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Topic: Strengthening Legal Frameworks for Combating Human Trafficking and Enhancing Protection of Women and Children

Trafficking in Persons Response Model Based on Women and Children's Protection Chains

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Abstract. *Trafficking in women and children continues to thrive through fake recruitment, unsafe migration, sexual exploitation, forced labor, forced marriage, and abuse of digital media. This study aims to analyze the regulation of the eradication of trafficking in persons and formulate the strengthening of the protection of women and children as victims. The research method used is normative legal research with a legislative, conceptual, and limited comparison approach to international standards. Primary legal materials include international instruments, the Law on the Eradication of Trafficking in Persons, and regulations related to victim protection. Secondary legal materials are books, journals, reports of UNODC, ILO, IOM, UNICEF, and guidelines of international institutions. The results of the discussion showed that the eradication of trafficking in persons was not enough to be placed on the criminalization of perpetrators, because women and children needed early identification, physical protection, legal assistance, medical and psychological recovery, restitution, and social reintegration. The state must link prevention, law enforcement, and victim recovery in a single chain of protection. The model can strengthen case proof, reduce the risk of revictimization, and ensure that women and children are treated as rights holders, not just as means of proof.*

Keywords: *Trafficking In Persons; Women and Children; Victim Protection.*

1. Introduction

Human trafficking is a crime against human dignity because it places the victim's body, energy, and freedom as objects of profit. These crimes do not always appear to be kidnapping or physical violence in the first place. Many victims are recruited through job promises, education offers, marriage lures, digital advertising, document management, or seemingly normal family relationships.



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Women and children are in the most vulnerable position because power relations, economic dependence, age, education, and limited access to information can be exploited by recruiters. When the victim is already in the perpetrator's control, exploitation is carried out through threats, document withholding, debt bondage, manipulation of shame, sexual violence, communication control, and fear of the authorities. This feature shows that human trafficking not only moves people from one place to another, but controls the lives of victims for the economic and sexual interests of the perpetrators.

Global developments show that trafficking in persons remains a major problem even though many countries already have special laws. UNODC noted that the number of victims detected in 2022 increased by 25 percent compared to 2019, with women and girls accounting for 61 percent of the total victims detected, while children accounted for 38 percent of all recorded victims.¹ The data gives an idea that women and children are not on the margins of the problem, but are at the center of the risk of human trafficking. The ILO, Walk Free, and IOM reports also show that 50 million people lived in modern slavery in 2021, consisting of 28 million people in forced labor and 22 million people in forced marriage.² The figures show that trafficking in persons is closely linked to poverty, insecure migration, informal labour markets, conflicts, disasters, and the demand for cheap services without protection.

Economic gains drive the trafficking of people continuously. The ILO estimates that by 2024 forced labor in the private sector will generate illegal profits of 236 billion US dollars per year.³ These profits were born from the reduction or elimination of wages, forced labor, forced prostitution, contract fraud, and mastery of the victim's work. Women and children are targeted because perpetrators consider them easier to control, more difficult to report, and often face stigma when they experience sexual exploitation. Children also do not have sufficient legal and social capacity to understand the risks of hiring, resist seduction, or exit an adverse relationship. Protection of child victims must go beyond criminal prosecution because children need safety, rehabilitation, education, surrogate families, and guarantees so that they do not return to exploitative networks.

1 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2024* (Vienna: UNODC, 2024).

2 International Labour Organization, Walk Free, and International Organization for Migration, *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage* (Geneva: ILO, 2022).

3 International Labour Organization, *Profits and Poverty: The Economics of Forced Labour*, 2nd ed. (Geneva: ILO, 2024).

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International instruments have provided a legal basis for trafficking in persons. The Palermo Protocol defines trafficking as the recruitment, transport, transfer, concealment, or reception of a person with threats, violence, coercion, kidnapping, fraud, abuse of power, vulnerable position, or the provision of benefits to obtain the consent of a controlling party of another person, with the purpose of exploitation.⁴ These elements show the existence of three series, namely acts, methods, and purposes of exploitation. In children, the element of means is not a decisive condition because any recruitment or transfer of children for the purpose of exploitation is still seen as child trafficking. This formulation is in line with the character of children who are immature psychologically, socially, and legally. The state does not sufficiently prove the existence or absence of the consent of the child, since the consent of the child in the relationship of exploitation cannot remove the responsibility of the perpetrator.

Indonesian law has regulated the crime of trafficking in persons through Law Number 21 of 2007. The law affirms that trafficking in persons is a modern form of human slavery and the worst treatment that violates human dignity and dignity.⁵ The regulation provides a basis for criminalization of perpetrators, corporate liability, witness and victim protection, restitution, and inter-agency cooperation. The presence of a special law demonstrates the state's recognition that trafficking in persons cannot be dealt with simply with articles of kidnapping, forgery of documents, or sexual violence. The series of exploitation experienced by victims requires special criminal norms that are able to reach recruiters, transporters, shelters, employers, document intermediaries, owners of places of exploitation, and parties who enjoy the proceeds of crime.

The main problem lies in the distance between the norm and the implementation of victim protection. Criminalizing perpetrators is often a measure of success, while the needs of victims are slow. Female victims need safe havens, reproductive health services, psychological assistance, legal assistance, protection from threats, and guarantees of identity confidentiality. Victim children need age assessment, temporary parenting, education, trauma services, safe family reunification, and protection from family or recruiter pressure. Legal processes that place victims only as testifiers can cause new wounds. Repeated examinations, questions blaming the victim, threats from the perpetrator, and the publication of identities make victims reluctant to report.

4 United Nations, *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime* (2000), Article 3.

5 Republic of Indonesia, Law Number 21 of 2007 concerning the Eradication of the Crime of Trafficking in Persons, General Explanation.



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Victim-oriented handling must ensure that the criminal process does not compromise the safety and dignity of the victim.

Human trafficking is also changing following digital communication patterns. Hiring no longer relies on face-to-face meetings. Perpetrators can use social media, messaging applications, job advertisements, entertainment platforms, and online friendship networks. Children can be persuaded through emotional connections, gifts, online games, or promises of popularity. Young women can be recruited through job vacancies as domestic workers, karaoke guides, models, migrant workers, or high-paid service workers. In the digital space, conversation evidence, electronic money flow, device location, photos, and account data are the defining parts of the proof. Law enforcement must be able to secure digital traces from the beginning so that victims are not burdened with heavy evidence.

Tackling trafficking in persons requires an integrated approach. Anne T. Gallagher emphasized that international law on trafficking in persons contains a state obligation to prevent, punish perpetrators, and protect victims as part of their human rights responsibilities.⁶ This view expands the measure of coping success. The state is considered to be fulfilling its obligations when it is able to prevent risky recruitment, crack down on perpetrators, track the profits of crime, and recover victims. Roza Pati also emphasized that the *Rantsev v. Cyprus and Russia* ruling affirms the positive obligation of the state to prevent trafficking in persons, protect potential victims, and investigate cases effectively.⁷ This direction is relevant for Indonesia because women and child victims are often at the intersection of poverty, migration, gender-based violence, and an unprotected job market.

This article is titled "A Chain-Based Model for Combating Trafficking in Persons for Women and Children" because the eradication of trafficking in persons must be understood as a series of interconnected works. Prevention without action makes the perpetrators continue to enjoy profits. Prosecution without redress makes the victim bear the burden of the crime alone. Recovery without reintegration opens up the opportunity for victims to be re-recruited. The chain of protection places the victim as the holder of rights from the initial identification, reporting, investigation, prosecution, trial, recovery, restitution, until returning to the family or community. This focus is expected to provide a

⁶ Anne T. Gallagher, *The International Law of Human Trafficking* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁷ Roza Pati, "States' Positive Obligations with Respect to Human Trafficking: The European Court of Human Rights Breaks New Ground in *Rantsev v. Cyprus and Russia*," *Boston University International Law Journal* 29 (2011).



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more complete legal framework for the protection of women and children in the eradication of trafficking in persons.

2. Research Methods

This research uses normative legal research. The object of the study is laid on legal norms that regulate the eradication of trafficking, victim protection, women's rights, children's rights, and the state's obligations to prevent exploitation. The approaches used include a legislative approach and a conceptual approach. The legislative approach was used to examine the Palermo Protocol, Law Number 21 of 2007 concerning the Eradication of the Crime of Trafficking in Persons, Law Number 12 of 2022 concerning the Crime of Sexual Violence, rules for the protection of witnesses and victims, and other provisions related to the protection of women and children. Conceptual approaches are used to examine the concepts of trafficking, exploitation, vulnerable position, victim consent, rehabilitation, restitution, and the best interests of the child.⁸

The primary legal material in this study consists of laws and regulations and international instruments. Secondary legal materials consist of books, legal journals, reports of international institutions, guidelines for handling victims, and the results of previous research. The analysis is carried out qualitatively through grammatical interpretation, systematic interpretation, and teleological interpretation. Grammatical interpretation is used to understand the formulation of the elements of the crime of trafficking in persons. Systematic interpretation is used to connect criminal norms, victim protection, restitution, and children's rights. Teleological interpretation is used to assess whether norms have led to the goal of eradicating trafficking, which is punishing perpetrators, preventing exploitation, rehabilitating victims, and preventing rehabilitation.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Prevention and Enforcement of Trafficking in Persons in the Migration, Employment, and Digital Space Chains

Prevention of trafficking in persons must start with an understanding that victims do not always enter networks of exploitation through open coercion. Many victims actually enter through seemingly legitimate channels, such as job recruitment, placement of migrant workers, job training, dating relationships, debt agreements, or travel arrangements. In the initial phase, the perpetrators used the language of economic opportunity. Victims are promised high salaries, housing, document management, secure jobs, or family assistance. After the

⁸ Peter Mahmud Marzuki, *Legal Research* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2017).



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victim changes places or depends on the perpetrator, the victim's bargaining position decreases. Documents were withheld, communications were restricted, debts were magnified, threats were made, and victims were directed to accept exploitation. Prevention must reach the recruitment phase, not just wait for exploitation to occur.

The migration chain is one of the vulnerable points. Women who want to work outside the region or abroad often rely on informal intermediaries due to cost, distance, information, and family needs. Intermediaries can master the process from job offers, transportation, training, age forgery, passport management, placement, to supervision in the workplace. When such processes are not recorded, it is difficult for the state to track who is responsible. Job placement supervision must ensure that contracts, work locations, employers, fees, wages, working hours, insurance, and grievance mechanisms can be verified. Strong data collection is not just an administrative matter, but a preventive tool so that recruiters do not hide behind informal networks.

The Palermo Protocol provides a broad framework for states to be able to take action against various parties in the trafficking chain. Criminal acts are not only attached to the person who exploits the victim directly, but also the party who recruits, transports, moves, accommodates, receives, or controls the victim for the purpose of exploitation.⁹ The formulation is useful because traffickers work in the network. There are parties who search for victims, provide documents, provide transportation, house temporary victims, connect victims with employers, supervise victims, receive payments, and disguise the proceeds of crimes. Law enforcement that only targets perpetrators in the place of exploitation will leave other nodes that continue to work to recruit new victims.

Law Number 21 of 2007 has adopted a wide range of criminal acts. Its criminal articles can be used to crack down on the recruitment, transportation, shelter, delivery, transfer, or reception of a person with threats, violence, kidnapping, detention, forgery, fraud, abuse of power, vulnerable position, debt bondage, or payment for the purpose of exploitation.¹⁰ This norm provides space for the authorities to dismantle a series of acts from the beginning. The challenge lies in proving the relationship between recruiters' actions, mastery methods, and exploitative goals. Investigators must carefully trace conversations, evidence of transfers, contracts, travel, connecting witnesses, shelter data, and victim testimony so that the case does not stop at ordinary labor violations.

⁹ United Nations, *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons*, Article 3.

¹⁰ Republic of Indonesia, Law Number 21 of 2007, Article 2.



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Prevention must also target markets that order exploitation. Trafficking in persons is growing because there is a demand for cheap labor, sexual services, unprotected domestic workers, order brides, forced beggars, child labor, and sexual content. Hila Shamir criticized the overly narrow anti-trafficking approach because it often focuses on criminal prosecution without improving workers' vulnerabilities and labor market relations.¹¹ The criticism is relevant to see trafficking as a crime that is also supported by weak labor supervision. When workers don't get clear contracts, decent wages, reasonable working hours, freedom of movement, and access to complaints, exploitation becomes easier to cover. Criminal law enforcement must go hand in hand with employment checks and supply chain supervision.

The digital space accelerates victim recruitment. The perpetrator can impersonate a work agency, peer, lover, entertainment manager, or model recruiter. Children are often victims through persuasion that takes advantage of the desire to get attention, gifts, jobs, or social acceptance. In some cases, the perpetrator obtains personal photos or videos of the victim and then uses the threat of dissemination to force the victim to commit sexual acts, work, or relocation. These crimes show links between human trafficking, electronic-based sexual violence, extortion, and child exploitation. Its handling requires digital forensic capabilities, platform cooperation, electronic evidence storage, and fast reporting mechanisms.

Legal arrangements must be able to respond to digital recruitment without disregarding the rights of victims. Law enforcement officials need to secure electronic evidence in the first place because perpetrators can delete accounts, change numbers, move conversations, or use fake identities. Digital evidence includes messages, calls, job ads, payment links, locations, photos, metadata, and transaction history. Victim data protection must also be maintained. Identities, images, medical information, and history of exploitation should not be disseminated as they can cause stigma and threats. Good digital enforcement is not only chasing the perpetrator's account, but ensuring that the victim is not harmed again by the dissemination of his personal data.

In law enforcement, victims must be positioned as protected subjects. OHCHR affirms that the human rights of trafficked persons must be at the center of all prevention, eradication, protection, assistance, and recovery efforts.¹² This principle rejects the pattern of handling that makes the victim just a piece of

¹¹ Hila Shamir, "A Labor Paradigm for Human Trafficking," *UCLA Law Review* 60, no. 1 (2012).

¹² United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking* (Geneva: OHCHR, 2002).

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evidence. A safe victim is better able to give full testimony, but safety must not be traded for the obligation to testify. Legal assistance, interpreters, victim-friendly examinations, and protection from intimidation must be prepared from the moment the victim is found. Investigations should also avoid questions that blame the victim, such as why the victim followed the perpetrator or why the victim did not flee. Such questions ignore the psychological power and control relations that characterize human trafficking.

The principle of not punishing victims is also part of fair law enforcement. Trafficking victims can be forced to use false documents, violate residence permits, work without a permit, engage in prostitution, transport goods, or commit other acts under the control of the perpetrator. If the state only looks at the outward act without tracing the exploitation relationship, the victim can be convicted for actions that are actually a direct result of human trafficking. The principle of not punishing the victim aims to separate the victim from the perpetrator. Children who are exploited in criminal acts must also be treated as victims, not as main perpetrators. This treatment is in line with the best interests of the child and prevents the child from getting further away from protection.

Cracking down on perpetrators requires tracking crime profits. Human trafficking survives because it makes money. Corporal criminalization without asset confiscation and restitution can keep the perpetrator enjoying the results of exploitation or transferring profits to other parties. Asset tracking should begin from the investigation through account checks, digital transactions, property, vehicles, business profits, and the flow of funds to recruiters. Restitution for the victim is more likely to be paid if the perpetrator's assets are frozen from the beginning. Without these steps, the restitution decision risks only being written in the verdict without real recovery for the victim.

The chain of law enforcement must also strengthen cross-border cooperation. Many cases of human trafficking involve different regions of origin, transit, and destination. Victims can be recruited in villages, accommodated in cities, dispatched through official or unofficial channels, and then exploited in other countries. Cooperation between countries is needed for information exchange, victim protection, safe repatriation, mutual legal assistance, and arrest of perpetrators. ACTIP in the ASEAN region provides the basis for regional cooperation for the prevention, prosecution, and protection of victims of trafficking, especially women and children.¹³ For Indonesia, regional cooperation

¹³ Association of Southeast Asian Nations, *ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children* (2015).



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is particularly relevant because the mobility of migrant workers, sea borders, and cross-border recruitment networks is quite high.

Prevention at the local level also determines success. Villages, sub-districts, schools, integrated service centers, employment offices, immigration, police, and community organizations can be early detection points. Residents who know the recruitment pattern is at risk can report when there are children who are about to be departed without documents, women who are promised unclear jobs, or groups of prospective workers accommodated by recruiters. Schools can recognize children who drop out of school due to work or marriage promises. Health services can find signs of sexual violence, injury, pregnancy, infection, or trauma in victims. Effective prevention works when each institution understands the indicators of trafficking in persons and knows the referral route to use.

The Indonesian government has indicated several steps, including the establishment of a special unit to deal with crimes against women, children, and trafficking in persons within the police force. The report related to Indonesia in the *Trafficking in Persons Report 2024* states that Indonesia has not fully met the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking in persons, but has made significant efforts.¹⁴ The statement shows two things. First, institutional steps have been taken. Second, the quality of victim identification, prosecution of perpetrators, victim protection, and coordination still needs to be strengthened. This kind of international assessment can be used not as a single measure, but as an evaluation material so that national laws are better able to reach changing patterns of exploitation.

Prevention and enforcement must reinforce each other. Case data from the investigation can be used to map the recruitment area, mode of job vacancies, travel routes, types of exploitation sites, and profiles of perpetrators. The results of the mapping can be the basis for public education, agency supervision, blocking risky ads, corporate audits, and cooperation with digital platforms. Law enforcement that does not result in policy learning will make new cases emerge with the same pattern. Each case must produce two outputs, namely the accountability of the perpetrator and the improvement of the prevention system.

14 U.S. Department of State, *2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Indonesia* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, 2024).

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3.2. Strengthening the Protection of Women and Children Victims through Identification, Recovery, Restitution, and Reintegration

Victim protection is at the heart of the eradication of trafficking in persons. Victims are often found in a state of fear, illness, injury, pregnancy, trauma, lack of documents, lack of money, or lack of trust in the authorities. Some victims do not even realize themselves as victims because they have been controlled by the perpetrator for a long time or feel indebted. Child victims can convey changing information because they are afraid, embarrassed, or unable to explain the event in a coherent manner. This condition demands an identification mechanism that is sensitive to the victim's circumstances. Identification should not rely solely on the victim's confession. Officers must assess objective indicators such as document withholding, communication controls, unreasonable debt, movement restrictions, signs of violence, unpaid wages, age of children, and recruitment history.

The OSCE ODIHR explained that *the national referral mechanism* is an institutional mechanism that helps countries identify victims of trafficking and ensure the protection of victims through coordination with various parties.¹⁵ This idea can be implemented by building a clear national chain of reference. When a victim is found by police, immigration, social workers, health workers, schools, or the community, the victim should immediately connect to secure services. The referral must contain rescue measures, needs assessment, temporary housing, medical examination, psychological assistance, legal aid, witness protection, and recovery plan. Without a clear reference, victims can move from one office to another without certainty of service.

Women victims of human trafficking often face multiple traumas. They can experience sexual violence, labor exploitation, forced contraception, pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, physical violence, threats to the family, and social stigma. The protective approach should respect the victim's choices, maintain confidentiality, and avoid pressure to testify immediately. Medical and psychological assistance should be provided from the outset, including reproductive health screenings and trauma services. Legal assistance must also explain the victim's rights, criminal process, examination risk, protection mechanism, and right to restitution. Victims who understand their rights are better able to make decisions in the legal process.

¹⁵ OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, *National Referral Mechanisms: Joining Efforts to Protect the Rights of Trafficked Persons, A Practical Handbook*, 2nd ed. (Warsaw: OSCE/ODIHR, 2022).

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The victim's child needs a different standard of protection than an adult. UNICEF affirms that the protection of child victims of trafficking should include identification, appointment of guardians or companions, safe havens, risk assessment, rehabilitation, and reintegration with the best interests of the child in mind.¹⁶ Children should not be placed in detention rooms or facilities that resemble punishment. Child examinations must be conducted by trained officers, with age-appropriate language, limited number of examinations, and a safe atmosphere. Children must also have access to education, psychosocial services, and safe family relationships. Family reunification should not be done automatically if the family is involved in recruitment, receives money from the perpetrator, or pressures the child to retract the report.

The best interests of the child require the country to assess long-term security. Children who have been rescued can be re-recruited if they return to the same environment without support. Family poverty, school dropouts, violence at home, or pressure to work can make children return to the path of exploitation. Reintegration must be accompanied by an education plan, family support, social worker monitoring, and access to a safe livelihood for families. A child's recovery is not enough to be calculated from the child's return home, but from the child's ability to live a life without the threat of re-recruitment.

Restitution is a victim's right that must be linked to the criminal process. The Law on the Eradication of Trafficking in Persons has provided for restitution for loss of wealth, suffering, medical and psychological treatment costs, and other losses suffered by victims.¹⁷ Restitution gives recognition that the victim bears real losses due to the crime. The cost of recovery is often substantial, while victims lose jobs, education, documents, social relationships, and a sense of security. The state must help the victim calculate the losses and file them in the judicial process. The right to restitution will be weak if the victim is asked to calculate on his own without assistance, or if the prosecutor does not adequately include the restitution demand.

Restitution issues often occur at the implementation stage. A judgment ordering restitution payment does not always result in a payment. The perpetrator can declare incapacity, hide assets, transfer profits, or choose a substitute penalty if the rules open up these options. Asset tracking from the beginning is a requirement for restitution to be carried out. Investigators and prosecutors must examine the flow of money coming from the exploitation, the perpetrator's family accounts, corporate assets, and the party receiving profits. The court must

¹⁶ UNICEF, *Guidelines on the Protection of Child Victims of Trafficking* (New York: UNICEF, 2006).

¹⁷ Republic of Indonesia, Law Number 21 of 2007, Article 48.



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also carefully assess the relationship between assets and crime. Victim recovery requires asset thinking, not just criminal agency thinking.

Victim protection is also related to proof. Victims who receive protection are more likely to testify consistently because they feel safe. Instead, victims who experience threats, stigma, family pressure, and service uncertainty may withdraw reports or change information. Law enforcement that protects victims actually strengthens the case. Victim-friendly examinations, recorded testimony, visum, digital evidence, other witnesses, travel evidence, and financial documents can reduce reliance on victim testimony alone. Over-reliance on the victim risks pressuring the victim to repeat the traumatic story over and over again.

Legal assistance should be understood as part of the victim's rights, not an additional service. The victim needs to understand whether he can ask for protection, how to apply for restitution, who can accompany him, how to deal with threats, and how to maintain identity. The companion also plays a role in ensuring that the examination questions do not injure the victim and do not lead to the victim's abuse. For children, mentoring must involve people who do not have a conflict of interest. Parents or families cannot always be companions when they are suspected of being involved in recruiting or pressuring children. The state must be able to provide independent companions so that children's voices are not controlled by interested adults.

Victim recovery services require inter-agency coordination. Ministries, local governments, police, prosecutors' offices, courts, LPSK, social workers, safe houses, health offices, schools, immigration, labor offices, and community organizations have different functions. Coordination is often weakened as each institution works with its own procedures, budgets, and indicators. The chain of protection demands a shared procedure that governs who does what, when, and by what standards. Without a shared procedure, victims can experience service delays or loss of rights because institutions are waiting for each other. The referral mechanism must be accompanied by a clear handling deadline and the person in charge.

Prevention of revitalization must be a measure of recovery success. Victimization can occur when the victim is blamed, his or her identity is scattered, forced to reconcile, does not receive restitution, is returned to an unsafe environment, or is criminalized for the actions of the perpetrator. Victim children can experience victimization when asked to repeat information many times, be placed with unsafe adults, or lose access to school. Female victims can experience victimization when their sexual exploitation is publicized or stigmatized. A good

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protection system must close all pathways that can make the victim experience violence again after being rescued.

Justice for trafficking victims also requires social recovery. Many victims go home with the burden of shame, debt, family conflict, or loss of confidence. People sometimes view victims as guilty of receiving job offers, leaving home, or being in a place of sexual exploitation. This view is wrong because it ignores fraud, vulnerable positions, and control of perpetrators. Public education must place the victim as a party whose rights are violated. Reintegration will be more successful if the community does not stigmatize, families receive assistance, and victims have access to education or safe jobs.

The chain of protection model can be formulated through four stages. The first stage is identification and rescue, which includes indicator detection, victim security, preliminary examination, identity protection, and separation of the victim from the perpetrator. The second stage is legal process protection, which includes assistance, legal assistance, witness protection, victim-friendly examinations, evidence security, and restitution submissions. The third stage is recovery, which includes medical, psychological, social, educational, documented, and economic support services. The fourth stage is reintegration and monitoring, which includes plans to return to family or other safe places, school or work support, periodic monitoring, and re-recruitment prevention. The four stages must run as a unit.

UNICEF by 2025 affirms that action against child trafficking rests on strengthening national child protection systems to identify, respond, rehabilitate, and integrate survivors.¹⁸ This direction is in line with the chain of protection model. It is not enough for the victim's child to be rescued from the place of exploitation, but must be returned to a safe growth and development path. Victim women also need recovery that connects health, security, legal access, and economic life. The absence of any of the elements can ruin the overall recovery. For example, the victim gets a safe house but does not get legal assistance; or the victim obtained a criminal verdict against the perpetrator but did not receive restitution and employment. Victim justice requires a complete protection package.

The model also improves the relationship between victims and law enforcement. When the victim feels protected, it is easier for the victim to trust the legal process. This trust is crucial in human trafficking cases because perpetrators often build fear that the authorities will not help, that the victim will be

¹⁸ UNICEF, *UNICEF's Action against Child Trafficking* (New York: UNICEF, 2025).

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punished, the family will be humiliated, or the debt will be collected. The apparatus must break this psychological control through correct information, an attitude of non-blame, and real protection. The success of law enforcement is not only measured by the number of cases that go to court, but by the state's ability to rescue victims, cut off networks, recover losses, and prevent new victims.

Ultimately, the protection of women and children in the eradication of trafficking in persons requires a change in perspective. Women and children are not objects of mercy, but subjects of law who have the right to safety, dignity, health, education, information, justice, and recovery. The handling that is only oriented towards the perpetrator makes the victim on the margins of the process. The chain of protection takes the victim to the treatment center without reducing the firmness of the perpetrator. Criminalization, asset confiscation, restitution, recovery, and reintegration must move together. In that way, the eradication of trafficking in persons does not stop at punishment, but results in the restoration of the victim's life and the prevention of repeated exploitation.

4. Conclusion

Trafficking in women and children is a crime born from the confluence of economic vulnerability, power relations, insecure migration, market demand for exploitation, and the development of the digital space. Criminal law is still needed to crack down on recruiters, carriers, accommodators, employers, intermediaries, and profit-seeking parties, but criminalizing perpetrators is not enough to compensate for the victim's losses. Equitable countermeasures must be arranged as a chain of protection from prevention, identification, rescue, investigation, prosecution, trial, restitution, recovery, to reintegration. Female victims need security, medical and psychological services, legal assistance, identity confidentiality, and socio-economic recovery. Victim children need treatment based on the best interests of the child, special assistance, education, safe parenting, and monitoring so that they are not re-recruited. The state must link the work of the police, prosecutor's office, courts, LPSK, social services, health services, immigration, employment, schools, local governments, and community organizations in a clear referral mechanism. The model strengthens case proof, cuts off perpetrators' profits through asset tracking and restitution, and ensures that the eradication of trafficking in persons results in real recovery for women and children.



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