will have to disclose painful memories.

VCA interviewing strategies

1. Attitude as we have said in previous sections has an impact on the victim. Be careful not to portray a person who is in power or behave as if you are the savior and the victim is a weak little person.
2. At the beginning, give emphasis on the fact that you may ask them to come back for clarifying questions and that they may go over the events again. This gives relief to the person, as they will think that it is OK if they forget something.
3. Start with background questions and topics that are comfortable for the individual. For example, you can start with identification questions or level of education.
4. Ask open ended questions and follow the pace of the person while telling you their story, without interrupting them unless it is for clarification questions.
5. Do NOT insist on asking questions for the chronological order of events or ask details on the traumatic event. Asking details on the traumatic event can lead to re-traumatizing the person. A trained psychologist can get the details for you if they are important for the case of the victim.

6. Observe what is difficult for the person. Keep in mind that they are still in the process of trusting you therefore many areas may difficult for them. Especially difficult could be the part of the trafficking story. If you think that they need more time for telling you this part of the story move on to another part and you can ask them back another time or another professional (a psychologist) can ask for it.
7. Be careful NOT to use judgmental comments or questions! For example, asking “*Why did you believe him?*” may seem judgmental.
8. Victims of trafficking may use this meeting as their way of releasing themselves mentally and may start going into details and speaking for a long time, increasing their distress without realizing it. In this case try to intervene by suggesting a break or to come back another day. Always suggest that after they complete the part of the story they were talking about.
9. When is it best to stop the meeting? It is better to wait until the person finishes their story, but in the cases where the story is too painful, and the person exhibits intense stress or anxiety it is better to discontinue. Moreover, you can suggest that they talk to a psychologist in the meantime.

Personal Social History – topic suggestions

✓ Identification information
✓ Address and contact information
✓ Family members in the same household
✓ Reason for assessment
✓ Referred from
✓ Contact person in case of emergency
✓ Description of the presenting problem: include the presenting difficulties that you see for the person, as well as the history (trafficking story or developmental) details
✓ Victim’s perception of the problem: Victim’s perception of what the problem is, plays a role in identifying the priorities, strengths and weaknesses of the person.
✓ Family history: include information about victim’s background in terms of relationships, siblings, significant others and important experiences
✓ Education
✓ Employment and economic status
✓ Health (medical health history)
✓ Mental health and psychological history: include if person is in immediate risk and if there was prior contact with a psychiatrist – take contact information of psychiatrist
✓ Social support system: Her social support system is an indicator of how the person adjusts as well as a variable that can be used for the benefit of the person.

✓ Developmental needs of minor(s) (if applicable)
✓ Assessment: Describe what your assessment is after taking the social history including the difficulties, strengths and weaknesses of the person.
✓ Recommendations: What actions need to be taken?
✓ Follow ups (include a table to record all actions taken)
Date: _____ Action: _____

Vulnerability assessment

Screening tools assist us in making sure that we note all the vulnerabilities a person has and prepare an effective action plan. Below you can find a short screening questionnaire that can be given before the meeting starts so it can give you an indication of the vulnerabilities.

C. Questions		
Please answer as many question as you want		
	Yes	No
• Have you ever been in danger?		
• Did anyone threaten to kill you?		
• Have you been hurt/abused/attacked?		
• Have you ever been arrested?		
• If yes, have you been abused/attacked in prison?		
• Did you witness other people or your family being hurt?		
• Did you experience any other extremely frightening event, Or something extremely frightening was done to you?		
• Do you feel safe in Cyprus?		
• Do you have a place to live?		
• Are you or any member in your family being maltreated in Cyprus?		
• Do you have health problems?		
• Do you have children living with you that have health or other problems?		
• Do you have family back home that is in danger right now?		

All information provided will be treated confidentially.

Furthermore, you can also use the vulnerability assessment tool at the link below as a guide for your social history taking:

<https://www.unhcr.org/protection/detention/57fe30b14/unhcr-idc-vulnerability-screening-tool-identifying-addressing-vulnerability.html>

6. Action Plan Referrals and communication with others about the case

After the social history finishes and all the information concerning the needs, difficulties, strengths and vulnerabilities have been taken, an action plan needs to be prepared.

Before deciding on the action plan some points need to be considered:

- Is the victim aware of their rights? Does she need to be educated on them? A person can not take part on developing a plan if she does not know her rights and responsibilities in the new country or situation. For example, she needs to know the rights she has after reporting the exploitation or the process of the criminal case.
- What does she think is priority for her? Consideration should be given to what the victim thinks is important.
- What the officer thinks is important should be communicated as a suggestion without imposing her/his opinion.

An agreement on the action plan is essential as this gives the victim a sense of responsibility and control over the situation. Moreover, giving some responsibility to the victim helps with her being motivated, to gain some control over her life and to be empowered. For example, a social worker can be the person to make some phone calls on her own. Be careful not to give the person an activity that is not able to do as this will have a negative impact and to make sure that she will come back and ask for assistance.

In the case of police investigators or asylum officials, where the person does not take any action other than wait for the procedures:

- They still need to be informed of what their rights are. Even though they have probably talked to other professionals before they come to you, this does not mean that they are clear on their rights. Additionally, due to the fact that they may be traumatized therefore their memory may be impaired at the moment, they may need repetition.
- What are the steps taken before and after their interview? Again, being clear on the procedures and steps gives them a sense of control.
- With whom you will talk to about their case. To emphasize confidentiality, you need to be clear about who you need to contact about their case and take their consent.
- Time frame of the steps to follow. Distress about what is going to happen can be controlled if they know more or less how much time the procedures take.
- How can they communicate with you if they have questions? As mentioned before, information given to them during your meeting may not be remembered or clear with the result of leaving from your office with questions.
- How will you communicate with them when you have progress on the case (phone, email, post)? Very often we hear the victims tell us that they do not

know how the officer will tell them the result of their case. This adds to their anxiety.

- What kinds of other services can they connect with? A leaflet with available services or a small chat about who they can connect with for assistance is also important so that they do not feel helpless.

7. Referrals

Many times, we need to refer the victim of trafficking to other services as many other professionals can assist in the rehabilitation process or the criminal case. While making referrals we need to always have in mind the main purpose which is the best interest of the victim. Also, we to always strive to protect the confidentiality and dignity of the person. Therefore:

- Any referrals should be discussed and agreed with the beneficiary
- A written consent is necessary
- Include minimum required information in the referral forms or emails
- When talking to another professional about a case, be careful to do it in a private place where no one else will listen

8. General Do's and Don'ts

Do

NO Harm

Advocate for the victim's rights

Be clear on what you say

Provide emergency numbers

Supervision

Protect confidentiality

Get consent for every action

Be consistent

Don't

Discriminate

Judge

Assume a power position

Maintain dual relationships

Act as a savior

See the victim as a number

Talk about cases if there is no purpose

Ask unnecessary questions

Appendix A

Consent form example

Consent to Release Personal Information

The [organization] is committed to handling Personal Data of all our beneficiaries responsibly and subject to the [organization] Privacy and Data Protection Policy and all applicable law. [organization] is the controller of the submitted data and can be contacted at Tel. [357 2205959] or [email]

- (i) “Personal Data” or “Data” means any information relating to an individual and includes any information related to the asylum claim or immigration status; biographical data (biodata) such as name, sex, marital status, date and place of a birth, country of origin, country of asylum, individual registration number, occupation, religion and ethnicity; biometric data such as a photograph, fingerprint, facial or iris image, as well as any expression of opinion about the individual, such as assessments of the status and/or specific needs.
- (ii) Personal data is collected and processed by **[organization]** only on one or more of the following legitimate bases: (a) With the consent of the beneficiaries; (b) In the vital or best interests of the beneficiaries; (c) to enable**[organization]** to carry out its mandate; (d) Beyond**[organization]** mandate, to ensure the safety and security of beneficiaries or other individuals; (e) to perform obligations owed to the beneficiaries; (f) for the purposes of safeguarding legitimate interests; (g) to form a profile about the beneficiary; (h) to investigate or settle enquiries or disputes: (i) to comply with applicable laws, court orders, other judicial process, or the requirements of any applicable regulatory authorities.
- (iii) Personal data collected by the **[organization]** may be disclosed to the **[other organization]**. Personal data shall only be disclosed or transferred to other governmental or non-governmental entities and organizations for one of the above legitimate bases and in the best interest of the beneficiary. None of the personal data collected and processed shall be transferred outside the European Economic Area.
- (iv) All beneficiaries have the right to withdraw consent at any time, without affecting the lawfulness of processing based on consent before its withdrawal.
- (v) All beneficiaries have the right of access to a copy of the information comprised in their personal data, restriction of processing, objection to processing that is likely to cause or is causing damage or distress, prevention of processing for direct marketing, objection to decisions being taken by automated means, as well as rectification, blockage, erasure or destruction of inaccurate Personal Data where considered right by the **[organization]** or Office of the Commissioner for Personal Data Protection in case of recourse to them.
- (vi) All beneficiaries have the right to claim to compensation for damages caused by a breach of the terms of the Policy and applicable laws and regulations.
- (vii) Complaints mechanism: Beneficiaries have the right to lodge a complaint with the Office of the Commissioner for Personal Data Protection [contact information] and/or lodge a complaint in accordance with the **[organization]** complaints mechanism. Individuals wishing to lodge a complaint with the **[organization]** complaints mechanism must do so in writing and can do so in any language. Complaint forms are available at the Front-Desk. Complaints can be made anonymously however **[organization]** assures that all complaints are treated in the strictest confidence. By providing contact details **[organization]** will be in a position to carry out a more thorough investigation into the complaint.

For the complete [organization] Privacy and Data Protection Policy as well as for more information, enquiries and recommendations please visit our website at [website] or contact the Front Desk at [phone number] or at [email].

Name:
Nationality:
Date of birth (dd/mm/yyyy):
ARC/File No.....

I, the above-named, hereby give permission for my Personal Data to be collected and processed by the [organization] subject to the Policy and all applicable law.

This authorization is valid until the date upon which I give written notice to the [organization].

I declare that I am able to read English and that I fully understand the entire content of this form.

I declare that the entire content of this form has been translated to me from the English language to the ----- language, which I fully understand.

Signature _____ Date ____/____/____



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GUIDE: VICTIM-CENTERED APPROACH

FOR FRONT-LINE PROFESSIONALS WORKING
WITH TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS