



• ireti •

empowering women

toolkit
for social workers
on approaches
and methodologies
to contrast human trafficking



INTRODUCTION

IRETI “Empowering Women and Strengthening Socioeconomic Integration” is an **Erasmus +** funded project that was launched in November 2017. The **partner organizations are BB&R (Spain), Ubele (UK), and AUR (Romania), coordinated by HRYO (Italy).**

The project seeks to highlight and bring together the best practices of working with human trafficking for the common purpose of combating exploitation of women, and to allow victims from human trafficking to have an access to basic services through an **online platform.**

As part of the project, we have also developed a **Booklet of good practices** and the present **Toolkit on approaches and methodologies for social workers’ daily activities,** in order to gain knowledge from the work and the local realities in London, Bucharest, Salamanca and Palermo.

Since the **Toolkit** was not meant to be an extensive research on the topic, but rather a user-friendly tool, it was designed to allow an **easy reading, and possibly inspire social workers in their daily work, promoting a victim-centered approach where their wishes, safety and well-being are considered the priority.** Thus, besides the desk research conducted by the project staff, the content of the Toolkit was greatly enriched by the contributions of the social workers and survivors attending the IRETI international training in Salamanca on September 2019. A group of 26 frontline workers, in fact, had the chance to exchange successful approaches and challenges in their daily work with victims, potential victims and survivors of human trafficking for sexual exploitation.

We have identified **four phases in the work with victims of human trafficking,** that is:

1. First contact
2. Establishment of a trusted relationship
3. Awareness raising and formal complaint
4. Empowerment, freedom and own life control.

Per each phase we present some tips and constraints related to four domains, which are **communication** (verbal/nonverbal), **setting** (safe environment), **connection to other services** (e.g. NHS, police, other), and **education, vocational training and activities proposed to the women**. As some suggestions are relevant in more than one phase, they are presented in multiple sections.

Lastly, considered that the aspect of communication emerged as the most sensitive and crucial one, thanks to the collaboration across project partners and with social workers and survivors, we have decided to include in the Toolkit a **Decalogue of good practices for communicators on the topic of victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation**.

Step #4: EMPOWERMENT, FREEDOM AND OWN LIFE CONTROL

COMMUNICATION

- In some cases women are not used to think about the **agency** they have on their own life, and dreaming is also an exercise for a **creative brainstorming on their future**.
- It is very likely that women who have been enslaved have **little or no idea of the outside world** in terms of job market, immigration law, social services, school system. Inform them and discuss such aspects.

SETTING (SAFE ENVIRONMENT)

- Build or make women join a **group of survivors**. The peer dimension is very important to overcome issues and find constructive support.
- During the meetings have a room or take with you **photos of people who have radically changed their lives**. It could be very inspirational and encouraging.
- Besides the activities and counselling with you, women in this phase are expected to get in touch with other actors like school and training centres staff, employers etc. **Check that the new environment is safe** to avoid any form of further exploitation (e.g. labour rights violations).

CONNECTIONS TO OTHER SERVICES (E.G. NHS, POLICE, OTHER)

- In order to accompany women towards a full independence and autonomy, during this last phase, social workers should carefully combine different dimensions of support **to avoid dependency**.

- In this phase, the cooperation with other services and organizations can be activated to engage the woman in **training and volunteering**.
- **Inform families and the local communities** about human trafficking and sexual exploitation, offering the possibility to host a woman at home (one of the IRETI training participants was a young woman who had the chance to host a survivor at home for five years, as a **foster family**). Considered the still huge vulnerability of the women in this phase, the organization of a foster families network is very delicate and challenging.
- Give talks in schools and training to teachers. Take any occasion to spread information on the phenomenon, promoting **awareness and a prevention approach**. **Engage survivors in such activities.**

EDUCATION, VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND ACTIVITIES FOR THE WOMEN

- Encourage **volunteering and training** based on their interests and attitude.
- Help them to **use their acquired skills** and foster the **gaining of new ones** to enter the job market, build resilience and get full life control.
- Support in writing the **CV** and accompany them to **open days and job interviews**.
- **Support individual interests and goals** without offering ready-made solutions. Some social workers remarked that unfortunately, often the opportunities offered to migrant women are very much limited (e.g. cleaning services, waitress, home assistance) without encouraging new solutions and entrepreneurial ideas.
- Some professionals have remarked the importance of **financial education**, also in relation to the expectations and requests of the families in the origin country.

- Encourage and support survivors in **developing a personal project related to awareness raising** on human trafficking and sexual exploitation. Tell them they can promote information and help other women who are experiencing similar situations.



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