



Tool 6.2 Considerations before identification

Overview

This tool briefly mentions issues that should be considered before the interview, to overcome various barriers to communication.

It is necessary to understand certain factors such as gender, immigration status, fear of reprisals, cultural background and the individual circumstances of potential victims, before beginning the process of identifying them as such.

Gender

Lack of power is a characteristic of all types of trafficked persons. It is exacerbated for women who hold weak social status in their country of origin and whose victimization may result in shame or loss of honour.

Immigration status

- Many potential victims fear that in accessing the criminal justice system, they will be exposed to the risk of deportation or other reprisals, such as incarceration.
- In countries where prostitution is illegal, people who are trafficked into the sex industry fear forced medical check-ups, forced re-socialization and/or imprisonment upon their return to their country of origin.
- Many trafficked victims are told by their traffickers that the authorities are complicit with their trafficking and will harm, arrest or detain them, thereby deterring the victim from seeking assistance.
- Before identifying victims of trafficking, it is necessary to acknowledge that members of immigrant communities are vulnerable to revictimization because of the fear of deportation.

Fear of reprisals

Traffickers often discourage victims from contacting the authorities by threatening them with physical or financial punishment, increasing working hours or removing “privileges” such as time off, sleep, food and amenities.

It should not be assumed that because a person is no longer in the situation of trafficking or in the country of destination that he or she is free of reprisals. Often traffickers use threats against victims’ friends and family, and have access to them.

Relationship with the trafficker

Sometimes victims believe that after a period of abuse they will be able to pay off “debts” and earn money. Some think that the person or people who trafficked them are their recourse for help. In other cases, traffickers become involved in personal relationships with victims, sometimes even marrying them, as a means of controlling their victims.

Cultural background

Many members of migrant and minority communities do not trust the police. The reasons for this include the assumption of corruption, attitudes towards law enforcement in their country of origin and fear that law enforcement agents will not understand or respect their religion, culture or beliefs. Examples of these are practices of voodoo, juju, marabou and “witch doctors”, important in some West African cultures, which can be misused and abused by traffickers. Many women and girls trafficked to Europe undergo powerful rituals obliging them to obey traffickers and repay “debts”. Such significant cultural considerations are often disregarded by law enforcers when they are interviewing potential victims.

Individual circumstances and reactions

- Before commencing interviews, it is impossible to know the individual circumstances of an interviewee, but these circumstances affect how victims communicate (some may be collaborative and others entirely non-communicative) and how they react (some may be passive, others aggressive).
- Some victims will be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Some victims may be addicted to drugs.
- Guidelines which are used when interviewing victims should be adaptable to the individual’s specific circumstances.



Source: Anti-Slavery International, *Protocol for Identification and Assistance to Trafficked Persons and Training Kit*, available at:
www.antislavery.org/homepage/resources/PDF/PDFtraffic.htm