



Cope & Hope

Lessons learnt for the Social Integration of Third Country National Victims of Human Trafficking

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Practical approaches fostering social integration of TCN women victims of trafficking

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Index

List of Acronyms and abbreviations	2
1. Introduction	3
2. Methodology	5
3. Dimensions of analysis	6
4. Activities developed in Cope & Hope program	8
4.1 Welcome Module	8
4.2 Digital literacy with a focus on social and labour integration	8
4.3 Work guidance module	9
4.4 Parenting course.....	9
4.5 Photographic therapeutic Module	9
4.6 NLP-based coaching	10
4.7 Body and movement therapy	10
4.8 Artistic expression through music	10
4.9 Language courses	11
4.10 Women’s groups.....	12
4.11 Art Therapy Lab for mothers and children.....	12
4.12 Individual psychological support	12
4.13 Sewing courses	13
5. Lessons learnt	15
5.1 Dimension of Safety and confidentiality	15
5.1.1 Safety	16
5.1. 2. Confidentiality	18
5.2 Dimension of women’s basic needs.....	20
5.3 Dimension of theoretical frame of action.....	21
5.3.1 Gender perspective	21
5.3.2 Transcultural approach	22
5.3.3 Intersectional approach	23
5.3.4 Human Right approach.....	23
5.4 Dimension of professionals assisting victims of Human Trafficking	24
5.5 Dimension of general best-practices.....	27
5.6 Pitfalls to avoid.....	31
Conclusions	33

List of Acronyms and abbreviations

(EU)	European Union
(TCN)	Third Country Nationals
(VoHT)	Victims of Human Trafficking
(IOM)	International Organization for Migrations
(ECRE)	European Council on Refugees and Exiles
(PTSD)	Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
(CT/ CPTSD)	Complex Trauma / Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
(GBV)	Gender Based Violence
(NGO)	Non-Governmental Organization
(Palermo protocol)	Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children
(Istanbul Convention)	Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence

Note: This report focuses mainly on Victims of Human Trafficking for sexual exploitation. The form of exploitation wasn't always clear in most documents analyzed, reason why the acronym VoHT will be used in a broad sense.

1. Introduction

Cope & Hope is a European project funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), taking place between January 2019 and February 2022. This project is managed by a consortium of 3 entities, two from Italy – Fondazione ACRA and Passepartout Consorzio di Imprese Sociali and one from Catalonia, Spain – Associació Benestar i Desenvolupament. The project aims at the analysis, pilot implementation, capitalization, sharing, and dissemination at local and EU level of best practices aimed at the emotional, social, and economic inclusion of TCN women victims of human trafficking, with 3 expected outcomes:

- 1) Pilot implementation in Barcelona and Milan of an **assistance and rehabilitation model** tackling emotional and psychological obstacles to integration in the hosting society of TCN women victims of trafficking: they will be involved in a multi-dimensional rehabilitation process (health, psychological and artistic therapy) aimed at healing their physical and emotional wounds.
- 2) Pilot implementation in Barcelona and Milan of a **model supporting the social and economic integration of TCN women victims of trafficking and violence** and their families in the hosting society. The model will offer language training, job orienteering services, skills, and competencies enhancement opportunities to foster the autonomy of TCN victims of trafficking.
- 3) **Capitalization and dissemination at local and European level of identified practices aimed at the integration of third-country national women victims of trafficking and their families.** A desk analysis will feed the definition of the pilot model (WP2 and WP3) and it will be capitalized at the national and EU level through an awareness campaign, recommendations, and multi-stakeholder event.

The current report corresponds to the third expected outcome and constitutes a collection of the lessons learnt along Cope & Hope project in the development of the activities designed for assisting TCN women victims of trafficking and violence, hoping to contribute to the general knowledge on the best ways to offer a quality care service to this particular population.

The relevance of the current report lies, thus, on the acknowledgment of Human Trafficking as a transnational crime with severe implications for the direct and indirect victims, thus demanding a set of comprehensive strategies for their recuperation and integration in the host society. Human Trafficking constitutes a serious violation of women's basic Human Rights such as the rights to liberty, security,

freedom of movement, the right not to be subjected to torture, and/or cruel, inhuman, degrading treatment or punishment, amongst others.

Human trafficking for sexual exploitation also constitutes a form of gender-based violence inscribed in the intersection between irregular migrations from the global south (in the case of Europe) and high demand for sexual services in Europe, which is fed through the sexual exploitation of migrant women.

For these reasons, the consequences of trafficking and exploitation on the mental health and the socio-economic conditions of the victims require a specialized and multidisciplinary intervention that can comprehensively respond to these multiple layers of intersecting human rights violations. The difficulties to do so are known by professionals and involve negotiating multiple bureaucratic difficulties, supporting women with little freedom and poor mental health, and combining resources that are often scarce and do not necessarily respond to the victim's needs. The current report is expected to shed some light on some of these most problematic issues.

2. Methodology

To collect all possible lessons learned throughout the Cope & Hope project it was paramount to contact the majority of professionals who participated in the project, both from Italy and from Spain, conducting in-depth interviews of no less than one hour, following a structured set of guidelines which were flexible enough to be adapted to the different profiles of professionals.

The profiles of the professionals who were interviewed went from public policymakers, social intervention professionals in social integration who participated in the whole project, and specialized professionals who participated in shorter activities with the women. These different levels of participation allow us to have a wide scope of analysis from different points of view which are not only comprehensive but complementary.

The following professionals were interviewed for this report:

Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Art Therapy through photography professional external to Cope & Hope project ● Language teacher from a school external to Cope & Hope project ● Language teacher from Cope & Hope project ● Body and movement therapist external to Cope & Hope project ● Social integration professional from Cope & Hope project
Italy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Milan Municipality professionals from the anti-trafficking area ● Professional expert in human trafficking from Cooperativa Lotta contro l'Emarginazione ● Passpartout professional from Cope & Hope project ● Fondazione Accra professional from Cope & Hope project

The interviews were conducted online due to the coronavirus restrictions and not, as initially planned, through in site visits.

Besides these interviews, this report was possible also through:

- Training to the professionals involved in Cope & Hope
- Observation of meetings between professionals involved in Cope & Hope
- Support and supervision to professionals involved in Cope & Hope

3. Dimensions of analysis

The structure of the interviews was developed according to a set of dimensions of analysis that consider the particularities of assisting women victims of human trafficking and gender-based violence. These dimensions were structured as follows:

1. Safety and confidentiality issues

One of the main concerns when working with victims of Trafficking is the safety of the victim and the assurance of confidentiality in the process developed. Trafficking is an international crime that involves complex transnational networks that can endanger the victims' lives and well-being, as well as their relatives' safety.

For these reasons, a focus on safety is of particular importance and separates the intervention of victims of trafficking from other populations who are not necessarily at such risk, suffering coercion, blackmail, or other similar dangers. This dimension aims at exploring the strategies developed by professionals to ensure the safety of the women assisted.

2. Women's basic needs

Victims of trafficking are usually in precarious socioeconomic situations, either if they are already being assisted by care services or not. Either due to the lack of legal documentation, the debt bond, the family's economic expectations, the precarious economic activities they have access to, or the lack of recognized training, the most common situation is that women are in a particular socio-economic form of exclusion, which social programs and projects attempt to reverse.

It is frequent that women who do not have their basic needs covered, mainly housing, food, and pocket money, experience particular difficulties to engage in long-term projects that focus on well-being, recovery, and other aspects that the woman perceives as secondary in contrast with more immediate programs. Often the precarious life conditions constitute a blockage to participating in programs, arriving on time, engaging with the program, and progressing, which leads to frustration both for the woman and for the professionals involved.

It is, thus, relevant to research on the strategies found by the intervening NGOs to cover basic needs or balance the coverage of basic needs and the participation in the projects.

3. Theoretical framework of action

Trafficking can be framed under a wide scope of theoretical frames of analysis, as it constitutes a crime rooted in sexism and colonialism, intersected by globalization, capitalist practices, and

transcultural contexts. The ways in which these perspectives are combined provide important clues to develop better strategies for intervention in the sense that these correspond, ideally, to an understanding of structural issues that affect women's lives, regardless of agency and individual choices.

With this dimension, we wanted to understand which theoretical frameworks were considered relevant for the Cope & Hope project and can be relevant for future projects, as well as consider the ways through which these theoretical frames can be operationalized.

4. Professionals that accompany and support VoHT

Just as theoretical frames shape the type of intervention developed, the professional's training, knowledge, attitudes, and skills are also fundamental to the type of process developed with women victims of trafficking, especially taking into account the complexities of trafficking and its effects at many different levels, from the legal framing, the psychosocial support, the protection measures, healthcare, etc.

This dimension explored what professionals consider to have been the main skills and knowledge that they have put into practice in the Cope & Hope project and that they recommend for similar projects.

5. General best-practices identified

This dimension, which contemplated a set of very open questions, was established to collect generic best practices and lessons learned by all professionals involved in Cope & Hope that represent their subjective experience in the project and the aspects they felt relevant to develop and apply to their practice. Given the wide scope of professionals involved in the project, from diverse backgrounds and skills, it seemed relevant to collect the variety of opinions around the skills and knowledge that were useful for this project and that is recommended to develop for similar projects.

6. Pitfalls to avoid

Finally, and acknowledging that not all choices are successful, it is relevant to explore which pitfalls have occurred along with the project and may occur in similar projects and should, therefore, be avoided.

The dimensions presented will structure the following main conclusions of the document, which are not broken down by the two countries studied, Italy and Spain. Instead, when distinctions are made, these will mainly have to do with different professional profiles.

4. Activities developed in Cope & Hope program

As described before, Project Cope & Hope consisted of different types of activities that were expected to contribute to the emotional, social, and economic inclusion of TCN women victims of trafficking. Such activities, which took place both in Milan and in Barcelona, included job-related workshops and courses and parallel activities focused on personal well-being which also indirectly contribute to the objectives of inclusion.

The current report is a product of the lessons learned in the development of these specific activities, reason why, to get a greater sense of the types of activities that were developed and how these informed the current document, such activities are itemized below:

4.1 Welcome Module

In Spain, this module is part of the Training Modules put forward by the Catalan Government's Department of Social Rights¹ and is directed particularly at people in an irregular administrative situation or at risk of falling into it, asylum or subsidiary protection seekers, refugees and stateless persons.

The modules which were offered through Cope & Hope and administered by public services had a total duration of 120 hours administered by external professionals had a total duration of XX and constitute a mandatory requirement for immigrant populations to obtain legal residency in Spain. In this sense, only women who needed this requirement took these modules, which were the following:

Module A: Basic linguistic competencies in Catalan and Spanish language

Module B: Work knowledge

Module C: Knowledge of Catalan society and its legal framework

The content of these modules consisted of a set of actions and resources to respond to their training and information needs hoping to promote their personal autonomy and facilitate their inclusion in Catalan society, both in the social and labour spheres.

4.2 Digital literacy with a focus on social and labour integration

This module was developed both in Italy and in Spain and focused on how to use technology to make everyday life easier, as well as in administrative procedures and personal or with official bodies/institutions communication. Content was presented both in the desktop computer and also on the user's smartphone. The main topics addressed were:

¹ Departament de Drets Socials de la Generalitat de Catalunya

- Knowledge of text processors in PC and mobile phones/Apps
- Design and edit résumés using templates
- Preparation and writing/editing of cover letter
- Using job search platforms: how to register, how to attach the résumé
- Searching and tracking job offers.

4.3 Work guidance module

This module was developed both in Italy and in Spain and aimed at offering women VoHT assisted by the program some practical tools and support to create a personalized labor insertion itinerary, through a coherent set of actions that improve their level of employability, increasing their possibilities of access to the labor market, and thus facilitating their social inclusion.

The module started with individual interviews with women to define their initial situation regarding job possibilities and to accompany them defining some training and job-related goals. Throughout the following sessions, these initial ideas were developed and an individualized itinerary was planned and followed by the professional.

4.4 Parenting course

This course was created to support women VoHT who are mothers in this new stage of their lives. Concretely it had as purposes to accompany and favor the bonding and growth processes between mother and child and to offer a space where a community support network can emerge with other mothers in the same situation and offer tools and resources concerning pregnancy and motherhood.

The course developed through group sessions in which a variety of topics were addressed, all related to motherhood such as pregnancy and delivery, legal resources, child care, managing the puerperium period, first aid for children growing in this period, and emotional management of early childhood.

4.5 Photographic therapeutic Module

This activity took place in Spain and aimed at developing a therapeutic process with women participants in Cope & Hope in order to allow them to reconnect with their emotions and improve their self-esteem and self-image. This activity included photography sessions where women were the models and were able to choose how to be portrayed. The pictures taken were distributed among women and some group dynamics were developed around these.

According to the professional developing this activity, this process was different for each woman, some engaging more in the activity than others who lived it from a more superficial perspective, maybe due to their resistances and difficulties to face what they lived. Some women were not interested in the activity as they didn't understand its purpose and didn't trust the experience.

Ultimately, for the women who did participate, the experience had positive outcomes and constituted an important step for the improvement of their self-esteem.

4.6 NLP-based coaching

This coaching support puts forward personal techniques and resources that help raising awareness about one's perception of reality in order to be able to change and improve it in terms of mental, bodily and emotional habits which improve well-being. It is a process of accompanying personal growth, which seeks to value and recognize all the possibilities that exist inside and outside of the person.

4.7 Body and movement therapy

The body, movement, and breathing workshops are organized by a therapist and dancer who works with the women who suffered trafficking to offer something at the body level so that they could be more in contact with themselves and with calm, developing a sense of security and self-confidence. Initially, it started from the experience of working with other women, with more basic practices and movement, which is an activity that works for them.

Due to Covid19 restrictions and to safety issues related to trafficking, group sessions could not be developed, which might have allowed developing a deeper individual process. Nevertheless, some specific strategies and basic activities were developed that women could introduce into their daily routine in situations of stress or discomfort.

The activities developed in two moments: an initial activity directed towards strategies for learning to breathe calmly in order to ease anxiety and another moment of spontaneous movement to rebalance and regenerate the body's involuntarily reactions to stress and anxiety.

The professional observed some resistance from women to give space to their well-being as they tend to focus less on themselves than on others. Nevertheless, changes were observed and issues like fear, anxiety, and avoidance were addressed.

4.8 Artistic expression through music

This 10 session workshop inspired on the anthropology technique of storytelling combines this technique with musical expression, with the aim of allowing women victims of trafficking to have a space

to expose and interpret their life stories with their own words and away from the stereotypes of human trafficking and external narratives.

By telling their story and reframing their experiences, women become aware of their resilience and skills, identifying the different ways in which they have overcome difficulties in their lives and how these skills can be used to continue their healing process.

Adapting their story to a musical piece, women also have access to space for artistic development and emotional connection, which is beneficial for their well-being and emotional stability. The presentation of this musical piece in public allows women to work on their self-security and reclaim space on the world stage.

4.9 Language courses

In the case of the project developed in Spain and throughout the program there were two language workshops, one of Catalan and one of Spanish, in order to facilitate women's inclusion in the bilingual host society. An NGO specialized in language teaching was trained in the particularities of victims of Human Trafficking in order to be able to teach classes with a sensitive perspective to these matters. Teaching took place both in groups and in individualized processes.

In Italy, the project developed an Italian language course. Before starting the courses and laboratories' implementation, a preliminary action was implemented in order to engage beneficiaries in the process. In order to do so, the following actions took place:

- Organization of two group meetings for women living in two reception centers in Milan (one for refugees and one for victims of trafficking);
- Individual interviews to women coming from a reception center for asylum seekers to collect personal information on women's migration and family histories and their perception of experiences of violence and to present the activities of Cope and Hope (Italian course, digital literacy course, mentoring for job orienting, sewing lab, story-telling, Art Therapy Lab for mothers and children, individual psychological support, women groups – open discussions on gender based violence, affectivity, parenthood, sexual health)

In these meeting, the objectives of each activity were also presented (improve individual skills oriented to job placement, orientation on territorial services, improve individual well-being through collective and/or individual actions, etc.).

Along these individual meetings, other activities took place, such as:

- collect suggestions from the beneficiaries about how to set the intervention (timetable, need to babysit children, desire to deal with specific topics in the speech group, type of intervention needed for job search)
- start a shared individual plan

Moreover, two meetings were organized in order to support women in the transitions to online activities (downloading the necessary app on devices, introduction to the use of the main apps)

4.10 Women's groups

Through horizontal discussion, women circles address specific issues like parenthood, health, affectivity, sexuality, gender-based violence, racism. Women are led by an expert transcultural facilitator and supported by a cultural mediator who introduces these themes starting from everyday objects (a picture, a newspaper, a song) which women can relate to their own experiences. In this way, women engage in a process of confrontation and mutual recognition of their personal experiences that can be framed in gender-specific awareness. Women are also informed about: the Italian legal frame on women protection, contacts of family and women counseling centers, pediatricians, anti-violence centers.

4.11 Art Therapy Lab for mothers and children

This workshop aimed at women and children had as the main objective to develop a creative, sensory, collaborative, and playful space. In each session women and children works with different material to produce manufactures that represent their memories and their dreams or they are just a way to experiment. The workshop consisted of 10 sessions.

4.12 Individual psychological support

During the initial individual interviews for the engagement of the beneficiaries, all the women we met have been invited to individual psychology meetings: we proposed a private and safe space where to address the topics we had proposed to deal with together within the project (parenting, affectivity, relationships, domestic violence, gender-based violence)...

Nevertheless, counseling had little to do with violence, but more with a reconstruction of life and a vital impulse. The difficulties were linked to the life in collective reception centers, the rules by which they are regulated, their work condition, the difficulties in finding a job, and the difficulties in learning Italian. These issues, brought by the women themselves, were accepted as work plans: working on the here and now in fact helps to recompose past traumas, to restore dignity to the person, and to restore a sense of time.

Another central themes were that of mourning, in the country and on the road: finally, the very strong theme of one's own reproductive life (mourning for not succeeding or vital impetus and planning when one does succeed!).

Psychological support was conducted with the following basic methodological principle:

- Transcultural approach: cultural decentralizing, cultural sensitivity
- Cultural mediator as part of the setting and complementarity of views
- Internal and variable-geometry setting (flexibility of places, times, methods, etc.)
- Active listening and observation
- Testimony method: help in narrating facts and emotions linked to the person's time frame
- Not forcing issues that one does not want to deal with
- giving availability beyond the appointment (almost never used but symbolically acting as a container and guarantor)

One of the major problems detected was constancy when there are other priorities (first and foremost, work) which should not be interpreted as attacks or resistance, but should be incorporated into the meaning of the story and of what is being tackled

4.13 Sewing courses

Three basic level courses have been organized, which included both the learning of basic sewing techniques and the production of small marketable manufacturers. The course was held by three professionals, one of them a tailor with a history of recent migration who spoke three different languages and could easily communicate with women, who could participate regardless of their Italian level.

The objective was to offer a vocational training, and so a training which aimed at:

- introducing to a craft which is both manual and creative, which is useful on a daily basis for self and family care for repairs but also for new creations
- open to learning new skills: for those who at the end of the course were interested in moving on, we arranged for them to be placed on more advanced courses in social tailor shops in the area
- practicing Italian language
- The most regular participants, started the lab Training on the job: marketing of tailor-made products to learn how to make lines for sale with a view to future self-income.

4.14 Training on the job: marketing of tailor-made products

The workshop was conceived and designed during sewing classes in which women produced one small personal gadget at each lesson. The workshop aimed to introduce the women to the stages before sewing, from the birth of the idea, the identification of the right marketable model, to the choice of material and the creation of a logo, with a view to marketing products that could be produced according to what they learned in the sewing course.

4.15 Other specific trainings

Along with the project some specific training activities were also developed according to the women's interests and to the professional criteria about the usefulness of certain activities. The external activities have been sought based on the requests of the users and taking into account (not necessarily in this order):

- The language used in the training;
- Preference has been given to safe spaces, that is, smaller groups, entities with experience in assisting immigrants, etc.
- When activities such as dance or theatre have been sought, the spaces led by multidisciplinary teams have been prioritized.
- The level of demand of the course and flexibility

These workshops had a variety of time duration and were taught by a variety of professionals as they covered a variety of subjects, such as:

- Women's rights
- Manicure and make-up
- Cleaning training
- Child-care training
- Cooking training
- COVID cleaning training

5. Lessons learnt

This chapter on lessons learned constitutes the main purpose of the current report and reveals the conclusions reached through the interviews to most professionals who participated in the Cope & Hope project, as well as stakeholders who participated indirectly.

Before entering any of the selected dimensions, it is relevant to mention that integration projects and programs depart from the detection of certain needs and the design of a set of goals and activities to achieve them. In this design, it is recommended to take into account certain factors, such as:

- › An extensive needs analysis to collect the main necessities and priorities of the potential women to be assisted;
- › Including potential women to be assisted in the decision making process of the activities and methods used along the project. Women VoHT should be in the centre of the entire project;
- › Keeping an open mind to adapt the project's methodology to creative solutions that meet women's needs;
- › Understand project design from a transcultural perspective, framing the activities selected under a global perspective which allows flexibility to adapt to women's cultural references.

Once these generic recommendations about project design are established, a list of lessons learnt is developed below under 6 dimensions.

5.1 Dimension of Safety and confidentiality

Safety and confidentiality are two intertwined concepts that are often indistinguishable from each other. Confidentiality is one of the bases for safety and clearly leads to higher levels of safety. But it is also a right for everyone to be assisted by public or private services. Although the following recommendations are divided between safety and confidentiality, it is often the case that the recommendation could fit either one or the other category.

Practically all interviewed professionals acknowledge the importance of guaranteeing women's safety while participating in the program. This entails taking certain measures, such as:

5.1.1 Safety

Accessing the program

The referral reports that are usually used to access the program should include the answer to several sensitive topics that the receiving NGO or service should know before conducting a first interview. This should include questions which allow a pre-evaluation regarding safety issues and, if possible, a risk assessment. This report is usually filled up by the NGO or public service who knows the woman's situation in depth and can answer questions such as:

- a) Can the woman coincide with other users in the same space?
- b) Is the woman a protected witness?
- c) Is the woman involved in a judicial process?
- d) Is the woman still living or sharing common spaces with traffickers or other victims who are currently being exploited?
- e) Has the woman been threatened lately? When? What measures were taken?
- f) Is there any sort of eminent danger?

Knowing the answers to these questions allows the program to adapt to their needs or even to redirect the referral to a more suitable program, in the cases when risk seems to be high.

When accessing the program, if no risk evaluation has been done in the past few months, one should be performed which is designed to take into account the specific realities of each country or region. Lack of information about women can be an obstacle for safety.

The first interview with the woman is aimed at assessing her needs and establishing a connection. Only after the woman accepts participating in the program are documents signed and the woman is explained all the different levels of consent included. Having an informal conversation with the professional allows to break down resistances and barriers

Assess women in strategies to tackle possible dangerous situations, namely having the police phone number at hand, avoiding parts of the city where they are likely to find people related to the traffickers or even supporting her in moving to another area to avoid being exposed to strong community ties which may endanger her.

The first meeting to be held with a victim of trafficking should be held in a completely safe environment for the women. This involves guaranteeing anonymity; not sharing the space with other people; not disclosing information to more than one professional and complete privacy during the conversation.

During the program

Building safety protocols which a focus on the several aspects impacting victim's sense of safety and their actual safety. These protocols should include a map of concrete actions and responses to situations of high risk or eminent danger, whether the woman is being assisted in site or in cases when she calls for help.

Professionals are advised to have the phone numbers of the police at hand, or other security agents, in the case of anyone connected with the trafficking network environment accesses the building. It is also recommended that professionals establish direct and regular communication with a representative from the police forces, building a relation of trust which can very useful in cases of eminent risk.

The waiting areas of the institution where encounters and sessions take place should be reserved only for women participating in programs and not mixed spaces where people from other programs and people accompanying them wait.

In the case when it is detected that the woman is in eminent danger for herself, others or the professional in a continuous manner, it is recommended that the woman is removed from the program and referred to a safety program like protected shelter houses.

Communication with women

In terms of communication with the women it is important to bear in mind that some women may have their telephones checked by traffickers and others. It is therefore paramount to arrange with the woman the best communication options before sending text or voice messages with sensitive information that could be intercepted.

Ensure the woman doesn't have her mobile phone's GPS activated to avoid being spied upon by the traffickers.

Professionals should adapt to possible communication limitations from the part of the woman, such as lack of GPS, inability to read map and lack of knowledge of the city. These limitations hinder the process and the meetings with the professionals reason why the team of professionals should be flexible enough to meet them in areas of the city that the woman knows, meeting at the metro stop, etc., both for protection and for making her feel safer.

It is recommended that professionals never communicate with women through Social Media: it offers no security regarding confidentiality and messages can be read by traffickers or others.

In the cases when communication is established by message services like WhatsApp, it is paramount to ensure that the woman is able to understand these messages, has the privacy to read them. It is recommended also to sign a consent form to communicate with the woman by WhatsApp;

In the cases when women don't have internet access in their phones the contact takes place by phone call and the professional's adapt to contacting each woman according to what is more convenient for her.

Take into account that some women live in protected shelter houses with hidden addresses: this has to be taken into account when defining with the woman how to access certain parts of the city. Always take other geographic points of reference (metro or bus stop for example) to protect the confidentiality of their address.

5.1. 2. Confidentiality

Group sessions

Before designing group sessions it is important to ask women individually how they feel about participating in group sessions where other women from their country and other countries will be

Ideally, a risk assessment tool should include questions about group sessions;

In the cases when women shouldn't be in contact with other victims or don't want to have this contact, the program defined some security best-practices, such as:

- a) Individual intervention instead of group intervention;
- b) Individual sessions are not consecutive, to prevent women meeting when exiting the session. Between each session there is a gap of at least half an hour to prevent these encounters;

When developing group sessions, no personal information should be disclosed that can provide identifying information about the woman

In sessions which entail a lot of information disclosure, especially psychological support groups, individual sessions should be preferred to group sessions. These last ones should only happen with women who are already in a safe environment and with an evaluated low risk.

In group sessions aimed at learning languages, it is recommended that individual and personal information is not shared between participants.

In group sessions aimed at psychological support, it is preferred to develop individual sessions.

The confidentiality of the victims must be assured when coordinating amongst different services and teams, especially in the cases of victims who are involved in a judicial process and are, therefore, protected witnesses;

The NGO's or Service's Privacy Policy should be disclosed and explained to the women participating, in their own language or a language they can clearly understand. It should then be signed by women, making it clear that the information they share will not be shared with anyone else.

Internal communication

Women should be identified internally through a code and their real names should not be used.

Archives between NGO's should be end-to-end encrypted.

Emails and other written communication should only use women's initials.

Women's documents and files should be kept in a safe place with a key.

The information that is passed onto referrals should be standardized, therefore avoiding biases and incomplete information.

5.2 Dimension of women's basic needs

The lack of coverage of basic needs constitutes one of the main impediments identified for the participation of women in integration programs, given their priorities rely on the short term whereas such programs focus on mid-and long-term life projects. This is true to most population groups but in the cases of trafficked women, the strong psychological impact of trafficking added to the precarious socioeconomic situation worsens most women's psychological capacity to invest in a long-term plan such as training. This is why most professionals refer that immediacy and urgency are characteristic of the intervention with trafficked women, who often have to deal with legal issues, lack of documentation, family pressure to send money, etc. Without stability, women can't commit to following up with such a process so the main recommendation is to ensure the coverage of basic needs before engaging women in integration programs.

Another consequence of women not having their basic needs covered is the lack of motivation, concentration, and engagement in classes, interviews, and other activities developed by the programs. In this sense, professionals recommend that the selection of women to enter a program considers their life situation and the likelihood of them being able to profit from participating in this program.

One of the strategies found was to work with women who are in reception centers who can provide some basic needs such as housing, food, and transport tickets. This strategy, however, may exclude women who are in more vulnerable situations;

The coverage of basic needs is also fundamental for long-term training activities which involve compromise and regularity. Professionals recommend not engaging women in long-term training unless they or any other service can provide for the coverage of basic needs. For this reason, it is important to prefer brief courses or modular courses: women can decide which module to attend and can quit or enter at the end of each module. As previously mentioned, due to job conditions, lack of long-term housing solutions, and single parenting, their life is precarious and they are forced to change their schedules and plans very often.

Trafficking, migration, and gender-based violence organizations are not entirely connected, and working in a network to provide support: to women who are in a limbo, being assisted by several this constitutes a serious problem as it is not clear where they would fit to receive support. There is a fragmented model of assistance amongst different cities or regions which also do not contribute to providing a homogenous model of assistance which ensures every woman the same rights. Under these considerations, the recommendations suggested by professionals have to do with regionally unifying the support systems for VoHT under a shared strategy and building stronger networks between NGOs, other private programs, and public programs.

Professionals consider that emotional support must also be understood as a basic need and not only material needs. Professionals find it is essential to provide spaces to develop emotional and psychological support which can contribute to women's stability and motivation to endure such a process.

The bureaucracy involved in the coverage of basic needs from public institutions may be a strong impediment for women accessing economic support. Professionals identify the need for more agile and faster processes and clearer instructions and information.

Bureaucracy is also an impediment for labor insertion in the sense that work permits often have limitations that are complicated to sort or even to get clear information about. Professionals must be trained in managing this sort of issue and have the resources to do so.

Throughout the program, professionals observe that women are often the main providers of their families, either in their countries or in the host country, being demanded to cover their family's basic needs besides their own. Frequently, family emergencies of sick relatives limited women's possibilities to participate in the program as they had to prioritize access to money or goods. This also affected their concentration in the program's activities and their motivation.

5.3 Dimension of theoretical frame of action

5.3.1 Gender perspective

Trafficking is not a gender-neutral crime: it affects women disproportionately and is rooted in the perpetuation of sexism and the use of women's bodies for male satisfaction and domination, symbolically and practically. Girls and women are trafficked across the world for being female and throughout the trafficking, the process is subjected to several sorts of violence, which can be inscribed under the umbrella term of gender-based violence.

Having this perspective in mind means that professionals must be able to understand and operationalize the weight that gender has on women's decisions and agency (or lack of it) in different moments of their lives, even once they are out of the trafficking circumstances, as their construction of themselves in the world is clearly defined by the social construction developed upon them. This helps explain why so many women present feelings of not being able to do anything else besides selling sex, not being comfortable with assuming a path on their own outside certain institutions (like marriage or the church community), etc.

Including gender perspective as a theoretical frame in the intervention with VoHT entails having in mind the particular gendered limitations and impediments that victims face and the dimension of power that conditions women's choices.

Under such perspective, it is fundamental to understand:

- the real possibilities of choice;
- the gender mandates and roles which are expected from women and which they perform;
- women's particular position in society;
- women's belonging to a network;
- the variety of oppression factors which affect women.

From this point of view, it is paramount to:

- adapt activities' content to women's particular situation;
- adapt activities' to the most relevant topics for the improvement of women's skills and knowledge about the host country;
- create the conditions to facilitate women's participation, adapting schedules to their availability and responsibilities and providing extra services like day care for the women with children or food banks to the women in need;
- consider all different forms of violence women experienced when preparing activities in order not to trigger their trauma. Also bear in mind the language and the examples used the type of questions asked.

5.3.2 Transcultural approach

The human trafficking definition used in Europe and established in the Palermo Protocol always entails a transnational crime. This means that professionals working in this field will always be confronted with women from different countries than their own, migrant women who bring specific cultural backgrounds and visions of the world and their place in it, specific rituals, daily activities, interests, and values, which often collide with those of the host country.

According to the lessons learned from Cope & Hope, incorporating a transcultural approach in the intervention developed would mean:

- Take into account own stereotypes, prejudices and cultural constraints when defining what professionals perceive as the best way to support women. Professionals bring to the table a system of values that belongs to their own culture and that does not necessarily match the system of values of the beneficiaries. There is more than one answer to a certain need and responses should be adapted to the beneficiaries needs. Professionals put forward the importance of ensuring to choose activities that women prioritize, understand and value, starting from the needs of women.

Professionals provide the example of therapeutic activities:

“One of the activities, art therapy, is one of the most difficult activities to be provided to

women. Photography and dance are activities that are attractive for us but not always for them as they perceive it as not useful. We assume these are useful activities to work on trauma but this is our perception on how to face these kinds of issues and problems.”

- Develop activities and communication departing from theory to practice as professionals get to know women and take into account their opinions and values along the establishment of a trusting relation;
- Include ethic principles in transcultural approach, not imposing one’s own values, world visions and moralist understandings;
- Apply victim-centered principles from a transcultural perspective: women’s lives are not stable in all counts and professionals should be ensure not to reproduce oppressive practices through negotiating commitments and ensuring an horizontal approach based on small objectives that can be revised and adapted.

5.3.3 Intersectional approach

An intersectional approach entails taking into account the variety of axis of oppression that crosses women’s lives, especially women in such positions of vulnerability as VoHT. This also means avoiding a unidimensional understanding of the women assisted and exploring together how these oppressions condition her life and choices, finding strategies to navigate those difficulties, and providing women with information about their rights.

Professionals advise to take into account women’s narrative about their story and their understanding, at the same time as professionals accompany in framing these events in a macro—perspective of oppression from an intersectional point of view, providing women with an understanding frame that affects many women around the world.

To ensure an intersectional approach, it is also an understanding of professionals that regular supervision sessions should take place to pass from an action-driven model of activity to a more reflexive space for re-framing the work being done and allowing taking some distance from immediate needs and responses.

Along the same lines, training on anti-oppressive practices is advised to ensure that professionals do not reproduce through their unconscious biases any of the oppressions which have affected women’s lives and avoid paternalistic relationships, allowing self-determination and agency.

5.3.4 Human Right approach

Professionals understand that a Human Rights approach is transversal to all activities developed with vulnerable populations. In the case of Trafficking, the links between how this crime constitutes a

serious violation of human rights are firmly established. Human trafficking and sexual exploitation constitute serious violations of the most basic Human Rights and represent a dehumanization of the victims, as well as discrimination in all fields of life. It is therefore considered by professionals that such perspective ensures that the victim’s rights are placed at the center of the intervention with the aim to guarantee the restitution of such rights.

5.4 Dimension of professionals assisting victims of Human Trafficking

This dimension aims at exploring the skills and competencies of professionals assisting victims of trafficking in order to ensure specialized assistance, given the known complexities of managing cases of human trafficking. The recommendations regarding professional’s competencies, knowledge and skills are itemized below, as well as some recommendations regarding the competencies of teamwork, going beyond individual care.

Professional’s competencies, knowledge and skills
Importance of having professionals who have experience on the field and a deep knowledge on the subjects instead of professionals who vary through different projects.
Professionals trained in Intercultural/transcultural competence and who know how to apply it
Professionals competent in building and keeping networks and strong partnerships among organizations
Professionals who are able to lead theoretical approaches into practices.
Professionals who are trained in Gender perspective in theoretical and practical aspects.
Professionals experienced in active listening, at the same time as they understand and respect the limits of the intervention
Professionals who are aware of the importance of acknowledging women’s agency and respect their choices, without imposing their own world-vision.

Professionals who work from a non-judgmental perspective
Professionals who work from a non-ethnocentric and non-eurocentric approach
Professionals with conflict resolution and management skills
Professionals with fast decision-making skills
Professionals who accept uncertainty and non-linear processes marked by unforeseen situations. Personal processes are not lineal and constant adaptations must be made.
Professionals who ensure principles of social justice and professional integrity
Professionals who can ensure to apply assertiveness, empathy, flexibility and creativity skills
Professionals who understand and guarantee the need for strong commitment and dedication
Professionals trained on current migration trends from the global south to Europe and aware of women's migration paths and how these processes condition their choices and freedom.
Professionals able to identify and contain trauma symptoms, even if not specialized psychologists.
Professionals who understand the distribution of the several functions amongst them, in order to alleviate the burden on each professional and gather different perspectives on each case assisted.
Professionals who are motivated as often work is very frustrating and women's frustration can secondarily victimize professionals.
Schedule periodic team meetings with the entire multidisciplinary team to align on the individual paths of the women assisted

Schedule monthly psychological supervision for professionals as supervision is one of the main means to help staff to: avoid burn-out; establish and negotiate boundaries in relationships with women; distribute the several functions amongst the other professionals; exercise the (self) criticism and awareness with respect to professionals' and beneficiaries' cultural structures.

Specific professional's principles

Non-Eurocentric attitudes

Open to diversity and to listen to the worldview of women

Deconstruction of biases in professionals

Sensitivity and experience with the population, from practice and not from theory

Have access to training from non-European women

Ease with the languages used by women

Team work

Multidisciplinary teams are the most recommended to respond to the different levels of intervention needed (psychological, social, legal, etc.)

Important to include professionals from other sectors, especially in what concerns job integration, such as businesses which are willing to employ women VoHT, organizations which can provide training, etc.

It is important to recognize that organizations must work together and not as competitors, networks have to be seen as strategic and put women's needs in the center of the intervention. Competition between different NGO's and programs is seen to have a negative effect on the development of the objectives of the programs;

It is highly relevant to know all other projects working on the same subject and other projects with which to establish network relations.

It is important to find ways to share information to coordinate and collaborate, preventing re-victimization and duplicity of work, still preserving the confidentiality of the victims.

5.5 Dimension of general best-practices

This dimension aims to identify some generic best-practices developed in the direct care intervention with women VoHT, which were not necessarily included in previous dimensions and which can materialize and exemplify some of the theoretical principles into more concrete measures.

Nevertheless, some of these best-practices do overlap previous recommendations, which must be considered as an emphasis on the specific subject which appear repeated in this dimension.

Having a **first training on trafficking** was a best-practice mentioned by most participants, both professionals who have already been working with victims of trafficking before, in order to assure that all professionals are on the same wavelength, as well as by other professionals who were not in contact with victims of trafficking before such as professionals from other areas (photography, body and movement therapy, etc.);

The **personal itineraries designed to assist women** should be coherent and realistic: balance between women's urgency to work and their real possibilities (especially when women are not comfortable with the language and can't speak and write yet).

Develop alternative solutions regarding **cultural activities and experiences** that go out of the most common activities developed with the immigrant population and in order to facilitate a more comprehensive integration process. Example: following a theatre and arts itinerary.

Along the same lines, another best-practice in assistance had to do with making **visits and outdoor activities** with women since it is important to support them in contacting with services, resources and community spaces to develop a sense of belonging and a recognition of citizenship rights. This will also allow to develop basic competences to move around the cities, reducing their social anxiety and giving them more power through physical autonomy, appropriate the spaces of the city.

Development of **courses and workshops** focused on particular needs and adapted to solving their particular problems. Example: Family nutrition workshop so that women know how to use the ingredients available in the host country for them and their children in a healthy and balanced way.

The assistance process must be very **individualized and personalized**, taking into account the differences between VoHT and avoiding stereotyping them and unify them under the victimization label.

Each process must be tailored to each particular victim and adapted to her specific needs.

It is important to establish **limits to the professional’s intervention**, therefore avoiding that women see the professional as a friend and lead conversations to subjects that are not appropriate for a professional relation.

One particular important best-practice directed at **women in poorer socioeconomic situations** is to have available transportation tickets and other ways of economically support women along the process. Many professionals mentioned how women in more vulnerable conditions feel less inclined and have less possibilities to participate in programs. Professionals acknowledge the importance of covering **women’s basic needs** before they can participate in recuperation processes.

Bear in mind that the absence of available places at public kindergartens prevents many mothers from participating in the courses. Although it is a duty of public institutions, it would be important to implement specific measures to cover the needs of women who need to undertake paths towards autonomy. From the point of view of this project, for example, foreseeing figures to take care of the children while the mothers do the course, and putting into account the rental of suitable spaces.

Specifically regarding **job market related activities**, professionals recommend:

Job market related recommendations
Ensure to develop workshops that make sense to the woman’s trajectory and adapted to the labour market
Identify the material needs of women and adapt training sessions to their real possibilities in terms, for example, of access to mobile phones, computers, internet, etc.
Give preference to small classes of 5 to 10 women to assure a homogeneous level of understanding and everyone’s participation.
Give preference to involving trainers with similar geographical and biographical background, so that women can participate in the courses even with a low level of host country language. In this way they see themselves immediately valued and are motivated to commit in a training path. Thus, they can start learning a job while learning Italian, instead waiting for the expected level. Many courses, in fact, have language requirements that, while not high, often prove difficult to achieve, making women individual path longer and often frustrating.

Adaptation of general training to the idiosyncrasies of victims of Trafficking. For example: Development of a course on digital tools that is adapted to specific needs, such as using the Calendar on the mobile; learning to use google maps to get to appointments; learn how to use communication Apps and all their possibilities; Learn how to use google translate for better communication; create and use an email account; learning how to keep information confidential and untraceable.

It is recommended to perform training activities in NGO's that are used to working with vulnerable populations since the learning process may not be linear and some flexibility is required.

Development of personal and professional skills and not only work experience and trajectory.

Create a résumé by competences instead of one only focused on job experience and formal training. This way professionals can ensure to put forward women's relevant skills and compensate for the frequent lack of job experience.

Have access to training from non-European women

Take advantage of the existence of a reference person to bond with the women in an external educational program. Not just assume that women will go from one professional or NGO to another in a light way as women have a hard time bonding with professionals and programs.

Follow up closely, understanding women face certain obstacles to their participation in educational programs, both material and psychological, due to their particularly vulnerable situation.

Professionals should keep in mind that career evolution constitutes a long process, especially for victims of trafficking and women in vulnerable social and personal positions. Therefore, they should focus on preparing women for achievable jobs which allow them to gain experience and skills and then moving on to higher positions.

Job training courses are available in the market but often women VoHT cannot access them due either to their cost, the admission requisites regarding previous formal education or their legal status. On the other hand, these courses are designed for a general public and from a Eurocentric perspective and do not have specialized educators who can adapt to the idiosyncrasies of trafficking victims. It is therefore recommended that projects and programs are able to develop their own specialized courses that are useful to access the labour market and which can grant women a certificate of participation and completion, as formal as possible.

Job training should contemplate a worker's rights module so that women gain knowledge about general legislation on rights and specific rights regarding their professional category. On the other hand, as VoHT do not constitute a homogeneous group, different labor rules may apply to different women as some are asylum seekers, some have no work permit, some have work limitations, etc., reason why, first of all, women should get to know the specificities of their particular situation, avoiding comparisons with other women.

Besides this, some practical tools should also be part of such module, regarding:

- › Reading a job contract
- › Negotiating a job contract
- › Calculating gross and net salary
- › Calculating holidays, days off, rotating hours and other similar rights
- › Reading a salary sheet
- › Basic taxes and accounting notions

Because many of the women assisted by professionals come from impoverished backgrounds and did not have prolonged access to formal education, professionals identify some difficulties in developing training sessions in of the traditional sort for European standards. Therefore, professionals recommend some strategies to keep women engaged and motivated, such as:

- › Make the classes as dynamic and interactive as possible
- › Go beyond words and use other materials such as videos, pictures, cards and objects, putting forward strategies for visual learning and ensuring activities involving creativity
- › Develop activities which place women in real life scenarios, such as role-playing job interviews
- › Keep each class no longer than 1h30 minutes

Specifically regarding **therapeutic activities**, professionals recommend:

Therapeutic care recommendations

Importance of being aware of the real possibilities of the woman regarding their availability and her priorities. Trafficking victims have various ways of handling the consequences of trafficking in their mental health and these activities must start by performing a diagnosis of the woman's needs and coping mechanisms.

Before initiating a therapeutic process, it is therefore very important to evaluate the emotional state of women in the first contact and diagnosing her the state of mind before making decisions about the therapeutic process and all other activities to be developed. In this sense, this diagnosis should be dialectical, including women's self-assessment regarding her own mental state.

It is also important to know the conditions in which the woman lives, namely if she still have links to the traffickers or may still be threatened or in debt as these conditions may hinder her capacity to undertake any sort of therapeutic process and this would also have to be an adapted process.

In the beginning of the therapeutic process, it is important to get to know the woman's network of support and how this conditions the work that can be done with the woman

Along the therapeutic process, the multiple professionals assisting the woman should be in contact and coordinate on the topics addressed, in order to complement each other's intervention and preventing revictimization and intervention duplicity.

Develop therapy strategies outside the standard therapeutic approaches to better adapt to the woman's ways of expressing, cultural frames and individual needs. Example: Coaching with a practical focus on handling daily routines; Movement and dance therapy focused on healing the mind through the body; Mentoring volunteer accompanying women in daily-life activities, exploring the city and transports, etc.

5.6 Pitfalls to avoid

● Project design

Project design tends to overestimate the number of women who will be able to fully benefit from the program. Psychosocial instability and prioritization lead women to, very often, develop intermittent processes without fully complying with all the expected outcomes.

On the other hand, also the profiles of the participants are often overestimated, assuming that participants will constitute a more homogeneous group than they actually do.

Finally, also regarding project design it is often not included in the budget a specific budget for women transport and basic needs coverage to assist classes and when they face emergencies or necessities are not able to fully participate.

Given the previous possible biases, it is highly recommended that project design integrates an in-depth diagnosis of the reality of women VoHT who will be the possible beneficiaries of the projects, performing a realistic needs analysis and adapting the project design to the effective situation of the possible beneficiaries, therefore avoiding a mismatch between project design and project beneficiaries expectations and possibilities.

● Navigating agency and possibilities

The intervention with VoHT navigates between the acknowledgment of women's agency from a Human rights perspective and the practical impediments which characterize VoHT real possibilities of

participation and inclusion, being those legal, bureaucratic, cultural or from a mental health perspective. It is, therefore, key, to avoid the expectation on linear processes and the frustration derived from its non-completion.

Along these same lines, a reference must be made to the dangers of placing too much weight on the victim for her to free herself from her situation: women are often in very complex circumstances which involve real threats to her life or the lives of their families. Although an intervention focused on the personal well-being of the woman putting her in the center of the process is desirable and relevant, professionals must be aware of each individual situation as some women are not necessarily at risk and others may be, therefore facing limited choices. Insisting on women making choices without being aware of their real situation may put women in danger, leading them to rushed actions which may have consequences or may lead women to withdraw from professional services due to feeling pressured.

● **Eurocentric perspective and cultural disqualification**

Eurocentric perspective was mentioned by many professionals as a clear pitfall to avoid, being characterized by the development of intervention strategies and attitudes that are only relevant and valid under a traditionally European vision of the world, therefore, being unable to relate to other forms of understanding oneself in the world and to negotiate communication strategies outside one's cultural frame. Eurocentrism can reflect itself in many ways: from the design of the programs themselves (establishing activities that have a cultural meaning in Europe but not in the southern part of the globe, for example) to the individual level of interaction with the victims, expressed in things like the fetitization of their culture, specific cultural assumptions about their priorities, the implicit or explicit assumption that European values and ways of doing things are superior to the ones of their countries, etc.

This tendency is understood to be an implicit bias and not an action or attitude expressed willingly with the intention to harm others. Nevertheless, it often leads to a cultural disqualification of the person being assisted and to the perpetuation of uneven distributions of power, placing the professional in a role of domination in the social scale and perpetuating that domination through eventually oppressive practices.

● **Therapeutic process**

Although professionals recognize the significance of the therapeutic process, this understanding clashes with women's interpretation of mental health processes and mental health itself, which is mainly due to cultural frames and understandings about sickness and health and to stereotypical images of mental illness. It is, therefore, paramount to avoid imposing therapeutic processes which women are not

open to and will not prioritize, as well as to implement such processes from a very refined transcultural approach. The same applies for imposing therapeutic processes to women who, due to socioeconomic circumstances, are not able to prioritize a space of self-care.

- **External professional's training**

Avoid involving external professionals without specific training on trafficking and on confidentiality and security issues as their proposed activities may hinder women's safety and sense of safety. Often external professionals who are involved for a short time in a very specific activity end up not receiving appropriate training, therefore not knowing that they might unwilling be re-victimizing women and exposing them to possible dangerous situations.

- **Family constraints**

Avoid developing activities which do not have into account the need for women who are mothers to leave their children, a situation which often hinders women's processes as they are unable to pay for daycare. Professionals recommend habilitating a space with a professional who can take care of women's children in a safe environment while they participate in training sessions, therapeutic sessions or other activities.

Conclusions

All previous considerations put forward the concrete specificities which involve the psychosocial intervention with women victims of human trafficking and the set of activities to be developed to contribute to their social integration in the host country and the reparation of the desecrated of their basic human rights.

The fact that the crime of trafficking entails transnational movements, a continuum of gender-based violence, and concrete cultural clashes means that the display of professionals and activities developed to achieve integration objectives requires a comprehensive scope of strategies, skills, and knowledge.

It seems fair to affirm that from project design to the completion of objectives, the best interest of the victim under the full respect for Human Rights requires that all intervention is adapted to their specific needs and cultural frame, establishing bridges between concrete cultural backgrounds and the context of the host country.

It also became obvious that the expertise of care professionals is one of the main recommendations mentioned, as it is essential to guarantee women's safety and the development of an adequate integration process. Professionals are expected to respond, from a multidisciplinary strategy to the complexities that the assistance to VoHT entail and that goes from the management of bureaucratic and legal procedures, the psychosocial accompaniment and care, the coverage of women's basic needs, and the entire process of supporting women in the development of pre-labor and labor skills.

The professional's expertise is expected to be rooted not only in experience and training but also in the deep understanding of the theoretical frames which inscribe the crime of trafficking in the intersection between gender inequality, post-colonialism and transculturality in the context of the existing limitations to migration rights. These approaches allow professionals to integrate daily practices adapted to this particular population at all different levels, from institutional to individual actions.

Having in mind objectives of social inclusion through the labour market it is also worth mentioning as a relevant conclusion that not only activities aimed specifically at job insertion are relevant for women VoHT processes but also satellite activities which improve personal well-being, self-esteem and trust in one self, as well as soft skills and cultural references. This is particular relevant due to the transcultural nature of Human Trafficking and the consequences on the victim's mental health of the whole trafficking process, as part of a recuperation process which should also go accompanied by specific therapeutic activities.

Finally, it is paramount to recognize the multifaceted dimension of care programs and projects directed at this collective, having to respond to the complex consequences of trafficking from a psychosocial and legal perspective and entailing a sequence of bureaucratic and legal procedures and social integration strategies requiring a multiple and comprehensive intervention.



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