

Guidance on establishing and maintaining National Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Councils (NSTACs)



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Acknowledgments

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ODIHR encourages states and all NRM stakeholders to ensure that the participation and professional work of survivor leaders is remunerated and that they are ethically treated and employed as professionals whose expertise is required at all levels of NRM and anti-trafficking work, including leadership.

Guidance on establishing and maintaining National Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Councils (NSTACs)

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Acronyms and abbreviations

BIC	Best Interests of the Child
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CTHB	Combating Trafficking in Human Beings
IGOs	Intergovernmental Organizations
ISTAC	International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council
NAP	National Action Plan
NFL	National Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council Focal Lead
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NRM	National Referral Mechanism
NSTAC	National Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
pSs	OSCE participating States
THB	Trafficking in Human Beings
ToR	Terms of Reference
VoT	Victims of Trafficking

Key definitions¹

This guidance on establishing and maintaining National Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Councils (NSTACs) strongly encourages recognition of the term ‘trafficking survivor’ in international law and national legislation, policy and protocols and refers to the [2021 Declaration²](#) and OSCE [Ministerial Council Decision No. 6/18](#) on Strengthening Efforts to Prevent and Combat Child Trafficking, including of Unaccompanied Minors,³ both of which recognize the term ‘survivor’.

Victim of trafficking: The term ‘victim’ is used in relation to a person’s status within a criminal justice process, i.e., ‘victim of a crime’, and implies that the person can seek justice and remedy for the physical and/or emotional harm suffered due to the crime.

However, the term ‘victim’ can have negative connotations when used as an ongoing or permanent definition of who a person is; it can be misinterpreted to imply passivity, weakness, powerlessness and vulnerability. In turn, it can have practical implications — such as neglecting the person’s agency — and using it can therefore contribute to the disempowerment of trafficked people.⁴

Survivor of trafficking: While the term ‘survivor of trafficking’ is not defined in international legal frameworks, it has been recognized increasingly in global multilateral negotiations⁵ and in some regional frameworks.⁶ There is acknowledgement that *“although the term ‘survivors’ is not defined in the Trafficking in Persons Protocol, it is often used to acknowledge that victims of trafficking in persons can recover from the trauma that they have endured”*.⁷ Likewise, some states use ‘survivors of trafficking’ *“to acknowledge that victims of trafficking in persons can recover or have recovered from the trauma that they have endured”*.⁸

The term ‘survivor’ recognizes the process of overcoming victimization and progress in escaping victimhood and emphasizes people’s strength and resilience to recover from trafficking.⁹ Thus, the term is used to underline the individual, lived experience of being trafficked, the process of survival and to remove the focus on victimhood. However, it must be acknowledged that not all victims of trafficking recover and reintegrate into society to the same extent or in the same way. Victimization is multifaceted, and the process of overcoming victimhood is neither

1 ICAT Brief on Ethical Survivor Inclusion (forthcoming).

2 [UN General Assembly resolution 76/7](#) on the Political Declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, 22 November 2021.

3 [OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 6/18](#) on “Strengthening efforts to prevent and combat child trafficking, including of unaccompanied minors”, OSCE, 7 December 2018.

4 [UNODC Teaching Module Series: Trafficking in Persons & Smuggling of Migrants Module 6](#): Defining the Concept of Trafficking in Persons; [UN General Assembly resolution 76/7](#) on the Political Declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, 22 November 2021; [UN General Assembly resolution 75/158](#) on Trafficking in Women and Girls, 16 December 2020.

5 OSCE Ministerial Council Decision 6/18 encourages, among others, *“a multidisciplinary approach, respecting human rights, that takes into account the respective gender-specific concerns of girls and boys, and reflects, as appropriate, input and recommendations from survivors of human trafficking when providing immediate assistance and looking for durable and sustainable solutions”*, [Ministerial Council Decision 6/18 on “Strengthening Efforts to Prevent and Combat Child Trafficking, including of Unaccompanied Minors”](#), OSCE, 7 December 2018; [Regional Guidelines for the Social Inclusion of Survivors of Trafficking in Persons in the Americas](#), Organization of American States, 31 October 2022; In the Third Work Plan on Trafficking in Persons (2023-2028), the OAS Member States recognized the valuable role of survivor leaders, among others, *“in understanding, preventing, protecting persons, and prosecuting cases of trafficking in persons”*, [Third Work Plan on Trafficking in Persons \(2023-2028\)](#), Organisation of American States, 21 July 2023.

6 [UNTOC Conference of the Parties resolution 11/5 \(2022\)](#) on “Implementation of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime”; and [Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice resolution 32/1 \(2023\)](#) on “Taking action against trafficking in persons in business operations, public procurement and supply chains for goods and services”.

7 [Eleventh session of the UNTOC Conference of the Parties](#), Vienna, 21 October 2022.

8 [Practical Guide: Survivor-Informed Services](#), US Office for Victims of Crime – Human Trafficking Capacity Building Center, no date.

9 [Engaging Survivors of Human Trafficking: Fact Sheet](#), US Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, 18 April 2023.

linear nor universal. It often depends, among other things, on the availability of, and access to protection and support services. Therefore, those victims of trafficking who, for structural reasons and/or individual circumstances, have been unable to recover fully from their trafficking experiences should be supported and should not be marginalized or stigmatized.

Survivor leaders: Sometimes survivors may prefer to be referred to as ‘survivor leaders’, ‘survivor advocates’ or as ‘subject matter experts with lived experience of human trafficking’.¹⁰ This publication uses the term ‘survivor leader’ for survivors with lived experience of trafficking in persons, who are also professional experts in the anti-trafficking field; recognizing that they can and do contribute their unique knowledge, experience, skills and insights to combat trafficking in persons by participating actively in anti-trafficking work, contributing as expert consultants, researchers, trainers, authors and speakers.¹¹ It is important for those working with trafficked people to refer to them as the survivors would prefer.

¹⁰ Sue Lockyer, Beyond Inclusion: Survivor-leader voice in anti-human trafficking organizations, *Journal of Human Trafficking*, 8(2), April 2022, p.136.

¹¹ ICAT Brief on Ethical Survivor Inclusion (forthcoming).

1 Introduction

“National Survivors’ Advisory Councils (NSTACS) ensure that survivor leaders are seated close to power. They are appointed to advise Governments in the OSCE region on law and policies to address and combat human trafficking. As leaders, NSTAC members provide unique guidance, expertise and insight for governments: creating a vital bridge between authorities and civil society and giving voice to millions of victims who are silenced.”

— Jane Lasonder (United Kingdom), vice-chair of 2nd ISTAC

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) supports participating States (pSs) in establishing National Referral Mechanisms (NRMs), providing technical assistance in their development, and monitoring and reporting on the progress of NRMs across the OSCE region. ODIHR’s approach is based on human rights, the rule of law and non-discrimination. It promotes victim- and survivor-centred, gender-sensitive and trauma-informed methods to help all adults and children impacted by human trafficking.

Survivor leaders are people who have lived experience of surviving human trafficking and are recognized as professional innovators in anti-trafficking. They are essential for ensuring a paradigm shift in the effectiveness of anti-trafficking responses by using their lived experience and professional expertise to contribute to multidisciplinary national efforts to combat human trafficking. NSTACs should be a central component of effective responses to combating trafficking in human beings (CTHB) and, ideally, an NSTAC should be a mandatory body working with National Referral Mechanisms (NRMs) or equivalent mechanisms. This guidance provides practical information for OSCE pSs on how to establish and structure National Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Councils (NSTACs).

The following OSCE commitments, guidance and recommended standards form the basis for establishing NSTACs.

1.1 OSCE Commitments

OSCE Ministerial Council, [Decision No. 6/17](#) recognizes “*the importance of the voice of victims of human trafficking in elaborating effective anti-trafficking strategies.*”¹²

Ministerial Council, [Decision No. 6/18](#) commits to “*incorporate the input and recommendations from survivors of human trafficking when providing immediate assistance and looking for durable and sustainable solutions.*”¹³



12 OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 6/17 on Strengthening Efforts to Prevent Trafficking in Human Beings, OSCE, 8 December 2017.

13 OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 6/18 on Strengthening Efforts to Prevent and Combat Child Trafficking, Including of Unaccompanied Minors, OSCE, 7 December 2018.

1.2 ODIHR’s National Referral Mechanism Handbook: Recommended Standard 6¹⁴

“A national survivors’ advisory body composed of survivor leaders should be established to support the work of each participating State’s NRM. It provides advice on all aspects of NRM structures, service delivery and procedures as well as anti-trafficking legislation, governmental policymaking, public awareness-raising, provision of education and training, as well as ensuring high standards of frontline support for victims and survivors.”

1.3 Recommendations from the ODIHR Code of Practice for Ensuring the Rights of Victims and Survivors of Human Trafficking (ISTAC Code of Practice)¹⁵

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- *States should establish national survivor advisory bodies composed of survivor leaders to support service delivery, anti-trafficking legislation and procedures, government policymaking, public awareness-raising and provision of education and training, as well as ensuring support for victims and survivors.*
 - *States should support the provision of leadership and skills training for survivors to become survivor leaders, including mentorship programmes.*
 - *Survivors as professionals should be compensated adequately for their expertise, time and experience.*
 - *States should find ways to ensure the systematic engagement of survivors in their national anti-trafficking response and to discourage existing patterns of tokenism, exclusion, discrimination and inequity in survivor inclusion.*
 - *The promotion of survivor leadership should recognize the complex and intersectional nature of survivors’ needs regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, disability, care status, migration status, language and economic or social status.*
- 

The methods and practices for establishing and running NSTACs presented here are derived from those used to establish ODIHR’s International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council (ISTAC) as well as from those already set up by participating States. The lessons and promising practices of some existing national survivor leader councils are highlighted, and the guidance is informed throughout by the 2nd ISTAC.¹⁶

¹⁴ National Referral Mechanisms - Joining Efforts to Protect the Rights of Trafficked Persons: A Practical Handbook – Second Edition (NRM Handbook), OSCE/ODIHR, 24 January 2022.

¹⁵ The Code of Practice for Ensuring the Rights of Victims and Survivors of Human Trafficking (ISTAC Code of Practice), OSCE/ODIHR, 14 April 2023, provides OSCE participating States and all anti-trafficking stakeholders with a standard to ensure effective strategies for the prevention and combating of human trafficking.

¹⁶ ODIHR International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council (ISTAC) webpage.

The first International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council (ISTAC) was established by ODIHR in 2021 to ensure the active participation of survivors in all anti-trafficking policy development. It had 21 international survivor leader members. The second ISTAC was convened on 5 May 2023 and has seven members.

ISTAC provides advice, guidance and recommendations to ODIHR and, through ODIHR, to OSCE executive structures and field operations, OSCE participating States, OSCE Partners for Co-operation and other stakeholders on matters pertaining to human trafficking.

ODIHR draws on and shares the expertise of ISTAC members when developing and promoting human rights-based, victim- and survivor-centred, gender-sensitive and trauma-informed national and transnational NRMs and anti-trafficking frameworks that incorporate survivors as a key stakeholder group. At ODIHR's request, ISTAC provides guidance to participating States, IGOs, NGOs and survivor leaders on the necessary tools to foster the growth of national and international survivor networks.

ISTAC advises on and contributes to:

- Draft legislation
- State policies and practices
- The implementation of relevant OSCE commitments
- Research, drafting and/or review of material related to international standards to combat human trafficking
- ODIHR, OSCE and other organizations' publications, including, e.g.,
 - [Code of Practice for Ensuring the Rights of Victims and Survivors of Human Trafficking](#), OSCE/ODIHR, 14 April 2023
 - [Guidance on Trauma-Informed National Referral Mechanisms and Responses to Human Trafficking](#), OSCE/ODIHR, 22 August 2023
 - [Guidance on the establishment and maintenance of National Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Councils \(NSTACs\)](#) (this publication)
 - [National Referral Mechanisms – Joining Efforts to Protect the Rights of Trafficked Persons: A Practical Handbook – Second Edition](#), OSCE/ODIHR, 24 January 2021
 - [Discouraging the demand that fosters trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation](#), OSCE, 10 June 2021
 - [Applying Gender-Sensitive Approaches in Combating Trafficking in Human Beings](#), OSCE, 17 May 2021

- [World Day against Trafficking in Persons: joint statement from GRETA and ICAT, Council of Europe, 30 July 2021](#)
- [Out of the Shadows — Addressing the Dynamics of Trafficking in Persons Belonging to National Minorities, OSCE \(forthcoming\)](#)
- Educational and capacity-building efforts undertaken by ODIHR in the implementation of its work on combating human trafficking in the OSCE region
- High-level events such as the UN General Assembly, the Commission on the Status of Women, international conferences and national events
- Training courses, NRM assessment visits and engagement with governments on survivor inclusion

With ISTAC's guidance and support, ODIHR promotes the standardization of survivor-related terminology and fosters the development of survivor networks and survivor leadership.

2 The purpose of NSTACs

2.1 Background

“Survivor engagement is crucial to combating global human trafficking and initiating systemic changes. As a survivor, I stand for solidarity, comprehensive support and the empowerment of fellow victims and survivors, ensuring their rightful place in society. My commitment is to prevent the situations and hardships we have faced.”

— Maria Kirdan (Russian Federation/France), member of 2nd ISTAC

Across the globe, human trafficking remains a low-risk, high-profit crime. No country can claim they keep pace with the domestic and transnational trafficking crimes committed on their territory. Traffickers are continuously diversifying their ‘business models’, presenting serious challenges for law enforcement. The global rate of prosecutions and convictions for the crime of human trafficking is shockingly low, and the impunity enjoyed by traffickers means that victims remain unidentified and trapped in exploitation and cycles of re-trafficking.¹⁷

For effective and sustainable trafficking prevention strategies there must be cooperation between multi-agency and multidisciplinary stakeholders. Survivor leader bodies and councils are already active in many fields of anti-trafficking. Their central involvement is increasingly recognized as fundamental both to preventing and combating human trafficking and to protecting the human rights of victims and survivors.

It is essential that pSs make best use of survivor leaders’ engagement by setting up fully resourced and independent NSTACs.¹⁸ Chapter 7 gives guidance on how NSTACs can function as a core component of effective NRMs. However, while many OSCE pSs have well established NRMs, or are in the process of developing or strengthening them, states that do not have functional NRMs should not wait to, or be deterred from, establishing NSTACs. If set up in line with this guidance, NSTACs can support states in developing an effective and functioning NRM.

NSTACs should be key stakeholders, at the centre of effective national anti-trafficking frameworks, to help:

- Build strong, international and national frameworks of anti-trafficking laws and conventions with universal terminology, guidance and standards;
- Develop strategies, including legislation and policies, to eradicate the demand that drives all forms of human trafficking;
- Maintain sustained, international and national partnerships, which use advanced methods of information exchange and data sharing to develop robust, evidence-based prevention

¹⁷ Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020, UNODC, January 2021.

¹⁸ NSTACs shall have the necessary independence in accordance with the fundamental principles of the national systems. (See Chapter 3.2).

policies and monitoring frameworks;¹⁹

- Disseminate a consistent, up-to-date, globally shared understanding of how trafficking businesses work: their members, roles, modes of operation and the markets in which they exploit their victims;
- Develop appropriate, bilateral or multilateral agreements or arrangements to foster international cooperation in investigating cases and ensuring the protection and rights of victims and survivors of trafficking;²⁰
- Develop appropriate, robust procedures for equal access of victims and survivors to NRMs,²¹ to address the impunity afforded to traffickers, and to ensure the protection and human rights of victims and survivors;
- Develop information and guidance on, and participation in, the implementation of NRM service delivery and procedures, including the provision of stakeholder education and training, and on ensuring high standards of frontline support for victims and survivors; and
- Address all forms of discrimination and situational vulnerability caused by the marginalization of adults and children from low socio-economic backgrounds.²² This is fundamental to protecting the rights of all people, in particular those from minorities and marginalized communities.

2.2 The unique value of survivor leaders' participation

Survivor leaders have unique experience, and insight²³ about efforts to combat human trafficking. They are the founders of NGOs and businesses, consultants, trainers, public speakers, and advocates across government, civil society and private sectors. They provide expert testimony for trafficking investigations and court cases, run NGOs, deliver services and write books, reports and other documents on human trafficking. They are lawyers, judges, policy-makers, healthcare professionals, social workers, charity founders and artists. Many survivors are frontline service providers and cultural mediators, lending their expertise and insight to meet victims' complex needs.

Survivor leaders have first-hand experience of how human traffickers evade criminal investigation, prosecution and conviction. The work of governments and national authorities should be guided and informed by survivor leaders in all matters that touch on anti-trafficking national

19 All forms of trafficking within and between countries are reliant on multiple communications and transactions, including the use of online platforms, service providers, financial transactions and associated people and businesses in various countries. Many victims experience both transnational trafficking and domestic trafficking, which may be perpetrated by the same, or different traffickers. Domestic and transnational trafficking crimes and networks may be interlinked in multiple ways, in terms of traffickers and their associates, methods of operation, online exploitation sites and social media forums, financial transactions and communication pathways. Therefore, strategies to prevent trafficking by sharing information and data should include all forms of trafficking, recognizing the many links and commonalities between them.

20 ODIHR, *NRM Handbook*, Recommended Standard 13.

21 There must be equal access to NRMs for all victims of trafficking, recognizing the needs of both victims of domestic and transnational human trafficking and the significant crossover that can occur between these groups.

22 States should adopt openness in confronting and sharing the 'blind spots' in their own societies which can result in forms of human trafficking remaining unnoticed or overlooked. It is also important for states to recognize and prevent the trafficking of adults and children who are not from poor socio-economic backgrounds. They may be vulnerable and discriminated against for reasons which can include (but are not limited to) naivety or a sheltered life, dysfunctional family histories, substance dependency or health or disability issues.

23 ODIHR, *NRM Handbook*, p. 19. Note that the professional expertise of survivor leaders may be based on formal education and work experience and/or lived experience and survivor leadership.

security measures, and in the design and implementation of related legislation, policies and practices. Insights from people who have suffered trafficking is invaluable: survivor leaders understand human trafficking from ‘the inside-out’ and, therefore, understand the perspectives of both the profit-driven traffickers and their victims, who remain trapped and controlled in exploitation. They can help develop proactive solutions in a field where misunderstandings and erroneous assumptions about the actions and behaviours of both traffickers and victims commonly result in failed or ineffective anti-trafficking responses.

The central and visible participation of an NSTAC enables anti-trafficking stakeholders to understand better the realities of human trafficking and how to meet the needs and manage the risks faced by victims and survivors. Survivor leaders have lived experience of the services of NRMs or equivalent systems of victim support and care. Therefore, they are in a unique position to give guidance on how to improve and support the establishment and evolution of systems and procedures for victim and survivor identification, protection, individual support, access to the criminal justice system²⁴ and social inclusion. It is vital to encourage victims’ trust in the systems designed to protect them, in order to prevent re-trafficking, to prosecute traffickers and to address the demand for different forms of exploitation that drives the trafficking.

NSTACs can help de-stigmatize experiences of trafficking, raise awareness of trafficking crime and develop effective trafficking prevention and response strategies. This includes addressing the demand for human trafficking and confronting the discrimination and other issues that increase the vulnerability of adults and children to traffickers.

²⁴ ODIHR, *NRM Handbook*, p.20, “Principle 4: Non-Conditionality: All NRM procedures and services for victims of trafficking are non-conditional. The principle of non-conditionality in international law is paramount. Therefore, identification, protection, individual support and social inclusion should not depend upon victims’ co-operation in criminal investigations or proceedings.”

3 NSTAC composition

A National Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council should be composed of at least three and, at most, 12 survivor leader members. All NSTAC members should be adults, meaning that they are all over the age of 18.

Each NSTAC member should serve a minimum term of two years, with the possibility of extending for two more terms (six years in total). Additional terms are good for the institutional memory of NSTACs and the continuity of their work.

States may wish to commit extra resources to retain a panel of five associate NSTAC members, or to maintain a list of independent consultants who can provide expertise to NSTACs in specific areas.

3.1 Diversity

Recommended standard: NSTAC membership should be representative of the wide diversity of survivors of trafficking with respect to age (over the age of 18 years), gender, ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds, disabilities, forms of trafficking exploitation and types of human trafficking experienced, including transnational and domestic trafficking.

A wide diversity of NSTAC members is crucial to ensuring equality of representation.

Wherever possible, NSTAC membership should include a range of:

- Age groups (over 18 years old) and genders²⁵
- Nationalities and cultures, reflecting both transnational and domestic human trafficking situations
- Individual lived experiences and trafficking histories, reflecting the different forms of trafficking exploitation
- People from national minorities and diverse ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds
- People with disabilities
- People with expertise (experience should be accepted in place of academic and vocational qualifications where these are not available or incomplete). (See Chapter 4).

²⁵ For the protection of children who are victims of trafficking, NSTAC must not have members who are under the age of 18. Children must be protected at all times in accordance with the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#). If they are worked with for the purposes of consultation or research, it should only be in the framework of an ethics-approved, child-specialist project in child-friendly settings, conducted by child specialists. See, for example, the methodology described in Patricia Hynes, Helen Connolly and Laura Durán, [Creating Stable Futures: Human Trafficking, Participation and Outcomes for Children](#), ECPAT UK, Sheffield Hallam University, University of Bedfordshire, Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice, October 2022.

Collectively, NSTAC members should have experience of human trafficking of both adults and children in different forms. This requires, at a minimum, representation of sexual exploitation, labour exploitation and exploitation in criminal activities (the latter is essential and should not be overlooked) (See Chapter 4.3.1). NSTACs should also be knowledgeable about trafficking for organ exploitation, adoption and forced marriage. They should recognize and reflect the common occurrence of ‘mixed’ and ‘sequential’ trafficking exploitation²⁶ and be aware of, and up to date on the evolving trafficking methods and practices, online and offline. A diverse NSTAC will demonstrate a multidimensional understanding of human trafficking and be best equipped to work in a culturally congruent, gender-sensitive and trauma-informed way.²⁷

3.2. Independence

NSTACs should operate as fully independent bodies, autonomous from government and any other organizations or entities it is meant to advise.²⁸ This is similar to other government-appointed roles such as independent National Rapporteurs on human trafficking (or equivalent mechanisms). Only an independent body can provide objective advice and recommendations, free from influence or pressure from larger organizations, government agencies or political interests.

An NSTAC should have the authority to give advice to the state on its laws, policies, protocols and procedures where these relate to human trafficking, and have its advice and recommendations listened to. Each member contributes equally and collaboratively as a voting member, thereby precluding sole decision-making by the NSTAC leadership and ensuring its independence from the influence of other stakeholders.

NSTAC members sit as private individuals and are independent and impartial in the exercise of their functions. An NSTAC’s independent status, and that of its members, should not be unduly affected by, or reflect advocacy or lobbying from government bodies, IGOs, CSOs or other special interest groups or individuals.

3.3 State appointment of NSTAC members

Members of an NSTAC should have state-appointed positions, in official recognition of their role as senior advisors. This is key to the NSTAC’s status and sustainability, ensuring that members can function with the necessary authority. As well as officially appointing NSTAC members to their advisory role, states should provide documented recognition of their independent roles and responsibilities, including in the Terms of Reference (ToR) of their contracts.

26 ODIHR, *NRM Handbook*, p. 37, “*Traffickers will exploit victims in any way possible in order to maximize their profits. Adults and children can be trafficked for the purposes of mixed exploitation, which means that they are subjected to more than one form of exploitation at the same time, or sequential exploitation, whereby they are moved from one form of exploitation to another in sequence.*”

27 For more information on the topic of working in a trauma-informed way, see Kaitie Chakoian, Resham Sethi and Jessica Santos, *Trauma-Informed Practice in the Field: Recommendations for Human Trafficking Service Providers*, Brendeis, The Heller School for Social Policy and Management IRE, October 2021; see also Angela Sweeney et al., *Survivor-led guidelines for conducting trauma-informed psychological therapy assessments: Development and modified Delphi study*, *Health expect.* 2022 Dec; 25(6): pp. 2818-2827; and *Modern Slavery Core Outcome Set (MS-COS)* website.

28 When establishing an advisory council or board, it is especially important to ensure it operates as an independent body, autonomous from the organization, government, or entity it is to advise. This enables it to provide objective advice and recommendations and protects members from being influenced or pressured by larger organizations to make certain decisions, change priorities, or weaken recommendations. The council or board should have the authority to establish its own governing bylaws, protocols and procedures, as well as deliver its advice and recommendations with a unified voice, with each member contributing equally and collaboratively as a voting member of the body. It is also important for organizations or governments to continually evaluate, reflect and adapt them to ensure engagement with members remains respectful and positive. For example, they should check that members are being treated as a body of experts and that no one member is singled out in any way.

- In some countries NSTAC members will be contracted as part-time government employees with equivalent pay to similar roles, the same status and terms and conditions.
- In others, NSTAC members will be contracted as independent consultants, with equivalent pay to similar roles, the same status and terms and conditions.²⁹ (See Chapter 10).

3.4 State funding and resources

Recommended standard: To implement their mandate, NSTACs should be institutionalized, functional and permanently sustainable. They should therefore be planned, funded and resourced by the state.

States should demonstrate their commitment to sustaining an NSTAC by planning and allocating sufficient funding for its continuation. Funding should come from government's dedicated national security or anti-trafficking budgets. At inception, where there may be no, or only limited, government budget available, IGOs and CSOs may contribute to funding the NSTAC, although this arrangement should not last longer than six years.

NSTACs should be funded and resourced on an ongoing basis, with guaranteed budgets for a minimum of two years, to match each NSTAC term, and with projected budgets for a further two years. State funds for an NSTAC should include professional remuneration for all the work and expenses of NSTAC members throughout their term(s) of service (See 3.4.1), as well as provision of an appropriate working environment for mandated meetings (See 3.4.3). All resources allocated to the NSTAC should be regularly reviewed and adjusted for inflation/changes in the cost of living.

3.4.1 Remuneration

Recommended standard: All NSTAC members should have a formal contract which clearly sets out the terms and conditions of their engagement, including appropriate remuneration for all work required and procedures for the advance approval and payment of any reasonable work-related expenses.

In light of the functions and recommended role of NSTAC members and the frequency of meetings, remuneration should be paid for a minimum of 10-15 working days per annum at a rate commensurate with a senior advisory position for state employees or contracted independent consultants. It is important to ensure that the remuneration covers all the work they are asked to do. They should be paid within the contract timeframe, without difficulty, including whenever they are asked to work additional, approved hours. Reasonable work-re-

²⁹ Survivors of Human Trafficking Empowerment Act, 22 U.S. Code § 7103b - United States Advisory Council on Human Trafficking.

lated expenses should be approved and paid in advance³⁰ and members should be given clear instructions on how the process works.

Remunerated tasks should include (but are not limited to):

- Four mandatory quarterly annual NSTAC meetings (1-2 days each)
- Contribution/participation at events, conferences, meetings, briefings and consultations (online or offline), including review of printed materials and publications and media engagement
- Time spent reading/writing/editing/reviewing emails, letters, reports or other documents in their capacity as NSTAC members
- All meetings with, and contributions to, the work of the NRM and/or National Interagency Coordination Working Group and other relevant government institutions

Additional remuneration should be paid where any work or engagement is requested beyond the scope of the NSTAC ToR. Requests should be made to NSTAC members in writing, giving a clear description of the task, the number of days required and the remuneration.

3.4.2 Work-related expenses

NSTAC members should be paid, in full, in advance *for pre-approved, work-related expenses. These expenses include (but are not limited to):*

- All necessary travel, including flights, any form of public transport including taxis, and the use of a car/petrol to attend NSTAC mandatory meetings or NSTAC-related activities.
- ‘Per diem’ (per day) expenses for meals and sundries while working on any site away from home.
- Expenses or services for alternative childcare arrangements, where needed, to enable members to participate in NSTAC mandatory meetings and activities. This should be available to ensure that parents are not discriminated against or disadvantaged.
- Any arrangements or equipment that may be required for disability access.

Travel facilitation

Travel arrangements should be conducted in a trauma-informed manner, taking into account the significant challenges survivor leaders can face when travelling.

³⁰ It is unethical to require survivor leaders to ‘lend’ their own money in any form to any organization, regardless of their personal circumstances. This should never happen and expenses should be approved and paid in advance.

Funds for travel by NSTAC members for work-related activities should ensure safe and comfortable travel, ensuring that the arrangements address any vulnerabilities or difficulties that NSTAC members may experience.

For each new NSTAC member, it is important to make a note of any information concerning difficulties and challenges that might be experienced when travelling to ensure as safe an experience as possible.

Appropriate arrangements for disability access must be arranged in advance for NSTAC members with disabilities.

Survivor leaders may encounter specific difficulties with being able to travel; for example, due to issues relating to status, lack of documentation or bank account requirements. The aim should be to resolve such difficulties as efficiently as possible and without causing difficulty for the NSTAC member concerned.

When, due to their trafficking experience, an NSTAC member has a criminal record³¹ that would prohibit travel, the state should facilitate their international travel for work-related activities. This can be supported by communication with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the destination country or through letters of support or *Notes Verbales* for visa applications. These documents should request that certain requirements can be waived, if necessary, on a case-by-case basis. For example, a member of an NSTAC may not have all the necessary documents, such as a certain level of savings in their personal bank account. (See Chapter 4.3.1)

3.4.3 Resources for NSTAC premises, meetings and equipment

NSTACs need to have premises, equipment and logistical support for their meetings. This should include a designated NSTAC conference room, Wi-Fi network, IT and technical support for meetings.³² An NSTAC's role is a central part of a government's functions, so its meetings should take place in an official government location, for example, in the building where the national Parliament sits and the daily business of government is conducted. In some states this will be in the same place as existing NRM and/or National Interagency Coordination Working Group meetings.

NSTACs should also be able to request meetings or event spaces on an ad hoc basis in line with normal procedures for securing such government spaces. There must also be full disability access, and any equipment must be provided for people with disabilities or needs related to health conditions, illness or injury.³³

31 Legal advice and representation are essential components for NSTAC members when they have criminal records which are a consequence of their trafficking, which require sealing, expungement or vacature.

32 It should be ascertained by facilitators that all members have sufficient access (including provision for disabled access) to the appropriate technology and internet required for remote working. Support should be provided where necessary.

33 ODIHR, *NRM Handbook*, p. 88, "12.4 Working with survivors who have disabilities".

4 How to conduct the NSTAC recruitment process

4.1 Overview

It is important to prepare an NSTAC recruitment process thoroughly. TORs and contracts should be prepared in advance by the government department responsible for recruitment.

NSTACs should be composed of at least three and, at most, 12 members who each serve for a minimum term of two years, with the possibility of extending for two more terms. NSTAC members must be adults (over the age of 18) who are recognized survivor leaders — professionals with lived experience of human trafficking.³⁴ They are officially appointed by states as part-time government employees or contracted independent consultants, with equivalent pay, terms and conditions. It is recommended to require that candidates have a minimum of five years post-trafficking experience,³⁵ as well as a robust support system in place.³⁶ (See Chapter 4.3.2.)

Recruitment for an NSTAC should be advertised as widely as possible to ensure a diverse range of candidates know about the positions and able to submit applications. This includes using public advertisements, government, IGO and CSO websites and all forms of communication through survivor networks, as well as social media. It is important to include print advertising, e.g., in magazines and newspapers, to reach survivor leaders who do not have good access to Wi-Fi. (See Chapter 3.1.)

Outline biographies of two NSTAC members are given below for illustration. All the [ODIHR NSTAC biographies](#) are available on the ODIHR website.



Jane Lasonder (United Kingdom) is a founding member of the Red Alert Task Force, a multidisciplinary task force designed to raise awareness of modern slavery and human trafficking. Jane is also a member of the [Interparliamentary Taskforce on Human Trafficking \(ITHT\)](#). She is the author of *Red Alert: the inside story of prostitution and human trafficking* (Scholten Uitgeverij, 1st edition 2016) and also a photographer. As a survivor of child trafficking, Jane shares her expertise with organizations and groups who are interested in increasing their knowledge about modern slavery and human trafficking, including school-age children, teenagers and medical students. She has contributed to work on human trafficking and other subjects for the European Parliament, the UN, ODIHR, the World Health Organization and the media.

³⁴ 'Professionals' in this context does not just apply to educational qualifications and vocational training, but years of work experience in the field of human trafficking and possibly other related areas.

³⁵ The process of recovery is highly individual and does not have a set time frame. However, a minimum of five years after leaving the control of traffickers is necessary for survivors to have recovered sufficiently and maintain a level of safety from re-trafficking risks. It provides them with time to have entered into, and established themselves in professional work and survivor leadership, and to have established their own support network. It also gives survivors time to access the four NRM Pillars (or equivalent support) and to conclude (or at least partially conclude) their involvement in legal matters and procedures. "Everyone heals at different times, time allows survivors to work on themselves, gaining some experience in becoming a leader" — Suamhirs Piraino-Guzman.

³⁶ It is important to establish whether each candidate has their own appropriate support network for their work. Survivor leaders should be able to recognize this requirement, as should any professional working in a field which can expose them to traumatic information and material. Some candidates may have undertaken therapeutic programmes and have a current therapist or counsellor; others may have family members, friends and work colleagues upon whom they can rely for support in times of difficulty or when they are overwhelmed.



Itohan Okundaye (Finland) is a survivor leader of human trafficking for sexual exploitation, a human rights activist, consultant and advocate, and has worked and volunteered in several anti-trafficking organizations. In 2018, the NGO Finnish Women in Development started an anti-trafficking campaign – Toisenlaisia tarinoita (Different Stories) – based on Okundaye’s initiative. She raises awareness about human trafficking and its impact on society through seminars and events, speeches, interviews and fundraising. Her autobiography was published in 2020. In 2022, Okundaye founded an NGO called Shinning Hope Foundation against human trafficking in Benin City, Nigeria. She is a member of the International Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Survivor Network and is a member of the 1st and 2nd ODIHR ISTACs.

4.2 NSTAC job description and qualifications

There must be a detailed job description and list of required qualifications that form the basis for selection to the NSTAC. A candidate’s lived experience and professional expertise in survivor leadership should always be taken into account when considering applications.

NSTAC candidates should have:

- Minimum five years post-trafficking experience
- Lived experience and professional expertise as a survivor leader, which can be considered in lieu of academic and vocational qualifications

4.3 Ethical approaches to survivor leader recruitment

NSTAC candidates should not be required to have official, legal and conclusive status as a victim of trafficking, especially in countries where this status is only granted at the end of criminal court proceedings. Letters of support from IGOs, CSOs or service providers may be accepted in place of conclusive status as a victim of trafficking, as well as other materials provided directly by the survivor leader.

NSTAC applicants should not be disqualified from selection if they have a criminal record as a direct result of their trafficking experience. (See Chapter 4.3.1).

4.3.1 Application of the Non-Punishment Principle³⁷

Recommended Standard: The non-punishment principle must be observed throughout the recruitment and employment of NSTAC members. It should be clearly and explicitly stipulated that no candidate be disadvantaged or excluded from appointment to the NSTAC if they have a criminal record or any other impediment or disadvantage that is a consequence of their trafficking history.

It should be clear to NSTAC applicants that they may declare, without fear of consequence, any previous criminal records or other impediments. Free legal advice and representation should be given to successful candidates to support them in having criminal records that are a consequence of their trafficking expunged or vacated.³⁸

The non-punishment principle must be observed throughout the recruitment of NSTAC members, as recommended by Principle 6 of the NRM Handbook.³⁹ It should be clearly and explicitly stipulated that no candidate be disadvantaged or excluded from appointment to the NSTAC due to having a criminal record or any other impediment or disadvantage that is a consequence of (i.e., connected to) their trafficking history. The recruitment and interview panel, the government department responsible for recruitment and wider government administrative bodies should be aware that this exception applies to any candidate who is selected for further interview or appointment by the panel.

4.3.2 Trauma-informed recruitment interviews

NSTAC candidates who are selected for interview, are invited to a single interview with a panel composed of no more than three members. The panel should include either the Chair or the NSTAC Focal Lead, the Consultant Survivor Leader and a member of a CSO or IGO. (See 7.3). Smaller interview panels, like this, are less intimidating and allow the panel to get to know the candidate better. The interview should not take more than one hour and the questions should be sent to the candidates in writing, in advance, so they can prepare.

NSTAC interviews should be conducted in a trauma-informed way and avoiding any focus on the survivor's personal trafficking history. Remembering that the goal is to establish a council of survivor leaders who can use their skills and experience to advocate at government level for the rights of victims of trafficking, the interview should focus on the skills, experience and knowledge of the candidates, enabling them to demonstrate their work with clear examples.

Successful candidates will be survivor leaders and change makers who have proven ability to work well within a diverse team. It is helpful to consider whether candidates have a wider range of anti-trafficking knowledge and connections; for example, an understanding of trafficking for various forms of exploitation and connections to the wider, international anti-traf-

³⁷ Non-punishment is the obligation of states under the Palermo Protocol to establish procedures that exempt victims of trafficking from punishment or prosecution for unlawful acts committed by them as a direct consequence of their situation as trafficked persons or where they were compelled to commit such unlawful acts.

³⁸ ODIHR, *NRM Handbook*, pp. 227-229, "16.21 Retrospective actions for victims of trafficking wrongly convicted of criminal offences".

³⁹ *Ibid.*

ficking movement. There may also be candidates who are selected as associate members of the NSTAC, or who are retained on a list of independent consultants so they can provide their expertise for particular areas of the NSTAC's work.

It is important to establish whether each candidate has their own, appropriate, support network for their work. Survivor leaders should be able to recognize whether a candidate meets this requirement, as should any professional working in a field which can expose them to traumatic information and material. Some candidates may have undertaken therapeutic programmes and have a current therapist or counsellor; others may have family members, friends and work colleagues whom they can rely on for support at difficult times. Whether a candidate has a personal support network, whether they recognize the need for one and can speak openly about it to the panel, helps establish a candidate's suitability to join the NSTAC.

Feedback procedures for unsuccessful candidates should reflect the highest ethical standards and the NSTAC objective of maintaining long-term relationships with survivor leaders and survivor communities. This should be communicated in writing and include the offer of a telephone call or online meeting to explain the decision. It is important to, give constructive feedback, encourage questions and communicate that all decisions are based on the need to create a balanced combination of members for each NSTAC cohort, rather than being based solely on individual performance. All candidates selected for interview will be valuable NSTAC contacts and therefore they should be asked if they will permit the NSTAC to retain their contact details as associate members or consultants. There may also be other avenues for them to engage with the work of the NSTAC.

4.3.3 Sensitive vetting procedures

The NSTAC recruitment process, while highly selective, must be tailored to specific requirements for contracting survivor leaders. Any government advisory role may be subject to a vetting process; for NSTAC members this should be conducted with particular sensitivity so as to be as non-intrusive as possible. NSTAC candidates should be given a full explanation of the reasons for the vetting, what the process entails, and be able to ask questions about it at stage of the process. Vetting should not start without the prior, full and informed consent of the candidate.

During the interview process, for the safety of candidates and all NSTAC members, the recruitment panel should be satisfied that candidates are applying freely and independently, and that they are not being unduly influenced by others, including traffickers or a trafficking network. If, at any point of the selection process or NSTAC term, there is evidence that an NSTAC member is being unduly influenced by others, including traffickers or a trafficking network, and is not acting independently, they should be given the necessary assistance, support and protection, while being disengaged from the NSTAC to protect them and the other members.

5 How to conduct the NSTAC induction process

NSTAC induction should include the following procedures:

5.1 Provision of induction information

Members should receive comprehensive and detailed information on all aspects of the NSTAC. They should be given a handbook (in accessible formats for members with disabilities and other difficulties) that includes information on the mandate of relevant government institutions and contact information. Members need to have a working ‘map’ of government and the remit of local authorities in order to understand its anti-trafficking institutional mechanism. They should also be given the same general information that is provided to all government employees.

Members of the NSTAC enter as professionals with significant experience. However, it should not be assumed that new members have common experiences and shared understanding in how to form a unified body. As with any new professional organization, they will need to get to know each other, train together and learn about the NSTAC and its function in relation to national government and its institutions in order to begin formulating their responses as a cohesive body. NSTAC procedures, policies and regulations should be clearly set out and discussed, and meetings arranged with relevant staff from each government institution.

5.2 Agreement and signature of the NSTAC ToR

The NSTAC’s mandate will ideally be enshrined in a national legislative act. (See Chapter 7.2). However, more detailed rules on procedures (such as the appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair, the frequency of NSTAC meetings and internal voting procedures etc.) should be developed and regulated in the NSTAC ToR or rules of procedure, which should be adopted or endorsed by government.

During the induction and training stage, the NSTAC mandate should be discussed and more details provided. This requires consensus agreement on more detailed objectives and outcomes, and on the expected conduct and commitment of members. The ToR should be discussed, finalized, agreed and signed by each NSTAC member.

The NSTAC governing documentation should include (but is not limited to):

- NSTAC confidentiality policy
- Professional conduct policy, including on bullying, sexual harassment, discrimination, etc.
- Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
- Procedures for resignation or member replacement
- Complaints policy and oversight mechanism⁴⁰

⁴⁰ The complaints policy and oversight mechanism will be used for any issues related to the professional conduct policy, including on bullying, sexual harassment, discrimination, etc.

- Ethical code of conduct for survivor leaders

5.3 Nomination of a Chair and Vice-Chair

The selection of Chair and Vice Chair should be based on years of leadership within the national survivor community and the anti-trafficking arena, proven teamwork, as well as trauma-informed communication style and availability. During the induction period, candidates for Chair and Vice-Chair will need to present their professional background and objectives for the upcoming term of the NSTAC to other members and explain why they wish to be nominated. A Chair and Vice-Chair should be elected by members via secret ballot, and decided by majority vote. During the recruitment interview, it is important to establish whether candidates who wish to put themselves forward for Chair and Vice-Chair can realistically undertake the extra duties and time commitments involved. The Chair and Vice-Chair must be selected during the first NSTAC mandatory meeting and the NRM and/or National Interagency Coordination Working Group should be notified.

Where the NSTAC members cannot reach a majority decision, the NRM Coordinator or the Chair of the National Interagency Working Group should take the deciding vote.

6 NSTAC in operation

The work of the NSTAC should be human rights-based, victim- and survivor-centred, gender-sensitive and trauma-informed in all aspects, promoting the equality and participation of all NSTAC members.

In order to protect NSTAC members from any misconduct, it is important to have a complaints policy and oversight mechanism (See Chapter 6.5.2) through which members can give feedback and make complaints.

6.1 Structure

In-person meetings at a key government location are critical to the NSTAC's cohesion, sustainability and political momentum.

While members may often work remotely and online, they should meet in person at this location at least three to four times a year, with the opportunity also to meet and liaise with government departments as needed, during that time. Meetings should be chaired by the NSTAC Chair with the support of the Vice Chair, and last one or two days with appropriate breaks. NSTAC members should be paid for attending meetings, and receive any approved, work-related expenses approved in advance.

Members should have access to the necessary technical and administrative resources and support for remote, online meetings and single meetings.

6.2 Reporting and publications

The NSTAC should be required to report regularly each year, to provide a reliable measure of its progress and to ensure sustained and concrete recognition. This requirement should be summarised in legislative/statutory guidance or the in NRM framework (See Chapter 7.3), and include at a minimum:

- An NSTAC Annual Report that records the NSTAC's quarterly meetings, activities and outcomes. This can be used by international anti-trafficking monitoring bodies, for example, the Council of Europe, GRETA, or the annual US Department of State Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report
- A bi-annual NSTAC strategy document outlining objectives, areas of focus for each NSTAC term and related output
- Reports on the tasks assigned to NSTAC by the NRM and/or National Interagency Coordination Working Group and other government institutions
- Work on and/or a 4-year review of domestic survivor-informed trafficking identification indicators

6.3 Training and skills development

NSTAC members should receive ongoing training: external, internal and on the administration and operations of government and how these are structured in relation to addressing human trafficking. Although induction meetings should be held in person, some training can be provided online.⁴¹

For new members of NSTACs, the following topics should be covered:

- Module 1 Explanation of the Interagency Coordination Group and the NSTAC mandate
- Module 2 Survivor leadership and the NSTAC
- Module 3 Leadership development
- Module 4 Trauma-informed work and self-care
- Module 5 Trauma-informed work and care of others
- Module 6 National legal framework
- Module 7 The workings of national government
- Module 8 National Referral Mechanism framework
- Module 9 Advocacy and communication

Further value may be added via professional training, consultation and interface with ISTAC and other NSTACs in operation in other countries.

6.4 A trauma-informed working environment

Recommended Standard: NSTAC members and other professionals working with NSTACs should be trained in trauma-informed methods of communication and conduct, and in the development of trauma-informed environments. All communication with survivors and survivor leaders should be conducted with a trauma-informed, gender-sensitive and culturally congruent approach.

The *ODIHR NRM Handbook* and *ODIHR Guidance on Trauma-Informed National Referral Mechanisms and Responses to Human Trafficking* explain the need for trauma-informed environments and trauma-informed methods of working in all contexts which involve survivors and survivor leaders.

⁴¹ For example, see: ODIHR's e-learning course — 2023 Capacity Building for Survivor Leaders of Trafficking in Human Beings.

NSTACs should provide an environment that is trauma-informed, respectful, gender-sensitive and culturally congruent from the outset and throughout the course of its work. Members should feel equally heard and valued as professionals and be able to access additional support should they need it.

- All people with a role in directing, facilitating, organizing or managing professional councils of survivor leaders will need to have an informed, working knowledge of the risks faced by survivors and the vulnerabilities in their lives and circumstances, which can be present long after they have left the direct control of traffickers.
- Professionals who work directly with the NSTAC to support its work should be trained in trauma-informed methods of working.
- It is not appropriate for any professional to engage in lone working with the NSTAC, regardless of their level of knowledge and experience. There should be at least two professionals involved at all times, to provide appropriate support and input for members, and to collaborate on all tasks together. At least one of the professionals working directly with the NSTAC should have significant, proven experience in working with survivors in group settings.
- NSTAC members should be given access to confidential, clinical or pastoral supervision and support where this is needed.⁴² It should be clear to all members that supervision provided by the NSTAC cannot replace or substitute the personal support network of each member, as established during recruitment. (See Chapter 4.3.2) This kind of supervision ensures that any vulnerabilities or difficulties are managed for the well-being and safety of members while they work for the NSTAC. If direct risks emerge for NSTAC members for any reason, safeguarding procedures must be followed.

Safe and sustainable NSTACs are trauma informed

Human trafficking is a highly specific crime with a particular impact on the lives of survivors. NSTACs therefore require the consistent availability of experts in frontline, anti-trafficking work, who can provide a flexible, knowledgeable and accommodating response to any difficulties which may arise.

It is essential for all facilitators to understand the traumatic impact of human trafficking and avoid incidents, or exposure to material which may cause re-traumatization or distress. Situations or discussions where members feel inclined, or are required, to detail their personal traumatic histories — to explain or validate their viewpoints — should be clearly and explicitly avoided for the safety and comfort of all present.

If NSTAC members wish to share specific details of their background in relation to a particular task or item, they may offer written or recorded accounts that they have used professionally. It should then be a matter of individual choice for other members if they wish to engage with these. This provides a trauma-informed environment and also emphasizes that the value placed on members is for their professional profile as

⁴² ODIHR, *NRM Handbook*, p.82, Chapter 11, "Pastoral support and Supervision for all Professionals who work with Survivors of Trafficking".

survivor leaders and not for their 'stories'. When delivering training on human trafficking it is also best practice to avoid including traumatic or distressing visual material.

6.5 Use and ownership of survivor leaders' information and materials.

Copyright of any photographic or creative images, biographical data and history of trafficking, creative work, audio/visual materials should in all cases be treated as belonging to the NSTAC members who are the subject of it, or who designed, distributed or authored it. These must not be re-used, co-opted or distributed in any aspect without the express and informed consent of the individual NSTAC member. Biographical information and visual/photographic images of each member should only be used for specific purposes related to the NSTAC, and with their express, written consent.

A trauma-informed environment can be introduced and maintained through the following induction training:

- Introduction and teambuilding exercises
- Housekeeping and agreed code of conduct
- Self-care including self-care breaks
- Trauma-informed methods of working and communication
- Cultural congruence⁴³
- Awareness of differing experiences, educational backgrounds, abilities and points of view
- Staying safe online and offline (includes any risks arising from NSTAC public engagement)

See: ODIHR's e-learning course — [2023 Capacity Building for Survivor Leaders of Trafficking in Human Beings](#)

6.5.1 Mentorship

A system of mentoring or 'buddying' is helpful as new members join the NSTAC and others leave. It may be possible to team individual members with others, such as former NSTAC members or ISTAC members, as well as with representatives of government institutions during the induction process so that they have a person to rely on for professional guidance and information.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 77, Chapter 9.3, "Culture is an integrated pattern of human behavior, which includes but is not limited to thought, communication, languages, beliefs, values, practices, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting, roles, relationships and expected behaviors of a racial, ethnic, religious, social or political group; the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations; dynamic in nature."

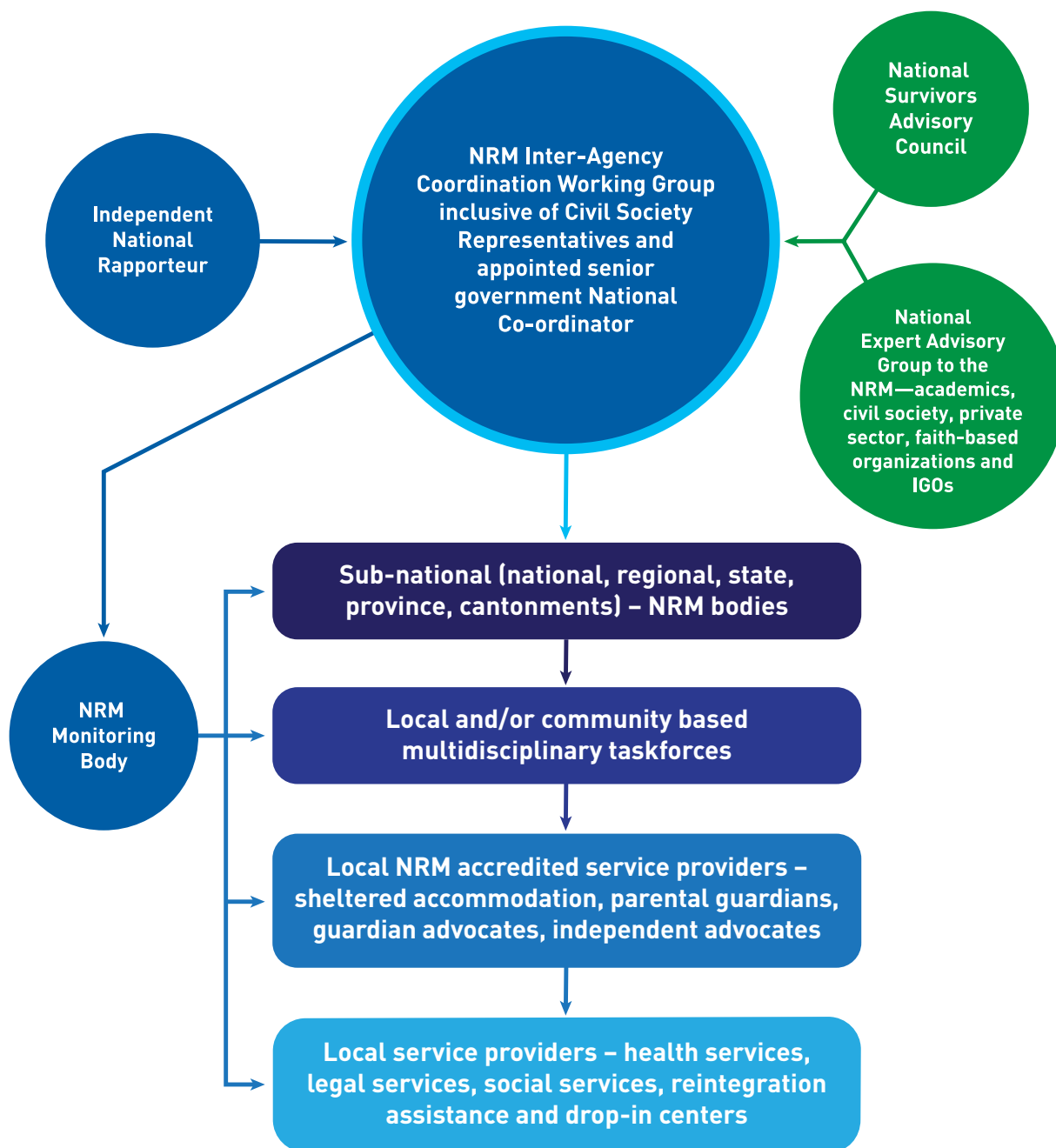
6.5.2 NSTAC complaints and oversight mechanism

Recommended Standard: NSTACs should have a complaints policy in place and an independent oversight mechanism. This should be used for all issues related to professional conduct policy, including on bullying, sexual harassment, discrimination, etc.

In order to protect NSTAC members from any misconduct, it is important to have a complaints policy and oversight mechanism through which members can give feedback and make complaints. All professional group environments face the risk of deterioration and bullying, undermining their purpose and effectiveness. However, when working with any professional group comprised of survivors of serious crimes, there is a particular responsibility and duty of care.

Furthermore, stigmatizing comments, targeting or threats towards members of the NSTAC, directly or online/via social media, should be taken seriously; immediate steps should be taken to address them by following government safeguarding procedures and ensuring members' security is protected.

7 NSTACs as a core component of National Referral Mechanisms



Source: ODIHR, *NRM Handbook*

7.1 Overview

In each OSCE participating State, NSTACs should operate as a core component of an established, sustained and functioning NRM. However, pSs are developing NRMs at varying rates and states should not delay or be deterred from appointing an NSTAC due to the lack of a fully operational NRM. As a core component of NRMs, the establishment of an NSTAC can support the work of government in developing or strengthening an NRM. An NSTAC can inform the

process of developing survivor-informed NRMs, as well as service delivery and procedures, stakeholder education and training, and high standards of frontline support for victims and survivors. OSCE pSs can also request assistance from ODIHR with developing NRMs.

Within an NRM framework, the NSTAC works with, and provides advice and guidance to the NRM Interagency Coordination Working Group, which is chaired by the NRM Coordinator. In all cases where the NRM is not yet fully developed, the NSTAC should work with, and provide advice and guidance to a national anti-trafficking, governmental inter-agency body, working with its Chair.

7.2 The NSTAC mandate

The mandate of NSTACs should be underpinned by national legislation, statutory guidance or (at a minimum) the NRM policy framework. The formulation of the mandate should consider including consultation and provision of expert guidance and recommendations to the NRM or National Interagency Coordination Working Group in relation to the following (but not limited to):

- Legislation, statutory guidance and policy
- Anti-trafficking National Strategy and National Action Plans (NAPs)⁴⁴
- Policy development and implementation, including for NRMs
- Functioning of NRMs
- Policy on survivor leadership and survivor inclusion, including national and international survivor-led and survivor-informed partnerships
- The terms of the working relationship between the NSTAC and the NRM or the National Interagency Coordination Working Group⁴⁵

Each state's consideration and decision about their NSTAC's mandate and its placement in the governmental structure, should reflect the NSTAC's centrality to the state's human rights-based, victim- and survivor-centred, gender-sensitive and trauma-informed approaches to combating human trafficking.

7.3 Establishing an NSTAC within the NRM framework: duties and responsibilities

The Chair of the National Interagency Coordination Working Group or the NRM Coordinator should establish the NSTAC, forging explicit links with other government departments and agencies and ensuring that the relationship between the NSTAC and other government institutions is facilitated and supported.

⁴⁴ ODIHR, *NRM Handbook*, p.377. A National Action Plan is a set of "government-directed goals and policies of a state that identify and address the main obstacles to the promotion and protection of human rights, and in the case of human trafficking, its prevention, suppression and punishment. A strong national action plan develops priorities, conducts thorough research and presents concrete proposals for administrative, legislative, political and cultural solutions to address the issues of focus."

⁴⁵ Including, but not limited to Homeland Security, Department of State, Justice, Domestic Policy, Defence, Health and Social Care, Labour and Employment, Agriculture, Commerce, Transport, the Interior, Education etc.

Two lead roles should be appointed. These facilitate the establishment and continuous functioning of NSTACs:

- An **NSTAC Focal Lead (NFL)** to ensure coordination and liaison with human resources and all relevant government institutions. The NFL's responsibilities include induction and training for representatives of the NRM and/or National Interagency Coordination Working Group on human rights-based, victim- and survivor-centred, gender-sensitive and trauma-informed approaches, ethical survivor inclusion and cultural congruence.
- An independent **Consultant Survivor Leader**. This could be, for example, a member of ISTAC. They will have professional experience that includes government/executive administration and connection to a wide survivor leader network. This appointment can be facilitated by ODIHR, IGOs or CSOs, as well as the state, and the contract must include terms, conditions and remuneration. This role should end as the NSTAC is first launched or, if resources permit and the NSTAC requests it, after NSTAC has been operating for one year.

The **NSTAC Focal Lead** and **Consultant Survivor Leader** should work together from the inception of the development of the NSTAC onwards, to ensure that every aspect of planning, recruitment and facilitation is executed appropriately and efficiently, including on the following key tasks:

- Establishment of the NSTAC
- The ToR, including the selection process, NSTAC composition, the term to be served by members and the mandate
- The selection mechanism for the nomination of the NSTAC Chair, Vice-Chair. (See Chapter 5.3)
- The requirement of government agency(ies) which are responsible for the budget to professionally remunerate NSTAC members for their work and approve and pay any work-related expenses incurred in advance⁴⁶
- Reporting and publication output
- Complaints policy and oversight mechanism; (See Chapter 6.5.2)

⁴⁶ It is imperative that the employment of survivor leaders in any form avoids any and all forms of exploitation. While non-exploitation obviously requires sufficient professional remuneration for all work, it also requires that monies or other resources required to cover expenses are never 'borrowed' in any form from survivor leaders and are therefore paid in a straightforward manner, and in advance.

8 How an NSTAC operates within the NRM framework

8.1 NRM Interagency Coordination Working Group

The [OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking In Human Beings](#) recommends that pSs link *“the activities of NRMs with those of inter-ministerial bodies, national co-ordinators, NGOs and other relevant national institutions to form a cross-sectoral and multidisciplinary team capable of developing and monitoring the implementation of anti-trafficking policies.”* Therefore, each NRM should establish an **NRM Interagency Coordination Working Group** to contribute to the coordination and resourcing of the NRM within their relevant mandates.

The tasks of the **NRM Interagency Coordination Working Group** include contributing to the development of national, regional and international anti-trafficking policies and strategies and improving coordination and coherence between all NRM stakeholders. **National coordinators** can also operate at the sub-national and local levels to monitor and support local NRM teams and networks.⁴⁷

8.2 The NRM national coordinator

The **NRM national coordinator** (or equivalent **mechanism**) is an appointed government body that acts as a central NRM authority. It chairs the **NRM Interagency Coordination Working Group**⁴⁸ and is responsible for coordinating the execution of all activities related to NRM implementation and reporting directly to government.

8.3 Independent National Rapporteurs

The role of **Independent National Rapporteurs** on human trafficking (or equivalent mechanisms) are also directly relevant to **NRMs**. They are responsible for monitoring the national implementation of anti-trafficking policies, reporting findings and contributing to the development of national and international policies and strategies relevant to combating trafficking in human beings. **Independent National Rapporteurs** may seek advice from NSTACs on legislation and policies, and to inform their annual reporting.

8.4 National sub-regional NSTAC-subgroups

The work of NRM sub-national and local teams and networks can strongly benefit from local sub-divisions of the NSTAC, which ensure survivor inclusion and representation nationwide that feeds into the work of the NSTAC overall.

47 See ODIHR, [NRM Handbook](#), pp. 31-32; and see [Permanent Council Decision No. 557](#) “OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings”, 24 July 2003, p. 14; see also, [Directive 2011/36/EU](#) on “Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Protecting its Victims, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA”, European Parliament and Council, 5 April 2011.

48 The OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings recommends that participating States link, *“the activities of NRMs with those of inter-ministerial bodies, national co-ordinators, NGOs and other relevant national institutions to form a cross-sectoral and multidisciplinary team capable of developing and monitoring the implementation of anti-trafficking policies.”*

As the *NRM Handbook* explains, “Trained multi-agency first responders and other professionals who operate within NRM sub-national and local teams and networks can be highly effective in the identification of victims and the delivery of NRM services. They have the advantage of localized knowledge of trafficking patterns and an informed understanding of local capacity and resources. They may also be involved in outreach activities within local communities. Mobile teams are most effective because they can travel to identify victims of trafficking wherever they may be located.”⁴⁹

The authority, structure and composition of sub-national and local teams and networks vary across different countries and localities. However, at a minimum, they should include regional NRM coordinators, representatives from local law enforcement authorities, municipal/local authorities and councils, statutory services, social services, healthcare services and specialist, anti-trafficking and other related NGOs, as well as survivor leaders and/or local representatives of the NSTAC.

8.5 Support for the establishment of NSTACs from ODIHR/ISTAC

ISTAC members can contribute to the work of NSTACs in an advisory capacity, for example, as an independent **Consultant Survivor Leader**. In some cases, members of an NSTAC may also be members of ISTAC and provide their national expertise to further develop international survivor inclusion efforts. In any case, where a person is a member of both ISTAC and an NSTAC, a professional duty of confidentiality must be maintained for their work with each body.

8.6 Support for the establishment of NSTACs by Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

IGOs and CSOs can support NSTACs in different ways. They may already serve as a member of the **National Interagency Coordination Working Group** or an **NRM Interagency Coordination Working Group**. In this role, they can advocate for the establishment of an NSTAC and the necessary legislative amendments and statutory guidance, as well as the overall national NRM policy framework and its links to the NSTAC. They can also support states at the initial stages of establishing NSTACs by fostering survivor leadership and contributing resources towards training and other forms of capacity building activities and professional remuneration (See Chapter 3.4.1) for NSTAC members.

IGOs and CSOs can take the following steps to assist national governments in the development of NSTACs:

- Sensitize and engage relevant government institutions including the **NRM or National Interagency Coordination Working Group** on the need for and benefit of survivor inclusion through workshops, roundtables, trainings, etc.;
- Train the media (online and offline) on human rights-based, victim- and survivor-centred, gender-sensitive and trauma-informed approaches for working with survivors of trafficking;

⁴⁹ ODIHR, *NRM Handbook*, p. 34.

- Organize public campaigns to de-stigmatize the perception of survivors of trafficking;
- Provide training for survivors of trafficking, including through the ODIHR e-learning capacity building course for survivors of trafficking;
- Assist national governments with the development of NSTACs through providing financial support and policy guidance for their functioning; and
- Ensure that there is a clear timeframe for the handover and integration of NSTACs into national governments with a maximum duration of five to six years.

The ultimate objective should be to transfer the NSTAC to the state's **National Interagency Coordination Working Group** or the **NRM Interagency Coordination Working Group**. State resources, survivor leadership roles and NSTAC inclusion at national government level should be developed in parallel. If the establishment of an NSTAC happens with the help of IGOs or CSOs, the transfer should take place seamlessly, and as swiftly as possible.

Other regional bodies such as the European Union and the Council of Europe, as well as anti-trafficking coordination bodies such as ICAT,⁵⁰ can play an important role in promoting an effective and ethical model of survivor inclusion via NSTACs, and support their development at a national level.

9 Promising practices: National Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Councils

United States of America (USA): Survivors Advisory Council on Human Trafficking

The Survivors' Advisory Council on Human Trafficking comprises eleven survivor leaders who are appointed by the President of the United States to advise the President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (PITF) and the Senior Policy Operating Group (SPOG).⁵¹ It has two committees: the Under-served Populations Committee and the Survivor-Informed Leadership Committee.

The Survivors' Advisory Council reviews US federal policy and programmes to combat human trafficking, including those relating to victim service provision, and it provides recommendations to improve and strengthen federal anti-trafficking responses. It serves as a focal point of contact for federal agencies, reaching out to human trafficking survivors for input on anti-trafficking programming and policies in the US. It gathers information from US government agencies, States and the community, and publishes its Annual Report of the U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking.⁵²

⁵⁰ ICAT Issue Brief on Ethical Survivor Inclusion (forthcoming).

⁵¹ The [Survivors Advisory Council on Human Trafficking](#) was established on 29 May 2015 by section 115 of the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act (JVTA) of 2015, Pub. L. 114-22, also known as the [Survivors of Human Trafficking Empowerment Act](#) (see note 28).

⁵² For the annual report, see the website of the [US Survivors Advisory Council on Human Trafficking](#). Note that the annual reports guide the way in which funding is purposed and released for best practices to use on combating human trafficking.

Albania: Advisory Board for Potential and Identified Victims of Trafficking

The Coalition of Shelters for Victims of Trafficking has an Advisory Board for Potential and Identified Victims of Trafficking, with its own Regulation and Code of Conduct.⁵³ The Board is comprised of three (3) survivor leaders who advise one state-run shelter and three NGO-run shelters on addressing the specific needs of victims in relation to identification, protection and support and consistently improving the shelters' policies and practices. This includes recommendations on police liaison, communications with shelter residents, appropriate interviewing conditions, the efficacy of criminal investigations and trial procedures, and access to longer term, independent, move-on accommodation. The Advisory Board participates in bi-annual meetings with the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator and/or the National Referral Mechanism Working Group.

10 Conclusion

Ethical survivor inclusion is the key to effective anti-trafficking work across geographical regions and spanning all related disciplines. It has been recognized globally as a necessary step for ensuring impactful responses to human trafficking, thereby addressing the impunity of traffickers and the effect of their crimes upon millions of adults and children every year. NSTACs play a crucial role in this process for the OSCE participating States.⁵⁴

⁵³ In April 2019, the [National Coalition Anti-Trafficking Shelters in Albania](#), composed of three NGO-run and one state-run shelter, signed a cooperation agreement enabling the establishment of the Advisory Board for the Potential and Identified Victims of Trafficking. This promising practice was submitted by the OSCE Presence in Albania as part of a survey in 2018/2019.

⁵⁴ The [2021 Political Declaration on the Implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons](#), UNGA A/76/L.11, 9 November 2021, affirmed the central role of victims and survivors of trafficking in all anti-trafficking work, stating: "*We express solidarity with and compassion for victims and survivors, call for full respect of their human rights, and, recognizing their role as agents of change in the global fight against trafficking in persons, acknowledge the need to incorporate their perspective and experience in all efforts to prevent and combat trafficking in persons. We aim to actively involve victims of trafficking in persons in designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating such efforts. We will provide victim-centred and trauma-informed care, assistance and services for their recovery and rehabilitation, access to health, including sexual and reproductive health-care services and mental health and psychosocial support services and, working with civil society and other relevant partners, monitor and regularly assess such assistance, with the input of victims, and seek to enhance the provision of long-term support and reintegration, including protection and assistance. We will ensure that victims are treated with respect and dignity and are not inappropriately penalized or adversely affected by laws, policies and other actions taken by government authorities and communities for acts that they commit as a direct consequence of their Trafficking situation*".

11 Recommended Standards

- NSTACs should be established by OSCE participating States as a central component of all effective responses to combating trafficking in human beings and as a mandatory body working with the NRM or equivalent mechanisms.
- NSTAC membership should be representative of the wide diversity of survivors of trafficking with respect to age groups (over 18 years old), gender, ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds, disabilities, and all forms of human trafficking experienced, including transnational and domestic trafficking, and different forms of trafficking exploitation.
- NSTACs should be human rights-based, victim- and survivor-centred, gender-sensitive and trauma-informed in all aspects, promoting the equality and participation of all NSTAC members.
- NSTAC members and other professionals working with NSTACs should be trained in trauma-informed methods of communication and conduct, and in the development of trauma-informed environments. All communication with survivors and survivor leaders should be conducted with a trauma-informed, gender-sensitive and culturally congruent approach.
- NSTACs should be institutionalized, functional and permanently sustainable in implementation of their mandate. They should therefore be planned, funded and resourced by each state.
- NSTACs should have a complaints policy in place and an independent oversight mechanism. This is used for all issues related to the professional conduct policy, including on bullying, sexual harassment, discrimination, etc.
- All NSTAC members should have a formal contract which sets out the terms and conditions of their engagement including appropriate, professional remuneration for all work that is required of them, and advance approval and payment of any work-related expenses.
- The non-punishment principle must be observed throughout the recruitment and term of NSTAC members. It should be stipulated, clearly and explicitly, that no candidate be disadvantaged or excluded from appointment to the NSTAC due to having a criminal record or any other impediment or disadvantage that is a consequence of their trafficking history.

Glossary⁵⁵

Anti-trafficking focal leads	Shall mean, in the context of NRMs, trained and experienced actors allocated within specific sectors who have contacts and routes of referral and to whom suspected cases can be directly referred
Demand	Shall mean, in the context of human trafficking, individuals' acts and behaviors, and socio-cultural systems that lead to fostering all forms of exploitation of persons, especially women and children, that lead to trafficking. Under international law, states are required to adopt or strengthen legislative or other measures, such as educational, social or cultural measures, including through bilateral and multilateral co-operation, to eradicate the demand for cheap goods and services, prostitution, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs, which, respectively, lead to all forms of human trafficking. ⁵⁶
Gender-sensitive approaches	Shall mean the attempt to redress existing gender inequalities when designing and implementing projects, programmes and policies. ⁵⁷
Human rights-based approach	Shall refer to a conceptual framework that is normatively based on regional and international human rights standards and that is operationally directed at promoting and protecting human rights. A human rights-based approach to gender issues uncovers how human rights issues affect women and men differently and how power relations and gender-based discrimination affect the effective enjoyment of rights by all human beings. ⁵⁸
Human trafficking, trafficking in human beings, or trafficking	Shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, the abuse of power or a position of vulnerability, or 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. ⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Selected glossary terms taken from ODHR, *NRM Handbook*, pp. 372-381.

⁵⁶ *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*, UNGA, 15 November 2000, Article 9(5).

⁵⁷ *Gender Equality Glossary*, UN Women training centre website.

⁵⁸ *Rights-based approach to programming*, International Organization for Migration (IOM), 12 May 2016.

⁵⁹ See the definition of THB as defined in the United Nations *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons*, Article 3(a).

National Plan of Action, or National Action Plan (NAP)

Shall mean government-directed goals and policies of a State that identify and address main obstacles to the promotion and protection of human rights, and in the case of human trafficking, its prevention, suppression and punishment. A strong national plan of action develops priorities, conducts thorough research and presents concrete proposals of administrative, legislative, political and cultural solutions to address the issues of focus.

National Referral Mechanism

Shall refer to a co-operative framework within which state actors fulfil their obligations to protect and promote the human rights of trafficked persons by co-ordinating their efforts in a strategic partnership with civil society.⁶⁰

National Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council Focal Lead

Shall refer to an appointed focal point (NFL) who can ensure co-ordination and liaison with human resources and all relevant government institutions. The NFL's responsibilities include induction and training of the representatives of the NRM and/or National Interagency Coordination Working Group on human rights-based, victim and survivor-centred, gender-sensitive and trauma-informed approaches, ethical survivor inclusion and cultural congruence.

Survivors of trafficking

Shall refer to a non-legal term for a person who has been able to exit and overcome their situation of trafficking. It does not connote a permanent status of victimhood, but that of survival. Survivors of trafficking know first-hand the human rights violations inherent in human trafficking and are of vital importance in informing effective anti-trafficking efforts. The term 'victim' is used only for: (a) contexts in which a person is under the direct control of traffickers, or (b) contexts in which the formal recognition of a person's status as a victim of trafficking is directly relevant to obtaining specific legal rights and entitlements.

⁶⁰ See the definition of a national referral mechanism as defined in [National Referral Mechanisms – Joining Efforts to Protect the Rights of Trafficked Persons: A Practical Handbook](#), OSCE/ODIHR, 13 May 2004, p.15.

Trauma-informed approach

Shall refer to methods of working that are based upon an understanding of the harmful effects of traumatic experiences together with fundamental principles of compassion and respect. Any form of professional communication with a person who has suffered human trafficking should be treated as an opportunity to help them to progress towards a long-term situation of safety, stability and well-being.⁶¹ In this context, States must protect victims from further trauma and provide holistic services, including psycho-social counseling.

Victim-centered approach

Shall mean the provision of services by States in a way that ensures trafficked persons are offered the assistance of highly qualified providers and ensure adequate access to justice, shelter, medical care, legal services, psycho-social counseling, culturally sensitive and native language support, and assistance for purposes of reintegration into society. This approach shall be in compliance with international standards, including non-punishment, witness protection, non-refoulement, reflection period, compensation, and access to justice.⁶²

Victim of trafficking, trafficked person

Shall refer to a person who is formally identified as a victim of trafficking, a potential or presumed victim of trafficking.

⁶¹ Rachel Witkin and Dr. Katy Robjant, *The Trauma-informed Code of Conduct For all Professionals working with Survivors of Human Trafficking and Slavery (TICC)*, Helen Bamber Foundation 2018.

⁶² *Trafficking in Persons Report 2007*, United States State Department, June 2007.

