

## Towards a regional model for assistance and support

### Part I Identification

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In the 2006 Rosa guide on identification of victims of trafficking (VOT), the actual conversation or interview process is highlighted as the most crucial and significant method of identification. The identification of a women victim of trafficking for sexual exploitation is obviously the starting point for any assistance, service provision as well as for finding and persecuting the traffickers. Several NGOs and women's rights activists draw attention to the fact that host countries often fail to identify women VOT in prostitution environments. Therefore, in the process of identification it is of the uttermost importance not only to respect the interviewee, but also to be genuinely aware of both open and hidden discriminatory mechanisms in play. The following indicators can be used as a starting point in the identification process.<sup>1</sup>

#### 1 How to identify

##### 1.1 General indicators

- The woman has not arranged her own travelling.
- The woman is undocumented or lacks residence rights.
- The woman has no passport, travel papers; documents or she has false papers.
- The woman does not know what kind of permit to be in the country she has.
- The woman is seeking asylum without knowing why.
- The same person seeks visa for several women at the same time.

##### 1.2 Health indicators

- Psychological problems: anxiety, concentration difficulties, depressions, aggressions, suicide attempts, low trust in others, self-inflicted damages.
- Physical injuries: scars, marks from physical and sexual violence, STDs, pains.
- Physical manifestations: roughness, tiredness, insomnia or difficulties to sleep, muscle tensions.
- The woman is being denied physical assistance by third party and/or is not allowed to be alone with medical/health staff.

##### 1.3 Behaviour

- The woman avoids contacts with public institutions (police, help organisations etc).
- The woman is rejecting help, tries to get out of conversations about her condition.
- The woman story seems studied to be learnt by heart.
- The woman tells different stories about her situation, about her way into prostitution and about her travel to the residence country.

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<sup>1</sup> The indicators summarized in this document are direct translations from the Norwegian organisation ROSA's "Identification manual" (2006). Original version is in Norwegian.

#### **1.4 Prostitution operations/activity - Organisation**

- The activity is organised, but can take on an almost indefinite number of forms.
- The woman says that she's with a boyfriend, partner or madam.
- The woman is not advertising the prostitution activities by herself.
- Several women are using the same advertise and/or telephone number.
- The woman is residing in the same city as in which she is 'selling' sex, may not know her exact address, and is frequently changing addresses.
- The woman has experiences of prostitution in several European countries.
- The woman has connections/attachments to criminal environments.

#### **1.5 Force, coercion & threats**

- The woman was never informed by the instigator about the scope and range of exploitation the selling of sexual services would include.
- The woman is selling sex against her will.
- The woman cannot control when, where and how often she has to sell sex.
- The woman cannot control the number of buyers or what kind of sexual services she must perform.
- The woman cannot get out of prostitution when she wants to.
- Threats are directed towards the woman, her family, friends and 'colleagues'.
- Someone threatens to tell the woman's family in country of origin that she's involved in prostitution.
- The woman has been given false information about prostitution in the country she is in, false information about her rights, duties, service provisions, police and immigration authorities.
- The woman is a direct victim of physical violence or a victim of psychological violence.
- The woman let other women or buyers know about the forms of coercion, control, exploitation, threats and violence she's being a victim of.

#### **1.6 Freedom of movement and control**

- The woman has limited choice as to where and when she can go, and for how long she can be away.
- The woman is a victim of information control.
- The woman is constantly being watched; she cannot go out on her own, participate in social activities or have conversations with 'outsiders'.
- The woman is physically locked up in an apartment/room.

#### **1.7 Economics/Finances**

- The woman is not allowed to keep part of (or all of) the money coming from prostitution.
- The woman is in debt to those who recruited her or those who organise the activity, debts that are being paid by the woman performing sexual services.
- Compared to her living standard, the woman is paying non-proportionally high rent.
- The woman supports someone in her home country.

### **1.8 Other indicators**

- Other women or buyers have witnessed threats, coercion, force and/or violence.
- Information provided by persons who are considered reliable sources.
- Information provided by organisations working with women in prostitution.
- Information provided by governmental/public authorities.

### **1.9 Interviews/meeting**

- Sensitivity when it comes to interviewers' and victim's gender, age, ethnicity and other social background factors.
- Victims of trafficking often express no or low trust in public authorities, let NGOs do the interviews.
- The Victims of trafficking to be involved in choice of interpreter (gender, nationality cultural background etc). Having an interpreter from the same country or cultural background could both give a sense of familiarity, but could also make the Victims of trafficking feel shame or fright.
- Many trafficked persons don't see themselves as victims of crime, but as people with bad luck. Therefore interventions by police officer may be seen more as an oppressive interference than rescue from exploitative situation.