

# (Mis)Use of human trafficking victims' experiences in advocacy processes



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Human trafficking represents one of the most serious forms of human rights violations in the contemporary social context. Some authors consider this phenomenon a form of modern slavery (Marburger and Pickover, 2020). Although there are various definitions of this concept used by different legal entities and authors, all of them are based on the same idea of understanding human trafficking as 'exploitation of people against their free will' (Dijck, 2005: 11). This particular form of human beings' exploitation includes activities such as 'recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, using a 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 exploitation.' (Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, Article 3 Paragraph (a)). These elements are recognized by all definitions of human trafficking including the definition of the European Commission which delineates this global problem as: 'the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or reception of persons, including the exchange or transfer of control over those persons, using the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.' (Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, Article 2, Paragraph 1).<sup>1 2</sup>

Today's global social context, permeated by globalization processes, poses new challenges in the fight against human trafficking. The increased mobility of people, goods, and capital, brought by globalization, is accompanied by the spread of transnational crime, which uses this new communication ecosystem for its expansion, including activities related to human trafficking. The development of transport and communication networks has enabled faster and more efficient crossing of victims across borders, while economic inequalities and instabilities in underdeveloped regions make individuals more vulnerable to exploitation. Human trafficking, which, among other things, includes forced labor and sexual exploitation, has become one of the most profitable forms of organized crime, often linked to legal economic sectors such as the construction industry, agriculture, and households in developed countries. In addition, globalization has allowed criminal networks to use sophisticated technologies for the recruitment and manipulation of victims via the internet and social networks. At the same time, inconsistent legal frameworks and limited international cooperation make it

<sup>1</sup> See more at: [https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon\\_o\\_potvrdivanju\\_konvencije\\_ujedinjenih\\_nacija\\_protiv\\_transnacionalnog\\_organizovanog.html](https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_potvrdivanju_konvencije_ujedinjenih_nacija_protiv_transnacionalnog_organizovanog.html)

<sup>2</sup> See more at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/HR/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32011L0036>



more difficult to effectively combat human trafficking. Although global initiatives, such as the UN Palermo Protocol and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Persons, aim to harmonize legal frameworks and improve the protection of victims, human trafficking remains a serious challenge that requires coordinated economic, political, and legal strategies at the international level.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, in today's social context, the fight against human trafficking requires collaboration at a global level - between governments, civil society organizations, and citizens. International organizations, such as the UN, the Council of Europe, and Interpol, actively work to dismantle human trafficking networks, while many countries introduce specialized programs for the assistance and reintegration of victims into society, and Serbia is no exception. In recent years, the fight against human trafficking also includes the trend of actively involving people with lived human trafficking experiences (survivor-led approach) in various anti-trafficking activities.<sup>5 6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See more at: [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/palermo-protocol\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/palermo-protocol_en)

<sup>4</sup> See more at: <https://rm.coe.int/168064899d%20srp%20i%20https://rm.coe.int/168008371d%20%20eng>

<sup>5</sup> At this point in the report, we intentionally use the term *persons with lived experience* instead of *survivor*. The reasons behind this choice will be discussed in more detail in the following sections of the report (author's note).

<sup>6</sup> Note: Since this term cannot be accurately translated into Serbian and can only be described, the English term survivor-led approach is used throughout the Serbian version of the text as well, in order to avoid confusion for the reader.

## **Survivor-led Approach in the Fight against Human Trafficking: Strategic Framework and Terminological Controversies**

*The survivor-led approach in the fight against human trafficking is based on the principle of participatory inclusion of survivors in shaping and implementing strategies to combat human trafficking. This model recognizes survivors not only as beneficiaries of assistance but also as key actors in policy-making, support programs, and initiatives for the prevention of human trafficking. According to some research, the inclusion of survivors contributes to more effective recognition of victims' needs, improvement of access to services, and increased efficiency of rehabilitation programs (Brunovskis & Surtees, 2019). From this arises the conclusion that victims' experiences enable the development of more sensitive and sustainable approaches that better meet the challenges faced by victims during recovery and reintegration. Therefore, this approach focuses on survivors recognized as: 'individuals who have had the experience of human trafficking, but have managed to process it and empower themselves enough to start their organizations or initiatives, or to engage in the work of existing organizations or government bodies active in the fight against human trafficking' (Bhagat, 2023).*

This self-empowerment of survivors through taking leadership in activities to combat human trafficking can include education, mentoring, and professional development, thereby promoting their long-term socioeconomic stability. According to research by Nichols and Heil (2015), the survivor-led approach reduces stigmatization and contributes to the development of policies based on the real experiences of victims. In their opinion, such models not only build trust in institutions and organizations providing support, but also strengthen community resilience in preventing human trafficking. Following these insights, many organizations dealing with human trafficking have begun to integrate survivors into various activities to combat trafficking, adopting the idea that these integration practices are not just an ethical imperative but also a strategic approach towards long-term and sustainable solutions in countering human trafficking.

Various strategic documents and reports by organizations dealing with human trafficking in the Republic of Serbia outline several key arguments in favor of adopting and further developing this approach in anti- trafficking efforts.

**Firstly**, most of the existing analyses of this approach emphasize that the active inclusion of survivors **contributes to a better understanding of the problem of human trafficking**. The reason for this is the belief that we still do not have enough information about the phenomenon itself, and that for a better understanding of how the network of traffickers functions, methods of recruitment and exploitation of victims, it is necessary to have insight into the lived experience 'from within'. Thus, individuals who have survived human trafficking possess unique expertise when it comes to this issue, which can be utilized to develop more effective measures for the prevention and protection of victims. (Guidance on establishing and maintaining National Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Councils (NSTACs), 2024: 14; United States Advisory Council on Human Trafficking, Annual report 2022; Hainzl, 2022)

**Secondly**, in this way **further traumatization and manipulation of human trafficking victims can be prevented**, not only by traffickers themselves but also by non-governmental organizations and institutions, whose services are often inadequate and misaligned with the actual needs of victims, which are frequently exploited solely to obtain donor funds, of which little reaches the actual victims. It can be said that survivor-led initiatives attempt to restructure the existing approach to the problem, demanding a 'different distribution of power within anti-trafficking initiatives. It's about who has access to privileged spaces, resources, and the shaping of narratives about human trafficking. It's actually a story about who is on top'. (Bhagat, 2023; Hainzl, 2022)

**Thirdly**, this approach offers the possibility of **further empowering individuals who have survived human trafficking**, both economically and socially, as well as in overcoming trauma. To date, the dominant role of victims in activities to combat human trafficking has been reduced either to the role of passive recipients who receive various forms of assistance (with minimal or no influence on their creation); or to the role of those who are somehow compelled to share and recount their traumatic experience publicly, all in order to raise awareness about the problem of human trafficking. It is important to note that this form of prevention often insisted on the model of an 'ideal victim', who fell into the network of human trafficking from 'naivety', and not from an attempt to escape from poverty and violence. (Quirk, 2023) In this sense, survivor-led initiatives open up a new possibility for survivors, to use their experiences to provide suggestions and advice for improving measures in the fight against human trafficking, not just through exposing themselves to potential further victimization, re-traumatization, which returns them to a position of helpless victim. (Quirk, 2023)

All these documents and arguments emphasizing the advantages of the survivor-led approach operate with two key terms – **victim** and **survivor**. The term victim refers to a person who is in, or has just emerged from, a situation of acute violence and exploitation, as a consequence of human trafficking. The term survivor denotes those individuals who have gone through the experience of human trafficking, but have managed to process it over time and with support from various actors, and to move on with their life (United States Advisory Council on Human Trafficking, Annual report 2022: 9). Additionally, individuals who have survived can also be recognized as:<sup>7</sup>

'professional innovators in the field of combating human trafficking. They are essential for establishing change in the efficiency of combating human trafficking, thanks to their experience and professional expertise.' (Ibid, 2022: 8)

<sup>7</sup> Note: In the context of legal proceedings in Serbia (investigative, criminal, and civil), individuals affected by human trafficking are often referred to as *witnesses* or *injured parties* (*oštećeni/oštećena*), rather than as *victims*.

**There are at least two operational problems regarding this dichotomy. The first is related to assessing the moment when a victim becomes a survivor, and the second to the absence of information about who should and on what competencies make such an assessment.<sup>8</sup>**

Survivors can contribute to anti-trafficking efforts in two ways, which are recognized in the analyzed documents as **participation** and **inclusion**. Engagement through survivors' *participation* implies predominantly their advisory role (through comments, suggestions, etc. on already developed measures and activities). In contrast, engagement through *inclusion* implies active involvement of survivors in designing measures, laws, and activities related to human trafficking (Hainzl, 2022: 19). For such a form of cooperation to be possible, it is necessary to develop a sense of trust between survivors and other actors, and to avoid even the slightest possibility of their re-traumatization and feeling of being exploited (Ibid).

Some civil society organizations working on human trafficking issues already actively include survivors and victims in their work. According to most of them, they rely on individuals who have survived human trafficking and used the services of these organizations. Survivors were mainly involved in activities related to: evaluating these systems for their improvement, prevention and education about the problem of human trafficking, project development, and monitoring activities (Ibid, 2022:21).

Unfortunately, the available material, including strategic documents and reports from organizations working on human trafficking in the Republic of Serbia and globally, lacks detailed guidance on how to operationalize the *survivor-led* approach in practice. Thus, for example, the organization Footprint to Freedom states the following prerequisites as key to successfully including survivors in the work of organizations that carry out activities against human trafficking:<sup>9</sup>

- *Flexibility in work* - this implies the awareness that the expertise of individuals who have survived human trafficking is different from that of those without such experience, and that individuals with lived human trafficking experience may have a different work dynamic and needs, which requires the possibility of working with flexible working hours;
- Opening opportunities for *additional education and retraining* - it is important to offer support and opportunities for further education and retraining to individuals who have survived human trafficking. Many individuals who have survived human trafficking lack formal education that could make them competitive in the labor market;
- *Financial support* - Every engagement of individuals with lived human trafficking experience must be paid, as well as the engagement of any other person. Financial support can only have a positive impact on those who have survived human trafficking, but it is important to establish clear expectations, which are by their capabilities;

<sup>8</sup> Despite the fact that ODIHR, in its publications, recommends that state institutions include survivors in national anti-trafficking advisory bodies, specifically those who experienced trafficking more than five years ago, thereby implying that this timeframe is sufficient to consider someone a survivor, the document does not provide arguments to support the validity of this reasoning (see Guidance on establishing and maintaining National Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Councils (NSTACs), 2024).

<sup>9</sup> Footprint to Freedom, „Checklist for Survivor Inclusion“, available at: <https://www.footprinttofreedom.org/en/about-us/resources/>

- *Valuing the diversity of experiences of individuals who have survived human trafficking* - it is important to be aware that one survivor does not represent all possible experiences of those who have survived human trafficking, and therefore it is necessary to ensure the presence of individuals with different experiences and identities who have survived human trafficking.

It is important to emphasize that the active inclusion of those who have survived human trafficking can be applied by state institutions. ODIHR in this regard, suggests that member states, at the national level, form advisory bodies composed of individuals with lived human trafficking experience. These bodies should have an advisory role in undertaking activities towards strengthening measures against human trafficking within specific national states (2024:9). In this regard, we highlight a few key recommendations:<sup>10</sup>

- Survivors who are included in the work of this body must have at least 5 years of post-trafficking experience, i.e., it must be ensured that their trauma experience has been processed and overcome.
- In this regard, it is important to establish working rules that will ensure that their re-traumatization is not triggered in any way, among which the most important can be identified as anonymity and data protection, sensitivity to survived trauma, not insisting on recounting lived experience, and safety from trafficking networks (Ibid, 23)
- Include the diversity of experiences and identities of those who have survived human trafficking, noting that work is only possible with adults (Ibid, 15)
- Ensure that survivors who are active in the advisory body receive financial compensation for their work, and security through stable employment contracts (Ibid, 16). Also, the work of this body must be recognized in reference laws and strategies, in order to ensure its stability and continuity of existence (Ibid, 17).
- Survivors who are involved in the work of this body do not need to have official victim of human trafficking status, especially in those countries where this status is obtained only at the end of the judicial process. Also, potential collaborators who are registered as perpetrators of criminal acts, which are a result of the exploitation and violence they were subjected to, should not be dismissed (Ibid, 22)

Interestingly, all analyzed documents consistently accept the terminological distinction between *victim* and *survivor*, which they interpret as a key opposition for understanding the capacity of an individual with a survivor experience to participate and/or integrate into human trafficking prevention activities. On the contrary, victimological literature indicates a significantly more complex process that a victim should go through on the path to overcoming trauma and potential integration. For example, Green and Pemberton (2018) in their study “The impact of crime: Victimisation, harm and resilience” where they consider the impact that a criminal act has on the individual who was exposed to it conclude that the strength of that impact directly depends on the

<sup>10</sup> The International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council (ISTAC) includes 21 individuals who have survived human trafficking, with the aim of improving anti-trafficking efforts in the OSCE region. ISTAC is expected to be involved in the development and implementation of various programs and policies related to combating human trafficking and protecting victims, as well as in educational activities, network building, and more (Hainzl, 2022: 38). See more at: <https://www.osce.org/odihr/istac>



balance between the severity of the injury and the level of resilience of the individual. In doing so, resilience is not only viewed as an inner resource that helps the individual to cope with harm (material, physical and/or psychological) but also as a kind of agency that enables them to take actions that help them go through the entire experience with as few consequences as possible, insisting that victims should not be treated as passive, subordinated, and powerless. Mangelsdorf and Eid in their text “What makes a thriver? Unifying the concepts of posttraumatic and postecstatic growth” also note that “Some people thrive after the worst and the best life experiences, while others remain the same” (Mangelsdorf and Eid, 2015: 1). Following this insight, they construct three phases of coping with victimization – victim, survivor, and the one who has survived and thrived. In their work, they pay particular attention to the difference between the survivor phase, which they define as “a person who has gone through hardships or disaster” and the one who has survived and thrived, whom they define as “someone who not only went through an exceptionally positive or threatening life experience but has shown growth thanks to that experience.” (Mangelsdorf and Eid, 2015: 1).

Following this research, Nikolic-Ristanovic (2019) in her book *From victim to winner: victimology as theory, practice, and activism* offers a slightly different translation of these terms:

“... in the absence of sufficiently precise terminology in Serbian, I suggest using three terms that reflect three levels of confronting victimization: victim (a person who has suffered victimization regardless of whether they survived or not), survivor (a person who has survived victimization or is trying to find a way out of it, and who is confronting its consequences) and winner (an empowered person who has successfully recovered after actively confronting the consequences of victimization, which may include personal growth and development).” (Nikolic-Ristanovic, 2019: 96)

In her text *From Victim to Survivor to Overcomer* Sarah Ben-David draws attention to the absent interest in professional literature in the concept of self-identity or self-definition of victimization, on which all exposed typologies largely rely. In her text, she offers a model of four stages of overcoming victimization and with them associated four identity positions to experienced trauma – victim, survivor, the one who has survived and thrives, and the one who has overcome obstacles (Ben-David, 2020: 21). While the first three stages victim/survivor/the one who has survived and thrives denote different stages on the path to overcoming trauma, the fourth phase represents complete recovery from it.

## Representation of the *survivor-led* approach within the anti-trafficking network

Considering the lack of information on practices of involving people with lived experience of human trafficking in anti-trafficking activities, we sent a request to more than 100 civil society organizations that are active in combating human trafficking, to fill out a short online questionnaire (see Appendix 1). Most organizations are active globally and in Europe, through membership in the GAATW and La Strada International networks. On the regional and national level, numerous organizations providing support to people with experience of human trafficking and other forms of violence were contacted. This request was responded to by 21 organizations. The questionnaire covered questions not only on practical experiences of applying a *survivor-led* approach but also on the general attitudes of organizations when it comes to the challenges and advantages of implementing this approach in practice.

The organizations that participated in this research offer different types of services to victims of human trafficking. The five most represented services that these organizations offer (see table 1) also testify to the most urgent needs that this extremely vulnerable population (people who have survived human trafficking) has.

**Table 1.** - The most common services organizations provide to victims of human trafficking (multiple responses, 5 most represented answers)

Most represented services	Number of organizations	%
Legal assistance	14	66,7
Social support	13	61,9
Educational programs, trainings, and workshops	12	57,1
Assistance in job seeking	11	52,4
Temporary shelter services	10	47,6

Source: *ASTRA Research*

However, when it comes to assessing which are the most effective types of assistance for empowering victims of human trafficking, the hierarchy of the most effective services looks different (see table 2).

**Table 2.** - Most effective services for empowering victims of human trafficking  
(multiple answers, 5 most prevalent answers)

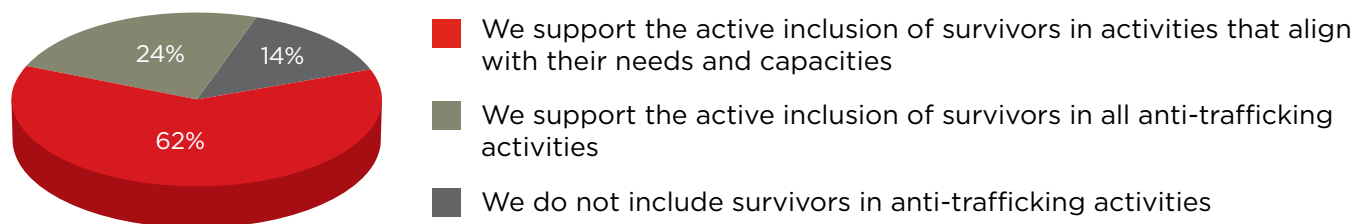
Most effective services	Number of organizations	%
Providing ongoing psychological support	14	66,7
Strengthening educational and work competencies	12	57,1
Strengthening work skills	12	57,1
Continuous financial support	10	47,6
Providing health services	8	38,1

Source: *ASTRA Research*

The majority of surveyed organizations (85.7%) support the active involvement of persons with lived experience of human trafficking in their organizations' activities. However, only slightly less than a quarter of the total number of surveyed organizations (23.8%) support the inclusion of survivors in all types of activities in combating human trafficking. The largest number of organizations (61.9%) support the inclusion of survivors exclusively in those activities that correspond to the current needs and capacities of specific individuals with lived experience of human trafficking. 14.3% of surveyed organizations do not include individuals with lived experience of human trafficking in their activities (see chart 1).<sup>11</sup>

**Chart 1.** - Organization's attitude towards the active inclusion of trafficking victims in anti-trafficking activities

### Organization's Position on the Survivor-Led Approach



Source: *ASTRA Research*

How surveyed organizations include people with lived experience of human trafficking in their work are very different. Some organizations use mediators, who are survivors themselves, to more easily establish communication with human trafficking victims. Some organizations include survivors in the work on articulating recommendations and strategic documents. What is common to all organizations that support the inclusion of survivors in their work is the attitude that this inclusion must be meaningful, precisely planned, structured, and paid. For many organizations, including individuals with lived experience is necessary because it opens a new perspective on the problem of human trafficking:

<sup>11</sup> Note: Organizations working with children do not have experience in actively involving survivors.

“The inclusion of survivors is necessary to gain an ‘inside’ perspective of the problem, but it must be kept in mind that each experience is unique and cannot be generalized. Therefore, it is necessary to include individuals with different trafficking experiences.”

However, some organizations do not support the inclusion of individuals with lived experience of human trafficking in their organizations’ activities. The reasons for this attitude are varied:

“Survivors are experts on their own lives, stories, experiences, and needs, but that does not make them experts on human trafficking, i.e., on the lives, needs, and experiences of all survivors. Therefore, it is necessary to support them in meeting and communicating with other survivors, listening to their stories, and building a common understanding of each other’s needs and experiences.”

“Not all victims, i.e., survivors, want to be involved in these activities. Nor should they, because the path to recovery is not the same for everyone. Also, victims need time to recover from the trauma, so their active involvement inevitably causes re-traumatization.”

“Typically, individuals who are victims of human trafficking do not have the capacity to participate in activities. We try to learn from their experiences and translate them into the language of policies and legislation. Therefore, their participation is often indirect.”

“Most of the women victims of human trafficking that we have met do not want to participate in such activities because they really want to forget the past, feel safe, and move forward.”

Among the 18 organizations that involve individuals with lived experience of human trafficking in their activities, five adopted these practices before the year 2000. Four organizations began including survivors in their activities between 2016 and 2020, while the remaining nine organizations implemented these practices more recently, after 2020.

Most organizations recognize various challenges in involving individuals with lived experience in their organizations’ activities. The largest number of surveyed organizations (61.9%) considers that the main obstacle to the inclusion of survivors is the insufficient development of the organizations’ capacities. The second most common challenge recognized by surveyed organizations is the disinterest of survivors to participate in certain activities (42.9%), followed by the unsuitability of the organization’s structure for including survivors (28.6%) and insufficient capacities of survivors to engage in the work of organizations (23.8%) (see table 3).



**Table 3.** - Key challenges in including survivors in activities in combating human trafficking (multiple answers, first 4 answers)

Key challenges	Number of organizations	%
Insufficient development of the organization's capacity to include survivors	13	61,9
Disinterest of survivors to get involved in activities to combat human trafficking	9	42,9
The structure of the organization and the way it operates are not adapted to include survivors	6	28,6
People who survived human trafficking do not have enough capacity to engage in the work of the organization	5	23,8

Source: *ASTRA Research*

Therefore, the key challenges identified by the surveyed organizations relate, on one hand, to the organizations themselves – their capacities and organizational structure – and on the other hand, to the survivors. Some organizations state that it is a problem to secure financial resources for the inclusion of people with lived experience of human trafficking, as donor funds are mostly conditioned by the formal education of the employed, which many victims do not have (especially when it comes to financial resources that these organizations receive from their countries). Also, the working capacities of the survivors are often not sufficient, and this is realized halfway through some activity, so it is often necessary to engage more people for one position to finish the job, which requires additional resources. Many organizations do not have the time or capacity to develop careful and detailed programs for the inclusion of survivors. It is not easy for many organizations to build a relationship of equality and trust with the survivors, avoiding perpetuating the dynamics of power and dependency. The psychological and physical traumas that survivors have experienced are not easy to overcome, and any contact, even if indirect, with topics related to human trafficking can cause stress or awaken unpleasant memories. For this reason, many survivors avoid situations that could lead them into similar states by defending themselves with a “lack of interest”. Most survivors want to: “build a ‘normal’ life far from the lived experience”.

A particularly complex challenge in working with people with lived experience of human trafficking is the *lack of trust*. At the same time, *unrealistic expectations* – sometimes unfounded – not only toward traffickers but also towards institutions and organizations can further complicate the process. Therefore, according to this organization, it is necessary to apply a *victim-centered* approach when working with individuals who have survived human trafficking.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Victim-centered* approach involves providing comprehensive services to individuals who have survived human trafficking, including adequate access to justice, shelter, medical care, legal assistance, psychosocial counseling, culturally sensitive support, native language assistance, and reintegration support. Additionally, this approach must align with international standards, incorporating principles such as non-punishment, witness protection, reflection periods, compensation, and equal rights. The primary responsibility for developing and implementing this approach lies with the state and its institutions responsible for combating human trafficking. However, it is essential to involve all professionals with relevant expertise and experience in both the development and implementation of this approach. See more at: **OSCE/ ODIHR (2024). Guidance on establishing and maintaining National Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Councils (NSTACs).**

“At the collective level, survivors struggle to build common power because those who have survived human trafficking were victims of deception, which can cause problems with trust and communication, making it difficult to build a power dynamic within the group. Non-governmental organizations may also face difficulties due to the diversity of opinions among those who have survived human trafficking, which can affect reaching a consensus or advocacy processes.”

“One victim once met with a high-ranking politician to tell her story. On this occasion, it was clearly communicated to her that this would not influence her asylum case in any way. Still, she was very disappointed that the politician did not help her in any way, after talking to him for more than an hour.”

However, many organizations recognize different positive effects of applying a *survivor-led* approach, specifically highlighting the introduction of a new perspective in understanding the issue of human trafficking, improvement of advocacy strategies, and enhancement of services and support for victims of human trafficking (see table 4).<sup>13</sup>

**Table 4.** - Positive effects of applying a survivor-led approach  
(up to 3 answers, 3 most common responses)

Positive effects	Number of organizations	%
Insight into different perspectives when it comes to human trafficking	14	77,8
Improved advocacy strategies	13	72,2
Enhancement of services and support for trafficking victims	12	66,7

Source: *ASTRA Research*

Given that the sustainability of most programs run by the surveyed organizations depends on donor support, several of their recommendations are directed toward donors.

“Overcoming the trauma caused by human trafficking is a long-term process. It takes time for a victim to overcome trauma and build trust. Do not be impatient.”

“It is very important to ensure stable and long-term funding for programs aimed at victims of human trafficking.”

“There is *no one-size-fits-all*, so we must bear in mind that there are different experiences of those who have survived human trafficking that need to be included. Be open.”

“Do not insist on retelling experiences.”

<sup>13</sup> „Advocacy efforts are significantly strengthened when they include the voices of those directly affected by human trafficking.“

“Increase funding for victim recovery services of human trafficking, because without this the whole story is meaningless.”

“Please understand that this requires greater investment in the short term, including the development of training programs and professional staff. However, in the long term, this will enable better reintegration of affected persons, higher quality of care, and more efficient functioning of organizations providing support. In the long term and in a broader sense, this will save money for society, but these savings will not be directly reflected in the financial statement of the organization you support. This commitment should stem from the belief that this is the best way to ensure quality at all levels, and not from the need to reduce costs.”

“Think more in terms of ‘what would benefit the affected persons,’ not ‘what would benefit our organization!’”

“It is clear that the idea and practice of actively involving persons who have survived human trafficking is becoming increasingly entrenched and topical in the field of anti-trafficking. However, it is important to emphasize several challenges that this approach faces, for which an adequate response still seems to be lacking. One of the problems, mentioned also in the documents above, is that **there is no universal experience of being a victim of human trafficking**, or of survivors. Individual experiences of persons with lived experience of human trafficking are extremely diverse. In addition, it is important to emphasize that there are persons with lived experience of trafficking who do not perceive themselves as victims, nor as traumatized persons (Brunovskis and Surtees, 2010:2). Another problem is that most victims **do not want any cooperation with institutions or organizations**, and do not want any contact with them after receiving primary help and support (Ibid, 26). Finally, it is important to consider that most persons who have survived human trafficking have also had other experiences of violence (in the family, most often), serious health problems (addictions, mental difficulties, etc.) so that **the recovery process involves much more than dealing with the experience related to human trafficking**.”

“However, the problem we want to emphasize in this analysis, which is already visible in the literature review itself, is **the absent operationalization** of the proposed recommendations and standards (ODIHR, 2024) when it comes to the active involvement of persons with lived experience of human trafficking in anti-trafficking activities. The question is, what are the opportunities for these recommendations to be implemented in the real social, economic, and political context, with the capacities of real-existing organizations on the ground? At the same time, it should not be lost sight of the fact that human trafficking is not a problem limited to individual experiences, but a problem that is connected with (global and local) structural social inequalities. Therefore, the possibility of developing and applying this approach is viewed in a real social context, or the context of the society of the Republic of Serbia.”

## Human trafficking in the Republic of Serbia

Human trafficking has been recognized as an issue in Serbia since the 1980s and remains present today. Over time, there have been notable changes in the way human trafficking, particularly involving women, has operated: from being a destination country for trafficking victims during socialism, Serbia became primarily a country of origin and transit during the wars and economic destruction of the nineties (ASTRA, Informational leaflet on human trafficking, 2023). However, one thing has remained unchanged: poverty, unemployment, and despair are the main reasons why women, girls, and increasingly men, respond to various job advertisements, and end up in the network of human traffickers (Ibid). Today, the majority of trafficking victims are still women and girls, most often citizens of the Republic of Serbia. However, it is important to emphasize that men are increasingly exposed to labor exploitation. Trafficking victims also include children, often sold by their parents, as well as persons with intellectual disabilities (Ibid, 2023:13).

The institutional response to the problem of human trafficking occurred (only) in the two thousands. Since 2012, at the national level, the **Center for the Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking**, which primarily provides assistance and support to trafficking victims, and coordinates the cooperation of state institutions in this field, has been operating. Since 2017, the **Office for Coordination of Activities against Human Trafficking** has been operating within the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Serbia. The Office's activities include implementing laws and measures against human trafficking, coordinating the work of various institutions, drafting legal solutions, providing professional assistance, collecting relevant data, and processing it, etc. Also, the **National Anti-Trafficking Council**, which represents an advisory expert body coordinating all activities in the field of domestic legislation, implementation of strategies and action plans, and international cooperation in the fight against human trafficking, has been formed within the Government of the Republic of Serbia. Reporting on the fight against human trafficking is one of the activities of the **Protector of Citizens** (ASTRA, Informational leaflet on human trafficking, 2023).

When it comes to legal solutions, any form of human trafficking and forced labor is prohibited by Article 25 of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia. The Criminal Code of the RS (Article 388) also sanctions human trafficking, especially of minors. Also, the Law on Social Protection obliges to provide assistance and support to victims of trafficking, but also to potential victims of trafficking (Article 41). Thus, *the existing legal framework in the Republic of Serbia provides a solid basis for addressing this issue.*

However, the results achieved in addressing this issue are still not visible. The local non-governmental **organization ASTRA** has been working since 2002 on the protection and assistance of trafficking victims, prevention of this problem, and advocating for legal solutions and measures, states in its report for the year 2023 that *the Government*



*of Serbia does not fully meet the minimum standards for eliminating trafficking but is making significant efforts in this direction.* (Trafficking in Persons Report: Serbia, 2023) The number of penalties imposed on traffickers is lower, and there's the presence of victim penalization who do not have official victim status; financial allocations for the functioning of the Center for the Protection of the Victims of Trafficking are insufficient; there is a lack of uniform relevant data on this problem.

*“The complicity of officials in the crimes of human trafficking is still very concerning, and the authorities have shown tolerance towards crimes of human trafficking and a lack of action in several cases. The state still does not fully protect the victims, nor does it fully investigate credible allegations that around 500 Vietnamese workers were subjected to forced labor in a factory owned by the People’s Republic of China (PRC). As a result, Serbia remained in Tier 2 on the Watch List for the second consecutive year.”*<sup>14</sup> (Ibid, 2023)

## **Victims of Human Trafficking in Serbia: Who Are They?**

In an attempt to answer this question more precisely, the main difficulty is the lack of harmonized and relevant data on victims of trafficking. Even though this is one of the basic and most important activities of institutions, it seems that each body – governmental or non-governmental organization – has its own record of trafficking victims. Therefore, it is difficult to track how human trafficking is organized and changes in the field, and to formulate unified and effective responses to this problem.

According to the data from the organization ASTRA, the majority of trafficking victims are citizens of Serbia, which clearly indicates that human trafficking in Serbia has an internal, not only international character. Also, since 2004, there has been a higher number of children - in 2019, 36% of the total number of identified victims were children. Despite this, in Serbia, there is still no specialized shelter for child victims of human trafficking. (ASTRA, Informational leaflet on human trafficking, 2023).

The gender dimension of the human trafficking problem is very pronounced, meaning that the victims are mostly women and girls, who are subjected to sexual exploitation. However, there is an increasing number of men who are used for forced labor in construction or agriculture (see. Babović, Obradović, Stević, 2022). Also, due to economic migrations, workers from abroad are increasingly present, whose status and labor rights are often unprotected, thus finding themselves in a position of potential victims of trafficking (ASTRA, Informational leaflet on human trafficking, 2023).

Data from the Center for the Protection of Victims of Trafficking, relating to the year 2023, also indicate the gender dimension of the problem: as much as 72% of identified victims are women, but also children (Statistical report of the Center for the Protection of Victims of Trafficking, 2023: 11). However, it is pointed out that the most common form of exploitation is forced begging, followed by labor exploitation, sexual exploitation,

<sup>14</sup> Available at: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-trafficking-in-persons-report/serbia/>

forced marriage, and forced criminal activities. (Ibid, 2023:9) Exploiters are most often people whom the victim knew – parents, partners, relatives, friends, etc. (Ibid, 2023:15). Also, most often it is about individuals coming from lower socio-economic strata, without steady income, property, and most often just with primary education. The majority of adult identified victims did not have a family, nor were they married; usually, they come from “dysfunctional” families, which makes them *particularly vulnerable because they are socially isolated and do not have community support*. (Ibid, 2023:20). Also, the Center in its records also notes two minor girls who already had children at the time of exploitation (Ibid, 2023:21).

That they are individuals from dysfunctional families, younger women, in severely poor socio-economic conditions, who are most often victims of trafficking, is shown by the data from other local NGOs. Also, among most victims, there is already present exposure to family violence, or inadequate care by parents. Also, most are in very poor psycho-physical health condition, among whom are also addicts to narcotics and alcohol. When it comes to the educational profile, most often it is about individuals with completed primary, and less often secondary school. Taking all this into account, it can be concluded that poverty is one of the key victimization factors (Ibid, 2023:20).

Unemployment, along with the lack of social and economic support, pushes these individuals into the hands of traffickers. The main “lure” in this sense are precisely job offers for work abroad. Given that there are no longer structural mechanisms that would provide every citizen in that position with a minimum of security, these offers appear as the only way out of a difficult life situation. In this case, employment abroad is accepted without checking the offer itself: trust is placed in the word of the intermediary, or intermediaries, who are often individuals the victim already knows from before (Babović, Obradović, Stević, 2022: 49).

It is important to note that a significant number of victims were subjected to forced labor and exploitation within Serbia. Some of the problems in this regard include non-payment of wages, work in inhumane and unsafe conditions, without any contracts or labor rights. Also, this problem is much more common among members of the Roma population compared to the general population, which leads to the conclusion that human trafficking, in addition to its gender dimension, also has a pronounced racial, or national dimension. (Ibid, 2022: 57).

## Support for victims of human trafficking in Serbia

As already mentioned, since 2012, the care of victims of trafficking has been taken over also by a state institution, namely the Center for the Protection of Victims of Trafficking, which is fully funded by the state. Support from the Center primarily depends on whether the person is identified as a victim of trafficking, based on criteria and by the law. Further, the Center assesses the needs of the victim, and by these assessments, they are referred to institutions or organizations that can provide the necessary support (see. ASTRA, Brochure on services for persons at risk and victims of trafficking, 2023; ASTRA, Informational leaflet on human trafficking: review of the situation and practices, 2023:10). In addition, the Center also manages a Shelter for victims of trafficking, where victims are provided initial medical, legal help, assistance in re-establishing contacts with the environment and family, as well as support in job searching. However, this institution only accepts persons of female gender over 16 years old and their children (ASTRA, Brochure on services for persons at risk and victims of trafficking, 2023:13). The Center for the Protection of Victims of Trafficking is also involved in providing support to victims of trafficking, through the development of individual protection and support plans for victims of trafficking. The plans cover a shorter period (3 or 6 months), and are aligned with the current needs and capabilities of the person. Also, the person for whom the plan is intended actively participates in the development of the protection and support plan.<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, a person who has survived human trafficking is, at least on paper, actively involved in this process of recovering from trauma and gaining control over their life. They can also count on the help of a “trusted person” of their own choosing, and they have the right to various types of financial assistance, which, however, are conditioned on various criteria (e.g., that the person is unemployed, has no assets, is actively seeking a job, has a certain type of disability, is unable to work, or is a single parent, etc.) (ASTRA, Brochure on services for persons at risk and victims of human trafficking, 2023:30; see Galonja and Jovanović, 2011)

In addition to these two governmental institutions, care for the victims is also provided by non-governmental organizations, ASTRA and Atina, which are located in Belgrade and whose work is entirely dependent on donor funds. The capacity of these organizations is insufficient to meet all the needs in this field, with the remark that there is still no special shelter nor support programs for child victims of trafficking, although they *make up to 40% of identified victims annually* (ASTRA, Information sheet on human trafficking: overview of situation and practices, 2023:10).

When it comes to the support provided by ASTRA, it includes direct assistance to victims of human trafficking, i.e., psycho-social, legal counseling; assistance in achieving civil, social, and economic rights; medical help; assistance through institutional procedures and processes; as well as help in social reintegration, namely in finding employment, continuing education (service brochure). Regarding the Atina organization, it also

<sup>15</sup> Interview with a representative of the Center for the Protection of Trafficking Victims, November 2024.

offers temporary housing for victims of human trafficking, in which individuals are offered accommodation and food, psycho-social, medical, and legal help, as well as further assistance in integration into society (education, employment help, economic empowerment, etc.) (ASTRA, Brochure on services for persons at risk and victims of human trafficking, 2023:10).

Both organizations, in collaboration with other local organizations, actively provide support for individuals who have survived human trafficking to reintegrate into their community. This includes help in obtaining education, economic empowerment, and job search assistance, legal help and counseling, and psycho-social support needed by them but also their family (Ibid. 2023).

Generally speaking, every support program for victims of trafficking is designed to be in line with the needs of each individual. Priority is given to medical and legal help, especially in terms of treating acute injuries, diseases, and traumas, i.e., obtaining valid documents and resolving civil status (Galonja and Jovanović, 2011:101). Also, it is extremely important to ensure the person's safety, provide accommodation if they don't have any, and meet basic life necessities. Additionally, the need of service users is also to reestablish relationships with family and children, if they have any (Ibid, 2011:102). Only after that do programs that provide support for continuing education, job search, and recovery from trauma caused by trafficking come along (Ibid).

The existing system of support and assistance for victims of trafficking lacks much. Firstly, the focus on adults and their "acceptance" or "rejection" of support, upon which the further process depends, is problematic for several reasons. Victims often do not even know they have a right to help and support; many of them, due to the violence and trauma experienced, are simply not capable of making conscious decisions about it (especially regarding cooperation with institutions and potential participation in processes against traffickers) (Galonja and Jovanović, 2011:58). Also, it is important to reiterate that a significant number of victims are minors, and a significant number of them have been trafficked multiple times, despite having been identified and gone through rehabilitation programs (Ibid, 2011: 59). Therefore, despite everything, victims still return to the same context from which they were trafficked. ASTRA notes that a major problem in approaching victims is also the punishment measures against the victims themselves, not receiving financial help if there is a legal process against them, suffering from secondary victimization during trials, because representatives of the institution are often insensitized to work with them (ASTRA, Information sheet on human trafficking: overview of situation and practices, 2023:14).



## Application of *survivor-led* approach in Serbia: perceptions and practices

To understand the real problems of implementing the *survivor-led* approach, we conducted field research with representatives of various organizations engaged in activities to combat human trafficking and protect victims in the territory of Serbia. We sent invitations to these organizations with a request to enable us to conduct interviews with persons within those organizations responsible for conducting, coordinating, and/or monitoring various activities aimed at combating human trafficking. This invitation was sent to addresses of 13 different organizations, 11 of which responded to our call. Two organizations, the Council of Europe and NGO Atina, did not respond to our request to participate in the research. In our research sample, there were civil society organizations (ASTRA, Autonomous Women's Center, IAN, and Novi put), international and donor organizations financially supporting activities against human trafficking in Serbia (UNODC, ODIHR, OSCE, Porticus, IOM, European sex workers alliance), as well as a government institution within the social protection system the Center for the Protection of Victims of Trafficking and the Office for coordinating activities in the fight against trafficking in human beings, within the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia. Semi-structured in-depth interviews about the experiences and practices of their organizations and institutions related to the application of the *survivor-led* approach in various types of activities aimed at combating human trafficking were conducted with representatives of these organizations and institutions (see appendices 2 and 3 in the Appendix). A total of 15 interviews were conducted.<sup>161718192021222324252627</sup>

Most organizations we spoke with **generally support** the ideas underlying the *survivor-led* approach, believing it is very important to include the perspective of persons with lived experience of human trafficking in the design and implementation of programs intended for them:

“IOM has always supported the inclusion of victims of human trafficking in anti-trafficking activities. This principle is valid for all our clients-migrants. All our programs are *victim centered* and *victim informed*. So all programs related to migrants are based on respecting their human rights and supporting their active participation in planning and implementing what we do and it has always been that way.” (IOM)

<sup>16</sup> See more: <https://astra.rs/>

<sup>17</sup> See more: <https://www.womenngo.org.rs/>

<sup>18</sup> See more: <https://ian.org.rs/home/>

<sup>19</sup> See more: <https://www.newroadbih.org/>

Note: Although this NGO is registered in Bosnia and Herzegovina, due to the nature of the human trafficking phenomenon, its activities are highly relevant to the fight against labor trafficking in the territory of the Republic of Serbia.

<sup>20</sup> See more: <https://www.unodc.org/>

<sup>21</sup> See more: <https://www.osce.org/odihr>

<sup>22</sup> See more: <https://www.osce.org/sr/mission-to-serbia>

<sup>23</sup> See more: <https://www.porticus.com/>

<sup>24</sup> See more: <https://serbia.iom.int/>

<sup>25</sup> See more: <https://www.eswalliance.org/>

<sup>26</sup> See more: <https://centarzztlj.rs/>

<sup>27</sup> See more: [http://www.mup.gov.rs/wps/portal/sr/baner-sadrzaj!/ut/p/z1/fY29DolwFEZfhcQw34KJxJEFhOBiNWkX5vITUqy3UAoxPr0dnJ2-nOTkfCCgBkG4qQGdMoTa80McZBQf49M-Z1V-SzKWnpMy49ekiHgMfLHywuWuQkdQgvhv-5wa51mkIFpDrn87qKe10aqV2-I9SyBqk3v4mWLCzHxD5uxgNkUY6HHt1Atheub3L8RsuKY!/?\\_af=1](http://www.mup.gov.rs/wps/portal/sr/baner-sadrzaj!/ut/p/z1/fY29DolwFEZfhcQw34KJxJEFhOBiNWkX5vITUqy3UAoxPr0dnJ2-nOTkfCCgBkG4qQGdMoTa80McZBQf49M-Z1V-SzKWnpMy49ekiHgMfLHywuWuQkdQgvhv-5wa51mkIFpDrn87qKe10aqV2-I9SyBqk3v4mWLCzHxD5uxgNkUY6HHt1Atheub3L8RsuKY!/)

“I would say that we have always included survivors in our activities, but in different ways.” (UNODC)

Some organizations also express concerns about involving persons with lived experience:

“We are an organization that provides services and support to victims of sexual, domestic/partner violence. ... A lot of women who have survived violence contact us, wanting to be involved in the direct work with women. We do not accept this for several reasons. First, we have limited resources when it comes to training, which is mandatory. Second, there have been situations where women with experience of violence were involved, but exclusively in things like translating documents and the like, for which they had formal qualifications. We never involve them in direct work with women because the guidelines we follow do not allow it. For a violence survivor to be able to engage in such activities, which is possible, and to advocate and lead the organization, they must do a lot of work on themselves and their trauma. So, it is possible, but it depends on how much that person has worked on themselves, how much strength they have, and whether they have sufficiently processed their own experience so as not to harm other service users, because they cross boundaries etc. For example, if they think something is a solution for someone, which may not be, maybe it is a solution for them, etc., because it is not good to get involved in work with violence victims based solely on one’s own experience. Experience can be important, but it is also very important for the person to have some expertise.” (AŽC)

However, when we talk about concrete activities and protocols related to the inclusion of persons with lived experience of human trafficking, it turns out that most donor organizations and organizations that financially support other organizations in activities aimed at combating human trafficking **do not have clearly defined protocols** that would be binding for the organizations they support and that the whole process takes place in good faith that all stakeholders involved will act in the best interest of survivors.

“We have never had any binding procedures for organizations we financially supported that included those who have survived human trafficking in their activities. But, we have assumed that the organizations we chose to support would take care of the well-being of survivors.” (Porticus)

“When we support a certain organization, we support them in good faith that they do that work and take care. We rely on the capacities of a certain organization and accredited services by competent institutions and that is enough for us.” (IOM)

“We are in contact with organizations led by survivors themselves that are well developed and have their own networks. At this point, we trust these organizations to carry out proper selection and to approach survivors in an adequate manner. Before we get in contact with an NGO we check it well. For example, whether ODIHR has any information about that organization, whether the organization is listed in their records, we also have a zero tolerance policy for sexual harassment and

coercion, sexual exploitation, etc. So, there are certain rules and procedures, which however are not rigorous and rely mostly on the reputation of the organization itself. In identifying these organizations, we rely on existing international networks wherever possible. If any problems arise during cooperation with an NGO, we terminate the cooperation.” (UNODC)

One of **the missing elements of the protocol** should be a section outlining **the activities and competencies needed to assess whether a person with lived experience**, whom the organization intends to involve in anti-trafficking efforts, should be considered a **victim** or a **survivor**. Although all organizations we spoke with consistently use the term *survivor* when talking about the potential inclusion of persons with lived experience in various activities, it is not clear what *the standard* should be *for assessing* whether that person is a victim or a survivor. There are different opinions on this among our respondents:

“I don’t have a precise answer to the question of how to make a distinction between a victim and a survivor, because it is very situational and depends on the moment and context. I can talk more about this topic from my personal experience. I believe that first and foremost we must talk about the victim, about a person who was first a victim of random circumstances and what happened to them. After that, there is a range of progressive actions that for a while still keep that person in the status of a victim and lead them to what we call a survivor. When we talk about inclusion we talk exclusively about survivors, about people who are empowered enough to give you some information. Because, until that moment, the position of that person is different and they are not able to participate in some activities adequately with all the protective actions so that the person would not be put into unnecessary risk or repeated danger. So, from my perspective at first we are dealing with a victim and in the last we should talk about a survivor, a person who is empowered enough, integrated and no longer at risk and who has the internal capacity to be seen as a survivor. I believe that it, first and foremost, has to do with the **personal feeling** of the person with lived experience.” (IOM)

“The experience of trafficking is very complex. I must say that in the organization where I work, and we are mostly psychologists, we have come to the conclusion that what affects us the most is when trafficking victims come to us for psychotherapy. Sometimes regardless of all my experiences with psychotherapy, and I’ve been working for almost 20 years, I’m the most ‘shaken’ when I meet with young women who have survived human trafficking. I’ve worked with various cases. I’ve heard all sorts. You can’t imagine what people can come up with in order to torture other people. We’ve heard everything, and yet trafficking cases affect us the most. That’s why I think that the assessment of whether someone is a victim or a survivor has to be done by **someone competent, who has experience** ... a psychologist, psychiatrist.” (IAN)

“I believe that each person should be seen as an individual. Also, **trauma experts** should be involved.” (UNODC)

“At the present moment, many survivors are engaged through various NGOs. NGOs involved in anti-trafficking activities are immersed in this topic on a daily basis. What I have learned from survivors is that there are numerous triggers for them, there are ways to avoid them, but also that there are moments when avoiding them is not possible. OSCE/ODIHR has issued a handbook that is the result of the work of National trafficking councils. In that book, there is a recommendation that there should be a **minimum distance of 5 years** from trafficking exposure before a survivor is involved in anti-trafficking activities.” (ODIHR)

Even this brief overview shows that the terminological opposition of victim-survivor cannot capture the full complexity of the lived experience involved in the process of overcoming trauma and moving toward potential integration, as illustrated by the following insight:

“If by survivor we mean a person who functions entirely independently, lives contentedly and independently carries out work responsibilities and has succeeded in various roles, then I would say that, among our clients, there are not many people who are that. But if by survivor we mean a person who gets up every day, makes their bed, goes to the store, and goes to work, who has both these and those kind of days, then we can talk about a higher percentage of people. A lot depends on the life circumstances in which that person lives, on the support from their surroundings, and on the personal resilience of the person, but unfortunately, that is not a great number.” (ASTRA)

This insufficiently conceptualized space of missing protocols around which there is still no clear consensus realistically and in the implementation of the *survivor-led* approach produces various problems. This is testified by some of our respondents when they talk about:

#### **a) experience of re-traumatization**

“I attended a meeting in Sarajevo in which two individuals who had experienced sexual exploitation participated. At one point, one of them approached me and said: ‘I do not feel well’. In front of everyone present, and there were over 50 of them, she shared details of her negative experiences being re-traumatized as a person exposed. Apparently, no one took that into account, and out of all the people present, she chose to share how she feels with me. Not all people are able to deal with their trauma in the same way.” (Novi put).

“I witnessed a scene at a conference in Niš where a victim completely broke down and then hugged the session moderator which was completely absurd.” (ASTRA)

#### **b) asymmetry of power** which is also reflected in the material valorization of the contributions of individuals with lived experience

“I would like us at those various round tables to be assigned roles and allowed to participate on an equal basis, because if things are set up in a way that we are just



puppets, for some international organization to tick off its to-do list. On the other hand, we receive expert status at meetings of this nature. However, our expert services are not valued in the same way as the services of other experts, judges, lawyers, advisers... When we talk about everyday life, all of us have our duties and jobs which should be integrated any gathering. I believe that individuals with experience participating in such gatherings should not only receive per diems on par with other experts for days spent at the gathering but also a monthly salary on which they could live, because only in that way individuals with experience could fully engage in the subject matter. Because it is not possible to participate in something like this and then go and work as a cashier in a supermarket.”

“I would also like to add, those conferences where survivors are invited always have the attitude of if you want to say something, say it, if not, you don’t have to... that is not inclusion. I expect to have some task, if we are equal and if my experience is important, and not just to be a figure for taking photos. The attitude towards us is often, in those places, patronizing, and that is offensive.” (Novi put)

“The problem is that the whole process of involving victims is not elaborated, procedures and processes during crisis moments. Everything is just on the surface. Whenever victims were involved in the implementation of certain activities, their opinion, invested time and effort was appreciated and compensated through honoraria. And it happens that victims are expected to perform all these tasks voluntarily, for example, if you’re paying an expert for a publication one should not expect a victim to participate voluntarily. I think this also needs to be thought through and elaborated. If someone is working for a per diem, and we ask that person to take a day off then we need to compensate them for that per diem.” (ASTRA)

- c) failing to recognize the different **stages of overcoming trauma** which determine the **internal capacities of individuals** with lived experience to participate/contribute to activities aimed at combating human trafficking

“Victim, survivor, survivor with experience and expert. These are four categories for which we do not have any time frame to know who is at which stage of cleaning from the trauma they survived. It is very important for a victim to receive systemic and non-systemic (NGO) support for overcoming trauma and re-socialization. It is necessary to value differently the engagement of these different categories, because the quality of input that each of these categories can provide is significantly different. We, the people with experience, are exploited from every aspect. The money we make is very little. Budva 4 days 200 euros. The way we are treated is also not right. People study medicine and if they don’t practice they cannot treat people. The same is with us. All of you can theoretically know but not the things we have lived through. Your eyes and my eyes do not experience the same. You are at a deficit, because I can learn the theory but you cannot learn the practice.” (Novi put)

d) the need to **regulate** these practices in a manner that will reduce the risk to individuals with lived experience of human trafficking

“For example, dragging survivors of trafficking to international conferences in an atmosphere that includes a certain type of sensationalism is something that definitely must be avoided, something we recognized as wrong only after it started happening. Because the voice of survivors is very important to be heard, in terms of *story telling*/their side of the story, revealing their truth about the lived experience their engagement took place without all the steps being thoughtfully considered beforehand. For example, little was taken into account regarding aspects such as their safety, communication skills, the feelings such activities can trigger, the impact of traumatic experiences both on the survivors themselves and on the audience. Thus, we have always engaged survivors and not always in a wrong, sensationalist manner, but the risk was also present, now we want to minimize that risk as much as possible.” (UNODC)

Following such insights on an international level, significant initiatives have been launched in recent years to regulate this insufficiently regulated area – the engagement of individuals with lived experience of human trafficking in activities aimed at combating human trafficking. In this regard, in 2021, the International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Board (ISTAC) was established to assist the work of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in fighting human trafficking. The Board has the mandate to provide advice, guidelines, and recommendations to ODIHR, and through it to the member states of the OSCE, regarding legislation, policies, practices, and trainings to combat human trafficking. Unfortunately, although this body was created with the intent of emphasizing the importance of including and promoting the voices of individuals with lived experience of human trafficking in considering all issues relating to the combating of human trafficking, it seems that, at least according to the testimony of one of our respondents, who participated in the work of this body, the operationalization of these ideas in the reality of everyday life experienced a “downfall of the idea”:

“Two years ago I was the deputy chair of ISTAC and for that engagement, I was receiving only 2000 euros a year. They paid me only for 10 working days for work that required much more from me, I was on the phone for up to 4 hours a day. During that period, I was working for ISTAC instead of being with my family and it wasn’t paid. For comparison, before 2010 I worked for ODIHR for 2000 euros a month. I believe that fair payment is very important. And that’s not the only thing because of which I felt exploited in ISTAC. For example, certain members were always sent to gatherings, and some were intentionally neglected.” (Novi put)

In January 2024, the Human Trafficking and Migrants Sector was established within UNODC - United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. As one of our respondents stated: “This should be seen as an effort to **standardize** certain activities related to the

meaningful and ethical engagement of survivors.” (UNODC) This Sector has launched at least two important initiatives:

- a) the development of a model for engaging individuals with lived experience of trafficking as consultants within the UN, recognizing lived experience as a form of competence and qualification:

“We are currently working on developing a model that would include different practices for protecting personal data, physical protection of individuals, compensation for consultancy services, signing of formal work contracts... we are consulting with individuals with lived experience of trafficking about all of this. We consider that persons with lived experience of trafficking are highly qualified to provide advisory services in the field of trafficking and the challenge for us is how to adjust their unique position to the strict procedures related to employment within the UN. We are currently exploring how within the UN system, lived experience can be recognized as a qualification at the level of, for example, an MA degree. I believe that the minimum would be to equate lived experience with a high school diploma but the question remains whether that is adequate. Another challenge is how within job advertisements it would be possible to introduce the variable of lived experience. Currently, we are negotiating about adding a sentence to the advertisement for a specific position to encourage individuals with lived experience to apply for that position. We are also thinking about how there might be an opportunity for individuals with lived experience to apply in the future for higher management positions within the UN system, and whether in job advertisements for UN employees we could add a sentence that we encourage persons with lived experience to apply (e.g., victims of crime or terrorism, that is the formulation because we believe it could pass, unlike victims of human trafficking or victims of domestic violence, towards whom there is greater resistance).” (UNODC)

- b) the creation of an ethical code for involving individuals with lived experience in anti-trafficking activities. This task was entrusted to ICUT (The Inter Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons), a political forum that was granted the mandate by the United Nations General Assembly to enhance coordination among UN agencies and other relevant international organizations, to enable a comprehensive and holistic approach to prevention and combating of human trafficking, including the protection and support of victims of human trafficking.<sup>28</sup>

“ICUT is currently working on the Ethical Code. It’s a kind of decision-maker network, which also has several publications that are a product of collaborative work. This network brings together various agencies with very different mandates, which are focused on very different issues. The uniqueness of ICUT is that it has managed to gather all these different actors who, when they speak with a unified voice, do it very powerfully. What is definitely lacking at the moment and not yet being worked on are Guidelines on how to include child victims.” (UNODC)

<sup>28</sup> See more at: <https://icat.un.org/>

## Conclusion

The implementation of a *survivor-led* approach in anti-trafficking activities still takes place in an environment that is not adequately equipped to manage or eliminate the risks to which individuals with lived experience of human trafficking may be exposed. Recent initiatives on an international scale indicate that the need for more detailed regulation of this field, or some of its very important segments, has been articulated at a global level. It remains an open question whether insisting on the opposition of victim-survivor, which pretends to describe the experience of individuals who have survived human trafficking, is a good solution, because analysis shows that individuals with lived experience, as well as victimological literature, recognize that the process of overcoming trauma is significantly more complex, as is assessing in which stage of overcoming trauma a particular person who experienced it is located. Anyway, as one of our respondents says:

“I think this is a kind of journey. No organization certainly did everything right from the beginning. From many survivors, I have heard that they are often not even sure what their role is, whether they want to be in it... It is important to bear in mind that survivors are very different from each other in terms of the type of exploitation they have experienced, country of origin, the country where they experienced trafficking... what we want is for the role of survivors as experts to be recognized. At the same time, it is very important at every moment to take into account their traumatic experiences, in a way that will not reduce them to their trauma. Especially we are aware of and the sensitivity of our role as those who must make sure they are protected, as well as the danger of patronizing those we want to protect. So it is necessary to have some kind of two-way listening. On one hand, we need to think carefully about what we need from the survivors, and on the other hand, we need to collect that information from them very sensitively without stereotyping them. We are facing serious challenges. We want to normalize their contribution and open up the possibility for survivors to be policy makers.” (UNODC)

This calls for a collective effort to reduce the risk of retraumatization for those with prior traumatic experiences to the greatest possible extent.

## Recommendations

- In Serbia, there are protection and support programs for victims of human trafficking, provided by institutions and non-governmental organizations. However, a serious deficiency in this respect is their partiality, i.e., their limitation to providing legal aid, temporary accommodation, medical, and psychosocial support. There is a lack of systematic support in the process of long-term reintegration into the community, for which **a comprehensive, long-term service program** is necessary, which should also be **intersectoral** (involving multiple ministries from different areas).
- Service delivery **standards** need to be clearly defined and adopted based on this program, followed by of a **licensing system** for specific types of services. This would ensure that services are provided exclusively by licensed providers, which may include civil society organizations and/or individuals employed within them.
- Existing resources related to **the systematization** and **review of all available services for victims of human trafficking** should be further **developed** and **updated** so that interested parties and people in need have clear information about who offers what type of support to individuals who have survived human trafficking at any given time. Also, it would be desirable for such a source of information to exist at the institutional, state level, considering the limited capacity of local non-governmental organizations to continually monitor changes in this domain.
- The continuation of **strengthening cooperation** and **networking** of local and international civil society organizations that deal with various aspects of activities against human trafficking is necessary, to exchange information and experiences on the possibilities and challenges of actively involving persons who have survived human trafficking. At present, such cooperation appears to be limited, leaving individual organizations to independently explore and interpret *survivor-led* approaches, often without sufficient support or alignment with others.
- It is necessary to develop **protocols** that regulate practices of involving persons with lived experiences of human trafficking in activities to combat human trafficking. These protocols should ensure respect for safety, confidentiality, and avoidance of re-traumatization of persons who have a lived experience of human trafficking and are involved in activities to combat human trafficking. In addition to the survivors themselves having to feel and express their readiness for active involvement in the fight against human trafficking, there must be developed **norms and standards for performing psychological assessments** whether a person with a lived experience of human trafficking is capable of participating in activities to combat human trafficking.
- Concerning the aforementioned protocols, it is necessary to initiate the development and adoption of a national document - ***Ethical Framework for the Involvement of Persons with Lived Experience of Human Trafficking***, in cooperation with civil



society organizations and with the active participation of relevant ministries (labor, social protection, justice, human and minority rights, health). This document should clearly define:

- › **basic ethical principles and boundaries of participation**, with mandatory informed consent and the right of the individual to withdraw from participation at any time;
- › **protection mechanisms from re-traumatization and misuse**, including access to psychological support before, during, and after engagement;
- › **different forms and levels of involvement**, with the individual's current capacities and interests – such as acting as a consultant, advisor, educator, public advocate, etc.;
- › **psychological assessments of readiness for participation**, carried out by qualified professionals independent of the organizations engaging the person;
- › the **principle of fair and transparent compensation**, ensuring that their contribution is valued equally to that of other experts;
- › **conditions for safe participation in public appearances and campaigns**, with clear rules for protecting identity, content, and personal stories, avoiding sensationalism or instrumentalization.

The adoption of such guidelines represents an important step toward ensuring that the inclusion of persons with lived experience of human trafficking becomes consistent, meaningful, and safe, rather than symbolic and sporadic. This would create the basis for authentic dialogue and the development of policies that truly respond to the needs of those they are intended to serve.

- Reintegration of persons who have survived human trafficking is not, and cannot be, exclusively the responsibility of the local NGO and the victim alone (with occasional institutional support). When a survivor is in an advanced stage of recovery from trauma, it is necessary to consider the possibility of **involving the wider community** through a **volunteering program** (such as mentoring, support programs) in the **reintegration programs** of survivors into the community.
- The issue of **language** used in public documents and communication is of particular importance, as language is not a neutral medium through which information is simply conveyed and exchanged. Language is a social field in which our knowledge of the world around us is actively shaped. In this sense, the terms we use and the meanings we assign to them construct the reality in which we live and organize our relationships. It is necessary to continually raise awareness about the importance of using certain terms that reflect decades of theoretical and practical feminist insights, and to explain why that matters. For example, it is important to consistently use the terms “victim” and “survivor” to distinguish between someone who is currently experiencing or has just exited a situation of acute violence and exploitation due to human trafficking, and someone who has survived such an experience and, with the support of various actors, has processed and overcome it over time. While no one chooses to be victimized, every victim has the potential to move into the identity of a survivor, from a position of vulnerability and passivity associated with victimhood,

to a proactive role of someone confronting, processing, and overcoming trauma and continuing life.

- In the **media** and **public events**, it is necessary to avoid involving persons with lived experience of human trafficking in ways that require them to testify about their personal experiences.
- Strengthening the role of **trade unions** in the prevention of human trafficking for labor exploitation is of great importance, especially in ongoing activities related to raising awareness about risks and educating workers about their labor rights. In this context, it is important that trade unions also recognize the potential of persons with experience of forced labor and exploitation to contribute to shaping protection policies and practices. Specifically, it is recommended that trade unions:
  - › conduct **systematic training** for their representatives to recognize indicators of human trafficking and forced labor, particularly in high-risk sectors (such as construction, agriculture, domestic work), and to apply this knowledge through the development of internal protocols for the inclusion of persons with experience of exploitation, and to understand how to cooperate with them in a safe, responsible, and ethical manner;
  - › include the voices of survivors in the development of collective agreements, protection protocols, and sectoral strategies, not only through public consultations but also through advisory bodies in which persons with experience of labor exploitation could contribute to shaping protection measures that correspond to real-life risks, needs, and field practices;
  - › In cooperation with civil society organizations and competent institutions, establish safe and confidential channels for reporting exploitation, so that victims and survivors can seek support and protection within union structures.
- Although international standards increasingly emphasize the importance of the participation of persons with lived experience of human trafficking, the inclusion of children and adolescents remains underdeveloped and highly risky. In Serbia, where a significant percentage of identified victims are children, it is necessary to develop specific **protocols, standards, and training** for professionals who work with this highly vulnerable group, and to establish mandatory specialized training programs for employees in the fields of social protection, education, justice, and health, with an emphasis on applying participatory methods, trauma recognition, and risk management skills.
- **It is necessary to prohibit the use of direct testimonies of children.** Ethical guidelines should be developed for using fragments of children's lived experiences for **promotional purposes** (within media campaigns, conferences, and trainings), which would include complete protection of the child's identity, detailed assessment of short- and long-term safety and other risks, while respecting the child's dignity.

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## Appendix

### Annex 1 – Questionnaire

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for participating in our survey. The aim of the research is to gain a general insight into the opinions and experiences of organizations involved in the fight against human trafficking in relation to the application of a survivor-led approach and the involvement of persons with lived experience of human trafficking in anti-trafficking activities.

We want to stress that the survey is anonymous, which means that your personal names and the names of your organizations will not be published. The results will be used exclusively for the purpose of this research.

- 1. In what way does your organization provide support to victims and survivors of human trafficking? (Multiple answers possible)**
  - a. Providing shelter and temporary accommodation
  - b. Providing medical, legal, and social assistance
  - c. Organizing training and workshops for personal development
  - d. Assistance in employment
  - e. Providing continuous psychological support
  - f. Other (please specify)
- 2. If you provide educational, economic, and/or employment support, can you list the specific activities you offer? (Open question)**
- 3. Based on your experience, what are the main benefits of maintaining continuous contact with persons who have survived human trafficking and whom you have supported?**
  - a. We can include them in our work
  - b. We can receive feedback and suggestions from them regarding our activities
  - c. We can rely on their experiences in our work
  - d. We generally feel satisfaction from our work
  - e. Other (please specify)
- 4. Based on your experience, what are the main challenges in maintaining continuous contact with persons who have survived human trafficking and whom you have supported?**
  - a. Difficulties in maintaining mutual trust
  - b. High rate of return to the trafficking network
  - c. Dependency (e.g., on psychoactive substances)
  - d. Lack of resources and time in our organization
  - e. Victims returning to the same context they were previously in
  - f. Other (please specify)

- 5. In your opinion, what are the most effective ways to empower victims of human trafficking? (Multiple answers possible)**
- a. Providing continuous psychological and medical support
  - b. Providing continuous financial support
  - c. Enhancing their educational and work skills
  - d. Actively involving them in anti-trafficking activities
  - e. Other (please specify)
- 6. Do you involve persons with lived experience of human trafficking in the following activities? (Multiple answers possible)**
- a. Peer support
  - b. Educational activities, as trainers, speakers, etc.
  - c. Program development, as consultants
  - d. Policy making and/or recommendations
  - e. Media campaigns
  - f. Project development
  - g. Advisory board work
  - h. We do not involve persons with lived experience of human trafficking in our work
  - i. Other (please specify)
- 7. If you have already conducted some of the aforementioned activities, can you share your experience regarding their implementation? (Open question)**
- 8. If you have not conducted any of the aforementioned activities, what are the main reasons for that? (Open question)**
- 9. What is your opinion on the survivor-led approach? (Choose one answer)**
- a. We do not agree with this approach and are not interested in its implementation in our organization.
  - b. We support the approach, but are not interested in its implementation in our organization.
  - c. We are indifferent to the approach and have not discussed its possible implementation in our organization.
  - d. We support the approach, but are still not sure about its implementation in our organization.
  - e. We support the approach and are very interested in its implementation in our organization.
  - f. Do not know/are not sure

**10. In your opinion, what are the key challenges for implementing the survivor-led approach in your work?**

- a. Survivors do not have the capacities to engage in our work
- b. Survivors are not interested in participating in the activities against human trafficking
- c. The capacities of our organization are not sufficiently developed to apply this approach
- d. The structure and nature of our work are not in line with this approach
- e. Other (please specify)

**11. What recommendations would you give to donors and partner organizations regarding the survivor-led approach? (Open question)**

## Annex 2 – NGO: Guide for an in-depth semi-structured interview

### I thematic area – Profile of the organization

*Purpose: To collect information related to the organization the respondent belongs to, and its policy regarding trafficking victim/survivor's participation approach.*

#### *Questions:*

- Can you briefly describe the organization you belong to? What is the structure of your organization? How many employees are there? What is their educational structure? Does your organization also involve volunteers? Who are they? How do you recruit them? What kind of tasks do volunteers perform within the organization?
- Which activities, or areas does your organization deal with within human trafficking? Prevention, assistance to victims, advocacy, etc.?
- What type of human trafficking does your organization deal with?
- Please briefly describe the activities that involve human trafficking victims that your organization deals with? What type of programs/assistance does your organization provide to victims of human trafficking? How do you evaluate the success of the programs undertaken by your organization (subjective and objective assessment)?
- What are your organization's experiences regarding the possibilities of securing funding for these programs? Do you think there are enough opportunities for raising funds for anti-trafficking programs? How would you describe the policies of donors and their priorities in regard to this topic?
- How does your organization position itself in relation to donor priorities? Does this influence your organization's policy? If yes, in what way?
- Does your organization actively involve victims of human trafficking in its activities? In what way?
- Are there among the employees in your organization persons who have survived human trafficking? What kind of jobs within your organization do they perform?
- When did your organization start to involve victims of human trafficking in its activities? How did it happen and do you associate it with any event? What was the direct motivation of your organization to make this step?
- Would you say that the experience of persons who have survived human trafficking is extremely important for conducting the activities that your organization performs? If yes, why? If no, explain?

## II thematic area – **Experience of the organization in relation to the active involvement of survivors of human trafficking**

*Purpose: To determine what are the (immediate and indirect) experiences of organizations with involving persons who have survived human trafficking.*

### *Questions:*

- Does your organization support the active involvement of persons who have survived human trafficking in anti-trafficking activities? If yes, explain why? Which activities do you recognize as adequate for this approach? Are there any activities that you think are better not to involve survivors of trafficking? State the reasons for this? What are these activities?
- If your organization supports the active involvement of human trafficking survivors, would you say you have clear procedures that you follow? Can you describe this procedure? Is it a procedure that your organization has developed autonomously, or do you use a procedure that was developed elsewhere? Specify where? What are the elements of this procedure (psychological assessment, security assessment, etc. - note: check how these assessments are generated within the organization and if there are control mechanisms for checking the quality of these assessments)?
- What do you think about the policies of donor organizations in relation to the active involvement of human trafficking survivors? Do these policies, in your opinion, affect the policies of NGOs dealing with trafficking problems? How so?
- One of the main criticisms of anti-trafficking organizations relates to the manipulation and inadequate treatment of victims (insensitive use of their experience in public, for example). What is your experience and opinion on this issue?
- Do you think that the involvement of trafficking victims in anti-trafficking activities has contributed to a better understanding of the trafficking problem and its prevention? By whom?
- Based on the experience of your organization, what are the positive consequences of actively involving people who have survived human trafficking, and what are the negative ones? For your organization? For global anti-trafficking efforts?



### III thematic area – **Cooperation with other NGOs**

*Purpose: To map the current state and opportunities for creating a network of organizations, on one hand to provide support to victims of human trafficking, and on the other hand, to articulate and implement joint public anti-trafficking actions.*

*Questions:*

- How much does your organization rely on other organizations in its work? Which ones and in what?
- How important do you think collaboration between different anti-trafficking organizations is? In which spheres is it most important and why? If not, why do you think so?
- Do you think that creating a local network of anti-trafficking organizations would contribute to greater visibility of the human trafficking problem in Serbia? To a better articulation of social response to this challenge?
- Can you imagine your organization as part of such a local network? Do you see any advantages in the possibility of forming such a network? Obstacles?

### IV thematic area – **Looking back**

*Purpose: To encourage the respondent to retrospectively look at the problem and articulate certain recommendations.*

*Questions:*

- How would you rate the past cases of involving victims of human trafficking in anti-trafficking activities?
- Based on everything said, what would be your (and your organization's) recommendations regarding the implementation of actively involving people who have survived human trafficking? Should this approach be further developed or abandoned? Under what conditions? Explain your stance?
- Is there anything else you would like to add that you consider important for this topic that we have not covered in our conversation so far?

THANK YOU!

## Annex 3 – Donor organizations: Guide for an in-depth semi-structured interview

### I thematic area – Profil donatorske organizacije

*Purpose: To collect information related to the donor organization the respondent belongs to, and its policy in relation to trafficking victim/survivor's participation approach.*

#### *Questions:*

- Could you briefly describe the donor organization you belong to? How autonomous is the local office in making decisions in relation to the international headquarters?
- Which activities within the thematic area of human trafficking does your organization support? Prevention, victim assistance, advocacy, prevention of a specific type of human trafficking, etc.?
- Does your organization prefer to support certain organizations or specific programs?
- What is your donor organization's stance on involving victims of human trafficking in the activities you support?
- When did your donor organization start to support the involvement of victims of human trafficking in the activities it supports? How did it happen and do you link it with a certain event? What was the immediate motivation of your donor organization to make this leap within its program policy?
- Would you say that the experience of people who have survived human trafficking is extremely important for implementing activities supported by your donor organization? If yes, why? If no, explain?

## II thematic areat – Experiences of donor organizations in relation to the active involvement of victims of human trafficking

*Purpose: To determine the (direct and indirect) experiences of donor organizations with the inclusion of people who have survived human trafficking.*

### *Questions:*

- Does your donor organization support the active inclusion of individuals who have survived human trafficking in anti-trafficking activities? If yes, explain why? Which activities do you recognize as adequate for this approach? Are there any activities you think it's better not to include victims of trafficking? List the reasons? What are these activities?
- If your donor organization supports the active involvement of people who have survived human trafficking, would you say that the organizations you support follow clear procedures? Can you describe this procedure? Are these procedures autonomously developed by the organizations you support or were they developed elsewhere? Specify where? What are the elements of this procedure (psychological evaluation, security assessment, etc. - note: check if donor organizations track how these assessments are generated within the organization they support and if there are control mechanisms (donors) to verify the quality of these assessments)?
- What do you think about the policies (and others) of donor organizations regarding the active inclusion of individuals who have survived human trafficking? Do these policies, in your opinion, affect the policies of NGOs that deal with trafficking issues? How so?
- One of the main criticisms of anti-trafficking organizations is manipulation and inadequate treatment of victims (insensitive use of their experience in public, for example). What is your experience with the programs supported by your donor organization and your opinion on this issue?
- Do you think that involving victims of trafficking in anti-trafficking activities has contributed to a better understanding of trafficking issues and its prevention? By whom?
- Based on the experience of your donor organization, what are the positive consequences of supporting the active inclusion of individuals who have survived human trafficking, and what are the negative ones? For your donor organization? For global anti-trafficking efforts? For local NGOs you support?

### III thematic area – **Cooperation with other donor organizations**

*Purpose: To map the current state and opportunities for creating a network of donor organizations, on one hand to provide support to a potential network of NGOs working with victims of human trafficking, and on the other hand to articulate and implement joint public anti-trafficking actions.*

#### *Questions:*

- How much does your donor organization rely on other donor organizations in its work? Which ones and in what?
- How important do you think the collaboration between different donor organizations that support anti-trafficking activities is? In which spheres is it most important and why? If not, why do you think that?
- In your opinion, would the creation of a local network of donor organizations that support anti-trafficking activities contribute to the efficiency of these programs in Serbia? To better articulation of the societal response to this challenge?
- Can you imagine your donor organization as part of such a local network? Do you see any advantages in the possibility of forming such a network? Obstacles?

### IV thematic area – **Looking back**

*Svrha:* Podstaći ispitanika da retrospektivno sagleda problem i artikuliše određene preporuke.

#### *Questions:*

- How would you evaluate the previous cases of involving victims of human trafficking in anti-trafficking activities?
- Based on everything said, what would be your (and your donor organization's) recommendations regarding the implementation of the active inclusion of individuals who have survived human trafficking? Should this approach be further developed or abandoned? Under what conditions? Explain your position?
- Is there anything you would like to add that you think is important for this topic, that we haven't covered in this conversation?

THANK YOU!

