

The Science (and Art) of Understanding Trafficking in Persons

Good Practice in TIP Data Collection

NEXUS
Institute

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**The Science (and Art) of
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Trafficking in Persons:
Good Practice in TIP Data
Collection**

Foreword

For many years, most reports on human trafficking predictably included the words “there is a dearth of data” or “there is a dearth of research”. However, the universe of data collection and research on human trafficking has been rapidly expanding, particularly over the last few years. Indeed, during the course of this multi-year project it was challenging to keep up with the global explosion of data collection efforts and discussions about the methods and approaches to capture the nature and prevalence of human trafficking.

The good news is that the overall quality of TIP data and research has improved substantially as the anti-trafficking field has matured. It is less common, for example, that a “research” report on human trafficking is based solely on desk research derived entirely or primarily from general internet sources and secondhand anecdotal accounts. Overall, there have been advances in the soundness of methodologies and evidence, as well as increasing attention to ethical considerations in TIP research.

But gaps and challenges remain. One critical shortcoming is that of thoughtful, independent analysis of data. And irrespective of progress in the quality of research overall, methodologies and approaches used in the collection of data are still too often flawed or poorly implemented. Compounding this, trafficking research continues to be plagued by an unwillingness to openly and honestly explain and account for the limits of the data collected and, thus, the conclusions and recommendations which are derived. As a result, the quality of data collection and research around the world continues to be mixed: some of it is rigorous and revealing while other initiatives are deeply flawed and unhelpful in illuminating important truths about human trafficking. Unfortunately, some efforts, including in some cases by the most prominent international and multi-lateral organizations, would not stand up well to the question: what is the contribution of this work to advancing our knowledge about human trafficking?

This publication is part of a series of studies produced in the context of the NEXUS Institute’s research project entitled *Good Practice in Global Data Collection on Trafficking in Persons: The Science (and Art) of Understanding TIP*. Our objective in this research series is to address the identification and elaboration of good practice in ways that will help guide organizations, institutions, researchers and others to strengthen their data collection and accelerate the collective acquisition of important knowledge about human trafficking. We undertook our work understanding that improving TIP data collection is vitally important as it provides a foundation for the enactment and implementation of more effective evidence-based anti-trafficking policy, law and practice, which, in turn, will lead to more effective protection of trafficking victims and prosecution of traffickers. Our project examined different types of research and data collection efforts on trafficking in persons in multiple countries and regions. NEXUS researchers conducted interviews with more than 120 key informants from around the world, representing NGOs, research organizations and institutions, academic institutions, international organizations, private sector actors and government officials. It is also based on information from survivors of human trafficking who have shared their experiences of TIP data collection and how it can be improved. We hope that readers will benefit from the many different experiences and perspectives captured in this study and will be encouraged to apply this combined knowledge and experience to new situations and contexts where data collection on human trafficking is undertaken.

Nevertheless, the topic addressed by this study is a daunting undertaking and we acknowledge the limits of what we have produced. It was not possible for this project to be an exhaustive treatment of all issues that arise in TIP data collection. There are issues and

topics that remain to be examined in future with additional analysis to be made and examples of good practice to be identified.

Some readers may have wished that we had “named names” of organizations, research studies or TIP data collection projects that are the subject of much discussion and some controversy within the anti-trafficking community. Debates of methods and approaches are vitally important in advancing this field of work. However, this study is broader than a consideration of the specifics of any individual project’s or organization’s research approach. We believe that the greatest contribution of this study is to present and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches and to share what was learned about good practice in this field rather than focusing on providing point-by-point critiques of specific projects or studies. Rather, with the additional information provided in this publication, readers will be better armed to be able to thoughtfully evaluate and decide for themselves the promise and limits of the methods and approaches of particular projects and studies as well as the usefulness and relevance of different efforts in relation to specific questions and issues that need answering. We believe that this study will help support informed evaluation of those initiatives and the formation of constructive criticism leading ultimately to needed improvements in the future. So equipped, readers will be able to better assess for themselves what data collection efforts move us significantly further in understanding this crime and human rights violation and knowing how to respond more meaningfully and appropriately. For example, when and to what degree should a large proportion of the funds available for research be dedicated primarily to estimating “the number” (that is, the prevalence of trafficking cases) compared with a more encompassing and integrated research strategy to address a broader range of knowledge gaps?

One final word: A serious constraint on meaningful data collection and analysis is lack of will and commitment. This seems incongruous given the many public declarations by government leaders and donors of the need for better data and research and proclaiming their commitment to improve it. But, in fact, leaders discover that high quality and robust TIP data collection – particularly involving field work with a meaningful commitment of time, engagement with frontline and grassroots stakeholders, and robust ethical protocols – is a costly and labor-intensive activity. Once this is recognized and the lights of the podium are dimmed, relatively few governments or others end up funding high-quality in-depth data collection and research.

The work underlying this study was undertaken by NEXUS Institute within the framework of a multi-year research project supported by the United States Department of State’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. The leadership and commitment represented by this support for multi-year research is to be commended. I am grateful for the opportunity this has afforded for the NEXUS Institute to explore these important issues.

I also thank those who participated in this research – more than 120 TIP researchers, TIP experts, data collection project staff and National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms. This study would not have been possible without the willingness of these very many professionals from countries and regions around the world to speak candidly and often critically about their work including the challenges they have faced, what they have learned about what does (and does not) work and the complex legal and ethical issues that arise when conducting research about trafficking in persons. The project and this study benefit from the knowledge and experience that they have shared with us.

I want to thank and commend the work of the authors – Rebecca Surtees, Anette Brunovskis and Laura S. Johnson – who have produced this important and in-depth study. Identifying and examining good practices in TIP data collection was an enormously challenging undertaking. Led by Senior Researcher Rebecca Surtees, this broad ranging, multi-year research spanned multiple regions and countries and has resulted in significant new

knowledge that can be reflected upon, discussed, adapted and utilized by others who are engaged in efforts to more meaningfully combat human trafficking and support survivors. The authors' professional and committed efforts in tackling and realizing this project is, in my view, highly laudatory.

I also thank the very many individuals who, after having survived human trafficking, have over the course of many years graciously and generously helped us to learn not only about their trafficking experiences but also about their experiences of engaging in research and data collection. Their advice, feedback and also criticism have contributed immeasurably to this paper and our understanding of human trafficking in our work.

Stephen Charles Warnath
Founder, President & CEO
NEXUS Institute

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This study is part of a multi-year, multi-country undertaking involving desk research as well as extensive interviews with TIP researchers, TIP experts, National Rapporteurs-equivalent mechanisms and trafficking victims. The project was made possible with support provided by the United States Department of State Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (J/TIP). We are deeply appreciative of the generous support and commitment to research by J/TIP and its leadership across multiple administrations. J/TIP recognized the value of longer-term field research to acquire insights about TIP research and data collection and collaborated with the NEXUS Institute in the overall conception, methodology and implementation of this study. In addition, J/TIP's Janet H. Zinn and Abigail Long reviewed and provided helpful feedback on this study.

At NEXUS Institute, Stephen C. Warnath, NEXUS Institute's Founder, President and CEO, provided leadership and guidance to the project as well as expert perspective and feedback into this study. We are grateful to those with whom we had the pleasure of working on this project. Maria Antonia Di Maio, Matthew Mullen and Rebecca Napier-Moore conducted interviews with key informants and provided valuable research assistance. Joy Pattarin provided helpful support in transcribing interviews with key informants. We are also grateful to the Fafo Institute, where Anette Brunovskis works, and with which NEXUS has enjoyed a longstanding research partnership over many years and on many different research projects.

This study is based on extensive interviews with more than 120 TIP researchers TIP experts and National Rapporteurs-equivalent mechanisms whose experiences and insights about the opportunities, challenges and shortcomings of TIP data collection have shaped our framing of good practice and offer critical examples and lessons to the reader.

We also thank our colleagues, eminent experts in the field of human trafficking, who reviewed this study and provided essential feedback and guidance. Their individual and collective input and validation of this publication strengthened its rigor and enriched its substance in important ways. This includes: Anne Gallagher (Independent Legal Scholar); Benjamin Harkins (Technical Officer, International Labour Organization, Thailand); Deanna Davy (Senior Research Consultant, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Regional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific, Thailand); Fabrizio Sarrica (Team Leader UNODC Research on Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants, UNODC Austria); Jordan Greenbaum (International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, USA); Kharisma Nugroho (M&E and Learning Advisor USAID Asia CTIP, Thailand); Maria Antonia Di Maio (Independent Consultant on Child Protection and Human Trafficking Issues, Italy); Mike Dottridge (Independent Consultant on Human Rights and Human Trafficking Issues, UK); Mark Sidney James Mansour (Independent Consultant, USA); Marika McAdam (Independent Legal Advisor, Thailand); Matthew Mullen (Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies, Mahidol University, Thailand); and Rita Penedo (Director of the Observatory on Trafficking in Human Beings, Portugal).

Finally, we are also deeply grateful to the very many trafficking victims whom we have interviewed over almost two decades of research on human trafficking. We have learned from them not only about various aspects of their experiences and lives but also how we can improve the way that we conduct TIP research and data collection in order, ultimately, to result in more effective and appropriate efforts to combat human trafficking. As always, we are humbled by the courage of these survivors.

Rebecca Surtees
Anette Brunovskis
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Table of Contents

FOREWORD	1
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4
TABLE OF CONTENTS	5
ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	11
1. INTRODUCTION	12
2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS	14
INTERVIEWS WITH KEY INFORMANTS	14
Interviews with TIP researchers and TIP experts	15
Interviews with TIP data collection staff	15
Interviews with National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms	16
INTERVIEWS WITH TRAFFICKING VICTIMS.....	17
DESK RESEARCH – LITERATURE AND DOCUMENT REVIEW	17
REVIEW PROCESS	17
LIMITATIONS AND CONSTRAINTS.....	18
3. FRAMING THE ISSUE. DEFINING AND CONCEPTUALIZING TIP DATA COLLECTION	20
WHAT IS TIP DATA COLLECTION?	20
Data collected for administrative purposes	21
Data collected for research purposes	22
Distinguishing between data used for administrative purposes and research purposes.....	22
TIP-RELATED DATA COLLECTION: THE 3PS.....	23
PROTECTION- AND PROSECUTION- RELATED TIP DATA	24
4. FRAMING GOOD PRACTICE. CRITERIA OF GOOD PRACTICE IN TIP DATA COLLECTION	27
FRAMING GOOD PRACTICE	27
CRITERIA TO ASSESS GOOD PRACTICE IN TIP DATA COLLECTION	27
 Data quality	28
 Relevance and usefulness	30
 Accessibility	30

	Timeliness	31
	Cost appropriateness	32
	Legal and ethical issues	33
APPLYING GOOD PRACTICE CRITERIA. EXTERNAL FACTORS AND CONSIDERATIONS.....		33
	Different fields of work.....	34
	Different purposes and goals of data collection.....	34
	The perspective of different stakeholders	35
	Different situations and contexts.....	36
Framing good practice. Balancing criteria and context		37
5. IDENTIFYING GOOD PRACTICE IN TIP DATA COLLECTION. LESSONS FROM THE FIVE STAGES OF THE DATA COLLECTION PROCESS.....		39
STAGE #1. DESIGN AND PLANNING.....		42
STEPS AND CONSIDERATIONS IN DESIGN AND PLANNING.....		43
Define data collection topic, purpose and scope		44
Frame the topic, issue(s) or question(s) of the data collection.....		45
Clarify the purpose of data collection.....		47
Consider the scope of the data collection.....		50
Clarify expectations related to data collection		53
Formulate data collection questions.....		57
Formulate data collection questions linked to topic.....		58
Ensure definitional clarity and precision.....		60
Operationalize definitions and terminology		67
Review existing literature and research		69
Find existing literature and research		69
Systematically review and assess relevant literature		71
Select a data collection approach and method (quantitative, qualitative and mixed approaches and methods).....		75

Assess different data collection approaches and methods (quantitative, qualitative and mixed approaches and methods)	75
Quantitative approach and methods	77
Qualitative approach and methods.....	81
Mixed methods approach.....	83
Choose a data collection approach and method	85
Ensure skills in the relevant approach and method when selecting researchers.....	89
Determine how the approach and method are influenced by the specific context	90
Consider participation and involvement of stakeholders and end users in data collection	91
Identify data sources and data providers	98
Assess possible data sources.....	98
Determine access to data sources.....	101
Assess the appropriateness of data sources	105
Identify biases and limitations in data sources.....	108
Develop or apply legal and ethical guidelines and protocols	115
Apply the principle of “do no harm“.....	118
Ensure voluntary and informed consent.....	122
Guard anonymity and confidentiality	127
Consider the safety and well-being of research participants and data collectors	129
Apply child protection principles including the “best interests of the child”	133
Implement procedures for review and adaptation	136
Prepare a work plan for data collection	136
STAGE #2. DATA COLLECTION.....	141
STEPS AND CONSIDERATIONS IN DATA COLLECTION.....	141
Select data collectors, as relevant and appropriate	143
Ensure technical competence and skills in data collection.....	143
Ensure knowledge of and sensitivity about TIP.....	145
Select a sample and implement a sampling strategy.....	151
Consider representativeness and validity	152
Assess access to a sample	155
Select, design and test data collection tools	157
Use or modify existing data collection tools	158
Design new data collection tools	159
Develop guidelines for data collectors.....	163
Prepare explanatory information and referral materials.....	164
Test data collection tools	166
Consider the use of technology in designing data collection tools	167

Develop a data collection manual	170
Refine legal and ethical guidelines and protocols for data collection.....	171
Ensure informed consent	172
Implement guidelines and protocols for contacting data providers and research participants	175
Ensure anonymity and confidentiality	177
Assess when data collection reveals risk or abuse	179
Support referrals for assistance and support	181
Guard the “best interests of the child” during data collection.....	183
Carry out training and on-going supervision in data collection	183
Train and supervise data collectors.....	184
Train and supervise translators, interpreters, transcribers and support staff.....	187
Document the data collection process	190
Revisit Stage# 1 work plan and adjust, if needed	192
STAGE #3. DATA STORAGE, MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT	195
STEPS AND CONSIDERATIONS IN DATA STORAGE, MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT	196
Consider options in setting up a database	197
Identify the best system for one’s needs	198
Determine the appropriate system for resources and capacities	203
Ensure adequate time, planning and sustainability	207
Ensure quality in data entry.....	208
Entering data and addressing errors.....	209
Ensure training and supervision	211
Consider data entry and processing in different languages.....	213
Establish procedures for data editing (validation, cleaning and maintenance).....	214
Consider issues in data editing (validation, cleaning and maintenance).....	215
Allocate adequate time and resources and assign or recruit skilled staff.....	216
Explore technology solutions for data editing (validation, cleaning and maintenance)	217
Develop procedures for data storage and management, including retention and disposal	218
Consider the type of data collected.....	219
Secure, store and manage data.....	220
Determine responsibilities and privileges in data handling.....	222
Develop and implement procedures and requirements for data retention and disposal	225
Consider the use of technology in data storage and management	227
Assess options for data sharing and transfer	229
Consider data sharing.....	229

Assess options for data transfer	233
Identify legal and ethical issues in data storage, maintenance and management	234
STAGE #4. DATA ANALYSIS.....	240
STEPS AND CONSIDERATIONS IN DATA ANALYSIS	241
Assess and describe data.....	242
Consider factors and biases that influence the data.....	244
Identify and describe relevant patterns in data.....	249
Interpret patterns and findings	254
Interpret the data.....	254
Align interpretation with existing research and knowledge	257
Identify biases influencing interpretation.....	258
Interpret meaning across languages	262
Validate findings	263
Train and build capacity in data analysis	266
Consider ethical aspects of data analysis.....	268
STAGE #5. DATA USE, PRESENTATION AND DISSEMINATION	274
STEPS AND CONSIDERATIONS IN DATA USE, PRESENTATION AND DISSEMINATION	275
Target appropriate audiences, including differentiated outputs for different groups ..	277
Assess consumption patterns of different target audiences and/or end users	277
Differentiate outputs for different target audiences and/or end users	278
Include research participants as target audience	280
Select presentation formats and language.....	283
Provide a clear presentation of methods including limitations.....	284
Ensure accessibility of findings and results	286
Consider data display and visual presentation	287
Tailor and target recommendations.....	290
Ensure findings are accessible in multiple languages.....	292
Identify different media and platforms to maximize impact and reach	293
Identify relevant media and platforms.....	294
Assess options for dissemination media	296
Consider resources and capacity for effective dissemination.....	297
Ensure access to outputs.....	298
Consider ethics in data use, presentation and dissemination.....	301
Assess the ethics of sharing and not sharing results.....	301
Consider ethics of representation and misrepresentation.....	305
Ensure anonymity, confidentiality, privacy and safety.....	306

Determine just attribution of contribution	308
Guard the “best interests of the child” in data use, presentation and dissemination.....	309
Measure reach and impact.....	310
CONCLUSION.....	313
BIBLIOGRAPHY	315
ANNEX #1. GLOSSARY	347
ANNEX #2. OVERVIEW OF THE STAGES, STEPS, CONSIDERATIONS AND GOOD PRACTICE IN TIP DATA COLLECTION.....	362

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADLS	Administrative Data Liaison Service
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CBPR	community-based participatory research
CoE	Council of Europe
EC	European Commission
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ERB	ethical review board
EU	European Union
FGD	focus group discussion
FSU	Former Soviet Union
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GIS	geographic information system
GO	government organization
HIPAA	Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
IEC	independent ethics committee
ILO	International Labour Organization
IO	international organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRB	institutional review board
J/TIP	United States Department of State Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking
MoU	memorandum of understanding
MRC	Medical Research Council
NGO	non-governmental organization
OAS	Organization of American States
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation and Europe
REB	research ethics board
SOP	standard operating procedure
THB	trafficking in human beings
TIP	trafficking in persons
ToR	terms of reference
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNIAP	United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNTOC	United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime
U.S.	United States
WHO	World Health Organization

1. Introduction

Effective efforts to combat trafficking in persons (TIP) are predicated on methodologically rigorous, reliable and ethical data collection and appropriate data management systems, as well as sound, objective and insightful analysis and use of that data. Without high quality TIP data collection, it is not possible to effectively target prevention efforts, design appropriate protection interventions or pursue effective prosecutions. It is also not possible to monitor and evaluate these anti-trafficking efforts in a meaningful way. Collecting and analyzing information in smart and sophisticated ways is needed on all aspects of human trafficking issues to achieve tangible results in prevention, protection and prosecution. To combat trafficking in persons, we need evidence-based knowledge – a collective and sophisticated understanding of the nature and scope of the problem (the *what, how, why, where* and *when*) – as well as data about what interventions do (and do not) work to combat it. Equally, we need to guard against weak or faulty data, which has the potential to cause disproportionate harm, including to trafficking victims, when used to design or support ill-conceived and ungrounded public policy and programmatic interventions on TIP.

The goal of this project was to identify good practice in TIP data collection in the areas of protection and prosecution, to inform and guide future anti-trafficking efforts. We began by consulting TIP researchers, TIP experts, staff from TIP data collection projects and National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms to develop criteria for good practice. These criteria included: data quality; relevance and usefulness; accessibility; timeliness; cost appropriateness; and attention to legal and ethical issues. We then used these criteria to examine current TIP data collection and research practices in different countries and regions, including the strengths and limitations of the various approaches. The study outlines five stages of TIP data collection – 1) design and planning; 2) data collection; 3) storage, maintenance and management; 4) analysis; and 5) use, presentation and dissemination – and explores issues that may arise at these stages as well as good practice examples at each particular stage. Disaggregating the stages of the TIP data collection process helped to identify and clarify the wide-ranging and sometimes complex factors that arise when collecting TIP data. This approach also allowed us to identify good practices or actions at a more granular level, in relation to a particular step, offering useful and specific guidance and examples.

This publication is not intended as a methods handbook, a research manual or a technical how-to guide for TIP data collection. Given the vast array of data collection approaches and techniques, this would be neither possible nor particularly useful. The intention is also not to evaluate or to critique any particular TIP data collection project or approach or to focus on the work of any one particular organization or institution. Rather, we have learned from and share in this publication the collective knowledge and experiences of TIP researchers, data collectors and experts globally, as well as existing research and resources on TIP data collection, to identify what constitutes good practice in TIP data collection and to offer practical guidance, lessons and tools from past and current efforts in how to implement TIP data collection efforts. The target audience of this publication is anti-trafficking professionals, organizations and institutions that are currently or are planning to collect TIP data.

This publication is part of a series developed in the framework of NEXUS Institute's project *Good Practice in Global Data Collection on Trafficking in Persons: The Science (And Art) of Understanding TIP*, which offers guidance to governments, international organizations (IOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on what constitutes good practice in the field of TIP data collection and how to operationalize it (and avoid risks and pitfalls) in their work to support improved data collection and analysis. Other papers and resources from the project include: *Legal and Ethical Issues in Data Collection on Trafficking in Persons*;

On the Frontlines: Operationalizing Good Practice in TIP Data Collection; and Good Practice in TIP Data Collection: Recommendations for Donors and Funders. The project was generously funded by the United States Department of State Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (J/TIP).

2. Research methodology and limitations

This publication is based on interviews with TIP researchers, TIP experts, staff from TIP data collection projects and National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms. We have also reanalyzed interviews with trafficking victims as well as conducted a review of research and resources on TIP data collection

Interviews with key informants

NEXUS conducted 163 interviews with 128 key informants representing non-governmental organizations (NGOs), research projects, academic institutions, international organizations (IOs), private sector actors and government.¹ We identified key informants through our desk research and based on our selection criteria. While criteria differed somewhat by category of respondent, a central aspect was diversity with regard to: 1) the types of TIP data being collected (for example, on protection or prosecution); 2) the approaches and methods used; 3) geographic scope; and 4) professional specialty or discipline. We then conducted snowball sampling, contacting key informants recommended by those already interviewed and who met our selection criteria.

Data sources

- Interviews with TIP researchers and TIP experts
- Interviews with TIP data collection staff
- Interviews with National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms
- Interviews with trafficking victims
- Desk research

Table #1. Interviews conducted with TIP researchers and TIP experts, TIP data collection staff and National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms

Type of key informant	Number of interviews
TIP researchers and TIP experts	95
TIP data collection staff	55
National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms	13
Total	163

The geographic focus of key informants' work covered most regions of the world, as shown on the map below. Some regions were more represented than others, a bias which we offset through the literature review and desk research.

¹ We conducted follow-up interviews with select key informants as further questions arose during desk research or in the context of other interviews. This afforded not only greater depth to the information gathered, but also the opportunity to test and corroborate certain perspectives, assessments or findings.

Map #1. Geographic representation of research and data collection by key informants²



Interviews with TIP researchers and TIP experts

We conducted 95 interviews with TIP researchers and TIP experts (67 first interviews and 28 follow-up interviews). This category was originally envisaged as TIP research experts (that is, researchers from different disciplines who are specialized in research on human trafficking). However, it was expanded over the course of the project to also include TIP experts who have experience in TIP data collection in their professional capacities (for example, as prosecutors, police, social workers or medical personnel). We also included key informants working in other professional fields (for example, individuals researching or collecting data on labor, migration and human rights, public health or child protection), as well as private sector actors engaged in anti-trafficking data collection. Lines of inquiry included: what constitutes protection and prosecution data; criteria or characteristics of good (and bad) practice in TIP data collection; gaps in TIP knowledge; key challenges in undertaking TIP data collection; and legal issues and ethical considerations in TIP data collection.

Interviews with TIP data collection staff

We conducted 55 interviews with individuals working on TIP data collection projects (49 first interviews and six follow-up interviews).³ These were individuals working on TIP data collection projects (largely within NGOs, the United Nations (UN) and IOs, but also some government partnerships), donors funding TIP data collection projects and technology experts whose work encompasses TIP data collection. Data collection projects were initially identified through desk review, which included not only a review of research and resources but also searching the websites of organizations or institutions with TIP data collection

² Most key informants work or conduct research in more than one country or even region, accounting for the discrepancy between the 128 respondents interviewed and the representation by region on this map.

³ There is some overlap between the categories of TIP researchers and TIP experts, on the one hand, and TIP data collection staff, on the other, as many professionals have worked in multiple roles. For the purpose of this categorization, TIP data collection staff are those whose interviews focused on their work on a specific data collection effort.

projects. We also identified projects and key informants from different countries and regions based on recommendations from TIP research and experts interviewed for the project. It was beyond the scope of the project to review and assess all TIP data collection efforts, given the broad swath of TIP data collection projects undertaken globally. Instead we identified different approaches and models used, to capture diversity. Lines of inquiry included: details of the specific data collection project; challenges and lessons learned across the five stages of data collection; various considerations in undertaking TIP data collection; and legal issues and ethical considerations in TIP data collection.

Interviews with National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms

We conducted 13 interviews with twelve staff from ten National Rapporteur offices or equivalent mechanisms from various countries in Europe and the Middle East.⁴ In addition, we communicated with one National Rapporteur office in Europe by email and attended a presentation by one equivalent mechanism in Southeast Asia. We also reviewed research and data collection undertaken by National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms as well as different models in Europe, the Caribbean, Latin America and Southeast Asia. Interviews focused on: the specific work and mandate of the National Rapporteur or equivalent mechanism; how specific data collection efforts were undertaken; challenges and lessons learned across the five stages of data collection; contextual considerations in the specific country in which the National Rapporteur or equivalent mechanism works; and any legal or ethical issues identified.

Interview procedure

All 163 interviews were conducted using standardized research instruments. Interviews were conducted in English with the exception of one interview with a National Rapporteur where the researcher was fluent in the language used. Researchers adapted lines of inquiry according to the specifics of the individual's experiences, but standardized probes assisted researchers in maintaining commonality and consistency. In some instances, we conducted follow-up interviews with certain key informants as questions and issues arose over the course of the project, during desk research or in the context of other interviews.⁵

Each interview began with a process of informed consent, which included an explanation of the purpose of the research, what the interview would involve, an overview of the questions that would be asked, how the data would be used/presented, the key informant's right to decline to answer any questions or end the interview at any time and assurances of anonymity. Once explained, if the key informant consented, the researcher commenced the interview. Interviews were either in person or remote (via Skype or telephone) and were audio recorded, with the consent of the key informant. Interviews were typically 75-90 minutes in length. Once completed, the interviews were transcribed verbatim. All interviews were treated confidentially; transcripts were shared only within the research team and

⁴ A National Rapporteur is responsible for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of anti-trafficking policy at the national level and coordinating a country's anti-trafficking efforts. Some countries do not have an established National Rapporteur but use an alternative mechanism ("equivalent mechanism") for monitoring and reporting. A National Rapporteur or equivalent mechanism is "instrumental in aiding participating States to produce, analyze, utilize and report on quantitative and qualitative data needed to improve counter-trafficking actions". Warnath, S. (2008) *Efforts to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings in the OSCE Area: Co-Ordination and Reporting Mechanisms*. Vienna, Austria: Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe, p. 72. See also CoE (2009) *Council Conclusions on Establishing an Informal EU Network of National Rapporteurs or Equivalent Mechanisms on Trafficking in Human Beings*. Strasbourg, France: Council of Europe; and European Commission (2018) 'National Rapporteurs and/or Equivalent Mechanisms', *Together Against Trafficking in Human Beings*. Brussels, Belgium: European Commission.

⁵ We conducted 35 follow-up interviews (23 individuals were interviewed twice and seven individuals were interviewed three or more times).

secured according to NEXUS Institute's data protection policies. Information shared in this publication has been anonymized.

Interviews with trafficking victims

As part of NEXUS Institute's research protocol, we typically end interviews with trafficking victims by asking how they felt participating in the research, their experiences of the research process, their thoughts on the interview, the tools used and questions asked, any specific issues or concerns they may have and what we could do to improve the research experience in future. This information offers a wealth of different perspectives on various data collection projects over time and in different countries. For this study, we reanalyzed 473 interviews with trafficking victims conducted for past research in Europe, the Former Soviet Union (FSU) and Asia between 2006 and 2016 and which included questions about their experiences and perspectives as research respondents. A handful of these victims (from Albania and Ukraine) were interviewed specifically about their experiences of participating in administrative TIP data collection and research and their advice on how this could be improved. Of these 473 trafficking victims, 96 were trafficking victims from Europe and the former Soviet Union and 377 were from different countries in Asia (Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam). Two thirds (299) were females and one third (174) were males, trafficked for various forms of labor exploitation, sexual exploitation and begging.

Desk research – literature and document review

This study is based on an extensive review of literature and resources on TIP research and data collection. Some was specific to trafficking in persons, while some was broader in scope and included general research methods and administrative data collection. This included the following types of research and resources:

- papers and articles on different research methodologies and data collection approaches, including strengths and limitations;
- project documents about TIP data collection efforts, including methods, procedures and outputs;
- handbooks, guidelines and manuals about TIP data collection;
- media reports or op-eds on TIP data collection including reviews and critiques of research methodology or data collection approaches, including the use of technology in TIP data collection;
- websites about specific TIP data collection projects or research projects;
- ethical guidelines and protocols for research and data collection (for TIP and more generally); and
- national and international legislation on data collection and data protection issues.

Review process

This publication was reviewed by twelve external peer reviewers, each of whom has extensive knowledge and experience in TIP research and/or data collection, as well as the TIP field more broadly. Peer reviewers included researchers, data collection staff and TIP experts from universities, National Rapporteur or equivalent mechanisms, UN agencies, civil society and independent experts from the fields of law, human rights, child protection and the private sector focused on technology and software development. This publication was reviewed internally within NEXUS Institute at various stages of drafting including after the external peer review process.

Limitations and constraints

As noted in the introduction, this publication is not intended as a methods handbook, research manual or technical how-to guide to address all possible scenarios and contexts, not least given the highly specialized and advanced nature of methodologies involved in data collection on often hidden and elusive populations and in a field that includes organized crime. Rather, this publication covers the fundamentals of the main methods and approaches in TIP research and data collection, tailoring discussions to the concrete issues that arise in TIP-specific contexts and in relation to different approaches to TIP data collection. It represents the knowledge and experience of a wide sampling of TIP researchers, TIP experts, TIP data collection staff and National Rapporteurs and equivalent mechanisms and trafficking victims as well as the body of literature produced in this field. We have aimed to provide sufficient background on different approaches to inform our examination of current TIP data collection practices. Nonetheless there are some limitations and constraints as discussed below.

Key informants' availability for interview. NEXUS staff sent interview requests to 188 identified key informants. From this, 128 key informants (68%) were interviewed. Twelve key informants declined an interview (seven individuals were no longer working on the issue; five individuals referred us to a colleague with relevant experience). Thirty-three key informants did not reply to multiple requests for an interview. Interview requests were sent over a period of between four to seven months, with up to four follow-up interview requests. With 15 key informants it was not possible to schedule an interview. While we originally received a positive reply, these 15 key informants were then either unavailable for an interview or did not reply to follow-up requests.

Sampling bias among key informants and projects. We conducted snowball sampling to identify possible key informants according to our criteria. This procedure, however, likely introduces biases in terms of which individuals, organizations and institutions were recommended and contacted, as well as who was willing to participate in the project. The relationship between different researchers, organizations and institutions is not neutral and may lead to patterns of inclusion and exclusion that inform what can be learned. We have been conscious of this potential bias and sought diversity among key informants as well as their organizational and institutional affiliations. Key informants, whether researcher, TIP experts or data collection staff, came from different organizations and institutions from different countries and regions, as evidenced by a review of publications, projects and institutional affiliations.

Interviews with trafficking victims. The 473 interviews with trafficking victims represent a large and diverse pool of respondents, reflecting data collection and research in multiple countries and with victims of different backgrounds, experiences and forms of TIP. Nonetheless, these interviews reflect only the views of trafficking victims who were willing to participate in various NEXUS research projects, primarily through in-depth interviews (structured, semi-structured and unstructured) and administrative data collection by partner organizations (case files, structured questionnaire, survey).

Limited information on data collection approaches and methods. There is generally quite limited written information about how data collection processes are implemented and the challenges faced, in spite of recognition that TIP data collection is a challenging and complicated undertaking. Project documents and reports tend to focus on successes and outputs, rather than an exploration of where issues were faced, how adaptations were made and what might be considered failures in some respect. Interviews were a more effective means of collecting information on these aspects. However, we also faced resistance from some key informants to share problems faced in data collection and research efforts. This raises important questions about transparency and opportunities to learn from past and present data collection initiatives. That being said, many other

researchers, TIP experts, data collection staff and National Rapporteurs were open and candid about the difficulties faced in their work. The challenges they have faced and lessons learned form an important part of this study.

The project scope. A global study is in itself challenging given the breadth of research and administrative data collection efforts that need to be considered and the different approaches that need to be examined. The process of identifying and gathering information about these diverse efforts was time consuming and labor intensive. In addition, the key informants interviewed and the data collection projects examined relate to such different contexts, experiences and points in time that it was challenging to draw higher level conclusions and recommendation related to good (and poor) practice.

Geographical coverage. The 128 key informants interviewed represent work being done in nearly all of the regions of the world, as shown on Map #1. We have strived for balanced geographical coverage both in the interviews and through the literature review and desk research. However, some regions are more represented than others. This may indicate that there are fewer data collection initiatives in some countries and regions. It may equally be that such efforts are present but less visible.

Language barriers and constraints. Interviews were primarily conducted in English and with key informants who spoke English. The literature review was also conducted in English and of English language materials. Materials from data collection efforts not produced in English or from TIP researchers who could not speak English were largely excluded from this study. The study is missing good practices and lessons learned from these non-English language projects and professionals.

3. Framing the issue. Defining and conceptualizing TIP data collection

What is TIP data collection?

Data collection is a broad concept, referring to a wide range of practices related to the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest. Data collection includes research conducted by researchers, institutions or organizations, as well as a broad assortment of administrative data collection by various organizations and institutions. Robust data collection is essential in maintaining the integrity of any analysis or data use. Improperly or unethically collected data may result in:

- an inability to answer data collection questions accurately;
- distorted or inaccurate findings and misleading conclusions;
- an inability to repeat or validate the process of data collection;
- harm to data collection participants;
- the potential to compromise interventions designed with the data;
- insufficient data to meet the research objectives.⁶

By contrast, when data collection is conducted properly and ethically it allows data collectors and analysts to: effectively analyze and use data and findings; contribute understanding and knowledge to the TIP field; and inform effective policies and programs to address human trafficking.

TIP data⁸ is qualitative or quantitative information on trafficking in persons. Pieces of data are essentially individual pieces of information. Data is collected, managed and stored and then analyzed, after which it is used (for example, presented in written form or visualized using graphs, images or other analysis tools). For the purposes of this

UN definition of trafficking in persons (TIP)⁷

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

⁶ ORI (2005) 'Data Collection', *Responsible Conduct in Data Management*. United States: Office of Research Integrity.

⁷ For the purposes of this study, we use the definition of "trafficking in persons" that appears in Article 3 of the *United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons (UN Trafficking Protocol)*. Exploitation includes "at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs". This definition also clarifies that "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child [any person under eighteen years of age] for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered 'trafficking in persons' even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in [the definition of trafficking in persons]". United Nations (2000) *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*, UN Doc A/45/49, Article 3. The *UN Trafficking Protocol* is also sometimes referred to as the *Palermo Protocol*, being one of the three Palermo Protocols adopted by the United Nations to supplement the 2000 *Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*, known as the Palermo Convention. They consist of the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children*; the *Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air*; and the *Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition*.

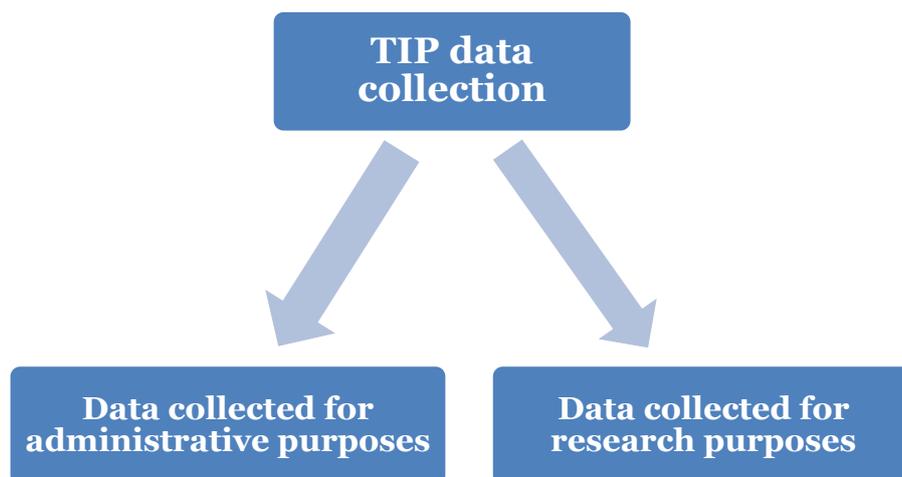
⁸ This study largely treats the word "data" as an uncountable or collective noun rather than a plural, its Latin origin notwithstanding. By extension, we refer to "a piece of data" rather than "a datum" where called for. This is in line with established use and with leading style references for both UK and U.S. English. In some cases, the plural may nonetheless be applicable (for example, when referring to a grouping of several types of data).

publication, **TIP data collection** is the overarching process of gathering and assigning meaning to data on various aspects of trafficking in persons, including its scope and nature and also anti-trafficking responses. This involves not only data collection itself but the processing and management of the data as well its analysis, use, presentation and dissemination.⁹

TIP data collection varies substantially in scope and nature. It may be undertaken by governments, IOs, NGOs, businesses and private sector actors. It may be global in scope and collated in a large and technically complex database. It may also relate to very specific and targeted data collected by a single organization or person to answer a very specific question. In some cases, it may constitute a discrete research project. In other cases, it may be the collection of administrative and research data as part of TIP-specific data collection efforts (for example, by the offices of National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms). In still other cases, it may be administrative data collected as part of a project or an institution's on-going operational work, either specific to TIP or more generally, such as social services or law enforcement. It also includes the collection of data to monitor or evaluate anti-trafficking interventions.

In discussing TIP data collection for the purpose of this study, we are primarily concerned with what we consider two distinct categories of TIP data: 1) Data collected for administrative purposes and 2) Data collected for research purposes.

Graphic #1. Different types of TIP data collection



Data collected for administrative purposes

This refers to information collected primarily for administrative purposes. This type of data is collected by government departments as well as NGOs and IOs for the purposes of registration, transaction and record keeping in the context of operational work with trafficking victims, usually during service delivery (for example, healthcare, social work, or legal assistance).¹⁰ This includes, for example, case files about trafficking victims being assisted by an NGO or government office. Administrative data also includes that which comes from operational work in the legal process (for example, investigative files, court files

⁹ For the purpose of this study we have divided the TIP data collection process into five constituent parts as follows: 1) design and planning, 2) data collection, 3) data storage, maintenance and management, 4) data analysis and 5) use, presentation and dissemination. Each stage is explained and discussed in subsequent sections. When referring to TIP data collection we are referring to all of these five stages.

¹⁰ ADLS (2017) 'Administrative data introduction', *Guidance to apply for and use administrative data*. United Kingdom: Administrative Data Liaison Service.

and outcomes, data collected about perpetrators of crime and their cases within the criminal justice system). Sources of administrative data include the agencies, authorities and services that engage with victims or perpetrators of trafficking and violence (for example, police, prosecutors, judiciary, immigration officials, health services, social services and specialized service providers, both government and NGO). Some administrative data is specifically about TIP (for example, case files about trafficking victims being assisted by a dedicated NGO or from criminal justice records about TIP cases). In other cases, TIP administrative data is embedded within wider systems of data collection (for example, TIP cases within a broader criminal justice database, TIP cases among vulnerable persons assisted by state social services, or TIP as one form of human rights violations).

Data collected for research purposes

Here we refer to deliberate and discrete data collection on a specific issue in order to answer a specific question or address a specific hypothesis.¹¹ Research data may be collected by researchers, governments, NGOs, IOs and private sector actors and may be collected by a range of methods (for example, through interviews, questionnaires, focus group discussions, or surveys) whether in person or remotely (for example, by telephone or online). Research data may include primary and/or secondary data.¹² Some research is TIP-specific, while other research considers TIP within wider issues of migration, labor issues, vulnerable groups and so on.

Distinguishing between data used for administrative purposes and research purposes

We find it helpful to distinguish between data collected for administrative purposes and data collected for research purposes. These two types of data collection have different intentions and, by extension, also different approaches and procedures. Whereas the former is collected in the context of operational work (for example, service delivery to victims or the criminal justice process), the latter is collected specifically for research purposes.

This is not to say that administrative data cannot be used for research purposes. Indeed, it is an important data source for much TIP research.¹³ However, because administrative data is collected as part of operational work, its primary purpose is practical and operational. This means that, in practice, administrative data is not always collected in a sufficiently rigorous way as to be helpful or appropriate for some research and data collection efforts. Generally speaking, when collecting and analyzing administrative data for research purposes, the same stringent standards should apply as when collecting research data. Questions, therefore, arise as to when administrative data can be used for research (and for what types of research) and what limitations need to be understood from the outset.

¹¹ Walby, S. et al. (2017) *The concept of measurement of violence against women and men*. Bristol, United Kingdom: Policy Press.

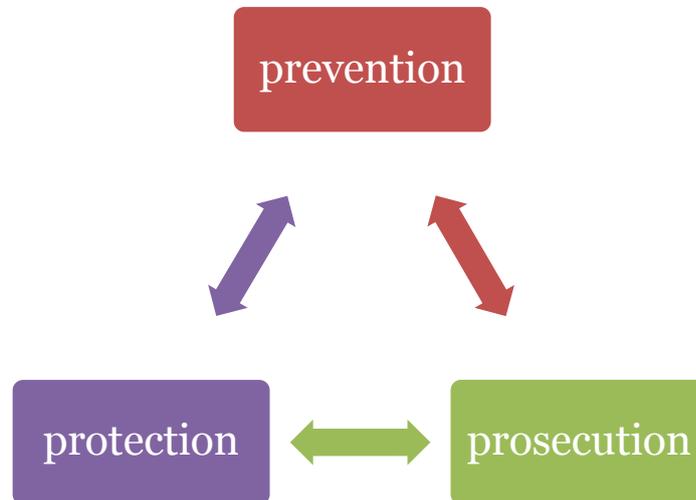
¹² Primary data is data collected directly by the researcher or data collector (for example, through interviews, participant observation, life histories, case studies, questionnaires, surveys, ethnographic research and so on). Secondary data is that which has already been collected and can be used for analysis (for example, previous research, official statistics, archival materials such as diaries and letters, government reports, victim case files, court document, or police files).

¹³ A data source is the source of the information being collected. A data source may consist of individuals (for example, trafficking victims, traffickers or perpetrators, service providers, or criminal justice representatives), as well as written materials (for example, register data, literature, or any other datasets).

TIP-related data collection: the 3Ps

The fight against trafficking in persons is generally framed around the 3P Paradigm, which refers to the prevention of the act of trafficking, the protection of victims of trafficking and the prosecution of perpetrators of trafficking.¹⁴

Graphic #2. The Three-P paradigm



- **Prevention** refers to efforts to prevent trafficking in persons from occurring, commonly via awareness campaigns, safe migration efforts and alternative livelihood programs, as well as cross-cutting endeavors such as amending and enforcing legislation and reducing vulnerabilities to trafficking.
- **Protection** refers broadly to the various stages and steps involved in protecting a victim of human trafficking, including identification, assistance, return and reintegration.
- **Prosecution** refers to the overarching legal response to human trafficking, including criminal justice avenues as well as other forms of access to justice.

TIP data collection may be on any aspect of these pivotal components of anti-trafficking responses. However, for this project we focus on two of these three areas of work – namely, **protection** and **prosecution**. This is a practical consideration to make the scope manageable given the breadth of material and projects to be covered. It is also because these two areas of work are very specifically related to anti-trafficking, while prevention, to a large extent, also has to do with more general issues of economic, social and cultural vulnerability.

¹⁴ The Three-P Paradigm is a framework used by governments around the world to combat human trafficking. It is outlined in the United States' *Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA)* and in the United Nations' *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*, supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (commonly referred to as the *Trafficking Protocol*). The paradigm was pioneered by the United States government in 1998 in accordance with efforts to combat violence against women and trafficking in women and girls. See Samarasinghe, V. (2003) 'Confronting Globalization in Anti-Trafficking Strategies in Asia', *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 10(1), pp. 91-104. For an elaboration of protection, prosecution and prevention, see J/TIP (2018) '3Ps: Prosecution, Protection, and Prevention'. Washington, D.C., United States: Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. In 2009, the then United States Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton announced the addition of a "fourth P" to the paradigm – "partnership" - to serve as a pathway to progress in the efforts against trafficking. United States Department of State (2010) 'The '3P' Paradigm: Prevention, Protection, and Prosecution', *Democracy and Global Affairs*. Partnership is worth highlighting in the context of TIP data collection, as partnerships are often central to this endeavor in terms of accessing different data sources and respondents as well as in developing the trust needed to share data and information.

That is, prevention-related data collection would include data on vulnerability in different populations, which substantially changes the scope and approach to data collection.

That being said, while we often talk about the Three Ps as distinct areas, they are closely related and not necessarily separate areas in practice, including in terms of data collection. Protection data is also often prevention data, particularly in terms of preventing re-trafficking and understanding general protection needs. Information about the demographics of trafficking victims being assisted can provide useful information about possible vulnerabilities and risk factors among assisted trafficking victims, which can be used to design and target prevention efforts. Similarly, better understanding prosecutions in terms of how they may serve as a deterrent for traffickers and in disrupting trafficking operations overlaps with prevention efforts. As such, the boundaries between what constitutes data collection for protection, prosecution and prevention are often blurred. Some good practice in TIP data collection for protection and prosecution may also be relevant for prevention efforts. Nonetheless, while many issues will be relevant for TIP data collection generally, our specific focus is data collection related to protection and prosecution responses.

Protection- and prosecution- related TIP data

Protection-related TIP data is data related to trafficking victims and their trafficking experiences, as well as their protection needs and experiences (for example, in terms of identification, assistance, return and reintegration). It also refers to information about the operation and effectiveness of protection policies and programs for trafficking victims, including their impact in the lives of trafficked persons, their families and communities. Protection-related data helps policymakers and practitioners from governments and civil society increase their understanding of trafficking victims and human trafficking generally, as well as to be more effective in their protection efforts.

Some examples of protection-related TIP data:

- Number of identified and/or assisted victims
- Information about trafficking victims and their experiences of trafficking exploitation
- Information about different forms of human trafficking
- Information about different economic sectors where workers experience trafficking exploitation
- Trafficking victims' assistance needs (for example, medical care, psychological assistance, livelihood support, education, family mediation)
- Information about the care and services that trafficked persons do or do not receive and the quality of that assistance
- Trafficking victims' experiences of identification and non-identification
- Trafficking victims' experiences of assistance and non-assistance
- Information about government's role in providing assistance, including gaps
- Information about the provision of appropriate accommodation (versus, for example, the detention of trafficking victims)
- Information about trafficking victims' lives after trafficking and over time
- Data about victims' families and communities (for example, the impact of trafficking on families, experiences of family and community reintegration)
- How the identification system functions in-country as well as cross-border
- How victim protection systems function in-country, as well cross-border
- The operation and effectiveness of national and transnational referral mechanisms

Prosecution-related TIP data refers to data that supports the efforts of policymakers and practitioners to prosecute relevant crimes or to assess the impact of the criminal justice response to TIP. This might include information about human traffickers at all levels, including their backgrounds, behaviors and motivations, or about the scope and nature of human trafficking operations, including strategies and business models of traffickers and others involved in various stages and dimensions of trafficking operations. It might also include details about how criminal justice and legal procedures function in practice to arrest and prosecute human traffickers and to support and protect victims and witnesses, including through compensation schemes. Prosecution-related TIP data can also consist of review and analysis of investigative and evidentiary data.

While prosecution traditionally refers to the criminal justice response, we approach this more broadly, including various legal responses and forms of access to justice, such as civil remedies, labor dispute channels, or civil litigation. Prosecution-related TIP data would include details about how these systems function, what constitute successful and unsuccessful cases, the treatment of suspects on the legal process, victims' experiences of different forms of access to justice and so on. Prosecution-related data aims to help policymakers and practitioners from governments and civil society to increase their understanding of traffickers and human trafficking operations generally as well as to be more effective in their prosecution efforts and legal responses.

Examples of prosecution-related data:

- Information about suspected and convicted perpetrators of trafficking, including profiles, behaviors, motivations
- Information from trafficked persons about their experiences of trafficking and their experiences in the legal process
- Data on the nature of trafficking operations
- Numbers of complaints, investigations, prosecutions and convictions
- Information on processes of investigation, prosecution and convictions, both successful and unsuccessful
- Data on the sentencing of trafficking offenders
- Investigation of criminal enterprises involved in trafficking operations
- Data from labor inspections and labor inspectors about labor violations
- Data from financial institutions pertaining to trafficking crimes
- Information about traffickers and trafficking operations over time
- How the criminal justice system functions in-country, as well as across borders
- The operation and effectiveness of national and transnational law enforcement efforts
- Information about forms of protection provided by governments to victims involved in the legal process
- Data about the provision of compensation and restitution to victims

While prosecution and protection are discrete fields of work and expertise, there are many types of data collection that are relevant for both protection and prosecution purposes. For example, information about the cost of human trafficking for victims may be of importance with regard to prosecution, to assess appropriate sentencing and compensation/restitution, as well as with regard to protection, to support programs for trafficking victims that offer high quality and comprehensive assistance. Both elements are also essential in assessing a country's response to human trafficking, as one National Rapporteur explained:

The information about victims and the information about [human trafficking] cases that have been brought before the court really should go together. ...they show you

what the country does [to combat trafficking]. One point is identifying victims but if you can't show how many cases you brought before a judge then you basically can't say what you've done as a country.

Thus, various bodies of data may inform an understanding of trafficking in persons and contribute to anti-trafficking efforts. How this is done in the best possible way is the issue to which we now turn.

4. Framing good practice. Criteria of good practice in TIP data collection

Framing good practice

For the purpose of this study, **good practice in TIP data collection** is understood to be a process, technique, or methodology that meets some or all of the criteria identified in this project. There is no one model that entirely constitutes good practice. Each individual model of TIP data collection has its strengths and limitations. Like all anti-trafficking efforts, TIP data collection involves complexities, challenges and complications, which require adaptation and adjustment over time. In studying and learning from various TIP data collection efforts, we have identified features or characteristics at various stages of data collection that, when implemented, contribute to good practice.

Criteria to assess good practice in TIP data collection

We did not approach this project with a fixed set of criteria. Rather we sought to learn from what experts considered criteria of good practice in TIP data collection. The good practice criteria developed for this project are based on interviews with TIP researchers, TIP experts, TIP data collection staff, National Rapporteurs, interviews with trafficking victims and a review of relevant literature on TIP research and data collection as well as research/data collection more generally.

Criteria presented here represent the combined learning, knowledge and experience of these individuals from different countries and fields of work engaged in TIP data collection over many years.¹⁵ In large part, these criteria align with literature on data collection and research more generally.¹⁶

Criteria to assess good practice in TIP data collection

- Data quality
- Relevance and usefulness
- Accessibility
- Timeliness
- Cost appropriateness
- Legal and ethical issues

¹⁵ Discussions around the need for improved TIP data collection and research have been on-going for many years. See, for example, GAO (2006) *Human Trafficking: Better Data, Strategy and Reporting Needed to Enhance U.S. Antitrafficking Efforts Abroad. Report to the Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary and the Chairman, Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives*. United States: United States Government Accountability Office; Goodey, J. (2008) 'Human trafficking sketchy data and policy responses', *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 8(4), pp. 421–442; Kangaspunta, K. (2007) 'Collecting Data on Human Trafficking: Availability, Reliability and Comparability of Trafficking Data' in Savona, E.U. and S. Stefanizzi (Eds.) *Measuring Human Trafficking*. New York, United States: Springer, pp. 27–36; Kelly, L. (2005) "You Can Find Anything You Want": A Critical Reflection on Research on Trafficking in Persons within and into Europe', *International Migration*, 43(1-2), pp. 235–265; Kutnick, B., P. Belser and G. Danailova-Trainor (2007) *Methodologies for global and national estimation of human trafficking victims: current and future approaches*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Labour Organization; Laczko F. (2007) 'Enhancing Data Collection and Research on Trafficking in Persons' in Savona, E. and S. Stefanizzi (Eds.) *Measuring Human Trafficking*. New York, United States: Springer, pp. 37–44; and Laczko, F. and M.A. Gramegna (2003) 'Developing Better Indicators of Human Trafficking', *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, X(1), pp. 179–194.

¹⁶ Bernard, H.R. (2006) *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Alta Mira Press; Bryman, A. (2016) *Social Research Methods. Fifth Edition*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press; Creswell, J.W. (2003) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches. Second edition*. Thousand Oaks, United States: SAGE Publishing; Denscombe, M. (2007) *The Good Research Guide for small scale social research project. Third edition*. Berkshire, United Kingdom: Open University Press; OECD (2011) *Quality Dimensions, Core Values for OECD Statistics and Procedures for Planning and Evaluating Statistical Activities*. Paris, France: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; McLean, R.K.D. and K. Sen (2018) *Making a difference in the real world? A meta-analysis of research for development*. Ottawa, Canada: International Development Research Centre; Pisani, E. and M. Kok (2017) 'In the eye of the beholder: to make global health estimates useful, make them socially robust', *Global Health Action*, 10(1); and Tauberer, Joshua (2012) 'Data Quality: Precision, Accuracy and Cost', *Open Government Data: The Book*.



Data quality

Data quality refers to whether data is able to serve its purpose in a given context. While there are many ways to conceptualize data quality, common measures are reliability, validity, accuracy and precision.¹⁷

- **Reliability** refers to the repeatability of research findings and their accessibility to other researchers (that is, whether another researcher under the same circumstances would make the same observation leading to the same conclusions). Data should reflect stable and consistent data collection processes and analysis methods over time. Consistency is the main measure of reliability and is determined by whether the data collection initiative produces stable and consistent results.¹⁸
- **Validity** refers to the accuracy and trustworthiness of instruments, data and findings in research, in other words, the extent to which they possess the quality of being sound or true as far as can be judged. Validity of information is its relevance and appropriateness to the research question and the directness and strength of its association with the concepts under scrutiny. Data is valid to the extent that it clearly, directly and adequately represents the result that was intended to be measured. Measurement errors, unrepresentative sampling and transcription errors may adversely affect data validity.¹⁹
- **Accuracy** refers to the degree to which data correctly estimates or describes the quantities or characteristics it was designed to measure. To be accurate in this sense, the data must be in the right unit. For example, a figure might best be expressed as a proportion of the relevant population, or in the context of an explicit time frame. Accurate data must also be represented in a consistent and unambiguous form.²⁰
- **Precision** is the depth of knowledge encoded by the data. Precision comes in many forms, such as the degree of disaggregation of statistics. For example, a summary report has low precision, while a detailed spreadsheet has high precision.²¹

¹⁷ Bernard, H.R. (2006) *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Alta Mira Press, pp. 53-60

¹⁸ Bernard, H.R. (2006) *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Alta Mira Press, p. 54; Bryman, A. (2016) *Social Research Methods. Fifth Edition*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press; Denscombe, M. (2007) *The Good Research Guide for small scale social research project. Third edition*. Berkshire, United Kingdom: Open University Press, p. 298; IOM (2008) *Handbook on performance indicators for counter-trafficking projects*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Organization for Migration, p. 48; Leavy, P. (2017) *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches*. New York, United States: The Guilford Press; and Pierce, R. (2008) 'Evaluating Information: Validity, Reliability, Accuracy, Triangulation' in *Research Methods in Politics*. Thousand Oaks, United States: SAGE Publishing, pp. 79-99.

¹⁹ Bernard, H.R. (2006) *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Alta Mira Press, p. 53; Bryman, A. (2016) *Social Research Methods. Fifth Edition*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press; Denscombe, M. (2007) *The Good Research Guide for small scale social research project. Third edition*. Berkshire, United Kingdom: Open University Press, p. 297; IOM (2008) *Handbook on performance indicators for counter-trafficking projects*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Organization for Migration, p. 48; Leavy, P. (2017) *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches*. New York, United States: The Guilford Press; and Pierce, R. (2008) 'Evaluating Information: Validity, Reliability, Accuracy, Triangulation' in *Research Methods in Politics*. Thousand Oaks, United States: SAGE Publishing, pp. 79-99.

²⁰ Bernard, H.R. (2006) *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Alta Mira Press, p. 55; OECD (2011) *Quality Dimensions, Core Values for OECD Statistics and Procedures for Planning and Evaluating Statistical Activities*. Paris, France: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; and Tauberer, J. (2012) 'Data Quality: Precision, Accuracy, and Cost', *Open Government Data: The Book*.

²¹ Tauberer, J. (2012) 'Data Quality: Precision, Accuracy, and Cost', *Open Government Data: The Book*.

While each of these are important elements of data quality, the weight given to each necessarily depends on the specific project. Measures of TIP data quality (reliability, validity, accuracy, precision) will be applied differently depending on the nature and scope of the data collection, as well as from setting to setting. For example, expectations around reliability differ substantially depending upon whether one is conducting quantitative or qualitative data collection. Similarly, whether and to what extent one is concerned with precision depends on what is being studied and the needs one has for the data.

An important contributor to data quality is the technical skill of the data collector, including their capacity to meet the specific requirements of any given data collection project. One TIP researcher explained that a data collector's skills are key to good practice and the collection of high quality data:

...characteristics of good practice [are] defining the problem you're studying, defining a methodology for studying it, having it carried out by people who know what they are doing, with an amount and time and resources necessary to do it. [...] And a lot of this stuff falls down because you have people doing things that they can't explain why they're worth doing. Secondly, they're not given enough time and resources to do things properly. And third, you have a lot of research being carried out by people who are [not competent] to do it.

The quality standard that a data collection effort is held against may depend on context. For example, there may be considerable differences in quality when conducting a discrete research study as compared to gathering administrative data in the context of operational work. One would also expect differences in quality when data is collected by a small NGO about the trafficking victims it assists, or by police officers about the investigations they conduct, or by well-funded professional researchers conducting a research project. This aligns with how data quality is framed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which views data quality as a multi-faceted concept, noting also that "the quality characteristics of most importance depend on user perspectives, needs and priorities, which vary across groups of users".²²

Additionally, if data show some quality issues, this does not necessarily mean that it cannot be used for meaningful analysis. Rather, it is important to identify and make explicit any quality issues in the analysis and presentation of the data and findings. As one UN agency staff explained of data collected by NGOs with whom she was working:

We know there's always some gaps in data quality... and we don't overlook those. We try to be very transparent about them, saying that there are limitations to the data we have. But that doesn't stop us from generating analysis from that data because we think there are still meaningful lessons that can be pulled out [of that data].

Such qualified use of data requires sharing the methodology and limitations openly so that the validity of the findings can be understood and assessed.

However, caution should be used in drawing conclusions or initiating anti-trafficking policies or interventions based on data that is known to be weak or in other ways lacking. And, put simply, some data is poor data, where quality cannot be salvaged or restored even with diligent attention to weaknesses and limitations when it is presented. The use of poor quality data should be avoided as it can lead to an inadequate or misguided understanding of the topic being studied. As one TIP researcher explained:

²² OECD (2011) *Quality Dimensions, Core Values for OECD Statistics and Procedures for Planning and Evaluating Statistical Activities*. Paris, France: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, p. 7.

It's dangerous in different ways, if you are hyper-inflating the scale of the problem or underestimating the scale of the problem because the data you're collecting is not rigorously collected.

This, in turn, may lead to poorly designed, misinformed and even harmful programs and policies. As one TIP expert has argued:

Why does all of this matter? The most immediate problem is that poor information, presented as fact, contributes to poor decision-making and sometimes highly damaging, unintended outcomes.²³

For example, data that erroneously point to a high prevalence of trafficking in one country or economic sector may lead to a great deal of attention and investment in anti-trafficking responses in that location and less attention where the prevalence may, in fact, be higher.



Relevance and usefulness

Data collection should be relevant and useful in enhancing our understanding of TIP (contributing to knowledge production) or for the specific purpose of the research (for example, building the evidence base around interventions responding to TIP). Contributing to knowledge production in the field may in and of itself be relevant and useful even without an immediate practical application. Relevance and usefulness are determined by the value of the specific TIP data collection effort (that is, the degree to which the data addresses the purposes for which it is sought by end users, including multiple user groups).²⁴ This can consist of answering a specific data collection question, or meeting TIP data collection objectives across a spectrum of stakeholders and user groups, including researchers, practitioners, policymakers, funders, and the news media. Measuring relevance and usefulness, therefore, requires the identification of user groups and their sometimes-differing needs, including preparing research products in ways that enhance the probability of use, influence and impact. This also includes attention to the range of possible multiple end users, including how these end users may change over time.²⁵



Accessibility

Results and findings from TIP data collection should be accessible to those who are interested to learn more about the issue and those who need this information in their efforts to combat human trafficking. Making data collection accessible involves being clear about the target audience or audiences, assessing what may constitute barriers to accessing the findings and working to overcome those barriers. Accessibility is also about making results and findings accessible to those who have participated in and contributed to the data collection (for example, trafficking victims, practitioners and policymakers).

²³ Gallagher, A.T. (2014) 'The global slavery index is based on flawed data - why does no one say so?', *The Guardian*, November 28.

²⁴ An end user is the individual or entity that ultimately uses the outputs of the research or data collection effort.

²⁵ McLean, R.K.D. and K. Sen (2018) *Making a difference in the real world? A meta-analysis of research for development*. Ottawa, Canada: International Development Research Centre, p. 7; OECD (2011) *Quality Dimensions, Core Values for OECD Statistics and Procedures for Planning and Evaluating Statistical Activities*. Paris, France: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, p. 7 & p. 9; Ofir, Z. et al. (2016) *Research Quality Plus: A Holistic Approach to Evaluating Research*. Ottawa, Canada: International Development Research Centre, pp. 4-5; and Pisani, E. and M. Kok (2017) 'In the eye of the beholder: to make global health estimates useful, make them socially robust', *Global Health Action*, 10(1).

Accessibility may be constrained by a range of factors including, but not limited to:

- dissemination strategies (for example, when results are not widely disseminated, when dissemination platforms are not accessible to or do not align with consumption patterns of the target audience, when there are no hard copy versions available to those without access to or the means of reading electronic versions, or when organizations or institutions do not share results because the findings undermine their interventions);
- presentation style (for example, when the findings are presented in a way that is not comprehensible, appealing or accessible to the target audience);
- presentation formats (for example, long reports written for policymakers with limited reading time, or electronic copies for those without access to computers or the internet);
- costs (for example, when research is only for purchase and not open access, or when organizations and institutions do not have the funds to access research and findings, including the cost of paper and printer cartridges);
- language (for example, when research is not published in national languages, when research in a multi-lingual country is only published in the main language, or when relevant data is not translated to relevant languages);



Timeliness

Timeliness relates to the time required for the relevant TIP data or results to be available in order to be of use to user groups.²⁶ Data should be available with enough frequency and should be sufficiently current to inform decision-making, practice and the knowledge base at appropriate levels.²⁷ Timeliness of data is important if the data is to be useful for understanding the nature of the issue studied, making decisions in on-going policy discussions, designing or modifying programs or drafting relevant legislation.

When research and findings are based on data collected a long time ago, the context may have changed considerably and the analyses may have become irrelevant to the present situation and challenges. Concerns about timeliness may also be about the publication and dissemination process itself (that is, books and journal articles which involve often lengthy publication processes or the publication procedures within some organizations and institutions). This does not mean, however, that research and data collection should be rushed. Many key informants voiced concerns over data collection projects being done too quickly or according to an unrealistic timeline, as such findings may be more likely to produce poor data and, by extension, limited understanding of the issue and/or weak interventions.

What constitutes “timely” depends on the particular data collection effort as well as the parameters of how data collection is done and the context in which it is conducted. Data collection needs to be timely in proportion to the nature and scope of what is being done. For example, what is considered timely will necessarily differ when conducting a small scale, internal review of investigative police files as compared to a longitudinal study of victims’ experiences in the criminal justice process. What is timely will also be different when studying TIP in a fast moving or evolving situation or depending on the topic being studied.

²⁶ OECD (2011) *Quality Dimensions, Core Values for OECD Statistics and Procedures for Planning and Evaluating Statistical Activities*. Paris, France: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, p. 9.

²⁷ IOM (2008) *Handbook on performance indicators for counter-trafficking projects*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Organization for Migration, p. 48.



Cost appropriateness

This refers to whether the human and financial costs of the TIP data collection effort are appropriate. Or, as one researcher put it, one needs to assess: “Is it doable, for the time and resources available?” Resources are central to one’s ability to collect and disseminate high quality findings that can contribute to the evidence base on human trafficking and/or inform interventions. This is certainly an issue in terms of TIP research, which often suffers from insufficient funding and staffing. In addition, resources are also lacking for rigorous data collection around monitoring and evaluation of anti-trafficking efforts. As noted by one TIP researcher:

...within the framework of anti-trafficking projects and the monitoring and evaluation of them, there’s really a gap in sufficient funding to look at the long-term results of anti-trafficking interventions. ...large initiatives on trafficking should have dedicated staffing with the necessary expertise to do monitoring and evaluation rigorously. For me, more spending is a key need if we’re going to get better data on anti-trafficking work.

Inadequate funds may mean that the project fails, leading to no results and wasted resources. Worse still is when under-resourcing leads to incorrect or misleading findings, which can distort and misinform the evidence base and, by extension, the resulting interventions. One TIP researcher cautioned about such risks:

I think there’s a lot to be said about badly designed data collection that result[s] in a significant waste of resources and in counter-productive, misleading [findings].

Cost appropriateness is not only about robust data collection with finite resources, but also about the responsible management and implementation of data collection when resources are sufficient. Some data collection is heavily funded, but, if poorly managed, can still fail to be cost effective or cost appropriate. Determining cost appropriateness then involves considering the investment of resources relative to the benefits in terms of the data and findings gained. This requires considering all costs, including those borne by data sources and data providers.²⁸ Other related considerations are myriad and might include questions such as: Could the data collection initiative be designed another way so that costs better align with benefits? Is the data collection effort being conducted with adequate resources and/or in an adequate time frame? What resources will be wasted if the data collection process is under-resourced and cannot be correctly implemented?

Another consideration is sustainability (that is, whether a data collection initiative, once resourced, can be maintained over a long period). Some data collection is done with a purposefully short time frame, in which case sustainability is less of a concern. More commonly, TIP data collection, particularly administrative data collection, is intended to be an on-going activity and, thus, cost appropriateness must not only be measured within a project cycle but also in the long-term. Large databases or longitudinal research projects that are only well-funded and well-staffed in the initial stages will generally struggle to find funds in the longer-term.

²⁸ OECD (2011) *Quality Dimensions, Core Values for OECD Statistics and Procedures for Planning and Evaluating Statistical Activities*. Paris, France: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, p. 11.



Legal and ethical issues

Good practice means adhering to legal and ethical requirements of data collection. Data collection should be in accordance with all relevant legislation including data protection, privacy and other related laws, across multiple jurisdictions when relevant. And because legal protections may be uneven depending upon the applicable country and jurisdiction, the highest level of legal protections should be identified and followed. One NGO director stressed the need to look at legislation in this way:

...there must be [consideration of] the relevant law and that might be several jurisdictions. And there must be the view that the most onerous jurisdiction, onerous laws... are the ones that should be considered as the standards.

And while data collection should start from the legal framework, it is also about ethical considerations and requirements, which may, in many instances, have a higher threshold. As the same NGO director noted:

[In] any of this data collection, people [should] sit down and think about a solid framework to set out their policies... Then you also want to consider obviously what your ethical positions on things are, which hopefully are higher than the legal and the compliance side of things.

The ethical and legal frameworks relevant to TIP data collection differ by country context and project and may also be informed by a raft of other factors, including the type of data being collected, who is collecting data, where data collection takes place, who is funding data collection, whether data collection involves a group requiring special consideration, whether there are emerging issues affecting the existing ethical and/or legal framework and so on. There are many legal and ethical complexities at play in how researchers and anti-trafficking professionals undertake TIP data collection. Assessing and addressing laws and ethics in TIP data collection is relevant for all five stages of the data collection process, each of which will be discussed in more detail.

Applying good practice criteria. External factors and considerations

In general, thoughtful and informed application of the above-mentioned criteria provides a useful starting point to guide anyone aiming for good practice in TIP data collection. The criteria, while discrete, should be considered together. For example, high quality data may be limited in its usefulness to those who want and need the information if it is not available in a timely fashion. Thus, good practice is multi-faceted and multi-layered.

Moreover, different criteria will be of varying relevance for different organizations or institutions, the specific field of work and topic as well as the different situations and contexts in which data collection takes place. What is assessed to be good practice by one organization or institution, working on one aspect of TIP in one country or setting, will not necessarily be considered good practice by another working with different parameters. Equally, what is possible and advisable will be informed by the context in which data collection is to take place. As such, while the above criteria offer useful guidance,

External factors and considerations

- Different fields of work
- Different purposes of data collection
- The perspective of data collection participants
- Different situations and contexts

attention also needs to be paid to the wider context and dynamics of any given data collection process.

There are a number of external factors and considerations that may come into play when making decisions around good practice in TIP data collection, including: different fields of work; different purposes of data collection; the perspective of data collection participants; and different situations and contexts. These external factors and considerations are discussed in turn below.



Different fields of work

An assessment of good practice will be informed by one's professional perspective and specific field of work. An assessment of good practice in anti-trafficking efforts in Africa noted that good practice does not occur in a vacuum but rather is impacted by differing value systems, world views and motivations:

Given that actions are guided by worldviews and values which shape motivation and behavior, applying what is designated as best practice does not occur on a neutral terrain, but on one where different values systems and motivation may blend, compete or clash with one another... Assessing best practice, therefore, cannot stop at the level of mere techniques and tools shown to perform effectively. Such an exercise should consider the links between a technique of doing things with its implicit worldview (including its inherent norms of validity) as part of the consideration on what may be categorized as “best”.²⁹

An understanding of good practice in the field of TIP data collection is informed by differing worldviews and fields of work. For example, good practice for a researcher or National Rapporteur conducting empirical research will differ from that of a social worker gathering data as part of their case management work or a police officer who is documenting cases as part of investigation work. While the researcher may be concerned that the data collection contributes to scholarly knowledge and theoretical development, the social worker might be more concerned with how this data will inform their daily work and planning of future activities. These differences in intended use, in turn, mean that the data collection will likely be approached differently. The social worker may prioritize timeliness and relevance over other aspects of data quality when responding to an urgent practical need in the field, for instance, why victims or witnesses withdraw from criminal justice proceedings, or why victims fail to be identified. By contrast, for the researcher, data quality will likely be the higher priority.



Different purposes and goals of data collection

How good practice criteria apply will also be informed by the specific purpose and goal of data collection, which may vary widely. There are both synergies and challenges in terms of producing socially relevant and scientifically meritorious research.³⁰ For example, there are differences between data collection for academic publishing and knowledge production and that which is intended to inform and underpin a specific TIP intervention or policy. Some TIP data collection needs to be done quickly and inexpensively, to respond to an urgent issue or answer a pressing question. While it may not have gathered the highest quality data,

²⁹ Truong, T. and M.B. Angeles (2005) *Searching for Best Practices to Counter Human Trafficking in Africa: A Focus on Women and Children*. Paris, France: UNESCO, pp. 26-27.

³⁰ McLean, R. & K. Sen (2018) *Making a difference in the real world? A meta-analysis of research for development*. Canada: International Development Research Centre, p. 4.

it can nonetheless provide information needed to respond to an issue or design an intervention in a timely fashion and, as such, be useful and relevant. Similarly, TIP data collection by National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms will need to meet the national need for harmonized TIP data (usefulness and relevance) while aligning this requirement with available time and resources of different government departments (data providers) with which the office cooperates. By contrast, data collection for an academic study will need to be diligent and rigorous, collecting high quality data and responding to issues that are of high scholarly interest. But this research may also have limited practical application in the immediate and be both costly and time-consuming. Good practice criteria, then, must be weighed and balanced in relation to the specific purpose and goal of the individual data collection effort.



The perspective of different stakeholders

Depending on the nature of the data collection effort, many individuals, organizations and institutions will be involved as data sources or data providers and have views on what constitutes good practice in TIP data collection. In the case of National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms, data providers include a wide range of government departments and civil society organizations in the country. For data collection about the criminal justice process, data sources and data providers may include individuals and institutions involved at the various stages of the legal process, including law enforcement, prosecutors, lawyers and judges, as well as trafficking victims and those supporting them and even traffickers. All of these various stakeholders may have different assessments of what constitutes good practice in a data collection effort and how they value and weigh criteria to assess good practice.

Assessing when data collection constitutes good practice will depend on which stakeholders are making this assessment and in response to what factors. For instance, timeliness may be particularly important criteria for a police officer who requires data to understand changes in trafficker behaviors and, thus, tailor investigative work. This timeliness may be valued above criteria like data quality or cost appropriateness. Similarly, some data collection questions that could contribute to a better understanding of trafficking for law enforcement and, thus, better responses – such as research with traffickers – may not be ethical or perhaps even legal for data collection projects.

Moreover, different assessments of good practice will also emerge *within* any one group. There may be substantial variations of interests and perceptions of what is and is not beneficial or a priority within a group. For example, the viewpoints and perspectives of trafficking victims *as a group* and *as a whole* are not necessarily represented by a given selection of its members. This equally applies to other possible data sources and data providers who cannot necessarily be taken to represent their cohorts more broadly.

Further, not all stakeholders are well positioned to apply each criterion in assessing what constitutes good practice in data collection, nor is it necessarily their role to do so. Assessing data quality, for example, is a specialized expertise which many practitioners and policymakers are not well positioned to gauge. Therefore, the variation between the perspectives of different stakeholders needs to be weighed with this also in mind.



Different situations and contexts

Good practice is often context specific. There is no one-size-fits-all good practice in TIP data collection or indeed in anti-trafficking interventions more broadly. One method might be appropriate for a given circumstance, while the same method, in another set of circumstances, may be ineffective or even harmful. One TIP legal expert expressed this as follows:

... what is a [good] practice in one country might be disastrous in another. [...] If I was to advise on how a certain law could be crafted in one country and might work, because of the way that the legislative system is, in another country it might not. [...] And so every best practice or every piece of advice that we are going to try to offer the world has to be tested against other contexts.

Different contexts and situations influence if, when and how good practice can be applied in terms of data collection. In some settings, this means that some criteria, such as data quality or cost appropriateness, may need to be given different weight. One TIP expert working with local organizations in complex and constrained political environments noted the need to be flexible in different settings:

The external factors are numerous, unpredictable, country-specific and impossible to avoid... We have to acknowledge [that] the contexts in which so many of our partners are operating are so challenging.

Some contexts will not necessarily support good practice in at least some types of TIP data collection for different reasons. In some countries, the political system complicates the flow of information in ways that make data collection costly, difficult to execute in a timely fashion and of uneven quality. One TIP researcher described the complexity of administrative data flows in countries that are geographically vast and have administratively decentralized governments:

Learning how this decentralization process affects very bureaucratic matters is just [mind-]boggling. And the physical transportation of papers... [Stakeholders in-country have said], “Well we have to wait for someone to travel from that island to [the capital]”, because they still keep so much on hard paper. A lot of things are not digitized or sometimes they fax things, but even scanning things doesn’t seem to happen a lot.

This example illustrates different measurements of what is timely and also accessible. Another feature is what might be considered cost appropriate in lower resource countries, where the implementation of a more complex database (for example, centralized and accessible online) would be very costly and where the legal framework is not sufficiently robust to ensure the legal, ethical and safe flow of data.

In some settings, available infrastructure and human resources may not be able to support what might elsewhere be considered good practice. For example, the project manager of a TIP data collection project described the design of an innovative database where caseworkers were intended to upload data that they collected from assisted trafficking victims to a central database via smartphones. However, the physical infrastructure (internet access) was not in place in practice and caseworkers had inadequate technical skills, which made the model unviable in that context:

At a practical level it was a challenge, which is why I said initially the scope of the database was very ambitious considering the context that we were working in. [...]

We realized that we might have set the bar too high as far as this kind of online real-time case management system. [...] ...the structures that we were trying to introduce for these NGOs, it was too complex. It was too complex and it wasn't the right time or the right environment.

As a consequence, the database and data collection project were not fully implemented nor sustainable in the long-term, as the same project manager explained:

We ran into so much trouble in the data collection piece. In fact we realized, as I said, that the scope was really beyond what was realistic on the ground. And so unfortunately while we were able to collect some data... we didn't really have a big enough database or robust enough [database]. And also the project ended and there wasn't a follow-up initiative to keep the database going... I don't think we really developed any tangible reports from this database.

In other contexts, good practice assessments need to be undertaken with recognition of the political climate. In some contexts, there is enormous potential for the abuse and misuse of TIP data. Decisions need to be made about the collection of information about trafficking victims (including how much and what type of information) in situations where this information must legally be submitted to the state authorities, could be subpoenaed or where there may be (formal or informal) pressure to share this information with organizations or institutions. For example, it may not be advisable to collect data about trafficking victims in settings where organizations and institutions face political pressures to share this data with state authorities, who may prosecute victims for irregular migration or force them to testify against their recruiters or traffickers. For example, in one country, NGOs reported being required by police and prosecutors to provide them with information about assisted victims so that they could contact victims and pursue prosecutions.

In some countries, the space for independent research and data collection is highly constrained or controlled. Some governments may block or dispute the publication of TIP research or data collection findings when they are deemed by the state to be contrary to their interests. Some governments may not permit any data collection to take place or may only consent to the data being collected in the first place because of non-sharing or non-publication agreements.

Considerations of good practice play out in markedly different ways in various political and social contexts. For instance, tensions emerge when researchers are able to collect high quality TIP data but are not able to make it accessible to those who need it to enhance their work. When data about trafficking victims must be legally disclosed to authorities without a victim's consent, tensions emerge between what is legal and what is ethical, including in relation to the principle of "do no harm". In some such settings, good practice in TIP data collection may be to *not* collect TIP data.

Framing good practice. Balancing criteria and context

Good practice is determined by the above criteria (that is, data quality, relevance and usefulness, accessibility, timeliness, cost appropriateness and legal and ethical issues). But these criteria do not exist in a vacuum. They are informed by a range of external factors and considerations, including different fields of work, different purposes of data collection, varying perspectives of different stakeholders and different situations and contexts in which data collection takes place. What constitutes good practice in one situation may not be equally applicable or effective in another.

Nonetheless, recognizing the influence of external factors and considerations should not be taken as an acceptance of weak or poor data. Rather, it is to note the wide variation in TIP

data collection globally and the different dynamics in this complex and varied arena. But there are necessarily limits to flexibility and relativism. And, while it is important to recognize these limitations and adjust a data collection effort to fit what is possible, it is not appropriate to compromise on some issues simply to fit what is easiest rather than what is most needed. It may be acceptable to adjust a data collection effort in response to some pressures or factors but not others. And, in some cases, these external factors are contradictory and the challenge is to find a balance between them.

Moreover, good practice may evolve over time alongside the experiential, theoretical and evidence base of the TIP field. Researchers and data collection staff will need to adapt and adjust as challenges arise and new understandings of TIP emerge. In the context of long-standing data collection projects, such on-going learning, including through challenges and failures, will give rise to new and improved models or approaches. As such, discussions around good practice in TIP data collection should be on-going, alongside developments and evolutions in the field over time.

5. Identifying good practice in TIP data collection. Lessons from the five stages of the data collection process

For the purposes of this project, we have found it useful to divide the overall **TIP data collection process** into five stages:



Stage #1. Design and Planning



Stage #2. Data Collection



Stage #3. Data Storage, Maintenance and Management



Stage #4. Data Analysis



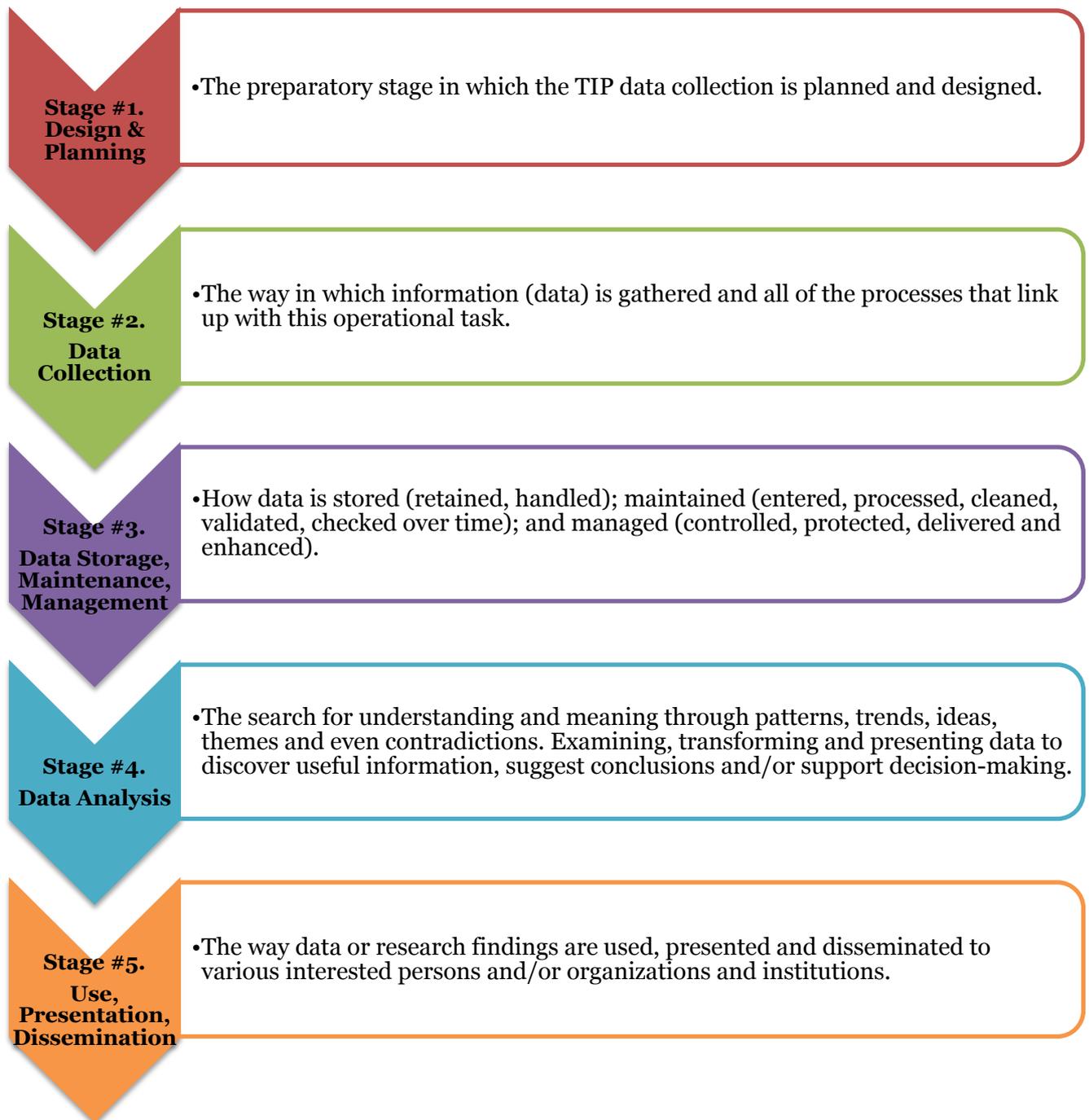
Stage #5. Data Use, Presentation and Dissemination

The following sections consider each of the five stages of the data collection process in detail. Each stage is then sub-divided into key steps involved in that specific stage of data collection, including a discussion of issues and considerations that are specific to TIP data collection and examples of good practice or lessons learned that have been identified over the course of the project. Disaggregating TIP data collection into these five discrete but interconnected stages permits a more granular discussion of what is involved in and may constitute good practice at each of these stages and steps.

Recognizing that there are many different types of TIP data collection using a vast array of approaches and techniques, we aim to address a wide range of scenarios and good practices within each stage and step. At the same time, not all data collection will correspond with these stages and steps nor is this publication intended as a technical step-by-step guide to data collection. Rather, this study aims to highlight and discuss aspects of TIP data collection that are important to consider as well as to document and present the collective experiences of organizations, institutions and individuals who have been and are involved in TIP data collection. The study offers practical lessons and tools to support anti-trafficking professionals in their own data collection efforts in a constructive and ethical way and in line with their existing work and mandates. It may also be read and used alongside the companion document – *On the Frontlines: Operationalizing Good Practice in TIP Data Collection*.³¹

³¹ NEXUS Institute (2019) *On the Frontlines: Operationalizing Good Practice in TIP Data Collection*. Washington, D.C., United States: NEXUS Institute.

Graphic #3. Five stages of a TIP data collection process



Stage #1. Design and Planning

Define data collection topic, purpose and scope



- Frame the topic, issue(s) or question(s) of the data collection
- Clarify the purpose of the data collection
- Consider the scope of the data collection
- Clarify expectations related to data collection

Formulate data collection questions



- Formulate data collection questions linked to topic
- Ensure definitional clarity and precision
- Operationalize definitions and terminology

Review existing literature and research



- Find existing literature and research
- Systematically review and assess relevant literature



Select a data collection approach and method (quantitative, qualitative and mixed approaches and methods)

- Assess different data collection approaches and methods
- Choose a data collection approach and method
- Ensure skills in the relevant approach and method when selecting researchers
- Determine how the approach and method are influenced by the specific context
- Consider participation and involvement of stakeholders and end users in data collection



Identify data sources and data providers

- Assess possible data sources
- Determine access to data sources
- Assess the appropriateness of data sources
- Identify biases and limitations in data sources

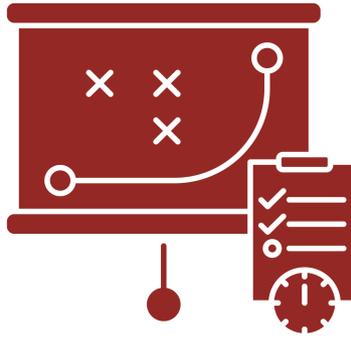


Develop or apply legal and ethical guidelines and protocols

- Apply the principle of “do no harm”
- Ensure voluntary and informed consent
- Guard anonymity and confidentiality
- Consider the safety and well-being of research participants and data collectors
- Apply child protection principles including the “best interests of the child”
- Implement procedures for review and adaptation



Prepare a work plan for data collection



Stage #1. Design and Planning

This is the preparatory stage of TIP data collection in which the process is planned and designed. Stage #1 – design and planning – is the development of a data collection effort as a whole, while the more practical and operational aspects of data collection are captured in Stage #2. Regardless of the parameters of the specific TIP data collection activity, it is important to clearly define the issue or questions to be addressed and carefully select the research approach and method. This will assist in maintaining a clear focus during the design of data collection (and, later on, in the implementation phase) and in being efficient and effective in moving forward with data collection.

It is also important to consider potential limitations and constraints in the design and planning phase, which are explored to some extent in each of the steps below. At the same time, some limitations and constraints are difficult to fully anticipate or predict prior to starting data collection and may only come into focus over the course of implementation. These will need to be tackled as part of TIP data collection itself (Stage #2) and in subsequent stages (Stage #3, #4 and #5).

Many aspects of the design and planning stage are integral to later stages of data collection; many of the steps below should be reviewed and revisited as the project is implemented over time. This is especially the case for on-going data collection mechanisms, such as data collection by National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms, the collection of victim case management data, data collection in the criminal justice system and so on.

“... good practice is defining the problem you’re studying, defining a methodology for studying it, having it carried out by people who know what they are doing, with an amount of time and resources necessary to do it”.

TIP Researcher

For larger (and more costly) TIP data collection efforts, pilot projects should be considered to inform the final design and planning. Pilots are also useful for both large and small projects to gain a more comprehensive understanding of possible barriers that may, in a worst-case scenario, jeopardize the data collection effort as a whole or translate into the collection of poor data, which can lead to ill-informed interventions or a poor understanding of the topic under study. Piloting a data collection project means working through Stage #1 (design and planning) and implementing a limited or scaled-down version of Stage #2 (data collection) before assessing any strengths, weaknesses and potential need for changes that might require returning to Stage #1, to make adjustments. This might involve, for example, a case management database that is tested by one NGO before being rolled out to other NGOs in the country. Or it might be a pilot database for police investigations tested in one district before being scaled to other districts in the country.

Steps and considerations in design and planning

This preparatory stage – of design and planning – involves a range of different steps, depending on the precise nature and scope of TIP data collection activities to be undertaken. Not all TIP data collection will correspond with all steps outlined below. Rather, the following constitute some of the more common features of design and planning.



Define data collection topic, purpose and scope. This involves: carefully and rigorously framing the topic, issue(s) or question(s) of the data collection; clarifying the purpose of the data collection; considering the scope of data collection; and clarifying expectations related to the data collection initiative, including data ownership and sharing. Setting realistic goals at the outset will guide implementation and dissemination stages. Returning to the topic, purpose and scope throughout the data collection process will assist in keeping the data collection effort on track.

Steps and considerations in design and planning

- Define data collection topic, purpose and scope
- Formulate data collection questions
- Review existing literature and research
- Select a data collection approach and method (quantitative, qualitative and mixed approaches and methods)
- Identify data sources and data providers
- Develop or apply legal and ethical guidelines and protocols
- Prepare a work plan for data collection



Formulate data collection questions. Data collection questions are at the core of robust data collection and underpin the project. This includes: formulating data collection questions linked to the topic being examined or question/issue to be answered; ensuring definitional clarity and precision in the questions asked; and operationalizing definitions and terminology.



Review existing literature and research. All TIP data collection needs to be situated in relation to the existing knowledge base. This requires not only finding relevant literature, but also systematically reviewing and assessing this literature for its relevance to the specific topic, scope and purpose of the proposed data collection as well as its approach and method. The literature review should consider and, ideally, also incorporate to the greatest extent possible, the existing relevant knowledge base that is available in other languages.



Select a data collection approach and method (quantitative, qualitative and mixed approaches and methods). The approach and method must be appropriate to answer the data collection questions and realistic relative to available resources and time frame. This involves: assessing different approaches and methods (quantitative, qualitative and mixed); choosing the approach and method; ensuring data collectors have skills in the approach and method; considering how the context or environment influences the approach and method; and considering participation and end user involvement in the data collection process.



Identify data sources and data providers. The identification of appropriate data sources and data providers is closely related to the selection of an approach and method. Data sources and providers follow on naturally from the approach and method and this step requires: assessing possible data sources; determining access to data sources; assessing the appropriateness of data sources; and identifying biases and limitations in relation to different data sources and data providers.

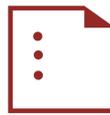


Develop or apply legal and ethical guidelines and protocols. Legal and ethical frameworks for data collection will vary depending on who is collecting data, what data is being collected, from whom, for what purpose and so on. This step requires identifying and anticipating legal and ethical questions specific to the proposed TIP data collection effort and establishing guidelines and data protection protocols to ensure legal and ethical adherence. More specifically, this includes: applying the principle of “do no harm”; ensuring voluntary and informed consent; guarding anonymity and confidentiality; considering the safety and well-being of research participants and data collectors; applying child protection principles including the “best interests of the child”; and implementing procedures for review and adaptation.



Prepare a work plan for data collection. This includes creating a discrete document to guide the data collection effort, including defining the main goals and associated activities as well as setting milestones and deadlines. The work plan needs to take into account the timeline and resources available for the project.

The following sections discuss each of these steps in detail, including an exploration of key issues and considerations that may be faced in the design and planning stage and examples of good practice or lessons learned at this stage.



Define data collection topic, purpose and scope

Defining the topic, scope and purpose of the data collection effort is a fundamental priority in designing and planning TIP research and data collection. There is no effective or efficient data collection without rigorously defining and clearly articulating the overall topic, issue(s) and question(s) to be studied. As one TIP researcher noted:

Instead of thinking, “We need data”, it’s really important for us to ask, “What questions are we trying to answer? How do we best answer those questions?” ... “What do we need to be able to answer?” and then thinking through how to design a data collection system that gets at those topics and questions. [...] ...We need to focus on what questions we are hoping to answer or what problems we are hoping to solve and then figure out what kind of data that [requires].

Define data collection topic, purpose and scope

- Frame the topic, issue(s) or question(s) of the data collection
- Clarify the purpose of the data collection
- Consider the scope of data collection
- Clarify expectations related to data collection

Alongside a carefully derived data collection topic must also be careful consideration of the purpose and scope of the data collection. Jumping prematurely into how to conduct data collection before the topic, issue(s) or question(s) are carefully considered and derived runs the risk of undermining the overall data collection endeavor.

Defining realistic goals as well as the purpose of the data collection informs and guides subsequent implementation and dissemination stages. Returning to the original topic, issue(s) and questions throughout the data collection process also safeguards against data collection efforts going off course during what, in some cases, might be on-going projects

over a long period of time (and potentially involving many different stakeholders as well as institutions or organizations). Equally key is to return to the purpose and scope of the data collection effort over the course of implementation, to guard against data collection becoming larger or less focused than originally intended.

Frame the topic, issue(s) or question(s) of the data collection

Framing the topic for data collection is fundamental and each of the steps below (that is, formulating data collection issues or questions, conducting a literature review, selecting an approach and method and so on) aim for an increasingly precise vision of how the topic will be studied and the data collected. While we focus on protection- and prosecution-related issues for this publication, even within these already specified subjects, selecting one or more specific topic(s), issue(s) or question(s) for data collection is an essential step.

For instance, within protection-related data, the topic might be: victims' assistance needs; procedures for the identification of victims; longer-term outcomes of assistance; the functioning of a national referral mechanism or assistance framework; or the number of victims identified, assisted and receiving temporary residence permits. Topics for data collection on the issue of prosecution may be: barriers in police investigations; numbers of investigated cases; numbers of convicted trafficking cases; profiles of traffickers; experiences as victims or witnesses in the criminal justice process; or an assessment of the functioning of the criminal justice process. Within an overarching topic, more specific issues and questions will in turn be explored.

The topic may emerge from an area of general interest or from a specific need in relation to anti-trafficking policy and interventions. For example, a National Rapporteur's office will need a broad overview of cases of human trafficking within a country, including the number and types of trafficking cases prosecuted and/or socio-demographic information about trafficking victims (for example, nationality, age or gender). In such a case, the topic for data collection may be the general known features of human trafficking within the country and how these may change over a given time. Similarly, criminal justice actors may need to improve the performance of the criminal justice system. Here, the topic might be to identify and understand the factors that lead to successful convictions in human trafficking cases. And within the public health field, the topic might be the mental and physical health of trafficking victims, with the goal to inform programming decisions around services for trafficking victims. As one public health researcher explained of her work:

We knew that we were trying to provide information that would help [service providers to] budget, that would help them understand whether they needed a mental health professional or forensic scientist, whether they needed MRIs [magnetic resonance imaging] for brain injuries. We were trying to really define this to inform the service providers.

A topic may also arise from an identified problem or knowledge gap. While there is data about the performance of the criminal justice system, little data exists in relation to perpetrators of TIP – who they are, what they do, how they do it and why they do it. More than one TIP researcher noted this knowledge gap:

We have little research on traffickers. Lots of people assume why people end up committing acts of trafficking and how they do it and what their rationales are, often based on data from victims, with what happens in court or their own imagination. We actually have very little empirical data on traffickers themselves. [...] [There are] very few examples of people actually doing [this] work or in other ways studying traffickers.

One National Rapporteur's office described its current cooperation with prison authorities in the country to collect data on perpetrators of TIP in response to this gap:

... we are focusing on traffickers, where we do not have that much data... The police [are] collecting [data] about traffickers, providing an image of [criminal justice] performance but not an image of the crime itself. So we were not able to collect too much data, qualitative information on traffickers. That is why we had to have one discrete effort to collect such data from the traffickers themselves. That's why we had to cooperate with the prison department to allow us access in prisons to [conduct research] with traffickers convicted of human trafficking.

There are also emergent forms of human trafficking, which can be the topic of research and data collection. This was the case, for instance, with the emergence of what was known initially as Sinai trafficking. Beginning in 2009, migrants and refugees trying to cross the Sinai desert in Egypt were being kidnapped, tortured and held for ransom in ways that, in some instances, arguably fell within the definition of human trafficking in the *UN Trafficking Protocol*.³²

With emergent topics, an important – and complex – part of data collection is carefully examining whether and how the facts of the new phenomenon may satisfy the international legal definition of TIP. This requires establishing a clear understanding of the phenomenon within a strong conceptual understanding of the international legal definition of trafficking in persons, as well to suggest appropriate policy responses. For example, the emergence of the exploitation of migrants and refugees within and on their way to Europe in recent years required understanding this phenomenon as human trafficking, which did not necessarily follow the same forms of trafficking or trafficking patterns as previously seen in that region. It follows then that established methods for identification, protection and prosecution may have limited efficiency or effectiveness in reaching these less recognizable victims of trafficking. An important data collection topic then is how human trafficking plays out in this specific population so that more responsive interventions can be designed.

Good practice. Frame the topic, issue(s) or questions(s) of the data collection

Identify a relevant topic, issue(s) or question(s) for TIP data collection.

Ensure the topic, issue(s) or question(s) are sufficiently specific to guide the data collection process.

Consider topics that address an issue of interest, a specific need, an identified problem, a knowledge gap, an emergent issue or a form of TIP.

New topics have also come under study with the increase of the private sector's engagement in anti-trafficking work in recent years. This has included data collection about human trafficking in supply chains,³³ corporations (and corporate owners and shareholders) behind trafficking operations and financial transactions related to trafficking operations. One TIP researcher described these new topics, issues and questions being considered:

Some groups have started looking at using financial crimes, tracking down the money, using money laundering or corruption laws to tackle human trafficking

³² United Nations (2000) *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*, UN Doc A/45/49.

³³ A supply chain is the system of organizations, individuals, activities and resources involved in in the production and distribution of a commodity. While there are differences between public and private sector supply chains, the movement toward supply chain accountability affects both sectors.

issues. So, for money laundering claims, for example, they would need some data to understand how the money flows from the victims [or the] family of the victims to the recruitment agency, to the factories or company that used the labor.

Current or emerging issues can be the subject of parallel studies or integrated into on-going frameworks for TIP data collection. For example, the Dutch National Rapporteur's office has, since its establishment, collected data on TIP protection and prosecution. In addition, the office researches emerging issues, including: trafficking for the purpose of criminal activities; trafficking for organ removal; cases where trafficking victims become perpetrators of trafficking crimes; and trafficking for forced commercial surrogacy. Similarly, the Observatory on Trafficking in Human Beings in Portugal (an equivalent mechanism of the National Rapporteur) carries out on-going administrative data collection about trafficking victims and trafficking cases and also conducts discrete studies on new trends, such as the new and varying typologies of trafficking cases and the effectiveness of the anti-trafficking framework in the country.

In summary: Identifying the specific topic, issue(s) or question(s) for data collection is the fundamental first step from which subsequent steps and decisions will necessarily flow. The topic, issue(s) or question(s) may address an issue of interest, a specific need, an identified problem, a knowledge gap, an emergent issue or form of TIP, among others. Regardless of the topic, issues(s) or question(s) selected, this step in design and planning must be sufficiently specific to guide the data collection process.

Clarify the purpose of data collection

One issue is *what* will be studied (that is, the topic, issue(s) or question(s) as discussed above) and another is *why* (that is, the purpose of the data collection). Data collection efforts need to be clear and focused to be effective in offering policy- and program-relevant information or to build the knowledge base on TIP. It is important to have a clear purpose from the outset of a data collection initiative. As one criminal justice expert noted:

Be very clear about [the] facts that you want to collect: what do you need them for? What is your goal in collecting this information? Is it just to collect it or is there some goal at the end of the day that you need that information for? Where is that information going? What is it designed to show?

Clarify the purpose of the data collection

- ❓ Who needs this data?
- ❓ How does it help better understand TIP?
- ❓ Does it enhance the knowledge base on human trafficking?
- ❓ How does it help to address TIP?
- ❓ What information does it provide to inform policy and practice?

Clarifying the purpose of data collection during the design and planning stage should include assessing the need for a specific study or data collection effort (for example, to understand an issue or to address policy or programmatic needs on the ground). A key part of clarifying the purpose involves asking: who needs this data? Does it enhance the knowledge base on human trafficking? How does it help us understand TIP? How does it help to address TIP? What information does it provide to inform policy and practice? Such an assessment is also needed to avoid duplicating efforts or wasting resources and

should include consideration of the time required for this effort. That is, one criterion in clarifying the purpose of data collection is whether it is relevant and useful.

It is also important to assess the potential pressure involved in some forms of TIP data collection (for instance, when interviewing trafficking victims or collecting data from professionals with already heavy workloads). In such cases, the purpose of the data collection should be sufficiently robust to offset the “costs” to those involved as data sources and data providers. The director of one NGO that assists trafficking victims and also conducts research stressed that research should have a clear and necessary purpose:

...there is a lot of research done and then the same research is done again... If you gather information and you use it for a good purpose...to change things and to better things, I agree [with this]. But always, of course, taking care of the victim and protecting her. But I also see sometimes when people come and say, “Could you do this or that research?” “Yes, we could, but what for?” “We need a baseline.” “We have already five baselines!” Another one, what for? To have a little more information on this or that? That won’t help. ...money sometimes is used to do research that is not used afterwards. And I think that’s an ethical issue also.

For example, documenting the effects and outcomes of protection programs and prosecution efforts has a clear purpose and is useful and relevant. One National Rapporteur observed the important purpose that conducting data collection on such a topic fulfilled in the country:

It seems very logical to me that if I implement protection projects, I collect data on the victims’ protection pathways, such as personal data, activities implemented (for example, vocational training), along with data that provides a picture of the effectiveness of that specific protection pathway.

Good practice. Clarify the purpose of the data collection

Assess the need for the specific type of data collection being proposed.

Assess the purpose of the data collection (*the why*).

Consider how the data collection will build the knowledge base or inform policy and practice.

Ensure that the purpose for which data is collected is relevant and useful.

Assess what exists already and avoid duplication of on-going or past efforts.

Furthermore, focused data collection can allow a more detailed analysis of which individual factors contribute to effective interventions or policies. This can both inform the specific intervention being examined and provide lessons for other efforts. One NGO service provider explained how data collection informed the provision of and adjustments to victim services provided by the organization:

One of the things that we’re looking at... is that it’s great to do nice things for people, but what happens to them? Are you making such an impact that it’s all of the things that you do together? Or is it certain things individually that are making the difference? We had a really engaged donor... and his question was, “I look at this program and I see a Cadillac. It’s an amazing service. But if you take one wheel off it, does it still work the same way? ... Or if you didn’t have that, would the whole thing just fall apart?” ... Is there a way for us to dissect what are the most effective things in what we’re doing?

Another purpose of data collection may be to argue for changes in legislation and policy based on victims’ needs. One National Rapporteur explained that documenting the prevalence of specific health problems among returned trafficking victims provided the evidence base for victims’ increased access to health services:

... in the last few years, the [number] of victims with psychological and psychiatric problems has risen... and many of them [do not have] health insurance. Many of them have had quite difficult health problems. Many of [the] victims [are] being returned either with chronic conditions or diseases. We see that obviously [something] needs to be done to provide [them] with health support. So we made the recommendation that a legislative amendment needs to be made to assist those vulnerable groups, like victims of trafficking.

A case management system based on victim data can be useful in the development or tailoring of programs (for example, victim services or prevention efforts). One NGO director described how the organization had developed a case management database with the purpose of tailoring programs based on what they learned from the trafficking victims that the organization assisted:

As we see changes happening in our programs and in our [categories of] clients, we feed back into our other programs. Like our child [trafficking] prevention program, that changes the messages of our prevention programs. And we introduced [into the database] an element on forced marriage into [one destination country]. Now we're introducing an element that looks at fraudulent scholarships to [one destination country] and restaurant jobs in [another destination country]. We're pulling the data out of our case management system and we're disseminating [the findings] internally [to inform programs].

Similarly, one purpose of prosecution-related data collection is to understand the nature of the prosecutions being pursued, not just the number of cases reported. This allows us to understand the quality of trafficking prosecutions as well as when some cases have been misidentified or misclassified as human trafficking. This is critically important in being able to identify when high numbers of prosecutions may not translate into a meaningful criminal justice response and to, in turn, adjust and refine how cases are handled in going forward. As one criminal justice expert noted:

There's a lot of pressure on some countries to come up with numbers of cases prosecuted successfully. These countries understand that a lot is at stake to satisfy those demands and show that they have these numbers. That, I think, puts pressure on investigators and prosecutors to identify cases as human trafficking cases that might not otherwise be seen as trafficking cases.

It may be useful, in some cases, to think about different *layers* of purpose for the data collection. For instance, a primary goal may be to inform the on-going work of a specific institution or organization on a particular aspect of their anti-trafficking effort. At the same time, a secondary goal may be to contribute to knowledge about specific aspects of human trafficking, to use the findings to inform policymaking and programming, for advocacy or to inform the work of others.

In this vein, one National Rapporteur spoke about how her office's on-going data collection on trafficking victims, in addition to providing information about the nature and scope of TIP in the country, also informed the provision of victim services including identifying underserved areas:

...we have tried to open more services for victims that will be transit centers based here in [the capital]. Because our shelters are not in [this] region. So we used the data analysis in order to see what kind of services need to be developed and for what kind of people.

In some cases, the purpose of the data collection topic may be decided by others (for example, donors and funders, national governments or the private sector). Funders or authorities may be responding to the interests and concerns of taxpayers, politicians or external funding agencies, which may lead to some issues and aspects being the focus of TIP data collection. External interests can lead to the overemphasis or neglect of different types of information, TIP issues and populations.

In summary: Regardless of the specific purpose, good practice in TIP data collection means that the information gathered should be relevant and useful. It should add something to the existing body of knowledge on human trafficking or to the daily work of practitioners and policymakers in ways that can inform policy and/or practice. Ideally, data collection would add to both knowledge and practice. Thus, defining the purpose of the data collection (the *why*) at the outset helps ensure that the data collection is needed. In some cases, data collection may be driven by external factors, which can lead to the overemphasis or neglect of different types of data collection.

Consider the scope of the data collection

Once the data collection topic and purpose are clearly formulated, it is necessary to consider the scope of the data collection. The choice of topic and research questions must align with the scope of the work, which is ultimately determined by resources available (human and financial resources as well as time). These factors determine what is and is not possible. That is: how broad and comprehensive will the data collection be? Do the budget and resources correspond to the scope and purpose of data collection? Is the proposed scope of data collection possible within the available time frame? And, when setting up TIP databases, is the approach sustainable?

Consider the scope of data collection

- ❓ How broad or comprehensive will the data collection be?
- ❓ Do the budget and resources correspond to the scope?
- ❓ Will available resources be sufficient for the scope and purpose?
- ❓ Is the scope possible within the available time frame?
- ❓ Is the database sustainable?

In cases where data is collected with and from many different agencies and institutions (for example, by National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms) it is also important to consider the time, workload, resources and interests of cooperating data providers. This includes recognizing that, in many cases, human trafficking is only one of the issues or crimes that data providers are working on and for which they are responsible. For many institutions and organizations,

TIP data collection is undertaken within a wider mandate of work. For example, law enforcement and prosecutors collect data about all forms of crime, of which TIP is only one. Similarly, social service providers assist and collect data about many different categories of vulnerable persons, including, but not limited to, trafficking victims. Balancing the time, workload and resources of the data providers with whom one cooperates is an important consideration in determining the scope of data collection. One National Rapporteur noted the need to recognize that most data providers with whom her office cooperates have time pressures and resource constraints that also need to be taken into account and accommodated in how her office's TIP data collection is designed and approached:

[Our] unit is a dedicated body [on TIP]. We're not a lot of people, but this is what we are there for. [...] We do have a lot of work, but we don't have too many other demands. Whereas the challenge with other [institutions] is that, if you think of the

police, there's a lot of crimes [that they are dealing with]. It's not always clear that human trafficking has a priority because other [crimes] are really important too.

Some TIP data collection can be carried out with relatively limited resources while providing valuable insight into specific issues. For instance, the systematization and collation of information from trafficking victim case files within a service provider organization can provide an overview of who comes into contact with the organization, how long assistance is provided, what services are provided, how victims are identified and so on. The analysis and presentation of this information will be useful for this organization and also, potentially, to similar organizations working with similar populations of trafficking victims. However, it is important in such cases to be realistic about what the data collection can (and cannot) provide information about and, thus, what conclusions can be drawn. For instance, this type of data collection could provide valuable knowledge about the experiences of the specific service providers including changes in terms of beneficiary groups, such as their age, gender, forms of exploitation and countries of destination or origin. It could also offer information about which institutions in the country identify victims and refer them for assistance. However, this data collection cannot provide insights into, for example, the experiences of trafficking victims generally, nor is it representative of the human trafficking situation more broadly, because it does not capture data on those trafficking victims not in contact with the service provider.

Similarly, systematization of police investigation files offers data about the types of crimes being charged (whether trafficking crimes or other related crimes) as well as the relationship between TIP and other crimes. One TIP researcher noted, for example, the analytical opportunity in police case files:

We played with the idea of having a flag for trafficking [in police files] so you would also be able to see the range of crimes that people have been [charged with], which might have a link to trafficking... And it would allow you to then see the totality of those crimes or perpetrators that you thought were involved in trafficking, even if they were charged with different crimes. ...it's one way that you could explore what was happening.

However, such data could not be used to make conclusions about, for example, the total number of trafficking cases in a country, nor could it indicate to what extent such cases and perpetrators are representative of traffickers and the crime of trafficking more broadly.

Data collection that aspires to illuminate issues that are complex and previously understudied, where data is absent, sparse or generally inaccessible, will be costly and time-consuming. Therefore, it is important to be realistic about the scope of the data collection effort in relation to that specific topic and to ensure that sufficient resources are available in the case of more complex data collection efforts as well as those with greater scope.

Good practice. Consider the scope of the data collection

Determine the scope of the data collection.

Ensure the scope of data collection aligns with available time and resources (both human and financial).

Take into account resources, available time and workload of organizations and institutions cooperating on data collection.

Be realistic about what questions the data can (and cannot) answer.

Focus on high quality data with a limited scope, over wider scope with low quality data.

Aligning the scope of data collection with the available time and resources should be considered good practice and is important in assessing cost appropriateness. Limiting the scope of TIP data collection is important in avoiding weak data and poor results. Too broad a scope often means not being able to adequately cover the topic or issue being examined. As one TIP expert noted:

...often research projects have too wide a focus – identification, protection, risk factors, etc. And as a consequence, few or no aspects are explored in sufficient depth. And this is not only related to resources available but also to the skills of researchers. How could one field researcher realistically have in-depth understanding about prosecution, investigation techniques, child protection, forced marriage, detention, etc.? [...] But this problem should have been anticipated from the outset. It should be flagged as a “bad practice” and not just a “limitation” of the study.

It is better to produce high quality data with a limited scope than to have a wide scope but low quality data. Poor data can be misleading and limit or distort an understanding of TIP, including misrepresentations that foster biases against individuals, communities and countries and lead to negative policy and practical responses. In the worst case, poor data may translate into inappropriate or even harmful policy and practice interventions, which can have real-life implications for trafficking victims or other categories of vulnerable persons as well as their families and communities.³⁴ The risks and potentially harmful consequences of bad data, therefore, must be a foremost consideration in the design and planning of any TIP data collection activity. As one TIP researcher observed:

...having bad data, to my mind, is worse than having no data, because once we have bad data we’re going to make decisions based on that information and it’s bad information.

This concern was echoed by another TIP researcher who cautioned about the risks of using poor data when informing policy and practice:

Perfect practice is extremely challenging and we do have a lot of constraints and being up front about research limitations is really important. If there is a limitation in our research and that impacts our findings, we really need to take a hard look and think about whether or not we should use this finding to inform research and practice if we don’t really have the kind of rigor that we want behind it. So [we need to] always present the research and be transparent about the limitations.

Equally, some consideration is needed to the strengths and limitations of data collection with substantive scope, such as national, regional and global data collection, including what it can (and cannot) offer. One TIP researcher explained the tension between their organization’s global research mandate and the commensurate challenges of such expansive reporting:

...this is one of the limits of our research, that we need to have a global report. [...] This means that we need to remain on the surface. We don’t have the time to have deep analysis. [...] We don’t have the resources and time to do that.

³⁴ Ill-conceived anti-trafficking policies and programs have led to harm in many different ways in countries around the world. See, for example, GAATW (2007) *Collateral Damage: The Impact of Anti-Trafficking Measures on Human Rights Around the World*. Bangkok, Thailand: Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women.

In summary: Defining the scope of data collection carefully from the beginning ensures that, among other things, data collection is consistent with available resources, including human, financial, time and other capacity considerations. Using a careful definition of scope will also serve as a reality check on the questions that a project's data will and will not be able to answer. Paying attention to threshold issues in this way will serve later in the data collection process to avoid a disconnect between a project's ambitions and any practical limitations and expectations.

Clarify expectations related to data collection

Proper data collection is a complex endeavor. Expectations may differ between funders, researchers, project partners, data sources, data providers and stakeholders in the trafficking field more broadly. There are benefits to anticipating when and how expectations among stakeholders may differ and resolving any differences at the outset.

It can be useful to have an open dialogue with funders³⁵ about realistic topics and scope for any data collection project.

Funders may represent a range of different institutions and will have different levels of knowledge about what is possible and appropriate for a given project, budget and time frame. They may also not be well positioned to assess what is the most appropriate approach and method, or to identify legal and ethical issues in relation to a topic or context. Funders may have unrealistic expectations about what a specific data collection effort can reveal, in the absence of a full understanding of the limitations and biases implicit in different methods and data sources. The specifics of these limitations are discussed in more detail below (*Identify data sources and data providers*).

Explaining these limitations and biases will be an important part of clarifying funders' expectations. In some cases, funders may have preconceived notions or even agendas about what is studied and how. As one TIP researcher explained:

It often appears to me that people or institutions that fund the project [decide a lot]. So researchers are going to conduct the research and try to

Good practice. Clarify expectations related to data collection

Clarify with funders what can be achieved with available funds and time.

Clarify expectations with stakeholders before data collection to avoid misunderstandings later on.

Engage a third party to inform technical decisions between the funder and research team, if needed.

Do not move forward with data collection when funder requirements do not align with good practice.

Clarify expectations and relationships with other stakeholders about scope and outcomes.

Consider and address data ownership, data sharing and data use from the outset.

Delineate roles, rights and responsibilities of different individuals and organizations involved vis-à-vis data ownership and sharing.

Consult and adhere to legal requirements and ethical standards around data ownership and sharing.

³⁵ Funders may refer to bilateral and multilateral government donors, UN/international organizations, foundations and other private donors, national governments, national research councils, research institutes or universities. Funders may commission data collection from a partner organization or institution or from individual researchers/consultants.

accommodate to a certain issue [topic] that the funders find important. In the framing of the research project, it could be useful [if] research teams or the [individuals] writing the project proposals try to be critical or suggest other topics or ways that [issues] could be explored.

The availability of adequate time and funding was an issue for many researchers and project managers in their relations with funders. This included, in some cases, an unwillingness on the part of some funders to invest the time and resources necessary to design and implement high quality studies and data collection. One TIP researcher flagged this as a key concern:

[We spend] a lot of time preparing for research. And this is the thing that often donors don't want to pay for. They think somehow study instruments magically appear or you just sit down and you write it up in a day and a half and then you go out and you interview a bunch of people.

Limited knowledge of TIP data collection on the part of some funders also influences how data collection is approached, including pressure, in some instances, to conduct data collection with trafficking victims or other vulnerable groups when it may not be possible or appropriate to do so. Other challenges arise when funders have unrealistic expectations such as unfeasible sample sizes, unrealistic timelines, inadequate funding and demands regarding the representative validity of samples. Individual researchers or consultants may find it even more difficult to clarify and manage funders' expectations as they commonly have less power and influence in negotiations than organizations and institutions and risk losing the contract if they do not agree to a funder's requirements, whether realistic and appropriate or not. Some contracting agencies or institutions also apply rigid and bureaucratic internal procedures that do not allow for discussions to resolve these issues. One good practice may be to engage a third party (for example, a panel of experts or a reference group) to act as peer reviewer and to arbitrate any technical debate between the funder and research team.

This also raises a higher-order question of when *not* to undertake data collection (for example, in cases when expectations cannot be met or when expectations cannot be reconciled with the real world deliverables of the project). At what point does one decide to call off or not to initiate a data collection project in light of substantial limitations? There is an argument that research and data collection can never be perfect and the need for TIP data in the here and now (to prevent and respond to TIP) means that it should be collected anyway. However, it remains important to take into account that bad data and inaccurate findings can fundamentally skew our knowledge of human trafficking and anti-trafficking interventions, which can have serious implications at both an individual and broader societal level. Bad data collection procedures also potentially pose risks to data collectors and research participants. Thus, in some situations, good practice might be *not* moving forward. One TIP researcher reflected on this scenario:

It might mean refusing to work with organizations that want research done on a short timeline with trafficking victims, if that's not appropriate to answering the necessary questions.

Expectations also need to be agreed from the outset in terms of data ownership. Different stakeholders may lay claim to data ownership, based on the type and degree of contribution they have made to the data collection or the nature of the data. This may include, for example, the organization or institution that generates the TIP data, the organization or institution that compiles the data from different information sources, the funder that commissions the data collection, the data subjects,³⁶ the government of the jurisdiction

³⁶ "Data subject" is any person whose personal data is being collected, held or processed. It refers to any individual who can be identified, directly or indirectly, via an identifier such as a name, an identity number,

where data collection takes place, and so on. The diversity of stakeholders engaged in anti-trafficking data collection can complicate the lines of data ownership. Data ownership policies should be carefully considered and articulated from the outset, delineating the roles, rights and responsibilities of the various individuals, institutions and organizations involved. A distinction will likely also be needed between data ownership and the right of access and use as well as opportunities for data sharing. This also requires careful consideration and agreement at the outset of any data collection project.

Policies on data ownership, access, use or sharing may be needed between various stakeholders including but not limited to:

- NGOs + state agencies providing data for national data collection mechanisms (such as National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms);
- researchers or staff of a TIP data collection project + donors;
- data collectors + businesses funding or facilitating the research;
- a research institution or university + research staff;
- NGO partners within a network or coalition that are collecting data about assisted victims or services in a country;
- law enforcement + third-party technology providers supporting a criminal justice data collection system;
- different research colleagues or data collection project staff;
- authors or researchers + publishing outlets such as commissioning organizations or journals;
- consultants working as researchers or data collectors + an organization or institution commissioning the research;
- organization or institution with a data collection project + third-party technology providers.

Some funders may have standard contractual arrangements for projects that do not take into account the specific ethical and legal issues that may arise in TIP data collection, especially when it involves primary data collection from or about vulnerable persons. For instance, affording data ownership or access to donors or project funders would, in most, if not all cases, compromise informed consent as well as anonymity and privacy. One TIP researcher expressed concern about the ethical issues attendant in donors requiring data ownership or access:

[The donor] requested that they have the copyright to the data. And we found that very problematic. Because it was data from when we interviewed the victims. ...we assure victims that this information will be handled by us, as researchers... And then you hand it to the [funding] entity and you don't know who [there] actually handles the data. There's an ethical dilemma.

This aligns with the concerns of very many of trafficking victims interviewed both for research and administrative data collection. One trafficking victim interviewed in the context of a research study in Indonesia stressed the importance of their data remaining confidential and not being shared beyond the research team:

I would appreciate it if you keep your promise not to share anything about my information. ...please leave out the details such as my name, where I study, my friends' names, any personal information. Just share the experience.

location data, or from other factors and characteristics specific to the person's physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity.

Feeling assured of confidentiality was key in agreeing to and feeling comfortable with participating in research, as one Kosovar woman trafficked for sexual exploitation explained when asked how she felt about being interviewed for one study:

I felt relaxed and without any concerns because this information will stay confidential. It is the most important for me. I didn't speak with anyone about my life for a long time, because of that I feel relief now.

This was echoed by a Serbian woman, trafficked for sexual exploitation, who had been assured of confidentiality by the social worker who had assisted in arranging the interview:

It (the interview) was okay. It is my life and what can I do. [The social worker] from [the NGO] told me that all of the information will be treated confidentially and that it is the most important thing. Because of that I wasn't concerned. I don't want to think about what has happened but it was okay to speak with you today.

When these issues are not addressed during the design and planning stage, it may lead to problems later on. This, in turn, may undermine data collection, compromise legal and ethical requirements and damage relationships with data sources and data providers (as well as between funders and implementing organizations or institutions). One NGO director described the difficulties faced when a funder required transcripts from interviews with trafficking victims interviewed for a research project:

We were financed by an international organization to do research and they asked us to conduct interviews with [trafficking] victims that were underage. That was interesting for us because it would allow us to orient the work we are doing with them and give better services... But when we sent the information in the reports, they wanted to have the whole transcription of the interview. And so we were very angry. We said, "That's not what we do and we are not going to do that. There is private information and we have made these persons sign and we have signed and promised this information is going to be used for research purposes, but also to help in the assistance we give to them, but not to give all the transcripts to a third [party]". So we had a big problem... what we did eventually was an [anonymous] summary of the story... But that is an ethical issue that I never thought about before because I never thought that something like that could happen.

This example raises questions about what funders should reasonably be able to require of grantees, particularly when such requirements may constitute legal and ethical breaches, not least in terms of data protection laws and higher order ethical considerations. Such scenarios also raise questions about what procedures are in place at the donor agency to store and manage data in line with national data protection and privacy laws, as well as the rationale for the funder to hold or have access to the data. Addressing these issues may require informing and educating funders about the legality and ethics of TIP data collection and requiring changes to contractual arrangements. This example also highlights the need for those conducting research to be prepared for such demands and expectations, including declining funds when legal and ethical requirements will not be met by funders. Clarifying expectations around data ownership should be dealt with in the contract for funding. If a funder's standard contract requires access to or ownership of data, amendments may be necessary before signing a contract for a given project.³⁷ Dealing with such issues before signing the contract should resolve and prevent potential problems as well as ethical and legal issues that may arise during implementation. Another option is the use of memorandums of understanding (MoUs) as well as through legal agreements.

³⁷ This is not a theoretical or rare issue. It may, however, be a largely under-recognized issue as many standard contracts of funders or prime contractors provided to research entities include boilerplate language granting that entity ownership rights of the data collected during research.

It is also important to clarify expectations and relationships with data providers, project partners and other stakeholders before commencing data collection, such that expectations align with the envisaged scope and outcomes. This may be in relation to realistic goals, the scope and outcome, sufficiency of time and resources and what is allowable legally and ethically in the accessing and use of data. Issues of data ownership and use need also to be agreed at this stage. Data providers may maintain ownership of data but decide to share the data, subject to established usage rights, such as appropriate data uses and acknowledgement requirements. Formally agreeing on these parameters as part of design and planning will help to prevent misunderstandings and problems later on.

Expectations about what a specific data collection effort can offer include: the time it may take to complete the task; the resources required; the opportunities for coordination and data sharing; and the outputs and outcomes. For example, the office of a National Rapporteur can only undertake data collection that meshes with: the office's mandate; national legislation on data protection; available staff and resources; and its relationships with various organizational and institutional data providers. A well-funded independent National Rapporteur's office that has access to a wide range of datasets and data sources (for example, from social workers, police, immigration, health workers, prosecutors, or the courts) will necessarily be able to gather and present more data than an office with limited staff, few financial resources, inadequate access to data from state institutions and a constrained mandate. Being clear about the scope of one's work from the outset can help to prevent misunderstanding and tensions among stakeholders and data providers, which can arise when divergent expectations become apparent at a later stage. It is good practice for all parties to have common guidance on how the data can or should be used, not least in ensuring all of the requisite legal and ethical protections.

In summary: Because various stakeholders may have different expectations around data collection, clarifying expectations from the outset is an important step. This includes interactions with funders, data providers, project partners and so on. It is inadvisable to move forward with data collection when expectations and requirements do not align with the criteria of good practice in data collection.



Formulate data collection questions

Key to any data collection effort is formulating robust data collection questions.³⁸ Data collection question(s) must be rigorously connected to the topic being examined and of a manageable scope. These questions must be clear and precise, with terms and definitions that can be operationalized in practice. And yet, too commonly research questions in TIP research and data collection are unclear and unspecific. As one TIP researcher noted:

Formulate data collection questions

- Formulate data collection questions linked to topic
- Ensure definitional clarity and precision
- Operationalize definitions and terminology

³⁸ Bryman, A. (2016) *Social Research Methods. Fifth Edition*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, p. 79.

...in general, in this research area there's been a lack of clarity about the differences between forced labor, trafficking, exploitation, smuggling... what those basic concepts mean. And researchers have tended not to be very transparent about what it is that they're actually researching... they do not define what it is that they're looking at and what types of cases they included and excluded, what the criteria were...

Formulating clear and researchable data collection questions requires: ensuring that there is a clear connection between data collection questions and the topic being examined; definitional clarity and precision, including agreed terminology; and operationalizing terms and definitions relevant for data collection.

Formulate data collection questions linked to topic

This step involves formulating the data collection questions or objectives which follow on from the overall data collection topic and issues identified and articulated in the previous step (see *Define data collection topic, purpose and scope*). It is important to clarify what specific features of the topic will be studied (*the what*) and why (*why* a data collection question is relevant and useful) including the link between the *what* and the *why* of data collection in formulating the data collection questions.

For instance, a data collection activity about trafficking victim's assistance needs might have the purpose of understanding what are appropriate and effective services. Research questions then might include the impacts of TIP on victims (physically, mentally and socially), the problems victims may face before and after (but unrelated to) TIP and victims' experiences of current assistance services (including issues and challenges). Equally, a data collection activity about trafficking prosecutions in a country might have the purpose of understanding the scope and nature of the criminal justice response to TIP. Research questions in this instance might include the number of TIP cases being prosecuted successfully and unsuccessfully, victims' experiences in the criminal justice process and the treatment of suspects in the prosecution of TIP cases.

TIP data collection will fall short if the formulation of the data collection question(s) is not rigorously connected to the topic being examined and of a manageable scope. And yet TIP data collection efforts are not always sufficiently clear in articulating specific research questions, which can answer the overall topic. As one TIP expert explained:

...sometimes people undertake field research without being very clear about what they want to know. They will bring some very good questions but without a very clear mind about the key research questions that they want answered. And this is where you end up with data that you don't know how to properly use. [...] Good practice is

Good practice. Formulate data collection questions linked to topic

Be clear about what questions the data collection is answering.

Consider why questions are being asked; why is this a relevant and useful research question?

Assess how best to answer data collection questions.

Assess if the questions are researchable.

Consider what data is necessary to answer data collection questions.

Determine if the data needed to answer data collection questions is legal and ethical to collect.

Weigh up the value of a data collection question against its potential for harm.

when you are clear about the objectives of the research and you try to answer systematically the questions and acknowledge the limitations that you have.

It is also important to assess if the data collection question is “researchable”³⁹ (that is, what it is possible to collect data about and what data sources are available to answer specific questions). There are many varying and diverse aspects of human trafficking about which anti-trafficking practitioners and policymakers would benefit from knowing more. For example, it would be useful to know how trafficking networks are organized and operate, including traffickers’ backgrounds, motivations and business models. But it may not be possible to research such questions (or only possible to a limited degree) if the only available data source is interviews with identified and assisted trafficking victims, who likely do not have this information. Similarly, questions about a victim’s experience of assistance and protection may not be adequately researchable when only consulting with anti-trafficking stakeholders, such as police or service providers, and not engaging directly with trafficking victims about their assessment of such assistance. Likewise, a review of case files of traffickers will not shed much light on how suspects and convicted traffickers have experienced the criminal justice process.

To formulate the data collection questions, it is important to consider what questions are researchable with what kinds of data. That is, all TIP data collection needs to identify and respect the limitations of certain forms of data collection. That so much TIP data is administrative data is important to note here given that administrative data cannot answer some complex data collection questions. Some research questions can only be answered with targeted research studies and projects. For example, administrative data from criminal justice stakeholders can shed light on the number and nature of TIP cases that have passed through the criminal justice system but cannot answer questions about prevalence of TIP cases generally or on how victim-witnesses and their families experienced and assessed the criminal justice system. Similarly, administrative data from a service provider will offer information about the assistance needs of trafficking victims assisted in a program but not about the assistance needs of those who are not in a program or may have declined to be assisted. This is discussed in more detail below (see *Identify data sources and data providers - Assess the appropriateness of data sources*).

Whether a question is researchable may also, at times, be an ethical issue (that is, whether the data needed to answer the research questions is ethical to collect). In the case of primary data collection, it is important to assess what data is necessary to be able to answer the data collection questions and weigh any potential for harm (for example, the potential to retraumatize research participants or pose any risk to them). For example, when planning a past study on family reintegration we explored different possibilities for respondent recruitment including interviewing trafficking victims, their families and friends, service providers and other assistance personnel working with trafficked persons and neighbors and community members. However, as many family or community members did not know about victims’ trafficking experiences, such research would have potentially “outed” them to their social environment, which may have led to risks for the victims, including stigmatization and discrimination.⁴⁰

Such ethical features should also be considered in the case of other key informants for whom participation in data collection may be harmful. For instance, some authorities may resist being involved in research about the functioning of the criminal justice system or the assistance system in their country if they are concerned about repercussions or have been instructed not to share what may be perceived as compromising information. In some cases,

³⁹ Creswell, J.W. (2003) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Second edition. Thousand Oaks, United States: SAGE Publishing, p. 27.

⁴⁰ Brunovskis, A. & R. Surtees (2010) ‘Untold stories. Biases and selection effects in research with victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation’, *International Migration*, 48(4), pp. 1-37.

there may be administrative and legal restrictions on what authorities are permitted to discuss with researchers and data collectors, making some question unanswerable by some data sources.

In many countries and regions, there are legal restrictions on the collection of some types of data, in particular what is deemed personal and sensitive data.⁴¹ Legislation in different jurisdictions may explicitly prohibit the collection of certain types of data or may require specific measures for exceptional circumstances. In some countries, the repercussions for breaching data laws are serious and may have wider implications for organizations not in adherence with the law. As one NGO director noted, organizations and institutions need to take seriously their obligations in terms of data protection:

A breach in data laws or implied practices in [this country] might give the government enough leverage to seek to target NGOs and pressure them to close or conform. NGOs cannot ignore this... This issue, therefore, threatens the continued existence of the NGO.

Finally, any research question should be a genuine question, not a question intended to produce a pre-determined answer, which would make the evidence gathered redundant or mere decoration around an ideologically held belief. As one TIP expert stressed, research questions must be honest articulations of what is to be studied:

[Good practice is] that you go into the research with a very clear thesis that you're questioning. You don't go in [to research] to bolster a particular position, it's a genuine inquiry. ... in a lot of research [the researchers] already know from the beginning what they think.

In summary: It is important to be clear about *what* questions the data collection is answering and *why* these questions are being asked. It is also important to consider whether the questions are researchable (what data is necessary to answer data collection questions) and determine if the data needed to answer those questions is legal and ethical to collect, including weighing the value of a question against its potential for harm. Any research questions should be genuine and not based on pre-determined answers and findings.

Ensure definitional clarity and precision

Framing research questions must start with a clear understanding of the concepts to be studied, including definitions to be used, both legal and operational. This involves defining the concept(s) and associated terms to be examined in a clear and precise way for data sources, data providers, data collectors, funders and eventually end users. Definitional clarity is important in ensuring that all stakeholders define, interpret and operationalize terms in the same way.

Regardless of the specific type of TIP data collection, everyone involved must have a clear, common and precise set of definitions to be working from. As one TIP researcher stressed:

⁴¹ Personal data refers to any information that can be used on its own or with other information to identify an individual (data subject). Sensitive data is personal data that may be used in a discriminatory way against an individual and as such should be treated with greater care and be subject to more stringent restrictions. Examples of sensitive data include: personal data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade union membership; the processing of genetic data or biometric data; data concerning health; and data concerning an individual's sex life or sexual orientation. EU (2016) *Regulation 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Protection of Natural Persons with Regard to the Processing of Personal Data and on the Free Movement of Such Data and Repealing Directive 95/46/EC* ("General Data Protection Regulation" or "GDPR"), Brussels, Belgium: European Union, Article 9.

...obviously you [should] think through defining all your terms really carefully. ...that might be defining terms for your surveyors or defining them in the case of those being asked questions. But to make sure that they're well understood in the minds of everyone who is involved in the [data collection] project.

Ensure definitional clarity and precision

- ❓ What are the concepts being considered?
- ❓ What are the definitions to be used?
- ❓ Are they clear and precise?
- ❓ How can they be operationalized?
- ❓ Are there barriers to conceptual and definitional clarity?
- ❓ How can they be resolved?

Having a clear definition of terms at the outset (for example, by developing a glossary or metadata files)⁴² not only informs the data collection by ensuring that it is consistent and systematic, but is also an important factor in data collection itself (see Stage #2: Data Collection, *Select, design and test data collection tools*), data analysis (see Stage #4: Data Analysis, *Interpret patterns and findings*) and in the use,

presentation and dissemination of findings (see Stage #5: Data Use, Presentation and Dissemination, *Select presentation formats and language – Ensure accessibility of findings and results*). Failure to clearly define terms also limits options for harmonization of datasets and findings across various TIP research and data collection efforts. Such harmonization can allow findings from one project to be usefully compared with data collection efforts by other organizations and institutions, within a country or between countries.

Definitional clarity and precision can be less than straightforward. The *UN Trafficking Protocol*⁴³ establishes in Article 3 an international legal definition and universal understanding of the term “trafficking in persons”, which should, ideally, allow for standardized collection and comparison of national, regional and global data. However, in practice, the international legal definition of TIP is not always used. And, even when it is used, it is not always consistently understood and applied. Trafficking in persons, or human trafficking, is a complex legal term that is not always easily translated or operationalized in practice, including for research or data collection purposes.⁴⁴ This has resulted in a lack of common understanding of the phenomenon and a lack of standardization of TIP data being collected.

An illustrative example comes from a recent study on the prevalence of human trafficking in one sector in one Southeast Asian country, in which those designing data collection made the assumption that all respondents within the sample met the definition of trafficking based on being a foreign national and, thus, having been “transported and/or received” if they were employed in the destination country. However, one TIP researcher in the country noted:

⁴² Metadata is the data providing information about one or more aspects of the data itself; it is used to summarize basic information about data which can make tracking and working with specific data easier. Metadata — often called technical documentation or the codebook — is critical to effective data use as it conveys information that is necessary to fully exploit the analytic potential of the data. ICPSR (2019) ‘Guide to Social Science Data Preparation and Archiving Phase 3: Data collection and File Creation’, *Data Preparation Guide*. Ann Arbor, United States: University of Michigan. For example, a library catalog will contain a set of metadata files that describe characteristics about each item in the library, such as author, title, date of publication, subject coverage and the location of the item. Dataedo (2019) ‘What is Metadata (with examples)’, *Data Knowledge Base*.

⁴³ United Nations (2000) *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*, UN Doc A/45/49.

⁴⁴ Aronowitz, A.A. (2010) ‘Overcoming the Challenges to Accurately Measure the Phenomenon of Human Trafficking’, *International Review of Penal Law*, 81, p. 501; Chuang, J.A. (2014) ‘Exploitation Creep and the Unmaking of Human Trafficking Law’, *The American Journal of International Law*, 184(4), pp. 609-649; and Skilbrei, M.L. and M. Tveit (2017) ‘Defining Trafficking through Empirical Work: Blurred Boundaries and their Consequences’, *Gender, Technology and Development*, 12(1), pp. 9-30.

...this application of the definition ignores the context in which most trafficking takes place within the country, whereby the vast majority of migrant workers in [the destination country] enter the country voluntarily seeking work. Therefore, it was unjustifiable to forego an assessment of the “act” element of trafficking because it posited involvement of recruiters and employers in [the destination country] in “acts” to which they may well have had no part. These kinds of basic differences in application of the trafficking definition can lead to dramatically inconsistent results.

Moreover, the international definition of human trafficking contains elements of complexity and opacity. Some terms within the definition in the *UN Trafficking Protocol*, such as “consent”, “harboring” “exploitation” and “abuse of a position of vulnerability”, are not clearly understood and, therefore, are not consistently implemented and applied. As one TIP researcher noted:

In terms of the whole trafficking discourse, this is a major issue, that we do not have a common agreement on what exploitation is.

While work is being done to further an understanding of the international definition of trafficking in persons,⁴⁵ national definitions continue to evolve, with countries reshaping the legal concept of TIP by including new forms of exploitation in national legal frameworks. Differences between countries in terms of the legal age of minors raise other issues, given the distinction between trafficking of children and trafficking of adults in international and much national TIP legislation.⁴⁶ In practice, this introduces challenges in how these definitions are understood and operationalized for research and data collection, including how to make comparisons within a country over time and between countries.

The emergence of competing and conflicting terminology (for instance, human trafficking, forced labor and modern slavery) further complicates the situation and leads to substantial confusion. For example, the 2015 United Kingdom (UK) *Modern Slavery Act* uses the term “modern slavery” to encapsulate slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labor and human trafficking.⁴⁷ And, despite the lack of an internationally agreed and legal definition, the term “modern slavery” appears in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 8.7.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Allain, J. (2014) ‘No Effective Trafficking Definition exists: Domestic Implementation of the Palermo Protocol’, *Albany Government Law Review*, 14, pp.112-142; Gallagher, A.T. and M. McAdam (2018) *Issue paper: The International Legal Definition of Trafficking in Persons: Consolidation of research findings*. Vienna, Austria: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; Gallagher, A.T. and M. McAdam (2017) ‘Abuse of a Position of Vulnerability within the Definition of Trafficking in Persons’ in Piotrowicz, R., C. Rijken and B. Heide Uhl (Eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Human Trafficking*. Oxon, United Kingdom: Routledge; Gallagher, A.T. and M. McAdam (2015) *The Concept of “Exploitation” in the Trafficking in Persons Protocol*. Vienna, Austria: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; Gallagher, A.T. and M. McAdam (2014) *The Role of “Consent” in the Trafficking in Persons Protocol*. Vienna, Austria: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; Gallagher, A.T. and M. McAdam (2013) *Abuse of a position of vulnerability and other “means” within the definition of trafficking in persons*. Vienna, Austria: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; McAdam, M. (2018) ‘International Legal Framework on Human Trafficking: Contemporary understandings and continuing confusions’ in Bryson Clark, J. and S. Poucki (Eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Human Trafficking and Modern Day Slavery*. Thousand Oaks, United States: SAGE Publishing, pp. 18-37; and Skrivankova, K. (2017) ‘Defining Exploitation in the Context of Trafficking - What is a Crime and What is Not’ in Piotrowicz, R., C. Rijken and B. Heide Uhl (Eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Human Trafficking*. Oxon, United Kingdom: Routledge, pp. 109-119.

⁴⁶ Jandl, M. (2008) ‘Research on Trafficking in Persons: Gaps and Limitations in Crime and Criminal Justice Data’ in Chawla, S. (Ed.) *Forum on Crime and Society (Special issue. Collecting crime data: indicators and measurement)*, 7, pp. 34-36.

⁴⁷ UK Home Office (2017) *Transparency in Supply Chains etc. A practical guide*. United Kingdom: Home Office, Government of the United Kingdom, p. 17.

⁴⁸ Sustainable Development Goal 8.7 calls on all to: “Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms”. UN (2015) *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, UN Doc A/RES/70/1.

Some terms are used without precision or accuracy. For instance, “debt bondage” is, at times, used to refer to pressures on migrants to repay loans that were not made by either their employer or anyone involved in recruitment. However, the practice of lending money at extortionate rates of interest, although common in areas of high labor migration, cannot accurately be termed debt bondage.⁴⁹

Lack of standardized definitions has impeded the harmonization of datasets and comparability of research findings within and between countries as well as between different projects and studies. Various TIP researchers pointed to this as a serious constraint:

...we’re still at some level grappling with shared definitions and that makes data shared or common practices difficult... I hear some people using the “forced labor” designation and so that’s going to affect best practices in terms of how questions are asked around trafficking and/or forced labor.

Others use the “modern day slavery” designation, which doesn’t actually have an [international] definition, so that’s not very helpful to my mind.

...when you’re talking to people about human trafficking, if you ask them, “What is human trafficking to you?” you’ll get a whole range of very different answers. And that means that if it’s human trafficking that they are working on, they’re working on a different thing to what the other person who has described human trafficking differently [is working on]. And then throw onto that the notion of slavery... And now we’ve got “modern day slavery” ... There is no definition of “modern day slavery”, which is why there are a hundred definitions of “modern day slavery”, none of which are in international law.

Numerous TIP experts pointed to the definitions used in one widely publicized global study of TIP prevalence, which they described as imprecise and incompatible with international law and, by extension, limiting in terms of achieving any level of clarity and precision and, therefore, usefulness. As one TIP expert pointed: “If the definition doesn’t make any sense than how can the data make any sense?”

Even seemingly simpler terms such “trafficker” can be blurry. There is no definition of trafficker offered in the UN *Trafficking Protocol*, raising questions as to who might be considered a “trafficker” and requiring the operationalization of a definition for any data collection, which may differ by project and context. As one legal researcher noted:

“Trafficker” is a huge category covering the most enormous range of individuals and actors and without clear categorisations between them... We say “recruiter”, “transporter”, “exploiter” ... but we know very well that the recruiter and the

Good practice. Ensure definitional clarity and precision

Begin with clear and precise definitions of the concepts to be studied.

Consider and address competing or conflicting terminology.

Understand how definitions may differ depending on context and field of work.

Be aware of the sometimes minute differences in the way words are used or interpreted.

Train all staff on definitions to ensure data integrity.

⁴⁹ Debt bondage is the status or condition arising from a pledge by a debtor of their personal services or of those of a person under their control as security for a debt, if the value of those services as reasonably assessed is not applied towards the liquidation of the debt or the length and nature of those services are not respectively limited and defined. UN (1956) *Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery*, Article 1.

transporter are not necessarily traffickers... And the exploiter who is a trafficker is also a lot of other things. ...they're brothel owners and owners of illegal businesses. I think there is a category difference that makes it much harder to grab onto the counterpoint of trafficking victims.⁵⁰

Recognizing that there are various ways in which individuals can be involved in the trafficking process (including as recruiter, broker, document processor, transporter, controller, exploiter and so on), it is necessary to define the specifics of who is, and who is not, a trafficker in each individual data collection or research project in line with relevant legislation. Definitions are further complicated when considering issues such as intent and whether different actors have knowledge of their involvement in what turns out to be trafficking. How involved does an individual have to be to be labelled a “trafficker”? What determines their status as trafficker? When is a taxi or bus driver who transports a trafficked person a “trafficker”?

Definitional clarity and precision require considering terms that may have different meanings in different contexts, including due to different institutional dynamics or administrative categories. The criminal justice sector may, for instance, operate with stricter and more specific criteria for human trafficking than organizations providing assistance to individuals, due to the sector’s obligations to meet legal definitions. Thus, a trafficking victim in the eyes of a service provider may include both persons who have been formally identified and others who have not. By contrast, a trafficking victim for a prosecutor will, in many jurisdictions, only include those formally identified and designated as such by the relevant authority and, in some countries, only when there has been a criminal charge filed or a conviction realized.

Terms such as “potential trafficking victim”, “possible trafficking victim” and “presumed trafficking victim” may be used in different ways in different countries by different stakeholders, challenging data harmonization and also general clarity and understanding. In some settings, the use of one of these terms refers to someone who is at risk of becoming a victim of trafficking, or who is a trafficking victim but has not been identified, or who declines to be formally identified. In some countries, these are colloquial terms with no fixed definition. In other countries, these terms are formal administrative categories with legal definitions and associated rights and protections. Some countries collect data only on formally identified trafficking victims, while others also include presumed (or potential or possible) trafficking victims in national data collection systems. In some countries, civil society organizations can formally identify trafficking victims, whereas in others this can only be done by state authorities. This all has an impact on national statistics and consequently on cross-national comparisons.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Surtees, R. (2014) *Traffickers and trafficking. Challenges in researching human traffickers and trafficking operations*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration and Washington, D.C., United States: NEXUS Institute, p. 26.

⁵¹ For example, the first EU-wide TIP data collection effort in 2013 noted that: “The EU currently lacks reliable and comparable statistical information on trafficking in human beings mainly due to the differences between the Member States in the criminal codes, in the reporting and monitoring systems and in the rates of reporting cases to the police, NGOs and other entities”. Eurostat (2013) *Trafficking in human beings*. Luxembourg: European Union, p. 16. The 2015 Eurostat report similarly noted “the complexity and the heterogeneous characteristics of the various data collection mechanisms” making it difficult to make reliable comparisons between the data due to “the vast diversity of registration systems and applicable definitions”. Eurostat (2015) *Trafficking in human beings*. Luxembourg: European Union, p. 15. See also Van Dijk, J. (2015) ‘Estimating human trafficking worldwide: a multi-mode strategy’ in Kangaspunta, K. (Ed.) *Forum on Crime and Society (Special issue. Researching hidden populations: approaches to and methodologies for generating data on trafficking in persons)*, 8, pp. 1-14; and Van Dijk, J et al. (2014) *Counting What Counts: Tools for the Validation and Utilization of EU Statistics on Human Trafficking*. Barcelona, Spain: INTERVICT/Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Similarly, an assessment of data collection by the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS) notes that data on trafficking victims is not comparable between CBSS Member States as “the term may refer to presumed victims (e.g. Norway), victims identified by NGOs (e.g. Estonia) or by the police (e.g. Germany), victims identified during of official identification procedures (Denmark and Latvia), or victims cooperating with the law

Institutional and administrative variations introduce complications, confusion and complexities when TIP data collection is done in more than one country. One program manager for a regional data collection project described the difficulties faced when trying to define trafficking victims for the project:

There are many issues related to terminology and the definitions. Especially when you think regionally. So, as an example, [in one country] you can talk about having a victim of trafficking only after a court case is concluded and somebody is convicted of the crime of trafficking... Otherwise it's just somebody who is in need of assistance for certain reasons, but you cannot call [that person a] trafficking victim. So it wouldn't appear necessarily in the country's data collection system. That's why we started talking about presumed cases of trafficking.

Clarity around terms and definitions comes, in large part, from detailed understanding of the context and field of work, in both prosecution or protection contexts. A thorough understanding, for instance, of how the criminal justice system functions and how data may present in the criminal justice process is key in designing suitable data collection. One criminal justice expert stressed the need for such expertise:

[It is important to] be clear in defining what is and is not trafficking. Being clear in understanding the connection between a related crime, charge and whether that can be classified [as] trafficking even though it is not charged under the trafficking law. Those kinds of parameters, that kind of understanding has to be in place before you can start collecting data in a consistent way. Because otherwise you're going to end up with all sorts of inconsistencies and cases being classified incorrectly.

Clarity and precision can also be challenging in data collection about prosecution, where some cases that may constitute human trafficking are prosecuted and recorded under other statutes in criminal law. In such cases, the burden of proof is often more complicated for trafficking laws than for other and lesser crimes, such as pimping, money laundering, extortion, document forgery, or withholding of documents. This is not an issue if the goal is to collect data on how many cases are prosecuted *as* human trafficking in a legal sense. But it is an issue if the goal is to find data on *how many instances of human trafficking have been investigated and prosecuted*, as there may be a great many human trafficking cases classified as another crime.

Some efforts have been made to agree terminology around specific topics. Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, has prepared a list of common statistical indicators, definitions of the phenomenon and guidelines on how to collect TIP data among EU Member States.⁵² The ILO guidelines on how to measure forced labor provide recommendations on the collection and analysis of forced labor statistics, including guidance on standard definitions to facilitate comparability across countries.⁵³ Similarly, the *Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse* offer guidance on how to navigate the complex lexicon of terms related to sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, there are specific challenges to arriving at such agreement. In the absence of consensus, glossaries or metadata files for specific data

enforcement authorities or who testify during court proceedings". Bociak, M. (2011) *Hard Data: Data Collection Mechanisms on Human Trafficking in the Baltic Sea Region*. Stockholm, Sweden: Council of the Baltic Sea States Task Force Against Trafficking in Human Beings (CBSS TF-THB), pp. 245-246.

⁵² Eurostat (2015) *Trafficking in human beings*. Luxembourg: European Union, p. 60-64; and Eurostat (2013) *Trafficking in human beings*. Luxembourg: European Union, p. 19-22.

⁵³ ILO (2018) *Guidelines concerning the measurement of forced labour*. ICLS/20/2018/Guidelines. 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians. Geneva, Switzerland: International Labour Organization.

⁵⁴ Greijer, S., J. Doek and Interagency Working Group (2016) *Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse*. Luxembourg: ECPAT International.

collection activities become all the more important in guiding clear and consistent data collection and for subsequent analysis. For regularly produced reports, such as annual reports from National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms, clear definitions and harmonization of these definitions from year to year is vitally important not only in terms of understanding findings but also being able to compare findings about the same indicators or data point across time.

Indissociable from any discussion of terminology are the issues of language and translation. Good practice means being aware of the sometimes-minute differences in the way words are used or interpreted in data collection. Many technical terms associated with TIP are not easily understood and do not necessarily translate easily into other languages. For example, in the twelve main languages of West Africa,⁵⁵ the term “exploitation” does not have a literal meaning and instead two elements are often conjugated: “mistreatment” and not “paying or rewarding” an individual’s efforts. There is also not a key word in any of the twelve national languages to define “trafficking” and instead existing terms are often translated from French (for example, “selling a [person]”). Without a direct translation of “trafficking”, definitions in these twelve main languages often focus on the consequences of trafficking versus the act itself, which necessarily means that there will be challenges in arriving at definitional clarity and precision.⁵⁶

Proper conceptualization of research questions, including definitional clarity and precision, needs to be accompanied by adequate training and on-going supervision of all staff directly and indirectly involved in the data collection effort to ensure data integrity,⁵⁷ as well as by requisite guidance on implementation through manuals, codebooks, metadata files and handbooks. Training is discussed in more detail in Stage #2: Data Collection (*Carry out training and on-going supervision in data collection*) and Stage #4: Data Analysis (*Train and build capacity in data analysis*). Both stages must include attention to definitional clarity, precision, common terminology and how to operationalize definitions and terminology.

In summary: Robust data collection requires clear and precise definitions of the concepts to be studied. This requires also considering and addressing competing or conflicting terminology, including across legislative and administrative categories. Definitions may also differ depending on context and field of work. All staff involved in data collection must clearly understand and precisely use definitions to ensure data integrity. This may require training, supervision and other forms of guidance.

⁵⁵ Fon (Benin), Mahi (Benin), Mooré (Burkina Faso), Dioula (Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast), Baoulé (Ivory Coast), Bamana (Mali), Songhrai (Mali), Haoussa (Niger), Zarma (Niger), Sousou (Guinea Conakry), Wolof (Senegal) and Ewe (Togo).

⁵⁶ AMWCY (2008) *Mobile Children: from “victims” to “actors”*. Dakar, Senegal: Enda Tiers-Monde Jeunesse Action and African Movement of Working Children and Youth, pp. 14-18.

⁵⁷ ORI (2005) *Responsible Conduct in Data Management*. United States: Office of Research Integrity.

Operationalize definitions and terminology

It is also important to operationalize definitions and terminology for data collection. Failure to use the same terms that all stakeholders understand in the same way undermines data collection and the usefulness of any findings based on that data collection. Making sense of definitions is an essential starting point for any data collection activity. As one TIP researcher observed, definitions are at the core of robust TIP data collection:

[There are] a lot of definitional issues. That's why [some organizations] developed indicators because human trafficking is by no means [simple]. There is a definitional issue of who is a victim of trafficking, the elements [of trafficking], how does your project define this?

Operationalizing definitions requires breaking legal definitions down into parts or translating them into real and practical language, for use by data collectors and to properly convey questions to research participants. Variations in the way that the same terms are used by different data collectors undermine data quality and the usefulness of findings. As one TIP expert noted:

...it's a matter of... using terms that we can all understand in the same way and making sure that they're translated when you're working with local people in ways that are understood locally.

Operationalizing terminology is, at times, an issue of how to translate the term and its meaning into another language and cultural context. This will require identifying issues up front (for example, through one-on-one consultations or focus group discussions). One researcher described this process as follows:

What do people talk about? What languages do they speak and what words do they use within those languages? In the context of human trafficking, you start to unpack that. The [UN *Trafficking Protocol*] talks about things like harboring, recruitment, transportation, deceit, coercion, abduction, exploitation. So you start to sort that out and ask people to talk about their own experiences as service providers or, in some cases, as people who are survivors of [trafficking] or are knowledgeable about people who have experienced [trafficking].

Operationalizing terminology requires, on the one hand, being clear and precise and, on the other hand, not being offensive or confusing. This is not uncomplicated within the field of human trafficking, where trafficking is sometimes taken to mean only women in prostitution or persons associated with stigmatized behaviors, such as irregular migration, smuggling or crime acts committed while trafficked. This can result in resistance to the term and to being associated with this issue. One factor that can cause dilemmas in formulating data collection questions on human trafficking is, thus, the potential for resistance to various terms and definitions within some contexts and communities. One TIP researcher, for example,

Good practice. Operationalize definitions and terminology

Break definitions down into parts to translate them into practical language.

Contextualize definitions and properly convey what is meant to research participants.

Consider how to operationalize terms and definitions across languages and cultures.

Use terminology that is clear and precise, but not offensive or confusing.

Be careful and sensitive in definitional formulations but do not obscure the purpose of data collection or compromise informed consent.

described various projects in which respondents were resistant to being defined as trafficking victims:

[On one project] there was a group of trafficked persons, a community group, a community network and they did not want to be called “trafficked”. ...and then there was a group of migrants [in another country] living in a slum community and they did not want to be called “migrants”. ...they got really upset with any interviewers or outsiders who came in and started pegging them with these labels that were going to socially harm them. Because somebody in the community would associate whatever stigma to trafficking or in the [other country] because there was a lot of xenophobia against migrants [...] In terms of interviewers coming in and navigating those [issues], the interviewer needs to be willing to redefine how they talk to people about the project or redefine the whole project itself based on how people are perceiving certain categories or labels or indeed the trafficking experience that happened to them.

One way of addressing such resistance is to formulate questions to specify what exactly is to be studied. For example, questions more generally formulated around migration may make for an easier initial approach than starting out with the issue of whether someone was trafficked. Such an approach could open by exploring whether migrant workers in specific communities failed to receive wages, faced poor working conditions, endured violence or abuse or signed fraudulent contracts. At the same time, it can be a challenge to keep data collection focused on cases and situations that amount to human trafficking if the questions become too generalized. Care is needed to balance the sensitivities around definitions with the need to avoid derailing the purpose of the data collection.

Furthermore, it is also important that data collection questions, at an overarching level, are clearly conveyed to respondents as part of securing informed consent. Potential respondents must be accurately and precisely informed of what the data collection is about so that their consent is informed and meaningful. This is an issue that we will return to in Stage #2: Data Collection (*Refine legal and ethical guidelines and protocols for data collection*), but we flag here that, while some care must go into formulating data collection questions in such a way that they are not offensive or create undue resistance, they must still reflect the true purpose of data collection.

In summary: Good practice requires formulating practical, operational definitions that can be properly and clearly conveyed to respondents. This may involve operationalizing these terms and definitions across different languages and cultures. Given the sensitivities around TIP, it is important to be careful and sensitive in formulating definitions. At the same time, this caution should not compromise the clarity of any communications. It would not be ethical to obscure, even unintentionally, the purpose of data collection in ways that may compromise informed consent.



Review existing literature and research

Review existing literature and research

- ❓ What research exists about the topic?
- ❓ What does this research tell us about the data collection topic and questions?
- ❓ How will it contribute to an enhanced understanding of human trafficking or the anti-trafficking response?
- ❓ Does this activity fill a knowledge gap or overlap with any existing research?
- ❓ Are there previous examples of similar data collection that can inform a choice of approach and method?
- ❓ What limitations were faced in similar data collection?
- ❓ How were these addressed?

A thorough literature review is an important part of design and planning for any TIP data collection effort. All TIP data collection must be linked to past research and situated in the existing knowledge base. There are several questions to ask of existing literature and to consider as part of one's literature review: what research and data already exists about the topic? What does this research tell us about the data collection topic and questions? How will this data collection contribute to an enhanced understanding of human trafficking or the anti-trafficking response? Does this activity fill a knowledge gap or overlap with any existing research? Are there previous examples of similar data collection that can inform a choice of approach and method? Are there lessons that can be learned about limitations in previous and similar data collection? Asking these questions at the outset of data collection also helps to avoid duplication of efforts (repeating the same research studies or data collection projects) and wasted resources.

This step involves: finding the existing literature; and a systematic review and assessment of relevant literature, both of which are elaborated below.

Review existing literature and research

- Find existing literature and research
- Systematically review and assess relevant literature

Find existing literature and research

This is a search for information, leads, contacts, potential sources or even possible collaborators for some aspect of the work. There is a vast and growing body of literature on human trafficking; relevant literature must be identified as part of the design and planning of any data collection activity. At the same time, the question of *what research exists about the topic* should be considered broadly and from a multi-disciplinary perspective. Lessons learned can be from other disciplines that address related or overlapping areas of work. Some issues are unique; many are not. It is important to identify what literature exists on the data collection topic as well as on the approach and methods that the data collection effort will use. The literature review should offer insight into the *what* (the topic) and the *how* (the methods and approach).

Finding research and literature involves considering and leveraging a wide range of potential sources and media. Literature and research will be available in libraries and resource centers

as well as online (on the internet, online libraries, organization's websites and so on). Technological developments, such as library-based and internet search engines, have facilitated our ability to identify relevant research and literature.

It is also advisable, when possible and appropriate, to consult persons working on the issue, such as researchers, practitioners and policymakers, who may offer suggestions for relevant literature on a specific topic. This may be particularly important in terms of accessing research and data that is not available through online searches (for example, research and studies conducted by small NGOs that do not formally launch or publicize their results; studies that are only available in hard copy and with a small print run; or research conducted in different languages). That being said, the burden of work for the literature review rests with the data collector and requests for literature should put the least demand possible on others. Moreover, recommendations about research and literature should supplement, not replace, systematic and independent library-based and online searches.

Academic publishing on human trafficking has increased in recent years, including dedicated journals on human trafficking, special issues on human trafficking in various journals, books, handbooks, textbooks, as well as the sharing of information presented at and written for TIP conferences. However, not all of this material is equally accessible to all researchers or anti-trafficking stakeholders. Most organizations and institutions do not have access to library databases for searching or to the journals and books available on these sites, the cost of which is often prohibitively expensive. Open access journals offer a counterpoint to this traditional publication approach.

Much research and information about human trafficking is "grey literature" (that is, resources that are produced outside of the traditional commercial or academic publishing and distribution channels).⁵⁸ Grey literature is generally produced by NGOs, governments, IOs, the UN or research institutes and often provides up-to-date and frontline information, although of uneven quality. A literature review should include reviewing grey literature, which may require not only searching online, but also conducting more targeted searches on an organization or institution's websites and searching media to identify new publications publicized in media outlets. It

Good practice. Find existing literature and research

Identify what literature exists on the data collection topic.

Ask TIP professionals for recommendations for research and literature.

Conduct online searches – on the internet and through library search engines.

Visit libraries and resource centers to find research.

Consult grey literature as well as academic research.

Conduct media searches to identify research and data that may be publicized in media outlets.

Search for literature in as many languages as possible.

Allocate time and funds for the translation of relevant literature as much as possible.

⁵⁸ Grey literature may include but is not limited to: reports (for example, technical reports, statistical reports, memorandums, research reports, etc.), theses, bibliographies, conference proceedings, technical or operational standards, non-commercial translations and official documents not published commercially (primarily government or international organization reports and documents). Alberani, V., P.D.C. Pietrangeli and A.M.R. Mazza (1990) 'The use of grey literature in health sciences: a preliminary survey', *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association*, 78(4), pp. 358-363.

may also involve contacting or visiting individual organizations or institutions to identify and collect copies of research. Grey literature is often applied research with a policy or programmatic focus that can be operationalized in responding to trafficking in persons. Thus, this literature is also important to consult when conducting data collection on more practical and applied issues as well as more current or time-sensitive topics, which are less likely to be published in academic literature. One researcher highlighted the importance of grey literature in informing the evidence base on TIP:

... if we're trying to change practice in terms of what practitioners are doing or what funders are funding, then journal articles are not the way to go. ...there's some great publications that are written by NGOs, published by NGOs. They are not always given the same weight as an academic journal article and I think that's an issue.

However, grey literature may also not always be accessible to researchers or anti-trafficking stakeholders, particularly those from lower resource countries where organizations or institutions may not have computers or reliable internet access, where downloading of files is constrained by limited bandwidth and/or where the cost of printing a report to read offline may be prohibitive.

Language can pose a barrier in accessing research and resources. Most human trafficking research is published in English and, to a lesser extent, other major world languages. Language barriers also limit the reach of research when written in the national language of the country where research was conducted but not translated to English or other major languages. Planning the literature and research review should consider and, ideally, also incorporate, to the greatest extent possible, the existing relevant knowledge base that is not in English (or in the primary language in which the research is conducted). It is important to search in as many languages as possible as well as make use of online translation tools when of sufficient quality and reliability. Time and funding for the translation of relevant literature should be allocated, to the extent possible. When translations are undertaken, these should be made available to other researchers and TIP professionals, to benefit the anti-trafficking community.

The above points notwithstanding, existing literature and research on some data collection topics may be limited or even nonexistent. This may be particularly relevant for the relatively new field of TIP, which has an emerging but still limited body of knowledge and evidence. This, then, may require leaning on literature from other related or intersecting fields of work as well as in terms of research methods and approaches that may have been used on similar topics or may be useful in relation to the proposed data collection topic and questions.

In summary: Finding literature on the specific data collection topic or methodology is an important step in design and planning. This can be done through online searches, including through library search engines, as well as by consulting researchers and TIP experts. One should consult grey literature as well as academic research in as many languages as possible. When literature on a data collection topic is limited or nonexistent, this may require leaning on literature from other related fields of work.

Systematically review and assess relevant literature

The literature review should be appropriate for the data collection topic, scope and purpose as well as the proposed approach and method. It should be approached systematically, which means sifting through a vast and growing body of research and materials on trafficking in persons to arrive at those that are relevant for the overall topic and specific research

questions. It must include an assessment of the quality of the study including the approach and methodology. Even with a narrow scope or topic, it is not possible to include all literature on the subject, making it necessary to engage in a sorting process. This requires considering whether the source is relevant for the specific TIP data collection question being considered (including in terms of approach and methods) and also if the source adds value to the project and to the literature that has already been compiled.

Synthesizing relevant TIP literature and research provides an overview of relevant research and draws connections between different research and findings. It also requires identifying similarities and differences in the research findings.

One should be critical and selective in a literature review, particularly in assessing whether research claims are reasonably supported by the data. This may require excluding studies where methods, approaches and, thus, findings that are not sufficiently robust. This issue merits emphasis as the quality of TIP research has been decidedly uneven since the emergence of the issue in the late 1990s, when the perceived urgency to act seemingly outstripped the need for robust research. As one TIP researcher observed:

...for such a long time there wasn't very much attention or [reflection] about methodology and there was so little data that it was all very second-hand, poor quality, anecdotal and just not collected to a very rigorous standard.

In spite of recent advances and improvements, questions remain as to the quality of some research and data in the TIP field. Various literature and systematic reviews have highlighted constraints in the existing evidence base,⁵⁹ which should be borne in mind when conducting a literature review. Some research cites flawed data, such as questionable prevalence data. The recycling and repetition of unverified statistics has been a long standing issue in the TIP field, as documented as early as 2003 when the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) established the Trafficking Statistics Project in Southeast Asia to examine and trace the origin of the numbers on TIP prevalence as well as assess the

Good practice. Systematically review and assess relevant literature

Approach the literature systematically, linked to topic, scope and purpose.

Assess the research collected in terms of methodology and the quality of the study; include only robust data collection efforts.

Be alert to ideological positions and orientations in the research.

Avoid duplicating past or on-going data collection efforts.

Allocate adequate time and resources to conduct the literature review.

⁵⁹ Cockbain, E., K. Bowers and G. Dimitrova (2018) 'Human trafficking for labour exploitation: the results of a two-phase systematic review mapping the European evidence base and synthesizing key scientific research evidence', *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 14, pp. 319-360; Goździak, E.M. (2015) 'Data Matters: Issues and Challenges for Research on Trafficking' in Dragiewicz, M. (Ed.) *Global Human Trafficking. Critical Issues and Contexts*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge; Goździak, E.M. (2014) 'Empirical Vacuum: In Search of Research on Human Trafficking' in Gartner, R. and W. McCarthy (Eds.) *The Oxford Handbook on Sex, Gender, and Crime*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press; Goździak, E.M et al. (2015) *Bibliography of Research-Based Literature on Human Trafficking: 2008-2014*. Washington, D.C., United States: Georgetown University; Goździak, E.M. and S. Graveline (2015) *In Search of Data and Research on Human Trafficking: An Analysis of Research-based Literature (2008-2014)*. Washington, D.C., United States: Institute for the Study of International Migration; Goździak, E.M. and M.N. Bump (2008) *Data and Research on Human Trafficking: Bibliography of Research-Based Literature*. Washington, D.C., United States: Georgetown University; Okech, D. et al. (2018) 'Seventeen years of human trafficking research in social work: A review of the literature', *Journal of Evidence-Informed Social Work*, 15(2); and Russell, A. (2018) 'Human Trafficking: A Research Synthesis on Human-Trafficking Literature in Academic Journals from 2000-2014', *Journal of Human Trafficking*, 4(2).

empirical and methodological basis for the numbers cited regularly in research, reports and the media.⁶⁰ A more recent example comes from one systematic review of prevalence data used in 42 recently published books on trafficking for sexual exploitation, which found that the vast majority of these books rely on and present data that was not rigorously produced and, therefore, may be misleading or, at minimum, inaccurate.⁶¹

Some oft-repeated findings and facts, upon scrutiny, are not empirically grounded, requiring sifting and sorting of research and literature.⁶² For example, it is not possible to verify the origin and methodology used for the commonly cited statistic in the United States (U.S.) that the age of entry for human trafficking is between 12 and 14 years. While the statistic has been attributed to different sources, the original source has never been verified and the statistic has been disproved in a number of ways.⁶³ Similarly, researchers were unable to document the empirical basis of the commonly repeated fact that youth runaways in the U.S. are at high risk of sex trafficking.⁶⁴

Various political and ideological agendas come into play in the TIP field, with positions taken on various issues (for example, prostitution/sex work, smuggling, migration, immigration, and labor rights).⁶⁵ This has influenced how some TIP research is designed and implemented, with not all activities constituting a genuine exploration of a research topic or issue and leading in some instances to questionable conclusions and “evidence”,⁶⁶ discussed also below (see Stage #4: Data Analysis, *Interpret patterns and findings – Identify biases influencing interpretation*). Understanding the complex political and ideological landscape

⁶⁰ Feingold, D. (2010) ‘Trafficking in Numbers: The Social Construction of Human Trafficking Data’ in Andreas, P. and K.M. Greenhill (Eds.) *Sex, Drugs, and Body Counts: The Politics of Numbers in Global Crime and Conflict*. Ithaca, United States: Cornell University Press, pp. 46-74. The UNESCO Trafficking Statistics Project is discussed further in Stage #1: Design and Planning (*Select a data collection approach and method (quantitative, qualitative and mixed approaches and methods) – Quantitative approach and methods*).

⁶¹ Fedina, L. (2014) ‘Use and Misuse of Research in Books on Sex Trafficking: Implications for Interdisciplinary Researchers, Practitioners, and Advocates’, *Trauma, Violence and Abuse*, 16(2), pp. 188-198.

⁶² Murphy, L. (2019) ‘Anti-Trafficking Sensational Misinformation - Part II’, *National Safe Place Network*, April 19; and Zhang, S.X. (2009) ‘Beyond the ‘Natasha’ story - a review and critique of current research on sex trafficking’, *Global Crime*, 10(3), pp. 178-195.

⁶³ GNOHTTF (2018) *Myths & Misconceptions: Myth-Busting Common Misconceptions Within the Anti-Trafficking Movement*. New Orleans, United States: Greater New Orleans Human Trafficking Task Force; and Har, J. (2013) ‘Is the average age of entry into sex trafficking between 12 and 14 years old?’, *PoliticaFact*, March 2.

⁶⁴ Murphy, L. (2019) ‘Anti-Trafficking Sensational Misinformation – Part II’, *National Safe Place Network*, April 19.

⁶⁵ Agustin, L. (2007) *Sex at the Margins: Migration, Labour Markets and the Rescue Industry*. London, United Kingdom: Zed Books; Anderson, B. (2007) *Motherhood, Apple Pie and Slavery: Reflections on Trafficking Debates*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, Working Paper No. 48; Anderson, B. and R. Andrijasevic (2008) ‘Sex, slaves and citizens: the politics of anti-trafficking’, *Soundings*, 40, pp. 135-145; Brennan, D. (2008) ‘Competing Claims of Victimhood? Foreign and Domestic Victims of Trafficking in the United States’, *Sexuality Research & Social Policy*, 5(4), pp. 45-61; Breuil, B.C.O. (2008) ‘“Precious Children in a Heartless World”? The Complexities of Child Trafficking in Marseille’, *Children and Society*, 22(3), pp. 223-234; Chuang, J.A. (2010) ‘Rescuing Trafficking from Ideological Capture: Prostitution Reform and Anti-Trafficking Law and Policy’, *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, 158, pp. 1655-1728; Doezema, J. (2013) *Sex Slaves and Discourse Masters: The Construction of Trafficking*. London, United Kingdom: Zed Books; Doezema, J. (1998) ‘Forced to choose: beyond the voluntary v. forced prostitution dichotomy’ in Kempadoo, K. and J. Doezema (Eds.) *Global Sex Workers Rights, Resistance, and Redefinition*. New York, United States: Routledge, pp. 34-50; Feingold, D. (2014) ‘Virgin territory re-explored: ethnographic insight, public policy and the trade in minority women in Southeast Asia’ in Yea, S. (Ed.) *Human Trafficking in Asia: Forcing Issues*. Oxon, United Kingdom: Routledge, pp. 81-100; Jahic, G. and J.O. Finckenaue (2005) ‘Representations and Misrepresentations of Human Trafficking’, *Trends in Organized Crime*, 8(3), pp. 24-40; O’Connell Davidson, J. (2006) ‘Will the Real Sex Slave Please Stand Up?’, *Feminist Review*, 83, pp. 4-22; Snajdr, E. (2013) ‘Beneath the master narrative: human trafficking, myths of sexual slavery and ethnographic realities’, *Dialectical Anthropology*, 37(2), pp. 229-256; and Weitzer, R. (2007) ‘The Social Construction of Sex Trafficking: Ideology and institutionalisation of a moral crusade’, *Politics & Society*, 35(3), pp. 447-475.

⁶⁶ Weitzer, R. (2007) ‘The Social Construction of Sex Trafficking: Ideology and institutionalisation of a moral crusade’, *Politics & Society*, 35(3), pp. 447-475; Weitzer, R. (2005) ‘Flawed theory and method in studies of prostitution’, *Violence against women*, 11(7), pp. 934-949.

of TIP research is important as part of sifting through existing literature. One TIP researcher described these different positions and how these needed to be considered in a review of the literature:

... it depends whether it's legal analysis, legal research or it's more multidisciplinary. Because your sources then are completely different. ...if you have the academic articles, if it's peer review, if it's a well-known journal, for instance, I take that into account. If it is a report from an NGO, then it's important to know what kind of an NGO it is. Is it [a well-known reputable organization] or is it from a very, very small NGO that is not very well-[recognized] or that has a very specific color, so to speak? Maybe a political color, which we also see in trafficking in persons, maybe religious. ...these are things that I take into account [in reviewing the literature].

Some organizations and institutions may be more dominant in TIP literature (for example, due to access to funding, a prioritization on publishing). Nonetheless, each study or project must be evaluated on its own merit, for methodological and analytical rigor as well as use and contribution to the field.

Assessing the literature also means learning from and building on what has been done previously in terms of TIP data collection approaches and methods. This is useful in identifying data collection methods, tools and data sources, including their limitations and biases. One TIP researcher described the importance of considering and learning from previous efforts:

...the two (TIP) data collection initiatives I mentioned before...are they still referred to? Are those handbooks still used? I would hope so. [...] Donors themselves are funding a lot of duplicative efforts, which is inefficient. ... there is also something around knowledge management, information retention and just the reality that everyone feels they need to have their own tool, their own approach. But we don't need to reinvent the wheel every time. When it comes from a resource and human perspective, it's an accountability issue.

It is also important to be aware of less successful approaches, to be able to learn from these challenges. However, organizations and institutions are generally disinclined to share the challenges faced in data collection, making it difficult to draw lessons and adapt initiatives accordingly.

A literature review should be done early enough in the process to meaningfully inform the design of the data collection project. One TIP researcher noted of her experience:

A problem that I have observed is that research questions and tools are already fully designed with a very small margin for changes in practice and the literature review is regarded as a "must-do" step, but not really expected to influence the research design stage and perhaps not even the findings. Often, it is carried out at the very end, when writing up the research report already.

While the literature review is part of the preparatory phase, it is also important in terms of the analysis. This will be discussed in more detail in Stage #4: Data Analysis (*Interpret patterns and findings – Align interpretation with existing research and knowledge*). However, at this initial stage it is important to catalogue the research (with full publication information) so that it can be found and referred back to during the analysis stage. Adequate time and resources must be spent on a thorough literature review, which includes not only finding the literature, but also reading and assessing it and cataloguing it for future use. Having sufficient time for a proper literature review as part of design and planning allows for

overall better design (for example, of the topic, research questions, methodology and tools) or to revise and adjust if the data project is already drafted by the funder or contractor. However, as one TIP expert noted, often this critical task is not prioritized in the design and planning of research or data collection activities:

What I found to be a pressure is that researchers were really rushed into the fieldwork phase by the [organization] commissioning the research. They ended up with poor data because they didn't have sufficient time to work on the methodology or to do the literature review, which is normally restricted to one or two days of the consultant's work, which is really short.

In summary: Literature should be approached systematically, paying attention to literature that is linked to topic, scope and purpose as well as the methodology. This requires adequate time and resources. Key in this process is to sift through what may be high and low quality research and include or exclude accordingly. This sifting also requires attention to ideological positions and orientations in the research that may indicate bias rather than objectivity or independence, as well as to other ways that the political economy of research may inform what research is available.



Select a data collection approach and method (quantitative, qualitative and mixed approaches and methods)

An important step in the design and planning of data collection is to select an approach and method appropriate to answer the data collection questions and that are realistic relative to the available resources and time frame for the data collection process.

Assess different data collection approaches and methods (quantitative, qualitative and mixed approaches and methods)

Data collection approach and method are terms that refer, respectively, to the *means* and the *manner* of the data collection and later, of its analysis. While a data collection approach may be used in many different ways, it is useful to distinguish between **approach** as the overarching framework or strategy for data collection (that can include different methods) and **method** as the specific *technique* or *procedure* used to collect the data *within* that approach. A data collection approach is, thus, an umbrella term for different methods that have, in common, a particular orientation.

Select a data collection approach and method (quantitative, qualitative and mixed approaches and methods)

- Assess different data collection approaches and methods (quantitative, qualitative and mixed approaches and methods)
- Choose a data collection approach and method
- Ensure skills in the relevant approach and method when selecting researchers
- Determine how the approach and method are influenced by the specific context
- Consider participation and involvement of stakeholders and end users in data collection

Quantitative approach and methods

Quantitative data collection is generally characterized as deductive, aimed at proving, disproving or lending credence to existing theories. It often aims to measure and assess different variables and to test relationships between variables in order to reveal patterns, correlations or causal relationships.⁶⁷ Quantitative data collection commonly refers to **observations** and **measurements** that can be made objectively and repeated by other researchers and data collectors. It is used to find out *how much*, *how many*, *how often* and *to what extent*. Quantitative methods typically aim to have generalizable findings and obtain representative data, by drawing samples from a larger population. Quantitative methods require particular technical competencies appropriate to each specific technique. This ranges from relatively simple collation of how cases distribute along a specific set of variables to advanced survey techniques for so-called hidden and elusive populations.⁶⁸

One general challenge for quantitative research or data collection on TIP is the difficulty in obtaining representative data. General population surveys are able to draw a randomized sample where each individual has a known probability for inclusion in the survey and, thus, produce data representative of the population as a whole. However, these standard procedures will not apply to trafficked persons because reaching trafficked persons is difficult, if not impossible, in most situations (both while they are being exploited and post-trafficking). Trafficked persons constitute a hidden and elusive population, meaning that standard sampling techniques do not apply. Traffickers are also a hidden and elusive population; they constitute a small part of the general population and seek to avoid detection. There are specialized techniques designed to obtain representative data from hidden and elusive populations, such as Respondent Driven Sampling (RDS),⁶⁹ which have been applied in the human trafficking field. But these require specialist knowledge, adequate resources and time, appropriate data sources, sufficient and suitable data access and other preconditions to be successful. The extent to which these techniques can be used, with which populations, for which forms of trafficking, based on what datasets and in what contexts, is

⁶⁷ Leavy, P. (Ed.) (2014) *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, p. 9

⁶⁸ A hidden and elusive population (sometimes also referred to as “hard-to-reach” or “marginalized”) is a population that is difficult for researchers to access due to their social or physical location, vulnerability, or otherwise hidden nature. Ellard-Gray, A. et al. (2015) ‘Finding the Hidden Participant: Solutions for Recruiting Hidden, Hard-to-Reach, and Vulnerable Populations’, *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 14(5).

⁶⁹ Respondent-driven sampling (RDS) refers to a series of methods that are used in data collection with “hard-to-reach” populations. In RDS, network links from sampled members of the target population are followed (traced) to select subsequent population members to add to the sample. RDS is different from “snowball sampling” (where respondents refer those they know, these individuals in turn refer those they know and so on) because RDS utilizes a mathematical model that weights the sample to compensate for the fact that the sample was collected in a non-random way. Gile, K.J. and M.S. Handcock (2010) ‘Respondent-Driven Sampling: An Assessment of Current Methodology’, *Sociological Methodology*, 40(1), pp. 285-327; Heckathorn, D.D. (2011) ‘Snowball Versus Respondent-Driven Sampling’, *Sociological Methodology*, 41(1), pp. 355-366; and Heckathorn, D.D. (2002) ‘Respondent-driven sampling II: deriving valid population estimates from chain-referral samples of hidden populations’, *Social Problems*, 49(1), pp. 11-34. In relation to human trafficking, please see Brunovskis, A. and R. Surtees (2010) ‘Untold Stories: Biases and Selection Effects in Research with Victims of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation’, *International Migration*, 48(4), pp. 1-37; Fedina, L. (2017) ‘Estimating the Trafficked Population: Public-Health Research Methodologies May Be the Answer’, *Journal of Human Trafficking*, 3(1), pp. 21-38; Fedina, L., C. Williamson and T. Perdue (2016) ‘Risk Factors for Domestic Child Sex Trafficking in the United States’, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, pp. 1-21; Greve, A. and O. Kaplan (2015) ‘Can snowball sampling estimate human trafficking?’, *Open Democracy*; Love, H. et al. (2017) *The Complexities and Challenges of Researching Forced Marriage in the US*. Washington, D.C., United States: Urban Institute; Robinson, C. and C. Branchini (2011) *Estimating Labor Trafficking: A Study of Burmese Migrant Workers in Samut Sakhon, Thailand*. Bangkok, Thailand: United Nations Interagency Project on Human Trafficking; Simic, M. et al. (2006) ‘Exploring barriers to respondent driven sampling in sex worker and drug-injecting sex worker populations in Eastern Europe’, *Journal of Urban Health: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, 7(83), pp. 6-15; Zhang, S.X. and L. Cai (2015) ‘Counting labour trafficking activities: an empirical attempt at standardized measurement’ in Kangaspunta, K. (Ed.) *Forum on Crime and Society (Special issue. Researching hidden populations: approaches to and methodologies for generating data on trafficking in persons)*, 8, pp. 37-62; and Zhang, S. et al. (2014) ‘Estimating Labor Trafficking among Unauthorized Migrant Workers in San Diego’, *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 653(1), pp. 65-86.

an evolving discussion and one which requires attention both to strengths as well as limitations.

One prominent type of quantitative data collection is measuring prevalence, which seeks to capture the number of persons who share a specific characteristic in a given time period. In TIP data collection, prevalence most often refers to the number of human trafficking victims in a certain group (for example, the number of trafficked persons in an overall population, among a specific age group or gender or in a specific sector). As one TIP researcher explained:

Prevalence is about, “How big is the problem? Is it getting bigger or is it getting smaller? Or is it getting more or less severe?” Those are the essential questions that prevalence data can help you answer. ...prevalence data is not going to tell you whether an individual has been assisted by the system or not. It’s just a raw measure of how big it is... and then it gives you a reference point against which to look at your responses.

The published figures around TIP prevalence have long been a source of controversy. These discussions have a historic backdrop that has left many skeptical, as statistics about TIP prevalence have been commonly misused and misquoted. One important initiative was initiated by UNESCO in Southeast Asia in 2003 to examine and trace the origin of the contradictory and unsubstantiated numbers on TIP prevalence. The objective of the UNESCO Trafficking Statistics Project was to trace published statistics on human trafficking to their original source and ascertain the empirical and methodological basis for the numbers. One researcher involved in the project described the approach:

...the UNESCO Trafficking Statistics Project attempted to trace as many published statistical figures as we could find back to their original source to find out where it came from. And that was very educational because we found, for example, that [one organization] would cite [a UN agency] and [that UN agency] would cite [that organization] for the same number. And you had numbers like 5,000-7,000 girls and women trafficked each year between Nepal and India. We found that this came from a seminar that was held in 1986, it was published in [one newspaper] in 1989 and continued on. And chances are [the number] could have been better, it could have been worse, but it was very unlikely to be the same.

Some recent efforts aim to understand the scope of human trafficking, as well as how it changes over time, using different approaches and methods.⁷⁰ At the same time, methods to determine prevalence are generally agreed to be underdeveloped, which raises important questions about the danger of designing interventions based on weak or poor estimates. One quantitative researcher involved in prevalence studies noted that even with recent advances, substantial improvements are needed:

...in terms of this quantitative research agenda, we’re beginning to push the field in a way that I think it becomes healthy. But it’s still a long way from being a robust field

⁷⁰ For example, Multiple Systems Estimation (MSE) is used to make statistical inferences about the number of trafficking victims by estimating the number of cases that are not included in lists that partially enumerate a closed population. See Silverman, B. (2014) *Modern Slavery: an application of Multiple Systems Estimation*. United Kingdom: Home Office, Government of the United Kingdom; Van Dijk, J. et al. (2017) *Monitoring Target 16.2 of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals; a multiple systems estimation of the number of presumed human trafficking victims in the Netherlands in 2010-2015 by year, age, gender, form of exploitation and nationality*. Vienna, Austria: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and Netherlands: Dutch National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Violence Against Children; and Van Dijk, J. and P. van der Heijden (2016) *Research Brief: Multiple Systems Estimation for estimating the number of victims of human trafficking across the world*. Vienna, Austria: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

with rich data that might be comparable to fields like economics... So I think there are some initial good efforts but it's still a long way to go.

A critical concern must be the risks inherent in overestimating or underestimating the rate of trafficking in persons, as the consequences may be a distorted understanding that impacts attention and funding. Overestimating the rate of TIP has the potential to focus attention and resources on this issue at the expense of other crimes and protection considerations. Equally, underestimates result in less attention and inadequate resources being allocated to address TIP. Some funders, including some of the largest donors in the anti-trafficking field, seemingly prioritize quantitative data, particularly prevalence data, in spite of the risks of too limited a view of data collection.⁷¹ As one TIP researcher has argued:

...the questions of which evidence is brought to bear are undeniably oriented foremost to quantification, particularly through measurement of scale and the increasing reliance on indicators to inform measurements. [...] Efforts to look for better ways to estimate trafficking prevalence should not, of course, be abandoned but merely tempered in favor of a more balanced focus on different types of data, information and questions that move beyond the current pre-occupation with prevalence.⁷²

There are also dangers in extrapolating prevalence beyond the specific framework and time frame to which it was applied; prevalence in one context or one economic sector cannot be read beyond the parameters studied. Moreover, prevalence studies should be conducted over time to mark change, whether improvements or deteriorations rather than as a one-off activity. One quantitative researcher highlighted the need to research each specific context when establishing prevalence:

I do think that prevalence measures are needed. But they're difficult to get and it's not a one-size-fits-all, either in the methodology, nor is it one-size-fits-all to say, "Oh we found this in [one economic sector], so, therefore, that means the prevalence of trafficking in [that country], for example, is X". You can't extrapolate easily from one industry to the next and from one context or one population to the next.

There is also a distinction to be made between targeted prevalence studies linked to, for instance, a specific form of human trafficking, economic sector or geographical area and global prevalence estimates, which have been heavily criticized and questioned in terms of methodologies and the accuracy of results.⁷³

⁷¹ Harkins, B. (2017) 'Constraints to a Robust Evidence Base for Anti-Trafficking Interventions', *Anti-Trafficking Review*, 8, pp. 113-130.

⁷² Yea, S. (2017) 'Editorial: The politics of evidence, data and research in anti-trafficking work', *Anti-Trafficking Review*, 8, pp. 1-13.

⁷³ Resources that discuss the benefits of large-scale or global prevalence efforts in TIP data collection include but are not limited to: Bales, K. (2017) 'Unlocking the Statistics of Slavery', *CHANCE*, 30(30), pp. 4-12; Belsler, P., M. de Cock and F. Mehran (2005) *ILO Minimum Estimate of Forced Labour in the World*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Labour Organization; Datta, M. et al. (2018) 'Assessing the Global Slavery Index' in Bryson Clark, J. and S. Poucki (Eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Human Trafficking and Modern Day Slavery*. Thousand Oaks, United States: SAGE Publishing; Datta, M. and K. Bales (2014) 'Slavery in Europe: Part 2, Testing a Predictive Model', *Human Rights Quarterly*, 36, pp. 277-295; Datta, M. and K. Bales (2013) 'Slavery in Europe: Part 1, Estimating the Dark Figure', *Human Rights Quarterly*, 35(4), pp. 817-829; David, F. (2017) 'Building the Infrastructure of Anti-Trafficking, Part II: Why measurement matters', *Anti-Trafficking Review*, 8, pp. 148-152; David, F. (2017) 'Modern Slavery – From Statistics to Prevention', *CHANCE*, 30(3), pp. 54-60; De Cock, M. (2007) *Directions for national and international data collection on forced labour*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Labour Organization; Durgana D. and G. Brown (2017) 'The Politics of Global Data Reporting: A Triangulated Solution for Estimating Modern Slavery', *CHANCE*, 30(30), pp. 36-40; Durgana, D. and P. Nador (2017) 'Fighting Slavery Through Statistics: A Discussion of Five Promising Methods to Estimate Prevalence in the United States', *CHANCE*, 30(3), pp. 50-53; ILO (2017) *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Labour Organization; ILO (2012) *ILO Global Estimate of Forced Labour: Results and methodology*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Labour Organization; Kutnick,

Specific and contextual quantitative studies may be of more practical use, given that anti-trafficking policies and measures are put into practice locally. Localized quantitative studies can offer relevant information on, for example, the prevalence of trafficking as such, or on outcomes of assistance over time, or developments in criminal justice sector efforts. Effectiveness of quantitative approaches and methods is, thus, informed by what scale and scope is being considered and the foundation on which it is based. One TIP researcher noted the value of quantitative studies on specific topics and for targeted studies over general prevalence studies:

I think we can't imagine a future where we have a perfect overview of the size of the phenomenon on trafficking. We don't have that overview in most crimes. We don't even have that for murder and it's really unimaginable that we would have a perfect estimate or a perfect counting [for human trafficking]. I think policymakers and also others have been too [enamored with] that [idea]. I think it's more important to do quantitative studies to understand, for example, the statistics on the issuing of protective schemes such as residence permits to have an overview of patterns and allocations of rights.

B., P. Belsler and G. Danailova-Trainor (2007) *Methodologies for global and national estimation of human trafficking victims: current and future approaches*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Labour Organization; Robinson, C., C. Branchini and C. Thame (2017) 'Global Trafficking Prevalence Data Advances the Fight against Trafficking in Persons', *Anti-Trafficking Review*, 8, pp. 157-160; and Zhang, S. and K. Vincent (2017) 'Strategies to Estimate Global Prevalence of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation', *CHANCE*, 30(3), pp. 13-20.

Resources that question and critique large-scale or global prevalence efforts in TIP data collection include but are not limited to: Brunner, J. (2015) *Inaccurate Numbers, Inadequate Policies: Enhancing Data to Evaluate the Prevalence of Human Trafficking in ASEAN*. Honolulu, United States: East-West Center; Crump, J. (2016) 'The Global Slavery Index: Helpful or Harmful?', *Human Trafficking Center Blog*, June 29; Dottridge, M. (2017) 'Global Trafficking Prevalence Data Distorts Efforts to Stop Patterns of Human Trafficking', *Anti-Trafficking Review*, 8, pp. 161-164; Feingold, D.A. (2017) 'Playing the Numbers: The spurious promise of global trafficking statistics', *Anti-Trafficking Review*, 8, pp. 153-156; Feingold, D. (2010) 'Trafficking in Numbers: The Social Construction of Human Trafficking Data' in Andreas, P. and K.M. Greenhill (Eds.) *Sex, Drugs, and Body Counts: The Politics of Numbers in Global Crime and Conflict*. Ithaca, United States: Cornell University Press, pp. 46-74; Gallagher, A.T. (2017) 'What's Wrong with the Global Slavery Index?', *Anti-Trafficking Review*, 8, pp. 90-112; Gallagher, A.T. (2014) 'The Global Slavery Index: seduction and obfuscation', *Open Democracy*, December 4; Guth, A. et al. (2014) 'Proper Methodology and Methods of Collecting and Analyzing Slavery Data: An Examination of the Global Slavery Index', *Social Inclusion*, 2(4), pp. 14-22; Harkins, B. (2017) 'Constraints to a Robust Evidence Base for Anti-Trafficking Interventions', *Anti-Trafficking Review*, 8, pp. 113-130; Kangaspunta, K. (2003) 'Mapping the Inhuman Trade: Preliminary Findings of the Database on Trafficking in Human Beings', *Forum on Crime and Society*, 3(1/2), pp. 81-103; Kessler, G. (2015) 'Why you should be wary of statistics on "modern slavery" and "trafficking"', *Washington Post*, April 24; Merry, S.E. (2016) *The Seductions of Quantification: Measuring Human Rights, Gender Violence, and Sex Trafficking*. Chicago, United States: University of Chicago Press; Merry, S.E. (2015) *Counting the Uncountable: Constructing Trafficking through Measurement. Guest Lecture*. Copenhagen, Denmark: University of Copenhagen; Merry, S.E. (2015) 'How big is the trafficking problem? The mysteries of quantification', *Open Democracy*; Molland, S. (2014) 'In search of the perfect method: reflections on knowing, seeing, measuring and estimating human trafficking' in Yea, S. (Ed.) *Human Trafficking in Asia: Forcing Issues*. Oxon, United Kingdom: Routledge, pp. 101-117; O'Connell Davidson, J. (2016) 'Walk Free: measuring global slavery, or masking global hypocrisy?', *Open Democracy*; O'Connell Davidson, J. (2014) 'Convenient conflation: Modern slavery, trafficking and prostitution', *Open Democracy*; Scullion, D. (2015) 'Assessing the Extent of Human Trafficking: Inherent Difficulties and Gradual Progress', *Social Inclusion*, 3(1), pp. 22-34; Steinfatt, T. (2018) 'Empirical Research on Sex Work and Human Trafficking in Southeast Asia and a Critique of Methodologies for Obtaining Estimates of Human Trafficking Numbers' in Bryson Clark, J. and S. Poucki (Eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Human Trafficking and Modern Day Slavery*. Thousand Oaks, United States: SAGE Publishing; Steinfatt, T. (2015) 'Calculations versus counting human trafficking numbers' in Kangaspunta, K. (Ed.) *Forum on Crime and Society (Special issue. Researching hidden populations: approaches to and methodologies for generating data on trafficking in persons)*, 8, pp. 63-84; Weitzer, R. (2015) 'Human trafficking and Contemporary Slavery', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 41, pp. 223-242; Weitzer, R. (2014) 'Miscounting human trafficking and slavery', *Open Democracy*; and Weitzer, R. (2014) 'New directions in research on human trafficking', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 653, pp. 6-24.

This, according to some researchers, requires “a shift in perspective from scale statistics towards statistics on the nature of human trafficking at a lower level of aggregation”, for localized, micro-level quantitative research that is tailored to and interpreted in concrete settings.⁷⁴

Qualitative approach and methods

Qualitative data collection gathers non-numerical data with the aim of developing themes and of exploring and understanding phenomena. It is generally appropriate when the primary purpose is to explore, describe, or explain the social world. Qualitative data collection is often characterized by inductive approaches to knowledge building aimed at generating meaning. Researchers commonly use this approach to: explore; robustly investigate and learn about social phenomenon; unpack the meanings people ascribe to activities, situations, events, or artifacts; or build a depth of understanding about some dimension of social life. The values underpinning qualitative research include the importance of people’s subjective experiences and meaning-making processes and acquiring a depth of understanding (that is, detailed information generally from a small sample).⁷⁵ The goal of qualitative data collection is to be able to provide information that is in-depth and detailed.

Qualitative data collection is important in revealing the nature of trafficking itself as well as a means of understanding and evaluating anti-trafficking interventions. For example, a qualitative approach brings out the experiences and needs of trafficking victims, which, in turn, allows an examination of anti-trafficking interventions (for example, identification, assistance, reintegration and prosecution) and how responses play out in the lives of trafficking victims, their families and communities. Qualitative data collection on prosecution-related topics sheds light on the quality of the prosecutions that take place and what improvements may be needed as well as the experiences of victim-witnesses in this process. It can also be used to understand modus operandi and motivation of traffickers. If quantitative approaches ask *how much*, *how many*, or *how often*, qualitative approaches are broader and more exploratory, asking *what*, *how*, *when*, *where* and *why*. In addition to understanding the nature of a problem, qualitative methods may also be used to grasp the scope of the topic or issue being studied. A qualitative approach can be successful in reaching clandestine populations, examining sensitive topics or understanding the nature of some less-studied or less-understood aspects of human trafficking. In addition, qualitative research is, in many cases, a pre-condition for quantitative surveys, to find out *what* is happening before asking *how often* it is happening.

Qualitative methods have much in common with regular social interactions and may appear, on the surface, to be less scientific than quantitative research. However, qualitative methods apply rigorous techniques and protocols. While a qualitative interview may appear similar to a regular conversation, it requires particular skills and expertise and close attention to how it is executed to be able to gather the information and level of detail that this approach is

⁷⁴ De Vries, I. and C. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen (2015) ‘Extremely wanted: human trafficking statistics – what to do with the hodgepodge of numbers?’ in Kangaspunta, K. (Ed.) *Forum on Crime and Society (Special issue. Researching hidden populations: approaches to and methodologies for generating data on trafficking in persons)*, 8, pp. 17. See also Steinfatt, T. (2015) ‘Calculations versus counting human trafficking numbers’ in Kangaspunta, K. (Ed.) *Forum on Crime and Society (Special issue. Researching hidden populations: approaches to and methodologies for generating data on trafficking in persons)*, 8, pp. 63-84; and Weitzer, R. (2014) ‘New directions in research on human trafficking’, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 653, pp. 15-16.

⁷⁵ Jaroonkhongdach, W. et al. (2011) ‘Three Dimensions of Research Quality’, *Proceedings of the International Conference: Doing Research in Applied Linguistics*, p.101; Leavy, P. (2017) *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches*. New York, United States: The Guilford Press, p. 9; and Leavy, P. (Ed.) (2014) *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.

designed to collect. Arriving at precise and sufficiently detailed information requires care in the preparation for and execution of the interview and trained interviewers are necessary to obtain robust qualitative data.

A qualitative approach contributes to an enhanced and nuanced understanding of TIP and TIP responses. One researcher studying trafficking within mixed migration streams highlighted qualitative approaches in understanding what was happening in complex migration narratives:

...we will try more and more to look at the qualitative side, to get a more granular analysis. [...] If you don't really look at that from a more qualitative perspective, you miss a lot of understanding of this person. It's [reductive] to just say that people are moving for economic reasons. There's a lot more behind it that would gain from the qualitative information collection rather than quantitative data collection.

Ethnographic and anthropological methods may be particularly useful in conducting some types of TIP research.⁷⁶ One TIP researcher highlighted the importance of in-depth, qualitative research including calling for increased use of ethnographic and anthropological approaches:

...there's not enough ethnography, for instance, not enough small-scale, in-depth work. ...large-scale research, while useful and while it has a place and is needed, it's never going to capture people's full experiences of trafficking or of anti-trafficking efforts. For people having gone through a potentially traumatic experience, you have to sit with people to effectively learn from them and you have to gain their trust.

That being said, qualitative methods are vulnerable to bias through the attitudes and qualities of the researcher and social desirability factors (discussed in more detail below in Stage #1, *Identify data sources and data providers – Identify biases and limitations in data sources*). Factors that are recognized as influencing the relationship between researcher and respondents include age, appearance, social class, culture, environment, gender and inequalities of knowledge and power.⁷⁷ Moreover, too heavy a reliance on qualitative research in the TIP field means that much research is not particularly representative and the range of studies is largely constrained by the same limitations and biases.

⁷⁶ Brennan, D. (2005) 'Methodological Challenges in Research with Trafficked Persons: Tales from the Field', *International Migration*, 43(1/2), pp. 35-54; Brunovskis, A. and R. Surtees (2010) 'Untold Stories: Biases and Selection Effects in Research with Victims of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation', *International Migration*, 48(4), pp. 1-37; Feingold, D. (2014) 'Virgin territory re-explored: ethnographic insight, public policy and the trade in minority women in Southeast Asia' in Yea, S. (Ed.) *Human Trafficking in Asia: Forcing Issues*. Oxon, United Kingdom: Routledge, pp. 81-100; Long, L.D. (2004) 'Anthropological Perspectives on the Trafficking of Women for Sexual Exploitation', *International Migration*, 42(1), pp. 5-31; Merry, S.E. (2016) *The Seductions of Quantification: Measuring Human Rights, Gender Violence, and Sex Trafficking*. Chicago, United States: University of Chicago Press; Molland, S. (2013) 'On researching "trafficking" and "anti-trafficking"', *Ethnography*, pp. 1-24; Siegel, D. (2016) 'Ethnicity, Crime and Sex Work: A Triple Taboo' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 71-84; Yea, S. (2016) 'Trust, Rapport, and Ethics in Human Trafficking Research: Reflections on Research with Male Laborers from South Asian in Singapore' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 155-172; and Zhang, S.X. (2009) 'Beyond the 'Natasha' story – a review and critique of current research on sex trafficking', *Global Crime*, 10(3), pp. 178-195.

⁷⁷ Hewitt, J. (2007) 'Ethical components of Researcher-Researched Relationships in Qualitative Interviewing', *Qualitative Health Research*, 17(8), pp. 1149-1159. See also Brunovskis, A. and R. Surtees (2010) 'Untold Stories: Biases and Selection Effects in Research with Victims of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation', *International Migration*, 48(4), pp. 1-37.

Mixed methods approach

A mixed methods approach is the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches and offers the benefits of both, including the possibility to triangulate findings. Historically these approaches were often held to be incompatible, as noted in one research methods book three decades ago: “The rather partisan, either/or tenor of debate about quantitative and qualitative research may appear somewhat bizarre to an outsider, for whom the obvious way forward is likely to be a fusion of the two approaches so that their respective strengths might be reaped”.⁷⁸ More recently the two approaches are seen essentially as complementary and mutually reinforcing. One social researcher explained the relationship as follows:

Qualitative research provides an in-depth picture of people’s lives and helps to determine which questions are appropriate. Quantitative research deals with variables that can be precisely measured, but results in a more general picture of how many people fall into a particular category... I argue that qualitative research (getting to know you) should precede quantitative research (getting to know how many there are of you) if the latter is to be useful.⁷⁹

One TIP researcher stressed the need to understand both the *how much* and the *why*, which requires mixed methods:

Good ethnography tells you why but it doesn’t tell you how extensive the phenomenon is that you’re studying. So I think that you need both [qualitative and quantitative] methods.

Mixed methods will involve at least one qualitative and at least one quantitative research question that will be linked in different ways and to varying extents depending on the specific data collection effort. Qualitative questions may be formulated to explain or contextualize what was learned from quantitative research questions. Quantitative questions may be formulated in response to what was learned in answering qualitative research questions. In deciding whether to use a mixed methods approach, it is important to ask if and why it is useful to engage in both qualitative and quantitative data collection and how this contributes to the study. It is also important to consider how the two datasets will inform and relate to one another.⁸⁰

A mixed methods approach offers the opportunity to understand the nature of the TIP phenomenon and its scope. One researcher illustrated the complementarity of a mixed methods approach:

...what we do whenever a country asks for a survey on forced labor is always to start with qualitative research with very open questions, usually targeted to the group at risk of forced labor or trafficking, in order to capture the elements of what will become the statistical definition. [...] We will draft the terms of reference for the qualitative research in a way that we will get out of the interviews or focus groups the main elements of vocabulary but also of concepts related to this element of involuntariness and penalty. ...the way an employer coerced or recruits by force or deceived a child or an adult to work is not the same in [different countries]. We use the qualitative research to capture those elements, to put names, to identify them and then later we translate that into the statistical definition. That’s fascinating. It’s a good practice.

⁷⁸ Bryman, A. (1988) *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*. New York, United States: Routledge.

⁷⁹ Jellinek, L. (2012) ‘Ways of Knowing Indonesia: The Personal Journey of an Academic and Activist’ in Purdey, J. (Ed.) *Knowing Indonesia: Intersections of Self, Discipline and Nation*. Australia: Monash University Publishing.

⁸⁰ Leavy, P. (2017) *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches*. New York, United States: The Guilford Press, p. 167 and p. 171.

TIP data collection by National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms is also generally a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches given the breadth of the topics and scope of data collection covered by these offices. One National Rapporteur described how her office used a mixed methods approach in its TIP data collection:

There is the quantitative dimension but there is also a qualitative dimension of the phenomenon [...] that is not captured by the [quantitative] database. So it's also important to have the qualitative evaluation or assessment by the persons in the field, by professionals on that specifically because some strands or some *modus operandi* are difficult to identify on a statistical level.

Another TIP researcher highlighted the value and complementarity of a mixed methods approach in TIP data collection:

Combining to some degree the quantitative and qualitative data collection methods is important. Quantitative, despite all of the critiques and caveats, is important in identifying what patterns are important to focus on in getting a sense of the scale of that. But then also [important is] getting the much greater context around that with solid qualitative data collection.

That a combination of research methods may provide the best path to understanding complex TIP issues is illustrated in the criminal justice context. Understanding criminal justice responses to trafficking requires both qualitative and quantitative methods to gain a deep understanding of cases and, by implication, the functioning of the criminal justice system. There are substantial limits to existing criminal justice data collection activities that only count cases, rather than marry these numbers with qualitative information from the cases. One criminal justice expert described these issues drawing from his experience of working with a criminal justice database:

The problem with [criminal justice] data collection is that it is focused on quantity and we want to get beyond that. We want to get to the quality of the actual investigations and prosecutions, so that we can determine whether in fact the criminal justice system is operating correctly. [...] It's so important to go beyond just the simple numbers because you will find if you do that the people being prosecuted are poor, vulnerable people. The mom-and-pop operation, the low-hanging fruit, the easy people who have no power to object or to interfere in the criminal justice response and they end up going to jail on very weak evidence or no evidence at all. Where are the powerful people? The people who are really making the money in the trafficking scheme, they're not being prosecuted. And I think that's an important data point to be able to gather and to then demonstrate. That they're not prosecuting very important people. The quality of the prosecution, just by means of the kinds of people who are being prosecuted, is poor.

Mixed methods are also needed in assessing the operation of the criminal justice system, as noted in one U.S. study:

Local Task Forces in the U.S. need better methods to collect and analyze data. The only way that researchers can evaluate the effectiveness of these task forces in the long-term is through adequate and consistent data collection. The current focus just on quantitative numbers must be enhanced with qualitative information on the specific cases themselves.⁸¹

⁸¹ McGaha, J.E. and A. Evans (2009) 'Where Are the Victims? The Credibility Gap in Human Trafficking Research', *Intercultural Human Rights Law Review*, 4, pp. 239-266.

Whether using qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods, it is important to consider the triangulation of methods. Using different methods to collect data rather than only one provides data from multiple perspectives, which, in turn, reduces the biases associated with any one particular method. In some cases, triangulation may be about using methods that are both qualitative and quantitative whereas, in other cases, this may mean using multiple methods within one approach, either qualitative or quantitative. Triangulation of methods is also important for data analysis, as is discussed in more detail in Stage #4: Data Analysis (*Identify and describe relevant patterns in data*).

Researchers must also consider the appropriateness of the data for the questions asked and conclusions that are drawn, paying attention to limitations and weaknesses in the use of methods during analysis, issues that we will return to in Stage #2: Data Collection (*Select a sample and implement a sampling strategy and Revisit Stage #1 work plan and adjust, if needed*) and Stage #4: Data Analysis (*Consider factors and biases that influence the data*). In terms of choosing an approach and method – which is the focus of this step – the most important issue is that the approach and method chosen are suited to answering the research topic and questions.

In summary: A data collection approach is the overarching framework or strategy for data collection, which can include different methods. Methods refer to the specific technique or procedure used to collect the data within that approach. Quantitative data collection generally aims to measure and assess; it refers to observations and measurements that can be made objectively and repeated by other researchers and data collectors. Qualitative research is a scientific method to gather non-numerical data; qualitative approaches are generally broader and more exploratory, asking *what, how, when, where* and *why*. Mixed methods combine qualitative and quantitative methods, benefitting from the strengths of each. Selecting from different data collection approaches and methods requires determining which can best answer the data collection questions. Our research suggests that a good practice in most cases of TIP inquiry is to combine approaches and methods if one seeks the fullest picture of TIP.

Choose a data collection approach and method

Determining the appropriate approach and method is primarily driven by the nature of the data collection, existing literature and accessibility of data sources. It is a matter of deciding on the approach and method that can best answer the topic and data collection questions. One TIP researcher described this exploratory process, to guide and inform decisions around approach and method:

We start asking ourselves and partners: how do you measure this? Is it best measured only through qualitative research? How do we get these deep contextual narratives from a number of different perspectives so that you may push on and say, “Let’s do only in-depth interviews?” But then we also want to think about how to get a reasonable sample across a section, maximum variation sampling.⁸² How do we think about saturation?⁸³... And if we are going into the quantitative, how does the

⁸² Maximum variation sampling, also referred to as “extreme variation sampling”, gathers a wide range of extremes among the sample group, capturing unique or diverse variations. The intention is to maximize the diversity in the sample to answer the research question. Palinkas, L. et al. (2015) ‘Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research’, *Administrative and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 42(5), pp. 533-544.

⁸³ Saturation is a term in qualitative data collection which describes the point at which sampling more data will not lead to more information related to the research questions. In other words, if analysis starts to show similar answers or examples over and over again, the data collector may conclude that saturation has been reached.

qualitative help us inform survey design? How do we think about sampling?

In some research and data collection projects the choice of approach and method is driven by expediency and what is possible with available time, staff and resources rather than the best option for the topic and research question. One TIP researcher made this point in the context of her work conducting research with NGOs:

Sometimes what happens is that people choose a method based on what's expedient, for example, "Let's do a focus group [discussion]. We can pull people together to do that", when that isn't necessarily the approach that would be the best one to get the data that you need to get.

Good practice. Choose a data collection approach and method

Be clear about the questions that data collection is attempting to answer.

Identify the best approach for the specific topic and questions, whether qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods.

Consider longitudinal data collection and/or participatory data collection if appropriate for answering the data collection questions.

Identify the best method within the selected approach to answer the data collection questions.

The selected approach and method must be "implementable" for the specific data collection effort. And, in practice, some approaches or methods may simply not be possible (for example, because of the topic, the context, the population being surveyed and so on). One TIP researcher highlighted limited opportunities for some types of sampling when researching TIP:

[How do we think about] spatially randomized sampling,⁸⁴ hot spot sampling,⁸⁵ so that you don't [just] assume [that] you can do it, which is often the sort of default position. You just can't go getting a prevalence measure. It's impossible for all sorts of reasons. Or [think] that it's easy, that you just go and knock on every third door [and ask], "Is anyone here trafficked?" Obviously you can't do that either. You have to think [it] through.

It is not always the case that more complicated methods are the most useful or provide more solid data and findings. Rather, it is a matter of finding the appropriate method to explore the specific topic on which data is needed. As one TIP researcher noted:

More is not always better. More complicated, more sophisticated modeling is not always appropriate. ...it's a field where things are changing all of the time, where establishing fact is really difficult...focusing on exploratory data is always a good

Fusch, P. and L. Ness (2015) 'Are We There Yet? Data Saturation in Qualitative Research', *The Qualitative Report*, 20(9), pp. 1408-1416.

⁸⁴ Spatially randomized sampling is used to survey a random sample of a population, usually in remote regions and/or developing nations with resource-challenged environments where detailed geographic and human census data is less available. Spatially randomized sampling uses the same approach as geographic sampling (where all eligible respondents and households are known in a specific target geography, enumerated and then randomly selected to construct a sampling frame) but is used when up-to-date and accurate geographic or census data, including maps and household or address lists, are not available; in remote areas, where streets and household clusters may be informal, irregular or unnamed and houses may be unnumbered; and in humanitarian or post-disaster settings. In spatially randomized sampling, after the sampling frame is developed, surveyors locate sample locations in the field, such as with a GPS unit or satellite photos. When population data is completely absent, such as in post-disaster settings or areas where data is outdated or unreliable, advanced enumeration efforts are used. Kondo, M. et al. (2014) 'A random spatial sampling method in a rural developing nation', *BMC Public Health*, 14.

⁸⁵ A "hot spot" refers to an area with significant trafficking activities or a significant risk of human trafficking.

contribution to the field. Sometimes simple data can be much better, much more useful than overcomplicated modeling procedures when you see those models applied to a trafficked or potentially trafficked population, which wouldn't be randomly sampled, you really have to take it with a grain of salt.

Choosing the most suitable approach and method links directly with the specific topic and context. Research approaches and methods may be a good practice for some forms of trafficking, some types of victims, on some topics or in some locations. For example, network-based approaches to reaching former trafficking victims, as a hard-to-reach population, require that there is network formation among these former trafficking victims, which may differ according to the form of exploitation, type of victim, or location. The level of stigma associated with sexual exploitation in a particular setting may mean that trafficking victims do not associate with one another and, thus, do not have a network which can be leveraged for sampling. Trafficking victims without regular status in a destination country may be less likely to disclose their immigration status to others, thereby also lacking a network and limiting sampling strategies. By contrast, former victims trafficked for labor may be more open about their experiences of exploitation, particularly in countries where labor migration is normalized and exploitation is common, meaning that they are more likely to have networks that can be mobilized in TIP data collection.

Within an overall discussion of methods and approaches is the distinction between **longitudinal** and **cross-sectional** data collection. Longitudinal studies collect data from the same sample over a period of time while a cross-sectional study is data collection with one sample at a single point in time. While cross-sectional research is most common in the TIP field, some research questions are best answered with a longitudinal approach. For example, longitudinal data collection can measure the success of reintegration outcomes, given that reintegration is a long-term and non-linear process, with victims facing setbacks and successes at different stages of their post-trafficking lives. It can identify the evolving set of challenges faced over the course of reintegration as well as the adaptive responses to these challenges and issues. Similarly, different issues and challenges arise at different stages of the criminal justice process, requiring data collection over time. A longitudinal approach is also critical in understanding TIP responses. As one TIP expert noted:

You can learn a lot by talking to people at different stages of their lives. ...someone in the shelter says this about the shelter, someone six months or even three years or six years later says different things. And there's different things that come out. Indeed, this is true about the whole trafficking experience... [There are] obstacles to collecting it. But I'd like to see much more priority on collecting [longitudinal data].

Tracking-specific trends and patterns also need to be tracked over time. As was noted of data collection by one National Rapporteur-equivalent mechanism:

Longitudinal analysis is essential if one is talking about statistical analysis. Trafficking in persons cannot be understood if one only takes into consideration one year or even two years, especially if the annual volume of data is low. In our annual reports and especially thematic bulletins we have a ten-year series and even so, in terms of some dimensions, it is difficult to talk about trends.

Longitudinal data collection approaches afford learning about developments over time and long-term outcomes and effects of interventions that are not visible with cross-sectional approaches. This might include, for example, how an economic sector functions and adjusts over time and in response to different interventions, how workers/victims' experiences may change in relation to policy changes and how businesses may adjust their operations in response to legal and policy interventions. While there have long been calls for longitudinal

research and data collection in the TIP field,⁸⁶ very little longitudinal TIP research has been conducted to date.⁸⁷ This may be due part to the complex nature of longitudinal research, particularly with vulnerable persons. It is also likely attributable to the lack of appetite for long-term (multi-year), complicated and costly TIP research.

Another cross-cutting theme within an overall discussion of methods and approaches is participatory research or data collection, which aims to engage various stakeholders in the data collection process. Different participatory approaches and methods were highlighted by TIP researchers as useful in conducting TIP research and data collection, including community-based participatory research (CBPR) and feminist participatory research.⁸⁸ One TIP researcher described the contribution offered by participatory approaches:

...the idea behind [participatory research] shakes up traditional research methods in that the NGOs and ideally people involved in anti-trafficking and trafficked persons are driving the research agendas themselves and also what happens with the results afterward.

Whether and how to use participatory approaches requires careful consideration and issues of participation are discussed in more detail below at this stage (*Consider participation and involvement of stakeholders and end users in data collection*).

From the selection of the best approach and method to answer the topic and data collection questions, many steps then follow. The selection of specific data collection tools or instruments will naturally follow on from the choice of approach and method, a step which is discussed in Stage #2: Data Collection (*Select, design and test data collection tools*).

⁸⁶ Brennan, D. (2005) 'Methodological Challenges in Research with Trafficked Persons: Tales from the Field', *International Migration*, 43(1/2), pp. 35-54; Brunovskis, A. and R. Surtees (2010) 'Untold Stories: Biases and Selection Effects in Research with Victims of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation', *International Migration*, 48(4), pp. 1-37; Danailova-Trainor, G. (2008) 'Evaluation of Trafficking Programmes and Research' in *Human Trafficking: New Directions for Research*. Cairo, Egypt: International Organization for Migration, pp. 44-56; Dottridge, M. (2008) 'Research Needs Concerning the Monitoring, Evaluation and Impact Assessment of both Research about Human Trafficking and Projects and Programs to Address Human Trafficking' in *Human Trafficking: New Directions for Research*. Cairo, Egypt: International Organization for Migration, pp. 57-72; IOM, NEXUS Institute and UNIAP (2011) *The State of Counter-Trafficking Research. SIREN Report*. Bangkok, Thailand: United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP); and Long, L.D. (2004) 'Anthropological Perspectives on the Trafficking of Women for Sexual Exploitation', *International Migration*, 42(1), pp. 5-31.

⁸⁷ Exceptions include: Chab Dai's Butterfly project in Cambodia, a 10-year research project to better understand reintegration for male and female survivors of sex trafficking (<https://chabdai.org/publications/#research>); NEXUS Institute's project Protecting the Unassisted and Underserved: Longitudinal Research on Reintegration in Indonesia (<https://nexusinstitute.net/past-projects/reintegration-in-indonesia/>), the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine's STEAM project, a longitudinal survey of health consequences of human trafficking in the Mekong (<https://same.lshtm.ac.uk/projects-2/study-on-trafficking-exploitation-and-abuse-in-the-mekong-sub-region/>); and Brennan, D. (2014) *Life Interrupted: Trafficking into Forced Labor in the United States*. United States: Duke University Press.

⁸⁸ Bootinand, J. (2014) 'Feminist Participatory Action Research in the Mekong Region' in Jaggar, A.M. (Ed.) *Just Methods: An Interdisciplinary Feminist Reader*. New York, United States: Routledge, pp. 445-456; Bootinand, J. (2012) 'Feminist Participatory Action Research in the Mekong Region' in Kempadoo, K., J. Sanghera and B. Pattanaik (Eds.) *Trafficking and Prostitution Reconsidered: New Perspectives on Migration, Sex Work, and Human Rights*. New York, United States: Routledge, Taylor & Francis; Bovarnick, S. et al. (2018) *Being Heard: Promoting Children and Young People's Involvement in Participatory Research on Sexual Violence*. Bedfordshire, United Kingdom: University of Bedfordshire, The International Centre Researching Child Sexual Exploitation, Violence and Trafficking; Fedina, L. (2017) 'Estimating the Trafficked Population: Public-Health Research Methodologies May Be the Answer', *Journal of Human Trafficking*, 3(1), pp. 21-38; GAATW (2019) *Reclaiming Migrant Women's Narratives: A Feminist Participatory Action Research Project on 'Safe and Fair' Migration in Asia*. Bangkok, Thailand: Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women; GAATW (2010) *Principle and Practice: GAATW-IS Reflections on Feminist Participatory Action Research*. Bangkok, Thailand: Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women; and GAATW (2019) *A Woman's Life is Richer than Her Trafficking Experience. Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) Series*. Bangkok, Thailand: Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women.

In summary: In essence, the best approach and method, whether qualitative, quantitative or mixed, is largely determined by the specific topic and the data collection question. Being clear about the questions that data collection is attempting to answer is key in identifying the best approach and method for a particular research or data collection effort. Whether to undertake cross-sectional or longitudinal data collection (as well as how to approach participation in the process) also ties back to the original topic and related research questions.

Ensure skills in the relevant approach and method when selecting researchers

Qualified personnel, with adequate supervision, are needed to design and guide data collection. Staff must have the requisite skills and expertise in the specific approach and method to conduct the data collection appropriately and with rigor. In practice such expertise is seldom available in house. Accordingly, having qualified individuals conducting the data collection properly will require in house staff receiving training and technical assistance or accessing the necessary expertise from outside of the organization or institution. This should be considered from the outset of the project, including in terms of the necessary time and resources. As one TIP researcher advised:

Whatever methodology you're using, there needs to be someone on the team who has expertise in that methodology... bringing in someone who knows that methodology really, really well and can make sure that you're implementing it correctly. [...] So I think it's a) being really intentional from the outset about what is it that you want to know; b) having someone on the team who knows enough about research writ large to be able to help figure out what might be the methodology that would be best suited to answer that; and then c) making sure you have someone on the team who knows that methodology really well and can help the team implement it well.

In the case of smaller organizations, whose staff may not have the requisite skills and also may not have the opportunity to hire experts, it will be necessary to take into account existing in house skills when choosing the data collection approach or method. This may require leveraging partnerships to allow smaller organizations or under-resourced government institutions to engage with researchers and data collectors with skills and expertise in a particular method or approach.

Thus, good practice is when the data collection approach and method align with either the existing skills of data collectors or with the time and resources available to train and supervise data collectors in the relevant approach and method (see Stage #2: Data Collection, *Select data collectors, as relevant and appropriate*). All data collectors also need to be supervised in implementation, a topic we will return to in Stage #2: Data Collection (*Carry out training and on-going supervision in data collection*).

Good practice. Ensure skills in the relevant approach and method when selecting researchers

Ensure staff has the needed skills to conduct data collection appropriately and with rigor.

Leverage partnerships with researchers and organizations who have requisite skills and expertise.

Ensure time and resources are available to train and supervise staff in the approach and method.

In summary: Persons with the right skill set and knowledge must be available for the selected method and approach of a data collection process. This can be achieved by using in house personnel with the right skills; training the personnel for the project, when time and resources permit; or contracting experts and leveraging partnerships to access those with requisite skills and expertise.

Determine how the approach and method are influenced by the specific context

Selecting the best research approach or method needs to be weighed against what is acceptable and feasible in a specific context and relative to a specific topic. What is meaningful and possible in one location may not be meaningful and possible somewhere else. Different approaches and methods, and by extension the data collection tools and techniques, may be differently valued in different cultures and contexts. In some socio-political settings a particular method (and, by implication, a specific tool or instrument) may not be suitable. One researcher, speaking broadly about research, observed that many of her respondents, rural dwellers in one Asian country, disliked formal questionnaires and surveys because “they evoke the language of distrusted officialdom. [...] Formal interviewing techniques were treated with suspicion and respondents answered in a way they thought the interviewer wanted. In trying to please, they gave misleading answers”. She found that they “responded better to questions asked in a natural way in the course of everyday life... Effective interviews had to be open-ended discussions without too many direct questions”.⁸⁹

In addition, the context within which data collection is implemented may change over time, requiring adjustments in approach and method. It may not be possible to repeat a particular approach or method in the same site over time, due to changed circumstances. For example, in 2003, researchers in Norway conducted a mapping of prostitution as part of a larger study on human trafficking. Part

of data collection was a phone survey with women in prostitution which included basic indicators such as age, country of origin, how long they had been in prostitution and so on. The survey had a response rate of 51 per cent, comparable to other phone surveys of the general population in Norway.⁹⁰ When researchers attempted to repeat the survey design five years later in the same setting, response rates were very low and the effort had to be abandoned. In the years since the initial study, public debates about prostitution and human trafficking had escalated, legislation was in the process of being changed and the police had become more active in targeting offenses relating to prostitution.⁹¹ This made women in prostitution much more reluctant to give information about their situations and activities to researchers over the phone.

Good practice. Determine how the approach and method are influenced by the specific context

Weigh up what is acceptable and feasible in a specific context and relative to the specific topic.

Consider whether the context has changed in a way that will affect the use of a particular approach and method.

⁸⁹ Jellinek, L. (2012) ‘Ways of Knowing Indonesia: The Personal Journey of an Academic and Activist’ in Purdey, J. (Ed.) *Knowing Indonesia: Intersections of Self, Discipline and Nation*. Australia: Monash University Publishing.

⁹⁰ Brunovskis, A. and G. Tyldum (2004) *Crossing Borders: An Empirical Study of Transnational Prostitution and Trafficking in Human Beings*. Oslo, Norway: Fafo.

⁹¹ Tveit, M. and M.L. Skilbrei (2008) *Mangfoldig marked: Prostitusjonens omfang, innhold og organisering*. Oslo, Norway: Fafo.

In summary: Determining the best approach and method must be considered relative to the specific context in which data is to be collected and the specific topic to be examined. Opportunities for data collection in one location may not be possible in another or sometimes even in the same location at a different period of time. It is essential to assess and weigh up what is acceptable and feasible in a specific context and relative to a specific topic, including whether the context has changed in a way that will affect the use of a particular approach and method.

Consider participation and involvement of stakeholders and end users in data collection

When choosing a data collection approach and method, it is important to consider the possible involvement of different stakeholders and end users. This is especially important for individuals about whom the data collection effort is focused and may benefit from results, such as trafficking victims and other vulnerable persons. There is also a raft of other stakeholders (individuals, organizations and institutions) who may have a vested interest in the outcome of research or data collection, which, in the TIP field, may include various types of practitioners (service providers, law enforcement), policymakers, as well as communities more broadly.

Given that the value of some TIP data collection may be characterized, at least in part, by the degree to which it is useful and relevant to stakeholders and end users, it is worth considering the various stakeholders and end users, including multiple user groups, and if, when and how to engage with them in the data collection process.⁹² This may mean considering how to engage end users as part of design and planning as well as at subsequent stages of the process. There are various potential advantages to participatory research approaches.⁹³

Good practice. Consider participation and involvement of stakeholders and end users in data collection

Identify possible end users (for example, trafficking victims and anti-trafficking professionals).

Consider if and how a participatory approach is appropriate for the specific data collection effort.

Identify in what ways and at what stages participation may be appropriate.

Be open to the new perspectives and issues that participatory approaches may offer.

Consider and assess the balance between end user participation and methodological rigor and precision.

Ensure that participation is ethically and sensitively undertaken.

Ensure that participation is meaningful and involves a shift in power relations among those involved.

⁹² McLean, R. and K. Sen (2018) *Making a difference in the real world? A meta-analysis of research for development*. Canada: International Development Research Centre (IDRC), p. 2.

⁹³ For examples of participatory research and discussions about the involvement of trafficked persons in research and data collection, please see Brennan, D. (2005) 'Methodological Challenges in Research with Trafficked Persons: Tales from the Field', *International Migration*, 43(1/2), pp. 35-54; Brunovskis, A. and R. Surtees (2010) 'Untold Stories: Biases and Selection Effects in Research with Victims of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation', *International Migration*, 48(4), pp. 1-37; Cwikel, J. and E. Hoban (2005) 'Contentious issues in research on trafficked women working in the sex industry: Study design, ethics and methodology', *The Journal of Sex Research*, 42(4), p. 310; Fedina, L. (2017) 'Estimating the Trafficked Population: Public-Health Research Methodologies May Be the Answer', *Journal of Human Trafficking*, 3(1), pp. 21-38; GAATW (2019) *A Woman's Life is Richer than Her Trafficking Experience. Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) Series*.

Participation ensures that the perspectives of the individuals about whom the data collection effort is focused are integral to the data collection project overall. This was valued by many trafficking victim respondents we interviewed as part of various research projects in Europe, the FSU and Southeast Asia. When, at the conclusion of the interview, we asked respondents how they felt about participating in the research project they generally reported having had a positive experience and focused on the importance of being listened to, having their opinions taken into account and making a contribution to help other victims in the future, through improvements to policy and programs. While not representative of all victims who have participated in research,⁹⁴ their answers below are illuminating of what some trafficking victims may perceive and experience as benefits of participation in research and data collection, in this case in-depth interviews:

[This research] is important. It is important that our opinion is taken into account. (Moldovan woman trafficked for sexual exploitation)

It is good and important to listen to trafficking victims' problems in order to understand how to help them. This is a normal thing. (Moldovan man trafficked for labor)

I think [sharing] my experience could help other people who decide to work abroad. I just wanted to share my experience with other people, how difficult it is to go there... You know at some point I cannot keep it in myself. I was thinking how many people suffered before me and maybe now the number is smaller, but I just do not want people to get into similar situations. (Ukrainian man trafficked for construction work)

I would like to help. I would like that this program exists and becomes better for new [beneficiaries]. (Serbian woman trafficked for sexual exploitation)

It is good that you want to hear from us and collect information about our lives from us. I expect that some things can be better especially that [social services] can be better and that they will assist us better, with better behavior and more funds. (Serbian girl trafficked for begging)

I felt relieved. I felt that other people might benefit from my story and experience because I told you [as someone] who works on this issue. Before I didn't see the point of talking to my friends about this. (Indonesian man trafficked for labor)

This was not stressful to me. I was pleased that my opinion counted for something and I think that the information I provided will be useful... Yes, this generally feels

Bangkok, Thailand: Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women; GAATW (2019) *Reclaiming Migrant Women's Narratives: A Feminist Participatory Action Research Project on 'Safe and Fair' Migration in Asia*. Bangkok, Thailand: Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women; GAATW (2015) *Briefing Paper: Seeking Feedback from Trafficked Persons on Assistance Services: Principles and Ethics*. Bangkok, Thailand: Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women, pp. 7-8; GAATW (2010) *Principle and Practice: GAATW-IS Reflections on Feminist Participatory Action Research*. Bangkok, Thailand: Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW); Surtees, R. (2014) 'Another side of the story: challenges in research with unidentified and unassisted trafficking victims' in Yea, S. (Ed.) *Human Trafficking in Asia: Forcing Issues*. Oxon, United Kingdom: Routledge, pp. 118-138; Surtees, R. and S. Craggs (2010) *Beneath the surface. Methodological issues in research and data collection with assisted trafficking victims*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Organization for Migration and Washington, D.C.: NEXUS Institute; and Warrington, C. (2018) *Children and Young People's Participation in Research to Address Sexual Violence: Ethical working paper*. Bedfordshire, United Kingdom: University of Bedfordshire, The International Centre Researching Child Sexual Exploitation, Violence and Trafficking.

⁹⁴ Other trafficking victims were more ambivalent and even negative about their participation in research, noting feelings of stress and distress. This is discussed in more detail below at this stage. See *Develop or apply legal and ethical guidelines and protocols – Apply the principle of "do no harm"*.

good, when your views are taken into consideration. This research will help better understand our problems. (Moldovan woman trafficked for sexual exploitation)

Participation may also be empowering and encouraging for research participants. One TIP expert explained this possible benefit of participation:

...safe and meaningful participation does have an empowering effect on the target group. It can really make people feel horrible if it is not well handled. But if it is [safe and meaningful], it can be really empowering because people think that they do contribute to something that is of relevance not only to their lives. And especially if they have been victims of trafficking or other forms of violence, they can use their experience in order to protect others.

A number of trafficking victims expressed a similar sentiment when asked how they felt about their participation in the research:

I feel very light-hearted and released from the tension that I have kept inside my heart as I could share what I wanted to share. (Woman from Myanmar trafficked for forced marriage)

I feel much released and comfortable. When I spoke these words, I felt much better. I went to the paddy field this afternoon to harvest rice in the burning sun of the day. My daughter said, "If I can go to school, I will do my best in order for you not to work hard like this." On listening to her, my tears were already inside my eyes. I really feel a lot better after telling you all. (Vietnamese woman trafficked for domestic work)

I felt satisfied. I could share my thoughts and I could convey some of the pain or complaints. I'm happy and relieved. I didn't know whom to talk to about this, not my parents obviously. Hopefully now that I have talked about it, I could make my way into success or something like that. (Indonesian man trafficked for labor).

A participatory approach can introduce new perspectives or afford better access to information about specific issues. Participatory approaches, including consulting with respondents in the design process, can help to ensure that methods, tools and procedures are appropriate for and sensitive to the target group. One TIP expert described a challenging study which, had it engaged proposed respondents in the selection of methods and tools, might have led to a more constructive data collection process:

Sometimes we forget or don't choose that slightly more difficult, maybe more intensive or expensive option around data collection. I think we need to generally be very wary around survey data that goes in and asks for performative responses from vulnerable populations. We have really struggled in a recent piece of research that we did around domestic workers to not only find the people that we wanted to talk to, but then also have them understand what a survey is and how questions like this work and how they end up being included in [the sample] ... That's been difficult when potentially a conversation [an interview approach] would have been more rewarding from their perspective.

One Albanian trafficking victim, interviewed about her experience of participating in TIP research and data collection, noted the value in engaging victims also in the design of interview tools and questions, including what topics or questions are sensitive and how questions and issues are approached:

Being asked questions about the past bad experience is what is stressful, not necessarily to be interviewed. I have had a lot of bad experiences in my life and it is

the trafficking experience that is the hard thing to talk about, this is what I don't want to talk about at all. Whether an interview is stressful is linked to what questions are asked and also how they are asked. Being asked questions like, "did you work on the street?". In such a case it doesn't matter who asks, it is hard even when social workers ask. If it is too direct, we don't like to say it. Even though women might answer you, they don't like to be asked such questions. And they'd rather prefer not to be asked such questions straight away in an interview.

Another respondent, a Cambodian man trafficked for labor, expressed some embarrassment over what he felt was his inability to answer questions, highlighting difficulties that may arise when interacting with victims of different education levels and the importance of considering what tools are chosen, how they are designed and how questions are worded:

...I am very happy to join your interview. But I am feeling a bit ashamed with you when I am not good at describing [what happened] or answering your questions.

A Cambodian woman trafficked for labor was similarly concerned with difficulties in expressing herself:

I don't want to be asked so many questions because I am not good at answering.

Engaging trafficked persons might also include discussion of where and how to arrange data collection, including how this may differ by context, project and individual. When asked how we could better arrange research in future, trafficked persons advised on various practical considerations that were important in their ability and willingness to participate in research, as well as their satisfaction with the overall process. This included the location itself, timing, the environment, the presence of others and so on:

I like the location because if it was at home, people would get curious about what is happening. (Myanmar man trafficked for labor)

The way it is [arranged] I feel very quiet, I feel safe, I feel comfortable with the environment. So, I really like this interview. ...Mainly the environment is very important and the translator is very important. (Albanian woman trafficked for sexual exploitation)

What could I do to make this interview better?... What about the environment? It was noisy, this was not a good choice. Yes, true. We could have chosen a better place. Here it looks like everyone is watching me. It was a little difficult to be here. (Kosovar woman trafficked for sexual exploitation)

I am satisfied with everything. Everything went very well for me. For me it was good that you are a young and kind woman. It was good that you came here to my place because I have small children. (Serbian woman trafficked for sexual exploitation)

I think you should see me in person as I do not want authorities to touch their hands onto this [get involved]. I want to keep my entire story secret. The interview could take place at my home as no one will be at home. (Vietnamese woman trafficked for sexual exploitation)

This is enough for me because the interviewing place is quiet without any bother. (Cambodian woman trafficked for labor exploitation)

Everything is fine. Only the time [of the interview] is not convenient for me. I have to ask permission from my employer. The employer doesn't want me to go out much. (Girl from Myanmar trafficked for labor)

The interview should be outside the shelter, such as in a cafe. I did not feel comfortable and [I feel] a bit scared to be interviewed in the shelter. (Vietnamese girl trafficked for forced marriage)

Participatory approaches are held by some as an ideal in and of themselves and an example of good practice in TIP data collection. One TIP researcher noted that trafficking victims are important to include in the design and implementation of some data collection efforts, particularly when researching specific topics and research questions:

...For me something that sticks out [as good practice] would be something participatory, so that it involved survivors in some way. That might be involving survivors in the design of a research project, involving them in coming up with a process or certain questions, what they want to explore. It might be involving them as researchers, peer researchers. To me, that is something that is a positive practice. I think survivors are experts by experience and can provide insights into the language that we use, what we should be asking. And also, if we are working together with survivors as peer researchers, they may also be able to establish rapport with other research participants... It needs to be well managed. There's lots of ethical issues to consider. But I think it's something that is worth exploring.

Participation can also bring a new lens, framing or understanding to an issue. One example is the difference between a legal understanding of human trafficking and people's own perception of when and how working conditions become exploitative or abusive. As one TIP expert explained:

[One NGO] was looking at what is unacceptable work in the sex industry.at what point did it tip over into a situation of either forced labor or even rape... or sexual assault or trafficking. ...Because we don't see that [analysis] happening very much in terms of the data collection that is done around human trafficking. It's always very much about, "Do you see act, means and purpose?"

While participation is most commonly discussed in terms of participation of trafficking victims, it also about wider stakeholder involvement. A range of stakeholders and end users may be involved in data collection to ensure usefulness and relevance. The participation of various practitioners (law enforcement, prosecutors, social workers, healthcare workers) helps to ensure that data collection meets their information needs and allows the data collection process to benefit from their expertise, including by ensuring that the data collected is relevant and useful to their operational anti-trafficking work. Another element is ensuring that data collected meets the needs of different types of data providers with different roles and mandates such as criminal justice practitioners and victim service providers. One National Rapporteur-equivalent mechanism described how data providers (various government institutions and NGOs in the country) were engaged in the design and implementation of national data collection activities on TIP:

We firstly identified the organizations (governmental and non-governmental) and the instrument of data collection (method, indicators, variables) were built with them. It was a bottom-up approach... the aim was that the product and efforts were from all of us. For instance, there were some variables that we wanted to insert but some [institutions] did not see the relevance. There is a balance that one needs to consider when, on one hand, you have law enforcement agencies and, on the other hand,

NGOs providing victim assistance. But after some years when we revised the instrument of data collection it was the data providers asking for additional variables.

Stakeholder and end user involvement also contribute to and enhance analysis and interpretation of data and the development of recommendations. One TIP researcher described the importance of relationships with stakeholders in research:

...our university had a strong relationship with the [relevant institutions] and so they were very willing and eager to refer participants to us... Using [participatory] methods at all stages: the data collection stage, during data analysis, during the interpretation of the results, when you are drawing conclusions and recommendations and implications from the research. [It is] really important to involve the larger team in that process.

Participation may also be about redefining power relationships in the production of knowledge, with respondents, stakeholders and end users able to inform how data collection and analysis are done. The same TIP researcher explained:

[Participatory research] just generally includes this shared power in the research process right from the start of a research study to the very end and having community members and partners lead that research process... It's not a specific methodology but more of an approach that is used to really share power between researcher and [respondent].

End user involvement has the potential to increase the likelihood that researchers will study useful questions and that results will be relevant for and upheld in practice. It can contribute to stakeholders and end users having greater confidence in the data collection and its results, thereby increasing the likelihood that the results will be used and translated into practice and policy. Other advantages include that it facilitates acceptance of research study objectives and findings, helps researchers to get pragmatic feedback on their research design and broadens the dissemination and uptake of their study's findings.⁹⁵

That being said, participatory methods are not necessarily appropriate for all respondent groups, in all political contexts or for all TIP data collection topics, issues and questions. As noted above, there are ethical and practical considerations including informed consent and voluntary participation, as well as choice as to their roles and involvement at different stages of data collection. One TIP researcher described a project in which trafficking victims were involved in collecting data about their experiences but only when and in ways that they wished:

Another thing that we observed through that project was giving people space to participate in the ways that they felt most comfortable. ...For example, everyone was involved in data collection or generation... But not everybody wanted to be involved in data analysis and that's fine. We gave people choices to say, "Okay, if this is something that you're interested in and you want to participate in, then you can do that, but no one has to do that". And so the people who were interested in data analysis then volunteered for it... So [good practice is] flexibility to allow people to participate in a way that feels most comfortable for them while also maintaining open and regular communication throughout the whole process.

Another consideration is in striking a balance between end user influence and participation, on the one hand, and retaining methodological rigor and precision on the other hand. Research respondents, stakeholders and end users are not always experts in data collection

⁹⁵ Hounmenou, C. (2018) 'Engaging Anti-Human Trafficking Stakeholders in the Research Process', *Journal of Human Trafficking*, pp.1-4.

methods and involvement, if not controlled, can undermine the timely production of technically accurate data collection. In some cases, stakeholders may struggle to objectively assess and analyze some data or findings, leading to a conflict of interest.

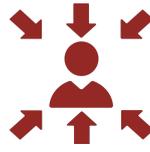
In considering the choice of approach and method, thought is needed as to whether participation is appropriate and would benefit the specific data collection process. End user and stakeholder involvement should not necessarily be a requirement for research and data collection. Decisions should depend on the specific research question(s) to be answered and the data collection approach and method to be used.

Attention is also needed to the new perspectives and issues that participatory approaches may offer as well as how participation may constrain these. This will require identifying: the stakeholders and end users who might be included; in what ways and at what stages of data collection participation may be appropriate; how participation can be meaningful; and how this can be done ethically and sensitively. In some cases, it can be critically useful to take a step back from what end users and participants think is useful and relevant and be open to differing perspectives. Careful attention is also needed to the balance between end user participation and methodological rigor and precision.

It is also important to consider the level of participation that is most suitable for the specific project. In some cases, a more-or-less equal collaboration between researchers, research participants and end users or target groups can be fruitful. In other cases, a lower level of consultation with participants may be more appropriate. End user and stakeholder involvement is time and resource intensive and not all stakeholders will consider their involvement in research or data collection as a priority.⁹⁶ Clear communication is needed from the outset with research participants, stakeholders and end user groups engaged in data collection about their real involvement and influence. This is a prerequisite for managing expectations and ensuring meaningful engagement and empowerment.

In summary: It is worthwhile considering if and how a participatory approach is appropriate for a specific data collection effort. Participatory approaches may offer new perspectives and considerations including the identification of questions, approaches and methods. However, participation must be undertaken ethically and sensitively and should be meaningful, including a rebalancing of power relations among those involved. It is also important to balance between end user participation and methodological rigor and precision. This requires an assessment of how participation might best be approached and at what stages participation may be appropriate.

⁹⁶ Hounmenou, C. (2018) 'Engaging Anti-Human Trafficking Stakeholders in the Research Process', *Journal of Human Trafficking*, pp.5-6



Identify data sources and data providers

Closely related to selecting a data collection approach and method is the identification of appropriate data sources. **Data sources**⁹⁷ may consist of individuals (for example, trafficking victims, traffickers or perpetrators, service providers, or criminal justice representatives) as well as written materials, register data, literature or any other datasets.

Identify data sources

- Assess possible data sources
- Determine access to data sources
- Assess the appropriateness of data sources
- Identify biases and limitations in data sources

In some cases, data sources are also **data providers** (that is, individuals, organizations or institutions who provide data to the data collection effort). For instance, criminal justice practitioners are *data sources* about their experiences of the operation of the criminal justice process. They are also *data providers* of other data sources such as case files of traffickers, trafficking victims and the criminal justice process.

Queries in identifying data sources

- ❓ What information do we need to answer the data collection questions?
- ❓ What/who are suitable data sources?
- ❓ Where can we get this information?
- ❓ Who are relevant data providers?

Identifying data sources requires the consideration of some key questions including: what information do we need to answer the data collection questions? Where can we get this information? Who or what are suitable data sources for this project?

The following sections explore these questions further by examining: assessments of possible data sources; access to data sources; the appropriateness of data sources; and biases and limitations in the use of different data sources.

Assess possible data sources

Data sources must be appropriate to answer data collection questions. Choosing a data source requires considering what **primary data** is needed or whether **secondary data** exists and can be used. **Primary data** is data collected directly by the researcher or data collectors (for example, through interviews, participant observation, life histories, case studies, questionnaires, surveys, ethnographic research and so on). Primary data has the advantage of affording researchers close control over data collection, as well as the opportunity to gather data on the specific issues being examined. The disadvantage is that primary data collection can be costly and time-consuming, depending also on the specific approach and method.

⁹⁷ A data source differs from a data provider, which is the individual or entity providing access to the data source. See Stage #1: Design and Planning, *Identify data sources and data providers*.

Graphic #5. Some examples of possible TIP data sources



Secondary data is data that has already been collected and can be used for analysis (for example, previous research, official statistics, archival materials such as diaries and letters, government reports, victim case files, court document or police files). Secondary data has the advantage of being readily available and cost effective. The disadvantage is that it may not be suitable to answer all data collection questions since it is already produced and cannot be tailored to the data collection effort in question. It is also important to be aware of the context in which secondary data was originally collected, how this informs the data in terms of quality and whether there are any limitations or biases. Also important is whether the original data was collected ethically.⁹⁸

The distinction between primary and secondary data depends on the relationship between the person or research team who collected a dataset and the person who is analyzing it. The same dataset could be primary data in one project and secondary data in another. If the dataset was collected for a specific project, it is **primary data**. If it was collected for another project, it is **secondary data**. An example of primary data is when a research team conceives of and develops a research project and topic, collects data designed to address specific research questions and performs and publishes analysis of the data collected. An example of secondary data is when a researcher identifies a research topic and poses research questions that are addressed through analysis of existing data but the data was not collected to answer those specific research questions. The same dataset may serve as both primary and secondary data (for example, when a researcher analyses data that they have collected for one project and when another researcher or analyst analyzes that same data in the context of another project). Such secondary analyses may serve a variety of purposes, such as addressing questions not considered in the original analysis or examining how a different analytic approach might change the conclusions reached from the first analysis. In

⁹⁸ There exist different criteria for evaluating secondary data. One resource identified four criteria including: 1) authenticity: how genuine is the document or source in terms of soundness and authorship; 2) credibility: the amount of distortion to the document or source, which will affect its sincerity and accuracy; 3) representativeness: how typical or untypical the documents being sourced are, in order to recognize limits to the conclusions that can be drawn from them; and 4) meaning: how well the researcher will be able to understand the document. Scott, J. (1990) *A Matter of Record*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Basil Blackwell Ltd. Another resource identified six criteria for consideration: 1) authorship; 2) authority of the author; 3) authority of the material; 4) authority of the site/organization; 5) currency (that is, is it up to date); and 6) pressure groups and objectivity. Stein, S. (2003) *Sociology on the Web: A Student Guide*. New York, United States: Routledge.

either case, the same dataset serves as primary data for the original research team and secondary data for the researcher performing the later analysis.

As such, primary and secondary data are differently useful and will have particular relevance for specific data collection topics and questions. They may also be complementary and can be used to support one another in a data collection effort.

Good practice. Assess possible data sources

Identify different data sources relevant for the specific data collection topic questions.

Assess whether primary or secondary data is best suited for the data collection question.

Some data collection questions can only be answered with the use of primary

data. This might include data from trafficking victims, about their personal backgrounds, motivations for migration, experiences of exploitation, experiences and assessments of victim assistance, or challenges in reintegration after trafficking. One TIP expert described the need for primary data in understanding some data collection topics:

Direct interviews with victims of trafficking are optimal sources of information related to trafficking. The sources of research and analysis on trafficking are too often just based on secondary sources. And so the collection of primary data in this area is absolutely necessary and done insufficiently. There's obviously a lot of ethical and security issues around the collection of data directly from victims of trafficking so those need to be taken into consideration. But more efforts to gather that data are important.

Similarly, many trafficking victims themselves noted that some data collection questions (for instance, about the quality of victim services, the design and evaluation of interventions, trafficking experiences) required their participation as data sources:

I think the idea is good and such research should be done because [it is] only by speaking to trafficking victims [that] service providers know what was good and what was bad... and it is important that beneficiaries can participate in such studies and that [their views] are taken into account. (Moldovan woman trafficked for sexual exploitation)

Yes, of course [the research is valuable]. It is good that you ask questions about the realities of life. I think that this helps you plan specific and fair programs of assistance and prevention. (Moldovan man trafficked for labor)

Yes, I do [think the research is worthwhile]. It is important that the whole world understands that men are also exploited and to understand better how they should be approached. (Moldovan man trafficked for labor)

Yes [the research is valuable] because it is good that beneficiaries tell about the assistance received: how good it was or if something is to be improved...maybe in some shelters they say they offer assistance but, in fact, it is not so. Only beneficiaries can tell the truth about the quality and quantity of the assistance received. (Moldovan woman trafficked for sexual exploitation)

...maybe my experience could be a lesson learnt for others... (Indonesian woman trafficked for sexual exploitation)

I want to help people with my experiences. (Indonesian man trafficked for labor)

Observation of criminal justice proceedings (that is, the monitoring and observation of trials) would provide the primary data needed to study the prosecutorial process. Similarly, primary data from traffickers is needed to shed light on their personal backgrounds, motivations and decision-making around becoming involved in human trafficking, how trafficking operations work in practice and so on. It would also be useful to understand the wider societal and economic fabric in which they function. As one TIP expert queried:

What are the factors that are contributing to the market opportunity for the criminal, for the trafficker? What are the factors that are enabling them to carry this out? What are the factors that are enabling them not to get caught? What's making it profitable? What are the social factors that are not inhibiting their behavior?

Some data collection questions may be answered with secondary data. For example, criminal justice case files and court documents are key in analyzing the effectiveness of investigations, prosecutions and court cases. Financial records and transactions can be valuable in understanding the operation of trafficking networks. A database of case law – comprised of officially documented instances of trafficking crimes – can answer questions around patterns of prosecutions and sentencing and allow practitioners to learn from experiences in other jurisdictions. A review of victim cases files can answer questions about the assistance response, including what services that individuals need to recover from trafficking, or for how much time they continue to need assistance. Secondary data can also be useful to answer broader research questions related to societal and political analysis, such as, the socioeconomic context of TIP in a given country, or the legal and policy developments impacting on anti-trafficking and related laws. This requires an understanding of the secondary data (for example, how data was collected and cleaned, its accuracy and the extent of missing data as well as ethical procedures in the collection of this data).

Different types of data sources become relevant when looking at specific forms of trafficking or interventions. For example, data collection questions about trafficking in the fishing industry would require different data sources than when, for example, conducting research on trafficking for sexual exploitation or for other forms of labor. This might include fisheries inspectors, the coastguard, the maritime police, coastguard, fishers' associations and unions and so on. Collecting information about trafficking in the fishing industry might also involve accessing secondary data sources unique to this specific form of trafficking, including crew lists, financial records, labor contracts and documents such as seamen's books, passports, or satellite photos.

In summary: Data sources must be appropriate to answer data collection questions which requires consideration of when primary data is needed or whether secondary data exists and can be used. Primary and secondary data are differently useful with varying relevance for different data collection topics and questions. They may also be complementary and can be used to support one another in a TIP data collection effort. It is critical to identify and assess what data sources are relevant and suitable for the specific data collection topic or questions. Some, but certainly not all, data collection questions can only be answered with primary data.

Determine access to data sources

The nature of human trafficking itself necessarily limits access to different data sources. For instance, as noted earlier, human trafficking is a criminal phenomenon and those involved in various stages of human trafficking operations may not be willing to participate in research and data collection. Similarly, trafficking victims are a hidden and elusive population, which

presents practical and ethical barriers in terms of access. Secondary data such as court files or police investigations may also not be publicly available. This step, then, requires a determination of whether it is possible to access the data sources needed to answer the data collection questions. If need be, the questions and ambitions of the data collection effort must be adjusted to fit the data sources that can be reasonably, legally and ethically accessed. The choice and availability of data sources are directly and intricately linked back to topic, scope, purpose, research questions, approach and methods, as outlined above.

Some data sources are less accessible than others. For example, some data sources that could shed light on the operation of the criminal justice system in relation to TIP are not publicly available. As one criminal justice practitioner explained:

In criminal prosecutions, the investigative file is not open to the public in most countries. In fact, it's only available to criminal justice practitioners. It's very difficult to get beyond that and to actually get access to the files. We tried when I worked for [past criminal justice projects]. It was very difficult to get access to the files and in many countries we were never able to. The most we were able to do was to get a prosecutor or an investigator to review the files themselves and give us a summary, which is not the best way to go about it.

In some cases, access is possible, but available information in court files is uneven, which limits the ability to answer questions around the functioning of the criminal justice system for TIP cases. One legal researcher noted the difficulties faced when tracking TIP cases through the courts:

...our first task was basically to round up all of the cases that had been prosecuted under a particular statute or under one in a series of statutes and to check the outcomes. [...] There were a couple of difficulties. The first is that the government doesn't provide... a list of all cases prosecuted under these particular statutes. So we had to find those cases on our own, which included looking up everything from news reports to doing searches in more specialized legal databases. So there was the initial difficulty of finding the cases. And then within the dockets themselves there was also [sometimes] a lack of information, lack of access to certain documents.

Access to trafficking victims as a data source is consistently challenging. Some trafficking victims may be more accessible for data collection purposes (for example, victims who are being assisted by an organization or institution). Assisted trafficking victims, however, only represent a sub-set of trafficking victims. Access to unidentified and unassisted victims is heavily constrained. Challenges arise when seeking to access them at different stages of their trafficking and post-trafficking lives, not least in terms of biases that influence the data and various ethical issues. And yet this data source is key in answering questions about why some victims are not identified or assisted, the operation of identification processes, what are suitable protection responses in particular locations, what are the assistance needs of

Good practice. Determine access to data sources

Identify what data sources are possible to access.

Consider access to data sources from a legal and ethical perspective.

Adjust data collection questions and approaches to the accessibility of data sources.

Consider required resources in terms of access to data sources.

Identify barriers in accessing different data sources.

Explore how to overcome barriers to access, when legal and ethical to do so.

unidentified/unassisted victims and so on. Research that aspires to access unidentified and/or unassisted victims, must address a raft of methodological and ethical considerations, which will differ from context to context and case to case.

Even within the sub-set of assisted victims, some categories of trafficking victims may be particularly difficult to access and different types of assistance programs with different types of beneficiaries may offer different levels of access. For instance, one service provider working with street-involved children,⁹⁹ many of whom were trafficked, noted that the organization's data collection was complicated by the fact that children often dropped out of contact for some time and the child's (or family's) lack of trust in service providers due to previous experiences of discrimination from authorities and service providers (for example, as ethnic minorities or vulnerable persons).

Individuals who drop out of assistance programs are difficult to access and yet this is a vital data source when trying to understand what may trigger dropouts and, thus, key in adapting programs accordingly. The director of one NGO noted difficulty in contacting those who had left the assistance program, as well as the value of this contact in program and policy design:

When [victims] left [the program], they wanted nothing to do with [the NGO] if they went back [into prostitution]. We have had contact with girls that have gone back and we've obtained that information anecdotally but they weren't our [control] group. It was more just finding out if are they okay, safe. [...] If we had girls that went back [into prostitution], they either went back with bad feelings and we weren't able to keep contact with them or, if we were, it was more just, "Hey are you okay? Please keep in touch."

Similarly, for a past study on declining assistance, we faced difficulty in accessing those who had, in some way, declined assistance. While we tried to address this by working through service providers, the fact that the request came through service providers (whose help they had already declined), resulted in some (perhaps even many) respondents declining to participate. We may have had different levels of participation (and different types of respondents) had we contacted them directly. At the same time, asking for (and service providers providing) contact information about victims who had declined assistance raised issues of confidentiality and privacy.¹⁰⁰

Access may also be influenced by the stage of trafficking or post-trafficking at which data is collected (for example, while victims are still trafficked, at a border, while detained or once home and at later stages of recovery and reintegration). Some contexts are less conducive to disclosure or ethical data collection and this will impact what data can be collected and how this should be weighed.¹⁰¹ One TIP expert, for instance, described conflicting priorities and complex tensions when seeking to interact with victims at different stages:

⁹⁹ Street-involved children are children for whom the street (in the widest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wastelands, and so on) has become a habitual abode and/or source of livelihood. This includes street living children, street working children and children from street families. Ray, P., C. Davey and P. Nolan (2011) *Still on the Street - Still Short of Rights: Analysis of policy and programmes related to street involved children*. United Kingdom: Global Child Protection Services, Plan and Consortium for Street Children, pp. 7-8.

¹⁰⁰ Brunovskis, A. and R. Surtees (2007) *Leaving the past behind? When victims of trafficking decline assistance*. Oslo: Fafo and Washington, D.C.: NEXUS Institute.

¹⁰¹ Brunovskis, A. and R. Surtees (2010) 'Untold Stories: Biases and Selection Effects in Research with Victims of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation', *International Migration*, 48(4), pp. 1-37; Kelly, E. (2002) *Journeys of Jeopardy: A Review of Research on Trafficking in Women and Children in Europe*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Organization for Migration (IOM); Surtees, R. (2014) 'Another side of the story: challenges in research with unidentified and unassisted trafficking victims' in Yea, S. (Ed.) *Human Trafficking in Asia: Forcing Issues*. Oxon, United Kingdom: Routledge, pp. 118-138; and Tyldum, G. and A. Brunovskis (2005) 'Describing the Unobserved: Methodological Challenges in Empirical Studies on Human Trafficking', *International Migration*, 43(1/2), pp. 17-34.

...if we want to time whether the measures applied at the border [throughout the region] are effective for these children. ...when do we talk to these children? When they just arrived? They just survived something and they are really psychologically unstable. They cannot necessarily be reflective of things that happened. Or are we able to access them in six months? Where are they? We don't follow-up on the cases and, therefore, we don't find people at the right time. The same with victims of trafficking, we don't know what happens to them if they just disappear. If we can't reach them how can we know the long-term impact of such interventions? This is one [constraint] – contacting people in general and at the right point of time.

Accessing still-trafficked victims generally may not be desirable or ethical. But there may be situations when, approached carefully, it does not pose a risk to the victims. In different countries and for different forms of exploitation, some still-trafficked persons may more easily be accessed than others. For example, there are substantial differences between different countries in terms of the accessibility of the prostitution arena (due to legal and social norms), meaning that some women trafficked for sexual exploitation may be more accessible than others. Yet, even within the same prostitution arena, different women (for example, according to nationality) may be more and less accessible due to differences in how traffickers control them. When safe and ethical, this can be vital information about the nature of victims' lives while trafficked, which could potentially be used to inform interventions including to identify and assist them. As one TIP researcher noted:

This all comes around the question of are you interviewing people who are still in a trafficking situation... Our general rule is not. But, on the other hand, there are places where exploitation is the norm and maybe those interviews wouldn't have put the person in harm's way...

Access to still-trafficked victims may also be possible in different economic sectors (for example, when conducting research about business supply chains or an economic sector more broadly). Here again access will differ by context, including by country, economic sector, specific companies or work sites and political environment. In all of these cases, though, accessing still-trafficked persons implies an obligation to report when victims can be helped and when criminal activities are uncovered. How this can and should be done needs to be carefully considered, which also needs to be factored into any decisions around the inclusion of such data sources.

Access may also differ depending on the context. In some settings, trafficking operations may involve organized crime or criminal networks while, in others, it is less organized and overlaps in significant ways with labor migration, both regular and irregular.¹⁰² It may also be possible to interview recruiters or labor brokers, some of whom can be involved in trafficking, in countries where labor migration is both formalized and commonplace. Interviewing pimps and facilitators, including traffickers, is likely to be easier where prostitution is legal or tolerated than in countries where prostitution is illegal. Access is also likely easier when contacting "low level" traffickers.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Shelley, L. (2010) *Human Trafficking: A Global Perspective*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, pp. 84-110.

¹⁰³ Antonopoulos, G and J. Winterdyk (2005) 'Techniques of Neutralizing the Trafficking of Women: A Case Study of an Active Trafficker in Greece', *European Journal of Crime, Criminal Law and Criminal Justice*, 13(2), pp. 136-147; Brunovskis, A. and R. Surtees (2010) 'Untold Stories: Biases and Selection Effects in Research with Victims of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation', *International Migration*, 48(4), pp. 1-37; and Troshynski, E.I. and J.K. Blank (2008) 'Sex trafficking: an explanatory study interviewing traffickers', *Trends in Organised Crime*, 11(1), pp. 38-39.

By contrast, there are other settings that make approaching and conducting research with traffickers impossible or inadvisable. One TIP researcher observed risks specific to his research work:

Trafficking is a dangerous topic for research... It takes place in organized crime grounds. These are “closed” or “guarded” social spaces with detailed internal codes that have to be respected with the utmost care. No one representing a risk for the members of these social (and partly criminal) networks is ever accepted inside. Moreover, even when accepted, if he/she is suspected of spreading names and facts that may lead to arrest, he/she runs great risks.¹⁰⁴

Some data sources may be inaccessible for practical or structural issues, in ways that prevent their experiences and needs from being represented. Some groups may be hard to reach because of logistical considerations, like living in remote locations, lack of time and resources to participate in research, not having access to childcare or being unable to miss work, access constraints for persons with disabilities and so on. In other cases, access to data sources may be impacted by cultural and societal norms, such as when it is not socially acceptable to speak privately with a data collector or to travel alone to participate in an interview or discussion. Design and planning should consider how to proactively address non-participation due to practical and structural considerations. The potential harm that may be caused by non-participation needs consideration when designing and planning data collection (see Stage #1: Design and Planning, *Develop or apply legal and ethical guidelines and protocols – Apply the principle of “do no harm”*). Limitations and biases created by non-participation of some data sources need also to be considered at the analysis stage (see Stage #4: Data Analysis, *Consider factors and biases that influence the data*).

More broadly, determining one’s access to data sources requires considering what resources are needed to access relevant data sources. When such resources are not available, the questions and ambitions of the project may need to be adjusted to align with data sources that can be accessed within available resources, both financial and human resources.

In summary: While a range of data sources may answer a data collection question, these may not always be safely, ethically or practically accessible. This step of design and planning requires not only considering what data sources can answer the research question, but also assessing accessibility and, if need be, adjusting the selection of data sources. It also requires considering what resources (financial and human) are needed to access relevant data sources.

Assess the appropriateness of data sources

It is also critical to consider whether a particular data source is appropriate to answer a specific data collection question. As has been discussed, trafficking victims are often seen as an important data source for TIP research and data collection. And the importance of primary data from trafficking victims in answering some data collection questions is undisputed. However, trafficking victims are not a suitable data source for all data collection questions, even those about victim protection. For instance, while victims are a vital data source of information about their assistance needs and experiences, other data sources are needed to fully understand how the assistance framework operates. While a victim may legitimately assess assistance to be inadequate, there may be legal, practical, financial or institutional reasons why a victim may not have access to some services, reasons that may not be apparent or clear to the victim. Moreover, and as noted earlier, there are also limits to

¹⁰⁴ Lazos, G. (2007) ‘Qualitative research in trafficking – a particular case’ in Savona, E. and S. Stefanizzi (Eds.) *Measuring Human Trafficking: Complexities and Pitfalls*. New York, United States: Springer, pp. 95-106.

what a sample of trafficking victims can reveal about the wider population of trafficking victims in a particular context, given that they constitute a sub-set of trafficking victims whose characteristics may be substantially different from the overall population of trafficked persons.

In addition, trafficking victims may not be a suitable data source when researching traffickers, depending on the specific questions to be studied and the nature of a victim's exposure to traffickers and trafficking operations. While trafficked persons can relate their own trafficking experiences, they are unlikely to have full or systematic information about their traffickers and trafficking operations. Most victims will know little about who the traffickers are (and especially at higher levels of trafficking operations), how they operate their businesses, what bank accounts proceeds are kept in or other operational issues. They will, in most cases, know what they have been permitted to know, which may be quite limited, particularly if victims do not have a shared language with their traffickers. They may also have reservations about passing on information that they do have. Disclosure is influenced by fear of traffickers and safety concerns; being stressed and traumatized as a result of trafficking experiences; issues of trust; pre-existing relationships with the trafficker; and so on.¹⁰⁵ The appropriateness of victims as a data source about traffickers also depends on the specific situation. For instance, someone trafficked as a domestic worker and living in close proximity to the exploiters may be more appropriate as a data source on those employers/traffickers than someone who is trafficked into a factory and has limited contact with their exploiters.

This can also apply to data collected about assistance programs from NGOs assisting trafficking victims. While their close involvement with victims and in providing services can provide valuable insights on this issue, input also needs to be complemented by other data sources about the assistance system. There is a need to triangulate data sources, gathering information from multiple data sources to reduce the bias introduced by any one source. One National

Rapporteur stressed the importance of understanding how the anti-trafficking protection system functioned from different perspectives (that is, victims, different institutions and organizations) and according to legal and administrative barriers:

...we are doing the study on victim assistance.... We are going to the NGOs and asking them, "What is missing and why we are not doing better? Why are victims of trafficking left on their own sometimes? What is going on? What are the gaps? NGOs are a very, very important source of information but they are not the only one. And NGOs are not always right. They have their own opinion. So, in that sense, we are really independent. We try to find information from various sources and then we draw our own conclusions... We try to understand why the authorities do what they do. There might be some reasons for that.

Good practice. Assess the appropriateness of data sources

Assess what data sources are (and *are not*) appropriate to answer the specific question or data collection topic.

Identify as many appropriate data sources as possible that can help to answer the specific question or data collection topic.

¹⁰⁵ Surtees, R. (2014) *Traffickers and trafficking. Challenges in researching human traffickers and trafficking operations*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration and Washington, D.C., United States: NEXUS Institute.

Not all primary data about trafficking victims and the protection response is derived from primary data sources (for example, trafficking victims).¹⁰⁶ A **primary data source** (or **direct data source**) refers to someone who has direct experience of the issue or event being studied whereas a **secondary data source** (or **indirect data source**) is someone with secondary knowledge of the issue or event. While the following are all examples of primary data, some are primary data sources and others are secondary data sources.

A trafficking victim who is interviewed and shares their experience of being trafficked or assisted is a primary data source (or a direct data source) of events that happened in their life. A service provider who retells the story of that trafficking victim's experience is a secondary data source (or indirect data source) in relation to the victim's experience, while being a primary data source about the services provided to that particular individual. In this example, the data gathered about that victim's experiences through the lens of another person will also include that service provider's interpretation and recollection and their access to facts and details might also be limited.

Victim case files, prepared by and from the perspective of caseworkers, are secondary data sources on victim experiences but primary data sources on registering practices in case files. Because victims' experiences have been filtered through someone else's understanding and perspective, they are a secondary (or indirect) data source. Victims' diaries, on the other hand, would be a primary (or direct) data source. In the same way, police files about traffickers are secondary data sources on traffickers' lives and experiences but they are primary data sources on the operation of the investigative process. The distinction between primary (direct) data sources and secondary (indirect) data sources is important when conducting data collection with vulnerable persons/populations given their unequal power relations with stakeholders like police, service providers and so on, who may also have a vested interest in presenting a certain perspective or position on the issue or about the victim or victim's experiences. It is important to recognize that secondary (indirect) data sources like law enforcement or service providers cannot accurately provide information about trafficking victims' or traffickers' experiences, let alone motivations or feelings.

Some TIP data collection requires primary data but it may not always involve primary data sources. For example, some questions may be answered by secondary data sources, such as social workers or law enforcement. Talking to a psychologist assisting trafficking victims about the exploitative situations faced by beneficiaries would provide primary data from a secondary data source. One researcher described using victim case files written up by service providers to understand the impact of involvement in the criminal justice system on victims:

...we did a file study in the institution where the victims... were receiving treatment... And we saw that it was reported in the daily reports that when they [the victims] have to go to the police, to do the hearing again, that then afterwards they were feeling depressed or they were so sad, [they needed] to be taken care....

At the same time, the use of case files in the above instance has limitations in that it cannot take into account other aspects and factors (for example, whether, in spite of the documented stress and difficulty from interacting with the criminal justice actors, the trafficking victim valued the criminal justice process and in what ways).

This raises questions about the use of primary and secondary data sources in relation to different data collection topics, purposes and questions. For instance: when is it appropriate to collect details about trafficking from, for example, a social worker (secondary or indirect data source) rather than a trafficking victim (primary or direct data source)? What aspects of

¹⁰⁶ Primary data is different from primary data sources. Primary data is the information collected specifically for the purpose of the research project. Primary data may be comprised of primary data sources (or direct data sources) and secondary data source (or indirect data sources).

the trafficking experience are available to the social worker? Is the information gathered factual or marked by some degree of interpretation? There is a difference, for example, between a trafficking victim saying, “I was scared” and a social worker or police officer saying, “I could see that they were scared”. It is also important to consider the possible differences between data collected from various secondary data sources about a trafficking victim and their experience (for example, from a social worker as compared to a police officer). When service providers and assistance organizations or institutions have an ideological perspective on human trafficking, or are not sensitized or educated about human trafficking, this can inform how these data sources understand and present victim cases and narratives. Similarly, trafficking victims as a data source about traffickers is constrained by the fact that it will only refer to a small (an unrepresentative) pool of traffickers, trafficking victims will be privy to only some information about traffickers (relate to their individual experiences and what traffickers allowed them to know) and all information will be through the filter of their specific experiences.

Selecting data sources is as much about assessing the appropriateness of data sources as about access. For some data collection processes and questions, secondary data sources may be preferred, particularly when it may not be necessary or advisable to collect primary data from trafficking victims. As one researcher explained:

If you’re going to work with vulnerable populations, then it needs to be justified by the research question. It needs to be sufficiently justified.

Good practice in this regard is also about identifying as many possible appropriate data sources that can help to answer the data collection question and inform the overall topic being studied. Gathering data from multiple sources is key in reducing the bias introduced by any one data source.

In summary: There are different and complex factors that necessarily come into play in deciding the appropriateness of data sources in answering the specific data collection topic and questions. It is important to assess what data sources are and, equally, are not appropriate to answer the specific question or data collection topic. Good practice also involves identifying as many appropriate data sources as possible that can help to address the data collection topic and answer the specific question.

Identify biases and limitations in data sources

One of the most persistent threats to a full understanding of the TIP phenomenon is a failure to identify biases and limitations of data sources. Each data source has its own strengths and limitations in terms of what it can and cannot answer. Difficulties accessing certain data sources, both primary and secondary data sources, may lead to **selection bias**. This, in turn, may produce systematic biases in data collection and with regard to what analysis is then possible. This has resulted in many instances of TIP data collection over the years being used to generalize findings beyond what the data sources can support.

An example, as already discussed at this stage (*Determine access to data sources*), is a reliance on data from and about identified and assisted victims to understand the wider picture of trafficking in spite of biases in terms of whom and what this data may represent. Victims of certain types of human trafficking are more recognizable to authorities, meaning that they more likely to be identified and referred for assistance. This, in turn, means that victim case management data will reflect a bias toward better-known forms of trafficking. In addition, some socio-demographic groups (for example, women and girls or certain nationalities) are considered more vulnerable to trafficking, which leads to the

greater likelihood that they will be part of the identified and assisted caseload.

Being represented in data about identified and assisted victims is also a function of the locations where victims can access programs and services, are aware of the services available and feel safe and comfortable to reach out and accept them.¹⁰⁷ That so much data collection is conducted with trafficking victims receiving assistance means that their experiences form a large (and arguably disproportionate) part of the knowledge base on trafficking victims. Studies will normally include caveats about limitations in data, how respondent sampling was constrained and discuss the impact of these limitations on the study's findings. However, there is still a cumulative effect of many TIP studies having the same constraints, which may not substantially advance our collective understanding of human trafficking.

Good practice. Identify biases and limitations in data sources

Identify the bias and limitations of each data source.

Be transparent about the limitations and biases of all data sources in how data is analyzed and presented.

Consider the role of gatekeepers in creating bias or limitations.

Be clear about the impact of limitations on findings in how data is presented.

Moreover, because so many victims are never identified or assisted, this limits the extent to which documented experiences can be taken to represent trafficking victims generally. As one TIP expert noted:

...you've got a fraction of the estimated number of victims of trafficking being identified in a given year. The fraction [is] estimated to be less than half a percent. And it begs the question, "What about those who aren't actually identified?" ... research that's being conducted is conducted on the basis of victims who are identified or cases who are identified. And so what about the other 99%? What are the profiles of those cases?

As noted above (*Determine access to data sources*), the profiles of unidentified and unassisted victims are likely to be systematically different from the better documented cases of trafficking, which are erroneously seen as more typical. And because research about assisted trafficking victims is often focused on a specific profile of assisted victims (for instance, women and girls trafficked for sexual exploitation who are assisted in shelters and residential programs), additional layers of bias also come into play.

It is also important to think not just about data that comes from service providers and assistance programs, but the types of data that comes from different *types* of assistance programs. Programs with less on-going and intensive contact with victims will likely gather a different level of detail about victims with whom they interact and may require more time to build sufficient trust with beneficiaries to be able to gather any data at all. Some populations of trafficking victims may be particularly marginalized, making them less inclined to trust or engage with assistance programs. One NGO staff running a drop-in center and outreach program for street-involved children described how the uneven and non-linear nature of the children's interactions with services limited the organization's ability to collect data and introduced biases in terms of what and whom their data represents:

¹⁰⁷ Brunovskis, A. and R. Surtees (2010) 'Untold Stories: Biases and Selection Effects in Research with Victims of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation', *International Migration*, 48(4), pp. 1-37; Surtees, R. (2014) 'Another side of the story: challenges in research with unidentified and unassisted trafficking victims' in Yea, S. (Ed.) *Human Trafficking in Asia: Forcing Issues*. Oxon, United Kingdom: Routledge, pp. 118-138; and Tyldum, G. and A. Brunovskis (2005) 'Describing the Unobserved: Methodological Challenges in Empirical Studies on Human Trafficking', *International Migration*, 43(1/2), pp. 17-34.

It's a different type of caseload because it's looking at kids that are on the street and kids come in and out of the program. So it's not necessarily the same linear process of being identified and assisted and then over time reintegrated. These kids might come and drop out; they might come and stay; they might end up trafficked or abused; they might move to another area. The parents might limit their ability to come to the drop-in centers and so on. So the flow of information, the type of information becomes trickier to collect.

When data is collected as part of case management (for example, by service providers assisting the victim), biases may arise from trafficking victims who may need to present a particular narrative to be identified and assisted or at least feel such a need. This may skew how they relate their experiences to a service provider and, thus, may introduce systematic biases into the data being collected and the picture that emerges from this data. Therefore, it is necessary to think not just about access to data sources that comes from service providers and assistance programs, but the *type of data* that comes from *different types of service providers and assistance programs*. Collecting data from several different programs will mean different types of data are collected; it will mean different limitations and biases in what this data can reveal and what it represents.

There is also a dissonance between officially identified trafficking victims and those who are informally identified and assisted by NGOs. That is, some (arguably most) trafficking victims will not be identified formally by the state and so their information might be missing from official TIP data collection, whereas it might not be missing from an NGO's data. This leads to different interpretations of the number and experiences of trafficking victims, which leads, in turn, to quite different conclusions about what actions are necessary.

Even among trafficking victims who come into contact with the authorities, different data sources may have uneven access to these persons. One National Rapporteur who collects data from different NGO and government data sources noted that not all trafficking victims are officially registered in different institutions:

Some of the victims that end up in court proceeding have not been reported to [the NGO that has the official responsibility to register victim cases]. And we know that because we did qualitative research into 27 police files to see whether or not they have been reported to [that NGO]. So again, you always need qualitative research alongside your [quantitative] data collection.

Similarly, one National Rapporteur noted that many trafficking victims who are initially identified and registered by law enforcement decline assistance or drop out of services. Their pathway through the referral system, is, thus, not linear, making it important to have several data providers from which one can collect and cross-reference data and information.

It is also worth considering who may opt not to participate in data collection and the reasons for this decision. Trafficking victims who are some time past their trafficking experiences or well advanced in their recovery and reintegration may decline to participate. This means that these experiences (for instance, a retrospective lens, common challenges faced after trafficking and the adaptive responses that victims may have used) will also be missing from the knowledge base. Victims who are able to return home to a supportive environment are also less likely to be captured in TIP data collection, limiting knowledge about individual and family coping tools after trafficking. And, as noted above (*Determine access to data sources*), some trafficking victims may not be able to participate in research for practical issues (for example, distance to research sites, lack of childcare options, needing to work, lack of access for persons with disabilities) or cultural and societal norms (for example, not appropriate to

travel to the research site, not socially acceptable to be alone with a data collector). This, then, introduces biases in terms of who is and is not represented in the data.

Hotline data also involves specific and significant limitations and biases. Calls into a hotline will not necessarily be identified cases of trafficking but reflect possible cases that require further verification. Furthermore, calling more than once can cause a single person to appear as multiple entries in the dataset of a hotline. Hotline calls may also capture calls from a wide range of individuals such as family members, friends and community members about possible cases, rather than from trafficking victims themselves. There is also a gap between knowing that a hotline exists and being able to call it. Persons who are more limited in freedom or lack access to phones or computers may not have any access to hotlines. Language and cultural barriers may also mean that victims of some nationalities or ethnicities are not able or comfortable to call a hotline. Whether a hotline is available or visible in a specific area or location also informs who will have access and, thus, be represented in the data. Thus, hotline datasets are more likely to represent certain types of trafficking victims and miss collecting information about others, posing substantial limitations around who this data represents and what types of experiences this reveals. Finally, the primary task of those answering a hotline is to provide potentially emergency lifesaving intervention, which is not necessarily consistent with full and thoughtful collection of data about TIP. Together, then, these factors require careful consideration as to what hotline data can reveal about human trafficking.

Some bias in data sources is a function of human trafficking itself, where it is not always possible to access those most likely to be trafficked. Human trafficking is a criminal and hidden activity; trafficking victims and traffickers are hidden and elusive populations. Data collection approaches and methodologies cannot in many ways adequately offset the isolation of most trafficking victims. This may be particularly an issue with some forms of trafficking where the isolation of victims is more pronounced. As one TIP researcher noted:

...certainly some of the methodologies could be questioned in terms of not addressing the isolation that is often a key part of the vulnerability to trafficking for migrant workers. If you only, for example, collect data on domestic workers who have privileges to move about freely, you're not getting data on a large segment of the domestic work population who can't go out ever and don't even have a day off. ... in the fishing sector, we had challenges around what we call long-haul fishers. These are people who are, we believe, more vulnerable to forced labor because they're on fishing boats for even up to a year or two at a time and don't come back to shore. The people who are most accessible, who do come back to shore every few weeks are actually less likely to be trafficked. So you need to develop ways of reaching those populations [that] are the most vulnerable.

Bias and limitations also come into play in the context of prosecution data, where access to traffickers as respondents is very limited and, moreover, may not always be advisable given the criminal context. Data on traffickers suffers from the same limitations as victim data, in that it often focuses on individuals whose status as perpetrators is confirmed. This can mean that such data only encompasses cases that have entered the criminal justice system, or the bias may become even more pronounced if the data is limited to later stages in the criminal justice proceedings (for example, only covering cases that a prosecutor takes to court, or individuals who are convicted). Thus, the data can over-represent these more obvious, confirmed cases, which may be systematically and substantially different from the wider population of traffickers.

When data about traffickers is derived from trafficking victims, other limitations emerge as these victims are most likely to be those who have been formally identified and/or assisted and their knowledge will constitute knowledge of a specific sub-set of perpetrators and

trafficking operations, with specific characteristics and behaviors. For example, some victims decline assistance and return home to their families. They may be able to do so because they are less at risk from their traffickers in their home communities, whereas victims who opt to stay in a shelter may face risks in their communities, where traffickers live or know how to find them. Similarly, if victims who are identified by law enforcement are more likely to have been subjected to extreme levels of abuse and violence (making their case more identifiable and a priority to law enforcement), then the perpetrators may represent a more violent and exploitative mode of operation than among victims who have not sought assistance or whose cases have not caught the attention of the authorities.¹⁰⁸

Interactions with traffickers are also plagued by bias in that those who agree to participate in data collection are likely to have their own reasons for doing so, which may not always lend itself to meaningful and truthful disclosure. Traffickers have their own motivations for participating in research and data collection and may choose to present themselves in a particular light¹⁰⁹ (known as **social desirability response bias**), something that we will return to later on in the discussion on factors and biases that influence data analysis (see Stage #4: Data Analysis, *Consider factors and biases that influence the data*). One study of women convicted of internal child trafficking in China, for instance, noted that some respondents preferred not to reveal details of their crimes, providing incomplete or seemingly doubtful data during interviews.¹¹⁰ Identifying bias, then, needs to be specific to the individual context and study approach. The denomination “traffickers” is a wide and diverse grouping, with great variation between the numerous people involved in moving and exploiting people, between trafficking operations from context to context and in relation to different forms of TIP. Biases and limitations need to be considered in relation to the specifics of traffickers and their trafficking operations.

Another bias is introduced by the involvement of **gatekeepers**,¹¹¹ such as service providers who facilitate access to victims as research participants. Gatekeepers may represent a range of professional fields and perspectives and, in some cases, also ideological positions or institutional agendas. They may have different views about: the usefulness of TIP data collection to their work; the potential risks and strain that data collection may pose to victim/respondents; the added burden and stress that this may introduce to their work; concerns about the organization/institution being criticized or negatively portrayed; previously bad experiences of research or with researchers; and so on.¹¹² All of these factors

¹⁰⁸ Surtees, R. (2014) *Traffickers and trafficking. Challenges in researching human traffickers and trafficking operations*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration and Washington, D.C., United States: NEXUS Institute, pp. 33-49.

¹⁰⁹ Antonopoulos, G and J. Winterdyk (2005) ‘Techniques of Neutralizing the Trafficking of Women: A Case Study of an Active Trafficker in Greece’, *European Journal of Crime, Criminal Law and Criminal Justice*, 13(2), pp. 136-147; Bouhours, T. et al. (2012) ‘Human Trafficking and Moral Panic in Cambodia: The Unintended Consequences of Good Intentions’, *SSRN*; Keo, C. (2014) *Human Trafficking in Cambodia*. Oxon, United Kingdom: Routledge; Lazos, G. (2007) ‘Qualitative research in trafficking – a particular case’ in Savona, E. and S. Stefanizzi (Eds.) *Measuring Human Trafficking: Complexities and Pitfalls*. New York, United States: Springer, pp. 95-106; Levenkron, N. (2007) ‘Another Delivery from Tashkent’. *Profile of the Israeli Trafficker*. Israel: Hotline for Migrant Workers; Shen, A. (2016) ‘Female Perpetrators in Internal Child Trafficking in China: An Empirical Study’, *Journal of Human Trafficking*, 2(1), pp. 63-77; Siegel, D. (2016) ‘Ethnicity, Crime and Sex Work: A Triple Taboo’ in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 71-84; and Troshynski, E. and J. Blank (2008) ‘Sex trafficking: an exploratory study interviewing traffickers’, *Trends in Organised Crime*, 11, pp. 30-41.

¹¹⁰ Shen, A. (2016) ‘Female Perpetrators in Internal Child Trafficking in China: An Empirical Study’, *Journal of Human Trafficking*, 2(1), p. 68.

¹¹¹ A gatekeeper is a person who is able to facilitate or arbitrate access to a respondent, influence the data collection setting and, by extension, impact the knowledge that can be produced by a data collection process.

¹¹² Bosworth, M., C. Hoyle and M.M. Dempsey (2011) ‘Researching Trafficked Women: On Institutional Resistance and the Limits to Feminist Reflexivity’, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 17(9), pp. 769-779; Brunovskis, A. and R. Surtees (2010) ‘Untold Stories: Biases and Selection Effects in Research with Victims of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation’, *International Migration*, 48(4), pp. 1-37; Melrose, M. (2002) ‘Labour pains: Some considerations on the difficulties of researching juvenile prostitution’, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 4(4), pp. 340-344; Surtees, R. (2014) ‘Another side of the story: challenges in research with unidentified and

inform if and how gatekeepers participate in and cooperate with research and data collection. As one TIP researcher noted of past experience:

Oftentimes the researcher relies on gatekeepers to determine who is going to be involved and we need to understand a bit more about that process, how those decisions are made. Because we know in some situations gatekeepers will be quite biased toward a sample and recommend certain people because they think they're going to say something or may be more positive about the program, for example.

A selection process does go on also among gatekeepers. Some organizations may refer researchers to their “successful cases”, which to some extent, may be because they may be best able to answer questions and less likely to be traumatized as a consequence of being interviewed. But this may also, in some cases, be about profiling successful work. Some agencies we have worked with have facilitated access to some of their more difficult and even “failed” cases in an effort to help us better understand what is (and is not) working in the assistance framework. However, as noted by one service provider who has assisted us in contacting respondents for various studies, this is not always possible and challenges in respondent recruitment necessarily leads to biases:

We try to access different clients with different issues. Those who may not be satisfied, for example, with services. For example, she wanted some service and we could not provide or other reasons. [...]. It's really difficult to find [these cases], to access, not to find, but to access. They do not trust organizations, even if it was just one organization they are not happy with, they distrust all other organizations. It is always difficult to get different profiles in one research.¹¹³

Gatekeepers also influence access to criminal justice data, including if, when, or how access to convicted traffickers is arranged through prison authorities or a relevant government ministry. Authorities can also influence access to investigative files, court cases and so on. This might sometimes be to ensure data protection or the integrity of an active case, but it may also be more about a given authority's unwillingness to open itself up to review and criticism.

Overrepresentation may also lead to errant conclusions. This occurs when some individuals have a greater probability than others of being included in a sample or when disproportionate attention is paid to some types of human trafficking or some types of trafficking victims. For example, the anti-trafficking response (and, by extension, data collection) has traditionally been focused on women and girls trafficked for sexual exploitation, skewing the impression of who most victims are and what types of human trafficking are most common. Similarly, in some countries or regions there is a focus on the trafficking of foreign nationals, but inadequate attention paid to the exploitation of nationals either within the country, or when they are trafficked abroad. Such bias in representation has profound effects on policy priorities and resource allocation. Lack of representativeness has contributed to substantial differences in, for example, the availability of assistance among different groups of victims of various forms of trafficking exploitation and differences in their identification.

unassisted trafficking victims' in Yea, S. (Ed.) (2017) *Human Trafficking in Asia: Forcing Issues*. New York: Routledge; Wylie, G. (2006) 'Doing the impossible? Collecting data on the extent of trafficking' in van den Anker, C. and J. Doomernik (Eds.) *Trafficking and Women's Rights*. United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan; and Verité (2016) *Research on Indicators of Forced Labor: Successes, Challenges and Reflections on Future Engagement*. Amherst, United States: Verité.

¹¹³ Brunovskis, A. and R. Surtees (2010) 'Untold Stories: Biases and Selection Effects in Research with Victims of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation', *International Migration*, 48(4), p. 17.

Concerns about representation also sometimes overlap with concerns regarding duplication of research. As one TIP researcher flagged:

Some groups are over-represented in the research. For example, if I'm thinking about research that's [focused on] children and young people [regarding] their recovery experiences... we've got quite a lot of information from [some countries] and the research that is with those groups in those same settings and applies the same methods is basically getting the same messages. So we're not necessarily learning anything new. [Good practice would be] researchers being clear from the start about where the gaps are and where actually it would be useful to gain some more knowledge.

In some cases, this may extend to individual respondents being included in research multiple times. This is not only a heavy burden for the respondent but also skews the data in ways that is not helpful for research results.

Another significant limitation is the **undercounting** of trafficking victims and traffickers in trafficking-specific statistics and datasets. This occurs in the criminal justice system when trafficking cases and traffickers are charged and counted under other crimes, either because trafficking is not recognized or because the higher threshold and burden of proof for TIP is such that the case is charged as a lesser or other crime. It is also worth considering to what extent criminal justice data is focused on high profile traffickers who are targeted because of their prominence, “worst cases” because they are taken more seriously by law enforcement (due to their severity in terms of scale, brutality, impunity and so on) or lower level criminals (who are easier to identify and act against). Quotas or targets for trafficking-related arrests or prosecutions may influence the types of cases being pursued, such as a focus on “easier” cases. Others not typically perceived to be trafficking perpetrators may have their role in the process overlooked. Police and court data may also exclude victims who are not able or willing to participate in legal proceedings (for example, because they do not trust the process, they have been threatened by traffickers, they have an on-going relationship with the trafficker, they are outside of the country of exploitation and there are no mechanisms to return to testify and so on).¹¹⁴ Data about victims from the court system is also constrained given that in many countries an individual is only counted as a trafficking victim when a TIP conviction has been achieved. Criminal sentences also generally focus on convicted individuals and may not even include information on the trafficking victims involved. Administrative data from law enforcement is similarly offender centered.¹¹⁵

Undercounting of victims also happens in other scenarios including: when trafficking victims are not identified as trafficked but rather as vulnerable persons; when deported trafficking victims are counted as irregular migrants; or when trafficking victims are misidentified and counted as offenders (for example, in prostitution, as irregular migrants or for illegal fishing) rather than as trafficking victims. As mentioned above, on-going challenges in understanding what human trafficking is can manifest as inadequate screening and identification processes. As a result, many people who are not trafficking victims may be counted as such, while many people who are trafficking victims may remain unidentified.

Biases and limitations arise in relation to all data sources, including anti-trafficking professionals, government and civil society. As one TIP researcher noted:

... [biases may arise] where issues of collusion and corruption may be involved,

¹¹⁴ Surtees, R. (2008) ‘Traffickers and Trafficking in Southern and Eastern Europe: Considering the Other Side of Human Trafficking’, *European Journal of Criminology*, 5(1).

¹¹⁵ Van Dijk, J. and P. van der Heijden (2016) *Research Brief: Multiple Systems Estimation for estimating the number of victims of human trafficking across the world*. Vienna, Austria: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

and/or where institutional loyalties may prevent honest responses. Individuals may not feel secure enough to discuss everything they know, especially if those involved are known to carry out threats of reprisals and/or to have high-level connections. There may also be risks attached to exposing one's organization to detailed public scrutiny, especially in contexts where the principles of democratic accountability are of fairly recent origin and/or where the organization is already on the defensive due to previous criticism. The risks involved for people of good conscience can sometimes be too great to justify providing researchers with more than basic information and conjecture. Here again it is important to pay attention to what is not being said and to the kinds of hints that may be given.¹¹⁶

While it is not possible to avoid bias and limitations in any data collection, data collectors can be deliberate in identifying these issues in the selection of data sources, the analysis and validation of the data, interactions with gatekeepers and in being transparent about these limitations and biases in how data is analyzed and presented.

In summary: Each data source has its own strengths and limitations and difficulties. Accessing certain data sources may produce systematic biases in data collection which, in turn, impacts possibilities for analysis. Data about identified and assisted victims, for instance, is reflective only of this sub-group of trafficking victims and cannot be used to understand the wider picture of trafficking. When accessing data sources involves gatekeepers, other biases are introduced. It is important to identify and be transparent about the bias and limitations of each data source over the course of data collection and in how data is analyzed and presented.



Develop or apply legal and ethical guidelines and protocols

TIP data collection is governed by both legal¹¹⁷ and ethical frameworks.¹¹⁸ These vary depending on who is collecting data, what data is being collected, where is it being collected,

¹¹⁶ Kelly, E. (2002) *Journeys of Jeopardy: A Review of Research on Trafficking in Women and Children in Europe*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Organization for Migration (IOM), p. 12.

¹¹⁷ Existing legal guidance in the TIP field includes but is not limited to: datACT (2015) *Data Protection Standards for NGO Service Providers*. Germany: KOK and La Strada; FRA (2018) *Handbook on European Data Protection Law*. Vienna, Austria: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights; HHS (2019) *International Compilation of Human Research Standards*. United States: Office for Human Research Protections, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; IOM (2010) *Data Protection Manual*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Organization for Migration; Surtees, R. (2009) *Anti-Trafficking Data Collection and Information Management in the European Union – A Handbook: The situation in the Czech Republic, Poland, Portugal and the Slovak Republic*. Vienna, Austria: International Centre for Migration Policy Development; and Surtees, R. (2007) *Handbook on Anti-Trafficking Data Collection in South-Eastern Europe*. Vienna, Austria: International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD).

¹¹⁸ Ethical guidelines developed specifically for TIP data collection include: Buchinger, K. (2009) 'Protection Mechanisms and Ethics', *Guidelines for the Collection of Data on Trafficking in Human Beings, Including Comparable Indicators*. Vienna, Austria: International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Federal Ministry of the Interior of Austria; GAATW (2015) *Briefing Paper: Seeking Feedback from Trafficked Persons on Assistance Services: Principles and Ethics*. Bangkok, Thailand: Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women; ILO (2012) 'Ethical rules for conducting a survey on forced labour', *Harder to see, harder to count: survey guidelines to estimate forced labour of adults and children*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Labour Organization (ILO);

for what purpose and so on. In the design and planning phase, it is good practice to identify legal and ethical requirements relative to the proposed data collection effort.¹¹⁹

Some TIP data collection may be governed by ethics review procedures. This may include submitting research protocols for review and approval by an ethics review board. Such approval takes time to obtain, which must be factored into the time frame for implementation. It also needs to be budgeted for as there will be costs involved, including in terms of human resources.

TIP data collection is often also governed by national and sometimes regional data protection laws. This requires understanding the various legal frameworks and requirements in different jurisdictions (as well as in terms of cloud-based storage of data). Many organizations are not sufficiently familiar with laws and policies designed to protect those from whom they obtain information (human subjects)¹²⁰ even when it is personal and sensitive data information. One NGO director involved in TIP data collection in different countries stressed the importance of considering these different elements:

What tends to happen is that people tend to think, “Okay I collected the data in [this country] and, therefore, those are the laws that apply”. But of course the storage of the data may be in [other countries] ... And then of course the data analysis may be done in, let’s say, [another country] ... So then you think, “Okay what are the data rules there?”

Where ethical and legal procedures are not yet in place, the discussion and adaptation of an ethics framework are an important part of design and planning. This may involve developing or applying legal and ethical guidelines, including data protection requirements, to ensure legal and ethical compliance of a data collection process.

Legal and ethical issues will differ depending on the parameters of data collection (that is, the research topic, questions, approach and method, data sources and data providers) as well as the context in which data is being collected.¹²¹ This section identifies a variety of issues

Develop or apply legal and ethical guidelines and protocols

- Apply the principle of “do no harm”
- Ensure voluntary and informed consent
- Guard anonymity and confidentiality
- Consider the safety and well-being of research participants and data collectors
- Apply child protection principles including the “best interests of the child”
- Implement procedures for review and adaptation

Issara (2018) *Updated Guide to Ethics & Human Rights in Anti-Trafficking*. Thailand: Issara Institute; OHCHR (2002) *Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking*, UN Doc E/2002/68/Add.1[4]; Surtees, R. (2010) *Monitoring anti-trafficking re/integration programmes. A manual*. Brussels, Belgium: King Baudouin Foundation and Washington D.C., United States: NEXUS Institute; UNIAP (2008) *Guide to Ethics and Human Rights in Counter-Trafficking: Ethical Standards for Counter-Trafficking Research and Programming*. Bangkok, Thailand: United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP); UNICEF (2006) *Guidelines on the Protection of Child Victims of Trafficking*. New York, United States: United Nations Children’s Fund; and WHO (2003) *Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Interviewing Trafficked Women*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization.

¹¹⁹ For a detailed discussion of legal and ethical issues in TIP research and data collection, please see the companion resource to this publication: McAdam, M., R. Surtees and L.S. Johnson (2019) *Legal and Ethical Issues in Data Collection on Trafficking in Persons*. Washington, D.C., United States: NEXUS Institute.

¹²⁰ A human subject is defined as a living individual about whom an investigator (whether professional or student) conducting research obtains (1) data through intervention or interaction with the individual, or (2) identifiable private information. See United States (2009) *Code of Federal Regulations*, Title 45, Part 46, Section 46.102.

¹²¹ There is an emerging body of literature that explores the complex ethical issues that arise in TIP research including, but not limited to: Bilger, V. and I. van Liempt (2009) ‘Introduction’ and ‘Methodological and ethical dilemmas in research among smuggled migrants’ in Van Liempt, I. and V. Bilger (Eds.) *The Ethics of Migration*

Research Methodology: Dealing with Vulnerable Immigrants. East Sussex, United Kingdom: Sussex Academic Press; Boyd, Z. and K. Bales (2016) 'Getting What We Want: Experience and Impact in Research with Survivors of Slavery' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 173-190; Brunovskis, A. (2012) 'A penny for your thoughts – paying participants in research' ['å betale deltakere I forskning'] in Fossheim, H. and H. Ingierd (Eds.) *Research and Money [Forskning og penger]*. Norway: Forskningsetiske komiteer; Brunovskis, A. (2010) 'Irregular Migration Research in Norway: Reflections on Research Ethics and Methodological Challenges Based on a Methods Development Project in Norway' in Thomsen, T. et al. (Eds.) *Irregular Migration in a Scandinavian Perspective*. Maastricht, Netherlands: Shaker Publishing; Brunovskis, A. and R. Surtees (2010) 'Untold Stories: Biases and Selection Effects in Research with Victims of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation', *International Migration*, 48(4), pp. 1-37; Coy, M. (2006) 'This morning I'm a researcher, this afternoon I'm an outreach worker: Ethical dilemmas in practitioner research international journal of social research methodology', *Theory and Practice*, 9(5), pp. 419-432; Cwikel, J. and E. Hoban (2005) 'Contentious issues in research on trafficked women working in the sex industry: Study design, ethics and methodology', *The Journal of Sex Research*, 42(4), pp. 306-316; Dahinden, J. and D. Efonayi-Mader (2009) 'Challenges and strategies in empirical fieldwork with asylum seekers and migrant sex workers' in Van Liempt, I. and V. Bilger (Eds.) *The Ethics of Migration Research Methodology: Dealing with Vulnerable Immigrants*. East Sussex, United Kingdom: Sussex Academic Press; De Wildt, R. (2016) 'Ethnographic Research on the Sex Industry: The Ambivalence of Ethical Guidelines' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 51-70; Duong, K.A. (2015) 'Doing Human Trafficking Research: Reflections on Ethical Challenges', *Journal of Research in Gender Studies*, 5(2), pp. 171-190; Easton, H. and R. Matthews (2016) 'Getting the Balance Right: The Ethics of Researching Women Trafficked for Commercial Sexual Exploitation' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 11-32; English, A. (2017) 'Mandatory Reporting of Human Trafficking: Potential Benefits and Risks of Harm', *AMA Journal of Ethics*, 19(1); GAATW (2015) *Briefing Paper: Seeking Feedback from Trafficked Persons on Assistance Services: Principles and Ethics*. Bangkok, Thailand: Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women; Guillemin, M. and L. Gillam (2004) 'Ethics, reflexivity and "ethically important moments"', *Research in Qualitative Inquiry*, 10(2), pp. 261-280; Horning, A. and A. Paladino (2016) 'Walking the Tightrope: Ethical Dilemmas of Doing Fieldwork with Youth in US Sex Markets' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 205-226; Hynes, P. (2017) 'Trust and mistrust in the lives of forcibly displaced women and children', *Families, Relationships and Societies*, 6(2); Kelly, L. and M. Coy (2016) 'Ethics as Process, Ethics in Practice: Researching the Sex Industry and Trafficking' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 33-50; Kerrand, P.L. and R. Dash (2017) 'Ethical Considerations in Mandatory Disclosure of Data Acquired While Caring for Human Trafficking Survivors', *AMA Journal of Ethics*, 19(1); Lewis, H. (2016) 'Negotiating Anonymity, Informed Consent and 'Illegality': Researching Forced Labour Experiences Among Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 99-116; Marcus, A. and R. Curtis (2016) 'No Love for Children: Reciprocity, Science, and Engagement in the Study of Child Sex Trafficking' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 191-204; Markova, E. (2009) 'The "insider" position: ethical dilemmas and methodological concerns in researching undocumented migrants with the same ethnic background' in Van Liempt, I. and V. Bilger (Eds.) *The Ethics of Migration Research Methodology: Dealing with Vulnerable Immigrants*. East Sussex, United Kingdom: Sussex Academic Press; McAdam, M., R. Surtees and L.S. Johnson (2019) *Legal and Ethical Issues in Data Collection on Trafficking in Persons*. Washington, D.C.: NEXUS Institute; Melrose, M. (2002) 'Labour pains: Some considerations on the difficulties of researching juvenile prostitution', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 4(4), pp. 333-351; Moniruzzaman, M. (2016) 'At the Organ Bazaar of Bangladesh: In Search of Kidney Sellers' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 227-248; Rothman, E.F. et al. (2018) 'Ethical and Practical Considerations for Collecting Research-Related Data from Commercially Exploited Children', *Behavioral Medicine*, 44(3), pp. 250-258; Scheper Hughes, N. (2016) 'On Adopting Heretical Methods: From Barefoot to Militant to Detective Anthropology' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 249-272; Scott, S. and A. Geddes (2016) 'Ethics, Methods and Moving Standards in Research on Migrant Workers and Forced Labour' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 117-136; Siegel, D. (2016) 'Ethnicity, Crime and Sex Work: A Triple Taboo' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 71-84; Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (2016) 'Introduction: The Variety of Ethical Dilemmas' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 1-7; Staring, R. (2009) 'Different methods to research irregular migration' in Van Liempt, I. and V. Bilger (Eds.) *The Ethics of Migration Research Methodology: Dealing with Vulnerable Immigrants*. East Sussex, United Kingdom: Sussex Academic Press; Surtees, R. (2014) 'Another side of the story: challenges in research with unidentified and unassisted trafficking victims' in Yea, S. (Ed.) (2017) *Human Trafficking in Asia: Forcing Issues*. New York: Routledge; Surtees, R. and A. Brunovskis (2016) 'Doing No Harm - Ethical Challenges in Research with Trafficked Persons' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in*

that may arise across TIP data collection efforts at the design and planning stage. It is good practice to think, identify and talk through the possible legal and ethical issues that may arise specific to a data collection process, within organizations and institutions as well as with partner organizations, data providers and funders. This should occur alongside formally articulated procedures and protocols to ensure legal and ethical adherence.

There are a number of legal and ethical issues to anticipate during design and planning. These include: “do no harm”; ensuring voluntary and informed consent; guarding anonymity and confidentiality of research participants; protecting the safety and well-being of research participants and data collectors; applying child protection principles including the “best interests of the child”; and implementing procedures for review and adaptation.

While these observations and experiences offer guidance in design and planning, it is not possible to anticipate all scenarios and outcomes in advance. Ethical and legal issues (including those noted below) will arise at each stage of the data collection process. Some will be minor and some will be more significant. Regardless, it will be necessary to respond to these issues as part of the implementation of the data collection process itself (see Stage #2: Data Collection, *Refine legal and ethical guidelines and protocols for data collection*). Ethical and legal issues will also arise in subsequent stages – Stage #3: Data Storage, Maintenance and Management; Stage #4: Data Analysis; and Stage #5: Data Use, Presentation and Dissemination). As such, legal and ethical procedures should be designed to encourage on-going dialogue, reflection and adjustment over the course of data collection and to update and revise all formal procedures and protocols on an on-going basis and in response to issues that arise.

Apply the principle of “do no harm”

Good practice means, at a minimum, that data collection does not put anyone in a worse situation, in the short- or long-term. This requires careful analysis of the context and potential impact and risk of data collection, examining how data collection might affect data subjects, data sources, data providers, as well as data collectors, including the potential for harm and safeguards against these negative impacts.

The principle of “do no harm” is particularly urgent when conducting data collection with trafficking victims, as vulnerable persons, and in collecting personal and sensitive information. One NGO researcher stressed the primacy of this principle in TIP research:

...one of the big [ethical principles] is the “do no harm” concept. These are [human subjects] that may either be vulnerable, may actually be already in exploitative and abusive situations or may be recovering from abusive and exploitative situations. Making sure that they are not re-traumatized, re-victimized, that’s one of the biggest challenges.

Research on Human Trafficking. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 137-154; Surtees, R. and S. Craggs (2010) *Beneath the surface. Methodological issues in research and data collection with assisted trafficking victims*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Organization for Migration and Washington, D.C.: NEXUS Institute; Tyldum, G. (2012) ‘Ethics or access? Balancing informed consent against the application of institutional, economic or emotional pressures in recruiting respondents for research’, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 15(3); Warden, T. (2013) ‘Feet of clay: confronting emotional challenges in ethnographic experience’, *Journal of Organizational Ethnography*, 2(2), pp. 150-172; Yea, S. (2016) ‘Trust, Rapport, and Ethics in Human Trafficking Research: Reflections on Research with Male Laborers from South Asian in Singapore’ in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 155-172; Zhang, S.X. (2016) ‘The Ethical Minefield in Human Trafficking Research - Real and Imagined’ in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 85-98; and Zimmerman, C. and C. Watts (2004) ‘Risks and responsibilities: guidelines for interviewing trafficked women’, *Lancet*, 363(9408).

Harm may occur in TIP data collection when an interview is traumatic for the respondent because of the issues discussed or the behavior or attitude of the data collector. Many respondents, trafficked for different forms of exploitation, when asked how they felt about talking about their experiences as part of research, described how this often caused at least some level of stress or distress, even in cases when the respondent felt ultimately that the process was worthwhile. Many found some topics difficult to discuss or were reticent about revisiting their trafficking experiences at all. For example, one formerly trafficked woman from Albania, when discussing being interviewed as part of TIP data collection, focused both on the sensitivity of some issues and the difficulty of remembering the past:

Being asked questions about the past bad experience is what is stressful, not necessarily to be interviewed. I have had a lot of bad experiences in my life and it is the trafficking experience that is the hard thing to talk about, this is what I don't want to talk about at all. Whether an interview is stressful is linked to what questions are asked and also how they are asked... And especially now that I am married it is even more difficult to talk about these things. I don't want to talk about the past at all, now that I have a normal life.

Other trafficking victims also explained finding it difficult to discuss experience of exploitation:

I was forced to flashback to my memory. Actually I already want to forget it. I felt a little bit sad. It was like my scars were opened again. I also felt tense since it was not a usual chit chat, it is an interview. But I am quite happy that I can tell you my life. (Indonesian woman trafficked for sexual exploitation)

I want to stop this story at this time because when I recall the story, it makes me scared and hurt... I don't want anyone to ask me more about my harsh experience. (Cambodian woman trafficked for domestic work)

[I feel] pretty sad actually. I wanted to get over it. I get traumatized every time I try to remember it. (Indonesian man trafficked for labor)

This aligns with the experience of service providers who have assisted us in contacting potential respondents. One service provider explained that it was often the topics related to trafficking that were the source of stress for many victims and when research did not focus on the TIP experience this was often a source of relief:

When I tell them [...] before the interview the aim of the interview and the topic that they will be interviewed about it is a big relief for them to know that it will not be related to the trafficking experience. So [if the interview is on] this topic, this influences whether they will speak, they do not want to remember these things.¹²²

That being said, what are considered sensitive topics differ by respondent as well as in relation to the research topic and lines of inquiry. In our research on reintegration, we have

Good practice. Apply the principle of “do no harm”

Consider the potential for harm in the data collection process.

Asses the likelihood of harm to data sources and safeguard against any negative impacts.

Implement procedures that mitigate harm, wherever possible.

Take into account that the obligation to “do no harm” may mean *not* collecting data.

¹²² Brunovskis, A. and R. Surtees (2010) ‘Untold Stories: Biases and Selection Effects in Research with Victims of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation’, *International Migration*, 48(4), p. 20.

found particularly sensitive topics to include, among others: family relations before and after TIP; tensions in parent-child and spousal relationships after return; returning home without any money; and failed migration and migration-related debt. Researchers for a multi-country study on the impact of anti-trafficking initiatives on the human rights of trafficked persons identified various topics that caused discomfort or sadness among respondents including: lack of economic opportunities; restrictive shelter practices; not being able to return and reconcile with family; dissatisfaction with the legal process or outcome of the criminal trial; difficult family relations; and memories of abuse and exploitation while trafficked. They also found that the degree to which the above topics affected the individual varied from person to person in spite of all respondents being at later stages of recovery (one to three years after trafficking).¹²³

Time seemingly played a role in the impact of the interview process on some victims. One woman from Kosovo, who had been trafficked for sexual exploitation some years before, noted that it had become easier over time to speak about her experience:

It's not a problem for me [to talk about my trafficking]. Sometimes I feel like I need to bring out things, I feel released. This happens when I talk to the center staff, any time I need. It's very well, I feel even happy. This is new to me, it's only these last years that I feel so. Years ago, I felt depressed when I talked about those experiences.

Similarly, one woman from Myanmar, trafficked to Singapore for labor, said:

If I was interviewed [when I] recently arrived back from Singapore, I would cry. Now, [it is] long ago thus I feel normal. This is one opportunity to share my bad experiences with others.

Nonetheless, this differs from person to person. One woman from Moldova, whom we have interviewed on a number of occasions, has moved on with her life and appears to have some distance from her trafficking experience. Nonetheless, when we asked her how she felt about being interviewed, she conceded that it was still difficult:

Every time when I go to an interview I have to brush up all those recollections. It lasts about two days before I forget my case. And then again sometimes someone asks me and I again recollect all of these things. This is life.¹²⁴

Some harm and stress caused by research participation may be mitigated by well designed research.¹²⁵ Consistent with the principle of “do no harm”, those gathering information from vulnerable persons (including trafficking victims) should use approaches that are culturally sensitive, rights-based and trauma-informed.¹²⁶ It is also important to think carefully about what information is really needed and to not ask unnecessary questions, which cause undue strain. As one TIP researcher noted:

We worked with a lot of different UN agencies ...and they always have expectations of how to collect data and what to collect and how to do it, starting with doing the

¹²³ GAATW (2015) *Briefing Paper: Seeking Feedback from Trafficked Persons on Assistance Services: Principles and Ethics*. Bangkok, Thailand: Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women, p. 4.

¹²⁴ Brunovskis, A. and R. Surtees (2010) 'Untold Stories: Biases and Selection Effects in Research with Victims of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation', *International Migration*, 48(4), p.19.

¹²⁵ One study of 92 rape victims found that the overwhelming majority of survivors assessed the interview to be a helpful, supportive and insightful experience and noted that the way of interviewing utilizing feminist interviewing principles contributed to an overall positive participation outcome. Campbell, R., et al. (2010) "What Has It Been Like for You to Talk With Me Today?": The Impact of Participating in Interview Research on Rape Survivors', *Violence Against Women*, 16(1), pp. 60-83.

¹²⁶ A trauma-informed approach involves understanding the physical, social and emotional impact of trauma on the individual and incorporating victim-centered practices into TIP data collection.

questionnaire without really thinking of what they want to do...it got me thinking about why are you collecting that data? Are you going to actually do something about it or are you going to just recreate the trauma that [respondents] have gone through? I think much more thinking is needed on what data we are collecting and what impact it's going to have on the [respondent]... I think we also need to think about the impact that our questions have on [respondents].

Harm may also occur when the process of data collection causes the status of trafficking victim to be known to the individual's family or community (for example, when research is conducted in the local community). This can potentially result in stigmatization or discrimination by family or community, reprisal by traffickers or even the risk of violence. Harm may also arise when collecting data from still trafficked persons in their work sites, which may lead to problems with employers or supervisors (discussed in more detail below, see *Consider the safety and well-being of research participants and data collectors*). Avoiding harm also requires careful assessment of the need and appropriateness of collecting any personal data, as its improper disclosure or use has a high risk of harm.¹²⁷

Harm may occur when some populations are excluded from data collection in ways that prevent their experiences and needs from being represented. This may be because of practical considerations (for example, distance, time, lack of childcare, needing to work, or lack of access for persons with disabilities) or cultural and societal norms (for example, when it is not socially acceptable to participate in research or to travel alone). Design and planning should consider how to proactively prevent harm associated with non-participation. This needs also to be considered in the identification of data sources, as discussed above (see Stage #1: Design and Planning, *Identify data sources and data providers*).

The obligation to “do no harm” is primarily applied to TIP data collection in the form of research with vulnerable persons, such as trafficking victims. However, it is applicable and should be paramount across varying forms of TIP data collection, regardless of whether it involves trafficking victims or other vulnerable persons. While the designation of vulnerability is often focused on trafficking victims, it may also apply to the victim's family, friends, neighbors and community members.

In some cases, traffickers themselves may have vulnerable status, as individuals who have entered the criminal justice system as suspects or convicts. And while data on convicted criminals usually falls under exceptions in data protection laws, it is important to determine if and how some protections differ between suspected and convicted criminals. Collecting data about persons suspected or accused of crimes (that is, prior to judgment) involves specific legal considerations, including privacy and confidentiality, that must be factored into any assessment of harm. Suspects of the crime of trafficking must be afforded the same rights and protections as vulnerable persons until the stage at which they are convicted of a crime definitively (that is, they have no further right of appeal). Legal and ethical issues in data collection from and about traffickers will be informed by the stage of the prosecution process when data is being collected.

Engaging trafficking victims in data collection should involve offering them referral information including on how to access services and, arguably, supporting referrals when needed. Referral information should be compiled by the data collection team as part of the preparation phase and regularly updated over time, at a minimum prior to each round of data collection. One TIP researcher questioned the appropriateness of exploring sensitive

¹²⁷ OHCHR (2016) *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Data: Leaving No-one Behind in the 2030 Development Agenda. Guidance Note to Data Collection and Disaggregation*. Geneva, Switzerland: Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, pp. 6-7. “Personal data” refers to any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person (“data subject”).

topics with vulnerable persons, which may trigger trauma and stress, when unable to offer this referral information:

I say to the [data collection] team that if you cannot do much about that vulnerability and if there's no one around that can actually address these kinds of [assistance] issues, there's not really a point in digging deep into what are the issues, if you really have nothing to help with that. I am not comfortable in going deeper if we don't have a referral system.

Harm may also arise in data collection with other data sources, like anti-trafficking practitioners, who may themselves face risks from being involved in data collection, some of which may be more or less serious depending on the specific data collection project or the country/context of data collection. The types and extent of risk involved in data collection with anti-trafficking professionals and other stakeholders need to be carefully considered and communicated clearly to potential data sources, consistent with informed consent.

In some cases, procedures can be implemented to mitigate harm. In other cases, doing no harm may mean not collecting data at all. For example, the first of the World Health Organization's recommended principles on interviewing trafficked women states that to "do no harm" may mean to not undertake any interview that will make a woman's situation worse in the short-term or the longer-term.¹²⁸ Attention to doing no harm at this stage may lead to different decisions about data sources, questions and indeed data collection overall.

In summary: Design and planning require considering the potential for harm in the data collection process and establishing safeguards against any negative impacts. While the obligation to "do no harm" is primarily applied to research with trafficking victims, it is applicable and should be paramount across varying forms of TIP data collection. In addition to trafficking victims themselves, vulnerability may apply to the victim's family, friends, neighbors and community members. In some cases, traffickers may have vulnerable status, as individuals who have entered the criminal justice system as suspects or convicts. Harm may also arise in data collection with stakeholders, such as anti-trafficking practitioners. In some cases, procedures can be implemented to mitigate harm. In other cases, taking into account that obligation to "do no harm" may mean *not* collecting data.

Ensure voluntary and informed consent

Voluntary and informed consent refers to the process by which research participants voluntarily agree to take part in data collection. Depending on the data collection effort and the context, this may be done verbally or in written form. Providing informed consent requires a clear understanding of what participation entails, including the potential risks and benefits, before making a decision to participate without coercion. Gaining informed consent in the context of data collection requires, at a minimum, that the following information be provided to data sources and data providers:

- the purpose of the data collection, including the specific data collection topic;
- the types of information to be collected;
- who is involved in data collection and will have access to data (that is how data will be handled, used and stored);
- potential risks and benefits of participation in TIP data collection;

¹²⁸ WHO (2003) *Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Interviewing Trafficked Women*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization, p. 4.

- how confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained in terms of raw data as well as in the presentation of research results;
- how, where and with whom the information will be used, shared and presented, including how anonymity will be assured;
- the option to end participation at any time and without negative consequences for the individual (for example, in terms of victims' access to services, reimbursement or compensation);
- contact information for the person and institution responsible for the data collection in case of any questions or follow-up issues.

In some cases, ensuring informed consent may mean explaining and emphasizing that the research may not have any tangible benefits for the research participant. One TIP researcher stressed this issue:

[It is] incumbent upon researchers to explain what we do *not* do. After all, [trafficking victims] are a population that has been asked to tell their stories to two general groups of “authority” figures: those who work in the criminal justice system (attorneys and law enforcement) and those who provide social services. These professionals offer them a variety of “deliverables”: immigration documents, job contacts, medical attention, housing, and, in some cases, financial remuneration (such as back wages and awards from civil lawsuits). As a kind of third group, researchers must emphasize that there are no similar set of tangible benefits to speaking with us. We also must make clear how we undertake our work as scholars (and possibly as advocates), what kinds of writing we create, how long it takes the different forms of our writing to be published, and what audiences are likely to read our writing.¹²⁹

Good practice. Ensure voluntary and informed consent

Provide full details of the data collection process and options to withdraw.

Ensure participants understand what participation entails, including risks and benefits.

Establish protocols for voluntary and informed consent.

Ensure there are no elements of coercion in the recruitment of respondents.

Provide time for respondents to consider their participation.

Anticipate and address what aspects of data collection efforts may compromise consent.

Provide contact information for those responsible for data collection in case of any questions or follow-up issues.

Decisions around consent procedures, whether verbal or written, should be in step with the specific project and target group. A simple process of verbal informed consent may be preferred so as not to intimidate respondents with complex words and excessive formality. It may also be necessary for other categories of respondents, such as those with irregular status in a country or engaged in illicit activities who have concerns about legal contracts. Key in this process is to go beyond a formulaic description of the project and to predict how the information will be used and to assess honestly whether it could cause any problems for data sources or data providers, either personally or as a member of a group that might become the focus of changed policy. Protocols must ensure that there are no elements of coercion in the recruitment of respondents. This involves anticipating what aspects of the data collection effort may compromise consent. This may include the individual's ability to understand the

¹²⁹ Brennan, D. (2005) 'Methodological Challenges in Research with Trafficked Persons: Tales from the Field', *International Migration*, 43(1/2), p. 45.

information communicated to them, which may require adjustments to the project in line with their level of education, language, maturity and other factors.

For some individuals, significant time and attention will need to be invested to ensure that they understand the nature of data collection, its purpose and the implications of their participation, so that they are empowered either to consent or *not* to participate, if they so choose. It may be necessary to first introduce a project and then come back at a later date once the person has had time to consider the project and their participation and possibly discuss with family and friends (or with a supervisor or work colleagues in the case of interviewing professionals). For example, during fieldwork in Indonesia, we worked with community-based organizations to preliminarily identify possible respondents and explain the research, after which we would travel to the community and contact them about possible participation. In one case we met with one former trafficking victim to invite her to participate in research, providing her with written information about the project and our contact information. In spite of having already been invited and having agreed, she nonetheless went home to again discuss her participation with her husband, returning only later to be interviewed. Another trafficking victim from Moldova, who was invited to participate in a research study, explained how she was contacted by the service provider and was initially concerned about participating but eventually decided to participate after thinking about it for some time:

When I heard about the interview I thought that a journalist would come and he would ask me about my experience of trafficking and initially I was scared...I felt as if I was blocked and I didn't listen to any further explanations, although everything was recorded in my memory. When I heard that it is not obligatory, I said that I would think about it and I would call. Afterwards, after I calmed down, I gave my consent. I understood that those that would benefit from this interview would be me and especially other women who would be assisted in the future.

Informed consent applies to data collection with individual respondents as well as decisions around the participation of organizations or institutions in a data collection effort, either as data sources or data providers. Time may be needed to assess the data collection project and the advantages and disadvantages of participation. This may cause delays in the implementation of data collection but nonetheless should be handled accordingly. Time to obtain meaningful informed consent should be anticipated and built into the design and planning for the project. This is also something that funders need to be aware of and increasingly accommodate given the often short (and unrealistic) time frames for TIP data collection activities and research.

Tied closely with consent will be decisions around the compensation of respondents. There are no clear rules in how this should be done; decisions about compensation are complex and highly contested among researchers generally.¹³⁰ Decisions needs to be considered and

¹³⁰ See, for example, Boyd, Z. and K. Bales (2016) 'Getting What We Want: Experience and Impact in Research with Survivors of Slavery' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 173-190; Brunovskis, A. (2012) 'A penny for your thoughts – paying participants in research' ['å betale deltakere i forskning'], in Fossheim, H. and H. Ingierd (Eds.) *Research and Money [Forskning og penger]*. Norway: Forskningsetiske komiteer; Cwikel, J. and E. Hoban (2005) 'Contentious issues in research on trafficked women working in the sex industry: Study design, ethics and methodology', *The Journal of Sex Research*, 42(4), pp. 306–316; Hammett, D. and D. Sporton (2012) 'Paying for interviews? Negotiating ethics, power and expectation', *Area*, 44(4), pp. 496-502; Lewis, H. (2016) 'Negotiating Anonymity, Informed Consent and 'Illegality': Researching Forced Labour Experiences Among Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, p. 109; Scott, S. and A. Geddes (2016) 'Ethics, Methods and Moving Standards in Research on Migrant Workers and Forced Labour' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, p. 230; and Tyldum, G. (2012) 'Ethics or access? Balancing informed consent against the application

analyzed relative to each data collection effort and research participant. As one TIP researcher explained, options and issues associated with decisions around compensation need to be weighed:

There's the whole issue of whether you pay or you give food or you compensate them for their time... There's advantages and disadvantages to compensation for participating in a research study that need to be taken into consideration.

Considerations center around how compensation (that is, payment of respondents) can create a pressure to participate in ways that may compromise informed consent. If compensation is high in relation to local costs of living, salaries or transportation costs, potential respondents may feel unable to decline to participate. Compensation also has the potential to affect future studies in creating expectations of payment of respondents, which may have implications for other studies where compensation is not offered. The absence of compensation can then act as a disincentive to potential respondents whose views might otherwise benefit the knowledge base on TIP. Different decisions and assessments may be made in relation to incentives when interviewing trafficking victims who are currently being assisted as compared with trafficking victims who may be unassisted or formerly assisted.

At the same time, incentives may be useful for recruiting participants who are otherwise not motivated by general interest or altruism and whose experiences would otherwise be excluded. Such incentives may not pose a threat to the voluntary nature of informed consent provided they are not so large as to make it difficult for the target population to decline them. However, it is often difficult to determine whether an incentive is too high or too low, particularly in societies with high levels of inequality and among vulnerable persons. Who can and cannot afford to participate in data collection is one element; who is not willing to do so is another aspect for consideration.

A distinction is to be made between compensation and the reimbursement of actual costs incurred to participate in a study (for example, transportation, meals or accommodation). Participation in data collection should not be at the expense of respondents nor leave them in a worse position than had they not participated. In some cases it may also be necessary to take into account lost income, when persons are unable to work and earn money due to their involvement in research or data collection. It may also be the case that key informants will require reimbursement of costs for their participation in a data collection initiative (for example, transportation costs to attend an interview or focus group discussion), particularly when representing small or grassroots organizations, or working in lower resource countries. It may also be appropriate to provide refreshments or meals. Data providers involved in contacting and facilitating access to respondents may also require reimbursement of costs incurred (for example, telephone calls, transportation costs to contact potential respondents, meals while working). These costs are important to include from the outset in the budget for data collection.

How compensation or reimbursement of costs is approached will differ from project to project. In some cases, it may be advisable to make payments up front to ensure that respondents feel able to refuse to discuss certain issues or even stop the interview or survey if needed, without fear of forfeiting the compensation. In other cases, payment may be given at the end, presented as a gift and/or not discussed as part of the informed consent process to avoid association between consent and payment. Additional considerations arise when administrative rules on payments are onerous and inappropriate (for example, requiring a signature to confirm payment, having to prove legal status in the country or eligibility to work, the submission of an expense claim form or a lengthy payment process).¹³¹ While this

of institutional, economic or emotional pressures in recruiting respondents for research', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 15(3), pp. 199-210.

¹³¹ Brunovskis, A. (2012) 'A penny for your thoughts – paying participants in research' [‘å betale deltakere i

will need to be anticipated as part of design and planning, it is likely something that will need to be considered and reconsidered over time during data collection itself and which is further discussed in Stage #2: Data Collection (*Refine legal and ethical guidelines and protocols for data collection*).

Even when consent procedures are well articulated and developed, consent may not always be fully informed. The director of one NGO collecting data from trafficking victims assisted by the NGO explained that the organization was required by law to submit data about those assisted to the authorities in the country for inclusion in the national anti-trafficking database hosted by and housed in the Ministry of the Interior. Program beneficiaries were required to sign a consent form, agreeing that their data would be sent to and stored in this national TIP database. However, she described feeling uncomfortable because she was not confident that all beneficiaries fully understood what this meant in practice (that the police would hold their data), nor was she confident that they understood their rights with regard to their own data in the longer-term. She also expressed concern about the informed consent procedures of other NGOs and government ministries that were submitting data to this database and the extent to which all were adhering to informed consent procedures.

In addition, when data is collected from victims assisted by an organization by the assisting organization itself, questions may arise as to the extent to which victims can choose whether or not to consent. Victims may be concerned that a decision to decline to participate may have implications for their access to services or may compromise their relationship with persons whom they like and trust. Victims may consent to data collection or be involved in research at the request of the service providers to repay the organization for assistance received. Indeed a number of trafficking victims, when asked why they agreed to be interviewed for various research projects we have conducted, expressed their appreciation to the assistance organization as a partial factor in agreeing to be interviewed, as illustrated in the response of one Albanian trafficking victim:

...because they [the assistance NGO] have done so much for me, given me so much support and assistance that it is a way to show my gratitude. It is an obligation for me. Any time that they call I will come.

This is not to suggest that these individuals have not meaningfully consented. But it is to say that consent is complex and care is needed in how it is approached, particularly in relation to vulnerable persons and when data is collected by the organization involved in assistance. As noted by one TIP researcher, while the dynamic is not insurmountable, extra care is needed in such cases:

If you're the service provider to a group of people who are highly vulnerable you have to be very careful about how you ensure that you are not subtly coercing information. Not wanting to [coerce them] but whether or not you have a group of people who may be vulnerable and you're their only connection to services that they need or staying in the country. ...when you have that kind of relationship and you're trying to gather data from them. I don't think it's an impossible situation but I think it has to be carefully considered.¹³²

forskning'], in Fossheim, H. and H. Ingierd (Eds.) *Research and Money [Forskning og penger]*. Norway: Forskningsetiske komiteer; Lewis, H. (2016) 'Negotiating Anonymity, Informed Consent and "Illegality": Researching Forced Labour Experiences Among Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, p. 109; Scott, S. and A. Geddes (2016) 'Ethics, Methods and Moving Standards in Research on Migrant Workers and Forced Labour' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, p. 230.

¹³² Surtees, R. and S. Craggs (2010) *Beneath the surface. Methodological issues in research and data collection with assisted trafficking victims*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Organization for Migration and Washington, D.C.: NEXUS Institute, pp. 54-55.

While these considerations are most commonly discussed in relation to trafficking victims, they should also be borne in mind for other types of research participants like key informants from different organizations and institutions (social workers, law enforcement, prosecutors, lawyers, psychologists and so on).

In summary: Voluntary and informed consent requires that participants, whether data sources or data providers, understand what participation entails, including risks and benefits. The onus is on the implementers of a data collection effort to anticipate and address what aspects of data collection may compromise consent, as part of design and planning. Decisions around consent procedures, whether verbal or written, should be in step with the specific project and target group. A simple process of verbal informed consent may be preferred so as not to intimidate respondents with complex words and excessive formality. The burden of ensuring that TIP research is ethical should not be borne by respondents. Gaining informed consent may involve a process of reflection and consultation, which may take some time. There should be no elements of coercion or pressure when engaging data sources and data providers. The relationship between the data collector and a research participant should also be carefully considered as a factor that may inform their decision to consent.

Guard anonymity and confidentiality

Confidentiality means that information will not be shared. **Anonymity** is the right to remain anonymous – not be identified, including by indirect background information that could inadvertently reveal the individual’s identity or their personal experiences or opinions. Confidentiality and anonymity are often key in maintaining respondents’ privacy, safety and security. **Privacy** involves the right to not have personal information revealed to others and is considered a basic human right in most countries. As one assisted trafficking victim from Albania observed, protecting confidentiality and privacy was of critical concern to her in general in terms of being able to speak about her experiences:

It is very important to have trustworthy staff so people won't talk outside about what I have said. Talking outside about my story, this is a very big problem.

One woman from Indonesia, trafficked for labor, consented to be involved in research but stressed the importance of her information being treated confidentially:

...please don't share [my interview] to the television. After it's transcribed you will delete the record, right? My husband reminded me to be careful, maybe the interviewer is a journalist and it will [be] published to the newspaper.

Good practice. Guard anonymity and confidentiality

Establish protocols to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

Identify legal requirements in the handling of personal and sensitive data, including any additional protections that must be ensured.

Implement a data security strategy to protect confidential information and avoid unforeseen data usage or disclosure.

Train all staff in the data security strategy.

Assess legal requirements for mandatory reporting.

At the design and planning stage, procedures related to anonymity and confidentiality should be developed, including how data will be handled within the project and by different

staff. This should be done in line with national legislation and ethical standards for data protection, an issue we will return to in Stage #3: Data Storage, Maintenance and Management (*Consider options in setting up a database and Identify legal and ethical issues in data storage, maintenance and management*). In some countries, this may involve specific requirements for the handling of personal and sensitive data including, in some cases, that this information cannot be collected at all.¹³³ For example, it is not permissible in some countries to collect data about a trafficking victim's ethnicity, given potential risks of discrimination. At the same time, some research suggests that ethnicity may be a relevant predictor of TIP vulnerability in some contexts, which raises questions about how to balance the need for TIP data with data protection laws.

Good practice is to put in place a data security strategy that addresses how data will be kept confidential and to explain that strategy to all staff, data providers and data sources. The strategy should outline procedures for data collection, storage, protection, retention, transfer, destruction, reuse transfer or exchange, preservation (encryption,¹³⁴ anonymization,¹³⁵ etc.) and other use of data. It should have procedures and measures in place to avoid unforeseen data usage or disclosure and to ensure compliance with relevant legislation. This may involve, among other considerations, the use of confidentiality agreements, requiring that data not be discussed with anyone not bound by the same duty of confidentiality, procedures to anonymize and de-identify the data and ensuring that all identifying information is removed in any public presentation of the data. Guarding anonymity and confidentiality for primary data may include consideration of different factors, such as how respondents are contacted, where data collection took place and whether sensitive personal information is gathered. All staff must be trained in the data security strategy. Guarding anonymity and confidentiality also requires consideration of how data is used and presented, as will be discussed in more detail in Stage #5: Data Use, Presentation and Dissemination (*Consider ethics in data use, presentation and dissemination – Ensure anonymity, confidentiality, privacy and safety*).

Data collection protocols must also take into account any legal requirements for mandatory reporting in the event that a situation of risk is disclosed through data collection as well as any threats to confidentiality (for example, the possibility of researchers being subpoenaed to appear in court and provide testimony about data collected from a victim in the legal process). Even in the absence of a legal requirement, there are situations when researchers may need to breach confidentiality, such as when respondents are at risk or intend to harm themselves or others. Limits of confidentiality must be clearly understood by researchers and data collectors as part of design and planning, as well as made a part of the procedures for actions and follow-up to be taken within the data collection process or in coordination with authorities.

Legal limits on confidentiality may also apply in cases of data collection where information about human trafficking or other serious crimes may be disclosed or when victims are involved in legal proceedings. Information shared with researchers and data collectors can be subpoenaed as part of legal proceedings. Establishing what is (and is not) legal in terms of

¹³³ Some personal data is considered “sensitive data”, presenting a greater risk to a person's private life than “regular” personal data and, therefore, requires extra protection. CoE (1981) *Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data*, ETS No. 108. Council of Europe and EU Directive 95/46/EC. Strasbourg, France: Council of Europe.

¹³⁴ Encryption is the process of encoding data so that only authorized individuals can access it and those who are not authorized cannot.

¹³⁵ Anonymization is the process of removing all personally identifiable information from data so that the individuals whom the data describes remain anonymous. There exists a range of options for anonymization, which should be tailored to the specific dataset to ensure data security. For example, some datasets might benefit from k-anonymization, a process of anonymization that addresses the risk of re-identification of anonymized data through linkage to other datasets by ensuring that the information for each individual contained in a dataset cannot be distinguished from at least k-1 individuals whose information also appears in the dataset.

guarding or breaching confidentiality should be considered already at the design and planning stage. This, then, needs reviewing over the course of implementation, in Stage #2: Data Collection (*Refine legal and ethical guidelines and protocols for data collection*). Limits on confidentiality must be made clear to respondents during data collection, as is further discussed in Stage #2: Data Collection (*Refine legal and ethical guidelines and protocols for data collection – Ensure anonymity and confidentiality*), the procedures for which should be designed at this stage.

In summary: Procedures for anonymity and confidentiality should be developed at the outset of a data collection effort, including how data will be handled within the project and by different staff in line with relevant legislation. This will involve assessing legal requirements in the handling of personal and sensitive data and implementing a data security strategy to protect confidentiality and avoid unforeseen data usage or disclosure. Protocols must also take into account any legal requirements for mandatory reporting when situations of risk are disclosed. Limits of confidentiality must be clearly understood as well as procedures for explaining this to respondents and any actions and follow-up to be taken within the data collection process or in coordination with authorities.

Consider the safety and well-being of research participants and data collectors

Design and planning must consider any potential safety and security issues posed by the specific data collection activity for all involved (data sources, data providers and data collectors). Potential risks to personal safety can be identified through risk assessments and minimized through targeted measures. Safety and security considerations might relate to: whether data collection sites are safe, convenient and appropriate locations; if the data collector's presence as an outsider in a setting may be identifying of (for example, identify respondents as trafficked, leading to stigma, discrimination and violence); if data collection occurs in areas where traffickers are operating and poses risks to respondents and/or researchers; among other considerations. One TIP researcher stressed the need to prioritize the safety and well-being of research participants:

That's the number-one ethical concern, that you're not endangering people whom your research purports to be addressing and helping in some way. And there have been many examples of bad practice within the [TIP] field where researchers have gone in and have not had strong ethical guidelines and have ended up jeopardizing the safety or job security or working conditions of the people that they interviewed or worked with.

For example, many trafficking victims keep some or all of their TIP experiences a secret from their families (or parts of their families) or from those within their communities to avoid the risk of stigma and discrimination. One trafficking victim from Albania explained how she kept her experience a secret within her wider family after returning home and decided to share only parts of her TIP experience with her husband:

My husband knows [about my trafficking experience] but even his family does not know anything about that past. I have lied to them. I do not want to talk, even when people ask me about these things, I just circumvent and just lie about it. [...] My husband knows about the trafficking experience and that is partly why he is jealous. But even he, the most important things about trafficking, he doesn't know. He doesn't let me out because he thinks that I might be meeting another man.

One woman from Myanmar, trafficked for forced marriage, expressed concern that participation in research might lead some victims' families to learn about what had happened:

Some those [former trafficking victims] who already got married might have problems with their partner [if they participate in research].

Another trafficking victim from Myanmar described her reluctance to have the interview recorded because she was concerned about confidentiality and the risk of community members discovering she had been trafficked:

I did not want my neighbor nor my community [to] know this. That is why I did not agree to be recorded.

One man from Myanmar, trafficked for fishing, agreed to be interviewed but preferred to do so away from his home so as not to draw attention of neighbor or authorities:

... if it was at home, people would get curious of what is happening. ...I am afraid of any complication and making any police case. We do not have any contact with police and we do not want to open the case or making any problems. I am also afraid that people will misunderstand me and create problems or threaten me. We do not have money to go here and there (travel costs if they are [asking] to come to police station or court) as we are working for our daily meals.

Being “outed” as a trafficking victim may expose an individual to stigma, discrimination and rejection by family and community and even violence. One woman in Moldova, trafficked abroad for sexual exploitation, described being sexually harassed by the men in her village after returning to live there with her two small children. Another woman trafficked for sexual exploitation was raped at a village party by several men because they saw her as a prostitute, saying: “...you were there and did this for money, why not do it for us free of charge”.¹³⁶

When collecting data about unidentified and unassisted trafficking victims (for example, who may be home in their communities) there may be additional considerations and concerns in terms of safety and well-being that need to be assessed and anticipated in the design and planning stage.

Some TIP data collection may involve contact with individuals who remain in precarious situations and these individuals may be concerned about their safety or other types of risk if they participate in a data collection activity. This might include, for example, data collected among workers in a known exploitative sector where they may face a range of risks including violence, losing their job and/or being blacklisted for future migration or employment. This

Good practice. Consider the safety and well-being of research participants and data collectors

Assess any potential safety and security issues posed by how the data collection is designed.

Assess whether the data collection poses a threat to data collectors.

Consider the safety and well-being of research participants involved in data collection.

Consider the safety and well-being of data collectors in planning data collection.

¹³⁶ Brunovskis, A. and R. Surtees (2007) *Leaving the past behind? When victims of trafficking decline assistance*. Oslo, Norway: Fafo and Washington, D.C., United States: NEXUS Institute, pp. 129-130 and Surtees, R. (2007) *Listening to Victims: Experiences of identification, return and assistance in South-Eastern Europe*. Vienna, Austria: International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), p. 169. See also GAATW (2015) *Briefing Paper: Seeking Feedback from Trafficked Persons on Assistance Services: Principles and Ethics*. Bangkok, Thailand: Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women, pp. 2-3;

might also include research among those still exploited in prostitution who may face violence or other repercussions for disclosing their experiences to researchers. While some research participants may be aware of the risks posed by their participation in data collection, others may not. It is, therefore, incumbent on those designing and implementing data collection to anticipate potential risks as part of design and planning and also address risks that may arise over the course of data collection (see Stage #2: Data Collection, *Refine legal and ethical guidelines and protocols for data collection*). Care is needed then in how these individuals can and should be approached and engaged in data collection.

Children may be particularly ill-equipped to assess safety or security concerns associated with their involvement in data collection and to protect themselves from harm. Data collectors should consult with children (and also family members or guardians), while also consulting with local stakeholders who could help anticipate possible risks and how these may be handled. The presence of risk, however, does not automatically mean that data collection should not be done with children.

Safety and security issues will differ substantially by project and context and data collectors should adapt accordingly. One TIP researcher described how safety meant different things in different data collection projects in which she had been involved:

...I've found it interesting over the years how people define safety for themselves. So ethics in different projects have varied. Safety for some people means private interviews and then in a research project I did two years ago, safety for a group of women meant [they wanted to have] their friends around when they do the interview. They don't want to be by themselves with the interviewer. And so while I thought it was more important to have this private interview, they insisted on having other people around. Similarly, safety for some workers can mean interviews with their employers around because they're scared of backlash if their employer thinks they said something wrong, which also causes problems with your data of course. But that can mean safety for some people. And then, for other people, safety means not having your employer around. ...methods have to be a little bit flexible sometimes for individual safety situations, whether that be around what's going to happen with police or what's going to happen with family.

The safety and well-being of those conducting data collection is also important in planning the logistics of where, when and how data collection takes place. Data collectors should put safety and well-being above the completion of all data collection tasks. One researcher described how her organization had abandoned a particular TIP data collection effort when it was assessed that the risks were too great for the data collectors and research participants:

... the [partner] organization was saying that there were certain areas and districts that we would need for a stratified sample that was nationally representative, but it would be too dangerous to go into, even for locals.

Another aspect of safety and well-being is considering the stress and trauma that data collectors may face as part of their work, including the risk of vicarious trauma.¹³⁷ Conducting TIP research, in particular interviews, surveys and discussions with vulnerable persons like trafficking victims, can be difficult and even traumatizing for researchers as well as analysts working with the data. It involves being exposed to sensitive, emotionally distressing and often traumatic information on a routine basis. One TIP researcher stressed

¹³⁷ Vicarious trauma (also referred to as compassion fatigue or secondary traumatic stress) refers to the negative physical, emotional and behavioral reactions and symptoms that can occur when professionals repeatedly witness or hear about victims' pain, fear and difficult experiences of trauma, violence and abuse. See Pearlman, L.A. and K.W. Saakvitne (1995) *Trauma and the Therapist: Countertransference and Vicarious Traumatization in Psychotherapy with Incest Survivors*. New York, United States: W.W. Norton.

the need for individuals and organizations involved in data collection to take seriously and plan for these potentially serious impacts on researchers:

We are exposed to information where we experience vicarious trauma. [...] What's important is that the individual has the support that they need. [...] We need to be aware of our triggers, of our level of being traumatized by contact or content or context. And we need to be aware of how that may manifest itself in the interview as well... I think we have a responsibility when we do research with this population that we are self-aware... And it's the responsibility of the organization also that when they send their researchers out [to research].

Conducting TIP research may expose researchers to a raft of sensitive and difficult issues. Researchers engaging with sexually exploited children in the United States reflected on various stressors and challenges faced in their research that caused and exacerbated secondary trauma:

The CSEC youth with whom they (the researchers) established on-going relationships often experienced multiple life crises and upheavals (i.e. destabilization) during the course of the study. Another upsetting aspect of the work was that there were times when research staff was trying to locate a CSEC youth using the contact information that she had provided, and an angry parent or even a potential exploiter would answer the child's phone and become verbally abusive. In other cases, research staff might call a parent to confirm a subject's location and the parent would desperately want information about their child and would beg the research staff to tell them whatever they knew, which staff was not permitted to do. There were also times when direct service workers would inappropriately share explicit details about a youth's history with research staff, and staff had to both absorb the information and figure out how to manage the disclosure. In addition, staff were required to tolerate demanding data collection conditions. They made themselves available during nights and weekends because that is when some CSEC youth were most likely to return their texts or phone calls for locator checks. The sensation of needing to be available anytime, day or night, in case one of the research subjects chose that moment to check in and provide updated contact information, is challenging even for seasoned on-call workers in any field. Similarly, CSEC survivors often cancelled data collection appointments with no or little warning because they were young, in crisis, or had to meet with other social services workers during the scheduled time. Sometimes data collection appointments were cancelled because the CSEC survivor had "gone on the run" again. These cancellations or "no shows" ratcheted up research project expenses—staff might rent cars and drive to meeting spots, wait for an hour or more, only to have to repeat the procedure the next day. The frustration compounded RA burnout.¹³⁸

While there is increased discussion of vicarious trauma and data collection,¹³⁹ more attention

¹³⁸ Rothman, E.F. et al. (2018) 'Ethical and Practical Considerations for Collecting Research-Related Data from Commercially Exploited Children', *Behavioral Medicine*, 44(3), pp. 255.

¹³⁹ Easton, H. and R. Matthews (2016) 'Getting the Balance Right: The Ethics of Researching Women Trafficked for Commercial Sexual Exploitation' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 22-24; Kelly, L. and M. Coy (2016) 'Ethics as Process, Ethics in Practice: Researching the Sex Industry and Trafficking' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, p. 44; Lewis, H. (2016) 'Negotiating Anonymity, Informed Consent and 'Illegality': Researching Forced Labour Experiences Among Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 99-116; Melrose, M. (2002) 'Labour pains: Some considerations on the difficulties of researching juvenile prostitution', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 4(4), pp. 333-351; Rothman, E.F. et al. (2018) 'Ethical and Practical Considerations for Collecting Research-Related Data from Commercially Exploited Children',

is needed to the impact of conducting TIP research on researchers and analysts and developing protocols and procedures to manage issues that may arise (for example, debriefing routines, systems of supervision, spacing out interviews, access to counseling and support, working in pairs or teams and sharing particularly stressful tasks, like interviewing or analysis). Researchers for the project mentioned above noted the need for sessions to address staff well-being (which requires time and resources) as well as the need to carefully screen data collectors who will be interacting with trauma survivors and who should have prior experience as well as coping skills.¹⁴⁰

There is also a need to ensure that the available funds and time frames for research and data collection are sufficient to allow for such procedures to be put in place. As one researcher argued:

...funding agencies need to take account of the stresses involved in such research and must be prepared, not only for such research to take time, but also to ensure that research teams are adequately staffed to allow fieldworkers space for “remissions” — that is, periods away from fieldwork — and “reminders” — time to do other things (teach, write, etc.) [...] This inevitably means that funding agencies must be prepared for research of this nature to be expensive.¹⁴¹

Exposure to difficult and traumatic material occurs not only during data collection (for example, data collection, transcription and translation) but also during data analysis (for example, validation, coding, analysis) and when writing up research findings. As such, this issue should be revisited over the course of data collection (see Stage #2: Data Collection, *Refine legal and ethical guidelines and protocols for data collection*) as well as during data analysis and drafting (Stage #4: *Data Analysis, Train and build capacity in data analysis*).

In summary: Design and planning will necessarily involve an assessment of any potential safety and security issues posed by data collection. This includes possible safety risks to respondents, their families and data collectors, including the possibility of vicarious trauma. It is important to consider the well-being of respondents involved in data collection as well as the well-being of data collectors.

Apply child protection principles including the “best interests of the child”

Child protection describes the responsibilities and activities undertaken to prevent or to stop children¹⁴² being abused or ill-treated. The principles of child protection, as enshrined in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)*, apply to data collection as to any other action undertaken in relation to a child, including that the “**best interests of the child**” shall be a primary consideration.¹⁴³ Securing the “best interests of the child” here means that the needs and interests of the child supersede any need to complete an interview or data collection activity. Guarding the “best interests of the child” in data collection involves balancing key factors related to the competing rights of the child: the views of the child; the

Behavioral Medicine, 44(3), pp. 250-258; and Warden, T. (2013) ‘Feet of clay: confronting emotional challenges in ethnographic experience’, *Journal of Organizational Ethnography*, 2(2), pp. 150-172.

¹⁴⁰ Rothman, E.F. et al. (2018) ‘Ethical and Practical Considerations for Collecting Research-Related Data from Commercially Exploited Children’, *Behavioral Medicine*, 44(3), pp. 255.

¹⁴¹ Melrose, M. (2002) ‘Labour pains: Some considerations on the difficulties of researching juvenile prostitution’, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 4(4), p. 349.

¹⁴² Children are anyone under 18 years of age.

¹⁴³ United Nations (1989) *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, United Nations Treaty Series, Volume 1577, p. 3, Article 3.1.

views of family members and others close to the child; safety as a priority; the importance of the family and of close relationships; and nurturing the development needs of the child. One child protection specialist stressed the importance of a clear understanding of child protection issues when undertaking data collection with and about children:

If you're working with children and young people, a really clear understanding of child protection issues, possible ethical issues related to children and young people is something that's key. Assuring that risk assessments and everything else has been undertaken.

There are specific considerations in terms of informed consent in the case of children. Parents or guardians have decision-making responsibilities and should be consulted and provide informed consent, except when this poses a risk to the child.¹⁴⁴ Nevertheless, consent or assent¹⁴⁵ is also needed from children. Data collectors must take into account the potential impact of the power imbalance between children and adults, including whether this creates pressure to consent (or decline) to participate, including by the parent or guardian or by a service provider involved in data collection if a child is receiving services.

At the same time, parents or guardians should be sensitized to the value of children's participation in research and data collection and enabled to play a positive role in supporting participation when appropriate and in the child's best interests. In other words, it is not just about complying with the legal and ethical requirements, but also about ensuring wider encouragement and assistance for the participation of the children concerned in research and data collection. The extent to which children can consent to their own participation in research and data collection will vary according to the child's age, experience, stage of development and

Good practice. Apply child protection principles including the “best interests of the child”

Apply the principle of child protection in all data collection; the “best interests of the child” should be a primary consideration.

Take into account the views of the child, family members, safety concerns, the importance of family and the development needs and evolving capacities of the child.

Take into account the specific features of gaining informed consent or informed assent with children.

Ensure that child protection measures are built into data collection initiatives.

Determine what mandatory reporting requirements exist and how these will be met.

Consult legislation, laws and ethical standards in the development of an appropriate protocol for child protection.

¹⁴⁴ It may not be appropriate to obtain consent from a parent or guardian in the following circumstances: (1) where participation in the activity involves minimal risk (that is, risks no greater than those in everyday life) and will not infringe on the rights or impact on the welfare of participants; (2) where parental or guardian consent is impossible to get or would not protect the child; or (3) where the young person concerned is resistant to a parent or guardian's consent being sought on the grounds of their right to privacy and confidentiality and where the emotional and social maturity of the young person has been evaluated and the risks of participation are considered to be low. If this is the case, a child advocate, such as a community worker, who is trusted by the child, should be involved in order to make sure the child's best interests are put first. Plan (2009) *How to include ethical standards in All Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Initiatives*. Woking, United Kingdom: Plan Ltd. Unpublished document. See also Rothman, E.F. et al. (2018) 'Ethical and Practical Considerations for Collecting Research-Related Data from Commercially Exploited Children', *Behavioral Medicine*, 44(3), pp. 250-253.

¹⁴⁵ Because the legal age of consent will differ according to national legal regulations, it is necessary in some cases to obtain informed assent from children instead of informed consent. Informed assent means a child's agreement in circumstances where they are not legally authorized or lack sufficient understanding to give consent competently. De Lourdes Levy, M., V. Larcher and R. Kurz (2003) 'Informed consent/assent in children. Statement of the Ethics Working Group of the Confederation of European Specialists in Paediatrics (CESP)', *European Journal of Paediatrics*, pp. 629-633.

evolving capacities. One TIP expert explained some issues of consent when working with children:

[Informed consent means] fully informing the child about the purpose of the research. What will be the content of the interview? How long will it be? Where will it take place? What are his or her entitlements? That they don't have to answer any questions, they can stop at any time, take breaks, to ask questions back. [...] What will be the use of the data? Will [the researcher] be recording or not? All the information that you need for someone to feel comfortable in taking part in an interview. [...] Have you properly planned the room where you're going to interview someone? Is it safe? Is it convenient for the person? [...] Have you informed the child where the toilet is? Have you planned for the toilet to be there? Have you brought snacks and water? From very practical aspects to more complicated ethical issues. How do you deal with a child who gets stressed? How do you release tension?... All of this needs time and planning and a team working on [these issues] on the project.

There may also be power dynamics that come into play around differences in race, ethnicity and other social signifiers of both the child-respondent and those involved as data collectors and gatekeepers, although this is not unique to data collection involving children.

It is important to ensure that child protection measures are built into data collection initiatives, which means all staff involved in data collection with children (including translators, assistants and administrative staff) should:

- have experience and knowledge of working with children and be trained in child protection principles;
- be trained in trauma-informed approaches to data collection;
- be screened for their appropriateness in working with children;
- be aware of the local legal and social welfare systems in place;
- be aware of the local social and cultural contexts;
- have information about support organizations/institutions in the local area and talk with these organizations/institutions about their accessibility and availability for referrals.

Children may disclose violence or other abuse that they have suffered or data collectors might come across other indications of abuse (for example, physical indications). Organizations and institutions carrying out TIP research and data collection with children should have a child safeguarding policy in place. Data collectors should be trained in what to do in these cases as encompassed in a child safeguarding policy. A child safeguarding policy is aimed at protecting children from possible abuse or violence. It involves assessing and addressing the potential risks to children, including from the organization/institution's staff, programs and operations. Acknowledging risks and implementing measures to prevent or address risk in data collection with children is fundamental to any organizations' strategies and governance.¹⁴⁶

Many countries make it mandatory to report suspected cases of child exploitation, abuse, violence and neglect. As part of design and planning, national legislation and child protection agencies should be consulted as to such requirements and procedures. These should be accommodated in the development of child safeguarding policies and procedures and built into clearly articulated, written guidelines and protocols to address issues that may arise during data collection (see Stage #2: Data Collection, *Refine legal and ethical guidelines and protocols for data collection*).

¹⁴⁶ See, for example, KCS (2014) *Child Safeguarding Standards and how to implement them*. London, United Kingdom: Keeping Children Safe.

In summary: The principles of child protection including the “best interests of the child” should be applied when designing and planning TIP data collection and remain a primary consideration at all subsequent stages. This requires taking into account all of the factors that may impact the child’s best interests, including the views of the child, family members, safety concerns, the importance of family relationships and the development needs of the child. Paying attention to threshold issues such as informed consent for children, child safeguarding policies and mandatory reporting requirements will serve to ensure that child protection measures are built into data collection efforts.

Implement procedures for review and adaptation

As noted at the outset of this section, it is not possible to anticipate every possible legal and ethical issue that may arise over the course of TIP data collection. There is a need for on-going dialogue, reflection and adjustment over the course of any data collection activity. This requires creating an environment where these challenging and complex issues can be raised and discussed within the research team or data collection project.

Moreover, it is necessary to train data collectors to consider and identify ethical and legal issues over the course of implementation. For some projects it may be necessary to seek legal advice to ensure compliance with legal requirements for data protection. Supervision is another vital step in identifying legal and ethical issues that arise and ensuring that these are handled in the best possible way. This is discussed in more detail in Stage #2: Data Collection.

Good practice. Implement procedures for review and adaptation

Engage in on-going dialogue, reflection and adjustment on legal and ethical issues over the course of data collection.

Train and supervise staff to identify legal and ethical issues that arise and how to handle them.

In summary: It is not possible to anticipate all legal and ethical issue that may arise during data collection. On-going dialogue, reflection and adjustment are needed over the course of the data collection process.



Prepare a work plan for data collection

As part of design and planning it is useful to create a work plan as a discrete document to guide the data collection effort. Work planning will require defining the main goals and associated activities as well as setting milestones for the achievement of each activity, with approximate deadlines. The work plan also needs to take into account the timeline and the human and financial resources needed for the project, as well as mechanisms for quality assurance. It is also useful for later in the process, when measuring reach and impact of the project (see Stage #5: Data Use, Presentation and Dissemination, *Identify different media and platforms to maximize impact and reach*). The work plan also serves as institutional

memory of the original intent and scope as well as procedures, allowing for future reference. The success of a data collection activity rests in large part with the initial work planning. One TIP researcher stressed the importance of “getting it right” at the design and planning stage:

You need to get your planning right. It’s the front end of the research and we need to invest much more into the planning processes. That could be around simply making sure that you’ve got enough budget and your timeline is appropriate. Maybe it’s making sure that a good research protocol is developed so that that becomes the roadmap for the study. ... and then also your recruitment of your research team.

In the case of some data collection efforts, such as National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms, work planning may involve multiple projects and outputs and need to fit within overarching institutional work planning. In some cases, this work planning will fall within a government’s National Plan of Action to combat TIP or within other government anti-trafficking strategies. As one National Rapporteur explained:

We’ve filed to the [relevant ministry] to have the working plan for the year, where we put in the big pieces that we try to accomplish. That’s also the tool and thinking about what we want done in this certain period of time. Another thing we’ve tried is listed how we think of a year as a unit, thinking of two or three big goals that need to happen... And obviously there will be a lot of things going on that we didn’t anticipate or that’s just a small [item] to be working on but we’ll try to keep those goals in mind.

Costs, both human and financial, must be anticipated and carefully considered in work planning. This includes any number of steps throughout Stages #2, #3, #4 and #5. For example, the costs of presenting and disseminating outputs from the data collection effort (discussed later in Stage #5: Data Use, Presentation and Dissemination (*Identify different media and platforms to maximize impact and reach* and *Ensure access to outputs*)) should already be anticipated and planned at this stage.

Adequate resources need to be set aside for any data collection effort, including when course corrections are needed during implementation. Data integrity may be compromised when decisions are based primarily on cost and convenience rather than the ability of data to adequately answer data collection questions. While both are valid factors in the decision-making process, they must be weighed against if and to what extent they impact data quality and integrity.¹⁴⁷ One TIP expert stressed the importance of adequate resources to get high quality data:

Good practice. Prepare a work plan for data collection

Create a work plan to guide the data collection effort.

Define main goals, associated activities and set milestones and deadlines.

Anticipate costs, both human and financial, as part of work planning.

Anticipate the on-going operating costs of technology, including technical assistance.

Align data collection with the available time frame.

Create a plan for and anticipate costs of dissemination of outputs to different target audiences.

Build review and reflection processes into work planning.

¹⁴⁷ NIU (2005) ‘Overview of Data Management’, *Responsible Conduct in Data Management*. DeKalb, United States: Northern Illinois University.

[We need to] acknowledge the resources that are necessary to do better quality research on these issues. [...] For me, more spending is a key need if we're going to get better data on anti-trafficking work.

Data integrity also suffers when funds are not available to fix problems that occur during data collection. As one TIP researcher noted:

My experience and observation [are] in large scale data collection [we] always spare [a significant percentage] of the field work budget for quality assurance and anticipate non-sampling errors. Many data collection [projects] collect poor data because there is not enough spare budget to fix the field problems...

Costs will differ depending on the nature of the data collection effort as well as on whether it is a one-off data collection effort or an on-going initiative (such as a national anti-trafficking database, a case management system for service providers or a criminal justice database). For TIP databases, such as those needed by National Rapporteurs, the costs will necessarily need to be built into government budgets and work planning.

Adequacy of funds depends not only on the budget *per se* but also on the budget relative to the scope of trafficking in the country. As one National Rapporteur noted:

...we haven't had such problems because numbers [of trafficking victims] are not very high.... This amount of information is not so big that it would make it difficult for stakeholders to process it. So it means that every case, every person is well processed, well described. And I think that information is, therefore, very precisely collected. It means that if we have hundreds of victims and hundreds of criminal proceedings, then, yes, there could be problems.

When a data collection project involves technology (for example, a database) the on-going and long-term operating costs of such systems (including technical assistance and support) must be anticipated and addressed to ensure sustainability of the technology beyond the project time frame. This is also true of other costs that may be associated with the use of technology (for example, a high-speed internet connection, data storage, security systems and so on). One NGO director described a data collection project implemented by an IO and funded by a bilateral donor for which the high operating costs (namely internet costs and technical support) could not be sustained by the NGO beyond the duration of the project which meant that the database could not be sustained once the project ended. Additionally, the project timeline was inadequate for the development, testing and piloting of the database. The NGO was still struggling to determine the best way forward with their data collection, reflecting on the balance between time, resources, what information they need, why they need it and so on.

Tied intimately with resources is the timeline involved. In designing data collection projects, it is important to take into account what is possible within the available time frame and, when needed, either adjust the time frame or the scope of data collection. And yet, very often time pressures are a serious constraint, resulting in work plans having unrealistic and ultimately unfeasible time frames. One TIP researcher described one project in which the timeline of the work plan did not take into account key activities:

[There was no time] to develop research tools or properly identify stakeholders or even get hold of them or properly interview them. Then it's impossible to go back and research more. So if you have a situation where the field research went badly you cannot redo it and the data is poor.

It is also useful to establish mechanisms for data collectors to review and reflect on a project or data collection effort. That is to step back and think about what one is trying to accomplish, why and whether the existing or prospective plan is the best way to do so. Planning, reflection and strategizing should not be thought of as something that just happens along the way. These processes require deliberate pause, time and reflection at the outset as well as at regular intervals and should be built into the work plan.¹⁴⁸

In summary: Data collection requires a work plan to guide it, with clearly defined goals, associated activities, milestones and deadlines. The work plan must also anticipate costs (both human and financial) of the project as a whole, including the need for adjustments and corrections along the way and the on-going operating costs of technology and technical assistance. Work planning also requires aligning the project with the available time frame. Review and reflection processes are useful to keep things on track during implementation.

¹⁴⁸ Bryman, A. (2016) *Social Research Methods. Fifth Edition*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, p. 79.

Stage #2. Data Collection



Select data collectors, as relevant and appropriate

- Ensure technical competence and skills in data collection
- Ensure knowledge of and sensitivity about TIP



Select a sample and implement a sampling strategy

- Consider representativeness and validity
- Assess access to a sample



Select, design and test data collection tools

- Use or modify existing data collection tools
- Design new data collection tools
- Develop guidelines for data collectors
- Prepare explanatory information and referral materials
- Test data collection tools
- Consider the use of technology in designing data collection tools



Develop a data collection manual



Refine legal and ethical guidelines and protocols for data collection

- Ensure informed consent
- Implement guidelines and protocols for contacting data providers and research participants
- Ensure anonymity and confidentiality
- Assess when data collection reveals risk or abuse
- Support referrals for assistance and support
- Guard the “best interests of the child” during data collection



Carry out training and on-going supervision of data collection

- Train and supervise data collectors
- Train and supervise translators, interpreters, transcribers and support staff



Document the data collection process



Revisit Stage# 1 work plan and adjust, if needed



Stage #2. Data Collection

Data collection is the way in which data is gathered and all of the processes that link up with this operational task. Whereas Stage #1 is about designing and planning the data collection effort as a whole, Stage #2 refers to the actual operational work of collecting data. **Data collection** (as outlined above in Section 3: *Framing the issue*) is the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest, in a systematic fashion that enables one to answer stated data collection questions, test hypotheses and evaluate outcomes. While research approaches and methods vary, the importance of accurate and transparent data collection remains the same. Accurate data collection processes and procedures are essential in collecting high quality data and in maintaining the integrity of any analysis or data use. It is essential to be able to answer data collection questions accurately and to effectively analyze and use the data to contribute to the TIP knowledge base and/or inform effective policies and programs to address human trafficking.

“When you talk about robustness in data collection, it’s the extent to which you have a reliable process to ensure that the data that are reported can be trusted.”

TIP researcher

Data collection requires adequate human and financial resources and a realistic time frame for implementation. Poor implementation of the practical aspects of collecting data can jeopardize the data collection effort as a whole. There are substantial limitations to data, and associated findings, when data collection projects stretch beyond what resources and capacity will allow. This is discussed in Stage #1 but is also important to keep in mind throughout Stage #2, not least when there are changes in implementation that may have budget, staff and time implications. Moreover, issues of resources and capacity need to be considered in each of the five stages of data collection discussed in this study.

Steps and considerations in data collection

Data collection involves multiple steps, the details of which are each determined by the specific TIP data collection effort. Not all data collection will correspond with these individual steps. It is important in all cases to go through a design and planning process that leads to the articulation of a precise strategy and approach for implementation of data collection in Stage #2.

Briefly, the steps of data collection may include the following:

Steps and considerations in data collection



Select data collectors, as relevant and appropriate. This involves ensuring that data collectors or data collection teams have technical competence and skills in the specific data collection project, as well as knowledge of and sensitivity about human trafficking and the topics under study. A range of support staff (for example, translators, interpreters, field assistants) may be needed to assist in different ways and they will also require relevant skills and sensitivity.

- Select data collectors, as relevant and appropriate
- Select a sample and implement a sampling strategy
- Select, design and test data collection tools
- Develop a data collection manual
- Refine legal and ethical guidelines and protocols for data collection
- Carry out training and on-going supervision in data collection
- Document the data collection process
- Revisit Stage #1 work plan and adjust if needed



Select a sample and implement a sampling strategy. This step is the selection of a research sample and the implementation of a sampling strategy. Specifically, this involves considering representativeness and validity and access to the sample. Sampling strategies follow from choices of approach and method and will have different implications.



Select, design and test data collection tools. This involves: using or modifying existing tools or designing new tools; developing guidelines for data collectors; preparing explanatory information and referral materials; piloting tools and materials; and considering options for the use of technology. These elements are important in ensuring data integrity.



Develop a data collection manual. A data collection manual allows all persons working on a data collection project to have a common understanding of and to follow an agreed process. It delineates instructions and guidelines for all aspects of data collection to ensure the quality of data collected.



Refine legal and ethical guidelines and protocols for data collection. This involves establishing clearly articulated, written guidelines and procedures to address ethical and legal issues that may arise in data collection. This includes but is not limited to: gaining informed consent; implementing protocols for contacting data providers and respondents; ensuring anonymity and confidentiality; assessing what to do when data collection reveals risk or abuse; determining how to support referrals for assistance and support; and guarding the “best interests of the child” during data collection with children. Legal and ethical guidelines and protocols should be considered and reconsidered over the course of data collection.



Carry out training and on-going supervision of data collection. Training and supervision are needed for all data collectors as well as support staff based on their specific roles. Training should supplement the data collection manual. Training is needed in the technical work of data collection as well as the legal and ethical obligations associated with the role of data collection.



Document the data collection process. This involves comprehensive documentation of the data collection process – before, during and after data gathering – in order to preserve the integrity of the information and to ensure that the data is valid, reliable, accurate and precise. This is particularly important when it comes to the use of

existing data or datasets for further data collection and analysis and when data collection occurs over longer periods of time.



Revisit Stage #1 work plan and adjust if needed. During data collection, it is important to revisit the work plan developed in Stage #1 and assess if any adjustments are needed, including any unforeseen circumstances or limitations that have arisen. In some cases, changes or challenges may be so significant that they cannot be addressed within the original work plan. This step may require flexibility in the approach including, when needed, revising or even withdrawing from research or data collection efforts.

The following sections discuss each of these steps in detail, including issues and considerations that may be faced in data collection and examples of good practice or lessons learned.



Select data collectors, as relevant and appropriate

Selecting data collectors requires careful attention to the specific nature of the data collection initiative. As data collection efforts range in nature, size and scope, this necessarily has implications for the selection of suitable data collectors. For any data collection project, the level and type of staffing will depend on the size, scope and time frame. A short-term research project might involve engaging an individual or team of researchers or data collectors for a finite period of time. Some data collection may be done in partnership with other organizations and institutions and the data collectors may come from these organizations and institutions. When TIP data collection refers to government initiatives such as National Rapporteurs, data collectors may be staff of the office, or staff working in institutions and organizations that contribute data to the National Rapporteur's office.

Alongside data collectors, a range of support staff may be involved in the data collection effort in different ways and to different degrees. This may include project administrators, translators and interpreters, transcribers, as well as logistical staff (for example, field assistants or drivers), any of whom may come into contact with vulnerable persons or communities during data collection.

Select data collectors, as relevant and appropriate

- Ensure technical competence and skills in data collection
- Ensure knowledge of and sensitivity about TIP

Regardless of the specifics of the data collection effort, it is important to select data collectors or data collection teams that have technical competence and skill along with knowledge of and sensitivity to human trafficking and the range of topics under study.

Ensure technical competence and skills in data collection

Data collectors need skills and experience in the specific approach, method and tools to be used for data collection. Whenever possible, it is important to identify data collectors with these existing skills and experience. However, this is not always possible or straightforward in practice. As one TIP researcher explained, many organizations and institutions lack in house technical skills in data collection:

The other frustration I found is around skills to actually do the research... I found that the researchers in the field have been quite limited in terms of who can do the

data [collection]. ...there appear to be a few people who are qualified to do this kind of work and understand it. ... [For example], I've had many conversations with local research agencies about what a random sampling frame is and there's a very different understanding as to what a random sample frame is. And so it's about ensuring that we've got the right skill sets and the right organizations... And if we are going to enhance the ability of certain NGOs to collect data or bring in monitoring data or even...go out to the field and do some research then let's make sure they've got the right skill set in place to do that and that they understand all of the ethical implications as well before they actually go out and collect data.

Requisite skills and experience will necessarily differ according to the specific approach, method and tool. The more discretion in implementation that is required by the selected data collection method and tool, the more experience, knowledge and skills that will be required of data collectors. For instance, a detailed questionnaire with little room for deviation can be administered by someone with relatively limited experience, whereas a semi-structured or unstructured qualitative interview requires a much higher level of knowledge and understanding of the issues to be explored as well as the method and tool itself.

Good practice. Ensure technical competence and skills in data collection

Select data collectors with skills and experience in the research approach and method, where possible.

Access technical expertise where needed to assist in data collection.

Access technical expertise where needed to conduct training in data collection.

When the requisite skills cannot be found within the data collection team, it is necessary to access this expertise. This might involve partnering with organizations or institutions to assist in data collection or training data collectors in the approach and method. As one TIP researcher observed:

... I am always happy to see when organizations partner with local statisticians and local social scientists to implement surveys so that those working on the ground have familiarity with the community and can establish a level of comfort with their interviewee.

Building capacity of local partners in TIP data collection contributes not only to the specific data collection activity but may support sustainability of research or data collection efforts in the longer-term. This might involve exploring longer-term partnerships to build capacity to conduct TIP research among local organizations and institutions as well as leveraging training and mentoring opportunities. As one TIP expert noted:

[One thing that could help would be] if there were more easily accessible ways to link up those who were undertaking data collection with those who had expertise in the area and interest in those kinds of partnerships. Whether that was research institutes who conduct research and provide support to grassroots partners or researchers or if that were other research specialists or academics who had conducted such research and were able to provide guidance to others or access to courses where you could develop those skills locally. And the courses would then obviously need to be in those local languages.

In summary: Technically robust data collection requires technical competence on the part of data collectors and supervisors. Data collectors should have existing skills and experience in the research approach and method, where possible, or should be trained in these skills by a technical expert. Technical expertise may be found in house, externally or through partnership with organizations and institutions skilled in this work. Whenever possible, it is important to build capacity in house to ensure the sustainability of data collection efforts and opportunities for future data collection work.

Ensure knowledge of and sensitivity about TIP

Having data collectors who are knowledgeable and sensitive about TIP as well as the specific topic under study contributes to data quality. The level and specific nature of that knowledge, however, will vary according to the data collection project. In some cases, data collectors may only need a basic understanding of TIP, sufficient to be able to administer a structured questionnaire or survey. By contrast, an in-depth qualitative study about the nature of a particular form of trafficking will require a higher level of knowledge and sensitivity of the issue.

For some data collection efforts, it may be sufficient for data collectors to be able to distinguish between elements of trafficking while, for other projects, specific TIP knowledge may be needed (for example, the focus may be on disentangling differences between TIP and smuggling, TIP in different labor sectors or the differences between child labor and child trafficking). The challenges involved in selecting suitable data collectors with appropriate skills and expertise means that some data collectors are likely to not be experts in TIP. This, in turn, means that some level of training to achieve the requisite level of understanding of TIP is likely to be needed, tailored to the specifics of the data collectors engaged. On-going supervision is important in all data collection.

Good practice. Ensure knowledge of and sensitivity about TIP

Select data collectors who are knowledgeable and sensitive about TIP.

Select data collectors who are knowledgeable about the topic being studied.

Select data collectors who are familiar with the specific and local context.

Ensure that data collectors are sensitized on the issue of TIP.

Weigh the advantages and disadvantages of engaging anti-trafficking professionals as data collectors.

Assess and mitigate power dynamics that come into play between data collectors and respondents.

It is also important to consider the data collector's knowledge of the specific field about which TIP data is being collected (whether protection or prosecution), notably in terms of understanding the relevant legal, administrative and institutional frameworks. This is particularly important when the aim of the TIP data collection effort is to inform policy and practice. There may be reasons for a particular practice (for example, linked to institutional structures and responsibilities). Data collectors in such cases should have the capacity to gather information so that it is usable and relevant and in a way that ensures the subsequent analysis leads to recommendations that take those specific dynamics into account. For example, one criminal justice practitioner stressed that data collectors need to be sufficiently knowledgeable about the complexities and intricacies of the criminal justice process to be able to ask the right questions and offer useful analysis:

...if you're going to do data collection and research with respect to human trafficking in the criminal justice system, it is important that the people collecting and analyzing the data have a good deal of knowledge of the criminal justice system, how it works. Partly because it allows them to ask the right questions and partly because they are less likely be fooled or [deceived]. And also they'll do a more sophisticated report. They'll really go into the detail of how things are being done. [...] if the research is specifically about the criminal justice response to trafficking, the researchers and data collectors and the people who design the system either themselves should be quite familiar with how criminal justice systems work or be in contact with people who are and who can advise them.

Familiarity with the specific and local context can be a considerable asset in a data collection team. As such, for some data collection efforts, it may be preferable to use anti-trafficking practitioners such as social workers or law enforcement as data collectors, given their knowledge of specific issues and of how the anti-trafficking framework functions in practice.

Sensitivity and respect are also important criteria in selecting data collectors, particularly when data collection involves interactions with trafficking victims. One man from the FSU, trafficked for labor, described how difficult it can be to relive one's TIP experience during data collection:

All of it is difficult, to relive [this] experience. However, I feel that if I share it that it might prevent other people from getting into similar situations, so that they do not commit the same mistakes that I did. [...] Yes, it is easier now [to talk about it], but I had dreams about this experience. [After talking about my trafficking experience], I start thinking more about it plus some people who never came back. A young person from [my city], he was working [with me] and he never came back.

Ensuring, then, that data collectors behave with the appropriate level of sensitivity and respect is vital. When asked how interviews can best be handled, trafficking victims stressed the importance of researchers being sensitive, open and non-judgmental:

I am a person that doesn't feel comfortable with people right away... But I see that I am talking to someone who will not criticize me... I felt comfortable and so I can talk freely. (Albanian woman trafficked for sexual exploitation)

Anytime I talk with someone who understands me, I feel very good. Someone who looks in your eyes when you speak, does not avoid you ... I feel very good. [...] ...someone who looks me in the eye and understands that I am bringing this out of my heart, I feel very good. It's rarely that you find such people. You tell one word and they understand five hundred other things. (Albanian woman trafficked for sexual exploitation)

Yes, it is good when you can speak to a person who understands you...and who wishes you only well... It is not stressful. I am glad that I am listened to. (Moldovan woman trafficked for begging)

Sometimes when people came to [interview] me, to ask me about what happened to me [abroad], they didn't really listen to what I said but they judged me. But I like when I talked to you because you listen to me and understand me. (Laotian girl trafficked for sexual exploitation)

I feel relaxed, and happy. I was worried that I might not be answering correctly. It's like a dream for me to talk like this. I feel very happy because I was interviewed with care, warmth and friendliness. (Girl from Myanmar trafficked for work in a factory)

I felt like I have known you before, even though it was the first time I met you.
(Woman from Kosovo trafficked for sexual exploitation and labor)

...the most important thing is in our communication, that we can connect with each other (Indonesian woman trafficked for domestic work)

...as long as the interviewer can connect [with me] then it will be fine. The location is not an issue, the most important thing is that the interviewer can be trusted.
(Indonesian woman trafficked for domestic work)

What could be better in this interview?... It was very good. Thank you that you spoke so nicely and made me feel good. You did not force me to speak, I felt good and I spoke with you. (Albanian woman trafficked for sexual exploitation).

Different power dynamics need also to be considered in the selection of data collectors. Social, cultural and interpersonal differences may impact who is considered an appropriate data collector. In some cases and when possible, it can be useful to have a diverse team of data collectors (in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, nationality) to anticipate some of these dynamics. For example, some women may be more comfortable being interviewed by a woman and some men may be more comfortable being interviewed by other men. But, equally, this may not be the case. One Albanian man, for example, when asked about the preferred sex of the interviewer said simply: “I would not have said a word to a man”. Similarly, one Ukrainian man trafficked for labor expressed a strong preference for a female interviewer:

It is easier to speak with women. It is a bit uncomfortable to speak with men. And I think the office environment like this is good. I was pleased to speak with women; I may not be so open speaking with men. It is more pleasant to speak with a woman, than with a man.

Others were largely ambivalent about the gender of the researcher, like a boy from Kosovo, trafficked for labor who said: “It is not important to be a man or women. It is the same for me to talk about such things”. Similarly, a woman from Indonesia said:

...man, woman, or transgender, I am fine. The most important thing is that they want to listen. Everyone is the same. They are kind to me and ask me similar questions.

Two men from Cambodia, exploited for the same type of labor trafficking in the same destination country, had different preferences when asked about the gender of an interviewer:

The male person would be better than the female one, because with a female I had difficulties in answering and felt embarrassed. But if it were a male person it would be easier in talking.

The sex of the interviewer [a woman] was not a problem for me. A comparable age, it was also no problem. Arrangement of the interview, it was alright. It was enough for me.

Women whom we interviewed for different studies more commonly preferred a female interviewer, especially those who had been trafficked for sexual exploitation, as illustrated in the comments below.

It was good, because you had [the interviewer who was] the same sex as me to conduct the interview. You were older than me. I felt normal and I was not nervous. The arrangement for the interview was good. The time was normal. The questions also did not have any impacts. (Cambodian woman trafficked for sexual exploitation)

It was alright for a woman [interviewer], but not with men. I would not answer [the questions] with men. (Cambodian girl trafficked for sexual exploitation)

If there is a female, I would speak really freely because I would think I am speaking to my mom or my sister. But if there was a man I wouldn't have come at all. [...] I personally don't feel well, I don't feel comfortable and I just can't, I don't feel comfortable with men in general; I just can't see them at all. (Woman from Albania trafficked for sexual exploitation)

But here again answers and preferences varied. Of those we spoke to, women trafficked for labor were seemingly more ambivalent about the gender of the interviewer, as illustrated in the contrasting comment of one woman from Cambodia, trafficked for domestic work: “It does not matter [if it is a] male or female [interviewer]. It does not matter about age.”

Some respondents also felt strongly about the age of the data collector, although whether someone older or younger was preferred differed from person to person:

It couldn't be better. It was good to talk with someone at your age because the older people do not say “Oh I know him I have seen him here, there”. Someone of your age and experience does not judge. (Boy from Albania trafficked for petty crime)

It was good, because you had [the interviewer who was] the same sex as me to conduct the interview. You were older than me. I felt normal and I was not nervous. The arrangement for the interview was good. The time was normal. The questions also did not have any impact. (Cambodian woman trafficked for sexual exploitation)

These observations are specific to individual research projects in which they were discussed and good practice in the selection of data collectors will vary. Being “insiders” and “outsiders” in data collection is complex and multi-faceted; different types of power imbalances emerge when researching within and outside of one's own “cultural” community. Both insider and outsider status require critical reflection as do an array of social fissures (for example, age, class, gender, religious affiliation, education and ethnicity).¹⁴⁹ Addressing, or at least seeking to mitigate power dynamics in the selection of data collectors will need to be assessed on a project-by-project and context-by-context basis as well as in relation to individual research participants. The key is being aware of potential sensitivities in how data is collected and to address these in the implementation of data collection. When data collection involves children, it will be important to have someone who is trained in interviewing children of different ages and evolving capacities and with difference experiences of exploitation.

Sensitivity and respect are also needed when collecting data from key informants, including various anti-trafficking practitioners and stakeholders. As one TIP expert noted:

¹⁴⁹ Ganga, D. and S. Scott (2006) ‘Cultural “Insiders” and the Issue of Positionality in Qualitative Migration Research: Moving “Across” and Moving “Along” Researcher-Participant Divides’, *Forum: Qualitative Social Research (FQS)*, 7(3), Art. 7; and Markova, E. (2009) ‘The “insider” position: ethical dilemmas and methodological concerns in researching undocumented migrants with the same ethnic background’ in Van Liempt, I. and V. Bilger (Eds.) *The Ethics of Migration Research Methodology: Dealing with Vulnerable Immigrants*. East Sussex, United Kingdom: Sussex Academic Press.

Poor practice is when you don't treat [key informants] with due respect and caution. This can happen even in an interview with a local institution stakeholder. You can make them feel that their perspective is not that relevant or [does] not explain well the purpose of the research.

When conducting research with trafficking victims, there may be advantages to engaging service providers as data collectors given their expertise about assistance and sensitivity in working with trafficked persons. As one TIP researcher explained:

...for the survivor surveys we use support workers and social workers, [who] have mental health training. We don't have to spend so much time on determining trauma levels prior to interview and what to do if someone is distressed and how to make appropriate referrals. That takes up less time because these are the people who we know are trained to work with trafficked people. ...we don't have to spend that extra week and a half on "what to do if somebody gets distressed" ... we assume since they're working with trafficked people they actually know what they're doing. We know that they're working with survivors and the downside is that they're maybe biased. But we feel it gets better disclosure or it's more ethical, it's safer. The upsides are much, much, much more important than the potential downside that they might have some preconceived notions or they might be biased.

At the same time, this needs to be assessed for each discrete data collection project and in relation to the topic and specific research questions. Moreover, not all service providers are suitable data collectors. The varying capacities, professional backgrounds and perspectives of different service providers in different countries and contexts will impact their knowledge of TIP and their sensitivity and respect toward trafficking victims. In some cases, service providers may not demonstrate sufficient sensitivity on certain issues that are to be covered in a data collection activity. Training and sensitization of data collectors will then be needed as well as on-going supervision.

Certain biases and limitations are introduced when practitioners engage as data collectors with and about individuals, organizations or institutions with whom they do their daily work, for instance when a service provider conducts research with trafficking victims being assisted by the organization or institution (as discussed above, see Stage #1: Design and Planning, *Develop or apply legal and ethical guidelines and protocols – Ensure voluntary and informed consent*). Such dynamics need to be considered in terms of the data collected and the meaning assigned to it. One TIP researcher noted the potential for bias when data collectors are also service providers:

At the same time [the service providers] are providing the assistance, so how does that influence the answers you get back? Are you eager to please? Or have you been socialized into a particular understanding of your own actions?"¹⁵⁰

When interviewed by service providers on whom they rely for assistance, trafficking victims may feel less able to decline to participate or may wish to participate as a means of thanking or pleasing the assistance organization. Assisted trafficking victims may answer in ways that are consistent with the approach of the assistance organization or in ways that they feel will ensure needed services and support. Research by one NGO network on the services they provide to beneficiaries highlighted these blurred boundaries as a substantial challenge in the research process, one that was not easy to manage and resolve. In reflecting on the research process, the researcher-practitioners observed:

¹⁵⁰ Surtees, R. and S. Craggs (2010) *Beneath the surface. Methodological issues in research and data collection with assisted trafficking victims*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration and Washington, D.C.: NEXUS Institute, p. 47.

Predictably, a number of interviewees were anxious to please and even asked “how well they did” in the interview. Indeed, requests for criticism caused visible discomfort in some of the interviewees. At moments like this, our practitioner researchers felt that as service providers they were at a disadvantage.¹⁵¹

Whether researchers get different data than service providers in such contexts is a natural follow-on question, which has significant weight in different research and data collection projects, but for which there is no easy answer. There are myriad dynamics at play in terms of what respondents share with whom, when and why. And this must be part of how data is analyzed and findings are understood. As one TIP researcher noted:

I am sure that we [researchers] do get different information just by being different people and not knowing them [like service providers]. And I think that it could turn out in many different ways. That is, I think sometimes we would get less. I think sometimes we would get more. Or we get different interpretations of the same chain of events.¹⁵²

Biases may also emerge when the data collector-practitioner is collecting data from and about practitioners and policymakers with whom they cooperate professionally on a daily basis. Existing working relationships and dynamics may lead data collectors to be more or less critical of the organizations and institutions from whom they are collecting data and research participants may be less willing to disclose information about challenges or issues faced. In more constrained political environments, data collectors may not feel able to ask about sensitive issues (such as corruption or the challenges or failures of the anti-trafficking response) and it may not be safe to do so. It will be necessary to weigh up these factors when selecting data collectors and to acknowledge and be transparent about how these issues and dynamics impact what data is collected and how data is analyzed and interpreted. This is discussed in more detail in Stage #4: Data Analysis (*Interpret patterns and findings – Identify biases influencing interpretation*).

It will also be necessary to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of engaging researchers and support staff from the same community as research participants (for example, by ethnicity, nationality or religion). Some experts have argued that engaging researchers from the same community may compromise the privacy of respondents, especially in tight knit or small communities where the victim’s experience may become known or visible to others. One TIP researcher advised against this approach:

We don’t want people from the same community necessarily interviewing the people who [we’re] researching because there are churches and everybody belongs to the same church... There are very small communities of minorities when you are working in places where people are in the minority...people just know each other. It’s a small community. It’s a small world.

By contrast, other experts have argued for data collectors from the same background and community as research respondents as there may be a greater level of trust and confidence in the data collector, especially when coming from vulnerable or marginalized communities. The above points notwithstanding, the appropriateness of engaging researchers from the same community will likely differ according to social and cultural contexts. Decisions should be made specific to the individual context, type of data collection and also the individual research participants. There may also be differences depending upon the type of data being

¹⁵¹ GAATW (2015) *Briefing Paper: Seeking Feedback from Trafficked Persons on Assistance Services: Principles and Ethics*. Bangkok, Thailand: Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women, p. 6.

¹⁵² Surtees, R. and S. Craggs (2010) *Beneath the surface. Methodological issues in research and data collection with assisted trafficking victims*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Organization for Migration and Washington, D.C., United States: NEXUS Institute, p. 49.

gathered as some forms of TIP-related data collection are likely to be less sensitive or contentious.

In summary: Ideally data collectors should be knowledgeable about and sensitive to the issue of TIP and, whenever possible, familiar with the specific and local context in which TIP takes place. When this is not possible, training and sensitization will be required as well as on-going supervision. In some instances and for some projects it may be preferable to engage anti-trafficking professionals as data collectors or to engage persons from the same community or background. Such decisions should be taken on a case-by-case basis and with attention to the advantages and disadvantages, not least when power dynamics may come into play.



Select a sample and implement a sampling strategy

In the design and planning phase (Stage #1), a key step is to decide on the approach, method and data sources. During the implementation phase (Stage #2), the step that follows from these choices is the selection of a sample and the implementation of a sampling strategy. The sampling strategies available follow from and are, to a large extent, bound by initial choices about the approach and method.

A **unit (or case)** is the individual or group that the data collection effort is interested in studying (for example, a victim of trafficking, a trafficker, a trafficking case, an assistance pathway). Since it is not possible to survey all units or cases (for example, all trafficking victims or every human trafficker in a country or region), it is necessary to select some and to conduct this selection process in such a way that meaningful conclusions can be drawn about a group or a phenomenon. A sample is the number of elements (or units or cases) ultimately selected for data collection and from which/whom data is generated.¹⁵³ A **sample** is a subset or sub-group from the population that is to be examined.

Sampling strategies follow from choices about method and have different implications. This section is not a detailed discussion of sampling strategies but rather offers a brief mention of some key distinctions relevant for TIP research and data

collection. Sampling strategies have traditionally been one of the main areas of distinction between qualitative and quantitative methods. Very simply, qualitative methods typically aim to develop in-depth knowledge based on fewer cases (as few as one, on occasion), selected *purposefully*. This is also known as **nonprobability sampling**, a method of sampling where it is not known which individual from the population will be selected. This technique does not use random sampling at any stage of the selection process, meaning that some members of the population may have a greater chance of being selected.¹⁵⁴

Select a sample and implement a sampling strategy

- Consider representativeness and validity
- Assess access to a sample

¹⁵³ Levy, P. (2017) *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches*. New York, United States: The Guilford Press, p. 76.

¹⁵⁴ Examples of nonprobability sampling include convenience sampling, snowball sampling and quota sampling.

Quantitative methods typically aim at arriving at findings that are representative of the population the sample is drawn from and samples are selected **randomly**. Random in this sense does not mean arbitrary. Simple randomization means that each member of the target population has an equal chance of being selected to be part of the sample, meaning that findings can be generalized to the population the member was selected from. This is also known as **probability sampling**, which involves the random selection of study participants in a manner that gives each member of the population an equal chance of being selected for the sample, translating into a representative sample.¹⁵⁵

Describing all possible sampling strategies is beyond the scope and purpose of this publication; many publications are designed to explore precisely these issues and should be consulted as needed. Sampling is in any case one of the technical skills that data collectors and supervisors must have and will be specific to each unique research study or data collection effort. Nevertheless, there are some common issues to consider for all sampling strategies on TIP. These include representativeness and validity of data and access to a sample.

Consider representativeness and validity

One of the greatest challenges in TIP data collection is obtaining representative data on many aspects that are central to protection and prosecution. When data is **representative**, it means that the distribution of different variables (for example, age, gender or trafficking experiences) observed in the sample are the same as would be observed in the population of interest. This allows the findings to be generalized. As noted above, the most common manner of assuring **generalizability** or **representativeness** is to draw a random sample, where all participants have the same chance of being selected.

However, this presupposes that selection probabilities can be calculated. For that, a **sampling frame** is needed (that is, a list of the total population of interest or units of analysis or cases *from which* a random sample can be drawn and *to whom* findings can be generalized). This does not exist for trafficking victims *as a whole*. In theory (though for ethical and safety reasons rarely in practice) such lists could be produced for assisted or registered trafficking victims and be used to produce representative data on these specific sub-populations, which could indeed yield valuable information. But it must be remembered what population the data in these cases will be representative of. For instance, the experiences of assisted victims are not necessarily representative of the experiences of unassisted victims. Misunderstandings about what data can and cannot reveal is a critical concern, particularly with regard to data that is presented and treated as representative when it is not. A related issue is misunderstanding (and, in some cases, misuse) of the significance of the data by end users when data and findings are used to conclude things that are not valid to conclude.

Good practice. Consider representativeness and validity

Consider what sampling is better suited to the data collection project.

Be clear about what population the data is and is not representative of.

Avoid generalizing conclusions to a wider population than the sample and sampling strategy permit.

Be clear and transparent about what particular samples represent.

¹⁵⁵ Examples of probability sampling include simple random sampling, systematic sampling, cluster sampling and stratified random sampling.

In qualitative analysis, it is not common to speak of representativeness but rather **validity** (that is, the accuracy and trustworthiness of instruments, data and findings), as the goal is to arrive at a deeper understanding of specific issues and phenomena and not necessarily to be able to extrapolate findings to a specific population. There are many different sampling techniques available, but an important distinction is between purposeful (or purposive) sampling and convenience sampling, the former generally being preferable. Both are types of **non-probability sampling**, which does not use random sampling at any stage of the selection process, meaning that some members of the population may have a greater chance of being selected than others.¹⁵⁶

Purposeful sampling means that the cases in the sample are selected based on specific criteria that will help illuminate the issue being analyzed. Some of these strategies may seek to maximize difference and variety within the sample, while others may seek to identify typical cases.¹⁵⁷ An example would be sampling with men from a particular place of origin who are exploited in an industry known to have cases of trafficking and exploitation.

Convenience sampling, on the other hand, is when cases are selected primarily because they are available and accessible. In some contexts, this may be the only option available as the group of interest can be very difficult to access. This may be the case for some groups of trafficking victims, or for traffickers. Convenience sampling is not ideal, as it leaves much more room for data to be biased in different ways and for research participants to be systematically different from others in the same group who are less accessible.¹⁵⁸ For instance, if traffickers are only accessible while in prison, it is highly likely that they will be different from traffickers who have not been convicted and also traffickers in prison may share information in a different way from someone who is not incarcerated.¹⁵⁹

For some respondent groups, purposeful sampling imposes significant limitations, not least for ethical reasons. Trying to sample trafficking victims while trafficked or under the control of traffickers can be dangerous, both for the victim and for the data collector. In some contexts, trying to sample victims outside of the assistance system can identify them to persons in their surroundings as having been trafficked, which may lead to various and often severe risks. These are all very serious concerns that obviously take precedence in choices about sampling when weighed against representativeness and validity. It is important, though, that data analysts are aware of the implications that any sampling approach has for data and the lack of generalizability to the wider population (for example, trafficking victims or traffickers) or to the trafficking field. This needs also to be taken into account during analysis and made explicit in the presentation of findings. One TIP researcher explained the challenge as follows:

There's been estimates of human trafficking victims. And then there are estimates of the traffickers, or the other side of the problem, the criminal side. As with any other social science, when you apply good social science methods, classical textbook methods may not exactly apply just because you have a situation where you cannot reach... all the victims of crime. And so there is always the issue of 1) the extent to

¹⁵⁶ Probability sampling involves the random selection of study participants in a manner that gives each member of the population an equal chance of being selected for the sample.

¹⁵⁷ Palinkas, L. et al. (2015) 'Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research', *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 42(5), pp. 533-544.

¹⁵⁸ Barbour, R.S. (2001) 'Checklists for improving rigour in qualitative research: a case of the tail wagging the dog?', *BMJ: British Medical Journal*, 322(7294), 1115.

¹⁵⁹ There are highly specialized statistical methods developed for collecting representative data in so-called hard-to-reach or hidden populations, such as Respondent Driven Sampling (RDS), but these do rest on certain preconditions that are not always present among trafficking victims. For more information about RDS, please see footnote 69 above.

which you are reaching the reported, identified victims and then 2) the extent to which one estimates or goes through the reported [victims] to the total.

Administrative data, which comprises a noteworthy amount of TIP data, is not representative of either trafficking victims or traffickers because it refers only to those instances that come to the attention of the authorities and are captured in administrative datasets. It may include, for example, victims who are formally identified by the authorities and, in some countries, victims who are informally identified by NGOs. But it excludes those victims who are entirely unidentified and essentially invisible. Indeed, most data from trafficking victims comes from victims who have been formally identified and assisted. However, many trafficking victims are never identified (for example, because of poor identification processes, limited capacity of anti-trafficking professionals, individuals not understanding or agreeing that they have been trafficked, unwillingness of authorities to identify trafficking victims or because of a conscious decision on the part of victims to avoid formal identification). And many identified trafficking victims are never assisted (for example, those who decline to be labeled as “trafficked”, those who are unsatisfied with available assistance or those who do not wish to return home or be returned home through an assistance program). These two groups – identified but unassisted victims and unidentified trafficking victims – are of unknown size, boundaries and nature and it is not known to what extent they are represented by the experiences and characteristics of assisted victims, including how this might fluctuate from place to place and over time.

Moreover, assisted victims may represent a particular sub-group of trafficking victims who may be systematically different from other trafficking victims. A range of factors inform who can be categorized as an assisted victim, including individual characteristics, social or cultural norms, policy or legislative frameworks, how programs are designed and funded, political commitment to anti-trafficking and so on. A victim’s education, age, geographical location, personal experiences and social networks (including family relations) may play a role in their knowledge of and ability or willingness to access and accept assistance, including different types of assistance. Social and cultural norms may impact what forms of trafficking are recognized, what types of victims are offered assistance and whether individuals are willing to accept assistance. The legislative and policy framework may also influence who is (and is not) assisted (for example, when national law and policy focus on one aspect of trafficking or one profile of trafficking victims).¹⁶⁰ Thus, there is a range of experiences not captured in assisted cases. As one TIP researcher explained:

We rely too much on information from identified cases [trafficking victims]. And I think we understand that the vast majority [of trafficking victims] are unidentified and there’s a real challenge [because] the characteristics of their experiences are quite different from those that we know. And so I think it’s important to access those unidentified [trafficking victims] much more than we do and to draw on their experiences in terms of our analysis.

Representativeness is also an issue in criminal justice data, which includes only those cases that have entered the criminal justice process. This raises questions of *about whom* it is representative. One study of convicted traffickers discussed precisely these limitations in the presentation of its findings:

¹⁶⁰ Surtees, R. and S. Craggs (2010) *Beneath the surface. Methodological issues in research and data collection with assisted trafficking victims*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Organization for Migration and Washington, D.C., United States: NEXUS Institute, p. 58-60. See also Brunovskis, A. and R. Surtees (2010) ‘Untold Stories: Biases and Selection Effects in Research with Victims of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation’, *International Migration*, 48(4), pp. 1-37; and Brunovskis, A. and R. Surtees (2007) *Leaving the past behind? When victims of trafficking decline assistance*. Oslo, Norway: Fafo and Washington, D.C., United States: NEXUS Institute.

... this document can only present the profile of traffickers who have been arrested and charged and only to a very limited extent that of traffickers who have not been arrested and have not come into contact with the authorities. Likewise, it is important to remember that the findings of this report are true for traffickers who trafficked in [the country] and are not necessarily applicable to traffickers elsewhere.¹⁶¹

Caution is, therefore, needed in terms of how data about particular samples and groups are used and what they purport to represent. It is essential to be clear and transparent about what particular samples do and do not represent and to avoid generalizing conclusions regarding a wider population than the sample and sampling strategy permit.

In summary: Representativeness is a substantial challenge in the field of TIP due to the lack of a sampling frame. It is important to consider what type of sampling is best suited to a specific data collection project, including being clear about what population the data is and is not representative of. Generalizing conclusions to a wider population than the sample and sampling strategy permit leads to inaccurate analysis and findings.

Assess access to a sample

Depending on the type of data collection, access to the sample may present challenges that need to be considered. Access will have been considered as part of design and planning in Stage #1: Design and Planning (*Identify data sources and data providers – Assess possible data sources*) but in Stage #2, there are also practical issues to be considered. This includes: having sufficient time and resources to access the data collection sample; being able to access the sample safely and ethically; the role of gatekeepers; building trust and cooperation with data providers; the variable priority given to TIP in different settings; political dynamics and sensitivities. Issues to be taken into account for the collection of primary data will be different from those relating to secondary data.

Time and resources are needed to be able to access any sample. Some data providers such as police or social services may not have sufficient time or resources to provide access to different data sources. Administrative data will require some degree of processing and likely also anonymization and other protections, which are time consuming and expensive. Time and resources will also be needed on the part of data collectors to reach out to and coordinate with data providers when collecting primary data. Secondary data sources also involve different resource considerations including the costs involved in preparing data so that it can be understood by others and shared safely and ethically.

It is also important to be able to access the research sample safely and ethically (for example, in a way that does not identify respondents as trafficking victims to their family or community environments, nor risk disclosing their association with trafficking). For instance, contacting former victims by letter to request an interview may risk exposing their trafficking status to their families or others in the community. In some settings, security and safety concerns can effectively bar access to an entire sample (or parts thereof). There may also be legal provisions that influence access to secondary data (for example, whether government data can be shared). One TIP researcher described variable access to samples relevant for TIP research and data collection:

How you collect your data on reported trafficking victims would depend on the authorities, the responsiveness of the authorities in particular countries to provide

¹⁶¹ Levenkron, N. (2007) "Another Delivery from Tashkent". *Profile of the Israeli Trafficker*. Israel: Hotline for Migrant Workers, pp. 11-12.

information, the extent to which the data is actually collected by those authorities, the extent to which there is legislation, etc..

Often, access to a research sample will go through **gatekeepers** (that is people or institutions in positions to either grant or deny access, formally or informally). Denying access to trafficking victims may, for example, be intended to protect victims from what may be traumatizing interviews and to not overburden them with requests for research participation. That being said, some service providers may be less inclined to facilitate access to trafficking victims for other reasons, such as in order to avoid criticism of their organization and the work they do with trafficking victims, because they are overburdened with work, because they don't see the value in the research and so on.

Good practice. Assess access to a sample

Identify safe and ethical ways to access the data collection sample.

Identify gatekeepers who can assist in accessing the sample.

Allocate sufficient time and resources to access the sample.

Consider biases and limitations that emerge from the nature of access and the sample.

Consider when and where data is collected and be transparent about how this influences the data.

Gatekeepers also impact access to traffickers and criminal justice data. For example, data collection about incarcerated traffickers will require interacting with the relevant authorities such as the Ministry of Justice or prison authorities. Access to court documents and investigative files will also require seeking access from criminal justice institutions. One TIP study on human traffickers noted as one of its limitations the difficulties faced in accessing traffickers as data sources:

The voices of the people who are the subject of the study – the traffickers themselves – are missing. We attempted to hear them directly through personal interviews and turned to the Prison Service and the various attorneys who have represented them over the years, to help us locate interview subjects. However, we did not get cooperation in time for the position paper to be submitted for printing.¹⁶²

Access is also influenced by trust; not all data providers may be willing to cooperate in data collection. One National Rapporteur-equivalent mechanism described this constraint in the office's initial efforts to gather data from the different organizations and institutions that hold TIP data in the country. She noted that in the early days of the office's work trust and suspicion influenced cooperation with some data providers:

In the beginning, it was a matter of trust as far as the [our office] and as far as sharing of information and data.in some NGOs there was some suspicions of giving [data], be willing to collect this data [for us]. There was certain suspicion of giving data [to us].

Time (and sometimes quite substantial periods of time) is generally needed to build trust with data providers. One criminal justice actor explained that this is a factor in working with criminal justice stakeholders:

It is important to establish a relationship with the key prosecutors and judges and police... That's going to take some time. But it's time... well worth spending. And then

¹⁶² Levenkron, N. (2007) "Another Delivery from Tashkent". *Profile of the Israeli Trafficker*. Israel: Hotline for Migrant Workers, pp. 11-12.

based on that, you'll have more opportunities to get information that goes just beyond the numbers [of investigations or convictions].

The low priority given to TIP data collection by some organizations or institutions also can inhibit access. Building a TIP data collection system relies on the engagement of key data providers, not all of which prioritize this work. As one National Rapporteur explained:

Each organization is collecting its own data based on their own interests. And we couldn't manage to build that [data collection] together with them...sometimes it is frustrating because it is due to their lack of commitment in providing the minimum [information] necessary.... There is an obligation to exchange data but the extent, the commitment, the quality varies.

There may also be political dynamics and sensitivities associated with TIP data collection, which limit access to some data sources and data providers. For instance, government officials in more constrained political systems or where TIP is a sensitive issue may not be willing or be permitted to participate in data collection and civil society in such settings may not feel able or even safe to do so. Access to trafficking victims may be less possible in countries where governments used restrictive assistance models such as closed shelters. There may also be restrictions on accessing populations where trafficking victims may be found, such as in the prostitution arena in countries where prostitution is illegal or in irregular detention facilities in countries where there are political sensitivities around irregular migration. Other factors influencing the decision of an organization or institution to withhold access to data could include proprietary concerns or might relate to concerns about the qualifications of those requesting access to data.

In summary: Access to a data collection sample is influenced by various practical factors including time, resources and trust as well as the priority that is given to TIP data collection in different political settings. This requires considering biases and limitations that emerge from the nature of access and the sample and being clear and transparent about how they may influence the data and findings.



Select, design and test data collection tools

The selection of suitable data collection tools is important in ensuring data quality. To a large extent, the selection of an approach and method narrows down the range of tools to be considered. But it is nonetheless important at this stage to consider what tool(s) will best answer the data collection questions. Each data collection tool has its strengths and limitations, which must be assessed relative to the specific project and then also taken into account in the process of data analysis, including limitations and biases linked to the tool(s). For example, when seeking to understand traffickers' motivations, an anonymous, self-administered questionnaire may yield more honest answers and a higher rate of disclosure than an in-depth interview where the respondent may answer in ways that they think are more acceptable to the interviewer. By contrast, when studying victims' decisions and choices in their lives after trafficking, an in-depth interview in a location where the individual feels comfortable is likely to yield more detailed and useful information than a

self-administered, structured survey with limited scope for reflection or a focus group discussion in which they may feel less able to speak freely about difficulties faced.

It is beyond the scope of this publication to outline the strengths and limitations of different tools that may be used in TIP data collection. However, we would stress that those selecting, designing and testing data collection tools must be conscious of each tool's strengths as well as the range of potential limitations associated with each and make choices to mitigate these. Such limitations need also to be taken into account in the analysis of the data later on, as will be discussed in Stage #4: Data Analysis.

Select, design and test data collection tools

- Use or modify existing data collection tools
- Design new data collection tools
- Develop guidelines for data collectors
- Prepare explanatory information and referral materials
- Test data collection tools
- Consider the use of technology in designing data collection tools

Both the selection of appropriate data collection tools (existing, modified or newly developed) and clearly delineated instructions for their correct use reduce the likelihood of errors occurring and maintains the integrity of the data collection.¹⁶³ In addition to guidelines for data collectors, explanatory information about the data collection tools will need to be prepared, including referral information when collecting data from trafficking victims and other vulnerable persons who may be in need of assistance. Once designed it will be important to test those tools and consider options also for the use of technology in the implementation of data collection tools.

Use or modify existing data collection tools

It is useful to consider how similar data collection efforts have been conducted including the extent to which existing tools were appropriate and effective and may be applied to the current data collection effort. A useful contribution to TIP data collection efforts would be the increased sharing of data collection tools including when and how challenges were faced in their implementation. Many organizations and institutions do not have the capacity to design their own data collection tools. Sharing existing tools and guidance can help organizations or institutions with less experience in TIP data collection to ask questions and collect data based on tools that have been tested and proven and, thus, constitute existing good practice in the field. As one TIP expert recommended:

What could be really useful... is to develop some standardized data collection instruments, as a standardized way of asking questions... And it would be a lot more straightforward because you wouldn't have to reinvent the wheel each time. [To have] a series of basic questions that you could [ask].

However, the appropriateness of such an approach needs to be considered on a case-by-case basis, recognizing that some projects will need tailored and carefully derived tools. Moreover, any standardized tools would need to be accompanied by clear guidance on application, the strength and limitations of the tools themselves and any issues and problems faced in past application. The application of existing tools may not be suitable for more sensitive topics and projects, nor in interacting with some types of research participants.

Even the most robust tools may require significant modification to questions or the wording of the questions as well as the way that the tool is applied. It is also necessary to assess whether the tools are appropriate to use in collecting data from a different source than the one originally intended or whether and to what extent the instrument should be modified.

¹⁶³ ORI (2005) *Responsible Conduct in Data Management*. United States: Office of Research Integrity.

Regardless, researchers will require appropriate skills in designing or modifying research tools.

There are also specificities that need attending to when designing, testing and adapting data collection tools. Tools need to be culturally appropriate and tailored to the specific context in which data collection is to take place. Adjustments will also be needed when tools are to be used with different types of respondents (for example, children vs adults as well as a range of other characteristics). Language considerations are also paramount; language should be tailored to the intended data sources and data providers. In some cases this may be about quality assurance in the language itself, with translation and back translations to ensure accuracy and appropriateness. In other cases this may be about modifications to more or less formal language, higher or lower levels of education, different comprehension levels and so on.

Good practice. Use or modify existing data collection tools

- Identify existing tools from similar data collection efforts.
- Assess the existing tool for possible adaptation to the specific data collection effort and with different data sources.
- Adapt the existing data collection tools, if possible.
- Ensure that any existing or modified tools are accompanied by guidance and adequate skills.
- Adapt tools to the specific context, language and data sources.

Testing and piloting are also good practice when using or modifying existing tools, as will be discussed below (see Stage #2: Data Collection, *Select, design and test data collection tools – Test data collection tools*). Moreover, the use of existing tools also does not preclude the need for the appropriate expertise in the use of these tools on the part of both data collectors and supervisors.

In summary: In some cases, it may be possible to use or modify existing tools from similar data collection efforts. This requires care in any needed adaptations, relative to the specific data collection effort and with different data sources. It also requires adaptations in language. Using existing tools will also require developing or modifying guidance in the use of the tools.

Design new data collection tools

Designing a data collection tool requires starting from the overall research topic and questions and thinking about how to get answers to these questions. This will be done differently depending on the specific data collection effort. For example, if conducting a survey to determine if someone is trafficked, it will be necessary to determine the different indicators that can assess if someone is a trafficking victim and then use these indicators for assessing and measuring. By contrast, if the intention is to understand the nature of a victim’s life after trafficking, this may involve a series of research questions and thematic lines of inquiry on individual well-being, family relationships, community dynamics, etc. around which questions are crafted. To design a data collection tool, it is important to ask what information needs to be collected to answer the overarching topic and research questions. This requires being very clear about what the project is looking to ask and answer.

The process of designing data collection tools involves identifying different categories or themes from the research question and formulating questions within these domains. It also involves limiting the number of potentially relevant questions to be manageable without eliminating entire themes or important categories. The need for data must be balanced against the need to minimize respondent burden; lengthy data collection tools are less likely to be completed or capture high quality data.¹⁶⁴

Any data collection tool needs to make sense to research participants and be something that they are able to answer. This was highlighted by different trafficking victims we have interviewed for various studies:

What could be better in this interview?... What about the length of the interview? It was very good and the time passed so quickly. How were the questions that I asked you? How did you find them? They were very good. They were questions that made me talk. (Albanian woman trafficked for sexual exploitation).

Asking questions in a way that we could understand well like this is very good. (Woman from Myanmar trafficked for forced marriage)

The time was appropriate as it was neither too long nor too quick. The type of questions, it was easy for me to understand and to answer. (Cambodian man trafficked for fishing)

This means paying careful attention to: the scope of the questions (that is, seeking information that is specific not abstract or general); the wording of the questions (that is, making sure they are clear, comprehensible, appropriate, specific and not difficult to answer); and the sequence of questions in terms of logic and flow (that is, whether questions are ordered by content, from broad to specific questions). Common *don'ts* in question design include: asking double barreled questions (that is, questions that touch on more than one issue); the use of double negatives; negatively phrased questions; biased or leading questions; questions with built in assumptions; the use of abbreviations or slang; ambiguous phrasing of questions; and questions that require recall from an unrealistic time frame).¹⁶⁵

Good practice. Design new data collection tools

Develop data collection tools that are appropriate in nature and scope for the project and data sources.

Ensure tools are able to collect sufficient and relevant information for the project.

Align the time needed to complete the tool with the time that data sources or data providers have available.

Ensure tools align with the capacities and resources of those collecting data.

Design tools with attention to sensitivities around gender, social equity and other power dynamics.

Consider the translation of data collection questions into other languages and dialects.

¹⁶⁴ Burns, K. et al. (2008) 'A guide for the design and conduct of self-administered surveys of clinicians', *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 179(3), pp. 245-252.

¹⁶⁵ Leavy, P. (2017) *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based, and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches*. New York, United States: The Guilford Press, p. 103; and Ruel, E. et al. (2016) *The practice of survey research: Theory and applications*. Thousand Oaks, United States: SAGE Publishing, pp. 51-56.

Response formats provide a framework for answering the question posed. As such, it is also important to develop succinct and unbiased response formats, either “open” (free text) or “closed” (structured).¹⁶⁶

The overall layout and structure of the data collection tool also needs to be considered. In the case of data collection with trafficking victims, it is good practice to sequence questions in ways that do not feel too intrusive. One reference text, for instance, suggests that survey questions focused on issues related to measuring forced labor and trafficking “do not need to be grouped together in a single section of the questionnaire, but can be scattered in different sections so as to help allay respondents’ fears of talking about sensitive issues”.¹⁶⁷

Care is also needed in the wording of sensitive questions to avoid non-responses or upsetting or even traumatizing research participants. Tools and instruments should respond to sensitivities around gender, social equity and other power dynamics, as well as sensitivities around trafficking itself. Such considerations are also important in other types of data collection (for example, when collecting data from anti-trafficking professionals who may be also influenced by power dynamics within an institution, their place in the professional hierarchy and whether and to what extent they have the authority to speak about specific issues). This is also important in conducting key informant interviews (for example, when studying the effectiveness of prosecution or victim assistance programs in which they are involved).

Tools should collect sufficient and relevant information for the specific data collection exercise to be able to answer the overall research question. One criminal justice expert highlighted the type of detail needed by his office to effectively track the prosecution of TIP cases:

... it was high detail. Information included the charge, the gender of the victim and of the subject... age, the specific subdivision or subsection of the TIP law that was being used in the case. Geographical information like where the case took place, the nationality of the victim. The kind of case, whether it was a sex trafficking case or a labor case was included. And then the status of the case. So as the case proceeded [through the criminal justice process], that [status] would change over time until at the end it would be a verdict of one kind or another. That would be also included in the database.

Special care is needed in designing instruments to collect data for more complex and less established topics, particularly as part of on-going data collection. One NGO service provider collecting data about trafficking victims assisted by the organization described struggling to construct a tool that successfully captured more complex elements of victims’ lives and the services needed and received:

For example, how should we log assistance? What type of information do you need for [collecting data about] assistance? [...] The database also doesn’t capture cases of re-trafficking so it’s hard to link up if one person gets re-trafficked, you have to re-enter them as a separate case so there’s duplication in the cases... How to capture secondary beneficiaries [victims’ families]? Nobody really asks about this, nobody is asking about it in the government, but it’s a huge part of our work... Does the database only log cases of victims of trafficking or should they be logging all cases of assistance?

¹⁶⁶ Burns, K. et al. (2008) ‘A guide for the design and conduct of self-administered surveys of clinicians’, *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 179(3), pp. 245-252.

¹⁶⁷ ILO (2012) *Hard to see, harder to count. Survey guidelines to estimate forced labour of adults and children*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Labour Organization.

Tools also need to be designed so that they are not too time-consuming to administer and they align with the amount of time that the data source or data providers are able and willing to commit. Tools should not create an institutional data burden either for those providing or gathering the data. **Respondent burden** refers to the degree to which respondents experience their participation as too stressful and/or time consuming and may lead to **respondent fatigue**, leading to lower response rates and lower quality responses.¹⁶⁸ The tool and the amount of data to be collected with the tool should be realistic. It is not useful to have a comprehensive data collection tool that will never be completed in its entirety and can threaten the quality of the data overall. For instance, in collecting case management data about assisted victims, it is important that data fields or questions are feasible and realistic to avoid a high degree of missing data. Where data collection is too ambitious (that is, too many data fields or questions), there is likely to be a high degree of missing data, as one service provider involved in data collection about assisted victims noted:

The whole process of collecting this level of detail has problems. It takes a long time to ask the questions and then fill in the information. And it is stressful in many cases to be asked such specific questions, especially about the trafficking experience.¹⁶⁹

Thus, data collection efforts need to balance what needs to be known against the degree of information that can be realistically (and ethically) collected.

Time and resource constraints often limit the amount of data collected. For example, service providers often don't have time to collect or enter a lot of detail about each victim they assist, which makes it necessary to consider what information is realistic to collect when partnering with or supporting service provider data collection. As one TIP expert explained:

One of the things that we do try to do is to make the [data collection] forms as concise and compact as possible. ...however nice it might be to have an extremely long form, practically people won't use it. ...so with a ten-page form and they don't answer three of the pages.

One National Rapporteur-equivalent mechanism advocated for a bottom-up approach in designing its data collection system, consulting with data providers about what was feasible and realistic in terms of what could be collected:

We designed our questionnaires with the data providers and balanced this between what they already had and what we needed. And then we presented to them what type of information and knowledge we could produce. This was essential for them to incorporate the questionnaire into their workflow.

Data collection tools also need to be designed to align with the capacities and resources of the organization or institution collecting data. One UN staff described developing a tool for an NGO partner to support data collection:

... we developed a legal assistance outcome record, which is very simple for our partners to use. There are real challenges for many of our partners in documenting their cases in a rigorous and comprehensive way. So we use a coded template so they can check very common types of labor rights abuses for specific cases. ...we break it down into various aspects of case management that we would want to look at. So one was the subject of the abuse. How many men and women were involved in the case?

¹⁶⁸ Leavy, P. (2017) *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based, and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches*. New York, United States: The Guilford Press, p. 107.

¹⁶⁹ Surtees, R. and S. Craggs (2010) *Beneath the surface. Methodological issues in research and data collection with assisted trafficking victims*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Organization for Migration and Washington, D.C., United States: NEXUS Institute, p. 42.

Through what channel did they actually resolve the case? Was it informal mediation? Was it a hearing in court? Was it an order by a government official? How long did it take to resolve? What were the remedies provided? Was there some kind of sanction applied to the offender? ...what we've found is for most of our partners, regardless of if they're government, trade union or NGO, they can fit their cases within the framework of this template pretty effectively.

When working in a multi-language setting, it is also important to consider translation of questions into other languages and dialects. Care and time are needed in the translation process. As one researcher explained:

[Good practice is] thinking through the wording of the questions in ways that are easily translatable and then vetting those questions, translating them, back-translating them, vetting them with community members to know that they are well understood within the local population.

Developing tools across languages also involves considering how best to formulate questions and what terms are used, particularly in relation to sensitive issues. The translation of tools is discussed further below (*Select, design and test data collection tools – Test data collection tools*).

In summary: New data collection tools should be appropriate for the project and data sources and be able to provide sufficient and relevant information. Taking into account the time available to data sources and data providers will improve the likelihood of collecting complete datasets. It is also important to consider the capacities and resources of those collecting data when designing a new tool. Tools should be designed with attention to sensitivities around gender, social equity and other power dynamics. It is also important to consider the translation of data collection questions into other languages and dialects.

Develop guidelines for data collectors

Alongside the development of tools should be the development of guidance for data collectors on how these are to be implemented. For questionnaires, for instance, this may include: explanatory comments to questions that may be misunderstood; guidance on how to administer questions (for example, whether to ask open questions or present a list of alternative answers); or if and when to probe or try to elicit more comprehensive answers from respondents. If the tool is a structured or semi-structured interview guideline, it is also useful to provide guidance specifically on which topics each series of question is meant to illuminate, as well as whether or how the sequence of questions may be changed to correspond with the flow of a conversation. When tools are self-administered, clear guidance will be needed for the respondent to ensure that questions are clear and understood, answers address the questions and the questionnaire is completed. Questions should clearly indicate the type of responses required including, when appropriate, the desired notation (for example, check or circle). Operational definitions should be included before potentially ambiguous questions, as should clear instructions to skip non-applicable questions. This guidance should be included in the questionnaire itself as well as any cover letter accompanying the questionnaire.¹⁷⁰

Data collectors also require guidance when collecting data from secondary sources, for instance, victim case files, court documents and so on. This would include, for instance, guidance on what information is to be captured or instructions for data providers from

¹⁷⁰ Burns, K. et al. (2008) 'A guide for the design and conduct of self-administered surveys of clinicians', *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 179(3), pp. 245-252.

institutions on what variables they should be collecting or sharing. Guidance is particularly important when there are multiple data collectors involved in gathering the same data, to enhance **inter-rater reliability** (that is, to ensure consistency of data from one researcher to the next). Guidance offers an important tool to ensure fidelity in the process of data collection.

Guidance is also needed on how information is recorded (for example, as notes, observations or recordings), the suitability of which will depend on the individual instrument as well as the context of data collection. The benefits of audio recording include: the researcher can concentrate and listen and respond better to the respondent; the discussion flows better without the distraction of note taking; a recording is accurate; there is less risk of subjectivity of the data collector; the respondent may feel less observed if the recording is discrete; and there is the opportunity to go back over material during analysis. However, some respondents may not be

comfortable being recorded and in some social, political and cultural settings respondents may have specific concerns about being recorded. Recording also requires transcription, which is time consuming and, thus, requires an adequate time frame and sufficient resources. Technological tools like transcription and translation software may be useful in this process but will require quality assurance procedures. Note-taking may be preferable in some settings and here too there are technological options that can support this process with options to write up notes on different devices. Questionnaires or surveys may also be administered on various types of devices including smart phones and iPads.

How data is recorded will be determined by the individual respondent, in line with procedures for informed consent. Thus, guidelines for data collection should cover alternative means of recording data if the respondent does not consent to the standard approach for the project. Guidance information should also include information about any power dynamics that may arise in administering the tool, with information about how this can be managed. While this may be covered in large part by the data collection manual (see Stage #2: Data Collection, *Develop a data collection manual*), it is important that this information is also handy and accessible to data collectors alongside the tool itself.

In summary: Tools should be accompanied by guidelines for implementation, including how data is to be recorded. Guidance will be needed for both primary and secondary data collection tools. Guidance information should also include information about any power dynamics that may arise in administering the tool, with information about how this can be managed.

Prepare explanatory information and referral materials

Along with data collection tools, it is necessary to prepare explanatory material about the data collection project for research participants (data sources and data providers). This material should inform research participants about the data collection initiative and their specific role in it. This should, at minimum, explain:

Good practice. Develop guidelines for data collectors

Develop guidelines for data collectors in the implementation of data collection tools.

Guidelines should be specific to the data collection tool.

Develop guidelines for secondary data collection as well as for primary data collection.

Ensure that guidelines provide information about how data is to be documented.

Provide guidance on how to manage any issues that may arise in administering the tool.

- the data collection topic and purpose;
- the types of questions to be asked;
- who is involved in data collection and will have access to data (that is, how data will be handled, used and stored);
- how confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained;
- potential risks and benefits of participation;
- how, where and with whom the information will be used, shared and presented;
- an explanation of the procedures for consent including the option to fully or partially withdraw consent at any stage without negative consequences (for example, in terms of victims' access to services); and
- contact information for the person and institution responsible for the data collection in case of any follow-up questions or issues.

This material should be given to research participants for their later reference and use, as needed. This is discussed in detail in Stage #1: Design and Planning (*Develop or apply legal and ethical guidelines and protocols – Ensure voluntary and informed consent*).

Some modifications may be needed to the explanatory information to ensure that it is appropriate to the research participant's age and maturity, native language and educational background. The research participant should be able to keep the material afterward in case of any questions or concerns that may arise. When data collection participants are unable to read, it will be necessary to explain this information verbally. And, in all instances, the process of informed consent requires that the information contained in the project description be fully explained before data collection commences.

For some data collection projects, explanatory information will need to be accompanied by referral information, to inform research participants about available assistance and support that they may require and how they can access this assistance. This is most pressing in the case of research done directly with trafficking victims and other vulnerable persons. Referral sheets should be shared with and explained to research participants during the data collection exercise so that they have the information needed to access support afterward. This is discussed in more detail below (see Stage #2: Data Collection, *Refine legal and ethical guidelines and protocols for data collection – Support referrals for assistance and support*). Part of this process is also the ability of the data collector to respond appropriately to respondent distress, not just with a referral but with immediate, on-site trauma-informed responses. This will likely require training, also

Good practice. Prepare explanatory information and referral material

Prepare explanatory information about the data collection project and all aspects of the how data collection will be conducted.

Present explanatory information in a clear and accessible way.

Include details about informed consent and options to withdraw from participation.

Include contact details for the agency or institution conducting data collection in case any follow-up questions arise.

Present explanatory information in written form so that the participant can keep and refer back as needed.

Verbally explain the information material when a participant is not literate.

Tailor explanatory information to the age, maturity, language and education of the participant.

Develop written referral information to be given to participants.

Communicate any limits of confidentiality to participants before starting data collection.

discussed in more detail below (see Stage #2: Data Collection, *Carry out training and on-going supervision in data collection*).

Even when vulnerable persons are not involved in TIP data collection, it may be useful to develop referral information for different types of key informants who would benefit from information about protection and prosecution options (for example, service providers, law enforcement, community leaders and so on). Some professionals may not have access to all information about anti-trafficking assistance and support and may benefit from this information, not least the opportunity to refer victims they may identify in their operational work.

In summary: It is important to prepare explanatory information for all aspects of data collection including the project itself, contact information for data collectors and ethical issues such as informed consent, limits of confidentiality and options to withdraw. Information should be clear and accessible, tailored to age and evolving capacities, maturity, language and education and be provided in both written and verbal formats. Written referral information should be given to different types of research participants (trafficking victims as well as anti-trafficking stakeholders who may benefit from this information in their anti-trafficking work).

Test data collection tools

Data quality depends on how well participants understand the questions being asked. Comprehension may be affected by language skills, education and culture and so on. As such, all data collection tools should be tested and revised as needed. Pre-testing tools may involve preliminary testing exercises, such as data collectors interviewing each other, or completing self-administered surveys or questionnaires. **Pre-testing** evaluates whether respondents interpret questions in a consistent manner, as intended by the data collector, and judges the appropriateness of each question. Data collectors may also ask “test respondents” to determine how improvements can be made, including changes to questions, eliminating questions or writing new questions. **Pilot testing** is a small-scale trial where a few participants from the research sample are engaged to test the research instrument and comment on the mechanics of the research tool, including: any problems with the guidance/instructions; when questions or terminology is not clear; formatting and typographical issues; the flow of questions; any unusual, redundant, irrelevant or poorly worded questions and responses; and so on. This is also an opportunity to determine the time required to complete the research tool. Pre-testing and pilot testing minimize the chance that research participants will misinterpret questions, fail to recall what is requested or misrepresent their true responses. The information obtained through pre-testing and pilot testing should be used to improve the data collection tool.¹⁷¹

Testing should be done with the relevant target group and with respect to culture, age, gender and so on. One TIP researcher described months of preparation for the various tasks involved, including piloting and field-testing instruments:

...we usually have a three-day meeting where we go through question by question, every single thing that's on the study instrument in addition to the study protocol of course and the ethics. We spend endless hours, painful, painful endless hours going through each study question to make sure it's phrased to get the answer that we think we want and making sure to have the interpreters there so that they can tell us what it

¹⁷¹ Burns, K. et al. (2008) 'A guide for the design and conduct of self-administered surveys of clinicians', *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 179(3), pp. 245-252.

means in the local language. ...the questions are all prepared so that we know exactly what kinds of answers we're going to get and we don't find out when we've interviewed a thousand people that that wasn't at all the question we were really wanting to ask. Just a huge amount of preparation for these studies, a huge amount of preparation in order to get really robust findings.

Some TIP data collection efforts may require the translation of tools and materials, which also need to be tested. Care and attention are needed to language in the design and testing of tools. As one TIP expert noted:

If there is translation needed, [we need to] test out how that translation is, has been done for the data collection tools and also for the responses. So first of all, the tools, translating first into the language that is going to be used for the respondent.

But then translating those questions back again to ensure that they come back in the format that is intended in the first language. And then similarly for the responses as well.

Good practice. Test data collection tools

Test all tools and revise or adjust as needed.

Be open to multiple rounds of testing, if needed.

Do not let time constraints prevent testing and piloting of tools.

Test the translation of tools and adjust as needed.

Test the tool with the specific target group; test with respect to culture, age, gender, etc.

This is not necessarily only a question of linguistically correct translation, but also requires culturally appropriate translation. For example, some terms may technically have the same meaning but not be used in general conversation. This can significantly alter the tone of the question and, therefore, the response and steps need to be taken to avoid these distortions.

Time and resources need to be set aside for testing and subsequent modifications. And yet this is often not carefully budgeted. One TIP researcher described how plans for testing were sidelined by the commissioning agency due to time constraints:

...I developed a questionnaire that initially was going to be pilot tested. However [the implementing organization] was operating with very constrained timelines. So we did not end up pilot testing the initial questionnaire and it was pilot tested with one participant in each country on the get-go, prior to conducting the data collection. [...] I was told, "No, no, no it needs to be done by such a date" and so we rushed everything, moved things really fast.

In summary: Tools should be tested with the relevant target group (for example, with respect to culture, age, gender and language) and then revised as needed. Multiple rounds of testing and revision may be needed and adequate time and resources should be allocated for this process. Testing is also important in the translation of tools.

Consider the use of technology in designing data collection tools

Various technological options may be available in the implementation of data collection. This might include, for example, data collection being administered through a smartphone application. One TIP researcher described an application designed specifically for research:

They have an app where you can custom design your own research app on mobile phones. That is then automatically encrypted and sent to the cloud. That's available for people in a number of contexts as long as they have internet access and a computer or a smartphone.

Technology can also be useful in identifying any missing data, allowing the researcher to then follow-up and complete those fields or questions. Technology can also support the secure transfer and storage of data. One TIP researcher described using cloud-based tools to support TIP data collection:

[For example, there are] cloud-based storage systems that provide their own built-in encryption and redundancy for protection so that somebody isn't driving home with 50 completed interviews and the car runs off the road and

everything gets destroyed. Then you've lost data. Or [if] it falls into somebody's hands and you have risk of exposure of confidential information, including names or identity documents and so forth. So, you put it into a phone right away, it uploads to a cloud, there's also protective mechanisms where it immediately deletes from that phone so that if the phone is confiscated the data has already been transferred. It's in an encrypted system. It can get downloaded and reviewed in real time. So, if somebody has missed some questions you can check that so you can improve quality. And you can improve confidentiality through some of these new technologies for electronic data collection through these mobile devices and uploaded through sort of cloud-based storage systems.

While recognizing the potential of such options, it is also important to consider security risks when using technology. One TIP researcher noted the potential breaches that may occur when using technology, while stressing the value of leveraging technology:

.... The fact that you are glued into an electronic format doesn't necessarily mean everything is safer. In fact, it could be [if] somebody hacks in or a phone or a device that has a lot of data is lost or stolen, or seized, you could be looking at other risks. But I do think that we're moving toward systems that do provide better protections than the old systems of paper and pen. Particularly in field settings where there is risk of something being lost or stolen or confiscated by authorities or people who really want to do harm.

In many lower resource countries, online options are constrained by limited internet access, unreliable service, low bandwidth and the high cost of internet services. Moreover, there are resource and capacity issues, particularly when using new technologies for larger-scale and on-going data collection efforts. One TIP data collection staff described difficulties faced in a project where social workers collected data about assisted trafficking victims by using smartphones or tablets. The project significantly overestimated social workers' technical skills, including their ability to complete forms on smartphones or tablets:

It was a tablet or smartphone database system. We had an application that we developed in house that caseworkers could use on phones and that we procured and

Good practice. Consider the use of technology in designing data collection tools

Identify technology options that could support or enhance data collection tools.

Asses and weigh any limitations of using a technological option.

Review legislation to ensure that any use of technology is legal and ensure adequate protections.

Consider any possible ethical issues or risks with the use of the technology.

distributed through the project. They could fill out these forms and then refer those cases. That data could be collected centrally and then accessed by caseworkers who were assigned the respective cases. ... we trained all of the caseworkers on the use of the forms and the use of the phones to fill out the forms. And we did several follow-up trainings as well. But we had challenges with access to internet and the basic capacity [of social workers] to use the phones for the purposes of filling out the forms. We had caseworkers who had never used a computer before.

He went on to stress the value of technological approaches and solutions, but only when implemented in line with existing structures and systems:

It's more important to use the systems and the structures that already exist and try to improve upon those in parallel with a technological advance. So, smartphones or computers or internet-based platforms are fine, but they have to be supplemented [by] or build upon an existing framework of data collection and analysis. Otherwise, introducing something completely new and maybe more advanced than what is normal or what is what people are familiar with, it will fail. [...] ...we saw the phones and saw this technology as an incentive in a way. ...but it was more of a hindrance than an incentive. [...] At the data collection level, at the district level and in the field, we are using a paper form. And that's not to say that we couldn't someday establish an application or a smartphone application or even a WhatsApp platform that people could use to share information. But for now, because paper is the way that information is collected and shared at the moment, that's what we're using. And I think part of it is also getting the data collection, these sorts of processes in place and the structures in place to collect this data.

Relationships to technology differ substantially across the world, including within communities and cultures. Its use needs to be case-by-case and align with the users of the technology, including data sources, data providers and data collectors. The use of technology may enhance or undermine data collection when interacting with participants of different ages who have different relationships to technology. This might mean using different types of technologies with different groups of data collectors and research participants. A one TIP researcher explained:

We also need to learn about cutting-edge new research techniques which are being developed and which use technology to good effect, even in resource-constrained settings. ...it's important to use appropriate technologies. Because you want to engage [with respondents]. ... people are thinking about things very differently from how an older generation might. So participatory, active tools and interactive methods might yield much richer datasets.

Whether and how to use technology will also require reviewing legal provisions and requirements, in particular with regard to the protection of personal and sensitive data, to ensure that the tools and software adhere to legal requirements of a country (or, in their absence, the ethical standards of data protection).

In summary: There exist an increasing number of technology options that could support or enhance data collection. But each option must be assessed and weighed in terms of any limitations its use may pose, including in relation to a specific context and different data collectors, data providers and data sources. This also requires considering any possible ethical issues or risks that may arise with the use of the technology. A review of relevant legislation is needed to ensure that any use of technology is legal and affords adequate data protection.



Develop a data collection manual

A data collection manual delineates the agreed process to guide data collection, allows all persons working on the data collection effort to have a common understanding and serves as a resource to be consulted throughout the data collection process. The manual should contain information on the full process of how data collection is to take place, including, but not limited to:

- the topic, purpose and scope of data collection;
- the data collection or research questions;
- data collection approach and method;
- definitions and terminology;
- how to use the data collection tools;
- the process by which data will be collected;
- procedures for submitting datasets;
- legal and ethical protocols and procedures;
- confidential and secure treatment of data;
- standardized quality control procedures (monitoring, detection and remedial action, when appropriate) for early identification and avoidance of problems and errors;¹⁷²
- communication procedures between data collectors and supervisors in the case of any issues during data collection.

In the case of more advanced data collection efforts with multiple stakeholders, one data collection manual may not be sufficient. Rather a set of manuals and guidance should be designed to guide data collection for different stakeholders involved in the process including data collectors, data providers, data processors, data analysts and so on. One National Rapporteur-equivalent mechanism described how the office had developed various manuals and guidance notes to guide TIP data collection efforts:

We have a methodology for collection and analysis of statistical data and also a manual for monitoring and analysis for policy for combating TIP. [...] Manuals will have different aims, depending on the level of technology associated and stakeholders involved and their role. You can have guides on how to insert data, explaining in each question what is intended by it. You can have manuals directed at data on the back end of the system.

The data collection manual needs to be accessible and comprehensible to data collectors and others involved in the process. It should not be overwhelming or intimidating. It will not be able to cover all possible scenarios in the context of data collection, but ideally the data collection manual is a living document, revised and updated over time in response to the realities of data collection. The data collection manual should also be part of a wider process of reflection, discussion and adjustment within the data collection project, which will allow those involved to identify issues and address them collaboratively.

¹⁷² **Quality control** activities are aimed at verifying that data collection is processed according to the manual, including the identification of any issues in data collection and the provision of any necessary mechanisms to correct faulty data collection practices. Quality control refers to activities that take place during and after data collection and may include direct observation of data collection or the regular review of datasets. Standardized protocols increase the likelihood of the early identification and avoidance of problems and errors. Quality control activities preserve data integrity and ensure the validity of data collection results. Quality control during and after data collection may require a sufficient proportion of the project's resources (that is, personnel, time and budget).

The data collection manual does not replace supervision and oversight. There should be a clearly defined communication structure between data collectors and supervisors as part of on-going data collection. When needed, this should track what happens when errors are detected, including any steps for what changes should be undertaken. Training and mentoring may be needed for staff who unintentionally deviate from the original protocol.¹⁷³ Most important is to create an environment where data collectors feel comfortable and confident to ask questions and raise issues if they are unsure or have made a mistake, that they know whom to contact on the project when problems are faced and that they feel able and have the means to do so.

Good practice. Develop a data collection manual

Develop a data collection manual that outlines the process of data collection, including for different data providers.

Delineate instructions and guidelines for all aspects of data collection.

Include data collection tools, procedures, legal and ethical protocols in the data collection manual.

Revise and update the data collection manual over the course of data collection.

In summary: A data collection manual should be developed to outline the data collection process and delineate instructions and guidelines for all aspects of data collection. The data collection manual should be revised and updated over the course of data collection. The data collection manual does not replace supervision and oversight. Clear communication is needed between data collectors and supervisors in on-going data collection work.



Refine legal and ethical guidelines and protocols for data collection

The design of ethical guidelines and protocols is discussed in some detail in Stage #1: Design and Planning (*Develop or apply legal and ethical guidelines and protocols*) and these guidelines and protocols should be incorporated into the data collection manual (discussed above). It is important to have clearly articulated, written guidelines and protocols to address ethical and legal issues that may arise during data collection. In addition, legal and ethical issues should be considered and reconsidered over the course of data collection and in response to issues that emerge.

During this stage of implementation (Stage #2: Data Collection) real world issues will emerge and will likely require reviewing, revisiting and revising the ethical guidelines developed in Stage #1. TIP data collection is likely to involve a raft of complex ethical issues as well as risks that are not possible to anticipate in advance. As such, while protocols for data collection should anticipate potential ethical issues and dilemmas, ethics should be seen as a process, with ethical issues being explored as they arise, both in the field and when working with data. In so doing it is possible to identify and address what some researchers

¹⁷³ NIU (2005) 'Overview of Data Management', *Responsible Conduct in Data Management*. DeKalb, United States: Northern Illinois University.

refer to as “ethically important moments” in research (that is, “the difficult, often subtle, and usually unpredictable situations that arise in the practice of doing research”).¹⁷⁴ As one TIP researcher noted:

... there’s always ethical issues in any kind of research where you’re dealing with activities that are illegal or on the borderline. What are your responsibilities [in different scenarios]? It’s complicated. [What you do] generally comes down to the particularities of it... A lot of these things are really easy when you are sitting around a seminar table [versus in the field].

Refine legal and ethical guidelines and protocols for data collection

- Ensure informed consent
- Implement guidelines and protocols for contacting data providers and research participants
- Ensure anonymity and confidentiality
- Assess when data collection reveals risk or abuse
- Support referrals for assistance and support
- Guard the “best interests of the child” during data collection

Regardless of the specific issues identified, training, mentoring and supervision will be required on the ethical and legal guidelines and protocols developed for the specific data collection effort. This should apply to all individuals involved in data collection, namely data collectors, translators and interpreters, transcribers and various support staff. On-going staff supervision is also needed on ethical and legal issues that arise over the course of any TIP data collection project. An important aspect of ethics and law in practice is to have procedures in place that allow data collectors to bring forward the various issues and problems that they face in their work for discussion and strategizing. As discussed above (see Stage #1: *Design and Planning, Develop or apply legal and ethical guidelines and protocols – Consider the safety and well-being of research participants and data collectors*), all individuals involved in data collection should be aware of the potential for vicarious trauma in TIP data collection and have tools and avenues to manage trauma and stress that they may face as part of their work. This requires clear procedures for communication between data collectors and supervisors as well as an environment of dialogue and discussion, where data collectors and support staff feel safe and confident to raise these issues and difficulties. Communication and dialogue with supervisors may also be needed in instances when data collectors and support staff may have made an error in the field and have concerns about blame or repercussions.

While there are many different types of TIP data collection, some common legal and ethical issues include how to: ensure informed consent; implement guidelines and protocols for contacting data providers and research participants; ensure anonymity and confidentiality; assess when data collection reveals risk or abuse; support referrals for assistance and support; and guard the “best interests of the child” during data collection with children.

Ensure informed consent

Gaining informed consent is complex and complicated. Approaches will necessarily differ depending on the nature of data collection, the context in which data is being collected as well as the data providers and data sources involved. What constitutes informed consent will require careful consideration and articulation in relation to each specific data collection project, research question and participant providing consent. How best this can be achieved requires thought and consideration as well as, in some cases, reflection and adjustment over time and in response to emerging factors.

¹⁷⁴ Guillemin, M. and L. Gillam (2004) ‘Ethics, reflexivity and “ethically important moments”’, *Research in Qualitative Inquiry*, 10(2), pp. 262; and Kelly, L. and M. Coy (2016) ‘Ethics as Process, Ethics in Practice: Researching the Sex Industry and Trafficking’ in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, p. 47.

For instance, gaining informed consent can be complicated in situations where data is collected by service providers about the trafficking victims that they assist and support, including when victims feel gratitude to the service provider leading them to consent to participate. Careful thought is needed about how such data collection is approached including meaningful discussions with beneficiaries as potential respondents. They should be aware of and comfortable with the option to decline to participate, including feeling assured that declining or withdrawal of participation will not translate into any penalty in the provision of assistance or even disappointment or bad feelings on the part of service providers. As one TIP researcher noted:

Good practice. Ensure informed consent

Identify and address any barriers to informed consent with research participants.

Anticipate and explain any potential risks from participation to respondents, particularly in light of social media and other platforms.

Be clear about what participation will and will not mean as part of consent procedures.

Assess whether it is more suitable to use verbal or written consent.

The most basic of ethical considerations is truly informed consent. And if you're in a situation where an organization is providing people with food and clothing and shelter, there's a real question as to whether people can say "no" if they're asked for information.

As noted above (see Stage #1: Design and Planning, *Develop or apply legal and ethical guidelines and protocols – Ensure voluntary and informed consent*), this concern was expressed by practitioners as researchers engaged in one study of the services they provide to beneficiaries, where they found that a number of interviewees were anxious to please and were visibly uncomfortable in discussing problems or complaints about assistance received.¹⁷⁵

Some respondents may expect that participating in data collection will lead to some direct and tangible benefit for them, which needs to be anticipated and addressed in terms of how this may impact on informed consent. In some cases, expectations may be about compensation or the reimbursement of costs, the power dynamics of which need to be anticipated as part of design and planning (see Stage #1: Design and Planning, *Develop or apply legal and ethical guidelines and protocols*) but also adapted as needed over the course of data collection. In other cases, expectations may be about other benefits like receiving assistance or restitution/compensation. It is necessary to spend adequate time with research participants to explain the precise parameters of participation, including being very clear about what will and will not happen as a result of participating in research or data collection. As one TIP researcher explained:

One of the key things is explaining that doing an interview with you is not going to guarantee that [their] problem is solved... That is something that we had major issues with when doing our surveys. We had to be very clear with people [we surveyed] that this would not get them [for example, legal status].

In some cases, victims' thinking around participation in data collection is more nuanced and an inclination to participate in research or data collection need not imply lack of informed consent. One trafficking victim described her decision to participate in research on victim

¹⁷⁵ GAATW (2015) *Briefing Paper: Seeking Feedback from Trafficked Persons on Assistance Services: Principles and Ethics*. Bangkok, Thailand: Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women, p. 6.

assistance not as something that she felt required or obliged to do but as something she wished to do for the NGO that had assisted her:

Is that one of the reasons that you agreed to come? Because [this NGO] has helped you? ...it's not that I feel obliged. But I have received so much assistance from this organization that it's a pleasure for me to come whenever they call me. The things that I have received from [the organization] and [the fact] that I come now for this interview cannot be compared.

Recognizing the often complex layers of decision-making around participation in data collection, particularly when involving trafficking victims, is part of understanding and navigating informed consent.

Gaining informed consent means anticipating and explaining the potential risks of participation in data collection in the short- and long-term, the dynamics around which are different in the current era of the internet and social media. One TIP researcher stressed the need to respect a respondent's decision to participate in research while making very clear to them to risks that this may entail:

I think being aware of [the risk] is the first start. ...is this something that is liable to endanger the person? And for those things you have to have their judgment... ...people have a right to tell their story or a right not to tell their story.... All of that is their choice. But you also have to think about [risk] much more now than you used to... now, with YouTube and all of these other things, you have to think about the fact that even if this person wants to do something, it's incumbent on you to explain what could be the implications.

Risks of participation are not only relevant for trafficking victims as respondents but may also affect professionals who participate in data collection. For instance, organizations working in more constrained political contexts may not be able to safely participate in data collection that may yield negative findings about a country's anti-trafficking response or even evidence of corruption and associated issues. Key informants in such cases may risk reprisals from government stakeholders. Some professionals, for instance under certain jurisdictions, may not be allowed to share information about their anti-trafficking work and participating in data collection may not be allowable or advisable. One criminal justice expert explained that the risks in such cases may apply both to key informants and the data collectors:

What could be quite serious is if a researcher does obtain information from a criminal justice practitioner and then publishes that information. It's possible that under the national law of a particular country that researcher could be liable under their laws for breaching the privacy act and can be prosecuted in that country. ...when I was in [one country], for example, I was working with prosecutors and investigators and they made it clear to me that they could not actually show me the files or provide me with details of the investigation unless I were to sign an agreement that should I then disclose that information outside the criminal justice arena in any kind of report or publication or even verbally outside the criminal justice system of that country that I would be subject to their criminal procedures.

Informed consent can be compromised by time pressures, when data must be collected in short periods of time and with unrealistic time frames. Adjustments to work plans may be needed when inadequate time has been budgeted to gain informed consent. One researcher stressed the distinction between explaining the research project and gaining informed consent:

Sometimes there is pressure to get something done in very short time. And so, therefore, there's not enough time for [respondents and key informants] to really understand what you're doing. And I'm not talking about reading a list of sentences, but to really understand [and consent].

To ensure that consent is informed, it may be advisable to give research participants time to consider their participation and even discuss with trusted others. This is discussed in detail above in Stage #1 (*Develop or apply legal and ethical guidelines and protocols – Ensure voluntary and informed consent*) and further adjustments may be needed to how this is done in practice based on the real-life implementation of data collection. This may cause delays in the data collection process but nonetheless should be handled accordingly.

How consent is to be documented (for example, verbally or in writing) will necessarily differ from context to context and informed consent guidelines and protocols need to take careful account of legal requirements, as well as local norms. In some settings and with some populations, written consent may be meaningless, potentially intimidating or even frightening. In environments where written contracts and agreements are not commonplace, being asked to sign a written consent form may raise concerns and fears among participants. Participants may also not fully understand the written consent form; written consent may not always be suitable when conducting data collection. As one TIP researcher argued:

A signed consent form doesn't mean anything to the people we're dealing with. But also the very signing of a consent form can endanger [the respondent].

Procedures for how to gain and document informed consent will already have been discussed in Stage 1 (*Develop or apply legal and ethical guidelines and protocols – Ensure voluntary and informed consent*). However, determining whether to use written or verbal consent may only be possible once data collection has begun. Adjustments and adaptations may be needed in the field, as well as over time.

In summary: All data collection, no matter the specific nature or scope, must be underpinned by informed consent. Thought should be given to how informed consent is approached and how meaningful discussions around consent are undertaken. This will require assessing potential risks to participation and being clear about what participation will and will not mean as part of consent procedures. Informed consent protocols need to align with legal requirements as well as local norms, including whether to require written or verbal consent. Adjustments may be needed to work plans to ensure that consent is informed.

Implement guidelines and protocols for contacting data providers and research participants

Guidelines and protocols for contacting data providers and research participants in data collection should be carefully designed and implemented. This is important in ensuring that everyone involved in data collection is aware of the process and their role within it and has consented to participate. One trafficking victim from Serbia described being contacted by a service provider that had previously assisted her and the clear explanation of the process which she was given, including being encouraged to decline if she preferred not to participate:

I was asked kindly by the people from [the NGO]. They explained everything [about the interview and research] and I agreed. If anybody can benefit from this information I will be happy.

However, guidelines and protocols, even when designed, are not always followed in practice, which necessarily undermines informed consent and also negatively influences the data collection process. In practice, explanatory information may not have been shared with the relevant respondents in advance; data collection may have been explained unclearly; or there may have been no preparation or explanation at all. One TIP researcher described a study for which she had prepared a recruitment process and introductory procedure that was not followed in practice by the gatekeepers (service providers) involved in contacting potential research participants, primarily child trafficking victims:

Good practice. Implement guidelines and protocols for contacting data providers and research participants

Establish clear and rigorous guidelines and protocols for contacting participants.

Share clear explanatory information with participants in advance of data collection.

Ensure that gatekeepers fully understand and adhere to recruitment criteria.

Consider and adjust the recruitment approach when it is not followed in practice.

I prepared this protocol whereby someone identified as a child protection gatekeeper was to read a letter that explained everything about the [research] process, what kind of questions would be asked, what their rights were, confidentiality and anonymity, the rules in terms of what would happen to the data, who would be listening, the recording, the only people who would be listening to that, how long we had to keep the raw data before we destroyed it, giving them all the information. And then I had asked for this child protection gatekeeper to do the same thing ahead of my coming there [to conduct interviews] ... However, that didn't happen systematically. So there were cases where children didn't even know they were going to be interviewed.

When relying on gatekeepers to contact research participants (for example, trafficking victims), this requires that gatekeepers fully understand and adhere to the recruitment criteria and approach. It also requires that the gatekeepers have similar views and approaches on how data collection and participant recruitment are to be done and, in turn, contact research participants in accordance with these procedures. For instance, some respondent recruitment, if not done correctly, risks outing respondents as trafficking victims to their families and communities in ways that may pose a risk and that certainly breach confidentiality. Some gatekeepers may not understand or fully appreciate the importance of the recruitment protocol in ensuring ethical, safe and robust data collection, which may compromise a participant's informed consent or well-being in other ways. It may be necessary to adjust the recruitment approach when it is not followed in practice, including working more closely with gatekeepers to ensure that they adhere to procedures, or choosing not to work through gatekeepers who do not implement the procedures correctly.

In summary: It is important to establish clear and rigorous guidelines and protocols for contacting any data providers or research participants, to ensure informed consent. Sharing clear explanatory information with participants in advance of data collection facilitates informed consent. Gatekeepers must fully understand and adhere to recruitment criteria. It may be necessary to adjust the recruitment approach when it is not followed in practice.

Ensure anonymity and confidentiality

Ensuring anonymity and confidentiality means attending to threats that emerge in the way that data is collected and then handled in practice. This is particularly pressing in the case of collecting personal and sensitive data (for example about trafficking victims) given the potential for direct and severe harm that may arise when anonymity and confidentiality are not protected. Ensuring anonymity and confidentiality is also relevant for key informants and other data providers generally.

Guarding anonymity and confidentiality requires controlling who has access to data and the handling of data over time. One trafficking victim from Albania, who consented to her personal data being included in the national TIP database, explained that she was willing to share her data only within the parameters agreed:

...it is the [NGO] social worker that has a file and no one else will have it. Only a person who is from the [responsible government ministry]. After a while, after some time they just [destroy it]. *And do you have any concerns about the ministry having your information?* As long as I know it is only for the ministry and no one else will have it, I feel okay. The moment I think that someone else will have it, then I will feel concerned.

One possible threat to anonymity and confidentiality is when data is shared and transferred without appropriate data protection procedures. One TIP expert described how different organizations and institutions did not always guard the anonymity and confidentiality of the data they collect:

...with the partners or the government, sometimes they do not understand that something could harm the beneficiaries. That's why we're trying to get the [standard operating procedures] (SOPs) as quickly as possible... But, as of now, for example, sometimes in emails they will put personal data and then all of a sudden fifteen people would be copied in this email with all of the names of the victims of human trafficking. And those are things we need to change and we need to change them as quickly as possible.

Good practice. Ensure anonymity and confidentiality

Be vigilant about ensuring anonymity and confidentiality in the data collection process.

Address threats to anonymity and confidentiality in the way that data is collected and processed.

Educate data collection staff on the risks of breaching anonymity and confidentiality.

Ensure that participants are aware of and consent to any limits of confidentiality.

Anonymity and confidentiality may also be breached when data collectors discuss cases and information in inappropriate contexts and with persons who should not be privy to this information. Protecting anonymity and confidentiality is about ensuring that staff involved in data collection do not speak about personal information in the wrong contexts. As one researcher noted:

There's real questions around making sure that staff don't inadvertently think it's no big deal to discuss cases in front of other people or to go home and tell their families, "Gosh I had this really interesting case today...". [...] ...data security has as much to do with not storing the files as much as warning staff around sharing "interesting" details of "interesting" cases.

Another threat to confidentiality may arise when the boundaries between operational work with trafficking victims and TIP data collection are blurred. One NGO director described a situation in which her staff inadvertently breached confidentiality by referring to information that the victim had shared as part of research in the context of on-going case management with the victim and the family:

...data can be misused. We have had experiences like that even with the professionals [in our organization]. For example, we did research with adolescents. And some of the interviews, because we were also working with [those respondents], was shared with the psychologist who was also gathering information [for the research]. And then the psychologist used part of the information to talk with the family. ...he mixed up what was the research and what was the daily work. ...the data that was collected in the context of the research should not have been used the way that he did. And it was not on purpose but...not all professionals are prepared enough to make the difference or to know how to deal with all this information.

The above points notwithstanding, there may be limits on assurances of confidentiality and anonymity for some research participants, such as those currently involved in the legal process. In some countries, researchers may be subpoenaed to appear in court and provide testimony about the individual from and about whom they have collected data, thus breaching confidentiality. One researcher explained the legal requirements in her country in this regard:

It depends on the country what the obligation of researchers are, in terms of the obligation to report crimes, information about crimes that have already taken place. It's an underestimated issue. And of course, it's different between countries, how obligated researchers are to report crimes they come across. Trafficking is a very serious crime so to come across the crime of trafficking and walk away, in many countries, this can be charged [under] criminal law. In the criminal code [of my country] it is an obligation for citizens to report serious crime to the police and as a researcher I sometimes break that law. ...many countries have obligation to report serious crime to the police which doctors and lawyers are exempted from, but not researchers. [...] I have been summoned to court to testify in concrete cases that the police suspect I have information on and, by law, I am under an obligation to testify.

This is an issue that many researchers and data collectors may not be aware of, which, in turn, complicates assurances around confidentiality in both data collected for research purposes as well as for administrative purposes. It may also undermine the ability or willingness to conduct TIP research in some settings, on some issues and with some data sources. The same researcher as above noted the complicated terrain she navigates in her own work:

I promised the people I interviewed their confidentiality. So there is a possible conflict between researchers' obligation under the law and their ethical obligation and the promises they make to their respondents... Many researchers are not necessarily aware of what kind of legal provisions exist in their countries or they believe that they have the same protections as lawyers and doctors, which they do not normally have in Europe at least....any information, materials we give to prospective respondents, we have to inform them about possible limitations on their rights in confidentiality. ...I would need to include in the information sheet, in the consent form to my respondents that if I were to hear about serious crimes that were detected or that I suspected were going to take place I'll have an obligation to go to the police...

Limited confidentiality also arises in cases when victims disclose violence that they are suffering and also any harm that they may cause themselves or others. As noted above, it is

necessary as part of design and planning to identify legal requirements for mandatory reporting if a situation of risk is disclosed or, in the absence of such requirements, to identify and agree at the outset when one may need to breach confidentiality (see Stage #1: Design and Planning, *Develop or apply legal and ethical guidelines and protocols – Guard anonymity and confidentiality*). It is important then at this stage of implementation to ensure that such issues are anticipated and addressed and, where conflicts and complications arise in practice, these must be considered and dealt with appropriately. Data collectors must be aware of any potential limits to confidentiality and have procedures in place for when such situations may arise. In practice, this may also require coordination with authorities. Participants in data collection (as well as data providers and gatekeepers involved in facilitating access) must also be aware of when confidentiality may not be guaranteed. This must be clearly explained to participants as part of ensuring informed consent.

In summary: Care is needed to guard anonymity and confidentiality as well as to address any threats to anonymity and confidentiality that may emerge in the way that data is collected and processed. Data collection staff should anticipate any potential risks of breaching anonymity and confidentiality as well as issues associated with the limits of confidentiality. Participants should also be informed about any limits of confidentiality in the process of gaining informed consent.

Assess when data collection reveals risk or abuse

As noted in Stage #1: Design and Planning (*Develop or apply legal and ethical guidelines and protocols*), many countries have mandatory reporting obligations, which require certain groups of professionals to report cases of violence and abuse, particularly involving children. As part of design and planning, national legislation and protection agencies should be consulted on the requirements, procedures and plans put into place to determine how data collectors should respond in situations of risk. In the absence of robust national legislation, different laws and ethical standards should be consulted in the development of an appropriate guideline or protocol. Data collectors should aim for the highest level of protection afforded by such guidelines and protocols. This should include the application of child safeguarding policies by organizations or institutions when working with children.

If a respondent discloses a need for protection in the context of data collection (for example, abuse within the family setting where they have been reintegrated or in institutional care where they are assisted), data collectors may need to take action even if this means breaching confidentiality, as discussed above (*Ensure anonymity and confidentiality*). One TIP researcher highlighted the need to act when abuse or violence was uncovered during data collection and also what she felt was a lack of discussion on these critical issues:

...if you're doing a household survey and it becomes clear to you that the person you are speaking with might be in a trafficking situation or the children in the house might be unsafe or things like that. [...] Are you meant to really just be an observer and there's nothing you can do? Or do you need to intervene? Those are questions that organizations have to grapple with... I did not necessarily [see] those kinds of conversations happening in organizations around the ethics of their data collection.

However, how to act and react in practice does not always align with procedures and protocols, particularly in more challenging settings and environments. Issues may arise as to the safety and well-being of the respondent in ways that may require modifications and adjustments in how data collectors should respond while ensuring that it remains legal, ethical and safe. Working out what “doing no harm” means in different situations is often

complicated. For example, an adult victim may disclose details of abuse and risk but, at the same time, may also specifically request that no action be taken, as any such actions may further endanger them. Moreover, there may be limited options to assist the individual, which needs also to be assessed and considered in advance. The advisability of engaging police in such cases may differ according to whether working in a context with robust rule of law as compared to contexts where corruption exists and there may be strong connections between law enforcement and traffickers.¹⁷⁶ Adaptations to procedures and protocols may be needed to ensure the protection of respondents involved in data collection including when situations evolve and change over the course of a data collection effort.

In the case of children, mandatory reporting requirements may prove complicated in practice. Risks arise when children report abuse perpetrated by state authorities to whom one must report or when the child is still in care and their removal from that situation is not certain. Mandatory reporting may mean that the data collector must report abuse or trafficking to an untrained authority, who may react in ways that bring harm to the child (for example, police with no training in human trafficking charging the child with prostitution, deporting the child, stigmatizing the child, or releasing sensitive information about the child). A sound child safeguarding policy helps to support staff and organizations or institutions in making informed and safe decisions. It implies that the organization or institution carrying out the research has undertaken a mapping of existing child protection resources, so that they know where to report suspected cases of abuse that data collectors may come across during their work: namely, to local authorities or, when unsafe, to other organizations better placed to intervene.¹⁷⁷

Good practice. Assess when data collection reveals risk or abuse

- Consult national legislation on requirements and procedures when respondents are at risk.
- Develop a protocol to address risk or abuse, to the highest level of protections.
- Take necessary action if a respondent discloses a need for protection in the context of data collection.
- Consult with the respondent about what steps may be taken in situations of risk.
- Ensure that all data collectors are aware of the procedures to address risk and mandatory reporting requirements.
- Adapt practice to ensure the protection of respondents, as needed.

All members of a data collection team should be aware of procedures and requisite steps concerning limited confidentiality prior to implementation. One program manager responsible for a research project on child trafficking described facing this issue in her work:

¹⁷⁶ Brunovskis, A. and R. Surtees (2010) 'Untold Stories: Biases and Selection Effects in Research with Victims of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation', *International Migration*, 48(4), pp. 1-37; Cwikel, J. and E. Hoban (2005) 'Contentious issues in research on trafficked women working in the sex industry: Study design, ethics and methodology', *The Journal of Sex Research*, 42(4), pp. 306-316; Kelly, L. and M. Coy (2016) 'Ethics as Process, Ethics in Practice: Researching the Sex Industry and Trafficking' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, p. 43; and Surtees, R. and A. Brunovskis (2016) 'Doing No Harm - Ethical Challenges in Research with Trafficked Persons' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 137-154.

¹⁷⁷ KCS (2014) *Child Safeguarding Standards and how to implement them*. London, United Kingdom: Keeping Children Safe. Child safeguarding policies are also needed to ensure that data collectors (their own staff or consultants or those from partner organizations) do not harm in any way the children directly involved in data collection. See also UNICEF (2006) *Guidelines on the Protection of Child Victims of Trafficking*. New York, United States: United Nations Children's Fund.

...we found out that there were cases of abuses [including] in institutions... These are cases when we need [to involve] legal authorities. And when you talk with legal authorities who should do that? What precautions do you need to take? Everyone in the project who speaks to people needs to be familiar with that, at least to know who to refer to.

If, when and how data is to be shared when data collection reveals on-going trafficking situations is another complex issue and one that is not easily resolved. As one criminal justice expert noted:

There is this on-going argument and I've never known it to be resolved to everybody's satisfaction ...between whether or not the [assistance organization's] duty of confidentiality to victims that it assists is outranked if that victim, for example, discloses to [the assistance organization] details that involve the location and continuing exploitation of other victims.

As noted above, while research protocols should anticipate ethical issues in relation to risks and abuse, many will emerge in practice over the course of data collection.

In summary: Assessing potential risks of data collection requires consulting legal requirements and ethical procedures to address risk or abuse if a respondent discloses a need for protection. All data collectors must be aware of procedures to address risk and mandatory reporting requirements. However, how to act and react in practice does not always align with guidelines and protocols, particularly in more challenging settings. Adaptations may be needed to ensure the protection of research participants. It is important to consult with research participants about what steps may be taken in situations of risk and, when needed, adapt practice to ensure the protection of respondents.

Support referrals for assistance and support

The development of referral information was discussed in Stage #1: Design and Planning, (*Develop or apply legal and ethical guidelines and protocols*). Referral information should be provided to all research participants as part of the data collection protocol. Referral information should be reviewed and revised over the course of data collection by: adding to referral sheets as new services become available or known; removing organizations that do not respond to assistance requests or do not provide inadequate services and support; and validating and, as needed, updating contact information for service providers. It will also be necessary to consider if referral information is conveyed in a clear way that is accessible to different types of research participants.

In the case of some types of data collection or for some profile of respondents, providing referral information about available assistance and support may not be enough. Data collectors may need to take a more proactive role in facilitating the referral process, including:

- calling the service provider on the respondent's behalf, with their prior consent;
- providing a phone or funds for a phone call in order that the respondent can call a service provider for assistance;
- accompanying the individual to the office of an assistance organization to inquire about assistance opportunities;
- following up with the respondent about whether they were able to access referral services;

- following up with the service provider to ensure that the respondent's requests have been received and are being addressed, with the respondent's prior consent.

Data collectors should collect detailed information about various services so that they can answer questions and make appropriate referrals to persons in need or to inform anti-trafficking professionals about available assistance.

Information can include the services provided; populations served and not served; any costs involved in accessing services; the location of available services; hours of operation; types of services provided; and the expertise of service providers. Data collectors

should also have a clear sense of what experience the victim will have if they seek services with the referral organization. As part of this process, data collectors should anticipate and manage respondents' expectations, ensuring that they are not leading respondents to believe that they will receive benefits like various forms of assistance that may not be possible.

Good practice. Support referrals for assistance and support

Collect detailed information about various services and referral options.

Revise and adapt referral information over the course of data collection.

When needed, take a proactive role in facilitating the referral process.

Anticipate and manage respondents' expectations.

While options for referrals are important in ethical data collection with trafficking victims, there are also often quite significant obstacles in identifying assistance options and offering referral information to respondents, in terms of both the actual existence of services and their appropriateness and desirability for respondents. While this is the case everywhere, it is particularly pronounced in lower resource countries. Challenges include: unavailability of services (including in a specific geographical area); available services being inappropriate or undesirable; inaccessibility of services to trafficking victims due to their legal status; available services only offered to some types of victims or for some forms of exploitation; difficulties in accessing services because of personal and practical barriers; and so on.¹⁷⁸ Questions also need to be asked about the possibility that referrals for and accessing of assistance may risk respondents being identified them as trafficking victims by authorities or to their families and communities, which may have implications for victims and pose significant and unanticipated problems.

In summary: Referral information should be revised over the course of data collection, adding and amending referral sheets as new services become available or known, or removing organizations that do not respond to assistance requests or do not provide inadequate services and support. Supporting referral of respondents may require taking a proactive role in facilitating the referral process. At the same time, it is important to be clear about the limits of what data collectors can do in this process and manage respondents' expectations of referral and assistance options. It is also important to be clear about obstacles to identifying assistance options and offering referral information to research participants.

¹⁷⁸ Surtees, R. and A. Brunovskis (2016) 'Doing No Harm - Ethical Challenges in Research with Trafficked Persons' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 137-154.

Guard the “best interests of the child” during data collection

Ensuring the “best interests of the child” means that the needs and interests of the child supersede any need to complete a data collection project, as discussed above (see Stage #1: Design and Planning, *Develop or apply legal and ethical guidelines and protocols – Apply child protection principles including the “best interests of the child”*). While many legal and ethical issues will have been discussed at the outset of the project (as part of design and planning), other issues may emerge over the course of data collection in ways that compromise the “best interests of the child”. This might include when children’s consent is not fully informed or when a data collector is not sufficiently trained or sensitized in conducting data collection with children. This requires considering and accommodating the “best interests of the child” at all stages of data collection and making adjustments and course corrections, as needed. This also requires ensuring that children or their parents/guardians have a means of recourse when problems or questions arise and clarifications are needed.

Good practice. Guard the “best interests of the child” during data collection

Identify issues that may undermine the “best interests of the child”.

Ensure that children or their parents/guardians have a means of recourse when problems arise.

In summary: Ensure that the “best interests of the child” supersede any need to complete a data collection project. Consider and accommodate the “best interests of the child” at all stages of data collection and ensure that children or their parents/guardians have a means of recourse when problems or questions arise.



Carry out training and on-going supervision in data collection

Regardless of the nature and scope of data collection, training and supervision are needed for all data collectors as well as translators, interpreters, transcribers, field assistants and other types of support staff. However, training and supervision will necessarily vary according to the specific nature and scope of data collection and the individual’s role within it. Some training may need to be undertaken on an on-going basis or repeated when new staff become involved in the project, or when the tools or procedures for data collection are revised. On-going supervision is also needed, including over time and in response to changes to the activity over time. Training and supervision should supplement but not replace the data collection manual as discussed above (see *Develop a data collection manual*).

Carry out training and on-going supervision in data collection

- Train and supervise data collectors
- Train and supervise translators, interpreters, transcribers and support staff

Train and supervise data collectors

Staff should be trained in all relevant aspects of data collection (for example, methods, institutional policies and regulations) to equip them to make decisions that ensure data quality and integrity. Training is needed in technical work as well as the legal and ethical obligations associated with data collection. Too often the role of data collectors is undervalued and insufficiently considered in how research is designed and implemented. And yet the capacity, skills and commitment of data collectors is at the core of and a prerequisite for good quality data. As one TIP researcher noted:

... [a few] days of training is always considered more than enough to upgrade the skills [of data collectors]. [But] we know in research that our “research instruments” are our interviewers and surveyors, not the questionnaires or surveys. So we need experienced interviewers who are good in asking probing questions.

Of particular importance is training data collectors on the issue of human trafficking and any particular sub-topic(s) being studied. While it would be ideal that all data collectors have at least basic knowledge of human trafficking, this may not always be possible or realistic. In the case of more comprehensive surveys or when partnering with local statistics institutions, it is not always realistic to expect the data collection team to have TIP-specific knowledge and expertise. And since human trafficking is a high-profile issue in many contexts, but with often biased and skewed associations, it is in any case important to establish a common understanding of core terms and knowledge among all data collectors, including those with prior knowledge and experience.

When data collection relies on data contributed from other agencies and institutions, as with National Rapporteur offices, training necessarily needs to extend to these data providers to ensure that data is sufficiently robust. One National Rapporteur, for instance, described a drastic spike in the number of identified cases in the country from one particular law enforcement body, which, upon closer examination of the data, indicated a different understanding of TIP than other data providers:

We thought, let’s look at those files to see what are those cases. That means not just the quantitative, but the qualitative research on those cases and we saw that those that were reported were reported on flimsy indications [of TIP].

Similarly, another National Rapporteur reported training labor inspectors in TIP given their important role as data providers, particularly in relation to labor trafficking:

It is important that labor inspectors are aware [of TIP] in trying to identify trafficking indicators. In [this country] all of the labor inspectors have been trained in trafficking in human beings. Because there was, at the beginning, confusion of what was trafficking in human beings and we started to give training. [There was] this perception that their mission was for forced labor or crimes related to that but not for trafficking in human beings.

Good practice. Train and supervise data collectors

Train staff on the overall data collection project and their role within it.

Provide training on human trafficking and the particular topic being studied, including definitions and terms.

Provide training on using the specific data collection tools.

Regularly review and debrief with data collection teams.

Address any issues that arise over the course of data collection.

Data collectors will also need training in the specific data collection effort itself (the topic and purpose, data collection question, approaches and methods, tools, definitions and so on). Data collectors should have as much insight as possible as to the topic, purpose, scope and research questions so that they can situate their task and work within the wider data collection effort. For instance, training should include attention to definitional clarity and precision, how to operationalize definitions and terminology and how to formulate questions linked to the overall topic, as discussed in Stage #1: Design and Planning (*Formulate data collection questions*). This is important in conducting interviews, as data collectors may need to ask a range of follow-up questions to arrive at a sufficient level of detail to answer data collection questions. But it is also important in terms of conducting surveys or standardized questionnaires where data collectors must understand the scope and nature of the data being collected.

Training is also needed in using specific data collection tools. Each data collector should be sufficiently familiar with the tools before they start data collection so that they have a clear idea of what is needed and do not need to refer excessively to guidelines or manuals when conducting data collection or lose track when conducting a survey. Training is an integral part of all TIP data collection; it should be embedded in each data collection effort. As one TIP researcher explained of her own work:

It goes inside the package of training that we do – how to use the study instrument, how to conduct the interviews...feedback. We have a whole training package that we do for researchers. Our team is very committed to that. ...we know that if your interviewers are bad, you'll get bad answers, regardless of how good your study instrument is.

Similarly, one TIP program manager described one regional research project in which training was integral to data quality:

We had a very skilled lead researcher who was part of the staff for one year and she was delivering training to all researchers at the national level and was also involved in selecting staff as much as possible at the national level. It was also properly staffed at each country. And that allowed proper planning and carrying out of the interviews, transcripts to be delivered to the lead researcher and the researchers in each country. And the data were analyzed at both national and regional level. [...] Generally the people were really skilled to do that [research]. They knew how to deal with the target group and were following strict methodologies and procedures. They were able to enforce those throughout the project and not let teams go on their own.

More training may be needed for some types of data collection efforts (for example, when data collection is done by practitioners who are not experts in data collection). Training will increase the quality and usability of the data being collected. One TIP researcher stressed the importance of training of data collectors:

... it would be really useful if NGOs that were interested were trained to do research, to upgrade the quality of what they're doing. They don't [need to] become a research university ... just make it a little bit better... A lot of NGOs have too few resources, too few people, too many problems, too many clients. ...if they do want to...learn how to collect better data on what they're doing, that would be something where training matters.

Training will also need to cover the ethical and legal requirements of the data collection effort. When data collection involves interactions with vulnerable persons, like trafficking victims, training will be needed on how to respond appropriately to respondent distress, not just with a referral but with immediate, on-site, trauma-informed responses.

Part of training and supervision is regularly reviewing and debriefing the data collection process with data collection teams, including addressing any issues that arise. This involves creating a climate where the data collection team feels comfortable and confident in raising issues, including with regard to mistakes they may have made or questions and concerns that they may have.

Data collection teams should debrief and review technical issues that are relevant for the implementation of data collection. This might involve more general issues (for instance any resistance to the project or difficulties in following the workplan) or more specific issues (for instance, in terms of data collection tools and how they work, whether the data collection questions are suitable and whether any adjustments are needed). Debriefing also supports quality assurance, which is key in later data analysis. As one TIP expert noted, it is valuable to have communication between data collectors and analysts throughout the process:

[There is a] close connection between whoever is going to be analyzing the data with those collecting the data. So the submission of transcripts as early as possible to be reviewed as quickly as possible to give direction and feedback in further interviews that may be conducted is important. ...if there's a chain almost between the interview, the direct data collection, the analysis and those drafting the reporting, there needs to be fairly regular and quick feedback down that chain to ensure that 1) the data is collected in a way that it was intended and 2) any corrections can be made as quickly as possible for subsequent data collection. And any changes, perhaps, even to the data collection tools can also be put in place.

This does not, however, appear to be common practice in many data collection projects, often due to considerations of time, resources and appropriate planning and procedures. As one TIP expert noted:

What I see is that usually the actual data collection is almost or completely over by the time that feedback from those analyzing data or writing up the research report is provided to data collectors... Usually this is due to tight timelines and limited resources, namely short contracts for data collectors and/or few working days therein. As a consequence, data collectors may perhaps learn something for the next time, but not really be able to adapt their data collection work for the purpose of that same research.

Debriefing routines are also needed for data collectors, especially given the difficult issues being studied. Debriefs will be needed, for instance, after what may have been very difficult interviews to conduct or difficult issues to discuss. They may also be needed in the case of stressful data collection settings, heavy workloads and so on. There is a need to support data collectors as part of the implementation phase, particularly when collecting data from or about trafficking victims and the crime of human trafficking. This has been discussed above in Stage #1: Design and Planning (*Develop or apply legal and ethical guidelines and protocols – Consider the safety and well-being of research participants and data collectors*), but will need revisiting at this stage of implementation when issues and difficulties will arise in practice.¹⁷⁹ Paying attention and responding to the impact of data

¹⁷⁹ Kelly, L. and M. Coy (2016) 'Ethics as Process, Ethics in Practice: Researching the Sex Industry and Trafficking' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 33-50; Melrose, M. (2002) 'Labour pains: Some considerations on the difficulties of researching juvenile prostitution', *International Journal of Social Research*

collection on researchers needs to be built into practice. One researcher stressed the need to consider and address the impact of this type of research on data collectors:

... the fact that researchers are listening to really disturbing things, maybe developing relationships, particularly if they're working with a group of young people or survivors over a period of time. The impact of research trauma is something that I think isn't really spoken about, but can be really challenging when you're then removed from that situation you don't know what's going to happen.

Review and debriefing procedures are as much about ensuring the well-being of the data collectors as the technical issues involved.

In summary: Staff should be trained in terms of the overall data collection project and their role within it, tools to be used, and more broadly on human trafficking and the particular topic being studied, including relevant definitions and terms. This also will involve regularly reviewing and debriefing with data collection teams, about technical issues as well as their well-being.

Train and supervise translators, interpreters, transcribers and support staff

Training and supervision are also needed for other professionals involved in supporting the data collection process. This includes translators, interpreters, transcribers as well as other types of support staff. Many data collection efforts will require translation and/or interpretation. In some cases, interpreters will be involved in interpreting interviews, focus group discussions or other types of in-persons interactions. In other cases, transcripts, questionnaires or surveys will be submitted to translators for written translation. Some interpretation or translation will be from a foreign language to the national language where data is collected. Some interpretation or translation will involve translation to and from minority languages in a country where not everyone may speak the majority language. Regardless, it is important that translators and interpreters have the requisite qualifications, training and are adequately supervised. As one TIP researcher stressed, this is important in terms of quality assurance:

I think so much goes wrong at that level of translation. I think that is an area where more time and effort and really best practices need to be discussed, piloted, identified and really rolled out.

When a data collection effort involves translators and interpreters, training should take into account the linguistic capacity for translation and interpretation, as well as TIP-specific skills, interpersonal skills and sensitivity. The latter is of particular importance when interviews are conducted with interpreters who then will be interacting with trafficking victims but is also relevant in interactions with key informants generally. One Ukrainian man, trafficked for labor, noted the importance of interpreters being neutral and not assuming too large a role in the interaction:

I like the interpreter. He is tolerant and I think that the gender doesn't matter. What matters is the person you are talking to. So the interpreter doesn't have really big role. He is only translating what's being said and he is tolerant, very calm.

Methodology, 4(4), pp. 333-351; Rothman, E.F. et al. (2018) 'Ethical and Practical Considerations for Collecting Research-Related Data from Commercially Exploited Children', *Behavioral Medicine*, 44(3), pp. 250-258; and Warden, T. (2013) 'Feet of clay: confronting emotional challenges in ethnographic experience', *Journal of Organizational Ethnography*, 2(2), pp. 150-172.

When asked about important things to consider in working with an interpreter, one Albanian woman, trafficked for sexual exploitation, also focused on behavior:

...first of all I think that she should be sincere. It doesn't matter whether she is tall or short, but whatever I say she should translate it accurately.

Sensitivity also comes into play when translating transcripts and other datasets, given the sensitivities around issues and terminology that intersect with TIP (for example, prostitution/sex work, migration status, nationality and ethnicity, gender or illegal activities).

Skills in interpretation include not only the linguistics translation itself but mirroring, as much as possible, the tone of the question and the approach of the data collectors, for instance, in demonstrating empathy or humor. Interpretation should always be in the first person to ensure an understanding of different actors in an account, including relationships between them. Interpreters must also translate the full account of what is said by both data collector and respondent, not cutting out details in questions or preambles. What may seem irrelevant to the interpreter can have a clear intent and context on the part of the researcher (for example, to reassure the interviewee, or provide an explanation or particular perspectives before asking a question, which are important parts of communication with a respondent). One trafficking victim from Albania described her frustration and disappointment with an interview in which the interpreter had not accurately translated what she had said:

We had a foreign [researcher] who came. The problem was with the translator... she translated different things. [...] [I knew because] I used to study English before.

Having qualified and skilled interpreters and translators for TIP data collection activities should be recognized as good practice. One TIP researcher stressed this point:

To ensure that you have translators who are qualified to play that role, who don't suddenly become a respondent themselves by twisting responses, suddenly answering themselves. Also making sure that the people are neutral to the environment and there's no dynamics that come into play with the environment.

Data collectors should be trained in working effectively with an interpreter or translator to be concise and clear in their questions, to pace an interview (for example, by pausing for the translator to translate), among other techniques. Good practice also requires working together to come to a common understanding of language and meaning to ensure data quality and an agreed way of interacting with research participants. Other considerations relate to the physical arrangement of an interview, how to act and interact appropriately in

Good practice. Train and supervise translators, interpreters, transcribers and support staff

Identify professional translators and interpreters.

Work with translators and interpreters to ensure high quality translation.

Provide training to translators, interpreters, transcribers and support staff when needed.

Train data collectors to work effectively with an interpreter or translator.

Establish mechanisms for quality control in terms of language.

Ensure all staff adhere to legal and ethical requirements.

Train and supervise transcribers and support staff and ensure ethical and legal adherence.

an interview setting and so on. This will require preparing in advance or data collection activities. As one researcher stressed:

It's important to have preparation ahead of data collection. So, for example, I spent a couple of days with the interpreters and research assistants preparing them, practicing and going over all kinds of topics. That would be recommended. Making sure that even the language is familiar, that the terms we're going to use, that the translator is familiar with what that means in this field. Because there are terms we use... that simply can be understood in many different ways.

Once suitably skilled translators and interpreters have been identified and trained, it is useful to use the same individuals as much as possible to ensure comparable data and reduce the risk of variation in language. It is also useful to have mechanisms for quality control in terms of language, which may, for instance, involve reviewing language from recorded interviews and validation procedures by external interpreters. This, however, requires allocating adequate resources as well as sufficient time as part of work planning.

One strategy to avoid or reduce the need for interpreters in data collection is to identify and train local data collectors to conduct data collection in their native language. One researcher highlighted this approach when working with different ethnic groups:

...we trained local researchers. When we were working with [different ethnicities] we trained local people in how to do research because they spoke the languages.

However, in such cases some translation will still likely be needed (for example, of interview transcripts into the language of the data collection project and data analysts). How to ensure quality in such cases though remains critical.

Moreover, there are considerations associated with using interpreters (and data collectors) from the same community as the victim that need to be considered and weighed for each data collection effort. Concerns include that the victim may not feel comfortable to disclose experiences, may feel judged or treated poorly and may fear that the account may not be kept confidential. At the same time, using an interpreter from the same community may be advantageous (for example, in contributing to an environment of comfort and safety).

Translators and interpreters (like all support staff) must be trained in, guided by and held to account in terms of legal and ethical procedures in data collection, including ensuring confidentiality, anonymity and sensitivity, as noted above (*Carry out training and on-going supervision in data collection*). As one trafficking victim from Albania stressed:

It's important that even the translator does not take things, information out [of the interview]. As long as whatever we discuss is kept within here, then that is okay.

Some data collection will also require transcription, which, in turn, requires ensuring that transcribers are appropriately trained and skilled in their field and, moreover, that they are sensitive to the issues and bound by the same ethical protocols as others involved in the project, including with regard to confidentiality. This will also require supervision and oversight.

Indeed, all staff involved in a data collection project must be adequately trained and supervised, including administrative staff, logistical staff (drivers or field assistants), transcribers and translators or interpreters. Some support staff will be in direct contact with respondents or present in communities where trafficking victims may live and it is important that these individuals are trained to act and behave appropriately and sensitively as well as guard all ethical and legal protections.

In addition, as with data collectors, debriefing routines and support mechanisms may also be needed with translators, interpreters and transcribers and some support staff, given the difficult issues and topics being studied and discussed. Being exposed to traumatic information does have the potential for negative impacts also on translators/interpreters and transcribers. One TIP expert described working with a translator for whom it was the first time working on trafficking in persons and hearing about the exploitation being endured by trafficking victims. The translator was visibly shaken by the interviews and issues discussed, something that the TIP expert admitted that she had not anticipated or prepared for as part of the data collection plans.

In summary: Translators, interpreters, transcribers and other support staff involved in data collection should have the requisite qualifications and training to ensure high quality data as well as adherence to legal and ethical obligations. All staff involved in data collection must be adequately trained and supervised. This may require additional training and on-going supervision as part of the data collection effort as well as debriefing routines, given the difficult issues studied.



Document the data collection process

It is important to comprehensively document the data collection process, including the steps before, during and after data gathering occurs, in order to preserve the integrity of the data and ensure that the data is valid, reliable, accurate and precise. This includes quality control activities aimed at verifying that data collection is processed according to the manual, including the identification of any issues and the provision of any necessary steps to correct faulty data collection. This also provides important information about the context in which data collection took place, which is helpful in assessing the credibility and legitimacy of the findings. Understanding the context and processes of data collection is essential in terms of assessing the quality of the data and being able to analyze it. As one TIP researcher stressed:

...the circumstance of data collection really is so crucial in terms of what this data actually represents and whether this is something that you know. At what stage was the information collected? Are these questions actually asked directly? Is the information collected from other sources and, if so, are these sources reliable? There is so much information that you need to know and really understand before you can start to analyze what the data means.¹⁸⁰

Documenting the data collection process also allows researchers to reflect on and document lessons learned from the research process. Documentation of the process is also important when data collection occurs over time and there are changes (for example, in practice and procedure as well as content and staff) that need to be accounted for in how the data is analyzed or used.

¹⁸⁰ Surtees, R. and S. Craggs (2010) *Beneath the surface. Methodological issues in research and data collection with assisted trafficking victims*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Organization for Migration and Washington, D.C., United States: NEXUS Institute, p. 29.

For example, when analyzing data collected over time through a victim case management system, it is important to know about any changes made to the database itself (for example, if the data collection tool changes, if data fields have been added or removed or any time series breaks)¹⁸¹ as well as any external factors that may have influenced how data was collected (for example, staff capacity, training and supervision of data collectors, available resources or any changes to the program including when programs are not funded and there are gaps in service provision and thus data).¹⁸² When the data collection process has not been carefully documented, challenges emerge in how to analyze and understand the data. One TIP researcher described the challenge of working with an organization that had collected data but for which there was no documentation process:

Good practice. Document the data collection process

Document the data collection process to ensure data integrity.

Document data collection processes to allow for later analysis, if appropriate.

Implement quality control mechanisms.

...all of these people who know what we have, what we don't have, it's not even written down anywhere, it's all in the heads of the people working in the team. And so it can be very hard to know how to use the data when there's no written record of what we actually have. The data is stored in different formats, in different places and in not a very organized fashion. That makes it very hard to figure out how to use the data well. ...it's hard when people are using a lot of different formats so some of the data is in Excel, some of the data is in Word, some of the data is in SPSS,¹⁸³ some was put in here, some of that there. The data tends to be all over the place and not necessarily in one package. It can mean that there's a lot of work that needs to be done to clean it before it's usable.

Documenting the data collection process is also important when it comes to the use of existing data or datasets for further research and analysis; it equips analysts with information needed to appropriately analyze, weigh and contextualize the data. Documentation of the data collection process is also needed by other researchers who may want to replicate the study.

¹⁸¹ Breaks in statistical time series occur when there is a change in the standards for defining and observing a variable over time. Such changes may result from a single change or the combination of multiple changes at one point in time of observation of the variable. OECD (2013) 'Time Series Breaks', *Glossary of Statistical Terms*. Paris, France: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

¹⁸² Surtees, R. and S. Craggs (2010) *Beneath the surface. Methodological issues in research and data collection with assisted trafficking victims*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Organization for Migration and Washington, D.C., United States: NEXUS Institute.

¹⁸³ Microsoft Word ("Word") is a software program for word processing that allows users to electronically write (type) and to save information using documents. Microsoft Excel ("Excel") is a software program that allows users to organize, format, calculate data with formulas and save information using spreadsheets. SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) is a widely used software package used for statistical analysis. Other frequently used data analysis software packages include Stata (a general-purpose statistical software package), and SAS (software for advanced analytics, multivariate analyses, business intelligence, data management and predictive analytics). Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software continues to develop at a fast rate, with examples of software programs for qualitative analysis including: AnSWR (Analysis Software for Word-Based Records); ATLAS.ti; C-I-SAID; CDC EZ-Text; Ethnograph; HyperRESEARCH; QCA (Qualitative Comparative Analysis); QSR NVivo; QSR NUD*IST; TextSmart; and winMAX.

In summary: Documenting the data collection process serves to preserve the integrity of the data and ensure that the data is valid, reliable, accurate and precise. This also provides important information about the context in which data collection took place, to allow for later analysis, if appropriate.



Revisit Stage# 1 work plan and adjust, if needed

During data collection, it is important to revisit the work plan developed in Stage #1 and assess if any adjustments are needed. For example: are there any unforeseen circumstances or limitations that warrant adjustment of the project topic, purpose, scope or approach? Are there adequate funds and time to implement the work plan? Is it possible to implement the proposed sampling strategy with the identified data sources? Is it necessary to raise challenges with funders or stakeholders?

Are adjustments needed to the work plan?

- ❓ Are there any unforeseen circumstances or limitations that warrant adjustment?
- ❓ Are there adequate funds and time to implement the work plan?
- ❓ Is it possible to implement the proposed sampling strategy?
- ❓ Is it necessary to raise challenges with funders (or stakeholders)?

Data collection commonly involves challenges, requiring adjustments and changes over the course of implementation. These may be a function of any number of factors, including limited resources, unrealistic timelines, an unrealistic scope of work, an overly ambitious topic, limited cooperation from data providers and so on. In some cases, it may also be a function of the context in which data collection is to take place. One National Rapporteur described a situation where the office's data collection efforts were inhibited by lack of

resources and the low priority given to the issue by law enforcement and one of its main data providers, which, in turn, limited the office's ability to conduct data collection according to the proposed approach and work plan:

...they (the police) are aware of the problem but it's just not priority for them to improve the system. Because also the police, they have very few resources to work on trafficking.

Similarly, one staff member working on a TIP data collection project explained how the design of the project was out of step with what was possible in practice and made it impossible to successfully complete the project:

We ran into so much trouble on the data collection piece. In fact, we realized that the scope was really beyond what was realistic on the ground. And so, unfortunately, while we were able to collect some data...we didn't really have a big enough database or a robust enough [database]...to develop actual tangible deliverables as a result of the database as far as using the data to identify trends or those types of things.

In some cases, challenges can be so significant that they can't be addressed within the original work plan. This requires being flexible in the approach, including revising or even withdrawing from data collection efforts when needed. One TIP researcher stressed the importance of flexibility in any data collection project given that many challenges that can be faced in practice:

Good practice. Revisit work plan and adjust if needed

Revisit the work plan and adjust if needed.

Make revisions when needed or withdraw from data collection efforts if circumstances require it.

[It's important to be] aware up front that things don't always work as you want them to work. For example, I worked with a research institute in [one country] and I expected that they would work and operate and have the same standards as a university in [my country]. But in reality certain things are not in place. There's no ethical review board, child protection really isn't understood that well, participatory methods aren't really understood that well. There's issues to do with timing, the fact that there's festivals happening in [the country] which throw time frames off. You have to be flexible in terms of thinking about what you can achieve in a certain time frame. And I think you have to be willing to stop and pull out if there's concerns that you can't manage and risks that you can't manage. So being flexible but also knowing when to pull the plug is really important.

Because data collection will inevitably involve unforeseen circumstances or challenges, it is important to revisit the work plan and revise, as needed. In some extreme cases, this may mean withdrawing from a data collection project when these circumstances threaten the quality of the work or safe and ethical implementation.

In summary: Data collection will, in all cases, involve unforeseen circumstances or limitations that must be considered and addressed. In some cases, adjustments may be needed (for example, to the goal, scope or approach, to the proposed sampling strategy or in terms of data sources and data providers). In some cases it may be necessary to review or revise the work plan. And, in extreme instances, it may be necessary to withdraw from data collection efforts.

Stage #3. Data Storage, Maintenance and Management



Consider options in setting up a database

- Identify the best system for one's needs
- Determine the appropriate system for resources and capacities
- Ensure adequate time, planning and sustainability



Ensure quality in data entry

- Entering data and addressing errors
- Ensure training and supervision
- Consider data entry and processing in different languages



Establish procedures for data editing (validation, cleaning and maintenance)

- Consider issues in data editing (validation, cleaning and maintenance)
- Allocate adequate time and resources and assign or recruit skilled staff
- Explore technology solutions for data editing (validation, cleaning and maintenance)



Develop procedures for data storage and management, including retention and disposal

- Consider the type of data collected
- Secure, store and manage data
- Determine responsibilities and privileges in data handling
- Develop and implement procedures and requirements for data retention and disposal
- Consider the use of technology in data storage and management

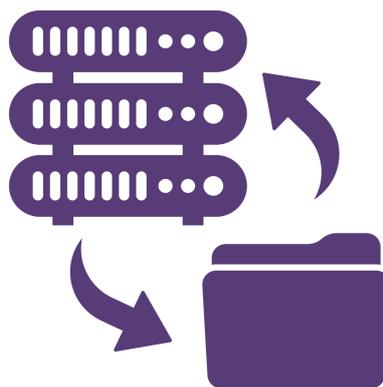


Assess options for data sharing and transfer

- Consider data sharing
- Assess options for data transfer



Identify legal and ethical issues in data storage, maintenance and management



Stage #3. Data Storage, Maintenance and Management

Data storage, maintenance and management are not simply the straightforward organizational tasks they may seem at first glance. The strength of these components impacts fundamental issues such as the integrity of the data as well as protecting personal and often sensitive information about the lives and/or perspectives of research participants. How data is stored, maintained and managed, then, must receive careful attention.

This stage involves the way in which collected information is **stored** (that is, housed, stored and secured), **maintained** (that is, entered, processed, cleaned, validated and checked over time) and **managed** (that is, controlled, protected, delivered and enhanced, as well as either retained or disposed of). Good practice in data storage, maintenance and management protects the data itself (particularly personal and sensitive data) and any data collection subjects. It also facilitates the organization and formatting of data, tracks any alterations to the data and retains data integrity during any sharing or usage.¹⁸⁴ How data is stored, maintained and managed depends on the amount and type of data involved as well as the motivation behind storing information and any compliance requirements for the actor(s) involved.

Approaches to data storage, maintenance and management must mesh with the particular data collection effort, including the available funding, human resources and time allocations, as well as legal and ethical considerations.¹⁸⁵ This means that there are important distinctions to be made between what is feasible and advisable for different initiatives, which may range from high-tech databases to analog paper-based systems.

This stage of data collection will likely involve the use of technology. Technologies should be chosen and made to fit and support a project's data storage, maintenance and management. Projects should not be squeezed into a particular technological approach or model. If storage, maintenance and management utilize a database, attention should be paid to a range of external factors and considerations specific to a given project and in different

"... [good practice is] finding a database system that's right for you, that's encrypted, that's password protected, that is accessible only to those who need access and is anonymized for others if it's important that that information is shared across the organization. And [good practice is] taking advantage of different technological tools to secure the data."

TIP Researcher

¹⁸⁴ Thorne, S. (2016) *Interpretive Description: Qualitative Research for Applied Practice*. Second Edition. New York, United States: Routledge.

¹⁸⁵ Denzin, L. and Y. Lincoln (Eds.) (2011) *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Fourth Edition. Thousand Oaks, United States: SAGE Publishing.

settings when deciding how to ensure a safe, secure and efficient database. External factors might include the legal framework that a database must align with, the political context, which may or may not be conducive to different data collection processes, institutional cultures in organizations and institutions that have different approaches and opportunities for the use of technology and so on.

Even within contexts with more limited resources and scope, steps can be taken to improve data storage, maintenance and management. And regardless of the type of database used, staff must have capacity and competence relative to that specific database. Good practice at this stage is as much about the technical skills and resources of individuals and organizations as it is about the technologies leveraged.

Steps and considerations in data storage, maintenance and management

Issues around data storage, maintenance and management will depend on the precise nature and scope of TIP data collection. Nonetheless, some common features and considerations are outlined below.



Consider options in setting up a database. This involves considering and designing how data will be stored or housed. Designing a database is about systematizing and building an infrastructure for the data. Setting up a database includes: identifying the best system for one's needs; determining the appropriate system for resources and capacities; and ensuring adequate time, planning and sustainability.

Steps and considerations in data storage, maintenance and management

- Consider options in setting up a database
- Ensure quality in data entry
- Establish procedures for data editing (validation, cleaning and maintenance)
- Develop procedures for data storage and management, including retention and disposal
- Assess options for data sharing and transfer
- Identify legal and ethical issues in data storage, maintenance and management



Ensure quality in data entry.

Data entry is the act of entering information into data collection formats and addressing errors. It requires the allocation of adequate time and resources as well as training and supervision.



Establish procedures for data editing (validation, cleaning and maintenance).

Data validation generally occurs at the time of data entry; data cleaning is the one-off process of detecting and addressing any errors within the dataset; and data maintenance refers to the on-going correction and verification of the dataset. These three tasks are essential in ensuring data quality. They require allocating adequate time and resources and assigning skilled staff. This may also involve leveraging technology solutions.



Develop procedures for data storage and management, including retention and disposal.

Data storage is the recording of data in a storage medium. Data management is the control, protection, delivery and enhancement of data and includes developing and implementing protocols for data retention and disposal. How to store and manage data safely and securely involves: consideration of the type of data collected; the best way to secure, store and manage data; responsibilities and privileges in data handling; procedures and requirements for data retention and disposal; and use of technology.



Assess options for data sharing and transfer. This step involves: considering and articulating data ownership policies; determining if and how data can be shared; and determining if and how data can be transferred.



Identify legal and ethical issues in data storage, maintenance and management. This requires adherence to data protection legislation (including regulations for administrative data and ethical considerations including informed consent, anonymizing information, confidentiality and privacy, guarding the "best interests of the child" and the need for formalized data protection procedures including training and supervision.

The following sections discuss each of these steps in detail. They also explore key issues that may be faced in data storage, maintenance and management, as well as examples of good practice or lessons learned that have been identified during the project.



Consider options in setting up a database

The first step at this stage is to determine how data will be stored or housed. A **database** consists of data, a search capability and an ability to manipulate the data. Designing a database is about systematizing the data that has been or will be collected and then building the infrastructure for this data. A **TIP database** is a structured set of TIP data that is organized in a way to facilitate the efficient retrieval, management and updating of information. Such databases can include victim data, criminal justice data, or indeed any TIP-related data. TIP databases will be of varying levels of detail and sophistication.

With the spread of computer technology since the 2000s and advancing mobile technology, a database today is usually a structured set of data stored electronically. However, there can be physical (hard copy) databases where data is housed in filing cabinets and other secure locations. Databases are different in nature, scope and purpose, which impacts how data is stored, maintained and managed. A simple electronic database may consist of data collected and organized in Word documents or spreadsheets. More advanced systems may allow, for example, for multiple simultaneous users with varying levels of access, the generation of statistical projections, data models for analysis of geo-data (computerized geographical data stored in a format usable with a geographic information system (GIS) for spatial data visualization) and so on.

Databases may contain data of various scope, ranging from local, national, regional or global concern. The scoping, and hence size, of the data may have implications in terms of its storage, maintenance and management. Decisions around the most suitable database will also need to consider available time and resources. An organization or institution with a large amount of data and adequate time and resources will likely have access to expertise to build more sophisticated solutions. Organizations with fewer resources and less data may find more moderate solutions meet their needs. The type of data also has direct implications for how this should be done. These distinctions inform what is possible and appropriate in terms of the options for a database.

Some databases are specific to one organization or institution, whereas other databases may be used by multiple stakeholders (for example, within a government across multiple

ministries, or between a government agency and civil society partners). Some databases are designed for use by a specific organization or institution, while some data collectors use existing commercial software and programs (for example, the Microsoft Office suite of programs). Databases may also be produced with any number of licenses, including one of the open source licenses that prioritize free distribution of the data contained within in a database. One important consideration is interoperability between databases (that is, compatibility of systems between various data providers and the centralized database). For example, databases for data providers from various government departments or NGOs would ideally be compatible with and, therefore, feed into the database of the National Rapporteur-equivalent mechanism.

Given the nature of data being collected, most TIP databases are restricted in terms of access or require special permission to access, including different permissions giving varying levels of access to different users within and between organizations or institutions. Very recently, some organizations or institutions have made their TIP databases wholly or partially available to the public, as **Open Data**.¹⁸⁶ Such a process involves significant anonymization and protections when datasets include personal and sensitive data as well as alignment with relevant legal requirements.

While considerations around data storage, maintenance and management may be part of design and planning (see Stage #1: Design and Planning, *Prepare a work plan for data collection*), in some cases, database needs (including the overarching need for a database) may only become clear after data collection has already begun. The director of one NGO noted that the NGO had for many years been collecting data about victims being assisted. However, it was only after some time that they identified the need for a database to systematize, manage, store and analyze the data, as a means of properly managing the data and also informing programming and policy work:

One critical area of work is in terms of data, for our own internal monitoring and evaluation, but also in conducting research for advocacy. We have collected data, we have data, but we don't have the capacity to analyze it... We're in a position where the different data that we're collecting is in lots of different places so we need to come up with a system that puts it all together. This is one of the challenges that we face. How to link data together? How to link case files with the database. Do we need a database? These are the questions that we're exploring in terms of going forward with our own data collection about our caseload.

Key elements in the design of a database include: identifying the best system for one's needs; determining the appropriate system for resources and capacities; and ensuring adequate time, planning and sustainability. These are discussed below.

Consider options in setting up a database

- Identify the best system for one's needs
- Determine the appropriate system for resources and capacities
- Ensure adequate time, planning and sustainability

Identify the best system for one's needs

Databases must align with the needs of the individual, organization or institution conducting data collection as well as with the goals of data collection or research. Yet, in many instances, there is a discrepancy between what data collectors need for their work and their existing

¹⁸⁶ "Open Data" (sometimes referred to as "open source data" is data that has been collected by an organization or institution and is subsequently made publicly available, subject to the necessary data protections. See Sheriff, M. (2010) 'What "open data" means - and what it doesn't', *opensource.com*, December 10.

databases. One staff working on the design of victim case management systems for NGOs noted the need for electronic databases among NGO partners working to assist trafficking victims:

Ninety per cent of [our NGO partners] were using paper forms or have some old computer system that doesn't really work. So the need [for electronic data collection] was definitely out there...

This was echoed by one NGO director who highlighted the potential role for technology in how TIP data is to be managed:

One should look to use technology. That doesn't mean it's got to be all or nothing. But technology now can provide security, safety and it can provide organization of data in a way that it couldn't necessarily do before. ...technology can provide a lot of support and structure to that kind of work without being too complicated.

At the same time, the needs of data collection and the capacity of the organization need to align, which is not always or only about technological approaches and systems. As one NGO director stressed:

...ultimately start with "Why?" "Why are you doing it?" To make sure that you have the right rationale for doing it. Not just doing it to do it. You may be too small to do it. It may be that hard analog files [paper] are the way to go and manage your information.

The best system for some organizations and institutions will be a complex database, which leverages various technological solutions. In other cases, a simpler but still electronic system may be appropriate. One National Rapporteur's office, for example, described using Excel spreadsheets as the basis for its data collection system. In still other cases, paper-based data collection may be the only practicable option (for example, where government staff do not have access to computers, where there may be security issues due to staff sharing an office computer, where internet access is limited, or where technological skills are limited). One criminal justice practitioner in one country in Asia described how law enforcement used a simple paper-based database with hard copy spreadsheets to gather and organize information needed on trafficking victims returned from abroad:

Good practice. Identify the best system for one's needs

Ensure the database aligns with the needs of the organization or institution.

Ensure the database aligns with the goals of data collection or research.

Make sure that the database is usable and accessible.

Provide options for technical support to ensure the database is manageable and accessible.

Choose a technological option that fits with needs and purpose of data collection.

Consider if a simple, low-tech solution is sufficient for one's needs.

Take into account infrastructure, resources and technical capacity when considering technological solutions.

Consider a multi-staged approach or options for piloting the database.

Utilize technological expertise in design and planning of the database.

Ensure the database adheres to relevant legislation and ethical standards.

There was a [several page template with a wide range of questions and as a result the government was able to get a far better understanding of what happened to the men [who had been trafficked]. ... [That data] was just on [paper] spreadsheets.

This is not to suggest that this system could not also be operationalized in a simple electronic form. But for this specific institution and task this approach may have been what best fit with the available skills of data collectors and resources of the law enforcement office engaged in this work.

In some contexts, storing data in hard copy may be required by law, which may influence decisions about the best database system for an organization or institution. One TIP expert described working on an electronic database in one country where it was necessary also to accommodate hard copy data:

[One] considerable issue in [the country] is, unfortunately, every shelter, every non-profit organization has to keep a paper record set of their forms. So, we are still trying to work that through and looking at printing capabilities and [while] all the information is quickly printable, often in [the country] it's still an add-on. They're still keeping those paper forms and then they're also adding it in [to the electronic database].

In some cases, there may also be concerns about using an electronic system because it does not align with how things are typically done in a particular context, because of lack of familiarity with various technological approaches, inadequate staff capacity to manage the system or due to the institutional culture within an organization or institution. One criminal justice expert described resistance by law enforcement authorities in one country to even the simplest electronic databases:

There's no use of electronic support, that is, computers and the like. They [the police] still use paper books. And everything is filed into books. And that goes across the whole government. ...it's just a huge problem because they're just so set in their ways, the old ways of writing data entries into books. ... [One challenge] is to get past that fear of using electronic or digital types of storage and so that then allows for proper analysis.

There are serious limitations to storing data in paper-based systems and it is not, in the long-term, a workable model. However, paper-based systems remain widespread due to insufficient resources, computer illiteracy or suspicion and concerns about electronic databases, among other reasons. It is, therefore, important to bear in mind that, in many contexts and for many organizations and institutions, a paper-based data collection system is realistically the starting point for thinking through possible options in going forward.

Before any decisions are made about the design of a database, it is important to carefully assess the context in which data collection is to take place, including the legal and institutional framework. As one TIP researcher noted:

One government tried a couple of times to establish a database that would function for various government agencies, so that those government agencies would be able to add their data to the database. But they didn't have standardized data collection tools, they didn't have any exercises to understand who was collecting what and whether there any gaps and what was being counted and so on. And so it got to a point where they were trying to establish an integrated data collection system, a database and it would just completely and utterly flop. It just wasn't working. Which is really expensive. So in any discussion around the need for more resources there are

a series of steps for better collecting data that need to be done before you can just pummel agencies with resources and expect it all to get better.

Databases, then, should not be treated as a panacea. A database in and of itself will not be a solution to an organization's or institution's data collection needs. Rather, this requires a wider discussion around how data collection can and should be conducted in relation to a particular institutional or organizational mandate. The same TIP researcher as above stressed the need for careful assessment and analysis before any decisions are taken:

[We conducted many] interviews [with anti-trafficking actors] where we wrapped it up with them saying "if we just had a database all our problems would be solved". And it's a lot more complicated than that. ...there are various steps towards achieving coherent data collection [that] are not yet in place in this region anyway...in each country in the region there are multiple government agencies collecting data on trafficking in persons and also a couple that are looking at irregular migration. But there haven't been any mapping exercises to really understand who is involved, who is collecting what, whether there's any overlap with the data collection, whether there's any areas of potential under-reporting or missing certain trafficking in persons data collection fields. That needs to be done first in each and every country.

Another TIP researcher described the practical challenges of TIP data collection in one large and geographically dispersed country where the technological infrastructure and associated human and financial resources were not in place. An electronic database was not an easy solution in this setting for various reasons, including the cost of building a database, buying the necessary software licensing for multiple users, training and capacity-building of relevant staff and the designation of staff for data collection, entry and analysis tasks. The decentralized government system further complicated the flow of information between different provinces and between different levels of government. Another TIP expert working in the same country described a criminal justice database (not TIP-specific) that had been designed and implemented by a foreign donor but which the government was not able to sustain due to a raft of constraints including high staff turnover, lack of technical skills, a shortage of dedicated data collection staff and lack of political commitment.

As noted above, what technology is needed and used for a database will vary substantially depending on the parameters of data collection. For electronic databases, there is a wide variety of database design options. In some cases, a standalone database utilizing an application on existing software (such as Microsoft Excel or Salesforce) might meet data collection needs. Other databases are web-based and can sometimes be tailored or adapted from the original design. Some databases allow for concurrent use by several users as well as for varying levels of access rights to meet data protection needs. Some databases are custom-built for a particular data collection initiative. And some TIP databases have been specifically designed and then made available to other institutions or organizations for use and implementation. For discrete data collection or research projects, researchers and data collectors use a range of programs and data analysis software packages.¹⁸⁷

One challenge in setting up a database is language as many existing programs and software are only available in English or a limited range of languages. Resources are needed to either translate the program's user interface or develop guidelines for data entry when entering in another language. Another consideration is that it should be usable, accessible and responsive to those working with the system. A database needs to give data providers the data that they need to do their work on an on-going basis and in an accessible way. As one criminal justice expert highlighted:

¹⁸⁷ Examples include: AnSWR (Analysis Software for Word-Based Records); ATLAS.ti; C-I-SAID; CDC EZ-Text; Ethnograph; HyperRESEARCH; QCA (Qualitative Comparative Analysis); QSR NVivo; QSR NUD*IST; SAS; Stata; TextSmart; and winMAX.

You need a system that has the capacity to analyze the data... [In our system] you could punch in a question, like “how many victims come from a certain country under a certain age that are female?” and you could punch that information in and get an answer for a certain period of time.

Similarly, one National Rapporteur described how the office’s TIP database was key in conducting her daily work:

We do an annual report as an office. And we have this data, the final data on victims of human trafficking for the whole year. But through the database you can get reports anytime you want for any period of time that you need.

By contrast, in many instances, the design of a TIP database has been found to be out of step with what intended users needed and were able to use. Another National Rapporteur’s office described how problems with the design and operation of its database undermined the willingness of institutions to contribute to data collection as data providers:

[The problems with the system] were impacting the willingness and the will of data collection [from data providers), meaning that users were not so happy in spending time filling in electronic forms about victims. [...] [One of the problems was that] they could only interrogate the information that they had inputted, not what others input. [...] The other challenge was the infrastructure, the technical issue. Those are...the main problems – to convince people that their contribution is important and to make it friendly and easy to use.

Similarly, one TIP researcher described the inefficiently designed database of one government agency in one country, which limited the ability of government staff to make use of the data. While provincial government staff input data into the database for analysis at the national level, the system does not allow national level staff to query the database. This means, in practice, that if national level staff need a specific data point, they must ask each individual province to go back and tally from the original paper forms, a labor intensive and inefficient approach which, in turn, limits the ministry’s ability to use data to shape and inform its policy and programmatic work.

A database needs to adhere to national data protection requirements including legislation in the country where the data is to be housed. The database should also address multi-jurisdictional issues that may come into play, as discussed in Stage #1: Design and Planning (*Develop or apply legal and ethical guidelines and protocols*). For example, a data collector may be subject to the laws and regulations of the jurisdiction in which the data collector resides or works, but may be storing data in another country that applies different laws and regulations, or be storing data “in the cloud”,¹⁸⁸ which is subject to various and rapidly changing national and international laws. Where legal requirements for data protection are not robust, systems should be designed in line with international data protection standards. And when designing a database, there is also a range of ethical issues that must be considered, as discussed in Stage #1: Design and Planning (*Develop or apply legal and ethical guidelines and protocols*).

Given the highly complex nature of setting up a database, a multi-stage process may be

¹⁸⁸ The “cloud” refers to software and services that run on a server or a network of servers. In simple terms, cloud computing means “storing and accessing data and programs over the internet instead of your computer’s hard drive”. Griffith, E. (2016) ‘What is Cloud Computing?’, *PC Magazine*, May 3. See also: Andrews, D.C. and J.M. Newman (2012) ‘Personal Jurisdiction and Choice of Law in the Cloud’, *Maryland Law Review*, 73(1), pp. 313-384; and Elkhatib, Y. (2015) ‘Explainer: where is “the cloud” ...and who owns it?’, *The Conversation*, December 8.

beneficial, starting with a simple approach at the outset and moving toward the development of a more tailored and complex system once the range of external factors and considerations have been identified and assessment. Alternatively, it may be beneficial to pilot the database before scaling it.

In summary: Databases must align with the needs of the individual, organization or institution conducting data collection as well as with the goals of data collection. The best system for one organization or data collection effort will not be the same as for another. A database should be usable and accessible. Decisions around technology should fit with the needs and purpose of data collection as well as available infrastructure, resources and technical capacity. Databases should be designed in line with relevant legislation and ethical standards. Setting up a database may benefit from a multi-stage process or a pilot phase.

Determine the appropriate system for resources and capacities

Databases must align with available resources and technical capacities. This requires carefully assessing these factors from the outset, including the availability of human and financial resources over time (for example, beyond the duration of a time-bound, donor-funded project). One NGO director who led the development of a complex and technologically advanced case management system for assisted trafficking victims stressed the importance of this prior planning:

...make sure that you really count the total costs of implementing a [data collection] system. It's not just purchasing the software or the system. It's also about the personnel hours, it's the amount of organization that has got to take place...

In the case of many data collection projects, success and sustainability of a database correlated with an accurate assessment of resources, in both the design and the on-going operation of the system. One program manager emphasized the need to pay attention to what resources will be available in the longer-term:

Ultimately, and this is a message that we've advocated with our government partners, even now, even before the database has been rolled out, [there] has to be the appropriate resources, the appropriate staffing assigned to the management of this database [beyond the project].

As noted above, many government offices and NGOs lack the infrastructure (for example, computers, internet access or secure storage systems) and technical expertise (for example, computer proficiency, skills in using a database or IT professionals/IT support) to support databases. The experience of one criminal justice expert working with police in various countries is illustrative of such challenges:

The ability to use computers, any form of computer is very low. So getting the computers or that type of material out into the various locations is a problem. Internet is available, but again, budgeting, paying for the internet connection will be a problem. Collecting the information in the various locations and then getting it to a central point for analysis is a big problem. And the educational standard of the people collecting [the data] is also an issue.

Similarly, one TIP researcher noted that many government agencies, particularly those that tend to be lower resource, requested support in setting up a database or updating antiquated data collection systems because they lacked the financial resources and technical capacity to undertake this work:

[Many government officials said], “If any international organizations are able to help us finance computers and a database and send someone to do training on data management and data analysis we would really appreciate it”. They just don’t have the financial resources.

Databases also need to be manageable in terms of available resources. Data entry and processing requirements need to align with staff’s other tasks and responsibilities, including when human trafficking is only one part of their work portfolio. Another consideration is the on-going operating costs of the database. One NGO director described how, in seeking to better manage the NGO’s case management data, the NGO had ended up with a complex database that was excessively labor- and cost- intensive:

Most people want to be able to manage and access data more readily...But we don’t have that right now. It’s a really, really messy and bulky system. ... [Other organizations] looked at our system and... these organizations are ten times bigger than we were, they can’t physically handle the workload that it would take to go to an electronically maintained case file system, let alone afford it. Not just the fiscal cost, but then it’s the human cost, the number of hours it would take to actually implement and train and all of that.

It is also necessary to consider, as in the case of National Rapporteur offices, the time and resources available to data providers (that is, the organizations and institutions that collect and feed data to the office of the National Rapporteur or equivalent mechanism). More than one National Rapporteur spoke about the time and resource pressures that many of their institutional partners and data providers are under, given that they work on many issues, not only human trafficking. For example, law enforcement officers may be required to report on a raft of different crimes, not only on human trafficking and may find that human trafficking is a lower priority in their work portfolio relative to other crimes.

One TIP researcher described the development of a database on labor violations by a trade union confederation, which essentially failed because it was not aligned with the resources of data providers. The confederation spent years developing the database but found that, in the long-term, the database was empty because they had not taken into account that, for their affiliates (the data providers), collecting and entering data represented a substantial amount of work which was unfunded. Therefore, it is important to consult with data collection partners and data providers, whether within the government or civil society, about their available time and resources in the practical implementation of the data collection system as well as its design.

Good practice. Determine the appropriate system for resources and capacities

Allocate adequate and appropriate human and financial resources.

Factor in the total costs of implementing a database, including personnel time.

Assess resources and capacities at the outset, including availability of resources over time.

Develop a system that is manageable in terms of costs and staff time.

Consult with partners about their available time and resources to provide data into the database.

Assess technical capacities of staff as part of design.

Assess available technical tools and skills to support the system, including over time.

Adequate resources and time are also needed for a range of possible activities over the course of implementation (for example, maintaining and potentially upgrading the database, training staff in maintenance and management, building capacity for data analysis, and so on). Failing to anticipate cost and time factors will often mean being unable to meet project objectives and outputs. As one project manager noted:

The [TIP data collection] project had the ambition to do [analysis] but then we had many other issues to deal with. First of all, the upgrade of the database, which wasn't foreseen and took a lot of energy, time and budget. And then the series of trainings on the actual database usage. It was complicated. It had to be repeated more than one time and many of the assigned staff changed. So we had to repeat it a few times. That left little space (resources) to go further and get into data analysis.

Similarly, the experience of one NGO illustrates the importance of allocating adequate resources and time for design, as well as for development and testing. The project, managed by an IO and funded by a bilateral donor, engaged a database expert to design and implement a database. However, as a senior staff member of the NGO explained, the project timeline did not allow for any testing phase in which adjustments and modifications could be made:

...the timeline of the project was so short that as we started to fill in the information in the database, we started to have problems but we had no support because [the database expert's] contract had ended.

In addition, there were inadequate resources to run the database, which relied on high internet speed. Long-term operational costs were not considered in project design, which undermined sustainability and meant wasted time and resources. As the NGO director explained:

We needed to have a very high internet speed to run this database...because it was web-based. We paid a lot of money for the internet connection that we couldn't really afford after the project ended. The whole project – the way it was designed with the timeline, no on-going technical expertise [...] – meant that we ended up with this database that we can't use. [...] The project ended and there was no follow-up. It's a dead database. It's of no use to us.

Beyond wasting financial resources and already limited staff time, the failure of this database also caused tension between the NGO and the government, which had expected to be able to receive data from the NGO for its own reporting needs and requirements. The NGO director continued:

It has caused a lot of political problems because the government thinks that we have this fabulous database that is working and that we have a lot of data in it and that we're not sharing this. There's no understanding that the database doesn't work. [The international organization] presented it as a successful project [to the government and donor] – that they had designed the database and it was now working and they had handed it over to the NGO. This caused a lot of tension with the government... But we didn't have data in the database, we couldn't generate reports, we couldn't share it with the government.

Similar factors have constrained criminal justice data collection on TIP, especially in low resource countries. One criminal justice expert stressed that the insufficiency of human and financial resources undermined opportunities for success:

Resources [are] definitely an issue. Even where the government does allocate funding to work on trafficking, they still need assistance from others to help them to develop this kind of [criminal justice] data collection system. They don't have their own or sufficient funding to do it by themselves. So resources definitely [are an issue]. And that's not just funding. It's also the human resources, including IT specialists. That's also a problem. In terms of maintenance of these systems, it's quite challenging and within the governments they don't usually have this kind of expertise. They also can't source it because they don't have the funding to source that kind of expertise.

Inadequate investment in the design of the database of one National Rapporteur's office led to its collapse in a very short period of time, as a senior staff member explained:

The technical infrastructure of the system was [developed in house] and the resources available at that point were not generous, so it quickly became...obsolete from a technical perspective.

When resources are not available in house, it may be necessary to hire a technical expert or establish a partnership with a specialist organization or company. Partnerships between those who collect data and those who know how to organize and structure it (including how to build a database) are a useful strategy, with each partner working within their area of expertise and skill set. As one researcher noted:

[If] you're hearing that an organization doesn't have significant resources for research, find a partner. Because small organizations might have been doing a lot of work, but they don't have the resources or ability to get that work [into a database]. You could work with people and institutions to help decide how you want to keep your records, if you're a business or a small agency, and say, "...We want you to show us how to keep records so that it's automated, so it's kept in a way that's accessible".

Technological expertise can be key in the success or failure of a database. It is critical to identify individuals or organization with appropriate skills and expertise. One project manager of a TIP data collection project described facing difficulties in finding a suitable expert for this task:

During phase one, it didn't [go] well because we had to change the IT company twice and we were not very satisfied with the final result. It wasn't user friendly. The reports that we would get out of it were very complicated. You needed a lot of IT experience to deal with it. There was no maintenance, [no] easy maintenance function. During phase two we upgraded the software. We contracted another company and the final result was much better.

The need for technical support is likely to be on-going for a period of time as databases are set up, tested and start to operate. Databases will also need some degree of adjustment and adaptation as well as technical support over time. One staff member of one National Rapporteur-equivalent mechanism described the office's experience in this regard:

...the first year is very important because maybe there are new things that you'd like to add, there is new information that you didn't know before that you needed, but then it creates a disconnect between one window to the other. So you think something is missing, so you add it.

Resources are also needed for training (and re-training) staff in the use of databases. One staff member working on an NGO data collection project stressed the importance of training:

...training people in the system, getting them to actually use the system takes a lot of time, sometimes repeated visits, repeated efforts to get the staff trained, to get them to really buy in [to the database].

This may involve not only one-off trainings but multiple trainings as needed as well as on-going mentoring and support. In contexts with high staff turnover or rotation, training will need to be repeated with all new staff to ensure consistency and quality in terms of data entered into the database. Training should be accompanied by written training manuals that can be referred to over the course of implementation; training manuals should be revised and updated with any changes to the database.

In summary: Databases must align with available resources and technical capacities, which should be assessed and accommodated from the outset of a data collection effort. This requires considering existing infrastructure (for example, computers, internet access, or secure storage systems), resources over time (for example, staff time and financial resources), technical expertise (for example, technical support in design and over time) and capacity building needs (for example, resources and time to train staff in computer proficiency, skills in using a database).

Ensure adequate time, planning and sustainability

Adequate time and planning are needed to design an appropriate and sustainable database. Organizations and institutions may be under pressure from government agencies, donors or partners to develop databases. This pressure should not overtake the need to take time at the outset to think through and plan the database in line with the precise parameters and needs of data collection. One TIP researcher stressed the importance of adequate planning to be able to collect better data:

...I'm definitely eager to see the [anti-trafficking] movement have better data. But I just want to make sure we're not in such a rush to get it that we don't set up the systems to do it well.

Not uncommonly, organizations and institutions move forward with data collection without considering how to store and manage the data the collected. As one TIP researcher noted:

In some of the organizations that I've partnered with they don't have a very systematic approach to storing data. It's not necessarily something that's been thought out ahead of time. People designed the study and then implemented it but didn't have a plan for how to store or manage the data. And so then when you try to come in and work with them to analyze it, it's a nightmare trying to figure out where it (the data) is.

Designing a database may benefit from a staged process that starts with a simple database at the outset, from which a more tailored system can be developed. Design should also anticipate the need to expand and upgrade the system over time. One NGO director described the need to revamp their database when they experienced a higher caseload than anticipated:

Good practice. Ensure adequate time, planning and sustainability

Allocate adequate time and resources to design a suitable database.

Start simple and revise the database over time.

Plan for the sustainability of the database beyond the duration of a project.

Design the database such that it can be updated and expanded over time, as needed.

... we never realized that we were going to have that large a number of cases and so much information. So now we are working on passing all of these [files and cases] into our web system with different security levels so that information is really secure.

Sustainability is another important consideration. Many databases are not sustainable once the external organization or funder is no longer involved. As one TIP researcher explained, sustainability remains a significant challenge for TIP databases:

... databases that have been tried and failed is because someone is supporting it – an external funder, an international agency... And it goes for two years and they start collecting data and as soon as the project period ends, the database dies and they don't have the staff to continue to input information.

This is illustrated by the experience of one NGO that had worked with their national government in the development and implementation of a TIP database. The database was initially successful but eventually failed because the government did not have the resources or capacity to address problems that arose over the course of implementation and did not maintain the database over time. As the NGO director explained:

...it was validated and officially accepted by the Ministry of the Interior and by the national police. And the police in the whole country were trained for that [database]. Of course they not only were trained in how to use the system, but also on trafficking, to understand what it is, to understand the law and so on... And then there were problems with the system ...they had problems with the server and the government just let it down. They don't use it anymore.

Sustainability needs to be considered from the outset in terms of decision-making and planning, including how to address problems that emerge during implementation. All of this points to the need for long-term planning in the design and implementation of TIP databases. It also highlights the need for realistic timelines for funders and implementers and for being aware of the inevitability that problems will arise and need addressing over the course of implementation.

In summary: Adequate time and planning are needed to design an appropriate database. External time pressures should not overtake the need to carefully think through and plan the database. Database design may benefit from a staged process and should also anticipate the need to expand and upgrade the system over time. It is important, at the outset, to plan for the long-term sustainability of the database.



Ensure quality in data entry

Data entry is the act of entering information into data collection formats, usually electronic formats or software on a computer. It is done on an on-going basis, but always requires care and precision. Data entry requires training and oversight as well as adequate time and resources. Language considerations also factor into the accuracy of data entry.

Entering data and addressing errors

Remediating potential errors in data entry is critical in ensuring data quality.

This process is often referred to as data editing (see *Establish procedures for data editing (validation, cleaning and maintenance)* below).

There are different means by which this can be done depending on the nature of the data being collected and the format or approach in which it is entered.¹⁸⁹

Technical mechanisms may be built into a database to provide checks and reduce errors including: by automating manual operations; the prevention of duplicate cases or double counting through the tracking of single case data; the reduction of invalid numeric responses through the inclusion of range limits; the prevention of invalid response options through logic flow checks; and the prevention of insufficient data through the incorporation of mandatory fields. These checks help to enhance data quality. Data entry staff should also implement procedures aimed at ensuring data quality including checking for high levels of missing data, outliers or unusual trends.

Ensure quality in data entry

- Entering data and addressing errors
- Ensure training and supervision
- Consider data entry and processing in different languages

Data entry errors may be minimized when the individual entering data is able to select from a number of predefined fields as compared to inputting open, narrative data which are more difficult to standardize and code. Closed fields can be useful in limiting errors. As one data collection staff explained:

We try to make it as challenging as possible to have user error. That's not always possible but, to the extent that we can automate fields or restrict the possible values based on another selection, we do try to do that, to make it as easy as possible to enter information [correctly].

Some errors may be prevented or lessened by offering guidance during the process of data entry (for example, providing instructions and definitions as part of the database interface or a manual or codebook for data entry).¹⁹⁰

One data collection staff explained how instructions were provided not only in a codebook, but also in the software itself:

Good practice. Entering data and addressing errors

Establish and implement quality control measures to address errors.

Ensure quality control activities suitable for the data collection project and approach.

We write in instructions and definitions in the user interface as well. So that helps to standardize across the different [country offices].

Another function, known as blocked formats, requires that compulsory fields must be completed to allow the user to move to the next stage of data entry. This is useful in addressing errors and is appropriate for some databases. However, the reality of how data flows, where full information from trafficking victims may only become available over time and not necessarily in the order provided in the format, may not mesh well with blocked formats. As one TIP expert noted:

¹⁸⁹ Data editing, a process of ensuring validity of the data by checking that the information provided is accurate, complete and consistent, might include: validity edits; range edits; duplication edits; consistency edits; historical edits; statistical edits; and other miscellaneous edits.

¹⁹⁰ A codebook describes the contents, structure, and layout of a data collection. It should contain information intended to be complete and self-explanatory for each variable in a data file. ICPSR (2018) 'What is a Codebook?', *ICPSR Find & Analyze Data*. Michigan, United States: Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan.

Very often a blocked format creates problems. When you remove the block, it becomes smoother, so one can leave a space blank and fill it in at a later point, in case the related data are not yet clear, available, or need more careful assessment.

Similarly, one TIP data collection manager described the need for flexibility and time in order to collect data about the same victim:

Part of the challenge with collecting data from victims of trafficking or any victim of trauma is that it takes time and you don't get the information in one interview. It might take several attempts to actually see the whole picture or hear the whole story. So we had to have a flexible data collection platform that you could, for example, go back to edit and update and revise.

For some types of data collection, stricter database systems may not always be suitable because they lack flexibility (for instance, to accommodate new patterns and unanticipated trends and behaviors). Those entering data may find themselves trying to choose the best (predefined) answer from a menu of often less than adequate responses. One TIP data collection staff noted this constraint:

A lot of data comes from drop down boxes so the variables are predefined and the predefined variables don't always cover the actual scenario... the predefined naming is one of the problems.... [in] a lot of [places] where the variables are defined, it might be better just to leave [the field] open because then you might get a better picture in terms of research.¹⁹¹

Case management databases (about assisted trafficking victims) need to be able to capture data about complex cases and assistance needs, including when victims are re-trafficked or exit and then re-enter an assistance program. However, as the staff of one NGO noted, some systems are not sufficiently responsive nor flexible in documenting victims' experiences and needs:

...there's a limited set of options that you choose from and a lot of pre-set options, which is what database people like to have because it limits and it controls the fields and it allows for quality assurance. But the problem is that it doesn't allow for the flexibility in complicated cases or different variations of how things have happened.

Recognizing that victim reintegration and criminal justice pathways often take years, databases must also accommodate the element of time, including changes over time. One National Rapporteur-equivalent mechanism noted the need for a data collection system that captures TIP as a process:

If one is collecting on-going data on the criminal procedures [for TIP cases], which can take years (and also on trafficking victims, from the first flagging of assistance), if the data collection is upon this process, it is then a matter of asking, "when is the data inserted? At the end of all or since the beginning?" These are methodological decisions with wins and losses.

The same National Rapporteur-equivalent mechanism noted that incomplete data may, to some extent, be inevitable at some stages of the TIP data collection process:

¹⁹¹ Surtees, R. and S. Craggs (2010) *Beneath the surface. Methodological issues in research and data collection with assisted trafficking victims*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Organization for Migration and Washington, D.C., United States: NEXUS Institute, p. 32.

Incomplete data at an initial stage is “normal” when referring to TIP, namely if the information comes from victims and on-going investigations. So the issue is more about the methodology in place and the possibility for the system to allow for the completion, revision, or correction of the data and that this is considered at the time of analysis and producing reports.

In such cases the role of data entry staff is particularly important in ensuring data quality and procedures must align with the nature of the data being collected and the database itself.

In summary: Remediating potential errors in data entry is critical in ensuring data quality. Technical mechanisms may be built into a database to provide checks and reduce errors. Data entry staff also should implement procedures aimed at ensuring data quality including checking for high levels of missing data, outliers or unusual trends. For some types of data collection, stricter database systems may not always be suitable given the lack of flexibility.

Ensure training and supervision

Time and resources for training should be allocated to ensure that data entry and processing are of a high quality. Different levels of training (and often re-training) may be needed given different levels of proficiency within and between organizations and institutions. In some cases, this may involve training on how to enter data in hard files or in simple electronic formats and may also involve basic computer literacy skills. In other cases, training may be for more advanced and complex databases. One project manager described the training required in implementing a TIP database for which social workers collected data and then entered the data into mobile phones:

We trained all of the caseworkers on the use of the forms and the use of the phones to fill out the forms. And we did several follow-up trainings as well. But we had challenges with access to internet and case workers’ basic capacity to use the phones in filling out the forms. We had caseworkers who had never used a computer before. And we were asking them to fill in forms on a smart phone, which was not realistic. And it quickly became clear that we either had to provide a lot more training and a lot more capacity building or figure out a way to do paper forms in addition or to complement the online forms.

On-going and repeat training is needed (and must be anticipated) when there is high rotation or turnover of staff, resulting in a lack of institutional memory. The manager of a regional TIP data collection project explained how this was an issue for the project:

There were a series of trainings for database users over the course of the years... But then sometimes we had to fly back to the countries to do follow-up trainings. Also because one of the biggest challenges is that focal points in these offices were changing very quickly. Sometimes you have trained two database users and in three months they’re both gone. There was no institutional memory [...] ...the people leaving were not able to properly hand over their work to their colleagues.

Staff rotation was cited as one of the main reasons for the failure of a criminal justice database in one country, in spite of a significant investment by the donor over a long period of time. As one criminal justice expert explained:

For ten years [the donor] tried to get it running effectively. But, in the end, they gave up. Because what happened is they trained people, users in the provincial and district level to input the data. But the national police didn’t have a proper system to replace

those people and train the new people so that it (the database) continued to function. ... there was no replacing and training of new users, the maintenance was not done on the computer systems.... They would go to a district, say, “We haven’t received your information for the last six months” and they would say, “The computer broke down” or “The user has been transferred and we don’t have anybody else”.

Supervision and oversight are also needed to ensure that data entry and processing are of a high quality. One National Rapporteur described how initially data entry was done by each institution (data provider) without adequate quality control, training and supervision. As this led to many problems, the procedure was changed so that one staff member (someone with the appropriate skills, training and supervision) was dedicated to this task:

We had these problems with the database people [entering] information in the wrong place when they were filling the data because initially access to the database were from [different government ministries] ... They were [entering] information. But then we found out that this was not the right way. Because some were [entering information], some were not [entering] any information at all. And so there were gaps in feeding the database...

Good practice. Ensure training and supervision

Provide robust on-going training to staff involved in data entry and processing.

Conduct on-going training, particularly when staff changes.

Tailor training to different levels of proficiency.

Assess the effectiveness of training over time and make changes as needed.

Provide supervision and oversight of staff conducting data entry and processing.

This makes clear the need for oversight and supervision of data entry. As one criminal justice expert stressed:

You need a set of data that reflects the information you need to gain. And that data needs to be consistent across the board for all cases. You need accurate input. You need people actually inputting this data into a database or computerized system. They need to be properly supervised... Mistakes will be made so they need to be carefully supervised.

Further, in thinking about training and supervision, it is important to recognize that some data entry personnel are also frontline responders (such as social workers and law enforcement officers) who will be busy with their operational work and for whom data entry may be considered of secondary importance. One NGO staff member noted this in her own organization:

The team is pretty busy and I think for most of the counselors and social workers, they still don’t see the benefit of the case management system (database). It’s just the data person that sees the benefit of a case system.

This was echoed by one National Rapporteur in speaking about the national TIP database, which was based on data entered by social workers assisting victims and law enforcement officers involved in TIP cases:

The file format is lengthy and complex and this could be a constraint because we know that those who have to enter data in a database tend to avoid it. This is actually a common problem with data collection. Those who have to enter data in the

database often do not do that very scrupulously, as they are pressured by [more] urgent priority needs and concerns. [...] The completion of the file at later stage sometimes is not done, is postponed and neglected, or it is not done so accurately as it should be.

All training and supervision has resource implications, particularly in terms of human resources, which need to be built into the budgeting for this work.

In summary: Time and resources are needed for training to ensure the quality of data entry and processing. Different types of training may be needed, tailored to different levels of proficiency within and between organizations and institutions as well as for new staff. Training should be assessed for efficacy and adjusted as needed. Supervision and oversight are also needed to ensure high quality data entry and processing.

Consider data entry and processing in different languages

Much TIP data collection involves multiple languages, not only in terms of data collected, but also with regard to data entry and processing. Varying levels of fluency among staff collecting and entering data may impact the level of precision, particularly when staff must translate from one language to another in the process of data entry. One NGO director described the difficulty faced by staff in one non-English speaking country when working with an English-language database:

It has been really problematic doing this in a dual-language environment. ...It makes it really difficult to collect data when staff, the people who are primarily doing the work, have English as a second language. It takes more time for them to be thoughtful about what's being written. Often times it's very stressful for them because they're not sure if they're using the right word in the right place.

Some projects involve multi-lingual databases and/or data entry instructions available in multiple languages. Working across multiple languages introduces potential errors, which may compromise the precision of the data. It is important to identify and address potential errors in data entry caused by language. Different levels of language proficiency should also be taken into account given how this impacts data entry and, thus, data quality.

In summary: Errors may arise when data entry takes places across multiple languages. Adequate time is needed to address potential errors in data entry due to language barriers.

Good practice. Consider data entry and processing in different languages

Identify and address potential errors in data entry due to language.

Allocate adequate time for data entry and processing given language barriers.

Check for precision in data entry when working in different languages.

Take into account different levels of language proficiency and how this impacts data entry.



Establish procedures for data editing (validation, cleaning and maintenance)

Human error is a reality in all data collection and data entry. Errors, however, may be mitigated through robust practices in data editing (validation, cleaning and maintenance), processes that can be supported by computer technology.

Data editing involves reviewing data for consistency, detecting errors and outliers and ensuring accuracy and adequacy of the data. The goal is to identify and correct as much error as possible. It may occur at almost any phase of data collection or analysis but is a critical part of the data collection stage (when data is gathered and recorded). The procedures and processes used for detecting and handling errors in data are referred to as editing techniques and range from routine activities of correcting typographical errors or out-of-range entries to elaborate statistical checks performed by computers.¹⁹² There are specific criteria for data editing, from geographical coherence to historical coherence, from analysis of the standard deviation to simple common sense. These processes take time and too often are not done correctly. Data editing involves the contiguous and mutually reinforcing tasks of data validation, data cleaning and data maintenance.

Data validation occurs at the time of data entry and generally means certain data is considered invalid and removed from the database. **Data cleaning** is the one-off process of detecting and addressing errors within the dataset (that is, amending, correcting or removing data that is incorrect, incomplete, improperly formatted or duplicative).¹⁹³ This may involve removing typographical errors or validating and correcting values against a known list of entities. The level of rigor will differ, ranging from strict (leading to some data being excluded when it does not meet the agreed criteria) to more fluid and flexible (involving correcting data that partially matches existing, known data). **Data maintenance** refers to the on-going correction and verification of the dataset.

Establish procedures for data editing, (validation, cleaning and maintenance)

- Consider issues in data editing (validation, cleaning and maintenance)
- Allocate adequate time and resources and assign or recruit skilled staff
- Explore technology solutions for data editing (validation, cleaning and maintenance)

These tasks are all important in ensuring data quality and, as one TIP researcher stressed, key aspects of good practice in TIP data collection:

[Good practice is] doing a good sweep of the data and the data cleaning process, doing quality data checks, random data checks to ensure that certain items match up.

¹⁹² NECE (2000) 'Glossary of Terms on Statistical Data Editing', *Conference of European Statisticians Methodological Material*. Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations Economic Commission for Europe; SCAD (n.d.) *Statistical Data Editing Guide*. Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates: Statistics Center Abu Dhabi; and Stinson, L.L. and S.K. Fisher (1996) *Overview of Data Editing Procedures in Surveys Administered by the Bureau of Labor Statistics: Procedures and Implications*. San Antonio, United States: International Computer-Assisted System Information Computing (CASIC) Conference.

¹⁹³ Rahm, E. (2000) *Data Cleaning: Problems and Current Approaches*. Germany: University of Leipzig.

Different procedures for validation, cleaning and maintenance will depend on the specific data collection effort, including how data is collected, when and by whom. Additionally, it is important to allocate adequate time, staff and resources to these tasks, as well as to leverage technology solutions to support this work, when appropriate.

Consider issues in data editing (validation, cleaning and maintenance)

A major consideration in some TIP data collection is the potential for **duplicate cases** and **double counting** within a dataset. This can happen, for example, when one victim is counted multiple times by different institutions or organizations involved in the victim's identification and assistance. One trafficking victim may be captured in the assistance caseload of more than one service provider and, thus, appear multiple times in the consolidated data set of victims in a country or area. Duplicate cases of trafficking victims are a common challenge in TIP data collection. As one data collection project staff noted:

The duplication of cases is an issue because maybe somebody went to three different NGOs and if they all report the same case, this is counted three times.

While systems are put in place to check for and exclude duplicate cases (for example, when National Rapporteur offices collect data from different institutions and organizations) legal restrictions on collecting personal data (names and other identifying information) may leave open a margin of error. Data protection requirements mean that duplicate cases may arise. As one National Rapporteur explained:

Good practice. Consider issues in data editing (validation, cleaning and maintenance)

Identify issues in data validation, cleaning and maintenance.

Anticipate and address duplicate cases in administrative data.

Professionals know the system well, so the inputs that we make into the system undergo a high quality control generally. However, we cannot cast out mistakes, double-counting, of a victim who enters, then discontinues, after one year enters again, because, for instance, she was expelled, goes somewhere else, where she was not known to the organizations providing assistance and is, thus, entered anew into the [system].

Similarly, the same trafficker may appear in the discrete datasets of various criminal justice institutions (for example, police, prosecutors and the courts). Lack of data sharing between police and prosecutors and the independence of the judiciary means that there is generally no linear, inter-institutional flow of criminal justice data from police to prosecutor to the courts. Rather, most commonly police collect data separately from prosecutors, with distinct case file numbers, leading to possible duplication between the two institutions. Duplication potentially distorts an understanding of the nature and scope of human trafficking in a country or context.

Duplicate cases may also arise in hotline data where the same trafficking victim may be counted multiple times among those calling in, even when measures are in place to exclude duplication. In addition, many hotlines count victims based also on reporting by third parties (for example, police, doctors, or social workers) and several different stakeholders may submit reports of the same victim or case.

Double counting is also an issue when victims and traffickers are counted in data from both origin and destination countries. A trafficking victim may be assisted in the destination

country and also once back home, which means that they will appear in both datasets. Traffickers who are apprehended both at home and abroad may also be duplicated across datasets at origin and destination. While it is important that cases and individuals be counted at both origin and destination, care is needed when the numbers from origin and destination countries are combined. Transnational coordination is needed to address the risk of duplication as well as disclaimers in macro-level reports (for example, regional or global reports) that point to this limitation in the data. One TIP researcher noted that in one region the consolidation of numbers of trafficking victims was done without adequate validation, compromising the quality of the data:

When data were being collected by the national trafficking committees in each country... they had a heap of problems. Because they're basically getting sent Excel sheets and Word sheets and documents in print and hard copy and documents in electronic formats and everyone is counting different things and they suggested there might be double counting and under-reporting. ...for example, if a victim had presented themselves at two different government agencies or a couple of different NGOs, they might be double counted. So, consolidation in the region is a massive problem and I would really question the accuracy of the data being reported at the national level and regional level.

In summary: There is the potential for duplication and double counting within TIP datasets (for example, when one victim is counted multiple times by different institutions or organizations involved in the victim's identification and assistance or when one trafficker is documented by different criminal justice actors). Duplication may also arise between countries of origin and destination. Care is needed to identify and mitigate duplicate cases in datasets.

Allocate adequate time and resources and assign or recruit skilled staff

Data editing processes (validation, cleaning and maintenance) are labor-intensive and time-consuming, particularly for some datasets (for example, when data comes from multiple data sources or different countries). The time needed for data editing will vary according to the data collection project and approach, but regardless, should be adequate for this task in any given project. One TIP researcher, working on transnational data collection, stressed the significant amount of time and work involved in this task:

The validation phase is very important and somehow we tend to always underestimate the validation phase... Once we receive the questionnaire there is an entire analytical part of looking at the data and trying to understand what is this information? What is this data? Who are these victims that these countries are sending? Are these real [trafficking] victims? Are these victims of other crimes? Are there victims that we can consider victims of trafficking but that are reported under other crimes? ...National authorities tend to send mixed data so sometimes we receive data that is coming from victims of trafficking that are actually victims of another crime.

Validation, cleaning and maintenance tasks should be undertaken by well-trained staff. One NGO director collecting case management data argued for dedicated staff for this important task:

We do have a dedicated staff member that was going back and he was working through all of [the data], looking for fields that are missing, things that are mis-entered, trying to go back and correct those.

Another NGO director described the arduous process of data validation for the NGO's victim case management system:

...it has taken us two years to get a system and we are just finishing up putting in our data. The challenge was that we've got different pieces of missing data...our team are not data people, or tech people, so we've been going back through and employed a data person for that team two years ago. And his job was not to do any cases, but literally to go back through all the intake forms and client forms and start entering all the data in [the local language] and English. It has been a long process.

Good practice. Allocate adequate time and resources and assign or recruit skilled staff

Dedicate sufficient time and resources for validation, cleaning and maintenance.

Train and supervise staff in validation, cleaning and maintenance.

In more complex systems (for example, involving multiple organizations and institutions as data providers), this would likely require one organization or institution taking responsibility for oversight and for ensuring clean and consistent data.

In summary: Data editing (validation, cleaning and maintenance) is labor-intensive and time-consuming. Adequate time should be allocated for this task, including as needed over time. Staff should be trained and supervised in data validation, cleaning and maintenance

Explore technology solutions for data editing (validation, cleaning and maintenance)

There are technology solutions, specifically software programs, to support data editing. These can be useful, for example, in identifying outliers, which can skew the results and raise questions about validity. One NGO program manager discussed using a cloud-based application to validate, clean and maintain data being collected about trafficking victims calling into a hotline:

[We use the application] to identify discrepancies that should never exist in the data or are extremely unlikely to exist in the data. We want it to throw [up] errors or bring back cases where you logged that ...they were both an adult and a minor at the time of the call. They can't be both. ...Identifying those data so we can review it and make sure that it isn't inaccurate depending on the type of discrepancy. And then the data accuracy checks are pretty extensive. They basically review every case coded at a certain level to make sure that it was coded correctly and that's done by a smaller group of people who have been

Good practice. Explore technology solutions for data editing (validation, cleaning and maintenance)

Identify a technology solution to support data validation, cleaning and maintenance.

Allocate resources for the purchase of any needed technology solutions.

Train staff in the use of any programs or applications for validation, cleaning and maintenance.

trained specifically on data standards to make sure that the data that was entered in structured fields matches our definitions.

The extent to which technological solutions are appropriate is a function of the specific database and data collection project. When leveraging such technology, resources will be needed for the purchase of software licenses as well as to train staff in its use and application. The use of such programs, though, is not a substitute for having skilled staff engaged in this process and adequate supervision of this staff.

In summary: Technology solutions may be mobilized to support data editing (validation, cleaning and maintenance). Resources should be allocated for the purchase of any needed technology solutions and for training and supervision of staff in its use.



Develop procedures for data storage and management, including retention and disposal

Data storage is the recording of data in a storage medium as well as the handling of this data.¹⁹⁴ Data storage (including handling) can be both physical (hard copy) and digital (electronic). Data storage is different from **data archiving** in that data storage is generally for current and active data (that is, data that is being accessed or that will be used for analysis), whereas data archiving is intended as a repository for data that needs to be kept for a long period of time, but is not necessarily used in current activities. For example, data may be archived when legal compliance requires that it be retained. Data that is archived is generally no longer in use, not changing frequently or not required on a regular basis.¹⁹⁵

Develop procedures for data storage and management, including retention and disposal

- Consider the type of data collected
- Secure, store and manage data
- Determine responsibilities and privileges in data handling
- Develop and implement procedures and requirements for data retention and disposal
- Consider the use of technology in data storage and management

Data management refers to the control, protection, delivery and enhancement of data. Data management includes developing and implementing protocols for **data retention and disposal**, which involves deciding which data is **retained (archived)** versus which data is **disposed of (destroyed)**.

TIP data must be stored and managed in a safe and secure manner during and after a data collection project. Considerations and issues in data storage and management include, but are not limited to: the type of data collected and stored; how best to secure, store and manage data; responsibilities and privileges in data handling (who can handle which portion

¹⁹⁴ Buys, C.M. and P.L. Shaw (2015) 'Data Management Practices Across an Institution: Survey and Report', *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication*, 3(2).

¹⁹⁵ Waterford Technologies (2017) 'The Difference Between Data Backup and Archiving', *Waterford Technologies Blog*, February 3.

of data, at what point during the project, for what purpose and so on); procedures and requirements for data retention and disposal (for example, how long data should be kept and when, how and who should handle data for storage, sharing, archival, retrieval and disposal purposes); and what technologies are appropriate and what technical support is needed. Each of these issues is discussed in turn below.

Consider the type of data collected

How to secure data is determined by the data collection project itself. Different data storage and management approaches will be needed depending on the nature of the data and the overall data collection activity. As one TIP researcher noted:

...it depends on what kind of identifying data are in the dataset... There's general procedures around locking up data, having some regular dates where you delete records off of a computer so that you don't have data that could potentially be accessed by people who are not involved in studies or the projects. And for the hard copy surveys, we shredded them after data was entered.

Different types of data will have different requirements in terms of data storage and management. These are most often legal requirements. For example, **personal data**¹⁹⁶ requires that extra protections be in place for storage as well as in terms of who has access to that data. In the context of trafficking in persons, personal data would include, among other information, an individual's name, date of birth, known address, telephone number and information from (or copies of) identity documents, which may be collected by institutions and organizations providing services to trafficked persons or by police and prosecution services collecting data on traffickers and on victims for the purpose of investigation and prosecution.

Good practice. Consider the type of data collected

Review legislation for requirements related to data storage and management.

Design procedures for data storage and management in line with relevant legislation.

In the absence of robust legislation, design storage and management procedures in line with ethical principles.

Consider the political context and adjust data storage and management procedures accordingly.

Legislation in a given jurisdiction may explicitly prohibit the collection of certain types of data or may require specific measures to be put in place to protect some types of data. For instance, TIP data collection that includes personal data raises specific legal requirements in terms of storage and management. Other types of data (for instance, open source court documents or a case law database) may not require the same high threshold of protection for data storage. However, this should not be taken to mean that this data does not have its own storage and protection requirements. There is a lack of legislation in some regions as well as failure to enforce what protections are in place. In the absence of robust data protection and

¹⁹⁶ Personal data refers to any information that can be used on its own or with other information to identify an individual (data subject). Sensitive data is personal data that may be used in a discriminatory way against an individual and as such should be treated with greater care and be subject to more stringent restrictions. Examples of sensitive data include personal data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade union membership; the processing of genetic data or biometric data; data concerning health; and data concerning an individual's sex life or sexual orientation. EU (2016) *Regulation 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Protection of Natural Persons with Regard to the Processing of Personal Data and on the Free Movement of Such Data, and Repealing Directive 95/46/EC*. European Union ("General Data Protection Regulation" or "GDPR"). Brussels, Belgium: European Union, Article 9.

privacy legislation in a given country, data collectors should adhere to a higher level of protection than what may be legally required. One TIP expert noted legislative gaps in many contexts:

...in the countries that we work there's insufficient legal protections around data storage. Certainly [in terms] of what's in practice and observed.

Some types of data may require specific storage protocols because of the political environment or the topic about which data is being collected. For instance, in constrained political contexts it may be risky to collect information on human trafficking (for example, in countries with poor human rights records and a limited space for civil society). This necessitates greater care in data storage than may be required in more open political contexts.

In summary: As different types of data will have different legal requirements in terms of data storage and management, it is important to review and adhere to this legislation as well as consider any issues that arise as a result of the socio-political context. Ideally data collection should also look to higher order ethical principles to guide procedures for data storage and management.

Secure, store and manage data

There are many options for data storage. How to store data safely will depend on the nature of data being collected (how, when and by whom). Data may be stored in hard copies and secured in locked cabinets; it may be in electronic format and password protected; it may be stored in the cloud with limited access. How to best store data is directly linked to the specific database that has been designed as well as any legal or administrative requirements and the environment in which data is collected. Different approaches include: de-identifying and anonymizing all files and records (or not collecting any identifying information);¹⁹⁷ using codes, numbers or pseudonyms for each discrete file or case; storing code source files in a secure location separately from the files; encrypting audio files and “shredding” them once transcribed; using password protections (including multiple levels, when needed); storage on private services; and storage on hard discs that are not connected to the internet.¹⁹⁸ Various experts and researchers working with TIP data described their approaches, which varied according to the specific data collection activity:

¹⁹⁷ De-identified data is data where all direct personal identifiers have been permanently removed, no code or key exists to link the information or materials to their original source(s) and the remaining information cannot reasonably be used by anyone to identify the source(s). Anonymous data refers to unidentified data (that is, personally identifiable information was not collected, or if collected, identifiers were not retained and cannot be retrieved) or information or materials (for example, data or specimens) that cannot be linked directly or indirectly by anyone to their source(s). Ohio State University Office of Research (2018) ‘What is the difference between the terms coded, de-identified and anonymous?’, *Office of Responsible Research Practices*. United States: Ohio State University.

¹⁹⁸ See, for example, Brunner, J. (2018) *Getting to Good Human Trafficking Data: Everyday Guidelines for Frontline Practitioners in Southeast Asia*. Stanford, United States: WSD Handa Center, Honolulu, United States: East-West Center and Jakarta, Indonesia: Human Rights Resource Centre, p. 67; IOM (2010) *IOM Data Protection Manual*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Organization for Migration, p. 37 and pp. 73-78; Lewis, H. (2016) ‘Negotiating Anonymity, Informed Consent and “Illegality”’: Researching Forced Labour Experiences Among Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK’ in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing; and UNIAP (2008) *Guide to Ethics and Human Rights in Counter-Trafficking: Ethical Standards for Counter-Trafficking Research and Programming*. Bangkok, Thailand: United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking, pp. 27-32.

...if you're talking about case files and interviews with victims, good practices [are] de-identifying information and multiple password protection...also de-identifying in field notes, for instance.

...we never use names. We use code numbers and we keep the code numbers separate from the code source files. [...] If we're using paper documents, we make sure those all get collected and aren't left on the top of desks or people's homes or where people could take that.

...all of the data that's stored, all of the transcripts, there's no identifiable information in any of them. As soon as we transcribe [the interviews], we take out all of the identifiable data. The team is the only one who knows who's who.

... an electronic storage would be on a server that's password protected so that only study staff can have access to it. You de-identify, code the [respondents] so their names are no longer associated with the data and everything is stored very securely or in a locked office, for example, so not just anyone can get access to the written or electronic data.

We store things. We encrypt audio files. We store files confidentially in private confidential servers that are only accessible to the research team.

Regardless of the specific parameters, there must be sufficient storage capacity for the data being collected and systems need to be reliable with effective retrieval capacities. It is also important to back up all stored data. This is a pressing issue both for hard copy and electronic files.

In spite of a raft of techniques for safe and secure data storage, vulnerabilities will nonetheless arise. This is the case in the storage of both hard and electronic copies. One TIP researcher, for example, described the lack of data storage procedures for court files in one country:

They just do their work and there are teetering piles of paper around them. I don't think beyond basic word document management that they [the courts] have any databases. ... it sounded very much like there's one paper copy of each court case file and that if the building went up in smoke, I don't think there are any backups anywhere.

Vulnerabilities also arise in relation to securing electronic data, particularly when adequate protocols and protections are not put in place. Electronic data is not in and of itself more

Good practice. Secure, store and manage data

Assess the storage needs for the specific data collection effort.

Protect systems and individual files with login and passwords.

Hard copy files should be securely locked in cabinets and locked offices.

Regularly update virus and other systems protections to prevent data vulnerability.

Backup multiple copies in secured multiple locations, for electronic and hard copy data.

Ensure adequate storage capacity.

Regularly assess the reliability and security of the storage and management system.

Ensure data is stored in line with legal and administrative requirements and ethical standards.

secure; care is needed to ensure that electronic data storage involves all of the requisite protections. One TIP expert noted risks involved in not adequately securing electronic data:

The issue of storage is becoming increasingly sensitive and if we think about the broader environment of IT (information technology), software, access to data that you may think is secure, but can be more easily accessed now than many of us think. I think about some of the data, whether it's not password protected, for example, or in software that is designed to hold confidential data, then that could be vulnerable, that could be at risk of being used, being taken somehow.

Storing data in the cloud can also present challenges, not least in terms of policing trans-border data flows, which may be particularly challenging for lower resource countries. Important questions arise in relation to data privacy and protection for vulnerable persons, which are immediately relevant for trafficking victims, including:

What happens if the data privacy of these vulnerable persons is infringed by the cloud service providers? What happens if this data falls into the hands of hackers? Can developing countries penalize these IT companies in a similar manner to how the EU plans to with its updated regulations? Do they have capacity to enforce data breaches against cloud companies with server farms around the world?¹⁹⁹

In summary: Decisions about safe data storage will be informed by the nature of data being collected (how, when and by whom). There are many different strategies for data storage, both practical and more technological. These approaches should be regularly assessed and updated, as needed. Data storage should be in line with legal and administrative requirements and ethical standards.

Determine responsibilities and privileges in data handling

Data handling is the process of ensuring that data is stored, archived or disposed of in a safe and secure manner during and after a data collection effort. This includes the development of policies and procedures to manage data handled electronically as well as through non-electronic means.²⁰⁰ In some cases, it may be necessary to manage access rights to datasets with varying levels of access (for example, with some individuals only having access on a need-to-know basis). This may also involve limiting physical access to equipment and storage media, including limiting access to equipment where data is stored, where appropriate and possible. This raises the following questions: which organizations and institutions can handle data? Which individuals within these organizations and institutions can handle data? Which portion of data do they have access to? At what point during the project do different individuals and institutions have access to data? For what purpose do institutions or individuals have access to data?

¹⁹⁹ Chirchir, R. (2018) 'Are you respecting the right to privacy as you advance social protection?', *Development Pathways*.

²⁰⁰ ORI (2005) 'Data Handling', *Responsible Conduct in Data Management*. United States: Office of Research Integrity.

Good practice is to ensure that there is limited and controlled access to all data being stored and managed. Access to data needs clear and strict guidance. This may include tools such as terms of references (ToRs), confidentiality agreements, security clearance, memorandums of understanding (MoUs) and so on. As one TIP expert noted:

Queries in data handling

- ❓ Which organizations and institutions can handle data?
- ❓ Which individuals within these organizations and institutions can handle data?
- ❓ Which portion of data do they have access to?
- ❓ At what point during the project do different individuals and institutions have access to data?
- ❓ For what purpose do institutions or individuals have access to data?

Certainly the number of people with access to data is important. They have to confine them (those with access) as much as possible. That way they use data to make it impossible to identify the victims and so on.

One National Rapporteur-equivalent mechanism described how personnel within the office had limited and controlled access to the national TIP database, prescribed by both law and administrative rules:

The persons who have access to the database they have what we call a “security certificate” that we get from the Prime Minister’s office. Everybody who gets to know secret

information, confidential information is obliged according to the law not to publish it, not to do any harm with that. And the database is within a secure system of the state police, so you cannot have access in it... It’s a law that we have to obey.

By contrast, in some contexts, access to data is not adequately guarded and confidential data is inappropriately accessible. For example, one assistance organization described how it was legally obliged by the state social services to share case files of the child trafficking victims that they were assisting. However, these case files were not securely nor confidentially stored. Children’s case files were kept in boxes in the corridors of the state social services’ offices because of a lack of storage space, making confidential, personal and sensitive information about trafficked and vulnerable children accessible to anyone in the building.²⁰¹ Similarly, one TIP researcher described meeting with one government ministry staff responsible for human trafficking who showed her confidential information about trafficking victims identified by the government, including photos and names:

When I was at the [ministry] I was talking to one of their lead officers on human trafficking and I asked, “What kind of information do you collect? And how do you store it?”. And she grabs a binder off the shelf right next to her desk of cases that have been reported.... She’s flipping through the pages showing it to me and there’s people’s faces and identities and all of their personal information.

Another TIP researcher described uneven and differing approaches to data security and protections among different government institutions one country:

Everyone using paper-based methods is, I would say, very bad practice [of security]. Pieces of paper floating around... I went to the prosecutor’s office and it was... piles of paper which I’m sure have tons and tons of information on cases and probably victim names and all sorts of things that probably shouldn’t be sitting on pieces of paper just in someone’s office. And of course, with no backup anywhere. [...] [At the police] there are only certain officers who are able to access the trafficking database. They

²⁰¹ Surtees, R. (2013) *Ethical principles in the re/integration of trafficked persons. Experiences from the Balkans*. Brussels, Belgium: King Baudouin Foundation and Washington D.C., United States: NEXUS Institute, p. 77.

have to have computer log-ins, the databases are locked so that the data can only be viewed by certain officers and generally only by their immediate supervisors.

Determining responsibilities and privileges in data handling should consider not only which individuals can handle data but also the nature of what data can be handled by different individuals including which portions of that data can be handled. One technology expert stressed that security mechanisms and controlling access to information are key to appropriate and secure data handling:

Security is most important. It's controlling access. Who has access to that information and are they authorized or have permission to have access to it? When it's transferred, obviously it has to be transferred securely and encrypted with all the appropriate controls in place so that no one can hack into it.

Differing levels of access within an organization or institution are needed between different staff, depending on their specific roles and responsibilities. One NGO director noted that access to victim data was on a "need to know" basis, in relation to the cases different staff were responsible for:

...only those who are directly involved with the trafficking victim have the information about that person. But they can't access the information of all the victims.

Allowing different levels of access to data is also a key strategy in handling data in the criminal justice database available to the office of one National Rapporteur. As the National Rapporteur explained:

...only a few people have the access to the database. They can check all in real time, what's happening to concrete case, if it is a criminal proceeding on-going or if it's only a pre-trial proceeding. ...it has quite a lot of information about traffickers as well. But only certain (authorized) people can access it.

When databases are in hard copy, access issues will not only be about how data is stored but also where data is stored and which individuals or institutions have access to these locations. One NGO director described the additional layers of security protocols for data handling for the organization's research office:

...the research office stays locked all of the time... nobody can access the research office at all. So even though the data is stored securely and the paper reports are stored securely, you can't even get into the office.

However, procedures around data handling are not always carefully enforced in all organizations and institutions engaged in anti-trafficking work. One TIP expert described his experience in working with anti-trafficking organizations:

Good practice. Determine responsibilities and privileges in data handling

Manage access to data with clear and strict guidance.

Limit and control access to all data in accordance with legal requirements and administrative procedures.

Outline access to data in formal agreements such as MoUs and ToRs.

Implement and enforce confidentiality requirements.

Control who has access to data as well as what portion(s) of that data.

Identify technical solutions that enforce data access restrictions.

An organization or agency that has data on trafficked persons... if those who have that data on their computers, at their desks, don't lock their computers as they leave their desks and then others within the organization have access. If they have it in hard files, on their desks, with identifying characteristics of respondents, or if it has identifying characteristics, not just of potential victims, but of potential exploiters, that others within the organization can access, or those outside the organization who happen to come into those offices could potentially access.

This highlights the need for careful attention to procedures around data handing in all organizations and institutions who collect and/or have access to all forms of TIP data including how this differs by staff roles and responsibilities.

In summary: Good practice is ensuring limited and controlled access to all data being stored and managed. Procedures should be guided by formal agreements such as MoUs, ToRs and confidentiality agreements. Part of this process is to determine what data needs protection and to control who has access to data including what portion(s) of data. Technical solutions may offer means to restrict and control data access.

Develop and implement procedures and requirements for data retention and disposal

Retention periods for TIP data should be determined at the outset of the data collection effort, in line with legal, ethical or regulatory requirements. This issue will then likely need to be returned to as part of work on data storage and management. Before data is disposed of, it should be determined if any applicable laws require retention of hard copies for a period of time. Disposal of electronic files, including audio and video files, also requires consideration including adequate mechanisms in place for secure disposal. Key considerations include: how long should data be kept? When should it be disposed of? Who should handle data for storage, retention, retrieval and disposal purposes? How should data be handled for storage, retention, retrieval and disposal purposes?

Queries in retaining and disposing of data

- ❓ How long should data be kept?
- ❓ When should it be disposed of?
- ❓ Who should handle data for storage, retention, retrieval and disposal purposes?
- ❓ How should data be handled for storage, retention, retrieval and disposal purposes?

Depending on the specific data collection effort and context, a different scope of data retention may be considered. Deciding how long data should be kept may depend on any number of factors, including the nature of the project or initiative, ethical guidelines, legal framework (of the project country, implementing agency, or the sponsoring agency or donor), on-going interest in or need for the data and the cost of long-term data maintenance. Data collection that informs national policymaking may be considered for

permanent preservation or archiving.²⁰² At the same time, retaining data once a project is over can lead to unauthorized access to confidential data and incur high costs for maintenance and protection. Additional considerations come into play depending on the precise nature of the data collected, including the extent to which it includes personal and sensitive data. It is important to think through and develop clear policies on the retention

²⁰² MRC (2012) *Good research practice: Principles and guidelines*. United Kingdom: Medical Research Council.

and destruction of data in relation to each specific project. The director of one NGO involved in data collection raised some key questions for consideration:

[It is important to] have a clear retention and destruction policy for all of your documents. Are you going completely paperless or are you going to continue to keep hard files? And if you do, how long do you keep them? And all of those sorts of [decisions].

Disposing of data requires adequate plans, procedures and impact analysis to ensure that data is discarded in a safe and secure manner. This includes establishing proper data management procedures according to which data should be stored, retained, shared, disposed of and so on. Without a proper plan or procedures in place, data collection efforts can be jeopardized when there is, for instance, staff turnover or institutional restructuring. Disposing of data containing confidential information requires additional care to ensure that the information cannot be reconstructed after disposal.²⁰³

Data disposal may be at the request of data subjects who may withdraw consent after data collection. For example, Article 15 of the European Union’s *General Data Protection Regulation* (GDPR) (which entered into force in May 2018) gives individuals the right to correct, erase, or block the transfer of their personal data and to object at any time to the processing of data relating to them.²⁰⁴ However, exercising data ownership rights is not always feasible in practice. Often the rights of the data subject are expressed in applicable legislation in general terms, without details about how an individual can exercise these rights.²⁰⁵ The extent to which data subjects are informed about their right to withdraw consent for their data is also an open question. Moreover, many key informants interviewed for this project were not aware that data subjects had the right to require their data be deleted nor did they have mechanisms in place for this possibility. Many organizations and institutions lack systems for data disposal when requested by data subjects and there is a general lack of guidance on this feature of data collection. For example, when asked what mechanism the organization had in place to destroy data should it be requested by a trafficking victim, one NGO service provider noted that this was not currently foreseen in its existing policies:

...we do not have that policy because by just the [national] standard we’re required to keep it as a legal record. ...no one has ever [asked] us that [before]. We’ve never addressed it.

Good practice. Develop and implement procedures and requirements for data retention and disposal

Identify at the outset any legal, regulatory and ethical requirements for data retention and disposal.

Consider the period of data retention at the outset of the project.

Consider different factors and interests in decisions about data retention and disposal.

Establish procedures for safe and secure data retention and disposal.

Align procedures with the rights of data subjects in terms of their own data.

Assess and adhere to legal and regulatory requirements for data disposal and retention.

²⁰³ ORI (2005) *Responsible Conduct in Data Management*. United States: Office of Research Integrity.

²⁰⁴ European Union (2016) *Regulation 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Protection of Natural Persons with Regard to the Processing of Personal Data and on the Free Movement of Such Data, and Repealing Directive 95/46/EC*. Brussels, Belgium: European Union. Subsequently referred to as “General Data Protection Regulation” (GDPR).

²⁰⁵ datACT (2015) *Data Protection Standards for NGO Service Providers*. Germany: KOK and La Strada.

Similarly, one TIP data expert working with NGOs on TIP data collection noted this gap:

...we don't have a mechanism for that (data disposal). I've spoken with many [NGO] partners about this being an issue. ...We talk about it from a technical perspective, on the technical side of how we can facilitate that. But the actual responsibility (to delete the data), we place that with our partner [NGOs].

Data collection efforts should be designed in ways that support data subjects to leverage their rights in terms of their own data, including data disposal. This would include setting up procedures and policies for how this is done and steps for data subjects to follow should they so choose.

In summary: Decisions need to be made at the outset of a data collection effort about how long data is to be retained, in line with legal, ethical or regulatory requirements, and returned to as part of work on data storage and management. Deciding how long data should be kept will be informed by a range of factors, including the nature of the project, the interests of those involved, on-going interest in or need for the data and cost of long-term data maintenance. Decisions should also align with the rights of data subjects in terms of their own data.

Consider the use of technology in data storage and management

Technology is often key in data storage and management as well as data disposal. Web-based or cloud-based databases may offer cutting-edge protection (for example, encryption and administrative controls) and storage options. One technology expert noted the security offered by the cloud:

...we guarantee the security of the information that's held in the cloud. It's only going to be accessible to the people that the user defines as being able to access that information, through data dictionary and various other administrative controls. ...all of the data encryption and permission and everything else to secure data in the cloud is all provided by [the company].

Technological tools can also be used to support safe data disposal. For example, putting files into the trash folder on a computer and deleting them does not fully erase them from the computer. The content from files can remain on the computer until it is overwritten with other information and, in the interim, the contents can potentially be retrieved using a data recovery program. However, there are programs that destroy digital files, virtually "shredding" them, thereby ensuring their secure and permanent removal. Many such programs are available free of charge.

Technological tools can support safe storage and management but, at the same time, also have risks that need to be considered. Moreover, careless or uninformed application of technologies has the potential to create a range of problems. One TIP researcher noted the security offered by various tools but also the associated risks:

There's a number of different tools out there. ...of course, cloud-based storage systems that provide their own built-in kind of encryption.... [...] Obviously you need to build in the safety and encryption that protects it from hacking... we've seen in just the last year or so the real risks involved with that...paper and pen has its own risks, but the fact that you used an electronic format doesn't necessarily mean everything is safer. In fact, it could be [if] somebody hacks in or a phone or a device that has a lot of data is lost or stolen or seized, you could be looking at other risks.

In certain sensitive political environments, there may be higher risks of data being stolen or confiscated by authorities who may abuse the data or do harm to certain individuals or organizations. In such environments, secure technological options for data storage and management may be particularly important to leverage (and leverage correctly).

Using technological tools to secure and store data requires adequate staff capacity in the use of these tools, including to prevent technology-related integrity violations.²⁰⁶ It may also require technical assistance and support, which may be in house or available through third-party technology providers. One National Rapporteur-equivalent mechanism highlighted the importance of in house technical support in her office's data collection work and in the management of the national anti-trafficking database:

...we are lucky because we have a whole directorate here that is still supporting us in our initiatives. [...] And the maintenance is all the ministry, the sector for technology of the ministry. They (the IT unit) are supporting the whole application.

Even when data storage does not use advanced technologies, procedures need to be in place for data retention and disposal and staff must have the requisite knowledge and skills to implement those procedures. One TIP researcher described protecting raw data during field research:

I made sure that my things were always locked up in a safe. I had my purse really wrapped around myself so you couldn't just take it easily. ... Hiding the audio recording. Backing it up. But not backing it up too much. And it's something that the organization who hires the researchers needs to also understand.

Retention of hard copy files (including papers, printouts, books, or photographs) requires consideration of secure data storage and back up. Disposal of hard copy files requires securely and permanently destroying the data.

In summary: Technological tools can offer substantial support in data storage and management as well as data disposal. These tools need to be applied with adequate care and staff should be properly trained in their use and the attendant procedures. When data storage does not use advanced technologies, procedures are needed for data retention and disposal by skilled and knowledgeable staff.

Good practice. Consider the use of technology in data storage and management

Identify programs, applications and systems for data storage and management.

Allocate resources for the purchase of any necessary applications, programs or systems.

Ensure staff is adequately trained in the use of applications, programs or systems for data storage and management.

Plan and budget for technical assistance that may be needed for applications, programs or systems used for data storage and management.

²⁰⁶ ORI (2005) *Responsible Conduct in Data Management*. United States: Office of Research Integrity.



Assess options for data sharing and transfer

Data sharing refers to making data available to others through a variety of mechanisms. Some data may be shared within an organization or institution. Data sharing may also occur between organizations and institutions and across jurisdictions. **Data transfer** refers to the transmission of data, either electronically or in hard copy, from one individual or organization/institution to another. Establishing parameters of and procedures for data sharing and transfer are core issues in data storage, maintenance and management.

Consider data sharing

Data sharing in the context of TIP research can support different goals including to: reinforce open scientific inquiry; encourage a diversity of analyses and conclusions; permit reanalysis to verify or refute reported results; and allow for alternative analyses to refine results and analyses.²⁰⁷ Data sharing also allows for the re-use of collected data, which can be cost effective. One TIP expert explained the importance of improving the efficiency of data usage:

...there's a lot of talk about protection and data. But use of data for me is the biggest [issue]. Until we're actually better using the data that we actually have, the return on investment for improving data collection are somewhat limited.

Within government institutions, data sharing is essential to the government's ability to understand the nature and scope of the TIP phenomenon in the country as well as anti-trafficking interventions. In some countries, National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms offer a mechanism for data sharing by leveraging data from a wide range of data providers (government agencies and civil society). However, many countries do not have a system for data sharing and many individual institutions gather their own information and run their own databases, generally independently of one another and with limited reciprocity. One TIP researcher described the data flow in one country's criminal justice system as follows:

Basically, the police would do reports and hand all their material to the prosecutor's office and the police actually lamented quite frequently that they never get any information back on those cases. The police databases have a field where they can collect information about the outcome of the court cases. But once the investigation files go to the courts there's really not much information going back to the police again from the courts. So they have to make phone calls, some months later, to chase down [the results].

In some cases, lack of information sharing is politically driven rather than related to the legal and ethical issues. One program manager for a TIP data collection project stressed this as a serious constraint in efforts to both collect and use data:

[There is] a lack of cooperation between different authorities on the way they want to – and they can – share data. In [one country] there were two different departments

²⁰⁷ Fienberg, S.E., M.E. Martin and M.L. Straf (1985). *Sharing Research Data*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press. See also ORI (2005) *Responsible Conduct in Data Management*. United States: Office of Research Integrity.

in the same building, on two different floors and they were not allowed or able to share information. ...at the end of the day internally there is no capacity either legally or simply because there is no willingness to do so. You can compose the best [database] system ever but it's never going to work [in this environment].

Barriers to data sharing may also be about dynamics between and within different institutions and organizations as well as bureaucratic procedures. As one TIP researcher noted:

From my experience, a lot of what prevents data sharing comes down to the bureaucratic hurdles involved and territoriality [between institutions] rather than legal and ethical concerns [about data sharing].

Data sharing may also be constrained by political concerns and sensitivities. For example, sharing data for external analysis may highlight higher rates of human trafficking in a country than authorities may wish to acknowledge. One TIP data collection staff faced this in one data collection project:

There are also political issues as well, of course, to be willing to display this data in an aggregate level outside of national institutions. Because it might look bad to the international community, even though we have always promoted the idea that the more trafficking cases you have [identified], the better job you are probably doing. Because it means that your identification rates are going very much up. So you shouldn't be scared to share this data or be concerned [with negative reactions].

That being said, there are on-going discussions around the balance between data sharing and data protection. As one TIP researcher noted:

...what we're starting to see is potentially good practice in the development of data-sharing protocols. How do different organizations share their data in a way that is a benefit to the individual and in a way which supports further research and development and learning, but it doesn't put people at risk. ...part of that is about building trust and confidence across different organizations and the other part of that is...data security and privacy.

Another TIP researcher expressed the desire to move toward greater data sharing:

I would like to get to a point whereby our datasets are accessible on our website, with the necessary ethical and security protocols in place including to ensure anonymity of respondents. And you can access this data and there will be a write-up of how the

Good practice. Consider data sharing

Review legal requirements and ethical standards related to data sharing relative to each data collection effort.

Determine if data can be shared, including what data, under what circumstances, by and with whom and for what purposes.

Outline parameters for data sharing, in line with legislation and administrative requirements as well as ethical principles.

Allocate adequate time and resources to process data for safe and secure sharing.

Weigh the cost and benefits of data sharing.

Assess if data sharing poses any risks to data sources, staff, the project, or the organization or institution.

Store and archive data securely to allow for data sharing, if appropriate.

data was collected and the methodologies behind it so that those who utilize this dataset are in a position to understand what they can and cannot do with the dataset. [...] There's ways of cleaning your dataset in a way that you don't run any risks of people getting identified.

When this is possible and advisable, data should be retained, stored or archived and held securely to allow it to be shared or used by others in the future. However, it is necessary to weigh the costs and benefits of data sharing, with attention to the various ethical, institutional, legal and professional dimensions as well as to the specific nature of the TIP data collection initiative. For example, some data is gathered with consent parameters that do not legally or ethically permit data sharing, as noted above (see Stage #1: Design and Planning, *Define data collection topic, purpose and scope – Clarify expectations related to data collection*). One NGO, pressured to share data by the IO funding the data collection, highlighted the inappropriateness of data sharing in such a case, both legally and ethically:

There is private information and we have made these persons sign [a consent form] and we have signed and promised this information is going to be used for research purposes, but also to help in the assistance we give to them, but not to give all of the transcriptions (raw data) to a third [party].

It is important at the outset of any data collection activity to clearly establish if data can (or cannot) be shared, what specific TIP can be shared (safely, legally, ethically) under what circumstances data can be shared, by and with whom and for what purposes. Ethical principles and applicable legislation necessarily vary when it comes to data collection involving human subjects and personal data. In the case of some TIP research and data collection efforts, data sharing would be neither ethical nor legal. In other cases, data may be shared if the necessary protections are put in place. In the case of data from and about trafficking victims these protections would include, for example, data being de-identified or anonymized to a satisfactory level of anonymization.

However, even when data sharing may, in principle, be allowable, it may not be advisable or appropriate. Some types of data are harder to de-identify and anonymize than others, which needs to be considered in terms of whether and how data sharing takes place. For instance, it would be impossible to ensure complete anonymity in in-depth qualitative interview data and adequate anonymization would likely require redacting the data to such a degree that it would lose much of its meaning and offer little of the context needed for meaningful analysis. Adequate anonymization may also not be possible in some settings (for example, in countries with fewer numbers of trafficking victims whose stories may be recognizable or individuals whose experience is outside normal patterns and trends). This is also an issue with regard to data collected from anti-trafficking practitioners (law enforcement, service providers, community leaders), whose views and observations may be recognizable enough to identify them, particularly in small countries or where there are limited stakeholders involved in anti-trafficking work. When such views are politically sensitive (for example, critical of the government), this can negatively affect these key informants (for example, in access to funding, job security, or even safety).

Some types of datasets do not easily lend themselves to data sharing. Some data sets cannot be divorced from the context in which they were collected, risking misinterpretation by analysts who are not privy to this contextual backdrop. One TIP researcher sounded a cautionary note in terms of data sharing on quantitative data collection projects in which she had been involved:

...whatever we get from this data, you would need actually one of us, one of the persons that has implemented this from this last year to read the data and not misread any of the peaks or the lows that you see in some areas. [...] I would not even

go for sharing data because you would need to have someone who is able to understand the limitation of the sampling as well as how to read the database... and put it in parallel with the individual survey results. ...we are not ready to share data and we have not found yet a way to share it in a way that would not lead to a lot of misinterpretation. I think we're particularly worried on how this will be read by [some governments].

On the other hand, there is some data that does not pose the same risks and can be shared more easily. As such, it may be useful to think about data sharing in terms of levels of data security and risk, with data sharing decisions made relative to these different levels and scenarios. It is a question of thinking carefully about what information is available and what options may exist for the safe and appropriate sharing of some data.

Data sharing, when assessed to be permissible and advisable, should be guided by legislation and administrative requirements. This would include parameters around what data should and should not be shared, between whom, when, for what purposes and how it can be done safely, ethically and legally. One government official working on TIP data collection stressed the importance of clear parameters and agreements for information sharing within governments:

...in terms of information sharing we take that very seriously. And one of the practices is about developing an MoU with the different agencies. So even though you're the government, having an MoU to be able to share data and have all of those parameters detailed in the MoU of what type of data is going to be shared, how it is going to be used, how it going to be exchanged, how it's going to be stored, when is it going to be destroyed, all of those sorts of questions in terms of how information is shared. And we have those arrangements with other [government] departments that we work closely with. And, from a legal perspective, that's to protect all of us. Not just us as agencies within the government, but also the individuals who we're holding information about... there's different types of protection. ...it might be anonymity, it might be the level of detail you share about a particular case, for example. How information is used and communicated. There are different types of information-sharing arrangements and that's not just within government, that's also with other countries as well. So it is very detailed. This is where the legal side does come in to make sure that individuals and agencies are protected. [...] In working for the government now this is coming into play because you do have to be very careful in how information is shared about individuals.

When sharing more broadly there may also be issues of compliance in different jurisdictions.

Data sharing can be a time-consuming and labor-intensive process, requiring staff and resources to prepare the data for sharing including putting adequate protections in places. These costs need to be considered in relation to any decisions about whether and to what extent data may be shared. One researcher for a UN agency described this as a challenge, even for a well-resourced organization:

The biggest issue for us has been sharing extremely sensitive data where the risk of identification, even if anonymized, is ... quite high and the consequence is very severe. [...] We can transfer data to our core partners, who are trusted research partners. But that always need to come with a separate legal agreement. ...even when our legal department is going as fast as possible...that's only really five or six priority agreements that get concluded at the central level each year, being realistic.

Similarly, one NGO described the amount of work and time required to safely and legally share its hotline data with researchers:

The process [of data sharing] was to a point where we could send them (external researchers) the data. And even just transferring the data to them was so complex, that it was actually only done very few times. And we realize that that was a huge issue, because we are only so big. We're not a huge developed research institution. We were really limited in what we could do internally.

In summary: Data sharing can advance efforts to combat TIP by reinforcing open scientific inquiry; encouraging diverse analyses and conclusions; permitting reanalysis to verify or refute reported results; and allowing for alternative analyses to refine results and analyses. It is also cost effective. However, careful assessment is needed as to whether data can be shared, including what data, under what circumstances, by and with whom and for what purposes. It is also important to assess if data sharing poses any risks to data sources, data providers, data collectors and so on. Parameters for data sharing must be in line with legislation and administrative requirement as well as ethical principles and adequate time and resources will be needed to process data for safe and secure sharing.

Assess options for data transfer

Data transfer refers to the transmission of data, either electronically or in hard copy, from one entity (individual, organization or institution) to another entity. In some cases, this might refer to the transfer of personal or sensitive data. In other cases, data being transferred may be of a less sensitive nature. Regardless, it is important to ensure that all data transfer is legal, ethical and secure. For instance, it is necessary to encrypt or otherwise secure files when transmitting sensitive information. Many countries have rules about the transmission of personal information over the internet, which may preclude the possibility of electronically transferring datasets even when encrypted. How the transfer process takes place will differ according to country and legislation.

When data is transferred between stakeholders, data transfer agreements should be in place between the transferor and the recipient, outlining the terms and conditions of use, including what data to be shared, the mode of transfer, the use that may or may not be made of the data and the data security measures in place. Before any transfer takes place, the transferor should verify that the recipient's use of data is equivalent to the principles and standards that the transferor itself has in place.²⁰⁸ There is a

Good practice. Assess options for data transfer

Review and adhere to legal and regulatory requirements related to data transfer.

Consider requirements for the transfer of both electronic and hard copy data.

Establish data transfer agreements outlining the terms and conditions of use of the data transferred.

Establish data transfer agreements for both electronic and hard copy data.

Make clear that the entity transferring the data is accountable for its protection.

Establish guidelines for what constitutes secure data transfer.

²⁰⁸ This is established in Article 44 of the European Union's *General Data Protection Regulation* (GDPR), which covers the general principle for data transfer Article 44 states: "Any transfer of personal data which are undergoing processing or are intended for processing after transfer to a third country or to an international organisation shall take place only if, subject to the other provisions of this Regulation, the conditions laid down in this Chapter are complied with by the controller and processor, including for onward transfers of personal data from the third country or an international organisation to another third country or to another international

link between secure data transfer and the principle of accountability in that it is good practice for the entity transferring the data to remain accountable for its protection.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) offers guidance on what constitutes secure data transfer in its *Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR*, which has relevance also in the field of TIP. Aspects to consider include whether:

- The transfer is necessary for purposes of detecting, preventing, investigating or prosecuting a serious criminal offence, in particular to avoid immediate risks to safety and security.
- The requesting law enforcement authority has requisite competence in relation to that purpose.
- The transfer will substantially assist the agency or court in the pursuit of the purpose and the personal data cannot be otherwise obtained from other sources.
- The transfer does not disproportionately interfere with the right to privacy or other human rights of the data subject or other person.
- The consent of any victim or witness is obtained before any transfer is made.²⁰⁹

When data transfer is not in an electronic format (for example, when it consists of hard copy case files or audio recordings), protections also need to be in place. This might include ensuring files are out of sight during transfer (such as keeping them in a secured case) or requesting that hard copies be locked in a secure location once delivered.

In summary: Data transfer requires that data transfer agreements be in place, outlining the terms and conditions of use of the data being transferred, including what is to be shared, the mode of transfer, the use that may or may not be made of the data and the data security measures in place.



Identify legal and ethical issues in data storage, maintenance and management

Properly addressing legal and ethical issues is deeply intertwined with good practice in data storage, maintenance, management and use. Safeguarding data is critically important when conducting TIP research and data collection with its many sensitivities and vulnerabilities.

Complying with legal and ethical standards that protect the safety and security of data must be a paramount concern. The design of databases and the related procedures for data storage, maintenance and management must align with national legislation on data protection and administrative regulations and requirements for data collection (for example,

organisation. All provisions in this Chapter shall be applied in order to ensure that the level of protection of natural persons guaranteed by this Regulation is not undermined.” EU (2016) *Regulation 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Protection of Natural Persons with Regard to the Processing of Personal Data and on the Free Movement of Such Data, and Repealing Directive 95/46/EC*. Brussels, Belgium: European Union, Article 44.

²⁰⁹ UNHCR (2015) *Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR*. Geneva: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, pp. 37-38.

in criminal justice administration or provision of health care services, or in record keeping about welfare and housing) and will also determine how data may be shared between different institutions within the government as well as with civil society organizations such as NGOs. The manager of one TIP data collection project noted various regulatory requirements in TIP data collection:

The data collection or information-management system should be based on policies or at least national action plans and where possible even regulated by a legal framework. ...there are so many legal matters involved. Also related to data exchange internally within ministries... And then the agreement and obligations related to data collection between actors and the exchange and management of this information should be actually recognized by all relevant actors involved.

Data collection initiatives will need to be clear about the legal framework for data storage in the relevant jurisdiction to ensure compliance with the law. As one National Rapporteur's office explained of the national TIP database in his country, the law required data to be entered safely, securely and according to legal and administrative procedures:

Obviously this [database] meets all legal provisions about privacy and about data treatment... In a database everything is very protected and every partner has its own precise rules and procedures concerning data collection and treatment. In line with the current law provisions on privacy, of course. As a general criteria... we anonymize data to a large extent. Data collection is indeed deriving from and relating to the protection projects, but it offers us information to analyze the phenomenon. Ours is never an analysis of detailed data so that we would risk entering into issues of incorrect [illegal] data collection. [...] In the database we include those few data concerning trafficking victims that help us to have a sense of the phenomenon, rather than to receive information about the individual case.

Professionals engaged in TIP data collection may also need to comply with sector-specific data protection requirements. For example, the United States government takes a sectoral approach towards data protection legislation (that is, specific legislation for each sector),

Good practice. Identify legal and ethical issues in data storage, maintenance and management

Assess legal and ethical requirements for data storage and management in all relevant jurisdictions.

Identify what issues may arise when data is stored and managed in multiple jurisdictions.

Adhere to international standards and procedures for data storage and management.

Develop tools and resources on legal and administrative requirements for data storage, maintenance and management.

Ensure informed consent is not violated in how data is stored and managed.

Gain informed consent for data sharing and use.

Assess risks within the context in which data is collected.

Adapt procedures to the specific context as needed.

Establish procedures for data storage, maintenance and management.

Train data collection staff in all procedures.

Take the context into account in establishing procedures for storage, maintenance and management.

Identify specific considerations when storing data about children; guard the "best interests of the child".

such as the Healthcare Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), which governs privacy in the healthcare sector. By contrast, countries in the EU have overarching data protection legislation that applies across sectors, which must align with the EU's overarching legislation on data protection, the *General Data Protection Regulation* (GDPR), which entered into force in May 2018 and represents the most robust regional instrument on data protection to date.²¹⁰

Adhering to laws in data storage, maintenance and management may also require attention to legislation across jurisdictions (for example, when data is being stored in multiple jurisdictions or when governance of a particular data collection effort straddles multiple laws and jurisdictions). This might be the case, for instance, when data is collected by an organization working in one country but which is registered or has governance structures in another or is funded by a donor that is bound by other laws and requirements. One NGO director advised paying careful attention to jurisdictional issues:

[Data collectors] must be looking at their relevant law. And that might be several jurisdictions. And there must be the view that the most onerous jurisdiction, onerous laws, which may be a combination [of laws and jurisdictions], are the ones that should be considered as the standard.

International legal and ethical standards and protections become crucially important when national data protection laws are insufficient to ensure the safety and security of data involving human subjects. In such cases, it will be necessary to adhere to more robust legislation or develop a higher standard of ethical guidance. As one NGO director noted:

I think then that you also want to consider obviously what your ethical positions on things are. Which presumably, hopefully, are higher than the legal and the compliance side of things...Where even if the law allows you to do this, you draw a line and say, "that's not for us".

Good practice, then, would include the development of tools and resources on the legal and ethical requirements in relation to any particular TIP data collection initiative. Such tools may be shared and used to inform data collection by other organizations and institutions that collect data as part of their work.

Underpinning all legal and ethical data storage, maintenance and management is **informed consent**. This may mean, in some cases, that data must be disposed of at the request of the data subject. It may also mean that data sharing may not always be possible and should, in all instances, be approached with care and caution. Trafficking victims may not wish for their data to be shared with, for example, law enforcement or other government agencies, which may put the principle of informed consent in conflict with legal requirements. As one TIP expert noted:

...what if the victim you are assisting does not want to come with a statement or does not want her information shared. Then it's very difficult for NGOs if there is this duty to report. Over the years we saw that more and more governments and also international organizations and others were requiring more and more information from NGOs. And that raised a lot of concern among NGOs. At the same time NGOs ... were struggling because they needed also to know for themselves what they had to have to ensure that they could get this data and be able to protect it. And not to do themselves something that would harm victims...

²¹⁰ Dimov, D. (2013) 'Difference Between the Privacy Laws in the EU and the US', *INFOSEC Institute*, January 10; and EU (2016) *Regulation 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Protection of Natural Persons with Regard to the Processing of Personal Data and on the Free Movement of Such Data, and Repealing Directive 95/46/EC*. Brussels, Belgium: European Union.

Current Open Data initiatives also raise questions around informed consent when data may have been collected several years earlier and without explicit consent around the transition to Open Data. Questions arise as to: the parameters of that consent; whether efforts have been made or are needed to retroactively gain this consent; and how realistic it is that consent issues could have been foreseen in earlier anti-trafficking data collection projects.

Not all organizations or institutions assign the same importance to **guarding anonymity, confidentiality and privacy** in how data is stored and maintained. One TIP expert noted the different approaches to confidentiality among different institutions and organizations:

[Our partner organizations] really don't understand or see the confidentiality issues in the same way that we see them [at our organization] ... We consistently receive reports [from our partner organizations] with photos, identity documents photocopied into them, names, birthdays, birth villages... So, there isn't really contextually an understanding of the need for confidentiality of data within our partner organizations and I would say arguably by the [data subjects] themselves. There is this sense that if you are accessing one of these services, you're out in the public realm. And I'm not saying that excuses not having appropriate... storage and confidentiality frameworks. But it does make it particularly challenging because we keep sending reports back saying, "Please blank out all personal details" and they keep coming back with more personal details.

The level of security and protection required will also depend on the context in which TIP research and data collection takes place. Data collectors need to consider databases within the wider political context in which data is being collected. Risks may arise in some political settings, necessitating robust data storage and management. One NGO working on human trafficking decided not to record personal data when conducting its research in a country with a restrictive and constrained political environment:

...we didn't record anybody's identifiable details at all. ...one of our funders is very interested in helping us with security issues, because at the moment we're monitored quite heavily [by authorities] and inspections have happened and things like this.

Conducting TIP data collection in more sensitive or high-risk political environments will require additional protections and security, which need to be considered and addressed on a case-by-case basis.

Finally, there are specific considerations when storing and maintaining data about children. Guarding the "best interests of the child" during data storage, maintenance and management means that the needs and interests of the child supersede any needs of the data collection effort, as discussed above (see Stage #1: Design and Planning, *Develop or apply legal and ethical guidelines and protocols – Apply child protection principles including the "best interests of the child"*).

While many legal and ethical issues will have been discussed at the outset of the project (as part of design and planning), other issues may emerge over the course of data storage, maintenance and management in relation to guarding the "best interests of the child" (for example, when children's data is not securely stored or is shared without informed consent). Procedures for data storage, maintenance and management must align with legislation on children's personal data and administrative regulations and requirements for data collection on children. For example, the recently enacted *General Data Protection Regulation* (GDPR)

in the European Union contains provisions to enhance the protection of children’s personal data, processing of which may require specific procedures.²¹¹

While there are some commonly agreed strategies for data protection, many organizations and institutions do not have systems in place. This raises the need for procedures in data storage, maintenance and management as well as **training all relevant staff** in their implementation. One TIP expert described the challenge in secure data storage and management among partner NGOs:

This is certainly a challenge for many of our [NGO] partners. We have provided some basic guidelines on how case files of legal assistance should be stored at [their offices], in terms of being kept in a locked cabinet and limiting access to certain personnel who need to access those files. Some basic practices just to ensure confidentiality. [...] We do try to make it so that when they collect data on beneficiaries, ...that they don’t actually need a name... they can collect an anonymous profile. But when you talk about an actual case, they do need to collect more detailed information and there are definitely challenges among some of our partners in understanding how to handle that information properly.

In summary: Databases and procedures for data storage, maintenance and management must align with national legislation on data protection or administrative regulations and requirements for data collection. Additional issues may arise when data is stored and managed in multiple jurisdictions. Developing tools and resources on legal and administrative requirements for data storage, maintenance and management offers helpful guidance on ethical and legal adherence. Key issues associated with good practices include: ensuring that informed consent is not violated in how data is stored, managed, shared and used; ensuring anonymity; guarding confidentiality and privacy; implementing appropriate procedures and training staff in their use; and guarding the “best interests of the child” in relation to data storage, maintenance and management.

²¹¹ ICO (2018) ‘Children and the GDPR’, *Guide to Data Protection*. United Kingdom: Information Commissioner’s Office.

Stage #4. Data Analysis



Assess and describe data



Consider factors and biases that influence the data



Identify and describe relevant patterns in data



Interpret patterns and findings

Interpret the data

Align interpretation with existing research and knowledge

Identify biases influencing interpretation

Interpret meanings across languages



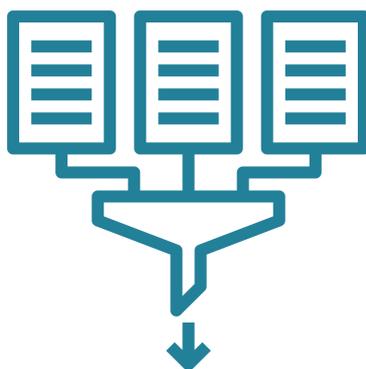
Validate findings



Train and build capacity in data analysis



Consider ethical aspects of data analysis



Stage #4. Data Analysis

Data analysis is the search for understanding and meaning through patterns, trends, ideas, themes and even contradictions.²¹² It is the process of examining, transforming and presenting data with the aim of discovering useful information, suggesting conclusions and supporting decision-making, in this case around human trafficking. There is a wide range of approaches to data analysis, drawing on varying disciplines and encompassing diverse techniques. Data analysis and its analytical framework are intimately connected with and informed by the approach and method used for data collection. It is beyond the scope of this study to provide a comprehensive review of all data analysis techniques. Rather, we will explore some considerations that are relevant in data analysis.

Data analysis, whether qualitative or quantitative, involves organizing data in an order where patterns can be recognized. Nonetheless, there are fundamental procedural differences between qualitative and quantitative approaches to data analysis.

Quantitative data collection is more commonly organized as clear and distinct processes, analysis being one such step. Data collection questions are determined and transferred into, for example, questionnaires, following which the data is collected, cleaned and stored and then analyzed and presented. Analysis of quantitative data leads to a statistical rendering of the data, generally presented in tables or charts and a discussion.

“[Good practice in data analysis] depends on what the methodology is. What would be a textbook way to go about analysis would be radically different in a participatory qualitative study versus a study that’s a quantitative quasi-experimental design... it would really depend.”

TIP researcher

In **qualitative approaches**, there is not one specific point where data collection ends and analysis begins; ideas about possible analysis will occur also during data collection. This may influence data collection as an iterative process where preliminary findings can lead the data collector to ask other questions to either confirm, disprove or add nuance to initial patterns that emerge. In some cases, issues and questions may emerge during analysis that call for more data collection, in which case data sources or data providers may be contacted again to clarify issues or provide additional information. This highlights the integrated nature of qualitative data collection and analysis.²¹³

²¹² Aguinis, J., R. Gottfredson and H. Joo (2013) ‘Best-Practice Recommendations for Defining, Identifying and Handling Outliers’, *Organizational Research Methods*, 16(2); Bernard, H.R. (2006) *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. Fourth Edition*. AltaMira Press, p. 452; and Osborne, J. (2008) *Best Practices in Quantitative Methods*. Thousand Oaks, United States: SAGE Publishing.

²¹³ Patton, M.Q. (2002) *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods. Third edition*. Thousand Oaks, United States: SAGE Publishing.

Data analysis is a key element of the data collection process and yet a number of key informants interviewed for this project noted the *lack* of analysis in many TIP data collection efforts, particularly in terms of administrative data collected by practitioners. One criminal justice practitioner noted his experience in working with the police in one country where data was collected about TIP cases, but this data was not analyzed nor used to inform policy and practice:

...they (the police) do collect data, but merely by numbers. And that's recorded, mainly in books. And that's where it sits. So the actual physical collection of numerical data is quite good. But there's no analysis and there's no dissemination of that information... So the data needs to be a lot wider and then obviously there needs to be a process of analysis.

This was echoed by one TIP researcher who had assessed various different government data collection efforts in one region, where data was compiled, but not analyzed:

[In] some government agencies it was the job of a couple of people just to add data all day long. But they're not asked to do any analysis of it. It's just adding data to a computer, whether it's Excel or Word or a database. And that's it. And then that is combined with senior supervisors not organizing any staff training for data analysis and not actually giving any instructions for what data needs to be analyzed and the purpose of the analysis. [...] So data are collected, that's one job. And reporting is done up to supervisors or basic figures are reported on upon request to other [government] agencies... Some of [the staff] were doing really basic tallying. So they were able to give us in [one country], for example, a really basic table saying the total number of trafficking victims that had been referred to their agency in that year, the number of women, the number of men, the number of children. I don't think they could even separate it into types of trafficking or anything else. And the numbers didn't add up!

Good practice in data analysis is closely bound with rigorous and method-specific analytic procedures. And, as mentioned above, the specificities of all strategies for analysis are beyond the scope of what can be covered in this publication. There are, however, a number of steps and considerations that are common to most, if not all, forms of data analysis.

Steps and considerations in data analysis



Assess and describe data. This involves organizing, assessing and describing the data or dataset that the analysis will build on. Because the analysis process builds from the initial assessment and description, this first step (getting to know the data) might involve describing the basic features of the dataset or the scope of the material that has been collected. In some instances, assessing and describing data will involve more interpretive analysis and technical solutions (for example, software packages) may facilitate this process.

Steps and considerations in data analysis

- Assess and describe data
- Consider factors and biases that influence the data
- Identify and describe relevant patterns in data
- Interpret patterns and findings
- Validate findings
- Train and build capacity in data analysis
- Consider ethical aspects of data analysis



Consider factors and biases that influence the data. It is important to be realistic and transparent about what data does (and does not) cover. Factors and biases influence

the data in different ways and these must be identified and documented as part of the analysis. It is important to consider the influence of the environment and context in which data was collected as well as respondent biases, response rates and response bias, all of which may influence what conclusions can (and cannot) be made as a result.



Identify and describe relevant patterns in data. This is essentially a process of condensing data for analysis, with a view to identifying patterns. This step generally involves asking questions that begin with *what* and *how*, rather than making conclusions about what causes patterns. It is important in identifying and describing relevant patterns in data to return to the initial data collection purpose and questions and seek to answer them. Both deductive and inductive analysis may be used during this step.



Interpret patterns and findings. Central to data collection efforts is to offer informed, nuanced and sophisticated analysis and understanding of what is happening in data. Therefore, this step involves making inferences about connections between the themes and patterns that have been identified. Interpretation should be aligned with existing research and knowledge. Interpreting patterns and findings also involves addressing biases and factors influencing interpretation and interpreting across languages.



Validate findings. Validating the findings with stakeholders and end users can offer alternative understandings and explanations and ensure that end users are aware of findings. Validation will depend on the nature of the TIP data collection effort. It may be done to inform the analytical process and findings or in relation to the final results and findings. The validation process includes determining what weight should be given to stakeholder feedback.



Train and build capacity in data analysis. Those involved in data analysis should have the skills required for the task (either when they are hired or through training, capacity building and supervision). This includes how to take into account biases and limitations when conducting data analysis. Training and capacity building in data analysis require the allocation of adequate time and resources.



Consider ethical aspects of data analysis. Ethical considerations are integral to data analysis in terms of producing truthful and trustworthy findings. Data that is not ethically obtained may lack veracity. A central concern is to “do no harm” in the analysis of data, which requires being open about limitations and possible biases, and equally, not misrepresenting the solidity of data, findings and conclusions. This also involves making decisions about how findings and results will be presented to a broader audience.

The following sections discuss each of these steps in detail and explore key issues and considerations that may be faced in data analysis. These sections also include examples of good practice or lessons learned that we identified over the course of the project.



Assess and describe data

A first step in data analysis is getting to know the data (that is, to organize, assess and describe the data or dataset that the analysis will build on). In essence, this is gaining an overview of the data and beginning to assess what data one has and what one can use it for. This might begin with organizing and describing the basic features of the dataset being

analyzed. This may include, for example, the number of respondents and the distribution of relative variables or dimensions of respondents such as gender, age or nationality. For example, in analyzing the nature of trafficking in a specific context, this might involve presenting the number of trafficking victims disaggregated by gender, age or nationality as well as form of trafficking. In analyzing trafficking cases, this might consider the number of cases as well as the form of TIP being prosecuted, as well as the number of victims or defendants. In the case of secondary data, this might include a description of the nature and scope of the material itself.

Some analysis will involve only describing the data (for example, descriptive statistics that summarize and describe). In other instances, assessing and describing will involve more interpretive analysis concerned with the response as well as what may have been inferred or implied. Presenting features of the data or dataset in a table or easy-to-read format is useful for both quantitative and qualitative data. Depending on the format and intended audience (see Stage #5: Data Use, Presentation and Dissemination, *Select presentation formats and languages*), tables or easy-to-read formats may also be included when the analysis is presented (for instance, in reports, papers or articles).

Good practice. Assess and describe data

Begin by organizing, assessing and describing the data.

Get to know the data and what it can and cannot be used for.

Organize and describe the basic features of the data.

Present features in a table or other easy-to-read format.

Assess whether software packages are suitable for the dataset.

Software packages can be used to assist and support quantitative and qualitative data analysis. These packages assist in coding, categorizing, matching, linking and comparing the data. Each software package will have specific features that need to align with the data collection approach and the planned outputs. Quantitative data will be analyzed for frequencies of variables; differences between variables; and the significance of the results (that is, the probability that they did not occur by chance). This is achieved by counting and comparison of variables. There are also several technical options when analyzing qualitative data. Qualitative data analysis software programs can accelerate the coding, categorizing and linking of often dense datasets. However, while these software programs may assist in the analysis process, they cannot alone analyze the data.²¹⁴ Whether or not qualitative data should be analyzed with qualitative analysis software is partially a question of the size of the dataset, available time and resources (including capacity) and personal preference. When working with a small dataset (for example, a service provider organization analyzing a handful of cases of assisted trafficking victims) such software may not be useful and may add a burden (for example, the cost of the software, time needed to learn how to use the software). By contrast, very large qualitative datasets can quickly become difficult to work with without qualitative analysis software, particularly for cross-case analysis (that is, when examining answers from different respondents or cases in terms of themes, similarities and differences).

²¹⁴ There are different types of qualitative software packages which have different uses, including: text retrievers; code and retrieve packages; and theory-builders. Selecting an appropriate software requires considering one's specific analysis needs. Patton, M.Q. (2002) *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods. Third edition*. London, United Kingdom: Thousand Oaks, and New Delhi, India: SAGE Publishing, p. 443. See also Fielding, N. (1995) 'Choosing the Right Software Package', *ESRC Data Archive Bulletin*; NYU Libraries (2019) *Qualitative Data Analysis: Choosing QDA Software*; Lewins, C. and A. Silver (2007) *Using Software in Qualitative Research: A Step-by-Step Guide*. London, United Kingdom: SAGE Publishing; and Silver, C. and N. Fielding (2008) 'Using Computer Packages in Qualitative Research' in Willig, C. and W. Stainton-Rogers (Eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology*. London, United Kingdom: SAGE Publishing.

In many government institutions, assessing and describing the data is often the full extent of what is done in terms of analysis. One TIP researcher described the analysis of one specific data collection initiative by one government agency for which analysis remained at the level of assessing and describing the data:

It's mostly just tallying figures and giving pretty basic statistics on total number of x, y, z. Total number of women, total number of children, total number of men. I asked a few agencies... about how data is analyzed for policy purposes. Are these figures being used strategically? With the police, for example, are you using the data to identify maybe a greater number of people being trafficked in certain provinces? And the answer to that question was "no".

In some cases, organizations and institutions have only a limited interest in analyzing their administrative data and often only do so to provide evidence that they have achieved progress on TIP. They do not necessarily prioritize critical analysis and reflection, which can inform and guide interventions. In other cases, staff may not have been trained or mandated to move beyond this. As one TIP researcher noted:

The staff don't know how. It's not really in their job descriptions. They're not being asked to do it. And they don't really know how that data would be used anyway, for policy purposes. So, at the moment, the figures are not being used strategically. They're basically just [calculating] "total number of" and that's the end of the story.

In summary: The essential first step of data analysis is to organize, assess and describe the data, which also means getting to know what the data can (and cannot) be used for. This step should also involve an assessment of whether software packages are suitable for helping to analyze the dataset.



Consider factors and biases that influence the data

Part of getting to know the data is assessing what it does and does not reveal. It is important to be realistic and transparent about what data does and does not cover or explain. This also involves documenting aspects of the data that are relevant to the analysis in different ways. Perhaps counterintuitively, being transparent about limitations and potential shortcomings in data adds to, rather than diminishes, the credibility of the analysis. This is because perfect data does not exist and all data is informed by different factors and biases. As one TIP researcher explained:

... all research has limitations. ...especially with something like trafficking or with a topic that has an underdeveloped empirical knowledge base. We [need to] adequately look at our data assumptions and look to see problems in the data and how that might impact our outcomes or findings. I think that often is overlooked in research in general.

As such, part of analyzing the data is presenting and understanding limitations. Many limitations are linked to datasets themselves. Each dataset has its own strengths and

limitations in terms of what it can and cannot answer as have been mentioned at various stages of this publication. With transparency and proper analysis, the existence of limitations and challenges neither invalidates nor undermines a particular dataset.

Making limitations explicit allows both analysts and readers to contextualize information and, by extension, better interpret its meaning so that it can be understood and used in the most appropriate and effective way. One TIP researcher discussed the need for greater openness about limitations in TIP data:

What I would suggest would be a little more honesty about what is known and what is not known. And some of the difficulties [with the data].

Another TIP researcher highlighted the lack of transparency about data limitations as a problem in the field of TIP research:

There is a long history of presenting data within the field without considering the major limitations involved. There is also a pattern within the anti-trafficking world where data that started out as anecdotal somehow evolves into valid statistical data simply through repetition.

Good practice. Consider factors and biases that influence the data

Assess limitations and bias in the specific dataset.

Be transparent about limitations and potential shortcomings in data.

Identify factors that may impact data and analysis.

Consider how respondent biases, response rates and response bias influence data.

Consider the environment or context in which data was collected in analyzing data.

For quantitative data, it is important at this stage to determine **response rates** (that is, how many of those approached as potential respondents declined, actively or passively, to participate in data collection, as a whole or for specific questions or variables) and the possibilities for response bias and respondent bias. While these are usually discussed in terms of quantitative data collection, these are also important to consider for qualitative data collection.

Respondent bias refers to the effect of non-responses on survey estimates. That is, if the non-respondents had responded, would the overall results have changed substantially?²¹⁵ Are there systematic differences between those who respond and those who do not? For instance, people who are overburdened with work may have less time to answer a questionnaire, creating systematic differences if the goal is, for example, to answer questions about resources in service provision or experiences with investigating trafficking. And because those who are very busy providing services or investigating cases may not have time to answer questionnaires, there will be a bias in the type of information gathered.

Trafficked persons with less education may be less inclined to participate in survey research (or research more generally) because they may not fully appreciate what the data collection is about and may be uncomfortable with participating. This potentially skews findings about socioeconomic and educational backgrounds of respondents. Similarly, trafficked persons who have been traumatized by their experiences of exploitation may be particularly disinclined to answer a survey or be an interview respondent. In addition, service providers may be less inclined to refer these individuals for participation in data collection out of

²¹⁵ Creswell, J.W. (2003) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Second edition. Thousand Oaks. United States: SAGE Publishing, p. 160.

concern for their well-being and their ability to provide meaningful consent. This, in turn, will impact what data collectors may understand about respondents' mental well-being, including the extent to which they may want and need counseling and other mental-health services. When the objective of the data collection is to understand what assistance needs victims have, this bias is important to identify and factor into how the information is analyzed. Assessing respondent bias in the data is crucial in understanding and contextualizing patterns that emerge from data.

In terms of respondent bias, it is also important to consider whether there were particular difficulties in accessing any individual or types of respondents. In some cases, there may be wide variations in how easy it is to include different groups of respondents. Some respondent groups are systematically harder to access. The role of **gatekeepers** (persons or institutions that, one way or another, control access to the data collection site or to respondents) can be a factor that systematically skews access, as gatekeepers will determine the allowing or denying of entry. For example, one study of why trafficking victims sometimes decline assistance found systematic differences in which types of organizations or institutions were willing to convey interview requests to their beneficiaries. Service providers that operated with stricter rules for beneficiaries and closed shelters were more reluctant to pass on information about the data collection and possible participation. This meant that beneficiaries assisted in more constrained programs were systematically underrepresented in the study, while being at the same time a potentially very important group to access for the main research question, which in this case was about victims declining available assistance.²¹⁶

Access to traffickers also relies on different gatekeepers, for instance, prison authorities or a country's Ministry of Justice may influence access to suspected or convicted traffickers. Interlocutors involved in some part of the trafficking industry (for example, brokers, recruitment agency staff, those involved in the sex industry like security guards) may secure access to still operating traffickers. This influences what types of traffickers may be accessed and, as such, what their experiences represent.

There are myriad ways that gatekeepers may influence who is part of data collection and, by extension, what biases this introduces. It is critically important to identify how gatekeepers influence data and factor this into the analysis. As one TIP researcher stressed:

We need to be much more critical or aware and open, transparent about where the data collection took place and who facilitated it. Because very often much data collection is based on connection to NGOs. ...the main contact with the people who were interviewed is through NGOs and there is too little discussion about what that really means in terms of data collection. How is it possible to have unbiased data collection when we get the access through the communities, through NGOs or other organizations? A best practice [in data analysis] is more transparent and more critical reflection on how the data collection took place.

Being clear about difficulties in accessing some types of respondents is important in order to understand and analyze data and its limitations.

Response bias refers to different cognitive effects that can lead to less accurate or less truthful disclosure from respondents.²¹⁷ This is particularly important to consider when the

²¹⁶ Brunovskis, A. and R. Surtees (2007) *Leaving the past behind? When victims of trafficking decline assistance*. Oslo, Norway: Fafo and Washington, D.C., United States: NEXUS Institute. See also Brunovskis, A. and R. Surtees (2010) 'Untold Stories: Biases and Selection Effects in Research with Victims of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation', *International Migration*, 48(4), pp. 1-37.

²¹⁷ Furnham, A. (1986) 'Response bias, social desirability and dissimulation', *Personality and Individual Differences*, 7(3), pp. 385-400; Paulhus, D.L. (1991) 'Measurement and control of response bias' in Robinson,

research topic may be stigmatizing or the respondent has a real or perceived sense of being judged, which can be the case in much human trafficking research or data collection. Often referred to as **social desirability response bias**,²¹⁸ this can significantly influence the extent to which respondents are open and forthcoming. For instance, trafficking victims may sometimes present as less knowing and with little agency in relation to decisions around their migration, for fear of having their victim status diminished or of being seen as somehow complicit in their own exploitation. This is particularly a factor when data is collected in a context of assistance, where victims may fear being cut off from help or being ineligible for certain programs or services. The desire to please the data collector or to perhaps express gratitude for assistance received may also impact responses, especially when staff of a victim service agency is collecting the data.

Data collection with traffickers is also influenced by social desirability response bias, where openness can disclose criminal and punishable behavior. One study of traffickers noted that data gathered from those involved in trafficking operations who were in the criminal justice process and facing long prison sentences had “a vested interest in minimizing the brutality of their deeds or in exaggerating their good personality traits during the sentencing phase”.²¹⁹ Similarly, one TIP expert noted various issues of reliability when conducting this type of data collection:

Something we did previously was interview convicted traffickers and that’s a very difficult one to do because of the reliability of the data. ...interviewing convicted traffickers or those who aren’t convicted but suspected, there are a lot of issues around developing the relationship to be able to gather reliable data and how that’s set up. If you’re interviewing convicted traffickers, say, in jails, being able to corroborate information, being able to look at it in different ways... you need to be quite clear on that. And [there are] a lot of limitations on what information can be collected.

One case study of an active human trafficker in Greece illustrates this tendency, noting that the trafficker answered interview questions in ways that justified his actions including denying that the women were trafficking victims, that there was any injury involved in trafficking and that he was responsible for any exploitation.²²⁰ Similarly, researchers who conducted a study of still-active traffickers in London raised concerns about whether the participating traffickers answered questions truthfully, not least as they were interviewed by two women about the business of trafficking in women.²²¹

J.P., P.R. Shaver and L.S. Wrightsman (Eds.) *Measures of social psychological attitudes: Measures of personality and social psychological attitudes*. San Diego, United States: Academic Press, pp. 17-59; and Van de Mortel, T. (2008) ‘Faking It: Social Desirability Response Bias in Self-Report Research’, *The Australian Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 25(4), pp. 40-48.

²¹⁸ Social desirability response bias is the tendency of respondents to answer questions in a manner that they deem to be more socially acceptable than their “true” answer in order to project a favorable image of themselves and to avoid receiving negative evaluations. This can lead to the over-reporting “good behavior” or under-reporting of “bad” or undesirable behavior

²¹⁹ Levenkron, N. (2007) “Another Delivery from Tashkent”. *Profile of the Israeli Trafficker*. Israel: Hotline for Migrant Workers, pp. 11-12.

²²⁰ Antonopoulos, G. and J. Winterdyk (2005) ‘Techniques of Neutralizing the Trafficking of Women: A Case Study of an Active Trafficker in Greece’, *European Journal of Crime, Criminal Law and Criminal Justice*, 13(2), pp. 136-147.

²²¹ Troshynski, E. and J. Blank (2008) ‘Sex trafficking: an exploratory study interviewing traffickers’, *Trends in Organized Crime*, 11, pp. 30-41. In this special issue of *Trends in Organized Crime* on interviewing organized criminals, all researchers acknowledged problems and limitations in the reliability and validity of the data obtained through interviews with “organized criminals” (including the risk of social desirability response bias). However, the researchers also noted that valuable information is produced from such interviews, especially when it comes to the perceptions, attitudes, and motivations of offenders, particularly as a complement to or in combination with other, more readily available data sources. Von Lampe, K. (2008) ‘Introduction to the special issue on interviewing “organized criminals”’, *Trends in Organized Crime*, 11, pp. 1-4.

Practitioners and policymakers working on TIP may also be influenced by a social desirability response bias, in that they may seek to present themselves (their work, their employers and their organizations or institutions) in the best possible light. For example, organizations assisting trafficking victims may be unwilling to share unsuccessful cases of assistance and reintegration or to offer examples of problems faced in their work. Equally, criminal justice practitioners may not be willing to critique the criminal justice process in the country overall or the handling of cases by specific individuals or institutions. In some cases, professionals may also fear that disclosing problems in their organizations can have negative consequences for them as professionals or for their organization or institution, including in terms of funding.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to fully guard against or compensate for response bias. However, and as noted in Stage #1: Design and Planning (*Select a data collection approach and method (quantitative, qualitative and mixed approaches and methods)* and *Develop or apply legal and ethical guidelines and protocols*), being clear and up front from the outset about confidentiality where appropriate and creating a non-judgmental atmosphere during data collection can go some way towards alleviating the issue. In the analysis phase the possibility for response bias should be taken into account and inform both the assessment of the data as well as the strength of the conclusions that are drawn.

At some level, identifying certain patterns of social desirability response bias can be informative in and of itself. If there are specific patterns of inconsistencies on certain topics, this may point toward particularly strong norms that influence particular fields.²²² For instance, one study found that it was relatively difficult for returned female trafficking victims to discuss their relationships with their children and that almost all respondents tended to portray these relationships in an overwhelmingly positive light. This was in contrast to the experiences of social workers who worked with the same group of women and reported that relationships between a returned trafficked mother and her children were very commonly strained and difficult. It seems possible that there was some degree of social desirability responding by women who had not only been trafficked but also stigmatized in their local communities as “bad women” (for example, because of their forced prostitution, failed migration or failure to support children who remain at home). Needing to self-present as a “good mother” might be particularly pronounced for someone whose status as a “good woman” had already been challenged.²²³

Data analysis needs also to take into account the method and tools used and how this may influence the data (for example, face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions, surveys or administered questionnaires). The dynamic in a two-person exchange, such as between interviewee and interviewer, differs from the group dynamic within a focus group because of the number of participants and how they react to each other’s responses. Equally, anonymous questionnaires can lead to higher or lower rates of disclosure depending on the topic, profile of respondent and so on.

Data can also be influenced by the environment or context in which data was collected, even when using the same method and tool with the same type of respondent. For example, differences will arise between data from an interview conducted privately by a researcher compared with an interview where a service provider or government authority was present. One TIP researcher explained how victim narratives changed also in relation to the context of interviewing (for example, in a shelter or not and whether with or without others present):

²²² Sandberg, S. (2010) ‘What can “lies” tell us about life? Notes towards a framework of narrative criminology’, *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, 21(4), pp. 447-465.

²²³ Brunovskis, A. and R. Surtees (2012) ‘Coming home: Challenges in family reintegration for trafficked women’, *Qualitative Social Work*, 12(4), pp. 454-472.

[In one country] I would interview women in the shelters who were identified as victims of human trafficking. All of them told exactly the same story. And then when I got to know them outside of the NGOs, they would often tell much more complex and other kind of stories. So there's issues then [about] where we conduct the interview. And, is it possible for the person we interviewed to be honest about the situation, considering who is in the room? Is it possible for her or him to talk about the motivation for leaving to another country or motivation for entering to different kinds of labor exploitation if they, at the same time, need assistance from the people in the room?

More constrained political environments where respondents may feel less able to disclose certain behaviors or experiences will also influence what may be shared by respondents. Data collectors and analysts should take all of these factors into account when conducting data analysis and, by extension, drawing conclusions.²²⁴

In summary: It is important to be realistic and transparent about what data does and does not cover, mean or explain and to be clear and transparent about the limitations and potential shortcomings in data. Different factors come into play when analyzing the data which requires careful attention to how respondent biases, response rates and response bias influence data and findings. The environment or context in which data was collected also merits attention when analyzing the data.



Identify and describe relevant patterns in data

Fundamental in identifying relevant patterns in data is to return to the initial data collection topic, purpose and questions and seek to answer them with and through the data that has been collected. For both quantitative and qualitative methods, it is important to include a process where data is analyzed with a view to identifying patterns to answer the questions posed. That is, to answer the questions that begin with *what* and *how*, rather than jumping ahead to make conclusions about *what causes the patterns* (See *Interpret patterns and findings* below). As one TIP expert explained:

...as strange as it may sound, sometimes people undertake field research without being very clear about what they want to know. They will bring some very good questions but without a very clear idea about the key research questions that they want answered. And this is where you end up with data that you don't know how to properly use. [...] ...good practice is when you are clear about the objectives of the research and you try to answer systematically the questions and to acknowledge the limitations that you have.

This is essentially a process of data reduction. **Data reduction** means to condense data, which is necessary in making it manageable, by organizing and summarizing it. In some cases, this process is the end goal of the analysis (that is, to present a very simple distribution of variables). One TIP data collection staff described how the project initially

²²⁴ ORI (2005) 'Data Analysis', *Responsible Conduct in Data Management*. United States: Office of Research Integrity.

aimed to provide instructions for higher-level analysis, but what was most needed and appropriate was simpler guidance on how to identify and describe patterns within the data:

We had the mission of having guidelines on how to prepare that analysis. But in the end we realized that it was probably too ambitious and that what was really needed was a very easy method of reporting. We created these reporting functions that were able to combine one or more variables, provide each region and, for example, purpose of trafficking, see how many [victims and traffickers] in the timespan of two years were involved and what was the gender and average age. And then we also distributed some guidelines on how to rate these numbers.

A variety of analytical procedures are available. Tools and approaches will need to be adjusted relative to the approach, method and collected data. While it is beyond the scope of this publication to detail specific analytical procedures, it is possible to discuss generally the different approaches to analysis, which can guide the search for patterns in the data. In broad brushstrokes, there is deductive analysis, which is testing existing theories and assumptions and inductive analysis, which is setting out to generate a new understanding.²²⁵ Both types of analysis contribute knowledge that can increase an understanding of TIP and inform actions to prevent or combat it.

Deductive analysis sets out to confirm or disprove a general hypothesis by examining the specific. Data is analyzed according to an existing framework. For example, one hypothesis may be that most people are trafficked by someone they know and an analysis of patterns of trafficking may prove or disprove this hypothesis. Or as one TIP researcher explained: “you’re basically looking to see if what you think is right is right.”

Inductive analysis is concerned with the generation of new thinking emerging from the data, to move from the specific data to generate general knowledge. Inductive analysis is about finding patterns, themes and categories in the data. Findings emerge from the data and the analyst’s interactions with the data.²²⁶ For example and using the same example as above, the analysis may start out with a more open inquiry into what *are* the relationships between traffickers and victims and then move on to map the different patterns of relationships identified in the data.

Good practice. Identify and describe relevant patterns in data

Return to the initial data collection purpose and questions in the analysis.

Ask “what” and “how” rather than jumping to make conclusions about what causes the patterns.

Condense data by organizing and summarizing it.

Adjust analytical procedures, tools and approaches relative to the approach, method and collected data.

Select a level of analysis that is appropriate for the purpose of the data collection effort and size of the sample.

Consider what time and resources are (and are not) needed for a specific data collection project.

Determine proper units of analysis.

Identify whether it is preferable to use deductive or inductive analysis.

²²⁵ Thorne, S. (2016) *Interpretive Description: Qualitative Research for Applied Practice*. Second Edition. New York, United States: Routledge.

²²⁶ Patton, M.Q. (2002) *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. Third edition. London, United Kingdom: Thousand Oaks, p. 453.

Data collection that pursues exploration and discovery angles requires an inductive approach. For other purposes, a more deductive approach might be desirable (for instance, when seeking to prove or disprove established knowledge or widely held assumptions). That being said, in practice the nature of data analysis may be rather flexible and fluid. Analysis is rarely completely deductive, focused only on proving or disproving a specific hypothesis to the extent that all other patterns are ignored, nor is it rarely ever completely inductive to the extent of having no preconceptions about what patterns might be.

An important decision at this stage, and one that should be considered also in terms of decisions about dissemination (see Stage #5: Data Use, Presentation and Dissemination), is to determine proper units of analysis. A **unit (or case)** is what has been studied and might be a victim of trafficking, a human trafficker, a trafficking case or instance, a criminal investigation, an assistance pathway and so on. Determining the proper unit of analysis will be directly informed by decisions made earlier in the process in relation to the sampling strategy and the research sample (see Stage #2: Data Collection, *Select a sample and implement a sampling strategy*). Units may then be aggregated for the purpose of analysis (for example, to consider all trafficking investigations in a particular geographical area or to review the assistance experiences of trafficked males from an area or country).

It will also often be useful to disaggregate the sample, to examine particular sub-groups in the sample, or compare groups with each other. For instance, do victims of different national groups experience assistance differently? Does this also vary with age? Are there different patterns of trafficking from different countries of origin? However, breaking down the sample into groups smaller than a certain size can lead to identification of individuals within the dataset and must be considered carefully with this in mind. Another issue is that this can lead to very small sub-samples, undermining the ability to identify patterns and draw meaningful conclusions from the data.

A common and intuitively accessible approach for many researchers and data collectors in qualitative analysis is to identify themes and patterns across a dataset to provide an answer to the research question (for example, identifying what different respondents say and whether there are themes that are common or different between cases). For example, when interviewing trafficking victims about their assistance needs, one pattern may be that many victims stress the need to receive assistance for their dependent children, which fits within the broader theme of family assistance needs. Data analysis needs to link back to the research purpose and questions and how patterns and themes help to answer the research question(s). In quantitative analysis, one looks for statistical significance. In qualitative analysis, one looks for substantive significance.²²⁷

Time and resources permitting, it can be useful to be open to other patterns emerging from the data. Sometimes issues that were not foreseen in the original design may lead to a series of new questions in addition to the initial ones. This is particularly the case for qualitative research and the analysis of qualitative materials.

Analysis of patterns in the data can be conducted at different levels, from the very simple to the very advanced (such as specialized quantitative modeling). The central issue is to select a level that is appropriate for the purpose of the data collection effort and the size of the sample. Simple analysis may be more relevant and useful in many instances. As one TIP researcher noted:

²²⁷ Leavy, P. (2017) *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based, and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches*. New York, United States: The Guilford Press, p. 152; and Patton, M.Q. (2002) *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods. Third edition*. London, United Kingdom: Thousand Oaks, p. 467.

It's a field where things are changing all the time, where establishing fact is really difficult...focusing on really exploratory data is always a good contribution to the field. Sometimes simple data can be much better, much more useful than overcomplicated modeling procedures. ...because you see those applied to a trafficked or potentially trafficked population, which wouldn't be randomly sampled, you really have to take it with a grain of salt.

Much can be learned from simple analysis when data aligns with the data collection question. As one criminal justice researcher noted of a study on legal outcomes for trafficking victims:

In the report [data analysis was] nothing sophisticated at all. We provided pie charts and percentages. But the numbers were so dramatic... We presented it to an audience largely of attorneys and some other sorts of advocates so we want to avoid any sort of fancy statistics. And so far they haven't really been necessary. You don't need to perform regressions to figure out that there's a problem when [something is] only happening a third of the time [when] it's supposed to be happening all of the time. There's been no need so far for sophisticated statistical tools.

Triangulation is an important part of the analysis process as it has potential to enhance the quality of the analysis and offset biases with multiple sources, methods and perspectives. How this is done follows on from choices made in Stage #1 about methods and approaches (*Select a data collection approach and method*) as well as data sources (*Identify data sources*). **Methods triangulation** uses data generated by different research methods. It provides data from multiple perspectives, helping to offset the limitations of any one particular method on data and findings. For example, data collection about TIP prosecutions may be both quantitative (counting the number of TIP prosecution) as well as qualitative (assessing the quality of TIP prosecutions by interviewing criminal justice practitioners and reviewing court documents).

Triangulation of data sources involves using multiple data sources within the same method and approach to address the same question. For example, when analyzing a trafficking case, a review of court records may, as part of the approach and method, be triangulated with interviews from stakeholders observing the trial. Similarly, research based on interviews with trafficking victims about their assistance needs will benefit from interviews both with victims and with service providers working with them. Interviews with key informants about patterns of trafficking within a country or area can be supplemented with a review of literature on that topic. Triangulation of data sources also involves secondary data sources, whereby the analyst checks information from different sources to assess the relevance and validity of emerging themes. This can be done, for instance, by considering and discussing the findings relative to the literature. That is: are findings in line with what has previously been observed? Is there divergence from past findings? If so, can reasons for this divergence be identified and discussed?

Analyst triangulation engages different analysts (or different teams of analysts) in analyzing the data. Analysts may be asked to individually analyze the data to identify patterns and trends, including offering different perspectives on the same dataset.²²⁸ For example, prosecutors examining investigative files to identify problems at the investigative stage may conduct this review individually and then jointly as a team. Or, as one TIP

²²⁸ Leavy, P. (2017) *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based, and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches*. New York, United States: The Guilford Press, p. 153; and Patton, M.Q. (2002) *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods. Third edition*. London, United Kingdom: Thousand Oaks, p. 464 and pp. 556-563.

researcher described, data collectors may work with NGOs in writing up the research results and analyzing the findings:

I've worked with NGOs in the last couple of years who have interview capacity and skills but not the time or skills for report writing. I've seen them be really appreciative of being involved in a research project, helping design it, doing the interviewing and then somebody else doing what they consider the hard part of report writing. ...best practice has been involving interviewers and helping analyze the interview data that they collected. Not having them use a fancy computer program and doing that kind of analysis. But sitting around a table and saying, "Okay, you did 20 interviews, what stood out for you as the most important things? What did you not expect? What changed the way you're going to go about your work now? Or given what you heard in the interviews, how does that confirm or clash with things you knew before?" I've found that process really helpful and that took very little resources and a lot of bang for the buck so to speak with good analysis of data, [involving] other people in to help look at it.

Some TIP data collection is on-going (for example, victim case management data and criminal justice data collection). In such cases, analysis is done on an on-going basis to inform how a program is designed, or to advocate for policy changes. This allows for the identification of patterns which can then directly translate into programming responses within an institution or organization and, if shared effectively, into policy change more broadly. One NGO director explained how her organization identifies patterns in the case management data collected from assisted victims to then inform programming:

We've seen a lot of changes in the forms of trafficking that our clients have endured. We actually [assist] about 200 cases a year. We have a lot of clients and most of them are clients we are assisting to bring back from another country. They have been trafficked to [countries in Asia, Africa or the Middle East]. [...] As we see changes happening in our programs and in our [categories of] clients, we feed back into our other programs.

In summary: To answer the problem(s) or issue(s) posed in a data collection project, analysis must identify relevant patterns in the data. In so doing, it is important to return to the initial data collection purpose and questions and seek to answer them. This step includes determining the proper unit of analysis and organizing and summarizing the data, which requires asking *what* and *how* rather than immediately seeking to draw conclusions about what causes these patterns. Analytical procedures, tools and approaches will require adaptation and adjustment relative to the approach, method and collected data. Analysis of patterns in the data can range from the very simple to the very advanced and it is important to select a level that is appropriate for the purpose of the data collection effort and size of the sample. This also means considering what time and resources are (and are not) needed for the specific data collection effort. In some instances, deductive analysis is preferable, whereas in other cases inductive analysis is what is needed. Triangulation can be an important part of the analysis process as it has potential to enhance the quality of the analysis and offset biases with multiple sources, methods and perspectives.



Interpret patterns and findings

The previous step in analysis (*Identify and describe relevant patterns in data*) sought to answer *what* and *how* by organizing and describing data and identifying relevant patterns, but not to draw conclusions about what causes the identified patterns. Some TIP data collection may stop at this step and aim only to describe a situation (for example, for monitoring or mapping purposes). In many cases, however, the aim will be to say something about more complex relationships and processes (for instance to inform change in policy or practice). In such cases, the data analysis also involves asking *why* – in other words, interpreting the data.

Interpretation of data and findings means to make inferences about connections between the themes and patterns that were identified in the previous step in order to answer the issue(s) or problem(s) posed. It is about moving beyond the descriptive data, attaching significance to what was found, making sense of findings, offering

explanations, considering meanings and drawing conclusions. It is important not to move into the interpretation stage before having answered the descriptive questions. While it may be tempting to move to this more creative step immediately as patterns emerge, it is important not to develop fixed explanations and understandings too early or before the data has been fully explored. Interpretation can take different forms including: using data to confirm what is known; correcting misconceptions; and illuminating important things that were not but should be known.²²⁹ This step, though, is not only about the interpretation of patterns and findings but also about aligning interpretation with existing TIP research and knowledge, identifying and making explicit any biases that influence interpretation and also considering how to address interpretation across different languages.

Interpret patterns and findings

- Interpret the data
- Align interpretation with existing research and knowledge
- Identify biases influencing interpretation
- Interpret meaning across languages

Interpret the data

Having organized and described the data, it is then necessary to interpret the data, answering questions such as: what does it all mean? What are the implications of these patterns and findings? Interpretation is the process of finding or making meaning out of the data. It involves moving beyond a statement of information and engaging with the data itself to be able to move forward with explanations and understanding. An informed, nuanced and sophisticated interpretation is central to any TIP data collection effort. As one National Rapporteur explained of her own work:

It's not only... giving statistics or data for someone else to make a decision... or to draw conclusions individually or independently somehow. Information should be interpreted in a context by people who understand the legal framework, the victim's rights, the [phenomenon], what's going on, where the problem are and give recommendations of what to do... Only giving data... it's not [enough]...

²²⁹ Patton, M.Q. (2002) *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods. Third edition*. London, United Kingdom: Thousand Oaks, p. 480.

Interpretation leans on different understandings of the topic and, where appropriate, on previous literature. It may also involve presenting different, even conflicting, understandings and interpretations as needed. Particularly in qualitative research traditions there is an understanding that there are multiple possible interpretations (and, in that sense, multiple realities) depending on what perspective is being used. It is important to be open to multiple interpretations and alternative conclusions even when conducting more targeted and bounded research (for example, with an explicit goal or a limited time frame). As one TIP researcher explained:

If you're doing research on a short deadline... you're basically looking to see if what you think is right is right. You're not really able to give the space to understand, [to be] open to alternative conclusions [...] [We need to] try to be really careful about popular narratives... that produce biases and foreclose the possibility of alternative positions.

In terms of prosecution-related data, interpretation is needed to go beyond the numbers, to get to the meaning of the numbers, if data is to be useful in crafting interventions. As one criminal justice practitioner noted:

...if you're collecting data...you really do want to know not just "How many?" and "What kind?" [of cases] but "How good?" "How reliable are those convictions?" "Are they really trafficking cases that they're prosecuting..."

Similarly, studying victim assistance programs requires interpreting the overall system to be able to understand why certain actions are taken and decisions made and to contextualize the results. As one National Rapporteur highlighted of a study currently being conducted by her office:

...now we are conducting the study on victim assistance... We are going to the NGOs and asking them what is missing and why we are not doing better. Why victims of trafficking are left on their own [without assistance] sometimes. What is going on? What are the gaps? Why they aren't there [in assistance]? NGOs are a very, very important source of information but they are not the only one. And NGOs are not always right. They have their own opinions. In that sense, we are really independent. We try to find information from various sources and then we draw our own conclusions, which are, I hope at least, balanced. We try to understand why the authorities do what they do; there might be some reasons for that.

Interpretation requires situating results within the broader context and against comparative data, so that meaning can be drawn from the data. Without an understanding of context (and the ability to compare data with other relevant information), it is not possible to make informed conclusions about what the data signifies. As one TIP expert explained:

An example is when [we conclude that] trafficking victims are uneducated. ... then the data for that will be that 62% of the trafficking victims had not finished primary school. And then you say, "What about the other members of the community? What's the community rate of finishing primary school?" And our general information will

Good practice. Interpret the data

Move on from *what* and *how* to answer *why*.

Offer informed, nuanced and sophisticated analysis of what data means.

Present different understandings and interpretations, where appropriate.

Be open to multiple interpretations and alternative conclusions.

be, “Well, we don’t know”. Well then you can’t make that conclusion, you can’t make the conclusion that in these particular communities being uneducated is a risk factor in relation to other community members, because you don’t have that data. And that’s really common for people to say, “X number of victims are poor or X percentage of victims haven’t had a certain level of education”. This [cannot be considered] a risk factor without any comparative data about how that relates to people who aren’t trafficked.

Similarly, criminal justice data needs to be interpreted contextually (for example, against the backdrop of national law and in terms of what conclusions can meaningfully be drawn from the data). As one legal expert explained, interpretation is needed to understand and explain significance and meaning of commonly presented indicators like the number of investigations or prosecutions:

Sometimes I’ll be in a situation where someone is... showing all of this [allegedly] fantastic data – this many prosecutions, this many people being investigated. ...that’s not so relevant, first of all because there’s no comparative value. If Country X has got 20 and Country Y has got two, what does that tell me? That requires so much context and background. Maybe one had 20 and it’s over ten years, maybe the second one is just now implemented its legislation. Maybe the 20 [prosecutions] reflects some awful prosecutions that should never be up on that bar chart. Whereas maybe those two [are] really high-level traffickers and not just some taxi driver. So there’s so much that needs to be looked at...

Another important data point in the criminal justice sector is the number of identified trafficking victims and/or the number of trafficking cases that are documented. However, the meaning and significance of these numbers too can only be interpreted against the backdrop of what is happening in the country in terms of the anti-trafficking response, as the number may increase or decrease in relation to both the action and inaction of authorities. As one TIP researcher noted:

The number of reported trafficking cases in any given place and time thus reflects at least as much the collective anti-trafficking efforts as it reflects the underlying problem. This makes comparability across countries nearly impossible, and it also complicates the interpretation of time trends in any given country: a rising number of detected cases of trafficking in persons (e.g. identified victims, traffickers, convictions) may reflect an increase in total trafficking in persons activity, or it may reflect an increase in the functionality and success rate of law enforcement efforts.²³⁰

An illustrative example comes from the United States, where low levels of victim identification by law enforcement are attributable not to lack of trafficking in the country but to the culture of local police agencies and police perceptions about human trafficking (for example, focused only on the sex trafficking of minors) that do not support the identification of different types of trafficking cases.²³¹

²³⁰ Jandl, M. (2008) ‘Research on Trafficking in Persons: Gaps and Limitations in Crime and Criminal Justice Data’ in Chawla, S. (Ed.) *Forum on Crime and Society (Special issue. Collecting crime data: indicators and measurement)*, 7, pp. 33-34.

²³¹ Farrell, A. and R. Pfeffer (2014) ‘Policing Human Trafficking: Cultural Blinders and Organizational Barriers’, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 653, pp. 46-64. See also Farrell, A. et al. (2019) ‘Failing victims? Challenges of the police response to human trafficking’, *Criminology & Public Policy*, 18, pp. 649-673; Farrell, A., R. Pfeffer and K. Bright (2015) ‘Police perceptions of human trafficking’, *Journal of Crime and Justice*, 38(3), pp. 315-333; Farrell, A., C. Owens and J. McDevitt (2014) ‘New laws but few cases: understanding the challenges to the investigation and prosecution of human trafficking cases’, *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 61, pp. 139-168; Farrell, A., J. McDevitt and S. Fahy (2010) ‘Where are all the victims? Understanding the determinants of official identification of human trafficking incidents’, *American Society of Criminology*, 9(2), pp. 201-233; Farrell, A., J. McDevitt and S. Fahy (2008) *Understanding and Improving Law Enforcement Responses to Human Trafficking: Final Report*. Boston, United States: Northeastern University;

Interpretation of data also requires ensuring that the voices of research participants come through and are fairly represented. Care is needed in the ways in which analysts speak for others and how others' experiences are interpreted and presented. This requires analysts being attentive to their own voices and perspectives, as well as the voices and perspectives of those with whom they are collecting data and with whom they are sharing results and findings.²³² One recent article on the state of TIP research and evidence stressed the importance of reflexivity and positionality in the process of data analysis:

One area that begs further attention in questions about evidence concerns how trafficking research can benefit from approaches in social sciences that take seriously notions of critical reflexivity, positionality and power relations that accompany research design, fieldwork and undoubtedly the analysis of data produced.²³³

Reflexivity involves researchers taking a step back and critically reflecting on their role in the research process, including what factors influence their construction of knowledge in the planning, implementation and analysis of the research. The goal of being reflexive is to improve the quality and validity of the research and to recognize and make explicit the limitations of findings that are produced, thus leading to more rigorous research.²³⁴ How this is done, however, will differ depending on the individual data collection effort.

In summary: Interpretation requires moving on from the *what* and *how* to answer *why* (that is, to say something about more complex relationships and processes). Interpretation means making inferences about connections between the themes and patterns that were identified in the previous step of answering the descriptive questions. Interpretation aims to offer informed, nuanced and sophisticated analysis of what data means and to present different understandings and interpretations, where appropriate. This requires data collectors/analysts being open to multiple interpretations and alternative conclusions as well as to how their own perspectives may influence interpretation. Interpretation of data also requires consideration of voice, particularly in terms of qualitative data collection.

Align interpretation with existing research and knowledge

An important step in interpretation involves assessing findings compared to previous research and literature. In Stage #1: Design and Planning, we discussed the need to conduct a thorough literature review (*Review existing literature and research*) and here again in Stage #4 there is the need to return to that literature, aligning and testing the findings against past research and the existing knowledge base. Revisiting literature reviewed at the outset of the project should involve noting how the project fills any gaps or otherwise contributes to the knowledge base on TIP. Analysis also requires examining what existing research says about the specific research topic and questions, noting any similarities or dissonance with one's own results.

and Irwin, N. (2017) 'Police officer understandings of human trafficking and awareness of anti-trafficking measures', *Policing: An International Journal*, 40(2), pp. 291-305.

²³² Leavy, P. (2017) *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based, and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches*. New York, United States: The Guilford Press, p. 49; and Patton, M.Q. (2002) *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods. Third edition*. London, United Kingdom: Thousand Oaks, pp. 64-65.

²³³ Yea, S. (2017) 'Editorial: The politics of evidence, data and research in anti-trafficking work', *Anti-Trafficking Review*, 8, p. 2.

²³⁴ Guillemin, M. and L. Gillam (2004) 'Ethics, reflexivity and "ethically important moments"', *Research in Qualitative Inquiry*, 10(2), pp. 274-5; and Yea, S. (2016) 'Trust, Rapport, and Ethics in Human Trafficking Research: Reflections on Research with Male Laborers from South Asian in Singapore' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 155-172.

When research findings do not align, this does not necessarily mean that the analysis or results are inaccurate. There are many external factors that may influence TIP data and findings. But it will be necessary to explore how, where, when and why these results vary and to work with the data (and past research) to account for these differences. One possible explanation for findings that do not align may relate to what some key informants interviewed for this project identified as the sometimes-unhealthy competition within the anti-trafficking field, as well as conflicting political, ideological and organizational positions and agenda.

Good practice. Align interpretation with existing research and knowledge

Align and test findings against the existing knowledge base.

Analyze how, where, when and why results differ from past research.

For example, one TIP researcher described what he identified as the counter-productive positioning of research in one economic sector in the country, with various organizations presenting widely different prevalence numbers and trying to discredit the findings of others in order to support uptake of their own results as well as associated interventions.

In summary: An important step of interpretation involves assessing findings against past research and the existing knowledge base, including how and why results differ from past research findings. When research findings do not align, this does not necessarily mean that the analysis or results are inaccurate. But it requires exploring how, where, when and why these results vary and working with the data (and past research) to account for these differences.

Identify biases influencing interpretation

Various selection biases may imply a selective inclusion or exclusion of certain types of data or experiences, even at the data collection stage, as previously discussed (see Stage #2: Data Collection, *Select a sample and implement a sampling strategy*). This requires paying attention to and offsetting this bias in the interpretation of the data.

While some biases may be a function of the data itself (as discussed above, see *Consider factors and biases that influence the data*), other biases are linked directly to the process of interpretation, including the role of the analyst. **Confirmation bias** is the tendency to look for patterns in data that confirm preconceived notions about connections and explanations. One TIP researcher described this bias in the research she was currently reviewing:

...they (the researchers) set out to answer a question and ...they purport to answer it. But they have not demonstrated that they used data that helped them answer it or that their methods in examining their data are appropriate to the question. And [the research] made it all the way to a secondary review in a journal!

Confirmation bias also results in overlooking patterns that may disprove or fail to support preconceived ideas (for example, men and boys being overlooked as victims of trafficking, the orientation of victim services to women and girls, a focus on foreign nationals over national victims of trafficking and so on). The intrusion of a researcher or analyst's opinion or perspective can dangerously distort the knowledge base on TIP. As one TIP expert observed based on his experience of reviewing research results:

Generally I spend a lot of time tidying up the language and reviewing it and extracting people's personal opinions from the [data]. The tendency [is]...to state

what the data says and then give an explanation “This is because...” but the explanation isn’t actually in the data, it’s just a researcher’s view of that.

One possible strategy to offset confirmation bias may be to map and record one’s own perceptions and ideas at an early stage, possibly even before the descriptive stage of analysis. This can serve as a reminder of what these ideas were and to invite self-reflection on whether they have become unduly dominant in the analysis. Avoiding bias in interpretation also requires looking at assumptions in the data and how this may influence the findings. As one quantitative TIP researcher explained:

...we don’t adequately look at our data assumptions and look to see problems in the data and how that might impact our outcomes or findings. I think that often is overlooked in research in general. So testing statistical assumptions, doing a good sweep of the data and the data cleaning process, doing data quality checks, random data checks to ensure that certain items match up. [...] In the analysis, [we need to] be really vigilant about checking the distribution of data, those preliminary analyses before you get to more complex or multi-varied analysis.

Data may also be **misrepresented** (that is, when analysts omit data that does not support their hypothesis or overall objective or even when analysts fabricate data that was lost or interrupted to align with their results.) While some examples of misrepresentation would constitute fraudulent research and are serious transgressions, other practices may be in more of a grey area but nonetheless impact the integrity and truthfulness of the research. One common criticism against qualitative research is that it is vulnerable to subjective interpretations. And the inclusion and omission of data is, to a large extent, a matter of subjective assessments of relevance. Analysts may be tempted only to use data that supports their research hypothesis and set aside or omit data that does not. In some cases, analysts may discredit data that does not support their views. As one TIP researcher noted:

Data can be the answer to a lot of things. But data can also just represent the interests of those collecting it.

Tied intimately with this type of selective reporting is selective referencing and citation, which ignores citations or prior work that challenges the findings.²³⁵ As discussed earlier in Stage #1: Design and Planning (*Review existing literature and research – Systematically review and assess relevant literature*), this is particularly important to keep in mind in the human trafficking field, which is prone to political and ideological positions on a range of

Good practice. Identify biases influencing interpretation

Be aware of biases in the interpretation process.

Train analysts to be aware of biases in the interpretation process and how to overcome them.

Be cognizant of confirmation bias.

Do not overlook patterns that contradict one’s interpretation.

Map one’s own perceptions and ideas ahead of data analysis to allow for self-reflection.

Do not discredit data that does not support one’s hypothesis.

Avoid overstating the significance of patterns and findings.

Consider one’s objectivity in the analysis process including recognizing the limits of one’s objectivity.

²³⁵ ORI (2005) ‘Data Publication and Reporting’, *Responsible Conduct in Data Management*. United States: Office of Research Integrity.

interrelated issues, including prostitution/sex work, smuggling and regular and irregular migration,²³⁶ which have, at times, influenced the construction of the TIP evidence base.²³⁷ As one TIP researcher stressed:

It is unethical to cherry-pick data that supports a particular paradigm or ideological position, while ignoring contrary data. Unfortunately, some researchers do precisely that — privileging some data over others and drawing generalizations based solely on the information that supports their preconceptions.²³⁸

Overstating and misrepresenting what patterns and findings actually mean is another problem, with significant implications for what is then understood as the knowledge base on TIP. One TIP researcher noted this poor practice:

One [poor practice] of course is misrepresentation of the findings. Causality is very, very difficult to prove under any conditions. But a lot of people misuse basic regression analysis and mistake correlation for causation. ...So the biggest challenge, I think, is actually people who know just enough to be dangerous but not enough to know why. So instead of trying to understand the larger framework that might exist, they're trying to simplify everything else into the framework that they're comfortable with, which inevitably reduces very complex and nuanced practices to things that are going to be misrepresented.

Other examples of poor practice in quantitative analysis and interpretation are **dredging the data**, which refers to analysis by several methods to find a significant result; reporting differences or lack of differences as a trend when the statistical significance is not adequate to provide a conclusion either way; and failure to include the total number of eligible participants or reporting percentages rather than absolute numbers due to small sample size.²³⁹ Converting data to percentages rather than using absolute numbers is particularly salient in the field of human trafficking, where much research is qualitative and sample sizes are small and unrepresentative. Qualitative TIP data is not uncommonly presented as percentages or without clearly reporting the specific sample size within the analysis. This then implies a stronger statistical significance than exists or indicate a trend that is not borne out by wider, more statistically significant data. Furthermore, emphasizing percentages can obscure the more qualitative aspects of the data.

²³⁶ Agustin, L. (2007) *Sex at the Margins: Migration, Labour Markets and the Rescue Industry*. London, United Kingdom: Zed Books; Brennan, D. (2008) 'Competing Claims of Victimhood? Foreign and Domestic Victims of Trafficking in the United States', *Sexuality Research & Social Policy*, 5(4), pp. 45-61; Chuang, J.A. (2010) 'Rescuing Trafficking from Ideological Capture: Prostitution Reform and Anti-Trafficking Law and Policy', *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, 158, pp. 1655-1728; Doezema, J. (2013) *Sex Slaves and Discourse Masters: The Construction of Trafficking*. London, United Kingdom: Zed Books; Feingold, D. (2014) 'Virgin territory re-explored: ethnographic insight, public policy and the trade in minority women in Southeast Asia' in Yea, S. (Ed.) *Human Trafficking in Asia: Forcing Issues*. Oxon, United Kingdom: Routledge, pp. 81-100; Jacobsen, C.M. and M.L. Skilbrei (2010) '“Reproachable Victims”? Representations and Self-representations of Russian Women Involved in Transnational Prostitution', *Ethnos Journal of Anthropology*, 75(2), pp. 190-212;; O'Connell Davidson, J. (2006) 'Will the Real Sex Slave Please Stand Up?', *Feminist Review*, 83, pp. 4-22; Snajdr, E. (2013) 'Beneath the master narrative: human trafficking, myths of sexual slavery and ethnographic realities', *Dialectical Anthropology*, 37(2), pp. 229-256; and Weitzer, R. (2007) 'The Social Construction of Sex Trafficking: Ideology and institutionalisation of a moral crusade', *Politics & Society*, 35(3), pp. 447-475.

²³⁷ This has, in some cases, translated into misrepresentations of trafficking and trafficking victims. See, for example, Andrijasevic, R. and N Mai (2016) 'Editorial: Trafficking (in) representations: Understanding the recurring appeal of victimhood and slavery in neoliberal times', *Anti-Trafficking Review*, 7, pp. 1-10; Andrijasevic, R. (2007) 'Beautiful Dead Bodies: Gender, Migration and Representation in Anti-Trafficking Campaigns', *Feminist Review*, 86, pp. 24-44; and Jahic, G. and J.O. Finckenauer (2005) 'Representations and Misrepresentations of Human Trafficking', *Trends in Organized Crime*, 8(3), pp. 24-40.

²³⁸ Weitzer, R. (2017) 'Foreword' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, p. viii.

²³⁹ ORI (2005) 'Data Publication and Reporting', *Responsible Conduct in Data Management*. United States: Office of Research Integrity.

An illustration of how converting data to percentages may translate into misrepresentation or overrepresentation may be found in the example of a commonly repeated statistic (in research, the media and for advocacy) about trafficked fishers exploited in one Southeast Asian country, that 59% of them had witnessed the murder of a fellow crew member. When this percentage has been used, it has not generally been contextualized as deriving from a sample size of 49 trafficked fishers (although the original paper makes this clear), nor does the presentation of this percentage note the possibility that some of these men may have been trafficked on the same vessel and thus witnessed the same single murder. This is similar to what has been referred to as “the Woozle Effect”, which starts with one investigator who reports a finding, with the relevant qualifications (for example, that the sample was small and not generalizable), followed by a second investigator who cites the first study’s data, but without the qualifications and then others cite both reports and “the qualified data gain the status of an unqualified, generalizable truth.”²⁴⁰

Objectivity is key in avoiding biases during interpretation. This may be particularly an issue when data collection is internal (that is, part of on-going work, an internal evaluation, conducted with partners and so on). One TIP researcher working on analysis of internal case management data discussed the importance of being objective while always recognizing and working to address the potential for bias in the interpretation of findings:

We are doing our data analysis in house for cost-saving purposes. I try to be objective and other analysts try to be objective. We use a social science method of looking for everything and then interpreting versus just looking for the hypothesis of what we want. But of course, there’s a potential bias there because it’s an internal check. That’s why we are instituting a dual review process for any internal data analysis, where another analyst on the team reviews the other’s work, just to avoid any possible issue there.

Similarly, one National Rapporteur noted that her position within and reporting to the government did have the potential to introduce bias in the interpretation of findings:

I’m an employee of a governmental institution, the Ministry of the Interior. So my reports can be considered a bit subjective. I’m responsible for trafficking issues [for some years] and my experience becomes richer and I’ve become more brave to speak, to criticize, not to hide weaknesses and gaps. I’m quite brave to acknowledge our problems on a national level and I’m trying to identify gaps and weaknesses.

The model of an independent National Rapporteur, external to the government, offers a means of enhancing objectivity and offsetting potential bias. As one National Rapporteur argued:

I do think that the independent nature of a national rapporteur helps to have better data and also a more critical way of looking at the way your country fights human trafficking. ...Parliamentarians use my report to control the ministers, the government, because they know that my data are correct. And if they don’t understand them [the data], they can call and the data will be explained [to them].

²⁴⁰ The “Woozle Effect” originates from the field of domestic violence. The creation of “woozles” happens when language changes from qualified (“it may”, “it might”, “it could”) to absolute form (“it is”), firming up language and introducing ideas and views not held by an original author or supported by evidence. Gelles, R.J. and M.A. Straus (1988) *Intimate Violence*. New York, United States: Simon and Schuster, p. 28; Dutton, D.G. (2006) *Rethinking Domestic Violence*. Vancouver, Canada: UBC Press; and Weiner, N.A. and N. Hala (2008) *Measuring Human Trafficking: Lessons from New York City*. New York, United States: Vera Institute, pp. 8-11. To a large extent the UNESCO project described in footnote 60 was an early effort to identify “woozles” in the TIP field.

There are myriad ways that data may be misinterpreted, misused and misrepresented. Analysts should be trained to be aware of potential biases and how to overcome them in the interpretation process. And, as noted above (see *Identify and describe relevant patterns in data*), a helpful means of addressing bias in interpretation is **analyst triangulation** whereby different analysts (or different teams of analysts) are involved in analyzing the data, offering different perspectives on the same dataset and validating one another's analysis.

In summary: Some biases emerge from the process of interpretation, including the role of the analyst. This includes, for instance, confirmation bias (the tendency to look for patterns in data that confirm preconceived notions about connections and explanations) as well as the possibility of overlooking patterns that may disprove or fail to support preconceived ideas, or simply not looking for them. Other issues include data being misrepresented (such as when analysts omit data that does not support their hypothesis or overall objective) or when analysts fabricate data that was lost or interrupted to align with their results. Analysts may also discredit data that does not support their views. Data may also be overrepresented, when overstating what patterns and findings mean. Objectivity is key in avoiding biases in the analysis process; this requires recognizing the limits of one's own objectivity. Analysts should be trained to be aware of potential biases and how to overcome them in the interpretation process.

Interpret meaning across languages

Working with translated data poses challenges when interpreting findings. This is particularly a concern in qualitative studies and when seeking to explore more conceptually complex issues. This requires considering whether there is any alternative explanation or interpretation of a statement due to translation. Misinterpretation of a single word can change the meaning and significance of an entire interview. For example, when interviewing a young woman for a trafficking study on victim assistance she was recorded in the first interview as having said “my family pushed me to accept assistance”, taken to mean that the family had wanted and encouraged the woman to seek out assistance. In the second interview, however, it became clear that what the woman had meant was that her family had treated her so badly that they *drove her* to seek assistance and that they had been very negative about her decision to seek help. This was the opposite of how this information was initially understood.

Translation is also an issue in quantitative data interpretation, not least when there are translations into several languages. As discussed in Stage #1: Design and Planning (*Formulate data collection questions*), terms and concepts can be difficult to translate so that they have identical meaning in different languages. Comparing data from different language data sources can, therefore, be complicated and should be done with some caution before drawing conclusions about differences between national or ethnic groups.

A related issue in research that involves several national or ethnic groups is the possibility of systematic cultural differences in how questions are answered. The tendency to answer “yes” (or in the affirmative) or to select the extreme values on a scale (for example, whether one is “extremely satisfied” or “extremely

Good practice. Interpret meaning across languages

Review translated data for misinterpretations or alternative explanations.

Exercise caution when making conclusions about differences based on data from different language sources.

Consider translation as an issue in quantitative data interpretation.

unsatisfied” with services) may also vary between different ethnicities and nationalities.²⁴¹ Similarly, questions about culturally sensitive topics (for example, mental health) may translate with varying degrees of accuracy into the corresponding terms in different languages. This can produce systematically different results that may have more to do with language or concepts and less with real difference.

All of these issues should have been considered during the development of the data collection tools (see Stage #2: Data Collection, *Select, design and test data collection tools – Design new data collection tools*), but are nonetheless not always possible to avoid or address at that stage. Being aware of limitations at the analysis stage helps avoid unduly strong assumptions and conclusions about differences between groups.

In summary: It is important to be aware of the additional challenges that exist when working with and interpreting translated data. This requires reviewing translated data for misinterpretations or alternative explanations. It also requires caution when drawing conclusions about differences based on data from different language sources. Interpreting translated data is as an issue in both qualitative and quantitative studies and projects.



Validate findings

Having described and interpreted the data, it is then necessary to validate the findings. Engaging with stakeholders and end users on the validation of findings can be an important part of the data collection effort. It is a means of quality assurance and affords stakeholders and end users the opportunity to offer alternative understandings and explanations that may not have been identified in the interpretation or addressed in the analysis. It offers an opportunity to present and explain the data collection objectives and results to stakeholders and end users in a constructive way, before the findings are formally released. It is also a way to ensure that key stakeholders and end users have access to and are aware of the data collection effort’s findings, either by reading the outputs ahead of a validation session, or by learning about the findings as part of a meeting. This is no small benefit given the information overload with which most practitioners and policymakers necessarily grapple.

There are different ways that validation may take place, depending on the nature of the TIP data collection effort as well as those involved. Validation may be done early on in the analysis, to inform the analytical process and inform findings. Validation may also take place at a later stage, in relation to the final results and findings. It might involve engaging with data sources when the data collection is about their personal or professional experiences or with data providers when data collection is about their professional work. TIP experts might also be engaged to draw from their knowledge and experience in relation to the data collection question and topic, at various stages of the project. For example, one National Rapporteur described how the office shares its analysis with TIP experts and academics as a means of reviewing and validating results:

²⁴¹ Hamamura, T., S. Heine and D. Paulhus (2008) ‘Cultural differences in response styles: The role of dialectical thinking’, *Personality and Individual Differences*, 44(4), pp. 932-942; Hui, C.H. and H.C. Triandis (1989) ‘Effects of culture and response format on extreme response style’, *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 20(3), pp. 296-309; and Johnson, T. et al. (2005) ‘The relation between culture and response styles: Evidence from 19 countries’, *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 36(2), pp. 264-277.

We give the text to somebody else [a TIP practitioner] to read and to provide comments. ...those people who we are monitoring are often those people who also know the best about legislation and would be the best to be consulted. ...when we published our [past] report, we gave it to some professors to read and comment [on] our text.

Similarly, one TIP researcher involved in quantitative studies described consulting with a working group of statisticians as part of the validation process:

...we always conduct our initial analysis and then bring it to an expert working group of master statisticians. We will look through the numbers, [they will] crunch with us, come up with different ideas. ...And we often have to have discussions about how and why to do things. But we really rely on our expert colleagues to help us weigh in on that. ...We regularly subject ourselves to public scrutiny and critique.

Good practice. Validate findings

Engage with end users to validate findings.

Consider the parameters of the validation process, including how feedback will be used.

Consider the weight to be given to the feedback of those involved.

Allocate time and resources to the validation process from the outset.

Another TIP researcher engaging in applied research on victim services described mid-term and end-of-project consultations to review the findings and also engaging stakeholders and end users in formulating recommendations:

There was a midterm meeting and [another at the end] where our partners and shelter managers got together and were discussing the results, interim results, but also how it was going, implementation issues that were fed back. We hadn't written the recommendations at this point. ...whenever we do recommendations for reports or for studies, it's usually done with our partners or our partners actually write the recommendations bearing in mind the quantitative data that we've analyzed. ...our partners have very significant input into the recommendations... And then we come back and refine it.

Determining who are appropriate stakeholders to assist in the validation process will differ from project to project. For example, some researchers or data collectors may have theoretical knowledge that will be important in academic research but lack practical, field experience of TIP or the anti-trafficking response which may be needed for more applied research. In this latter case, data validation may be better done in partnership with practitioners. As one TIP researcher involved in practice-oriented research noted:

I would prefer to show my data to practitioners and field people and have them help me understand the meaning.

Other approaches might include sharing preliminary findings with involved stakeholders and intended end users for written feedback; presenting findings at a consultation meeting for discussion and feedback; and so on.

Depending on the specific data collection effort, the validation processes may benefit from engagement with a range of stakeholders and end users who relate to the data collection effort in diverse ways. One researcher described sharing findings with a range of different individuals with different roles:

...[we] include people from all levels – policy, programs, people on the ground. One thing that we’ve been trying to do is... as we’re sensing themes and patterns, we then bring in the respondents themselves as much as possible. In our last study...we found some themes and patterns and because we were working directly with an implementing partner and then we actually presented that data to those people who shared the data and said, “This is what we’re finding, what do you think?” And then we took it to the implementing partners and gave them a little bit more nuanced discussion, “This is what we’re finding, what do you think?” And then we took it to funders and then we asked the same thing. ...we try to bring in as many players as possible into interacting with the data.

Part of the validation process will necessarily involve determining what weight should be given to the feedback of those involved. Some stakeholders will have a vested interest in a particular interpretation, which requires caution in how validation is approached and agreement from the outset as to what influence the validation process may (and may not) have over findings and final results. The validation process should not be used to stifle or change uncomfortable or inconvenient findings or research results. One TIP expert described the potential for conflict and disagreement in such validation processes:

In certain situations, it’s systematic that you pull together some of the stakeholders and give back some findings to them and get them to comment on them. And that sounds good. Sometimes it’s not. Sometimes that’s going to dilute and maybe even destroy some good research analysis. Because the people you’ve collected information from normally have a particularly objective assessment themselves about their own experience... I’m not thinking now about trafficked persons. I’m thinking of doing data collection among anti-trafficking organizations. ... if you go back to them and ask them to test this accuracy, they’re going to put the clock back to where they think it should be.

The parameters of the validation process should be carefully considered in advance, including how, in practice, to use feedback from those engaged in the validation process. It is also important to consider the political context in which some data collection takes place and whether, in some cases, a validation process may silence or lead to demands to change important (but uncomfortable) findings and results. In such environments, validation may need to be approached differently and with care.

Engaging in a validation process of any nature or scale implies the allocation of time and resources, which needs to be considered and anticipated from the outset. Of particular importance is ensuring that adequate time is given to those who are engaged to validate the findings, especially practitioners who will be busy with their day-to-day tasks.

In summary: Once data is described and interpreted, the findings then need to be validated. There are different types of data validation and appropriate stakeholders for validation will differ from project to project. It is important from the outset to consider the parameters of the validation process, including how feedback will be used in practice and in determining the weight to be given to the feedback of those involved. Care is needed in some settings where a validation process may be used to silence or change important (but uncomfortable) findings. Engaging in a validation process implies the allocation of time and resources, which should be considered from the outset.



Train and build capacity in data analysis

Data analysts must have the necessary skills to appropriately and ethically analyze the data. They must either have these skills when they are hired for the task or acquire them through training, capacity building and supervision. Many organizations and institutions, especially smaller ones, do not have this in house expertise to gather and write up data and may struggle to understand and explain what data means. For example, organizations collecting data about the victims they assist need to be able to analyze this data to inform their work and also to advocate for services from the government based on their assisted caseload. However, as one NGO director noted of her own organization, the staff (professional social workers, psychologists and lawyers) lack the skills to systematically analyze data, impeding their ability to effectively use the data in day-to-day work:

One of the gaps and areas that we identify as a critical one is in terms of data, in terms of research, for our own internal monitoring and evaluation, but also in terms of conducting research for advocacy. So we have collected data, we have data, but we don't have the capacity to analyze it... We're worried about not having information to raise issues. For example, we had a massive caseload of men coming back from [one country] for labor. We need to document those cases, do the research, do the analysis so that we can profile those issues and really advocate for those cases and the recognition of male trafficking victims.

Good practice. Train and build capacity in data analysis

- Ensure data analysts have the necessary skills to analyze the data.
- Ensure that analysts have appropriate skills in relation to analysis needed, the type of data collection and the staff involved.
- Develop skills in data analysis through training sessions or on-going mentoring.
- Accompany training and mentoring with handbooks and guidelines for use on an on-going basis.
- Pay attention to biases and limitations in the data when conducting data analysis.
- Train staff in the use of data analysis software.

Training and capacity building in data analysis are needed by various institutions and organizations engaged in TIP data collection. One TIP expert, who had partnered with various institutions on research and data collection, highlighted this constraint:

We've had several experiences with institutions that have been able to collect data, but not able to analyze it in a way that we would consider to be publishable or terribly usable from [our organization's] perspective. That's even beyond solely NGO partners who perhaps have slightly more excusable gaps with respect to data analysis... But much bigger institutional partners also struggle with that, including in government departments.

Similarly, one National Rapporteur-equivalent mechanism highlighted the need for training in data analysis, as her office generally produced statistics without any narrative description or analysis:

It would be good if we have some training on data analysis. It could [mean] more qualitative reports. We have some qualitative [reports], but still, we could do more if there is [training from] an expert on this data [analysis].

Different levels of skills in data analysis will be needed, depending on the nature of the analysis to be done, the type of project and the staff involved. Developing skills in data analysis can be done through training sessions, on-going mentoring as well as the secondment of researchers or researcher partnerships. Supervision will also be needed to ensure that these skills are attained and used.

Some training will be basic and not excessively time-consuming. This is especially important when engaging frontline practitioners in data analysis (for example, social workers or law enforcement) who benefit from analytical skills training, but for whom data analysis is usually an ancillary task. Data collection and analytical skills need to dovetail with the on-going work of these organizations and professionals, including in terms of available time, resources and other commitments. One TIP expert described working with civil society partners to not only concentrate on collecting project data for monitoring and evaluation but also on building analytical skills and capacity to better mobilize the data that they collect in their work:

Through training we've tried to get our partners to apply some thinking about the data they're collecting instead of just reflex collecting and reporting in progress reports to us... We try to do it in terms of disaggregated data between women and men, saying, "When you collect this data, if there's a major skew towards men, as there often is, you need to consider how you can adjust your services so that you get a greater balance". This is the kind of very basic considerations about what the data is telling them. But applying this to the data that they're collecting to support a more results-based approach is a big step that we need to continue to work on.

This can be adapted to the skill level and needs of each project as well as the specific counterparts involved. One data collection project staff member described basic level training on data analysis, in line with the project itself and the capacity of the partners implementing data collection:

There was an initial definition and [explanation of the] relevance of the variable [being analyzed]. What were the possible trends and what does it mean when a trend goes up, when a trend is constant and when a trend goes down. For each of the variables we could do something like this. But it was very, very basic. For example... border crossing... legal and illegal...then the analysis of this data is relevant to detect cases of internal trafficking ... and then we suggested to combine some indicators with other indicators. For example, to find out the rate of internal trafficking of the assisted victims. ...Very, very basic things.

Training and mentoring should also, ideally, be accompanied by handbooks and guidelines in data analysis for use and reference on an on-going basis. As the same data collection project staff member noted:

It's also important to produce guidelines on how to collect [data], what does the data mean. ...issues related to the quality of data, the validation of the data, which are very important parallel things that you have to consider.

Training in data analysis will require attention to understanding and taking into account biases and limitations in the data (for example, respondent bias and response bias) as well as biases introduced by the data analyst (for example, confirmation bias), as discussed above (*Interpret patterns and findings – Identify biases influencing interpretation*).

Training should also include attention to ethics, including the roles and responsibilities of data analysts in presenting results in a way that is respectful and safe and that adheres to the principle of “do no harm” (see *Consider ethical aspects of data analysis*, below). Further, analysis of data on TIP, like data collection, may impact on analysts’ well-being. Analysts should be oriented and trained to be aware of the potential for vicarious trauma during data analysis, particularly when analyzing sensitive and difficult data, and have access to support to deal with such issues.

Training will also be needed in the use of data analysis software, when this is to be used as part of the data collection effort. This generally requires understanding how to set up a program, enter and manage the data and also how to use the software for data analysis. Building capacity in the use of software requires time and, by extension, adequate resources. However, allocating a lot of staff time for training and capacity building may not be needed for small data collection efforts or when aiming for a basic level of analysis.

Supervision is an essential aspect of training and capacity building in relation to data analysis. This supervision may come from in house managers and researchers or from external partners and experts who, in addition to offering training and mentoring, can supervise the application of data analysis skills.

In summary: Data analysts must have the necessary skills to appropriately and ethically analyze the data. They must either have them when they are hired for the task or acquire them through training, capacity building and supervision. Time and resources should be allocated for training and capacity building in data analysis, including in the use of data analysis software, if appropriate. Developing handbooks and guidelines to accompany and reinforce training is also useful in building and maintaining capacity.



Consider ethical aspects of data analysis

Several important ethical considerations in data analysis have already been discussed above, as they are integral to analytical procedures in terms of producing **truthful and trustworthy analyses** that are open about their own limitations and possible biases and, by extension, **do not misrepresent the solidity of data, findings and conclusions**. There are also other issues to consider in terms of ethics and analysis.

The analysis stage is simultaneously the beginning of the presentation and dissemination stage. Beginning to formulate and present patterns and conclusions to answer data collection questions as part of analysis is also a process when decisions are made about how these findings and results will be presented to a broader audience.

A most pressing consideration in the analysis of data is the injunction to “**do no harm**”. It is critical to ensure fairness and respect in the representation of vulnerable and marginalized groups, including trafficking victims. The results and presentation of results should not contribute to a worsened situation for individuals that are already vulnerable or stigmatized. This does not mean that relevant data should not be analyzed, nor that relevant results should not be reported. But it is important that results and findings are conveyed with

respect for the values and attitudes of those who have responded or shared data and also to accurately and fairly represent their voices and perspectives.

A dilemma that may arise during data analysis is whether, in some cases, it is more ethical to *not include* or share certain important, central, but sensitive findings from the analysis. For example, sharing some findings may put people in danger or be detrimental to their more general well-being or have repercussions in society more generally. This can be the case, for instance, if findings are somehow stigmatizing or if they do not align with the way that respondents view themselves. On the other hand, this is not an uncomplicated determination and there is an argument to be made for the freedom of academic inquiry. One TIP researcher described facing resistance and obstacles when exploring intersections between ethnicity and prostitution and questioned the legitimacy of stifling exploration of difficult issues:

Over the last 15 years, it has happened to me more than once that people with whom I shared my research plans involving the topics of ethnicity, crime and prostitution strongly advised me to reconsider or even abandon my project, for the simple reason that they considered any combination of these issues too dangerous or too sensitive and, therefore, likely to result in negative repercussions.²⁴²

There is also a need to be explicit in defining the limitations of the data collection effort and the reasonable interpretations of the findings. This is needed to avoid or to help minimize the chance that others may focus on particular aspects of the results and misinterpret them, leading to harm for trafficking victims, families, practitioners and others.

Another ethical issue relates to how to **guard anonymity, confidentiality and privacy** in data analysis. Data analysts must take care not to include information that makes data sources identifiable to others. Breaking datasets down into very small units of analysis has the potential to compromise anonymity and privacy of respondents. This means that data analysts may need to carefully consider how many background factors (for example, the country of origin, age, gender, or region of origin) can be combined in the analysis without resulting in identification of research participants. One TIP researcher expressed her concern about how to adequately guard anonymity of respondents, both generally in the public domain as well as vis-à-vis anti-trafficking professionals who may be involved in assisting in a case:

One of the things that I've struggled with is anonymity. For example, avoiding [saying] which country or the age or just trying to murk things up so that quotes are

Good practice. Consider ethical aspects of data analysis

Assess if and how harm may result from analysis of the data.

Be open about limitations and possible biases.

Do not misrepresent data, findings and conclusions.

Consider how findings and results will be presented to a broader audience.

Ensure that the results do not contribute to a worsened situation for research participants.

Consider how to deal with sensitive issues that emerge in data analysis.

Guard anonymity and confidentiality of respondents in data analysis and presentation.

Assess if and how children may be harmed in data analysis and guard the “best interests of the child”.

²⁴² Siegel, D. (2016) 'Ethnicity, Crime and Sex Work: A Triple Taboo' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 73.

not [identifiable]. The issue that comes up is, of course, the gatekeepers who know who was interviewed may recognize the quote.

Thick description²⁴³ or the use of quotes from respondents that can be combined can also lead to cases and respondents being identifiable in the analysis. One solution might be to use compound quotes, that is, quotes constructed from different respondents, to convey a general theme. However, these must be used cautiously and transparently and can only be used in ways that do not misrepresent data. There is also a risk of adding a layer of interpretation when combining different elements, or assuming that something is typical. This is not only about how to present primary data collection from traffickers and trafficking victims (and their families and communities), but also concerns data from various other types of key informants including anti-trafficking professionals (for example, service providers, police, prosecutors and so on).

It is also important not to ascribe feelings and motivations to respondents and key informants, as discussed earlier (*Interpret the data*). Care is needed in bringing research participants' voices out in the analysis while not speaking for them, as discussed in the same section above (*Interpret the data*).

As in all previous stages of data collection, specific ethical issues and considerations may arise in terms of **guarding the “best interests of the child”**. At this stage this means, at minimum, assessing if and how children may be harmed from analysis (and subsequent presentation) of the data and putting in place procedures to address this. The needs and interests of the child supersede any needs of the data collection effort.

Another ethical consideration is the presence of any **conflict of interests** in research or data collection. For example, conflicts of interest may arise when institutions or organizations that assist trafficking victims present high numbers of victims, which then may translate into increased resources for the organization. It may also arise when research and data collection are conducted about an anti-trafficking intervention, program or organization in which the data collectors and analysts have a vested interest. Good practice in much academic publishing is the requirement to disclose any potential conflicts of interest and institutional affiliations, something which could also be applied by practitioners conducting research about their own work and activities.

Ethical issues also arise in the analysis of secondary data where it is necessary to verify the origin of the data, including whether it was collected and stored ethically and correctly and to pay attention to procedures for dealing with data to ensure these are also correct and ethical. Another issue is the need to pay attention to anomalies or discrepancies in the data and make sure to report on them accurately, not omitting data that refutes one hypothesis or assumptions.²⁴⁴

Ethical considerations must be integrated from the outset of data analysis and included in the **training and supervision of data analysts** (see above *Train and build capacity in data analysis*). It is important that all data analysts are fully aware of the responsibility that goes with data analysis. Data collection results may form the basis of policy and interventions and it is imperative that these are based on sound findings. Otherwise there is

²⁴³ Thick description refers to the detailed account of a particular human behavior in which the researcher not only describes the behavior, but also makes explicit the patterns of cultural and social relationships and puts them in context. Thick description usually includes subjective explanations and meanings provided by the people engaged in the behaviors. Geertz, C. (1973) 'Thick description. Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture' in *The Interpretation of Cultures. Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz*. New York, United States: Basic Books, pp. 3-36. See also Holloway, I. (1997) *Basic Concepts for Qualitative Research*. London, United Kingdom: Blackwell Science.

²⁴⁴ Leavy, P. (2017) *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based, and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches*. New York, United States: The Guilford Press, p. 42.

a risk that interventions and policy that result from these findings are not only unhelpful but, in the worst-case scenario, may cause harm.

A final issue that arises again at the stage of data analysis is the obligation to consider and **guard the well-being of researchers and analysts**. This is discussed above (see Stage #1: Design and Planning, *Develop or apply legal and ethical guidelines and protocols – Consider the safety and well-being of research participants and data collectors*, Stage #2: Data Collection, *Refine legal and ethical guidelines and protocols for data collection* and Stage #4: Data Analysis, *Train and build capacity in data analysis*). As is increasingly being recognized, the experience of working with and analyzing sensitive and difficult data (such as data collected with and from trafficking victims) can be taxing and traumatic and take a significant toll on the well-being of researchers and analysts. Analysts working with this data may be exposed to vicarious trauma.²⁴⁵ One researcher described this stage in data collection as extremely difficult:

The experience of analyzing the data was in many ways as disturbing as collecting it. I had to struggle constantly with my feelings at this stage, feeling that I did not want such knowledge in my consciousness... As I listened to the tapes again I began to feel reluctant about engaging with the data... [...] There was a temptation to fast-forward the tape and to collude in the denial of the abuse these young people had experienced. In many ways, it was more difficult to ‘manage’ my feelings at this stage of the project than it had been during the fieldwork stage, not least, because my distress at re-visiting the data took me by surprise. I had expected that distance from the field would enable me to examine the data without the emotions that had accompanied the collection of it. Perhaps because of the difficult emotional labour involved in suppressing the feelings that I experienced during the fieldwork I had little energy left for performing this type of labour at the analysis stage of the project.²⁴⁶

Data analysts, like data collectors, may require support to deal with the impact of this difficult and potentially traumatizing work, which implies the need to allocate resources for support. The emotional costs of collecting and analyzing TIP may be aggravated by the practical constraints of limited time and resources.²⁴⁷ Ensuring that TIP research is done in an appropriate way, with adequate time and resources, then is also an ethical issue.

²⁴⁵ Easton, H. and R. Matthews (2016) ‘Getting the Balance Right: The Ethics of Researching Women Trafficked for Commercial Sexual Exploitation’ in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 11-32; Kelly, L. and M. Coy (2016) ‘Ethics as Process, Ethics in Practice: Researching the Sex Industry and Trafficking’ in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 33-50; Lewis, H. (2016) ‘Negotiating Anonymity, Informed Consent and “Illegality”’: Researching Forced Labour Experiences Among Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK’ in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, pp. 99-116; Melrose, M. (2002) ‘Labour pains: Some considerations on the difficulties of researching juvenile prostitution’, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 4(4), pp. 333-351; Rothman, E.F. et al. (2018) ‘Ethical and Practical Considerations for Collecting Research-Related Data from Commercially Exploited Children’, *Behavioral Medicine*, 44(3), pp. 250-258; and Warden, T. (2013) ‘Feet of clay: confronting emotional challenges in ethnographic experience’, *Journal of Organizational Ethnography*, 2(2), pp. 150-172.

²⁴⁶ Melrose, M. (2002) ‘Labour pains: Some considerations on the difficulties of researching juvenile prostitution’, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 4(4), pp. 347-348.

²⁴⁷ Melrose, M. (2002) ‘Labour pains: Some considerations on the difficulties of researching juvenile prostitution’, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 4(4), pp. 349; and Rothman, E.F. et al. (2018) ‘Ethical and Practical Considerations for Collecting Research-Related Data from Commercially Exploited Children’, *Behavioral Medicine*, 44(3), p. 255.

In summary: A pressing consideration in data analysis is to “do no harm” and to ensure fairness and respect in the representation of trafficking victims. The results and presentation of results should not contribute to a worsened situation for groups that are already vulnerable or stigmatized. The “best interests of the child” should remain a primary consideration during data analysis. There is also a need to be explicit in defining the limitations of the study and the reasonable interpretations of the findings, to help minimize the chance that others may focus on particular aspects of the results and misinterpret them, leading to harm for victims and others. Anonymity, confidentiality and privacy also need to be protected in data analysis. In some cases, it may be more ethical to not include and share sensitive findings from the analysis when doing so may put people in danger, or be detrimental to their more general well-being, or have repercussions in society more generally. Ethical considerations must be integrated from the outset of data analysis and included in the training and supervision of data analysts.

Stage #5. Data Use, Presentation and Dissemination



Target appropriate audiences, including differentiated outputs for different groups

- Assess consumption patterns of different target audiences and/or end users
- Differentiate outputs for different target audiences and/or end users
- Include research participants as target audience



Select presentation formats and language

- Provide a clear presentation of methods including limitations
- Ensure accessibility of findings and results
- Consider data display and visual presentation
- Tailor and target recommendations
- Ensure findings are accessible in multiple languages



Identify different media and platforms to maximize impact and reach

- Identify relevant media and platforms
- Assess and address constraints in dissemination media
- Consider resources and capacity for effective communication



Ensure access to outputs



Consider ethics in data use, presentation and dissemination

- Assess the ethics of sharing and not sharing research
- Consider ethics of representation and misrepresentation
- Ensure anonymity, confidentiality, privacy and safety
- Determine just attribution of contribution
- Guard the “best interests of the child” in data use, presentation and dissemination



Measure reach and impact



Stage #5. Data Use, Presentation and Dissemination

Data use, presentation and dissemination refers to the ways that data or research findings are used, presented and disseminated to interested persons, organizations or institutions. The honest and accurate use, presentation and dissemination of data and research findings are an essential step of any data collection effort.²⁴⁸ Inaccurate data reporting and publishing negatively influence the evidence base. This can lead to ill-conceived programs and policies, which impact anti-trafficking work (including criminal justice responses and the development of protective measures) as well as the lives of trafficking victims and their families. Poor data use, presentation and dissemination also threaten to compromise the credibility of the anti-trafficking field more broadly.

Data about trafficking in persons may be used for any number of purposes, including to:

- educate anti-trafficking stakeholders on specific issues;
- inform decision-makers;
- educate and raise awareness among the general public;
- make findings and knowledge available to other researchers;
- advocate on the issue;
- request funding for a specific program or policy;
- monitor and evaluate trafficking trends and responses.

Intended use, as noted above, impacts what information is shared, how the information is conveyed and to whom. Of critical importance is that the data is presented and disseminated such that it is available to and used by intended end users. The way in which one presents and disseminates findings can determine whether, how and to what extent that information is used by different stakeholders and end users, and by extension, the impact that the data collection effort has in terms of the TIP knowledge base and anti-trafficking responses. When asked about good practice in TIP research and data collection, one TIP researcher focused on the importance of data use:

[It is important to] use the research to talk to governments and NGOs and the UN and employers. Because what's the point of doing it if the research isn't going to affect any change?

However, this also requires the engagement of a range of possible end users (for example, practitioners, policymakers, researchers and so on) to use the findings. Too often TIP data and findings are not accessed and applied in practice. One TIP researcher pointed to the lack of evidence underpinning most anti-trafficking interventions:

²⁴⁸ Marco, C. and G. Larkin (2000) 'Research Ethics: Ethical Issues of Data Reporting and the Quest for Authenticity', *Academic Emergency Medicine*, 7(6), p. 693.

[I]nterventions continue to be designed and funded largely based upon donor foreign policy agendas—and the outsized supply of anti-trafficking organizations that are available to implement them—rather than results-based decision-making on what works.²⁴⁹

There has also been inadequate attention to and investment in analyzing and using TIP data to inform policy and practice. One TIP expert pointed to this gap:

...there is such a focus generally on collecting the data. There is not that additional focus on either analyzing it or then using it in any kind of programmatic intervention... We're all looking at collection, collection, collection. Whereas the leveraging from what [information] we've got is not [treated] as nearly as important.

“We need authors to better understand data and its usage. We also need publishers to verify data, identify errors and misuse and strengthen editorial and peer review processes to ensure accuracy and credibility. Academic and peer reviewed books that rely on unsubstantiated estimates are a special cause for concern. Academic researchers have a professional responsibility to present data based on sound methodology”.

TIP researcher

Until the anti-trafficking field commits to the need for, and to the use of, a more evidence-based approach, data collection will remain a largely reflexive exercise, hindering the ability of anti-trafficking practitioners and policymakers to act and react appropriately. Thus, enhancing data use should be a significant priority in the anti-trafficking field as a whole.

Dissemination strategies should be considered, planned for and budgeted for at the outset in the design and planning stage (Stage #1) and then adjusted as needed. Adequate resources should be set aside for data use, presentation and dissemination, as well as for necessary training and supervision in these tasks. The need for training and mentoring is particularly likely in small organizations or for small data collection activities, which are less likely to have in house capacity. In other cases, data use, presentation and dissemination will be undertaken in partnership with colleagues in a communications or media department or sub-contracted to a professional company with this specific expertise.

Steps and considerations in data use, presentation and dissemination

The steps of this final stage depend on the precise nature and scope of TIP data collection undertaken. While the steps will vary, the following points constitute some of the main features and tasks involved in data use, presentation and dissemination.

²⁴⁹ Harkins, B. (2017) ‘Constraints to a Robust Evidence Base for Anti-Trafficking Interventions’, *Anti-Trafficking Review*, 8, pp. 113-130. The same issue of the *Anti-Trafficking Review*, entitled *Where’s the Evidence?* included articles that pointed to examples of anti-trafficking policies and interventions being designed without evidence and, in another cases, in spite of evidence. For example, Huschke, S. and E. Ward (2017) ‘Stopping the Traffick? The problem of evidence and legislating for the ‘Swedish model’ in Northern Ireland’, *Anti-Trafficking Review*, 8, pp. 16-33; Millar, H., T. O’Doherty and K. Roots (2017) ‘A Formidable Task: Reflections on obtaining legal empirical evidence on human trafficking in Canada’, *Anti-Trafficking Review*, 8, pp. 34-49; and Molinari, N. (2017) ‘Intensifying Insecurities: The impact of climate change on vulnerability to human trafficking in the Indian Sundarbans’, *Anti-Trafficking Review*, 8, pp. 50-69. See also Harkins, B. (2017) ‘Why don’t we know if anti-trafficking initiatives work?’, *Open Democracy*.



Target appropriate audiences, including differentiated outputs for different groups. An essential aspect of data use, presentation and dissemination is to identify the specific target audiences and end users for the various outputs. Key considerations include: considering consumption patterns of different target groups; differentiating outputs for different target audiences and/or end users; and including research participants as a target audience.

Steps and considerations in data use, presentation and dissemination

- Target appropriate audiences, including differentiated outputs for different groups
- Select presentation formats and language
- Identify different media and platforms to maximize impact and reach
- Ensure access to outputs
- Consider ethics in data use, presentation and dissemination
- Measure reach and impact



Select presentation formats and language. Data may be presented and disseminated in any number of formats, but these should be appropriate for the target audience and end users and relative to the topic or theme. Key considerations include: providing a clear presentation of methods including limitations; ensuring accessibility of findings and results; incorporating displays and visual presentations; providing tailored and targeted recommendations when appropriate; and ensuring findings are accessible in multiple languages.



Identify different media and platforms to maximize impact and reach. Different platforms and media serve different purposes in terms of reaching the target audience and in terms of the nature of use and the processes and requirements for usage. Identifying which media and platforms to use to target audiences and maximize impact and reach should involve: identification of the most relevant media and platforms; considering constraints of some dissemination media, such as issues of access and other challenges; and ensuring there are resources and capacity for effective dissemination.



Ensure access to outputs. This involves considering access opportunities and constraints for the target audience. At a basic level this might be about whether the target audience and end users need hard copies or have access to a computer and the internet where they can read findings. Some types of outputs may not be accessible to some target audiences. Issues of language and language barriers are another consideration. Ensuring access to outputs should also involve sharing research results with data sources and data providers.



Consider ethics in data use, presentation and dissemination. There is an overarching ethical obligation to make data and research available to improve the knowledge base and contribute to policies and programs. Data, therefore, must not be misrepresented or misused. Other ethical issues that arise at this stage include: ethics of sharing and not sharing research; issues of representation and misrepresentation; ensuring anonymity, confidentiality, privacy and safety; and just attribution of contribution.



Measure reach and impact. It is important to measure the reach and impact of research outputs with target audiences. This might involve trying to understand the impact of data collection or research on the target audience and the extent to which it has informed the evidence base on TIP (for example, what members of the target audience have learned or what policies have been affected).

The following sections discuss each of these steps in detail, including an exploration of issues and considerations that may be faced in data use, presentation and dissemination and examples of good practice or lessons learned.



Target appropriate audiences, including differentiated outputs for different groups

An essential aspect of data use and presentation is to identify the specific target audiences or end users for the research findings and the different outputs needed as a result. This ultimately determines what outputs are produced and how the information is presented and to which audiences or end users. This also requires understanding the information consumption patterns of different target groups and the most suitable outputs for these different groups. All of this information feeds into the overall communication strategy which will need to be developed to effectively and strategically present and disseminate the research or data findings to different audiences and users.

Target appropriate audiences, including differentiated outputs for different groups

- Assess consumption patterns of different target audiences and end users)
- Differentiate outputs for different target audiences and/or end users
- Include research participants as target audience

Assess consumption patterns of different target audiences and/or end users

It is important to have a clear understanding of how different types of audiences and end users consume information, including what presentation formats are most accessible, what languages are needed and what media and platforms are best mobilized. The format (or packaging) of information and results will vary substantially between, for instance, a researcher or academic (for whom a journal article might be useful); a practitioner (who would benefit from a practical report with guidelines or specific recommendations); a policymaker (who would best be reached through a policy brief and a policy-oriented recommendations); research participants (who may prefer a brief report and/or presentation of findings); and the general public (for whom a social media post or an editorial piece (op-ed) may be most accessible.

Depending on the data collection effort, it may be necessary to further disaggregate the target audience. For example, findings tailored to practitioners may need to be further tailored to reach different types of practitioners (for example, NGO as compared to government or social workers, psychologists as compared to law enforcement and prosecutors). Equally, among researchers the presentation of applied research and more theoretical research directly informs the format and presentation. And within a professional sphere (for example, social work or medicine), different end users will range from frontline responders who will need practice guides and operational tools to policymakers who will require specific, policy-oriented findings.

Targeting one's audience also involves tailoring outputs according to important characteristics. This might include, for example, factoring in education levels, literacy, as well as different languages used within and between different target audiences. This is particularly the case when disseminating results and findings outside of typical circles of end users (for example, with trafficking victims and their families, community leaders, grassroots organizations and so on) and is discussed in further detail below (*Include research participants as target audience*). There may also be differences in terms of the country or region where data collection outputs are to be shared, in terms of what are the most suitable and accessible formats for different end users. Cultural and social norms will need to be taken into account in deciding how best to format and package findings.

Understanding one's target audience is also relevant in terms of the media and platforms that are used to disseminate research and data findings, as will be discussed in more detail below (*Identify different media and platforms to maximize impact and reach*). For instance, while in some contexts social media may be a useful way to announce new data findings or results, this may not be equally useful in other settings where social media may be less prominent among the intended audience. There may also be aspects of hierarchy, protocol and decorum that need to be borne in mind in terms of dissemination. For instance, when seeking to engage with high-level government stakeholders, a formal announcement letter with a hard copy of a research report will generally be more appropriate than announcements on various social media feeds accompanying an online, downloadable version of the research findings.

That being said, one format or medium need not preclude another. Often multiple formats and media are important and have strategic value for reaching specific audiences. But it is important to keep in mind that the use of formats, media or platforms and languages is not evenly distributed across various anti-trafficking stakeholders, who come from diverse professional backgrounds, organizational and institutional cultures as well as cultural and national groups.

Good practice. Assess consumption patterns of different target audiences and/or end users

Assess how different target audiences and end users consume information.

Identify the most suitable format and medium for the target audience(s).

Use multiple formats and media to have the greatest impact.

In summary: Different target audiences and end users consume information differently, which requires considering the most accessible presentation formats, what languages are needed and what media and platforms are best mobilized. It is, therefore, important to assess how different target audiences consume information and identify the most suitable format and medium for the target audience(s). It may be necessary and advisable to use multiple formats and media to have the greatest impact.

Differentiate outputs for different target audiences and/or end users

There is an urgent need to enhance research dissemination and use to, in turn, advance the field. As one TIP researcher argued:

The dissemination of research needs to be [enhanced]. This is the field where many government bodies and NGOs really have a need for research-based knowledge. It's important to disseminate research in the way that makes it available to broad audiences. At the same time, [there is] a need for dedicated scholarships, scholarly

investment in trafficking which might be more theoretical, therefore, not as easily accessible for policymakers or social workers throughout the world. I think that kind of a two-fold dissemination strategy is necessary.

The same data collection effort may be relevant for various target audiences and end users, each of which may approach the issue from different perspectives and with different priorities. It is, therefore, important to consider whether it is possible and useful to different outputs to present results and findings to different audiences or end users. Some research may need to be tailored in terms of its format and presentation depending on whether it is targeting an academic audience or practitioners. For example, analysis of how the criminal justice system functions may be presented in a journal article directed at an academic audience, such as law professors and students. The results may also be relevant to criminal justice practitioners working directly on these issues and, as such, can be reworked (for example, with a different focus writing style or tone) to share practice-relevant information in a guidebook or practitioners report. Findings could also be shared with lawmakers in the form of a policy brief. Thus, it is valuable to consider how the material from any data collection effort may be made relevant and accessible for different practice and policy responses as well as in building knowledge generally. This involves meeting the information and knowledge needs of various audiences working on the issue from different angles. As one TIP researcher highlighted:

The big difference between academic research that you publish in the peer review journal and an NGO report is really the audience. The academic journals will be read by a few scholars and maybe policymakers, while the NGO's report, you are appealing ideally to global audiences. [...] The same datasets and the same methodologies but you tailor the results in the way that is more intellectually appealing to the different audiences out there.

As such, in many ways use, presentation and dissemination involve an adjustment not of *what* data and findings are being shared and presented, but rather of *how* and *where* they are presented. As one TIP expert noted, making research accessible is key:

It's good to have publications that are really accessible. I've seen that [one organization] has produced in the past couple of years different formats of sharing data and I think that is great because people can access different formats and quantities and qualities of information. It's good to have a very clear idea about the target group and tailor the research reports or whatever you produce accordingly...to reach the right people.

In reflecting on one research project, researchers noted how their focus on targeting results to policymakers meant that they paid insufficient attention to communities from which the data was collected:

We acknowledge that we did not adequately ask ourselves about the latter [the communities from which data was collected], in particular about ways to work more

Good practice. Differentiate outputs for different target audiences and/or end users

Identify the relevant target audiences for the results or findings.

Identify what formats and outputs suit the different audiences.

Present results and findings in different outputs with different intended audiences.

Target different audiences and users with results, tailoring for each audience.

Tailor results even when sharing data internally within an organization to ensure uptake.

with our researchers in order to identify and provide some kind of return to the local organisations and their respective networks that turned out to have a key part in facilitating our peer/community research methodology.²⁵⁰

Differentiating outputs does, however, imply time and resources that may not always be available. There is, for example, a tension between publishing academically and for practice and it may be possible to only publish in one format. One TIP researcher described her own dilemma in this regard:

When I went into academia my intention was to develop this dual stream of publications. One that is more scholarly publications and then a second that's more for practitioners. It sounds nice in theory to do that because in order for the findings to be used, it needs to be adapted to the target audience. But it also takes a lot of time to do that. And, honestly, as much as I wanted to do that, it's actually been hard for me to do it in practice because it's just so time consuming, taking the same findings and then crafting the way it's presented to these different audiences so that it is accessible to these different groups of people.

Some data collection is for internal use within an organization or an institution, rather than for widespread public distribution (such as monitoring the implementation of programs or policies, internal data collection within a network of partners or for donor reporting). This, then, also requires tailoring to the organizational or institutional environment and the needs of sometimes different end users within these. Formats and presentation are likely to be dictated by internal procedures for data presentation and perhaps also, in some instances, by administrative requirements. Nonetheless, it is still important to make sure that data is presented in the way best suited for the target audience and indeed for different audiences and end users within an organization or institution. How best to share operational information with frontline responders will differ from how best to share information with higher-level executives within an institution or policymakers. Both target audiences are vital recipients of the data and research, making it important to tailor outputs accordingly.

In summary: The same data collection effort may be relevant to various actors or institutions, making it important to present results and findings in various outputs with different intended audiences. This involves identifying relevant target audiences for the results or findings, including what specific formats and outputs suit the different audiences and then tailoring outputs for each audience. Such tailoring is also needed when data collection is for internal use within an organization or an institution.

Include research participants as target audience

Good practice means sharing the results and findings with those who have participated in and contributed to the research or data collection activity, in line with their interests and needs. This includes data sources (those who have provided information and data) as well as data providers (those who have facilitated access to data sources). As one TIP researcher highlighted:

... what is important is that you bring back to the people who have contributed to your report the results of your research. That's another ethical issue that is important.

²⁵⁰ Scott, S. and A. Geddes (2016) 'Ethics, Methods and Moving Standards in Research on Migrant Workers and Forced Labour' in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, p. 129.

This will require tailoring how an output is presented to the target audience or audiences. As one TIP researcher explained:

[Often the data] doesn't come back in any way to a local population, [who] may be participating in the research and whose, [for whom] the social benefits of that study may be useful. But they never hear about it because it's in a language that they don't understand and it's written in a way that cites things like "P values and intervals and regressions and multifactorial analysis" and they [think], "What does that mean?"

Determining the best ways to present data to different target audiences may be usefully based on consultation with end users themselves. One TIP researcher described trying out different ways of presenting findings, including engaging different stakeholders in discussions of how best to present data:

...the first few studies we realized that what we ended up doing is just creating a report. ... that document makes sense to only those types of people who would pick up a 50-60-page document and read it. It only makes sense to those people who are literate... The more academic it is, the more academic of an audience that tends to read it. And we realized

that, in doing that, we were alienating a lot of players who really needed this data. So as time has gone on we've been sitting down and [thinking about this]... we've been trying to create infographics, dealing with images, dealing with various ways of digesting the massive amounts of data we've been collecting. We'll usually do multiple presentations; we'll do something like an information sheet for practitioners who are not going to sit down and read a 60-page report. We'll do a more visual type thing for people that are maybe on the ground in vulnerable communities. [...] in order to do that it has been necessary to bring in as diverse of characters as possible – so people from the ground, practitioners, people from policy level – and actually hearing different perspectives and visualizing what we've learned in different ways so that we can represent it differently. And that's been really, really important. I don't think we have figured it out yet. But we're trying!

Different suggestions about how to present research results were made by some of the trafficking victims we have interviewed in Southeast Europe, the FSU and Southeast Asia. Many respondents were not interested in formal reports, seeing these as too academic and out of step with their capacities and interests. One older woman, trafficked from Moldova for begging, said: "No [I am not interested in the report]. I am old and I am not good at studies". Another Moldovan trafficking victim, a young man trafficked for labor, was also uncomfortable with formal reports: "I don't know [what format would be best]. I haven't read any books in a long time". The suggestion from another Moldovan trafficking victim, a young woman exploited for labor, was that any material needed to be simple and clear:

...it definitely has to be written in simple words. When I stayed at the shelter, I had read some books about the statistics of trafficking in human beings, but I could understand very little.

Good practice. Include research participants as target audience

Share findings with research participants (data sources and data providers).

Tailor outputs to be accessible to research participants.

Make findings available in the language of research participants (data sources and data providers).

Consider alternative media to share findings with research participants (data sources and data providers).

Many victims were interested in the results and suggested various other formats including: “in the form of suggestions for improving the existing system of assistance”; “as an outline or brief with conclusions”; “in the form of recommendations and guidelines”; and so on. Some victims preferred having the findings presented and discussed with them, as various trafficking victims suggested:

I want the results of the research to be explained to me because I don’t understand anything in ‘clever’ words, expressions and books. (Woman from Moldova trafficked for sexual exploitation)

I hope I will have work and not time to read reports. But we can have a coffee together and you can tell me what it has. (Albanian man trafficked for labor)

Yes, I am interested [in the research results]. You can call me on my telephone and tell me. Just please ask me if I can speak. Or you can tell [the NGO] and they will bring me the information. (Woman from Kosovo trafficked for sexual exploitation)

By contrast, other respondents were interested in receiving and reading a copy of the research report:

Yes, I am interested, I can freely be contacted through the [assistance] organization. (Woman from Kosovo trafficked for forced marriage)

Yes, you can deliver the research results to [the NGO] and they will give me. (Woman from Kosovo trafficked for sexual exploitation)

Yes, you can contact me. I am interested in the results. (Serbian woman trafficked for begging and forced marriage)

Within one project, different respondents may be more or less interested in receiving information and findings. For example, 13 of 32 victims interviewed in one study in Moldova were interested in seeing the research report. Said one Moldovan man trafficked for labor: “Yes, if possible, [I would like to receive] the report”. Similarly, one Moldovan woman, trafficked for labor, stated: “Yes [I would like to receive the report] because I want to know the opinions of research organizers about the answers, which I provided here”. The other 19 respondents were more ambivalent in spite of seeing the research as worthwhile. One woman, trafficked for sexual exploitation, was supportive of the research itself and the idea of including victims as respondents but ambivalent about the results:

No [I don’t want to see the results]. I am sure you will use it adequately. Yes, I think [this research] is very significant for victims themselves. It is important that you take our opinion into account.

Similarly, one man trafficked from Moldova noted:

No [I don’t want to see the results]. I don’t have time to read written information. [...] I do [think the research is useful] because it is important that all people understand that men are also exploited and that they need assistance as well.

When research or data collection has involved vulnerable persons, such as trafficking victims, a feedback process may be practically challenging (for example, requiring time and resources when respondents are geographically dispersed). Feeding back research results may also be ethically complicated, particularly when victims have moved on with their lives and may not wish to think about past trafficking experiences. Sharing research results with some respondent target groups may also be risky, not least when victims have returned to

live in their home communities and when victims' families and communities don't know about their TIP experiences. One trafficked man from Myanmar asked not to be contacted again after the interview was completed because he feared that this would draw the attention of the local police, which concerned him as he had migrated illegally when trafficked.

Decisions around feeding the results of data collection back to respondents need to be considered on a case-by-case basis and in line with the self-expressed interests of respondent target groups. Nonetheless, as one TIP researcher noted, it is important that this option is at least considered and explored:

There may be certain instances where we can't go back in and disseminate that directly because of the risks of doing that with the local population. But at least the question is asked and it calls upon researchers not to take a default position, which is to say we don't have to do anything or the publication itself will be sufficient.

How to ensure access to research results or data collection outputs is further discussed below (*Ensure access to outputs*).

Research participants may also be key informants including different types of stakeholders from government and NGOs, such as social workers, lawyers, law enforcement and psychologists. How to feedback to these groups will depend on the specific data collection effort but may be through formal reports or through presentations and round table discussions. Nonetheless, while most practitioners and policymakers appreciate a formal report, many also appreciate the option of a shorter and easier to read version, like a practitioners' guide or policy brief. Presentations and workshops may also be valued, particularly when a more interactive format allows for discussion and inquiry as well as feedback on the findings. For on-going data collection efforts, such as those implemented by National Rapporteurs, the process of feeding back and engaging with data providers is often on-going and reciprocal, with data providers feeding into the databases and data systems and then receiving feedback through reports and meetings, including opportunities to comment on and clarify findings.

In summary: It is good practice to share the results and findings of data collection with research participants – data sources (those who have provided information and data) as well as data providers (those who have facilitated access to data sources), which may require tailoring the presentation of outputs in ways that are accessible to each target audience. This might involve considering alternative media to share findings with these target audiences. It will also be important to make findings available in the language of research participants.



Select presentation formats and language

Data may be presented and disseminated in any number of formats (for instance as reports, research papers, journal articles, books or book chapters, policy briefs, presentations, videos or film, maps, interactive visualizations, infographics, or artistic productions). Presentation requires selecting the appropriate format for the main target audience and/or end user and relative to the topic or theme. For instance, research and data with an academic orientation

will require a different presentation of analysis (and also a different means of dissemination) from practitioner- or policy-oriented research and data). As one TIP researcher noted:

We need to focus on what questions we are hoping to answer or what problems we are hoping to solve and then figure out what kind of data that generates. And then from there [we need to] find a way to express that data in a way that is accessible to policymakers or to NGOs offering services or whatever.

Select presentation formats and language

- Provide a clear presentation of methods including limitations
- Ensure accessibility of findings and results
- Consider data display and visual presentation
- Tailor and target recommendations
- Ensure findings are accessible in multiple languages

Knowing the target audience, as discussed in the previous section (*Target appropriate audiences, including differentiated outputs for different groups*), is important in identifying how best to share information and results in the most accessible way. For instance, lengthy written reports will likely not be read (at least not in full) by people with limited time or who have a diverse portfolio of work. This may then require accompanying such reports with an executive summary and a conclusion that accurately summarizes the findings, as these may be the only sections read by many and, therefore, need to capture nuance while, at the same time, simplifying the overarching report.

Alternative formats that may better align with an end user's available time or professional background merit consideration. This might include organizational or institutional reports and studies, policy briefs, practitioner reports, summary reports or executive summaries, issue and working papers, blog posts or online articles, among others. As one TIP researcher explained, the selection of the format is tied intimately with the target audience(s):

Depending on the audience, where you publish will be really different. There's definitely a place for academic journal articles that are peer reviewed... But if we're trying to change practice in terms of what practitioners are doing or what funders are funding, then journal articles are not the way to go. There's definitely a bit of a hierarchy and although there's some great publications that are written by NGOs, published by NGOs, they're not always given the same weight as an academic journal article and I think that's an issue. Data use needs to hit all of those different levels. If you've got a piece of research it needs to have an academic article, it needs to have a report for practitioners, it perhaps should have a report for [respondents], you might consider doing a blog, you might consider doing a short video.

Regardless of the presentation format(s) selected, there are nonetheless some important considerations regarding high quality presentation of data and results. These include: providing a clear presentation of methods including limitations; ensuring the accessibility of findings and results; considering data display and visual presentations; offering tailored and targeted recommendations, when appropriate; and ensuring findings are accessible in multiple languages.

Provide a clear presentation of methods including limitations

A description of the data collection approach and method should be included at the outset of any presentation of results and findings. This should include information about what data was collected, who or what were the data sources, how data was collected, when and where data was collected as well as what definitions were used and the legal and ethical procedures followed. The methods section theoretically should allow another researcher to duplicate the

data collection activity. Clearly explaining research methods and the data collection process is good practice, as one researcher noted:

[Good practice is] ...in the reports, publications, describing the findings of the study, that there's a very clear, detailed description of the methodology. ...there are a lot of reports from research projects on human trafficking but there's very little detail about the methods. And so it's very hard to understand where did that data come from. [It is good practice] to be rigorous in the research design and implementation but also to be very intentional about disseminating details of that research process.

This also requires explaining what the data does and does not mean, to ensure that the information is read and understood correctly. And yet there is tendency among some organizations to promote results and findings without mentioning the various limitations and caveats included in the original study. This may be particularly important when it comes to explaining data to the media and general public and in relation to prevalence studies which tend to be widely reported, but often insufficiently contextualized. But it is also an issue with other datasets and data collection projects. One TIP researcher described one data collection initiative where victim data was a combination of formally identified and “possible” trafficking victims (for example, calls to a hotline, or cases suspected by service providers). While each dataset was potentially illuminating, the blurring of the categories complicated any presentation of who were victims in the country:

Good practice. Provide a clear presentation of methods including limitations

Describe the research approach and method at the outset.

Be clear about what data does (and does not) mean.

Present limitations and challenges faced with the approach and method.

...we have on an annual basis the reports on the number of victims that are registered by...an organization that does the central registration. But you really have to look into how these data are composed and how these figures are collected. And then you find out that not all the registration does refer to [an identified victim], or might not refer to, a victim of trafficking. It can also be that a doctor is asking for some assistance or some advice, because he thinks a person might be at risk or in danger. That's not necessarily a case of trafficking, [but] these are registered as well and these are included in the figures on possible victims of trafficking.

Including the limitations and challenges of a research method or approach is critically important in understanding the findings of any data collection project and in advancing the TIP data collection methods and approaches. As one TIP researcher noted:

[Data collectors] may not be as transparent about the challenges that they've experienced...if we're going to understand or identify what works and what doesn't, we really need to fully understand the challenges to using certain methods or analytic techniques in conducting the research itself. But I do think that in an increasingly high-pressure world to produce research ...sometimes being transparent about limitations could get put aside. Because there's this greater pressure to produce something that could be used to inform a legislative platform.

In summary: Any presentation of results and findings should include a description of the approach and method used for the data collection process or research, including challenges and limitations. This requires explaining what the data does and does not mean, to ensure that the information is read and understood correctly.

Ensure accessibility of findings and results

While the style of writing and presentation may be more technical for certain specialized audiences, it is important nonetheless that findings remain clear and accessible to as wide an audience as possible, including beyond the sphere of TIP or research experts. This accessibility is essential in better communicating what data means to ensure that there is an accurate TIP knowledge base and to support anti-trafficking practitioners and policymakers in designing interventions accordingly.

Results and findings should be presented with an explanation of terms and concepts to ensure a common understanding of what is being discussed. Part of clear and accessible language is clarity around definitions, presenting information in as precise a way as possible. As discussed in Stage #1: Design and Planning (*Formulate data collection questions*), precise and clear definitions are critical in ensuring the quality of TIP research or data collection. This is also important in how the data collection results and findings are shared. Terms and concepts will have been operationalized at the outset of the study. Clearly explaining these in the presentation of the findings is essential for those who are reading and using research findings. Common categorizations may have diverging implied meanings to researchers and end users, making it important to clarify the use of terms in the presentation of results and findings.²⁵¹ Precise definitions can reduce confusion and promote understanding of research conducted, avoiding misuse or misrepresentation of results and findings.²⁵²

Good practice. Ensure accessibility of findings and results

Write and present results and findings in clear and accessible language.

Ensure findings and results are accessible to the target audience and end users.

Explain all terms and concepts to ensure a common understanding.

Use precise definitions.

Avoid technical or specialist language and terminology.

Ensure the language (and level of language used) is appropriate to the target audience.

In the case of regularly produced reports, such as those by National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms, another dimension of accessibility is the harmonization from year to year of the report's structure and content, including the terms and definitions used and the statistical information gathered. This allows different target audiences and end users to understand findings as well as compare findings about the same topic indicators or data point across time.

Findings should be clearly written and presented. The level at which the language is pitched will, of course, vary according to the target audience. Some data collection may be very specifically directed at experts in their fields, in which case professional terms are necessary.

²⁵¹ Marco, C. and G. Larkin (2000) 'Research Ethics: Ethical Issues of Data Reporting and the Quest for Authenticity', *Academic Emergency Medicine*, 7(6), p. 693.

²⁵² NIU (2005) 'Data Publication and Reporting, *Responsible Conduct in Data Management*. DeKalb, United States: Northern Illinois University.

Nonetheless, whenever possible one should avoid using overly technical or specialist terminology without explanation or definitions (such as procedures or categorizations that are unlikely to be known outside an organization or institution). For instance, the term “reflection period” is unlikely to be known outside TIP circles and can furthermore mean different things in different countries and according to different legal frameworks. In some countries, it refers to a short postponement of an order to leave the country, whereas in others it is a more extensive permit for temporary residence and work. As such, it may be useful to give an overview of the institutional framework for anti-trafficking in the relevant context, as this may differ substantially between countries and regions and findings and conclusions may be strongly influenced by the context. Equally, trafficking prosecutions take place in widely different legal systems (for example, civil versus common law), which will require sufficient explanation of legal terms and processes when presenting data about the operation of these legal systems. Ideally, it should be possible to read the results and findings without expert or detailed knowledge of the field.

An example of accessibility noted by one TIP researcher was a special journal issue on quantitative research methods for TIP, written for audiences outside of academia:

It’s not written like a peer review journal. ...it’s written in a way that’s publicly accessible. But still has ...content to convey some of these principles and practices. And I think that trying to bridge that divide... is really critical because we can’t operate in a silo as [researchers] in a field that desperately needs that data. And so if we don’t know what questions practitioners and policymakers need us to answer or what data they have, we won’t be getting anywhere.

Information and findings should be presented in a measured way, without overstating or dramatizing the results. One criminal justice expert reflected on her work collecting data on trafficking prosecutions:

...we’re operating from the first principle that facts matter. That getting information out there is important, being forthright about it. ...and in terms of presenting [data], I think people are also very responsive to clear presentation of information in a field riddled with anecdotes and hyper-emotional accounts that really don’t provide very much basis for good policy. Those things matter for sure. But they are not ...all that relevant to lawyers in a lot of cases... because we’re really operating from this presumption of data mattering.

This is particularly salient issue in a field where sensationalized presentation is commonplace by some organizations and institutions, as discussed above (see Stage #4: Data Analysis, *Interpret patterns and findings – Identify biases influencing interpretation*).

In summary: Findings should be clear and accessible to as wide an audience as possible, including beyond the sphere of TIP experts. Results and findings should be presented in clear and accessible language, explaining terms and concepts, providing clear definitions and avoiding technical or specialist language. Different formats will be differently accessible to various audiences and end users.

Consider data display and visual presentation

A visual display presents information in a clear, accurate and accessible way while seeking to be engaging and appealing. It should provide ready access to information and convey a message, a finding or a particular perspective on specific data or topic. Visual presentations should aid in conveying information and not complicate or confuse the interpretation of the

data. Visual presentation of TIP data is important in making findings accessible. As one TIP researcher noted:

[Good practice is] presenting the analysis in a way that is easily digestible and...there's been a lot of strides on data visualization and how you can present data in a way that's digestible and simple.

Visualization methods are either “static”, “interactive” and “dynamic”. Examples include:²⁵³

- graphs (for example, pie charts, box plots, histograms, bar graphs, line graphs, pyramids, radar charts, scatter plots and function plots);
- tables (for example, numerical, textual, frequency distributions, or analyses of variance);
- maps, both static and interactive;
- photographs, bearing in mind the importance of informed consent and not using images which reveal the identity or location of data sources;
- audio and video clips, again while ensuring informed consent and that the identity or location of data sources is not disclosed;
- illustrations;
- animations;
- infographics;
- dashboards.

Graphic and visual presentation have various advantages given that visual perception is more immediate than a sequential scan of numbers and letters; it moves the reader from the specific and literal to the general and abstract; it can tell a story; it reveals patterns in the data that may be otherwise difficult to detect; and it is more universally understood without requiring knowledge of language.²⁵⁴

Of critical importance is *how* to present data visually, suggestions for which include:

- Be clear and uncomplicated. A visual display should balance important information and minimum detail, avoiding unnecessary off-topic information. It should avoid excessive and irrelevant data, which inhibits the audience's ability to find the essential and meaningful information.

Good practice. Consider data display and visual presentation

Use visual presentation without complicating or confusing the interpretation of the data.

Be clear and uncomplicated, balancing important information and minimum detail.

Avoid excessive and irrelevant data in any visual presentation.

Avoid sensationalist or salacious imagery.

Visual presentation should be self-explanatory.

Consider visual displays for both quantitative and qualitative data.

Train analysts in how to present data visually.

Use software when it offers good options to display the data.

²⁵³ Visualization methods are either “static”, “interactive” and “dynamic”. Static visualization refers to visuals such as graphs and infographics; interactive visualizations include network views and relational data displays; dynamic visualizations can be found in interactive timelines and animations. Starling Gould, A. and F. Wienczek (2016) ‘Data Visualization in qualitative research’, *Network Ecologies*.

²⁵⁴ Lyons, R. (2010) *Best Practices in Graphical Data Presentation*. Baltimore, United States: Library Assessment Conference.

- Show data variation, not design variation. The focus should be on showing the data, not showing skills in design.
- Information should be self-explanatory (that is, understandable without the need to read the text to which it refers).²⁵⁵

Display formats and visualization types may vary considerably and are usually adjusted to the type of data being displayed (for example, quantitative versus qualitative). Whereas some visual displays may require an accompanying narrative text (such as a caption) to support their understanding, others may be more quickly understood without additional explanation. The number of different relationships and concepts depicted increases the relative complexity of the display.²⁵⁶

When and how to use visual presentations will depend on the nature of the data itself. While quantitative data may lend itself more obviously to visuals and graphics, there is also much that can be done to convey qualitative data visually. Displaying data graphically is a way of portraying information succinctly and efficiently, illustrating the details that are provided in longer textual information. Data visualization is increasingly used in qualitative data collection and research.²⁵⁷

Decisions around data display will also depend on the target audience(s) and what approaches to presentation and visualization are more suitable. Data display may be particularly important in reaching some end users (for example, relative to levels of education or literacy or in contexts where visual presentations are privileged over written texts.) It may also be particularly important for some types of formats (for example, when sharing data through presentations and lectures to engage the audience.)

The above points notwithstanding, when and how to visualize trafficking requires careful consideration. As has been observed generally in the anti-trafficking field, sensationalist or salacious victimizing imagery may contribute to the objectification of trafficking victims.²⁵⁸ This concern is also relevant in how data results are visualized, including through the use of photographs, illustrations and other visual displays.

Incorporating graphic and visual presentations of data into the range of outputs of a data collection effort requires certain skills and expertise. Training may be needed in how to design tables and graphs as well as more dynamic data visualizations for effective and

²⁵⁵ See Duquia, R.P. et al. (2014) 'Presenting data in tables and charts', *Anais Brasileiros de Dermatologia*, 89(2), p. 280; Iliinsky, N. (2010) 'On beauty' in Steele, J. and N. Iliinsky (Eds.) *Beautiful visualization: Looking at data through the eyes of experts*. Sebastopol, United States: O'Reilly Media, pp. 1-13; Morse, J. (2006) 'Diagramming qualitative theories', *Qualitative Health Research*, 16(9), pp. 1163-1164; Tufte, E.R. (2001) *Envisioning Information. Second Edition*. Cheshire, United States: Graphics Press, p. 53; and Verdinelli, S. and N. Scagnoli (2013) 'Data Display in Qualitative Research', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, pp. 359-381.

²⁵⁶ Verdinelli, S. and N. Scagnoli (2013) 'Data Display in Qualitative Research', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, pp. 359-381.

²⁵⁷ Chandler, R., E. Anstey and H. Ross (2015) 'Listening to Voices and Visualizing Data in Qualitative Research: Hypermodal Dissemination Possibilities', *SAGE Open*; Dey, I. (1993) *Qualitative data analysis: A user-friendly guide for social scientists*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge; Verdinelli, S. and N. Scagnoli (2013) 'Data Display in Qualitative Research', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, pp. 359-381. See also Henderson, S. and E. Segal (2013) 'Visualizing Qualitative Data in Evaluation Research', *New Directions for Evaluation*, 139, pp. 53-71.

²⁵⁸ See, for example, Andrijasevic, R. (2007) 'Beautiful Dead Bodies: Gender, Migration and Representation in Anti-Trafficking Campaigns', *Feminist Review*, 86, pp. 24-44; Freedom Collaborative, Liberty Asia, Chab Dai and BNP Paribas (2016) *Guidance Note on Use of Victims' Images*. Hong Kong: Liberty Asia; Krsmanovic, E. (2016) 'Captured "Realities" of Human Trafficking: Analysis of photographs illustrating stories on trafficking into the sex industry in Serbian media', *Anti-Trafficking Review*, 7, pp. 139-160; and Vance, C.S. (2012) 'Innocence and Experience: Melodramatic Narratives of Sex Trafficking and Their Consequences of Law and Policy', *History of the Present*, 2(2), pp. 200-218.

efficient communication of research results and data.²⁵⁹ Contemporary software supports some innovative means of data display and makes it easier to transform the way data is viewed. However, using specific software to design visual presentations involves an allocation of time and resources, including to train data analysts in its use where necessary (or to allow them to teach themselves). Such time and resources may not be available to all researchers or data analysts, whether individuals, organizations or institutions.²⁶⁰ At the same time, the current information climate, with short attention spans and attraction to imagery, means that it is essential to include visualizations. As such, some organizations and institutions may opt to invest in these technological tools and skills development.

In summary: Visual presentations of information should be clear, accurate and accessible and not complicate or confuse the interpretation of the data. When and how to use visual presentations will depend on the nature of the data itself, as well as the target audience. In visual presentations, care is needed to avoid sensationalist or salacious imagery. Incorporating graphic and visual presentations of data is likely to require training, to ensure analysts are able to communicate results and data effectively and efficiently. Software may be used to assist in displaying data.

Tailor and target recommendations

When TIP data collection is oriented toward action (either in terms of policy or program responses), recommendations are an important output. Recommendations may be directed at any number of end users. This might include policymakers and practitioners to support the design of anti-trafficking interventions or researchers to encourage research or data collection about new and under-explored issues that arose from the data collection. Applied research and data should feed into action and offer concrete guidance on what may be done. As one TIP researcher noted:

Ideally what you want is to create a process where researchers, in partnership with community members, advocates and others, are developing evidence-based research and that gets fed to policymakers. I don't just mean legislators, but also policymakers in healthcare facilities and in schools and that informs their decision-making so that they are adopting and implementing policies that do a better job of reducing vulnerability to this exploitation or respond appropriately when people are exploited.

Regardless of the specific end user, recommendations must be sound, realistic and, ideally, specific. Part of formulating recommendations is to target different audiences and end users with specific recommendations, possibly in different formats. For example, the recommendation to “improve victim identification” is too general to be helpful or effective. More helpful would be to identify specific measures that can and should be taken to improve victim identification including in identifying different profiles of trafficking victims (that is, male and female, adult and children, foreign and country national) and/or in offering guidance to different frontline responders engaged in victim identification (that is, social workers, police, prosecutors, medical staff, immigration officers, labor inspectors and so on). As one TIP researcher noted:

... it's typically more effective when you do identify an actor or a potential actor. ...if you say, “legislators can do A, B and C – state legislators can do A, B and C; hospitals can do D, E and F; schools can do G, H and I” ... it presents a better opportunity to

²⁵⁹ Few, S. (2004) *Show Me the Numbers: Designing Tables and Graphs to Enlighten*. Oakland, United States: Analytics Press.

²⁶⁰ Verdinelli, S. and N. Scagnoli (2013) ‘Data Display in Qualitative Research’, *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, p. 12.

engage those actors, those stakeholders, in a dialogue and to have them consider the recommendations.

It may be useful and strategic to work with data providers and end users in the formulation and validation of recommendations to ensure that they are specific, relevant, useful and targeted. This is also useful in ensuring uptake of the recommendations by these end users (that is, practitioners and policymakers working on the issue).

One National Rapporteur-equivalent mechanism described how the office engaged data providers (also practitioners and policymakers) in designing more robust recommendations:

We have created a group to reflect on TIP on statistics with law enforcement, NGOs and others twice a year in order to get feedback not only on how to improve our reports but to get information from the field that administrative data does not show to us. And also, to write the recommendations of the annual report jointly, as a collective effort. We felt last year that continuously putting, “Consolidate training actions...” was, to some extent, poor [practice in terms of] helping with decision-making. As such, this group [of data providers-practitioners] is going to help us to see what is working or not and [to draft] robust recommendations.

Involving data sources (for example, trafficking victims or practitioners) in the formulation of recommendations is also useful in ensuring that recommendations are responsive to their needs and interests, as has been discussed above in Stage #1: Design and Planning (*Select a data collection approach and method (quantitative, qualitative and mixed approaches and methods) – Consider participation and involvement of stakeholders and end users in data collection*). This requires, however, that there is a sufficiently open environment (social, political, institutional) to engage in drafting recommendations. When this process involves engaging trafficking victims, this also requires attention to and strategies to address practical and ethical issues that may arise. Key ethical considerations would include informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, guarding the “best interests of the child”, as have been discussed in detail above at all stages data collection. Ethical considerations specific to this stage of data collection (Data Use, Presentation and Dissemination) are discussed further below (*Consider ethics in data use, presentation and dissemination*).

In summary: When a TIP data collection effort is intended to inform policy or program responses, it is important to include recommendations in the outputs and dedicate sufficient time to this aspect of use and presentation. Regardless of the data collection topic, recommendations should be sound, realistic, specific and, where appropriate, time-bound. There may also be a need to develop specific recommendations for different target audiences. Engaging data sources, data providers and end users in the development of recommendations can be a useful means of ensuring their relevance and usefulness.

Good practice. Tailor and target recommendations

Prioritize the formulation of useful recommendations when data collection informs policy and programs.

Ensure that recommendations are sound, realistic, specific and, where appropriate, time-bound.

Target specific recommendations to different target audiences, possibly in different formats.

Engage data sources, data providers and end users in formulating recommendations when appropriate.

Ensure findings are accessible in multiple languages

Findings should be made available in as many languages as possible, to reach as wide of an audience as possible. Translation into different languages will increase the accessibility and reach of data. As many end users are not fluent in English (or other major languages), this limits their access to much TIP research and data which is conducted in English. As one NGO director noted:

I feel that language has to do with that. ...I have difficulties in my English and I see a lot of organizations that don't speak English...

Results should be made available in the national language or languages where data collection was conducted to ensure access for people in and from those locations. Having findings available in more commonly spoken languages is also valuable. If it is not possible to translate the full set of outputs from a data collection effort (due to time and costs, for instance), it is nonetheless useful to translate the executive summary and conclusions or other summary materials into major world languages. The translation of recommendations may also be considered a priority in reaching some end users.

Enhanced access also works in the reverse, ensuring that national research is available outside of a country. Making results and findings accessible internationally helps build the knowledge base around TIP among a wider number of target groups and end users including practitioners, policymakers, researchers, the media and the general public. This brings knowledge and discussion forward and reduces the risk of duplication in other data collection efforts.

However, making findings available in multiple languages presents a logistical and resource challenge, particularly when working on multi-country or regional data collection efforts. For instance, while English and French are the two official languages of the Council of Europe, there are 47 member states, most of which have unique national languages. The European Union (EU) has 24 official languages. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has ten member states representing great linguistic diversity, with hundreds of languages belonging to five different language families spoken in the bloc. Other examples include the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) with 15 member countries and the Organization of American States (OAS), which comprises 35 member countries.

The challenges and costs of sharing and presenting information in multiple languages are substantial. This was highlighted by one TIP researcher working regionally across six different countries, each with a discrete national language:

Certainly in some of the countries that we work in, translation is hugely expensive. And yet you're unlikely to have take-outs from policymakers if they can't read what you've produced.

Thus, it is good practice to ensure that adequate funds are allocated for the translation of data collection findings and lessons from TIP data collection efforts, including for multi-lingual translation when relevant and useful. Findings should be translated into the national languages of the

Good practice. Ensure findings are accessible in multiple languages

Make results and findings accessible to as many target audiences and end users as possible.

Present findings in as many relevant languages as possible.

Always translate findings into the language of the countries where the data is collected.

Translate executive summaries and conclusions into as many languages as possible.

Ensure high quality translation to effectively convey results and findings.

country where the data collection took place. Ideally findings would be translated into other languages, even if only the summary.

An additional issue is that much peer reviewed literature is published only in major world languages, and in particular the English language, which not everyone can read and understand. Moreover, peer reviewed journals may be written in a language in which researchers are not able to write fluently, compromising their ability to effectively present and disseminate their research results. Few journals offer language support to researchers who are not fluent in the journal language, essentially blocking access to these publications as well as opportunities for end users to learn about this research.

Regardless of language, translations must be of high quality to effectively convey the results and findings from TIP data collection. One TIP researcher highlighted the importance of high quality translation in ensuring that findings can effectively conveyed:

I've read a lot of research where the translation is quite poor and that takes away from what survivors are saying. ...having really good translation is really important because otherwise the quotes that we see might not be as powerful or might not represent really what that person is trying to say.

Translation is particularly complicated when it comes to technical terms as well as how concepts around TIP are appropriately presented in different settings. There may be sensitivities around the translation of certain terms and concept. Checking and double-checking translation (for example, with translators and native speakers) is good practice.

In summary: The findings of a data collection effort (in full or summary) should be made available in as many languages as possible, to reach as wide of an audience as possible. This helps build the knowledge base around TIP among a wider number of stakeholders, bringing knowledge and discussion forward and reducing the risk of duplicative research. Results should be available in the language of the country where data collection was conducted. Regardless of the language itself, translation must be of high quality to effectively convey results and findings from TIP data collection.



Identify different media and platforms to maximize impact and reach

The rise of technology is facilitating various information platforms and media (including social media websites and applications), offering countless ways that data may be presented and disseminated. Many of these platforms and media also offer a specific mechanism for the promotion of data and research results.

Available options for dissemination include but are not limited to:

- organizational or institutional websites;
- blogs;
- virtual libraries;
- social media (for example, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram);
- email notifications, listservs and mailing lists;
- workshops, conferences, seminars and roundtable discussions;
- forums, meetings and networks;
- journals and books; and
- lectures and presentations (in person, webinars, video lectures or short videos for distribution, such as on YouTube).

Identify different media and platforms to maximize impact and reach

- Identify relevant media and platforms
- Assess options for dissemination media
- Consider resources and capacity for effective dissemination

With ever-expanding platforms to share data and findings, decisions need to be made about the most appropriate, effective and ethical use and presentation of data. It is necessary to think about the right media and platforms for findings. Optimizing data use is about finding a platform that fits a project, finding the most effective ways to present the data, findings and conclusions and ensuring that all elements of data use are in line with commitments to data sources and data providers and ethical protocols (including informed consent) and the nature of the data itself.²⁶¹ For example, while the main output of a data collection effort may be a written report, it may also be useful to consider how these findings can be shared through other media (for example, presentations at conferences or meetings, sharing key findings on social media, a short video or blog to present main results or findings or preparing photo essays), while also guarding anonymity and confidentiality, informed consent, the “best interests of the child” and so on.

Different platforms and media may serve very different purposes in terms of the target audience, nature of use and the processes and requirements for usage. For example, an international academic journal and a report from an anti-trafficking NGO target different groups in different ways and for different purposes. Each will work differently and will be used for different reasons. Where data and findings can be presented on an organization’s website in various formats, social media and listservs may allow data and findings to be disseminated to a wider audience and perhaps also with a more targeted message (or set of messages). For some results and findings, it may be advisable to send an announcement letter directly to relevant institutions that are part of the intended target audience. Identifying the best media and platforms for findings then requires assessing these different options including their respective constraints and ensuring there are sufficient resources and capacity for their use. Each of these points is discussed below.

Identify relevant media and platforms

Each data collection effort must assess and identify the most relevant and useful media and platforms for dissemination including how these may vary from one target audience to another, a point that will be discussed in the next section (*Assess options for dissemination media*). Presentation and dissemination will vary according to the specific data collection effort. For instance, one National Rapporteur-equivalent mechanism described holding regular coordination meetings with different data providers from government institutions and civil society, which allowed them to discuss findings, validate and share data and results with these frontline data providers:

²⁶¹ Stoecker, R. (2013) *Research Methods for Community Change: A Project-Based Approach*. Thousand Oaks, United States: SAGE Publishing.

At those [biannual] meetings, we have different stakeholders from different agencies and it's important to us, but it is also important for them because they share experiences, they exchange information from what they are seeing in the field. [...] we send [the reports] to the data providers to collect their validation. ...They are not going to say, "We do not agree with the following conclusion or recommendation". But sometimes these workflows do not work because it's one institution asking data and not giving that information back to [the data providers]. And the institution produces reports and the data providers do not see the reports that are done. So we give the data providers the reports and naturally we ask for suggestions, recommendations, whatever. We do need their validation on the overall report, especially on the recommendations. Additionally, the reports are validated by all data providers, including NGOs.

Good practice. Identify relevant media and platforms

Identify the most relevant and useful media and platforms for dissemination.

Tailor dissemination to different target audiences.

Consider different avenues for dissemination.

In addition, National Rapporteurs-equivalent mechanisms often share information and coordinate through regular meetings nationally as well as regionally. For example, within the Organization for Security and Cooperation and Europe (OSCE), two meetings are held each year, one of which is between National Rapporteurs-equivalent mechanisms and one between National Rapporteurs-equivalent mechanisms and civil society partners in their respective countries. One National Rapporteur-equivalent mechanism described this approach:

...the group of National Rapporteurs [or] equivalent mechanisms has created a civil society platform that is represented by two or three NGOs from each member state and we normally have two meetings in Brussels in the year and one of the meetings is between the National Rapporteurs [or] equivalent mechanisms and the other is the platform for civil society organizations. [...] For me it is more a meeting to see what is happening because we are seeing these new trends that are... [also] happening in [other countries].

Many organizations leverage a range of media and platforms to share and disseminate information. One National Rapporteur explained how information is shared on the office's website in a wide variety of formats to reach different audiences. The formats include studies and other information prepared by the office, as well as work being done by other stakeholders such as NGOs, other government agencies or researchers in other institutions or organizations:

We are approaching society by providing important information about social services, about identification, hotlines, also research, information materials. [...] It's like state information resources for everybody who is interested in the reduction of trafficking in human beings... a place where we try to collect all information about trafficking. It doesn't mean that I fully provide all information that I have in the office. I consider very, very much what kind of information to publish and in what manner. I need to publish it to make it interesting for people. [...] And of course there is a difference from information that I provide to the government or parliament.

Using different media will be needed to reach different audiences and this needs already to be considered in the design of the data collection project, to ensure that adequate resources

are available to most effectively convey results to end users. One TIP researcher stressed this point:

...small, very small-scale research can be written up and packaged well to have a big impact or use. Sometimes with limited resources, instead of putting priority on getting a huge sample size and then having very little money left to do the advocacy or promotion of [findings] later on, [it is better to] put the priority into telling the stories and meeting with [stakeholders], putting together a photo exhibit or something that policymakers see, having policymakers on a panel, that kind of thing. Sometimes priority can be shifted toward the use part [of the research project] in order to make change.

In summary: Each data collection effort must assess and identify the most relevant and useful media (including social media websites and applications) and platforms for dissemination of findings. This is likely to require different avenues for dissemination and tailoring dissemination to different target audiences.

Assess options for dissemination media

Media and platforms vary in terms of being accessible and manageable. Options to leverage different media and platforms will depend on the media itself as well as staff time and capacity in working with this media. Training may be needed in how to utilize different platforms and media. Some platforms may involve costs for dissemination (for instance, membership or registration fees, the purchase of programs or software or fees charged by journals for publishing), have specific access requirements (for instance, membership or payment requirements) or imply different time frames (for example, different publication timelines and processes for peer reviewed books, journals and grey literature).

Some constraints may be a function of how and where research is published. One academic TIP researcher noted that her university required that she publish her research in peer reviewed journals, which limited accessibility of her work to some audiences:

Unfortunately, that [publication decision] was largely driven by professional pressures... so peer reviewed journals... the book [form] is typically what is expected for tenure. And I think that the saddest part about this is the delay, the huge timeline that it takes to publish in peer reviewed places and to work in book form where I have a lot of guilt that I've been sitting on this data for like seven years. Because it is really important stuff..

By contrast, there are other media and platforms that are more accessible and immediate and, as such, more relevant for some forms of dissemination and target audiences. One TIP researcher described one global media platform to which she contributed, which offered opportunities for wide dissemination of results:

Good practice. Assess options for dissemination media

Consider media and platforms that are more accessible and immediate.

Identify barriers to access and address them.

I was happy to write for ... [that editorial platform]. And I thought they made a really important intervention because in the first couple of years they got a lot of academics to write some [short] pieces that could draw from pieces that the university published and use that as a way to disseminate their research more urgently.

The above highlights important questions to be asked about different media and platforms including who is (and is not) reached and who, in turn, can (and cannot) access and then use the information. Another consideration is that certain media are not necessarily well equipped to present complex findings and results. For example, one TIP researcher expressed his frustration about the promotion and circulation of research results on social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook without any mention of the nuance of findings or limitations of the data. Risks are associated with findings being inadequately presented and nuanced. Lack of contextualization has the potential to misrepresent findings and, thus, misinform end users, as discussed above in Stage #4: Data Analysis (*Interpret patterns and findings – Identify biases influencing interpretation*). Some media, therefore, may not fit such dissemination of TIP research and findings.

In summary: While there are many and varying media and platforms for disseminating the findings of a data collection effort, not all are equally accessible to data collectors or target audience members. It is important to consider media and platforms that are more accessible and immediate and any barriers that these may present.

Consider resources and capacity for effective dissemination

Effective dissemination of findings and results requires skills, time and resources. However, data collectors and analysts will not necessarily have these skill sets. As one TIP expert noted:

Maybe [poor dissemination and communication] is just a product of the fact that the people who are writing these reports are not [public relations] people, they're not marketing and communications people. They're trafficking people. So they know how to do some research, but they don't know how to launch it and disseminate it.

Effectively conveying data collection results and findings means making these accessible and interesting to the various end users being targeted. It is generally advisable to engage communication experts for this task or to train in house staff for this work. As one TIP researcher noted:

Involving those with professional training in communications can be extremely valuable. As researchers, we sometimes get so focused on the rigor of our analysis that we can lose sight of the need to communicate the results in an accessible way. It is a good idea to bring in people who can help with packaging the findings in a way that encourages uptake.

Larger organizations and institutions often have an in house communications team or officer skilled and experienced in how to effectively disseminate information using different formats and media. One TIP researcher, for instance, explained that her institute develops a communications strategy for each of its data collection projects:

We do have a publication strategy and a media strategy. And all of our projects always include at least one type of research report. And, in addition to the research report, we might have press releases, policy briefs and shorter dissemination formats. ...in all of our projects, we also have a dissemination strategy.

Smaller organizations and institutions are less likely to have in house communications capacity. In such cases, organizations and institutions may need to draw on available resources (such as handbooks and other guidance on how to disseminate research results), explore partnerships with communication experts or outsource dissemination tasks to

communications experts/companies. It may be possible to leverage the in house expertise of donors or funders.

Some media and platforms may require specific skills and expertise as well as an articulated strategy. For example, using social media as a dissemination platform, requires skills and knowledge in the effective use of social media as well as a clear, specific and well-articulated goal and strategy for the social media effort (for example, to raise awareness or to conduct advocacy for a specific policy change.)

Good practice. Consider resources and capacity for effective dissemination

Allocate time and resources to communicate results and findings.

Assess in house skills and capacity for communication.

Identify external communications resources or expertise, as needed.

While it is important to leverage skills and expertise in dissemination, data analysts need to remain engaged in this process to ensure that the findings being communicated are correct and include the necessary caveats and nuances to appropriately and accurately represent what the data does (and does not) mean. Efforts to develop concise and strong advocacy messages may risk losing nuance, undermining and even distorting findings.

In summary: Effective communication of results and findings requires skills and expertise as well as time and resources. It is important to assess in house skills and capacity for communication as well as when external communications resources or expertise is needed. Some media and platforms are particularly likely to require specific skills and expertise.



Ensure access to outputs

Having identified one's target audiences and end users, it is important to ensure that these individuals and groups have access to the various outputs produced. This, however, is not always the case in the TIP field. One TIP expert noted that while much TIP research is conducted, it does not always reach those who want and need this information:

There's so much good [research] work going on out there and not so much good dissemination going on. So, for instance, I've worked for many years with [this agency] and I love [its] mandate. I think what it does is so valuable. And I think that its dissemination strategies are...absolutely terrible... I'm not sure anyone knows how this data is being used.

Far more attention is needed to how the outputs from data collection efforts can be accessed and used by various end users. This, then, requires attention to what facilitates and limits a target group's ability to access research and data collection results.

At a basic level this might be about users having access to reliable internet or one's own computer to be able to search for and access research and data online. In many institutions and organizations this is not the case, with staff sharing computers, limited access to the internet or lack of knowledge on how to search for this information. It may also be about the

amount of bandwidth available (and affordable) for downloading files, one solution being to offer lower resolution versions of online reports and materials. Providing hard copies of research is important in many contexts but especially in lower resource countries (and lower resource areas within countries), where computer use and internet connectivity are lower and where many organizations and institutions are unable to print research studies due to the high costs of paper and printer cartridges. As one TIP expert noted:

[Good practice] is planning to have a hard copy of the report. You find that many people don't print it and don't read it. If you have a hard copy, I think [you] read more.

As noted above, some types of outputs and formats may not be accessible to some audiences. Peer reviewed journal articles and books are largely inaccessible to practitioners and policymakers. Few people outside of academic circles have access to peer reviewed literature, which is typically only available for purchase, written in an academic style and often only in major languages. As one TIP researcher explained:

Lots of government agencies don't have regular access to the journals and the academic search engines that you and I might use. So there is a real question about where is the repository of this information? Where would you expect to go to find all of the latest and best thinking?

The pace of much academic publishing may also mean that data is unavailable in a timely fashion, to inform policy and programs. This is particularly a concern when research topics are time sensitive. Another TIP researcher highlighted the issue of access:

We have a huge challenge in the anti-trafficking field whereby...peer review publication takes a long time. It's not often that people who have access to this data from their direct work in their field commit to [doing peer review] ... So the problem we have is where does this knowledge accumulate? Also lots of government agencies don't have regular access to the journals and academic search engines... So there is a real question about where is the repository of this information? Where would you expect to go to find all of the latest and best thinking? There are lots of human trafficking journals coming out now that could serve as great resources for this type of work. But there's a question about how we, as academics, are structuring the system so that policy relevant and informed research can flourish instead of almost being an afterthought.

This raises questions about formats that reach broader audiences and inform stakeholders' thinking and action on TIP. As one TIP researcher argued:

If the goal is to disseminate...if the goal is to use research to inform practice and policy and to really get it out there in a timely fashion and to get it out there in a transparent fashion, then we might want to consider alternative avenues of disseminating and publishing that work, if peer reviewed articles and academic platforms are not going to allow us to fully do that.

Good practice. Ensure access to outputs

Identify constraints in access results among different target audiences.

Enhance access to all outputs for all target audiences.

Identify and address barriers to access such as medium and language.

Share research results with data sources, data providers and end users.

Access may also be about how outputs are presented and shared in different countries and in relation to different target audiences. As noted above (*Identify relevant media and platforms*), certain formalities and procedures should be followed in different settings. In some settings, publications should be printed in hard copy format and sent with a formal announcement letter. Different procedures may apply when sharing research with government institutions as compared to civil society where less formality may be required. With some target audiences, it may be possible to engage in a discussion of the research. It is, therefore, important to think about and make plans in relation to these more practical aspects of dissemination. As one TIP expert explained:

It's good to tailor [outputs] as much as possible, to reach the right people, to write proper accompanying letters and so on. These may be obvious things, but they are not necessarily obvious in practice. It's good, I think, to follow-up with [the target audience] and see whether they found it interesting and whether they have any feedback for you. Sometimes reports are interesting but not so many people read it so you can organize events not only to launch it but also to walk people through the findings.

Language may also serve as a barrier in accessing research and data. Making research available in multiple languages is important in terms of enhancing access to results and findings. Doing so requires time and resources, as discussed above (*Select presentation formats and language – Ensure findings are accessible in multiple languages*).

Improved exchanges of information and experiences on past TIP data collection efforts can also support learning. One NGO director highlighted the need for greater access to research learning from around the world:

We have the feeling that in other countries... there are other kinds of research that could be useful for us and it is difficult for us to get to the methodology of that. [...] There must be a way of exchanging more easily the experiences and research on that from different countries.

As discussed above, an important audience for research outputs is data sources and data providers themselves (those who have participated in and contribute to data collection and those who will make use of this information). Data sources may be respondents (such as trafficking victims, their families, migrant workers and so on) or key informants including service providers, law enforcement and so on. Data providers might include the organizations or institutions that provided information or facilitated access to respondents and key informants. Ideally, those who participated in a data collection effort should have access to the final output(s), as discussed above (*Target appropriate audiences, including differentiated outputs for different groups – Differentiate outputs for different target audiences and/or end users*) and *Include research participants as target audience*). For example, one NGO that assists trafficking victims described how it collects data about the victims it assists in their program and, in turn, with the consent of the victims, shares this with the government anti-trafficking coordinator to feed into national data collection efforts. However, this NGO expressed frustration that they did not receive any information or reports back from authorities about victims being assisted in the country. Similarly, one TIP expert noted that research findings were not always shared with research participants:

But the feedback for participants... how often do you see that people are given feedback? Even those who have taken the time from their institutions, they are not even told about the research report. Their name may be there but they are not even told that the research report is out. How often do we go back to a respondent, at least to some of them, to tell them what happened to the research? people give their time and don't know what the use of it is.

As discussed above (*Assess and address constraints in dissemination media*), there may be a range of barriers to disseminating research findings to data sources and data providers. For example, dissemination may be constrained by limited resources and short time frames as well as low prioritization on the part of funders or the data collection team. Dissemination to respondents may be complicated by contact after data collection (for example, not having addresses, phone numbers or other contact information). One way that this can potentially be alleviated is to provide details during data collection regarding where results can be accessed and to distribute results through gatekeepers or community members. At the same time, not all victims will be in contact with service providers in the longer-term. It also may not be safe or advisable to follow-up with some respondents after data collection (for example, when a victim has returned to live with their family and the family does not know about their trafficking experience or involvement in research or data collection). Decisions around such dissemination need to be considered on a case-by-case basis, in line with the project's resources and capacity (see *Target appropriate audiences, including differentiated outputs for different groups – Include research participants as target audience*). These issues should, at least preliminarily be considered at the design and planning stage (see Stage #1: Design and Planning, *Prepare a work plan for data collection*).

In summary: It is important to ensure access of various target audiences to research and data findings, particularly those who have participated data collection as data sources and data providers. And yet, there is a raft of constraints to be identified and addressed including practical, logistical, financial, linguistic and so on. More time and resources are needed to identify and overcome these barriers, when safe, ethical and appropriate to do so.



Consider ethics in data use, presentation and dissemination

There are specific ethical issues that arise at this final stage of data collection including: the ethics of sharing and not sharing findings; representation and misrepresentation; ensuring anonymity, confidentiality, privacy and safety; just attribution of contribution; and guarding the “best interests of the child”, as discussed in the following subsections.

Ethics in data use, presentation and dissemination

- Assess the ethics of sharing and not sharing results
- Consider ethics of representation and misrepresentation
- Ensure anonymity, confidentiality, privacy and safety
- Determine just attribution of contribution
- Guard the “best interests of the child” in data use, presentation and dissemination

Assess the ethics of sharing and not sharing results

In the context of some data collection activities, it may not be ethical for findings to be publicly shared or published. This may when data collection is part of an internal process to inform specific work and is, therefore, not appropriate to share publicly. It may also occur when research results may have negative or unintended consequences that can cause harm.

Sharing the results of some data collection may pose risks to data sources data providers as well as researchers/data collectors. Risks may arise, for example, when authorities participating in data collection as key informants disclose sensitive information. As one criminal justice expert noted:

The negative impact [of sharing those findings], it could very well be a shut-down of the willingness [of authorities] to cooperate, to engage in training, to welcome criticism or evaluations from outside, to be very defensive. I think that has to be factored in.

It may not be ethical to release studies when data collection was poorly done, resulting in poor data, because of the enormous potential to distort and compromise the knowledge base on TIP and lead to ungrounded interventions. Poorly implemented research with questionable findings should not be released. As one TIP expert argued:

Extensively over the past couple of years, these types of things have come to me. ...where you have a poor piece of research and you [are asked] to try to camouflage the information in a way so that it can be released [...] [There was no time] to develop research tools or properly identify stakeholders or even get hold of them or properly interview them. Then it's impossible to go back and research more. So if you have a situation when the field research went badly, you cannot redo and the data is poor. I think you should simply not release it.

The political circumstances in a country may also influence whether research results are shared. Governments may stifle the publication of findings that identify sensitive issues (for example, corruption, complicity of authorities in human trafficking or failure to respond effectively to TIP in the country). They may also refuse to release studies that generally reflect badly on the country or the government. One TIP expert described a UN-commissioned study which was never released due to political pressures, both from governments and from within the organization:

Political pressures, I have seen that when it came to the UN-lead research not using some of the findings because they were embarrassed or worried, because there were cases of high mistreatment. But still they [those problems] were there and documented. We had interviews. I think that it was not appropriate when we did it [did not release the study] but still it was too sensitive to the governments. I'm sure this happens a lot of time specifically with governmental and inter-governmental organizations.

Risks may also be faced by researchers and data collectors, particularly when local researchers and organizations are involved. As one TIP expert highlighted:

This kind of [critical] research is often published by [foreign] organizations [...]. Local researchers who are known to be a part of those studies are certainly at much greater risk.

The decision of when (and when not) to share research and data needs to be very carefully considered and should not merely be a matter of concern about sharing or

Good practice. Assess the ethics of sharing and not sharing results

Consider whether sharing findings poses any risks to data sources, data providers or researchers.

Assess the context in deciding whether it is safe to share results.

Do not allow research sponsors or funders to influence reporting of results.

Do not release inaccurate data, given the potential for harm.

publishing results that may be undesirable to some parties, create negative findings or complicate program implementation. Data collection staff and researchers have a responsibility to share results and findings, even when they are sensitive or uncomfortable. External pressure should not lead results to be quashed. As one TIP expert noted:

It is an ethical imperative to make research outputs as useful as possible through a thorough analysis and dissemination of the data and findings, despite donors' or other stakeholders' implicit or express instructions.

Research sponsors should not influence the sharing of results unless they pose risks that outweigh the value of the research. One TIP expert described a project in which implementing agencies did not publish research results, largely due to government pressure not to publish findings that were uncomfortable:

[There was] pressure by member states who didn't want some of the things to be made public... But it was an [important] topic when it came to protecting [our target population].

Researchers and data collectors may be impacted by external forces that either promote or prevent dissemination including: institutional or organizational pressure to publish and promote research; competition between organizations and institutions, often triggered or exacerbated by funding pressures; advocacy agendas of an organization or institution; and the push for recognition and advancement in the field of work, at institutional, national, regional or even global levels. Additional aspects for academic institutions may include: university or departmental publishing requirements; requirements for tenure or promotion; financial remuneration; and media publicity.²⁶²

Consideration of how data findings and research will be shared should be part of design and planning already in Stage #1, as it has implications for the data collection process as a whole. This includes whether findings are to be shared publicly or internally and with which organizations or institutions. For instance, when conducting primary data collection, part of informed consent procedures is informing research participants (whether trafficking victims, service providers, law enforcement, or other stakeholders), data providers and gatekeepers about the purpose and process of data collection, including plans for use and dissemination. Decisions around consent to participate are likely to be directly linked to these parameters and data sources, data providers and gatekeepers should be informed about the full intentions before deciding about participation.

In many cases, respondents decide to participate, sometimes at a considerable emotional cost, in order to contribute to knowledge and practice and make their experiences count and be heard. For example, as part of our research protocol, we ask trafficking victims whom we have interviewed how they felt about the interview and why they agreed to be interviewed (among other questions aimed at improving our work). Very often, trafficking victim respondents have initially expressed trepidation, even fear, about participating in research, but then decided to participate out of a desire to prevent others from being trafficked and to improve the anti-trafficking response. One trafficked woman from Moldova, for example, was initially afraid but then decide to participate after all:

When I heard about the interview I thought that a journalist would come and he would ask me about my experience in trafficking and initially I was scared...I felt as if I was blocked and I didn't listen to any further explanations (although everything recorded in my memory...) when I heard that it is not obligatory, I said that I would think about it and I would call...afterwards, after I calmed down...I surely gave my

²⁶² Marco, C. and G. Larkin (2000) 'Research Ethics: Ethical Issues of Data Reporting and the Quest for Authenticity', *Academic Emergency Medicine*, 7(6), p. 692.

consent...I understood that those that would benefit from this interview – would be me and especially other women, which would be assisted in the future...

Another Ukrainian man described contradictory feelings about participating in the study:

I wanted to come and at the same time I didn't. You forget things over time and they get erased from the memory and we have other issues. *So does talking about this with us make you remember and this is a little bit uncomfortable?* I feel a bit of discomfort. I am trying to forget things that happened to me, so I am trying to get back to normal. *Can I ask why you agreed to talk to us? We really appreciate it...* Sometimes you feel like you want to share your experience with someone. When something bad happened to you, you share it with someone and it feels easier. Maybe it is just me, maybe it is common for other people.

Similarly, one Ukrainian woman, trafficked for labor, explained that she agreed to participate to prevent what she had suffered from happening to others:

[The social worker] explained that people would come in to do a study to help others...to prevent other people from getting to similar troubles... I would not wish anyone getting into the same situation that I faced. [...] I think that's the most awful thing that can happen to a person.

If the results are not going to be published and this personal objective not fulfilled, this may be seen as failing to meet one of the conditions the respondent had in mind for their consent to participate. It may also considerably reduce respondents' future willingness to participate in research. The personal inconvenience and risks that respondents have assumed by participating in data collection puts an obligation on researchers and data collectors to use the information collected for the benefit of the individuals concerned and further make it available to policymakers and advocates who can also use it to do some good. As one TIP researcher argued:

[People] who are providing services and survivors themselves are chief stakeholders in the research process and [it should be] something that's done collaboratively between researchers and stakeholders in the field, service providers and survivors themselves. And [there should be a] genuine focus on research uptake and dissemination that the findings are made accessible to the people who could benefit from them. And [there should be] a genuine attempt to use those findings to improve [the situation]. Let's say we're talking about protection, to improve protection services in the area relevant to that particular study.

Similarly, one TIP researcher noted the importance, even responsibility, of better using TIP data:

...There's a lot of data that is gathered that is never actually then used. NGOs and other groups might commission a piece of research and then for whatever reason not publish those findings. I think that's a real issue when data is being used, when it's being collected and people are giving their time for that.

In summary: The use, presentation and dissemination of data and research must be done ethically. It is important to consider whether sharing findings from some data collection processes may pose risks to data sources, data providers and data collectors. When data collection resulted in poor data there is also the risk of findings distorting and compromise the knowledge base on TIP and leading to ungrounded interventions. At the same time, decisions about when (and when not) to share research and data need to be very carefully considered and should not merely be about concerns over sharing or publishing results that may be undesirable to some parties, negative findings, or problems in the implementation of the project.

Consider ethics of representation and misrepresentation

Data collection involves an ethical obligation to present findings accurately and fairly, which includes not overstating conclusions or findings and being transparent about limitations and biases. This applies to one's own data as well as when referencing data from secondary sources. And yet, the misrepresentation of data in the anti-trafficking field is not uncommon, including the recycling of questionable statistics around the prevalence of TIP, as discussed in Stage #1: Design and Planning (*Review existing literature and research – Systematically review and assess relevant literature*). As one TIP researcher noted:

Many sources of literature continue to cite flawed data and some misuse research in ways that seemingly inflate the problem, which can have serious implications for anti-trafficking efforts, including victim services and anti-trafficking legislation and policy.

This also includes ethical obligations in terms of how results are presented and promoted publicly (for example, avoiding the inflation of research results for and by the media as well as in one's own communications strategy). This may happen when public or media statements are insufficiently supported by data or are based on premature reporting of results that turn out to be incomplete, inaccurate or unsubstantiated.²⁶³ One TIP expert cautioned against the temptation to overstate results:

... that tendency to use perhaps hyperbole for the effect of heightening our perception of the severity of that particular pattern. And so [we need to] get down to a more nuanced and accurate understanding of that [issue]. It can be very difficult of course when dealing with these issues that are very emotive and do cause a lot of concern. That, I think, makes a lot of responders, NGO staff, want to present it in a way that encourages people to want to take action rather than taking it down to a level of trying to take the emotion out of it and analyze it in a way that is perhaps more rational.

Good practice. Consider ethics of representation and misrepresentation

- Present findings accurately and fairly.
- Do not overstate conclusions or findings.
- Be transparent about limitations.
- Consider risks of harm in terms of fairness and representation of persons.
- Preserve dignity and integrity of research participants in the presentation of findings.

²⁶³ Marco, C. and G. Larkin (2000) 'Research ethics: ethical issues of data reporting and the quest for authenticity', *Academic Emergency Medicine*, 7(6), pp. 691-694; NIU (2005) 'Data Publication and Reporting', *Responsible Conduct in Data Management*. DeKalb, United States: Northern Illinois University; and Price, J.H., J.A. Drake and R. Islam (2001) 'Selected ethical issues in research and publication: perceptions of health education faculty', *Health Education & Behavior*, 28(1), pp. 51-64.

Researchers need to assume responsibility in ensuring the accurate and contextualized promotion of TIP research results and findings. They need to work more closely with communication teams and experts in this regard, including in pushing back against pressure to sensationalize results. As one researcher stressed:

...we need to work closer with communications teams. Often [there are] scientists on one side and then we have the policy and advocacy groups. ...we don't work quite as closely because our expertise isn't in how to communicate this to an audience. But I think the biggest pitfall is that we lose accuracy when we don't care about the nuance. And often times scientists can be convinced that this is for the greater good, this is how we communicate it to our people, this is how the message gets out, this is our job. But I think it's really all of our responsibility to push back on that.

When use and dissemination involve a peer review process (as discussed above, see *Select presentation format and languages*) reviewers, editors and publishers share the burden of responsibility for the dissemination of accurate and relevant research data. Recognition of potentially inaccurate data reporting methods is an important part of the peer review process.²⁶⁴

Ethical questions also arise in terms of fairness and representation of data sources. As discussed above (Stage #4: Data Analysis, *Interpret patterns and findings – Interpret the data*), the voice and experiences of research participants (data sources) must be fairly represented. And while this is particularly acute in the case of trafficking victims, it is also relevant for others involved in data collection, including various types of key informants as well as data providers. This requires care in the ways in which we speak for others and how others' experiences are presented.

In summary: There is an ethical obligation to present findings accurately and fairly, not overstating conclusions or findings and to be transparent about limitations. It is important to consider the potential for harm when findings are not fair or are not accurate. Care is needed in the way that others' experiences are presented. It is also important to take more responsibility in ensuring the accurate and contextualized promotion of TIP data collection results and findings.

Ensure anonymity, confidentiality, privacy and safety

In presenting data and research, anonymity, confidentiality and privacy of research participants must be guarded. In some instances, this is about presenting information anonymously. In other cases, this may require more proactive camouflaging of identity and experiences. One TIP researcher conducting primary data collection with trafficking victims discussed how she was able to camouflage the information for a more external audience but that the identities and experiences were more identifiable to persons working closely in the country or specific organization, which heightened the need for protection:

One of the things that I've struggled with is... anonymity. So, for example, avoiding to say which country or the age, or just trying to murk things up so that we can't really identify [the person]. The issue that comes up is of course the gatekeepers (service providers- who know who was interviewed may recognize the quote.

²⁶⁴ Marco, C. and G. Larkin (2000) 'Research Ethics: Ethical Issues of Data Reporting and the Quest for Authenticity', *Academic Emergency Medicine*, 7(6), p. 693.

These protections are very important in terms of research with trafficking victims. One trafficking victim from Moldova, when asked about how to present the research results, was ambivalent about the format but stressed the importance of guarding her anonymity: “Whatever you think is best, just without anyone seeing who said what”. Guarding anonymity, confidentiality and privacy goes beyond considering personal identifiers to also consider whether information may pose risk to an individual in the victim’s family or community. For example, geographically mapping areas of origin of trafficking victims (“trafficking hotspots”) in a country or region may be identifying and pose risks, particularly in more politically constrained environments or ones with weak rule of law. It may also be the case that risk may be posed to a wider population of trafficking victims or irregular migrants. As one TIP researcher noted:

Some issues of trafficking and forced labor are highly specific to certain cultural/social groups ...there is also the risk that information about certain types of employment, employers and so on could be used to harm the wider population of insecure migrants, for example if used by authorities as intelligence to shape enforcement in particular areas.²⁶⁵

Good practice. Ensure anonymity, confidentiality, privacy and safety

Ensure the confidentiality and privacy of research participants.

Ensure that information is sufficiently anonymized.

Anonymize data from all data sources.

At the same time, while a strict level of anonymity may be required for some research, contextual information (for example, country of origin, forms of TIP, details of employers and economic sectors where exploitation takes places) may be needed to effectively convey findings.

Some research participants may not wish to be anonymous. Reflecting on the ethical challenges that emerged from one multi-country research project, one global network of NGOs noted the following:

Although many ethical guidelines and principles stress the importance of protecting the identities of participants, our researchers also faced situations where the interviewees were keen to share their experiences publicly. Indeed, such situations have also been acknowledged in some research guidelines. Some of our researchers noted that a few interviewees wanted to expose their traffickers, talked about violence from law enforcement during anti-trafficking operations and raise their voices against corruption within the government systems. When asked if they wanted anything to be excluded from the publication of the research, some interviewees requested that their names and those of their traffickers be used.²⁶⁶

This, then, introduces a raft of other challenges in terms of balancing respect for what research participants request in how their data is presented with unforeseen risks, as well as how to appropriately support decision-making around these issues.

²⁶⁵ Lewis, H. (2016) ‘Negotiating Anonymity, Informed Consent and “Illegality”’: Researching Forced Labour Experiences Among Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK’ in Siegel, D. and R. de Wildt (Eds.) *Ethical Concerns in Research on Human Trafficking*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, p. 112.

²⁶⁶ GAATW (2015) *Briefing Paper: Seeking Feedback from Trafficked Persons on Assistance Services: Principles and Ethics*. Bangkok, Thailand: Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women, pp. 3-4.

Protections are also important in terms of data collected from service providers and authorities who may be disclosing information that could compromise their professional positions or even, in some cases, their safety and well-being. This is particularly relevant in politically constrained settings, including with limited space for civil society or freedom of expression. This may also be an issue in countries where there is weak rule of law and high levels of criminality. The presentation of some data and results may pose a risk to researchers and/or the organizations or institutions engaged in data collection or research. One NGO director described the impact of publishing a small report on an emerging form of TIP in one very politically restrictive environment in Asia:

We did write a small report [on this form of TIP in that country] ...which ended up putting us into a security issue. We had to fly one of our staff out of the country [for protection].

In terms of protecting anonymity, confidentiality, privacy and safety, the use of some media – like audio and visual formats – may require additional care and attention. One trafficking victim, for example, described how the recognizability of her voice “outed” her as a trafficking victim to family and friends when her interview was aired on radio in her home country:

When I did a radio interview organized by [an assistance organization], I regretted doing that interview because my voice is recognizable and everyone can recognize my voice. People always recognize my voice easily even when I am talking on the phone or the radio so I regretted doing that interview.

While this is most obviously the case for trafficking victims, it also merits consideration in terms of key informants like government authorities, activists, community leaders and so on.

In summary: Confidentiality, anonymity and the privacy and safety of research participants must be guarded, which will require different approaches depending on the data itself. These protections are important for all research participants, whether vulnerable persons like trafficking victims or key informants such as from government and civil society.

Determine just attribution of contribution

Just attribution refers to a fair and equitable attribution of the contributions made to a data collection or research project, whether by institutional partners, data collectors or individual authors. Problems arise when an author is not acknowledged when they have made substantial contribution to a study. As one TIP expert noted:

It is bad practice at my own organization. It is official policy not to include authorship so that reports will be cited as [the organization]. However, organizations do not conduct research and write reports – individuals do – and this really should not be obscured.

Good practice. Determine just attribution of contribution

Credit and acknowledge the work done by various contributors and partners.

Do not credit persons for work that they did not do.

Published research and data collection results should include clear credit and acknowledgement of the work done by the range of contributors and partners, with

recognition in line with the nature and extent of that contribution. This would include acknowledging contributions from data collectors, data providers, data sources as well as those involved in respondent recruitment and other related tasks (for example, in a foreword or acknowledgments section). Attribution of authorship, however, implies a more substantial contribution to the research or results. Co-authorship, for instance, implies having been engaged in the process overall (design, data collection, analysis and drafting); it would not necessarily extend to all of those involved in data collection alone. The acknowledgments section may be a more appropriate place to identify colleagues who did contribute to the study but were not analysts or authors.²⁶⁷

In summary: Different persons will have differently contributed to a data collection project or research report. It is important these individuals are appropriately credited and acknowledged; this credit should be specific to but not exceed their actual contributions to the project.

Guard the “best interests of the child” in data use, presentation and dissemination

Guarding the “best interests of the child” means that the needs and interests of the child supersede any needs of the data collection effort, as discussed above (see Stage #1: Design and Planning, *Develop or apply legal and ethical guidelines and protocols – Apply child protection principles including the “best interests of the child”*). Of particular concern at this stage is if and how children may be harmed from the use, presentation or dissemination of data that they have shared. Key in this determination is that the use of research results does not contribute to a worsened situation for children. This particularly includes questions of anonymity and confidentiality. It is also critically important that the child and their guardian have provided informed consent to how the data will be used and presented in any outputs.

Good practice. Guard the “best interests of the child” in data use, presentation and dissemination

Assess if and how children may be harmed from the use, presentation or dissemination of data.

Ensure that the results do not contribute to a worsened situation for children.

Guard anonymity and confidentiality of child respondents in data presentation.

Ensure informed consent from the child and parent/guardian in the use and presentation of the data.

In summary: The “best interests of the child” principle is of key importance in the use, presentation and dissemination of data and research involving children. Assessing if and how children may be harmed from the use, presentation and dissemination of data is of particular concern. It is also critical to guard anonymity and confidentiality of child respondents in data presentation and to ensure that the use, presentation and dissemination of data do not contribute to a worsened situation for children.

²⁶⁷ Music, I. (2018) ‘The Malversations of Authorship - Current Status in Academic Community and How to Prevent It’, *ACTA Informatica Medica: Journal of Academy of Medical Sciences of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 26(1), pp. 4-9; Price, J.H., J.A. Drake and R. Islam (2001) ‘Selected ethical issues in research and publication: perceptions of health education faculty’, *Health Education & Behavior*, 28(1), pp. 51-64; and Smith, E., M. Hunt and Z. Mater (2014) ‘Authorship ethics in global health research partnerships between researchers from low or middle income countries and high income countries’, *BMC Medical Ethics*.



Measure reach and impact

An important aspect of dissemination is reaching the target audiences and end users to ultimately enhance the knowledge base on human trafficking and to influence policy and program responses. This requires measuring the impact of research and data collection on either knowledge or action. As one researcher explained:

... I would also say not just what kind of question are we trying to answer, but what is the outcome that we want to try to achieve? ... if we're estimating prevalence is this going to be something that we want to bring to a particular government's attention? Or more generally to the world? How do we disseminate in a way that's most effective? And I think this is where science, we're being challenged now more and more to not just generate good evidence, but be able to somehow demonstrate that there's impact of that. You say, "Well we published a study". Okay so what!... Did it do anything? Did it change anything? "What do you mean change anything? That's not our job!" Did somebody pick it up and use it? Did it get cited in testimony? Did it get included in media discussions? And that doesn't always mean positively, it could be maybe a source of heat, rather than light, but at least it's getting somebody's attention and hopefully with some sort of potential positive outcome.

Measuring reach and impact is not often part of this final stage. Insufficient work is done to assess how data is used and what impact research findings have. As one TIP expert argued:

In some ways I'm not sure anyone knows how this data is being used. we're putting it online and patting ourselves on the back, but are we really doing a massive landscape of analysis of who is doing what? Who needs to get what? Sending the manual packages saying, "this is something that you need, here it is in your language". I'm not sure that we're doing that.

By contrast, one TIP expert described one project in which measuring research impact and reach was part of the overall project design and implementation but noted also that this was more the exception than the rule:

One thing I have never found in any other project I've been involved in is the impact monitoring system that we had for the regional project. It did incorporate some research of the indicators trying to understand to what extent was the research successful according to the objectives that were set. And also, what was the impact of the research on the readers, the audience and our target groups. This also relates to advocacy. But the distribution of the publication also had some [efforts]. We tried to reach out to them [the target audience], for example, to understand what they learned from it. And it was the only

Good practice. Measure reach and impact

Disseminate results in ways that will reach and impact the knowledge or work of the target audience.

Identify different methods to assess impact and reach.

Ensure adequate resources (human and financial) are available to undertake this measurement.

Include the measurement of impact and reach in the design of the project.

time that I've seen that there was an attempt to go back to the target group, particularly to the children and parents as well as community members who had taken the time to speak to researchers to give them some feedback about the result and outputs of the research and also how the information was being used.

The same TIP expert acknowledged the costs of measuring impact but also stressed its importance. These costs need to be taken into account as part of the design and planning and prioritized as an integral part of the overall project:

This was very expensive. ...if you look at just the national staff hours, travel, workshops, devices, everything that was needed. But it is the only way to do quality research especially for NGOs, because many could not be in a position to afford that and may still have more knowledge, more contacts in the field than other international big agenc[ies] who do not even have the opportunity to access the target group.

There are different ways to measure impact and reach. Traditionally, the impact of academic and peer published research has been measured by citation counts. An alternative metric similar to counting references in journal articles is measuring the topicality of the dataset on social media platforms. However, many of the tools available for measuring the impact of data vary widely in what and how they measure.²⁶⁸ In addition, these measures focus largely on the impact of research and findings to the knowledge base around TIP. As important is measuring the impact of research and data collection on policy and programmatic interventions. For example, process tracing (a qualitative research approach used to investigate causal inference) can be used when research is intended for policy advocacy. This way of measuring impact involves engaging with relevant stakeholders after changes have occurred to determine what contribution the research output made to these changes.²⁶⁹

In measuring impact and reach, it is also important to consider the nature of the impact (for example, whether for individual victims, communities, institutions, or society). To some extent this will follow on from the parameters of the project itself, linked to the initial framing of the project in terms of the data collection topic, purpose and scope (see Stage #1: Design and Planning, *Define data collection topic, purpose and scope*).

Professionals involved in data collection expressed a keen interest in their information and findings having sufficient reach among people working on TIP and having an impact on their work. One TIP researcher described her concerns about how to effect change through dissemination:

Ultimately I struggle with my research not being able to change anything immediately or long-term for the people who have entrusted me with their experiences. ...and that tension of making research that asks organizations to be more accountable, while not really being confident that they have any need to change anything, is a little bit hard. And I guess there the incentive structures of where to publish, that encourages you to publish in places that are going to be read by or influence those organizations that you're writing about.

Researchers and data collectors (and those involved in data collection projects) have an important role to play in enhancing users' interest in, and use of, the findings, including being responsible or accountable for the extent to which research is well positioned for use. However, impact and reach are not solely in the hands of those engaged in research and data collection. Research uptake, use, influence and impact depend on the interaction of multiple

²⁶⁸ Ball, A. and M. Duke (2015). 'How to Track the Impact of Research Data with Metrics', *DCC How-to Guides*. Edinburgh, United Kingdom: Digital Curation Centre.

²⁶⁹ See, for example, Oxfam GB (2013) *Process Tracing: Draft Protocol*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxfam GB.

actors, agencies and socio-political circumstances.²⁷⁰ Thus, another part of this process is to equip practitioners and policymakers with the skills and knowledge to leverage findings for programmatic and policy change. One TIP researcher described how currently data is not being sufficiently leveraged:

The purpose of data collection is not entirely clear and people are really stuck in their jobs in that they're not allowed to go beyond that... I asked a few [government institutions] questions about how is data analyzed for policy purposes. Are these figures being used strategically? With the police, for example, are you using the data to identify maybe a greater number of people being trafficked in certain provinces? And the answer to that question was "no". The staff don't know how, it's not really in their job descriptions, they're not being asked to do it. And they don't really know how that data would be used anyway, for policy purposes. So at the moment the figures are not being used strategically, I don't think. They're basically just being "total number of" and that's the end of the story. And that's due to, yeah, staff not being asked to do it, lack of training and I'd say as well maybe supervisors just not being aware of how data might be usefully used. Or maybe in some countries just a lack of incentive or a lack of will to use data that way.

This highlights the importance of disseminating and using TIP data collection results that can impact the knowledge or work of the target audience. To do so requires the development and implementation of effective tools and processes for measuring the impact and reach of the data being collected. This, in turn, requires that adequate resources, both human and financial, are available to undertake this measurement and that this element of measurement is included and prioritized by funders and implementers in the design and planning of the data collection project.

In summary: Dissemination ultimately aims to enhance the wider knowledge base on human trafficking and to influence anti-trafficking professionals. This requires measuring the impact of research and data collection on either knowledge or action. But measuring the reach and impact of disseminated materials is often not part of this final stage in many data collection efforts, not least because of the costs involved. More attention, time and resources are needed to measure the impact and reach of the data being collected and shared.

²⁷⁰ Ofir, Z. et al. (2016) *Research Quality Plus: A Holistic Approach to Evaluating Research*. Ottawa, Canada: International Development Research Centre, pp. 4-5.

Conclusion

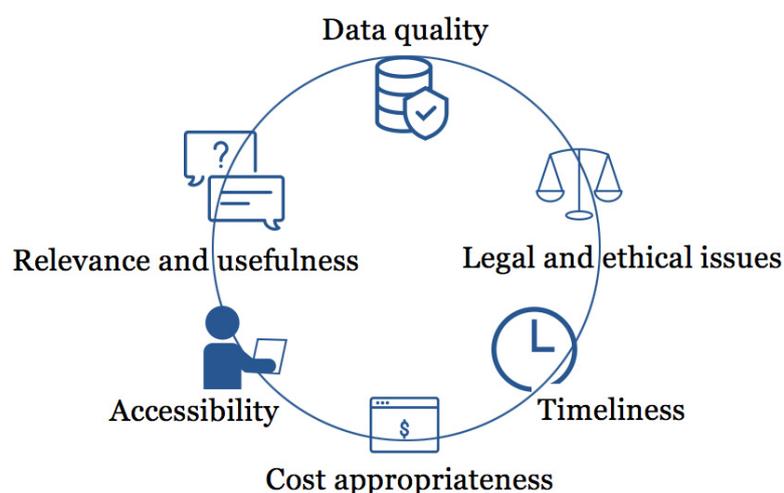
Until quite recently, data collection has lagged behind other aspects of a comprehensive response associated with combating TIP. The development of anti-trafficking policy and practice has not generally been underpinned by empirically sound, reliable data and analysis. Government, international organizations and non-governmental organizations have often collected and maintained TIP data in isolation from one another. Even within governments, data collection efforts have not always been coordinated nor data shared between departments or sections to maximize the effectiveness of a country's anti-trafficking response.

It is perhaps useful to situate this discussion in historical context, in which definitions and terminology were uncertain, access to data sources and data providers was limited and constrained, legal and ethical frameworks underdeveloped and methods and approaches were underdeveloped. As one TIP researcher observed of the situation not so long ago:

If you go back to 2005, 2006, even before, a lot of studies were based on open source information. Even international organizations were using open source [data]. Basically, a case that was published on a website, by media that was referring to primary information that was coming from institutions, law enforcement, or NGOs and maybe this information was already reported by someone else. ...At that moment in time, most of the publications were based on perception or opinions or the cases reported by sources that were not really clear. ...the information that was coming from a website, from the media, from reports, even UN agencies or the [government reports] it was impossible to identify the original sources.

As such, while many challenges and limitations remain, the field of TIP data collection and research has advanced substantially. It is also important to recognize that this is still a new field in many ways and much more needs to be done to build a solid knowledge base and to continue to develop this over time.

The good practice criteria discussed in this publication offer guidance in terms of how TIP data collection may be approached. These criteria consist of data quality; relevance and usefulness; accessibility; cost appropriateness; timeliness; and legal and ethical issues.



At the same time, and as discussed throughout this study, not all criteria are equally relevant for all TIP data collection or research initiatives. Different criteria will be of varying

relevance for different organizations or institutions as well as the specific field of work. The extent to which criteria are relevant may also vary according to the different situations and contexts in which data collection tasks place and the different perspectives of data collection participants. What constitutes good practice for one organization or institution working on one area of anti-trafficking work in one country or setting will not necessarily be considered good practice by another working with entirely different parameters. As such, while the above criteria offer useful guidance, attention also needs to be paid to the wider context and dynamics of data collection, namely with regard to different field of work; different purposes and goals of data collection the perspective of data collection participants; and different situations and contexts.



Different fields of work



Different purposes and goals of data collection



The perspective of data collection participants



Different situations and contexts

In light of this, good practice in TIP data collection is not just one thing and is also not stationary; it is multifaceted and continuously evolving. There cannot be just one solution or one model that is used to answer the wide range of questions and issues surrounding TIP. And no one method or approach can ever offer a full and comprehensive picture of TIP. Rather it will be through the combination of data collection efforts in different locations globally that we will be able to better understand the complexity and variation of trafficking in persons and what constitute effective anti-trafficking responses. Such long-term efforts, conducted by different organizations and institutions in different locations and from different perspectives and professional fields, together contribute to knowledge production around TIP, which ultimately aims to have an impact and to facilitate change. It is the responsibility of all of us working in the anti-trafficking field, whether researchers, data collectors, practitioners, policymakers or donors, to work toward a solid knowledge base on trafficking in persons, to improve responses through the application of good practice criteria and, above all else, to do no harm.

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Annex #1. Glossary



accuracy

the degree to which data correctly estimates or describes the quantities or characteristics it is designed to measure



administrative data

information collected primarily for administrative purposes (for example, for registration, transaction and record keeping in the context of operational work)



anonymity

the condition of being anonymous (when an individual cannot be identified)



“best interests of the child”

when all actions concerning children take, as a primary consideration, needs and interests of the child



bias

an error or influence that provides a distortion in the results of a study; bias can occur at any stage of research or data collection



child protection

the responsibilities and activities undertaken to prevent or to stop children being abused or ill-treated

**confidentiality**

protecting an individual's privacy by restricting access to information about that individual

**confirmation bias**

the tendency to look for patterns in data that confirm preconceived notions about connections and explanations

**conflict of interest**

when an individual, organization or institution has multiple interests and serving one interest will influence (or even work against) another interest, impacting the ability to be impartial

**convenience sampling**

a sampling strategy when cases are selected primarily because they are available and accessible

**cross-sectional research**

research with one sample at a single point in time

**data**

information on variables of interest

**data analysis**

the search for understanding and meaning through patterns, trends, ideas, themes and even contradictions

**data archiving**

the retention of data that needs to be kept for a long period of time, but that is not necessarily important for current activities

**data cleaning**

the one-off process of detecting and addressing the errors within a dataset

**data collection**

the process of systematically gathering and measuring information on variables of interest to answer a data collection question

**data collection approach**

the overarching framework or strategy for data collection, which includes different data collection methods (qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods)

**data collection method**

the specific technique or procedure used to collect data within a data collection approach (qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods)

**data collector**

an individual who gathers and measures data in relation to a specific data collection project

**data disposal**

erasing and/or destroying data



data editing

reviewing data for consistency, detecting errors and outliers and ensuring accuracy and adequacy of the data



data entry

the act of entering information into data collection formats and addressing errors



data handling

the process of ensuring that data is stored, archived or disposed of in a safe and secure manner



data maintenance

on-going correction and verification of data



data management

control, protection, delivery and enhancement of data



data ownership

possession of and responsibility for data



data provider

individuals, organizations or institutions who provide data to a data collection effort



data quality

whether data is able to serve its purpose in a given context



data reduction

condensing data by organizing and summarizing it



data sharing

making data available to others



data source

source of the information being collected



data storage

recording (storage) of data in a storage medium



data subject

any person whose personal data is being collected, held or processed



data transfer

transmission of data from one entity (individual, organization or institution) to another



data validation

process by which invalid data is rejected



database

collection of data that is organized to provide efficient retrieval



dataset

collection of data on a specific topic



deductive analysis

analysis that sets out to confirm or disprove a general hypothesis



double counting

when a unit or case is counted more than once in a sample



duplicate cases

when the same case is accidentally entered more than once in a dataset



end user

the individual or entity that ultimately uses the outputs of the data collection effort



gatekeeper

a person who facilitates or arbitrates access to data sources



geo-data

computerized geographical data stored in a format usable with a geographic information system (GIS) for spatial data visualization



good practice

a process, technique or methodology that has been shown to meet a set of criteria



inductive analysis

finding patterns, themes and categories in the data



information bias

when information is measured, collected or interpreted inaccurately (also called observation bias or measurement bias)



informed consent

the process by which individuals, organizations and/or institutions are fully informed about and voluntarily agree to take part in data collection



key informant

an individual who provides in-depth information based on unique knowledge of a topic and/or professional expertise

**longitudinal research**

data collection from the same sample repeatedly over a period of time

**metadata**

data providing information about one or more aspects of the data itself

**misrepresentation**

failure to faithfully reflect the nature and range of findings

**mixed methods data collection**

data collection that combines qualitative and quantitative approaches and methods

**nonprobability sampling**

a method of sampling wherein it is not known which individual from the population will be selected as a sample (examples include convenience sampling, snowball sampling and quota sampling)

**overrepresentation**

when some individuals have a greater probability than others of being included in a sample or when disproportionate attention is paid to an issue or topic

**participant (respondent) bias**

when a participant responds in ways that influence the data (for example, what they think is the right answer, what is socially acceptable, to please the researcher) or when the participant does not remember or recall things correctly



personal data

any information that can be used on its own or with other information to identify an individual



pilot testing

a small-scale trial where a few respondents are engaged to test the research instrument and comment on the mechanics of the research tool



pre-testing

a process that evaluates whether those from whom data is collected interpret questions in a consistent manner, as intended by the data collector, and judges the appropriateness of each question



precision

the depth of knowledge encoded by the data



prevention

efforts to prevent trafficking in persons from occurring



primary data

data collected directly by the researcher or data collector



privacy

the right of an individual not have personal information revealed to others



probability sampling

a method of sampling in which the subjects of the population have an equal opportunity to be selected as a representative sample (examples include simple random sampling, systematic sampling, cluster sampling and stratified random sampling)



prosecution

the overarching legal response to human trafficking including, but not limited to, criminal justice prosecution of traffickers



prosecution-related data

data that supports the efforts of policymakers and practitioners in their prosecutorial efforts as well as to assess the impact of the criminal justice response



protection

the various stages and steps involved in protecting a victim of human trafficking, including identification, assistance and reintegration



protection-related data

data related to trafficking victims and their trafficking experiences as well as their protection needs and experiences



purposeful sampling

the cases in the sample are selected based on specific criteria that will help illuminate the issue being analyzed



qualitative data collection

data collection that gathers non-numerical data and that aims to explore, describe, or explain



quality control activities

activities that serve to preserve data integrity and ensure the validity of data collection results



quantitative data collection

data collection that measures and assess different variables and tests relationships between variables in order to reveal patterns, correlations, or causal relationships



reliability

the repeatability of data collection findings and their accessibility to other data collectors (that is, whether another data collector under the same circumstances would make the same observation leading to the same conclusions)



representative

the distribution of different variables (for example, age, gender, trafficking experiences or other relevant points) observed in the sample are the same as would be observed in the population of interest



research data

the deliberate and discrete collection of data on a specific issue in order to answer a specific question or address a specific hypothesis.



research participant

an individual who participates in a particular study (also referred to as a respondent)



researcher bias

when the researcher influences the data in the way it is collected (what the researcher observes, what questions are asked and how) as well as how data is analyzed, interpreted and presented



respondent

an individual who participates in a particular study (also referred to as a research participant)



respondent bias

the effect of non-responses on data collection estimates



respondent burden

the degree to which respondents experience their participation as too stressful and/or time consuming



respondent driven sampling (RDS)

a series of methods that are used in data collection with “hard-to-reach” populations where network links from sampled members of the target population are followed (traced) to select subsequent population members to add to the sample



response bias

different cognitive effects that can lead to less accurate or less truthful disclosure from respondents



response rates

the number of individuals approached as potential respondents who declined (actively or passively) to participate in data collection



sample

a sub-set or sub-group from the population that is to be examined

**sampling frame**

a list of the total population of interest from which a random sample can be drawn

**secondary data**

data that has already been collected and can be used for analysis

**selection bias**

when the process of sampling (the selection of individuals, groups or data for analysis) introduces bias into the study, linked to what is included and omitted (also called selection effect)

**sensitive data**

personal data that may be used in a discriminatory way against an individual and as such should be treated with greater care and be subject to more stringent restrictions

**snowball sampling**

a sampling method used in data collection in which respondents refer those they know, these individuals in turn refer those they know and so on

**social desirability response bias**

the tendency of some respondents to answer questions in a manner that they deem to be more socially acceptable than their “true” answer in order to project a favorable image of themselves and to avoid receiving negative evaluations

**spatially randomized sampling**

a form of sampling used to survey a random sample of a population when up-to-date and accurate geographic or census data is not available



street-involved children

children for whom the street is a habitual abode and/or source of livelihood



target audience

a particular group at which research or data collection is aimed



thick description

the detailed account of human behavior in which the researcher describes the behavior as well as patterns of cultural and social relationships



TIP data

a set of values of qualitative or quantitative variables on the topic of trafficking in persons



TIP data collection

the overarching process of gathering and assigning meaning to data on various aspects of trafficking in persons



TIP expert

a professional with expertise in TIP (for example, as prosecutors, police, social workers, medical personnel and so on)

TIP

trafficking in persons

the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation



triangulation

a process to validate data, such as methods triangulation (using different research methods to collect data on one topic to ensure validity), triangulation of data sources (using multiple data sources within the same method and approach to address the same question) and analyst triangulation (engaging different analysts or different teams of analysts in analyzing the data)



undercounting

recording fewer units of analysis (for example, a trafficking victim or a trafficking case) than actually exist



unit (or case)

the individual or group that the data collection effort is interested in studying (for example, a trafficking victim, a human trafficker, a trafficking case, a criminal investigation, an assistance pathway)



validity

the accuracy and trustworthiness of instruments, data and findings and the extent to which they possess the quality of being sound or true, as far as can be judged

Annex #2. Overview of the stages, steps, considerations and good practice in TIP data collection

Stage	Steps and Considerations	Further Steps and Considerations	Good Practice
 <p>Stage #1: Design and Planning</p>	 <p>Define data collection topic, purpose and scope</p>	<p>Frame the topic, issue(s) or questions(s) of the data collection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a relevant topic, issue(s) or question(s) for TIP data collection. • Ensure the topic, issue(s) or question(s) are sufficiently specific to guide the data collection process. • Consider topics that address an issue of interest, a specific need, an identified problem, a knowledge gap, an emergent issue or a form of TIP.
		<p>Clarify the purpose of the data collection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the need for the specific type of data collection being proposed. • Assess the purpose of the data collection (<i>the why</i>). • Consider how data collection will build the knowledge base or inform policy and practice. • Ensure that the purpose for which data is collected is relevant and useful. • Assess what exists already and avoid duplication of on-going or past efforts.
		<p>Consider the scope of the data collection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the scope of the data collection. • Ensure the scope of data collection aligns with available time and resources (both human and financial). • Take into account resources, available time and workload of organizations and institutions cooperating on data collection. • Be realistic about what questions the data can (and cannot) answer. • Focus on high quality data with a limited scope, over wider scope with low quality data.

	Formulate data collection questions	Clarify expectations related to data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify with funders what can be achieved with available funds and time. • Clarify expectations with stakeholders before data collection to avoid misunderstandings later on. • Engage a third party to inform technical decisions between the funder and research team, if needed. • Do not move forward with data collection when funder requirements do not align with good practice. • Clarify expectations and relationships with other stakeholders about scope and outcomes. • Consider and address data ownership, data sharing and data use from the outset. • Delineate roles, rights and responsibilities of different individuals and organizations involved vis-à-vis data ownership and sharing. • Consult and adhere to legal requirements and ethical standards around data ownership and sharing.
		Ensure definitional clarity and precision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin with clear and precise definitions of the concepts to be studied. • Consider and address competing or conflicting terminology. • Understand how definitions may differ depending on context and field of work. • Be aware of the sometimes minute differences in the way words are used or interpreted. • Train all staff on definitions to ensure data integrity.
		Operationalize definitions and terminology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Break definitions down into parts to translate them into practical language. • Contextualize definitions and properly convey what is meant to research participants. • Consider how to operationalize terms and definitions across languages and cultures. • Use terminology that is clear and precise, but not offensive or confusing. • Be careful and sensitive in definitional formulations but do not obscure the purpose of data collection or compromise informed consent.

		Formulate data collection questions linked to topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be clear about <i>what</i> questions the data collection is answering. • Consider <i>why</i> questions are being asked; why is this a relevant and useful research question? • Assess how best to answer data collection questions. • Assess if the questions are researchable. • Consider what data is necessary to answer data collection questions. • Determine if the data needed to answer data collection questions is legal and ethical to collect. • Weigh up the value of a data collection question against its potential for harm.
	 Review existing literature and research	Find existing literature and research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify what literature exists on the data collection topic. • Ask TIP professionals for recommendations for research and literature. • Conduct online searches – on the internet and through library search engines. • Visit libraries and resource centers to find research. • Consult grey literature as well as academic research. • Conduct media searches to identify new research and data that may be publicized in media outlets. • Search for literature in as many languages as possible. • Allocate time and funds for the translation of relevant literature as much as possible.
		Systematically review and assess relevant literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach the literature systematically, linked to topic, scope and purpose. • Assess the research collected in terms of methodology and the quality of the study; include only robust data collection efforts. • Be alert to ideological positions and orientations in the research. • Avoid duplicating past or on-going data collection efforts. • Allocate adequate time and resources to conduct the literature review.
		Assess different data collection approaches and methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the different data collection approaches and methods. • Determine whether data collection should be quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods. • Identify what approach and method can best answer the questions.

	 <p>Select a data collection approach and method (quantitative, qualitative and mixed approaches and methods)</p>	Choose a data collection approach and method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be clear about the questions that data collection is attempting to answer. • Identify the best approach for the specific topic and questions, whether qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods. • Consider longitudinal data collection and/or participatory data collection if appropriate for answering the data collection questions. • Identify the best method within the selected approach to answer the data collection questions.
		Ensure skills in the relevant approach and method when selecting researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure staff has the needed skills to conduct data collection appropriately and with rigor. • Leverage partnerships with researchers and organizations who have requisite skills and expertise. • Ensure time and resources are available to train and supervise staff in the approach and method.
		Determine how the approach and method are influenced by the specific context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weigh up what is acceptable and feasible in a specific context and relative to the specific topic. • Consider whether the context has changed in a way that will affect the use of a particular approach and method.
		Consider participation and involvement of stakeholders and end users in data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify possible end users (for example, trafficking victims and anti-trafficking professionals). • Consider if and how a participatory approach is appropriate for the specific data collection effort. • Identify in what ways and at what stages participation may be appropriate. • Be open to the new perspectives and issues that participatory approaches may offer. • Consider and assess the balance between end user participation and methodological rigor and precision. • Ensure that participation is ethically and sensitively undertaken. • Ensure that participation is meaningful and involves a shift in power relations among those involved.
	Assess possible data sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify different data sources relevant for the specific data collection topic questions. • Assess whether primary or secondary data is best suited for the data collection question. 	

	 <p>Identify data sources and data providers</p>	Determine access to data sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify what data sources are possible to access. • Consider access to data sources from a legal and ethical perspective. • Adjust data collection questions and approaches to the accessibility of data sources. • Consider required resources in terms of access to data sources. • Identify barriers in accessing different data sources. • Explore how to overcome barriers to access, when legal and ethical to do so.
		Asses the appropriateness of data sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess what data sources are (and are not) appropriate to answer the specific question or data collection topic. • Identify as many appropriate data sources as possible that can help to answer the specific question or data collection topic.
		Identify biases and limitations in data sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the bias and limitations of each data source. • Be transparent about the limitations and biases of all data sources in how data is analyzed and presented. • Consider the role of gatekeepers in creating bias or limitations. • Consider issues of representativeness in creating bias or limitations (for example, overrepresentation, undercounting or the impact of individuals who decline to participate in data collection). • Be clear about the impact of limitations on findings in how data is presented.
	Apply the principle of “do no harm”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the potential for harm in the data collection process. • Asses the likelihood of harm to data sources and safeguard against any negative impacts. • Implement procedures that mitigate harm, wherever possible. • Take into account that the obligation to “do no harm” may mean not collecting data. 	

	 Develop or apply legal and ethical guidelines and protocols	Ensure voluntary and informed consent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide full details of the data collection process and options to withdraw. • Ensure participants understand what participation entails, including risks and benefits. • Establish protocols for voluntary and informed consent. • Ensure there are no elements of coercion in the recruitment of respondents. • Provide time for respondents to consider their participation. • Anticipate and address what aspects of data collection efforts may compromise consent. • Provide contact information for those responsible for data collection in case of any questions or follow-up issues.
		Guard anonymity and confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish protocols to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. • Identify legal requirements in the handling of personal and sensitive data, including any additional protections that must be ensured. • Implement a data security strategy to protect confidential information and avoid unforeseen data usage or disclosure. • Train all staff in the data security strategy. • Assess legal requirements for mandatory reporting.
		Consider the safety and well-being of research participants and data collectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess any potential safety and security issues posed by how the data collection is designed. • Assess whether the data collection poses a threat to data collectors. • Consider the safety and well-being of research participants involved in data collection. • Consider the safety and well-being of data collectors in planning data collection.

		Apply child protection principles including the “best interests of the child”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply the principle of child protection in all data collection; the “best interests of the child” should be a primary consideration. • Take into account the views of the child, family members, safety concerns, the importance of family and the development needs and evolving capacities of the child. • Take into account the specific features of gaining informed consent or informed assent with children. • Ensure that child protection measures are built into data collection initiatives. • Determine what mandatory reporting requirements exist and how these will be met. • Consult legislation, laws and ethical standards in the development of an appropriate protocol for child protection.
		Implement procedures for review and adaptation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in on-going dialogue, reflection and adjustment on legal and ethical issues over the course of data collection. • Train and supervise staff to identify legal and ethical issues that arise and how to handle them.
	 <p>Prepare a work plan for data collection</p>	Prepare a work plan for data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a work plan to guide the data collection effort. • Define main goals, associated activities and set milestones and deadlines. • Anticipate costs, both human and financial, as part of work planning. • Anticipate the on-going operating costs of technology, including technical assistance. • Align data collection with the available time frame. • Create a plan for and anticipate costs of dissemination of outputs to different target audiences. • Build review and reflection processes into work planning.

 <p>Stage #2: Data Collection</p>	 <p>Select data collectors, as relevant and appropriate</p>	<p>Ensure technical competence and skills in data collection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select data collectors with skills and experience in the research approach and method, where possible. • Access technical expertise where needed to assist in data collection. • Access technical expertise where needed to conduct training in data collection.
		<p>Ensure knowledge of and sensitivity about TIP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select data collectors who are knowledgeable and sensitive about TIP. • Select data collectors who are knowledgeable about the topic being studied. • Select data collectors who are familiar with the specific and local context. • Ensure that data collectors are sensitized on the issue of TIP. • Weigh the advantages and disadvantages of engaging anti-trafficking professionals as data collectors. • Assess and mitigate power dynamics that come into play between data collectors and respondents.
	 <p>Select a sample and implement a sampling strategy</p>	<p>Consider representativeness and validity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider what sampling is better suited to the data collection project. • Be clear about what population the data is and is not representative of. • Avoid generalizing conclusions to a wider population than the sample and sampling strategy permit. • Be clear and transparent about what particular samples represent.
		<p>Assess access to a sample</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify safe and ethical ways to access the data collection sample. • Identify gatekeepers who can assist in accessing the sample. • Allocate sufficient time and resources to access the sample. • Consider biases and limitations that emerge from the nature of access and the sample. • Consider when and where data is collected and be transparent about how this influences the data.

 Select, design and test data collection tools	Use or modify existing data collection tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify existing tools from similar data collection efforts. • Assess the existing tool for possible adaptation to the specific data collection effort and with different data sources. • Adapt the existing data collection tools, if possible. • Ensure that any existing or modified tools are accompanied by guidance and adequate skills. • Adapt tools to the specific context, language and data sources.
	Design new data collection tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop data collection tools that are appropriate in nature and scope for the project and data sources. • Ensure tools are able to collect sufficient and relevant information for the project. • Align the time needed to complete the tool with the time that data sources or data providers have available. • Ensure tools align with the capacities and resources of those collecting data. • Design tools with attention to sensitivities around gender, social equity and other power dynamics. • Consider the translation of data collection questions into other languages and dialects.
	Develop guidelines for data collectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop guidelines for data collectors in the implementation of data collection tools. • Guidelines should be specific to the data collection tool. • Develop guidelines for secondary data collection as well as for primary data collection. • Ensure that guidelines provide information about how data is to be documented. • Provide guidance on how to manage any issues that may arise in administering the tool.

		Prepare explanatory information and referral materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare explanatory information about the data collection project and all aspects of the how data collection will be conducted. • Present explanatory information in a clear and accessible way. • Include details about informed consent and options to withdraw from participation. • Include contact details for the agency or institution conducting data collection in case any follow-up questions arise. • Present explanatory information in written form so that the participant can keep and refer back as needed. • Verbally explain the information material when a participant is not literate. • Tailor explanatory information to the age, maturity, language and education of the participant. • Develop written referral information to be given to participants. • Communicate any limits of confidentiality to participants before starting data collection.
		Test data collection tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test all tools and revise or adjust as needed. • Be open to multiple rounds of testing, if needed. • Do not let time constraints prevent testing and piloting of tools. • Test the translation of tools and adjust as needed. • Test the tool with the specific target group; test with respect to culture, age, gender, etc.
		Consider the use of technology in designing data collection tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify technology options that could support or enhance data collection tools. • Asses and weigh any limitations of using a technological option. • Review legislation to ensure that any use of technology is legal and ensure adequate protections. • Consider any possible ethical issues or risks with the use of the technology.

	 Develop a data collection manual	Develop a data collection manual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a data collection manual that outlines the process of data collection. • Consider developing multiple data collection manuals if the data collection effort includes multiple stakeholders. • Delineate instructions and guidelines for all aspects of data collection. • Include data collection tools, procedures, legal and ethical protocols in the data collection manual. • Revise and update the data collection manual over the course of data collection.
	 Refine legal and ethical guidelines and protocols for data collection	Ensure informed consent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and address any barriers to informed consent with research participants. • Anticipate and explain any potential risks from participation to respondents, particularly in light of social media and other platforms. • Be clear about what participation will and will not mean as part of consent procedures. • Assess whether it is more suitable to use verbal or written consent.
		Implement guidelines and protocols for contacting data providers and participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish clear and rigorous guidelines and protocols for contacting participants. • Share clear explanatory information with participants in advance of data collection. • Ensure that gatekeepers fully understand and adhere to recruitment criteria. • Consider and adjust the recruitment approach when it is not followed in practice.
		Ensure anonymity and confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be vigilant about ensuring anonymity and confidentiality in the data collection process. • Address threats to anonymity and confidentiality in the way that data is collected and processed. • Educate data collection staff on the risks of breaching anonymity and confidentiality. • Ensure that respondents are aware of and consent to any limits of confidentiality.

		Assess when data collection reveals risk or abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult national legislation on requirements and procedures when respondents are at risk. • Develop a protocol to address risk or abuse, to the highest level of protections. • Take necessary action if a respondent discloses a need for protection in the context of data collection. • Consult with the respondent about what steps may be taken in situations of risk • Ensure that all data collectors are aware of the procedures to address risk and mandatory reporting requirements. • Adapt practice to ensure the protection of respondents, as needed.
		Support referrals for assistance and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect detailed information about various services and referral options. • Revise and adapt referral information over the course of data collection. • When needed, take a proactive role in facilitating the referral process. • Anticipate and manage respondents' expectations.
		Guard the "best interests of the child" during data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify issues that may undermine the "best interests of the child". • Ensure that children or their parents/guardians have a means of recourse when problems arise.
	 <p>Carry out training and on-going supervision in data collection</p>	Train and supervise data collectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train staff on the overall data collection project and their role within it. • Provide training on human trafficking and the particular topic being studied, including definitions and terms. • Provide training on using the specific data collection tools. • Regularly review and debrief with data collection teams. • Address any issues that arise over the course of data collection.

		Train and supervise translators, Interpreters, transcribers and support staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify professional translators and interpreters. • Work with translators and interpreters to ensure high quality translation. • Provide training to translators, interpreters, transcribers and support staff when needed. • Train data collectors to work effectively with an interpreter or translator. • Establish mechanisms for quality control in terms of language. • Ensure all staff adhere to legal and ethical requirements. • Train and supervise transcribers and support staff and ensure ethical and legal adherence.
	 <p>Document the data collection process</p>	Document the data collection process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document the data collection process to ensure data integrity. • Document data collection processes to allow for later analysis, if appropriate. • Implement quality control mechanisms.
	 <p>Revisit work plan and adjust if needed</p>	Revisit work plan and adjust if needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisit the work plan and adjust if needed. • Make revisions when needed or withdraw from data collection efforts if circumstances require it.

 <p>Stage #3: Data Storage, Maintenance and Management</p>	 <p>Consider options in setting up a database</p>	<p>Assess the best system</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the database aligns with the needs of the organization or institution. • Ensure the database aligns with the goals of data collection or research. • Make sure that the database is usable and accessible. • Provide options for technical support to ensure the database is manageable and accessible. • Choose a technological option that fits with needs and purpose of data collection. • Consider if a simple, low-tech solution is sufficient for one's needs. • Take into account infrastructure, resources and technical capacity when considering technological solutions. • Consider a multi-staged approach or options for piloting the database. • Utilize technological expertise in design and planning of the database. • Ensure the database adheres to relevant legislation and ethical standards.
		<p>Determine the appropriate system for resources and capacities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate adequate and appropriate human and financial resources. • Factor in the total costs of implementing a database, including personnel time. • Assess resources and capacities at the outset, including availability of resources over time. • Develop a system that is manageable in terms of costs and staff time. • Consult with partners about their available time and resources to provide data into the database. • Assess technical capacities of staff as part of design. • Assess available technical tools and skills to support the system, including over time.

		Ensure adequate time, planning and sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate adequate time and resources to design a suitable database. • Start simple and revise the database over time. • Plan for the sustainability of the database beyond the duration of a project. • Design the database such that it can be updated and expanded over time, as needed.
	 <p>Ensure quality in data entry</p>	Entering data and addressing errors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and implement quality control measures to address errors. • Ensure quality control activities suitable for the data collection project and approach.
		Ensure training and supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide robust on-going training to staff involved in data entry and processing. • Conduct on-going training, particularly when staff changes. • Tailor training to different levels of proficiency. • Assess the effectiveness of training over time and make changes as needed. • Provide supervision and oversight of staff conducting data entry and processing.
		Consider data entry and processing in different languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and address potential errors in data entry due to language. • Allocate adequate time for data entry and processing given language barriers. • Check for precision in data entry when working in different languages. • Take into account different levels of language proficiency and how this impacts data entry.
	 <p>Establish procedures for data editing (validation, cleaning and maintenance)</p>	Consider issues in data editing (validation, cleaning and maintenance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify issues in data validation, cleaning and maintenance. • Anticipate and address duplicate cases in administrative data.
		Allocate adequate time and resources and assign or recruit skilled staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicate sufficient time and resources for validation, cleaning and maintenance. • Train and supervise staff in validation, cleaning and maintenance.

 <p>Develop procedures for data storage and management, including retention and disposal</p>	Explore technology solutions for data editing (validation, cleaning and maintenance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a technology solution to support data validation, cleaning and maintenance. • Allocate resources for the purchase of any needed technology solutions. • Train staff in the use of any programs or applications for validation, cleaning and maintenance.
	Consider the type of data collected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review legislation for requirements related to data storage and management. • Design procedures for data storage and management in line with relevant legislation. • In the absence of robust legislation, design storage and management procedures in line with ethical principles. • Consider the political context and adjust data storage and management procedures accordingly.
	Secure, store and manage data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the storage needs for the specific project. • Protect systems and individual files with login and passwords. • Hard copy files should be securely locked in cabinets and locked offices. • Regularly update virus and other systems protections to prevent data vulnerability. • Backup multiple copies in secured multiple locations, for electronic and hard copy data. • Ensure adequate storage capacity. • Regularly assess the reliability and security of the storage and management system. • Ensure data is stored in line with legal and administrative requirements and ethical standards.
	Determine responsibilities and privileges in data handling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage access to data with clear and strict guidance. • Limit and control access to all data in accordance with legal requirements and administrative procedures. • Outline access to data in formal agreements such as MoUs and ToRs. • Implement and enforce confidentiality requirements. • Control who has access to data as well as what portion(s) of that data. • Identify technical solutions that enforce data access restrictions.

		Develop and implement procedures and requirements for data retention and disposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify at the outset any legal, regulatory and ethical requirements for data retention and disposal. • Consider the period of data retention at the outset of the project. • Consider different factors and interests in decisions about data retention and disposal. • Establish procedures for safe and secure data retention and disposal. • Align procedures with the rights of data subjects in terms of their own data. • Assess and adhere to legal and regulatory requirements for data disposal and retention.
		Consider the use of technology in data storage and management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify programs, applications and systems for data storage and management. • Allocate resources for the purchase of any necessary applications, programs or systems. • Ensure staff is adequately trained in the use of applications, programs or systems for data storage and management. • Plan and budget for technical assistance that may be needed for applications, programs or systems used for data storage and management.
	 <p>Assess options for data sharing and transfer</p>	Consider data sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review legal requirements and ethical standards related to data sharing relative to each data collection effort. • Determine if data can be shared, including what data, under what circumstances, by and with whom and for what purposes. • Outline parameters for data sharing, in line with legislation and administrative requirements as well as ethical principles. • Allocate adequate time and resources to process data for safe and secure sharing. • Weigh the cost and benefits of data sharing. • Assess if data sharing poses any risks to data sources, staff, the project, or the organization or institution. • Store and archive data securely to allow for data sharing, if appropriate.

		Assess options for data transfer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and adhere to legal and regulatory requirements related to data transfer. • Consider requirements for the transfer of both electronic and hard copy data. • Establish data transfer agreements outlining the terms and conditions of use of the data transferred. • Establish data transfer agreements for both electronic and hard copy data. • Make clear that the entity transferring the data is accountable for its protection. • Establish guidelines for what constitutes secure data transfer.
	 <p>Identify legal and ethical issues in data storage, maintenance and management</p>	Identify legal and ethical issues in data storage, maintenance and management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess legal and ethical requirements for data storage and management in all relevant jurisdictions. • Identify what issues may arise when data is stored and managed in multiple jurisdictions. • Adhere to international standards and procedures for data storage and management. • Develop tools and resources on legal and administrative requirements for data storage, maintenance and management. • Ensure informed consent is not violated in how data is stored and managed. • Gain informed consent for data sharing and use. • Assess risks within the context in which data is collected. • Adapt procedures to the specific context as needed. • Establish procedures for data storage, maintenance and management. • Train data collection staff in all procedures. • Take the context into account in establishing procedures for storage, maintenance and management. • Identify specific considerations when storing data about children; guard the “best interests of the child”.

 <p>Stage #4. Data Analysis</p>	 <p>Assess and describe data</p>	Assess and describe data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin by organizing, assessing and describing the data. • Get to know the data and what it can and cannot be used for. • Organize and describe the basic features of the data. • Present features in a table or other easy-to-read format. • Assess whether software packages are suitable for the dataset.
	 <p>Consider factors and biases that influence the data</p>	Consider factors and biases that influence the data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess limitations and bias in the specific dataset. • Be transparent about limitations and potential shortcomings in data. • Identify factors that may impact data and analysis. • Consider how respondent biases, response rates and response bias influence data. • Consider the environment or context in which data was collected in analyzing data.
	 <p>Identify and describe relevant patterns in data</p>	Identify and describe relevant patterns in data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return to the initial data collection purpose and questions in the analysis. • Ask “what” and “how” rather than jumping to make conclusions about what causes the patterns. • Condense data by organizing and summarizing it. • Adjust analytical procedures, tools and approaches relative to the approach, method and collected data. • Select a level of analysis that is appropriate for the purpose of the data collection effort and size of the sample. • Consider what time and resources are (and are not) needed for a specific data collection project. • Determine proper units of analysis. • Identify whether it is preferable to use deductive or inductive analysis.
	 <p>Interpret patterns and findings</p>	Interpret the data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move on from <i>what</i> and <i>how</i> to answer <i>why</i>. • Offer informed, nuanced and sophisticated analysis of what data means. • Present different understandings and interpretations, where appropriate. • Be open to multiple interpretations and alternative conclusions.
		Align interpretation with existing research and knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align and test findings against the existing knowledge base. • Analyze how, where, when and why results differ from past research.

		Identify biases influencing interpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware of biases in the interpretation process. • Train analysts to be aware of biases in the interpretation process and how to overcome them. • Be cognizant of confirmation bias. • Do not overlook patterns that contradict one's interpretation. • Map one's own perceptions and ideas ahead of data analysis to allow for self-reflection. • Do not discredit data that does not support one's hypothesis. • Avoid overstating the significance of patterns and findings. • Consider one's objectivity in the analysis process including recognizing the limits of one's objectivity.
		Interpret meaning across languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review translated data for misinterpretations or alternative explanations. • Exercise caution when making conclusions about differences based on data from different language sources. • Consider translation as an issue in quantitative data interpretation.
	 Validate findings	Validate findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with end users to validate findings. • Consider the parameters of the validation process, including how feedback will be used. • Consider the weight to be given to the feedback of those involved. • Allocate time and resources to the validation process from the outset.
	 Train and build capacity in data analysis	Train and build capacity in data analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure data analysts have the necessary skills to analyze the data. • Ensure that analysts have the appropriate level of skills in relation to the nature of the analysis needed, the type of data collection and the staff involved. • Develop skills in data analysis through training sessions or on-going mentoring. • Accompany training and mentoring with handbooks and guidelines for use on an on-going basis. • Pay attention to biases and limitations in the data when conducting data analysis. • Train staff in the use of data analysis software.

	 <p>Consider ethical aspects of data analysis</p>	<p>Consider ethical aspects of data analysis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess if and how harm may result from analysis of the data. • Be open about limitations and possible biases. • Do not misrepresent data, findings and conclusions. • Consider how findings and results will be presented to a broader audience. • Ensure that the results do not contribute to a worsened situation for research participants. • Consider how to deal with sensitive issues that emerge in data analysis. • Guard anonymity and confidentiality of respondents in data analysis and presentation. • Assess if and how children may be harmed from the analysis of data and guard the “best interests of the child”.
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 <p>Stage #5: Data Use, Presentation and Dissemination</p>	 <p>Target appropriate audiences, including differentiated outputs for different groups</p>	<p>Assess consumption patterns of different target audiences and/or end users</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess how different target audiences and end users consume information. • Identify the most suitable format and medium for the target audience(s). • Use multiple formats and media to have the greatest impact.
		<p>Differentiate outputs for different target audiences and/or end users</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the relevant target audiences for the results or findings. • Identify what formats and outputs suit the different audiences. • Present results and findings in different outputs with different intended audiences. • Target different audiences and users with results, tailoring for each audience. • Tailor results even when sharing data internally within an organization to ensure uptake.
		<p>Include research participants as target audience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share findings with research participants (data sources and data providers). • Tailor outputs to be accessible to research participants. • Make findings available in the language of research participants (data sources and data providers). • Consider alternative media to share findings with research participants (data sources and data providers).
	 <p>Select presentation formats and language</p>	<p>Provide a clear presentation of methods including limitations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the research approach and method at the outset. • Be clear about what data does (and does not) mean. • Present limitations and challenges faced with the approach and method.
		<p>Ensure accessibility of findings and results</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write and present results and findings in clear and accessible language. • Ensure findings and results are accessible to the target audience and end users. • Explain all terms and concepts to ensure a common understanding. • Use precise definitions. • Avoid technical or specialist language and terminology. • Ensure the language (and level of language used) is appropriate to the target audience.

		Consider data display and visual presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use visual presentation without complicating or confusing the interpretation of the data. • Be clear and uncomplicated, balancing important information and minimum detail. • Avoid excessive and irrelevant data in any visual presentation. • Avoid sensationalist or salacious imagery. • Visual presentation should be self-explanatory. • Consider visual displays for both quantitative and qualitative data. • Train analysts in how to present data visually. • Use software when it offers good options to display the data.
		Tailor and target recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize the formulation of useful recommendations when data collection informs policy and programs. • Ensure that recommendations are sound, realistic, specific and, where appropriate, time-bound. • Target specific recommendations to different target audiences, possibly in different formats. • Engage data sources, data providers and end users in formulating recommendations when appropriate.
		Ensure findings are accessible in multiple languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make results and findings accessible to as many target audiences and end users as possible. • Present findings in as many relevant languages as possible. • Always translate findings into the language of the countries where the data is collected. • Translate executive summaries and conclusions into as many languages as possible. • Ensure high quality translation to effectively convey results and findings.
		Identify relevant media and platforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the most relevant and useful media and platforms for dissemination. • Tailor dissemination to different target audiences. • Consider different avenues for dissemination.
		Assess options for dissemination media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider media and platforms that are more accessible and immediate. • Identify barriers to access and address them.

	 Identify different media and platforms to maximize impact and reach	Consider resources and capacity for effective dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate time and resources to communicate results and findings. • Assess in house skills and capacity for communication. • Identify external communications resources or expertise, as needed.
	 Ensure access to outputs	Ensure access to outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify constraints in access results among different target audiences. • Enhance access to all outputs for all target audiences. • Identify and address barriers to access such as medium and language. • Share research results with data sources, data providers and end users.
	 Consider ethics in data use, presentation and dissemination	Assess the ethics of sharing and not sharing results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider whether sharing findings poses any risks to data sources, data providers or researchers. • Assess the context in deciding whether it is safe to share results. • Do not allow research sponsors to influence reporting of results. • Do not release inaccurate data, given the potential for harm.
		Consider ethics of representation and misrepresentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present findings accurately and fairly. • Do not overstate conclusions or findings. • Be transparent about limitations. • Consider risks of harm in terms of fairness and representation of persons. • Preserve dignity and integrity of research participants in the presentation of findings.
		Ensure anonymity, confidentiality, privacy and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the confidentiality and privacy of research participants. • Ensure that information is sufficiently anonymized. • Anonymize data from all data sources.
		Determine just attribution of contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit and acknowledge the work done by various contributors and partners. • Do not credit persons for work that they did not do.

		Guard the “best interests of the child” in data use, presentation and dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess if and how children may be harmed from the use, presentation or dissemination of data. • Ensure that the results do not contribute to a worsened situation for children. • Guard anonymity and confidentiality of child respondents in data presentation. • Ensure informed consent from the child and parent/guardian in the use and presentation of the data.
	 <p>Measure reach and impact</p>	Measure reach and impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminate results in ways that will reach and impact the knowledge or work of the target audience. • Identify different methods to assess impact and reach. • Ensure adequate resources (human and financial) are available to undertake this measurement. • Include the measurement of impact and reach in the design of the project.