

SURVIVOR ENGAGEMENT PROTOCOL

PRACTICAL STANDARDS FOR ENGAGEMENT IN ADVOCACY

SURVIVOR ENGAGEMENT PROTOCOL

Practical Standards for Engagement in Advocacy

Date of publication

April 2026

Developed by

Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice

In partnership with

Grace Agenda, Synergy for Justice, Tallawah Justice for Women

Within the framework of

The Global Initiative Against Impunity (GIAI)

Financing

This document was produced with the financial support of the European Union.

Disclaimer

The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

About the organisations

Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice is an international feminist organisation working to advance gender justice through the law, with a particular focus on international criminal law and accountability for gender-based harm.

Grace Agenda is a survivor-led organisation based in Kenya, founded to support survivors of post-electoral sexual violence during 2007 and 2008, working with survivors of sexual violence to restore their dignity and amplify their voices in the pursuit of justice and reparations.

Synergy for Justice is a women-led, multidisciplinary team working to advance justice, end impunity for human rights violations, and support survivors in accessing the services and opportunities they need to heal and fully participate in society.

Tallawah Justice for Women is a non-profit association that works to connect, empower and amplify the voices of women and youth survivor leaders and grassroots activists.

The Global Initiative Against Impunity (GIAI) is co-funded by the European Union and works to support a comprehensive, integrated, and inclusive approach to justice and accountability for serious human rights violations and international crimes. The members of the consortium are the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), the Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC), Civil Rights Defenders (CRD), the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR), Impunity Watch, Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA), REDRESS, TRIAL International, and Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice (WIGJ).

Acknowledgements

Development of this Protocol was informed by consultations and collaboration with survivor partners and grassroots activists whose experiences, expertise and vision were central to shaping this work. We are profoundly grateful to **Sylvia Acan** (Golden Women Vision Uganda); **Pamela Angwech** (Gulu Women Economic Development and Globalisation, Uganda); and **Kolbassia Haoussou** (Freedom from Torture, United Kingdom). We are grateful to the **Global Initiative Against Impunity** partner organisations for their valuable feedback, to **Margarita Martínez Osorio** (**Dejusticia**) for her careful review and contributions, and to the **Victims' Rights Working Group** organisations for their generous input.

Design and layout

Alina Cliucinicov

Contact

info@4genderjustice.org/www.4genderjustice.org

© 2026 Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice. All rights reserved.



Co-funded by
the European Union



Tallawah
Justice for
Women

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	4
Background and Rationale.....	5
Development of the Protocol.....	6
Scope.....	6
Objectives.....	7
SURVIVOR ENGAGEMENT PROTOCOL.....	8
A. Initial Contact and Outreach.....	8
B. Survivor Participation in Events and Activities.....	10
C. Travel Arrangements and Logistics.....	13
D. Per Diem and Reimbursement of Costs.....	16
E. Remuneration and Compensation Guidelines.....	17
F. Accountability and care: owning mistakes and preventing harm.....	18
ANNEX 1: SURVIVOR ENGAGEMENT RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL	21
TOOL II: SURVIVOR ENGAGEMENT PRACTICAL CHECKLIST.....	23



INTRODUCTION

Survivors and victims¹ have a central role in the work of international institutions and civil society organisations (CSOs) engaged in international justice and accountability. Their lived experiences, knowledge, and expertise often inform judicial and non-judicial processes, advocacy, and public events on accountability.

Despite growing recognition of survivor-centred approaches as a core principle of international justice, survivors invited to participate in advocacy activities and policy spaces often face significant practical and administrative barriers.

Existing guidelines address survivor protection, documentation, and policy engagement. However, a practical gap remains in detailed operational guidance for survivor-centred participation in advocacy and policy spaces.

This Protocol addresses that gap by providing concrete operational standards and step-by-step checklists covering the logistical, financial, security, and psychosocial dimensions of engagement, from initial contact to travel, compensation, follow-up, and institutional accountability.

Moreover, engaging with survivors takes place within unequal power structures and complex institutional environments. Even where intentions are good and safeguards are in place, mistakes, misjudgements, or oversights may generate harm. Recognising this possibility is part of practising genuine accountability and maintaining trust. This Protocol sets out standards for responding to concerns raised by survivors in their interaction with your organisation, guidance on repairing harm, and how to strengthen institutional learning.

The Protocol reflects an effort to develop greater intentionality, transparency, and accountability. It seeks to support responsible, non-extractive engagement grounded in safety, dignity, and meaningful participation.

¹ For the purpose of this Protocol, the terms “victim” and “survivor” refer to persons who have individually or collectively suffered harm as a result of acts or omissions that constitute gross human rights violations and/or serious violations of international humanitarian law, in line with the UNGA “Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law” (A/RES/60/147). This includes immediate family members or dependents of direct victims, as well as persons who suffered harm while assisting others in distress or seeking to prevent victimisation. While “victim” is the internationally recognised legal term, this Protocol predominantly uses the term “survivor” in recognition of agency and lived experience. This does not alter or diminish individuals’ legal status under domestic or international law, nor does it undermine preference for different terminology to describe lived experience, which should be respected in engagement.

Background and Rationale

Survivors who participate in advocacy, policy and accountability processes often face significant structural and practical barriers. These may include care responsibilities, economic precarity and reliance on daily income, language barriers, mobility and accessibility constraints, and limited access to travel documentation or technology.

Too often, survivor participation is expected without adequate planning, resources, or institutional preparedness to address these realities. Without concrete measures to mitigate such barriers, participation risks becoming nominal rather than meaningful, effectively excluding those in situations of vulnerability, and in some cases, causing harm or re-traumatisation.

Such practices may reinforce patterns of structural silencing and exclusion that survivors, particularly those facing intersecting forms of marginalisation, have historically experienced within justice and accountability processes.

Organisations engaging survivors therefore carry a duty of care. Inadequate planning, insufficient safeguards, or extractive engagement practices, including inviting survivors primarily for optics or symbolic representation, can expose survivors to harm and create ethical, legal, and reputational risks for the organisation.

For the purpose of this Protocol, survivor engagement refers to: “active collaboration with survivors, where possible, at every stage of the process, from planning and decision-making to implementation and evaluation.”² Engagement is understood as a collaborative and iterative process that moves beyond hierarchical or mere consultation-based approaches.

Existing Guidance and Identified Gap

Several protocols and guidelines provide important guidance on engagement with survivors and victims of human rights violations. These resources generally fall into several categories:

Documentation and interviewing guidelines, such as the [Murad Code](#);

Policy guidance, such as the [Council of Europe’s Guidelines for Policy Makers on Engaging with Victims and Survivors of Child Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse](#);

Institutional protection frameworks including Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) frameworks such as the [United Nations protocol on the provision of assistance to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse](#); and

² Adapted from Women’s Aid, “A guide to meaningful survivor engagement”, available at <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Final-A-guide-to-meaningful-survivor-engagement-April.pdf>. See also Welsh’s Women Aid, Survivor Engagement Toolkit, available at <https://welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Survivor-Engagement-Toolkit-ENG.pdf>.

Mental health and psychosocial support guidelines, such as the [Mental Health and Human Rights Info](#) resources.

These frameworks provide key principles and safeguards. At the same time, there is no detailed operational guidance for survivor-centred participation in non-judicial advocacy and policy spaces.

This Protocol addresses that operational gap by providing practical standards and checklists covering the logistical, financial, security, and psychosocial aspects of survivor engagement.

Development of the Protocol

To address the above-mentioned challenges, Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice (WIGJ), within the work of the Global Initiative Against Impunity (GIAI), and together with Grace Agenda, Synergy for Justice and Tallawah Justice for Women have developed this gender-sensitive and intersectional Survivor Engagement Protocol (Protocol).

As organisations working across different contexts and positionalities, we recognise the privileges associated with some of our positions and the risk of misalignment with the needs and expectations of survivors and victims. As such, this Protocol reflects an effort to develop greater intentionality, transparency, and accountability. It seeks to support responsible, non-extractive engagement grounded in safety, dignity, and meaningful participation.

This Protocol is the result of years of learning working alongside survivors, victims, and grassroots activists, who informed the development of this protocol through consultations. Input was gathered through a structured survey and one-on-one conversations to better understand the practical, logistical, and administrative challenges survivors encounter when engaging in advocacy processes and events with international organisations and institutions. Consultations focused on identifying barriers, risks, and gaps in existing engagement practices. Additional feedback was sought from partner organisations and colleagues with experience in survivor engagement to reflect on recurring operational challenges and the strategies they have adopted to address them.

This Protocol is intended as living guidance and will be reviewed and refined over time to reflect evolving circumstances, feedback, and emerging practices in the field.

Scope

The Protocol provides practical guidelines for organisations and institutions engaging with survivors and victims in events, conferences, advocacy initiatives, capacity-building, and other non-judicial spaces. It aims to ensure that survivor participation is safe, informed, voluntary, culturally appropriate and respectful.

Its application should always be guided by context, recognising that effective engagement must respond to the cultural, social, legal, and individual realities of survivors.

This Protocol does not govern victim participation in judicial or quasi-judicial proceedings (e.g., testimony in criminal trials or before international human rights mechanisms and tribunals, participation proceedings before the International Criminal Court (ICC), reparation hearings). Victims' legal representation and engagement within judicial processes are governed by other legal frameworks, professional ethical obligations, and case-specific protocols.

The level of safeguards and mitigation measures required under this Protocol will vary depending on context, individual circumstances, and risk level. For each engagement, organisations should assess whether it falls within a low-, medium-, or high-risk context and plan accordingly.

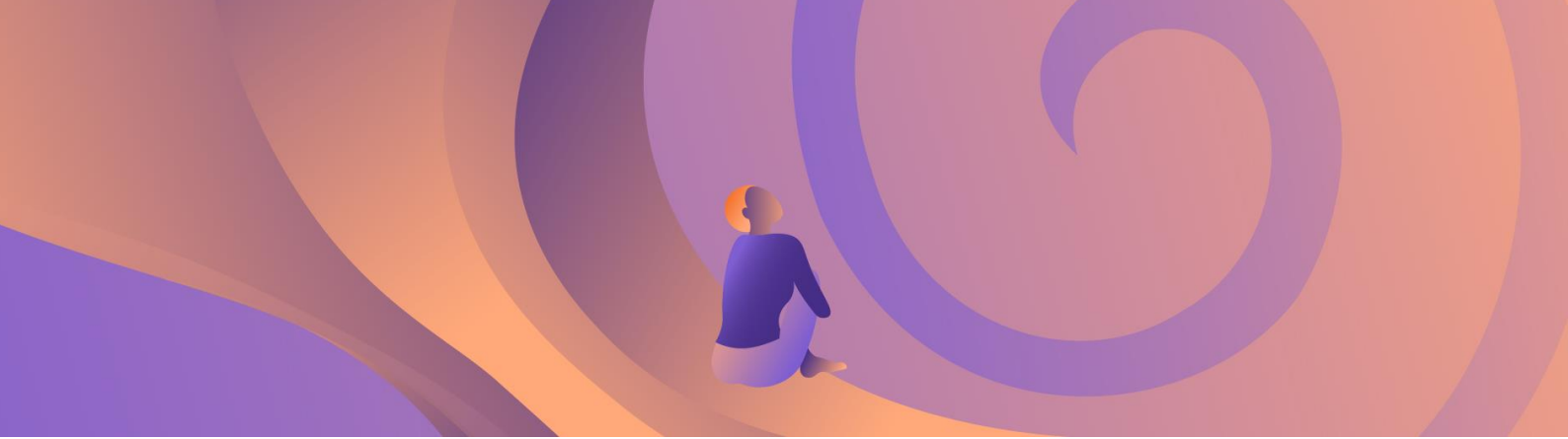
Objectives

The Protocol is designed to:

Provide organisations and institutions engaging survivors in non-judicial advocacy and policy contexts with a clear and practical framework for survivor-centred engagement.

Establish detailed operational standards covering the full cycle of engagement, including initial contact and outreach, event design and participation, travel and logistics, financial arrangements (including reimbursement and compensation), communication, follow-up, and risk mitigation.

Set out accountability safeguards and response measures to prevent harm, address concerns, and promote institutional learning where misalignment, mistakes, or adverse impacts occur.



SURVIVOR ENGAGEMENT PROTOCOL

This Protocol addresses six key areas of direct contact and engagement:³

- A. Initial contact and outreach
- B. Participation in events and activities
- C. Travel arrangements and logistics
- D. Per diem and reimbursement of costs
- E. Remuneration / compensation guidelines
- F. Owing to mistakes: accountability and care

A. Initial Contact and Outreach

Clearly articulate the purpose of survivor participation and assess whether it is necessary and proportionate to the objectives of the event. Survivor engagement must not be used to confer legitimacy, visibility, or symbolic value. Engagement should only proceed where it is meaningful, aligned with the survivor’s interests, and consistent with a do-no-harm approach.

Prioritise physical, emotional, and psychological safety in all contact and communication. Ensure that organisational policies, protocols, safeguarding measures, and adequate staffing and financial resources are in place to support this commitment.

Assign a single organisational focal point to coordinate engagement. The focal point should coordinate communication with the survivor and any relevant partners to avoid confusion or duplication.

Conduct a self-assessment before initiating outreach, to determine the most appropriate person within the organisation to serve as the focal point. “Am I the right person to do this?” Perhaps another colleague would be better equipped to ensure survivor-centred, trauma-informed, and culturally appropriate engagement. Wherever possible, the focal

³ See Annex II – Survivor Engagement Practical Checklist with a ready-to-use checklist that summarises this protocol.

point should have experience in engaging with survivors, be trained on survivor-centred and trauma-informed approaches, have familiarity with mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), and understand the logistics of international travel and advocacy spaces. Where such expertise is limited, ensure appropriate supervision, internal guidance, and referral pathways are in place so that the do-no-harm principle is consistently applied.

Engage survivors at the earliest possible stage. Avoid inviting survivors at a late stage solely to fulfil a “survivor representation” role without prior consultation or involvement in shaping the event. Where later engagement is unavoidable, explain the reasons transparently and clearly define the scope of participation.

Respect survivors’ autonomy and decision-making. Survivors are the ultimate decision-makers regarding their participation. Communicate in a manner that ensures they do not feel pressured or obligated to take part, including due to perceived future opportunities, funding relationships, or continued inclusion in advocacy spaces.

Reach out through trusted local partners or networks and prioritise contact through partners with established relationships. Where needed, use trusted intermediaries for cultural or language mediation to ensure respectful and context-appropriate communication.

Conduct a joint risk assessment⁴ in consultation with the survivor and, where relevant, trusted partners. Assess security, health, psychosocial, financial, legal, digital and reputational risks. Consider factors such as caregiving responsibilities, economic precarity, migration or asylum constraints, and potential community backlash. In high-risk contexts, consider consulting security, medical and/or legal professionals. If risks outweigh anticipated benefits, the engagement should not proceed.

Provide clear and transparent information from the outset. Share information about:

- the purpose and format of the event,
- organisers and expected audience,
- level of public visibility and media presence,
- language and interpretation,
- anticipated duration and scope of engagement,
- financial arrangements (including travel, reimbursement, and remuneration),
- potential risks associated with participation.

Information should be tailored to the specific context and revisited if circumstances change.

⁴ See Annex I – Survivor Engagement Risk Assessment.

Be mindful of survivors' family roles, caregiving responsibilities, and work obligations. Survivors may have childcare responsibilities, may care for elderly or ill relatives, or depend on precarious employment. Others may be subject to migration, asylum, or residency-related obligations (such as reporting requirements, integration courses, or travel restrictions). These realities must be discussed explicitly, at an early stage, and factored into planning to avoid creating legal, financial, or social harm.

Clarify financial implications and ensure participation does not create financial or practical hardship. Confirm in advance that adequate resources are available to mitigate participation-related burdens, including loss of income, childcare or dependent care, travel, and incidental costs. Be transparent about remuneration when survivors participate as experts, speakers, or trainers. All arrangements related to travel, compensation for missed workdays, caregiving responsibilities, and other logistical costs should be clearly communicated and confirmed as feasible before participation proceeds. Participation must not result in financial strain or social pressure.

Obtain informed and ongoing consent. Secure consent (preferably in writing) for the use and dissemination of contact details and for public identification, photography, recording, or digital dissemination. Confirm whether pseudonym use is preferred. Consent should be understood as ongoing and subject to revision, particularly where a survivor's security situation, personal circumstances, or preferences evolve. Survivors must have clear pathways to modify or withdraw consent at any stage.

Establish safe and appropriate communication channels. Confirm preferred communication methods (e.g. WhatsApp, Signal, email) and ensure they are secure and do not create financial burden. Assess potential digital monitoring risks where relevant. Avoid assumptions if responses are delayed, as survivors may face connectivity issues, safety concerns, or competing obligations.

Where engagement is jointly sponsored, establish clear coordination arrangements in advance. Agree in writing on roles, financial responsibilities, timelines, and designation of a single liaison. Organisational misalignment must not create additional burden for the survivor.

B. Survivor Participation in Events and Activities

B1. Before the event/activity

Engage survivors at the earliest possible stage of planning and conceptualisation. Seek their input on relevant themes, issues to be addressed, and target audiences or stakeholders to invite. Survivor participation should not be limited to speaking roles at a late stage but should reflect meaningful involvement in shaping the engagement where feasible.

Allow survivors to choose the form and level of their participation. Depending on the format of the event or activity, participation options may include speaking publicly; participating in closed-door sessions; participating in ICC court hearings⁵; contributing

⁵ See: Tool II: Survivor Engagement Practical Checklist, point G, below for checklist specifically for attendance at ICC and other Court hearings.

through moderated dialogue; providing pre-recorded video or audio statements; submitting written contributions; participating anonymously or under a pseudonym; or contributing through a trusted intermediary. Respect decisions regarding format and reassure survivors that they may change their mind at any point.

Consider language and accessibility from the outset. Identify possible language barriers and, to the extent feasible, allow survivors to participate in their language of choice with interpretation provided. Clarify whether interpretation will be simultaneous or consecutive and ensure that interpretation arrangements preserve dignity and accuracy.

Ascertain visibility preferences well in advance. Confirm whether survivors are willing to be photographed, video-recorded, livestreamed, quoted, or identified publicly. Use a visibility consent form with multiple options to avoid misunderstandings, embarrassment, or security risks. Media representatives, communications teams, and moderators must be clearly briefed on consent parameters. The consent form should be bilingual if the survivor is not fluent in English.

Clearly define the scope and boundaries of the survivor's contribution. Discuss in advance the topics they wish to address and any areas they prefer to avoid. Moderators and facilitators must be briefed accordingly and instructed not to deviate into unagreed areas, particularly those that may elicit traumatic details. Survivors should never be pressured to respond to unexpected or probing questions in live settings. Avoid requesting deeply personal accounts of victimisation unless there is a clear purpose, informed consent, and safeguards in place.

Maintain regular and appropriate communication to support preparation. This may include sharing draft agendas, concept notes, or background materials; discussing audience composition; clarifying timing and format; and identifying potential sensitivities. Share the final programme with survivors who contributed to its development or who are participating.

Organise pre-event briefings that explain how the event will unfold, who is expected to attend, what level of interaction is anticipated, and what opportunities for networking may arise. Where appropriate, conduct more than one preparatory session depending on the survivor's level of experience, the complexity of the event, and their expressed needs, while avoiding unnecessary burden on their time or wellbeing. With respect to ICC court hearings, provide information on the Court, court procedures, courtroom etiquette, content expectations, warnings regarding graphic content, and the rights of attendees.

Assess psychosocial support needs in advance. Clarify whether the survivor may require emotional or psychosocial support before, during or after the event and whether the organisation can provide such support through a qualified professional or designated wellbeing space. Be transparent about available resources.

Ensure that participation does not create financial or practical hardship. Reconfirm that arrangements related to travel, remuneration, childcare, care for dependent relatives, compensation for missed workdays, and incidental costs are clear and feasible.

Before requesting participation in calls or online preparation meetings, **confirm that the survivor has sufficient airtime, internet access, and a quiet and safe space to engage.** Where possible and appropriate, provide support to enable meaningful participation in

preparatory activities. Take caregiving responsibilities and work obligations into account when scheduling meetings.

B2. During the event/activity

Ensure the designated focal point or support person remains available throughout the event. The focal point should provide consistent and visible support without being intrusive or overbearing. The role is not to monitor or “shadow” the survivor, but to create a secure and supportive presence that respects their agency and autonomy.

Provide practical orientation and reduce avoidable stress. Ensure there is ample time for arrival, settling in, meeting organisers or moderators as needed, locating bathrooms and safe spaces, and accessing food or drinks. Anticipate that registration and badging procedures can be stressful, particularly where documentation checks or security screening may create discomfort. Plan proactively to prevent situations where survivors feel scrutinised, questioned unnecessarily, or made to feel unwelcome.

Strictly adhere to confidentiality and privacy principles. Coordinate with organisers, moderators, and communications staff to ensure no private details are disclosed without explicit consent and that inadvertent disclosure of sensitive information is avoided.

Ensure media engagement and digital visibility follow agreed consent. Survivors should not be tagged, quoted, or featured on organisational or partner platforms beyond agreed parameters. Where relevant, discuss whether the survivor intends to post independently and whether monitoring of potential digital backlash is required.

Maintain transparent and respectful communication throughout the event. Recognise that individual circumstances, concerns, or fears may evolve during participation. Respect personal boundaries at all times.

Designate a liaison person⁶ responsible for intervening if distressing matters or safety concerns arise. This person should monitor wellbeing, respond promptly to concerns, and adjust arrangements where needed.

Respect the survivor’s right to withdraw. Survivors may pause, step out of a session, decline to answer questions, or withdraw from the event entirely at any moment and without explanation or judgment.

Be mindful of informal networking spaces. Receptions, lunches, dinners, or side conversations may create additional emotional or reputational pressure. Survivors should not be expected to engage in informal advocacy or personal storytelling beyond their agreed role. The focal point should remain available to facilitate or gently limit interactions if needed.

B3. After the event/activity

Provide space for decompression where appropriate. Following the event, ask whether the survivor would like to engage in a restorative or grounding activity, such as quiet time, a walk, or informal reflection. Where feasible, ensure the schedule allows for this.

⁶ The liaison person may not always be a staff member but may also be a consultant, psychologist or staff member from a partner organisation who is experienced/trained in working with victims and survivors.

Ensure safe transport back to accommodation and, where relevant, safe return travel. Confirm arrival. In higher-risk contexts, conduct a brief post-return check-in to assess whether any security-related issues have arisen as a result of participation.

Where participation involved public visibility, **monitor for potential online harassment, misrepresentation, or backlash in the days following the event.** Remain available to advise or support the survivor in responding to such risks.

Conduct a follow-up check-in within a reasonable timeframe (e.g., one to two weeks) to assess emotional wellbeing, delayed reactions, or unintended consequences of participation.

Hold an internal structured debrief session to gather feedback on the engagement process, address any outstanding concerns, and identify lessons to inform organisational learning and future engagement practices.

Confirm how recordings, photographs, quotes, or testimonies will be used and offer the opportunity to review or revise consent for specific uses of public image.

Inform survivors how their input will concretely influence outputs or advocacy efforts and explain next steps. Communicate transparently about timeframes, limitations, and uncertainties associated with policy or advocacy processes to avoid creating unrealistic expectations.

Ensure that any outstanding financial matters related to travel reimbursement or compensation are resolved promptly and in accordance with the relevant sections of this Protocol.

C. Travel Arrangements and Logistics

C1. Pre-travel consultation

Consult with the survivor well in advance regarding all travel-related arrangements. Discuss travel preferences, routes, timing, and available options, taking into account location, accessibility, safety, and prior travel experiences. Identify any previous negative travel experiences or trauma-related triggers (such as fear of flying or language barriers) to ensure appropriate planning and support.

Confirm whether the survivor holds valid travel documentation and, if not, provide support to obtain the necessary documents in sufficient time. This may include covering costs associated with securing passports, birth certificates, or other government-issued documents, as well as travel required to attend administrative appointments. Budget planning should anticipate these needs.

C2. Visa Process

Determine whether a visa is required and initiate the process well in advance, ideally 30 to 45 days prior to travel. Provide an official invitation letter clearly stating the purpose and duration of the event, the survivor's role, and confirmation of which costs will be covered (travel, accommodation, insurance, visa fees). Accompany the survivor through each step of the visa process, including embassy appointments where required.

- Be aware of consular access limitations. In some contexts, consular offices may not be available in the survivor's region or may be located only in capital cities far from where the survivor resides. Internal travel for visa appointments may therefore be required. Before confirming participation, ensure the organisation has both the logistical capacity and financial resources to cover and coordinate this additional travel.
- In rare cases, invitation letters may be used in the context of asylum applications. Organisations should approach such situations with empathy and awareness that displacement may be linked to structural violence and insecurity. At the same time, potential legal, reputational, financial, or diplomatic implications should be assessed in consultation with trusted partners and, where appropriate, legal advisors. Decisions should balance the survivor's safety and rights with the organisation's legal obligations and capacity and should be documented transparently.
- If a visa is denied or significantly delayed, consult with the survivor regarding alternative participation formats, such as remote or pre-recorded contributions, and respect their preference.

Identify special needs early, including dietary restrictions, disability accommodations, medication requirements, and mobility considerations. Clarify what support can and cannot be provided within available resources.

Confirm that appropriate travel insurance is arranged prior to departure, including coverage for medical care. Survivors should be informed clearly of what the insurance covers and any exclusions, including pre-existing conditions where relevant.

Confirm whether the survivor has access to a functioning and reliable payment mechanism during travel (e.g., debit or credit card). Where survivors do not have access to international banking systems, discuss alternative payment arrangements in advance.

Personal documents such as passport copies and visa scans must be shared and stored securely, and only with staff directly involved in travel coordination.

Provide practical written information about the destination in advance. This may include contextual and cultural information, weather conditions and appropriate clothing, currency, electrical adapters, transport systems, and relevant emergency contacts. Ask whether the survivor requires assistance in obtaining appropriate clothing or essential items, particularly when travelling to colder climates or unfamiliar environments. Be clear about the type of support offered, including whether assistance includes financial coverage.

C3. Travel booking

Prioritise direct flights and minimise long layovers where possible. Where budget permits, consider scheduling arrival sufficiently in advance to allow rest before the event and departure with adequate time for recovery. Flexible tickets should be considered where appropriate.

For survivors unfamiliar with international travel, **provide clear step-by-step guidance about airport procedures**, including security checks, customs processes, and what

documentation may be requested. If relevant, discuss in advance how to describe the purpose of travel accurately at immigration or border control, without coaching misrepresentation. Survivors should be supported in preparing for potentially intrusive questioning in a manner that reduces stress and risk.

Arrange door-to-door transport where feasible and funding allows. Survivors who live far from capital cities or international airports may require additional internal travel. Plan and budget accordingly to ensure journeys are safe and manageable.

Whenever possible, **arrange airport pick-up and drop-off services.** Arriving in an unfamiliar airport in a foreign country can be stressful. Where feasible, a member of the organising team or a trusted contact should meet the survivor upon arrival and assist with onward transit. If survivors are expected to use public transport at the destination, provide clear, written instructions covering routes, ticketing systems, language considerations, safety tips, estimated travel times, and contingency plans.

Select accommodation that is secure, private, and respectful of survivors' needs, ideally located close to the venue. Shared accommodation should not be offered unless explicitly requested and assessed as appropriate. Confirm accessibility features where required (e.g., elevator access, quiet rooms). Communicate clearly about check-in procedures, house rules, and emergency contacts.

Double-check with accommodation providers **that no unexpected payment, credit card deposit, or financial hold will be required** from the survivor upon check-in. In some countries, hotels retain passports temporarily; confirm whether this applies and inform the survivor in advance to avoid unnecessary stress.

C4. Before Travel Day

Ensure the survivor receives all travel documentation in a language they understand. This should include tickets, boarding passes where available, invitation letters, visa documents, hotel booking details, full itinerary with times, emergency contact information, and relevant embassy and local emergency numbers.

Where appropriate, **provide clear, step-by-step written guidance for travel day,** potentially including photos of meeting points or airport terminals. Confirm who will meet the survivor upon arrival, if applicable. If local regulations require temporary passport retention at hotels, this must be confirmed and communicated clearly in advance.

C5. Emergency Support Plan

Establish a clear emergency support plan prior to travel and maintain it until the survivor has safely returned home. It should address foreseeable incidents, including flight cancellation or delay, illness or distress during travel, security issues (see risk assessment tool in Annex I), lost passport or documents, unexpected layovers, payment card malfunction, or unforeseen expenses.

Ensure survivors have access to 24-hour emergency support during travel. Designate a primary contact person, preferably the same focal point engaged from the outset, and a secondary back-up contact within the organisation.

For survivors with disabilities or medical needs, **arrange for necessary assistance**, including medical companions where required.

After the survivor's safe return, **conduct a brief check-in to confirm arrival** and assess whether any travel-related security or wellbeing concerns have arisen.

D. Per Diem and Reimbursement of Costs

Transparency of financial arrangements. Participation must not create financial hardship or emotional stress. Survivors must not incur personal financial loss as a result of participating in organisational activities, and participation must not depend on their ability to front expenses. Clearly communicate financial arrangements in advance. Survivors must be informed whether they will receive a per diem or whether the organisation will directly cover participation-related costs. Explain financial procedures transparently, including how expenses will be processed and the expected timeline for reimbursement.

Provide advance payments where needed. Survivors may experience economic precarity or rely on daily income; organisations must not assume financial flexibility or require survivors to advance funds. Advance payments should cover anticipated out-of-pocket costs such as visa fees, travel to administrative appointments, per diem, or other expected expenses.

Prioritise direct payment of major costs. Flights, accommodation, visa fees, airport transfers, and other substantial expenses should be prepaid by the organisation. Before arrival, confirm with accommodation providers that no credit card deposit, financial hold, or unexpected payment will be required from the survivor.

If per diem is provided, clarify its scope. Survivors should receive clear information regarding the rate and currency; what the per diem is intended to cover (e.g., meals, local transport, incidental expenses); which costs remain covered separately by the organisation.

If expenses are reimbursed rather than prepaid, explain the reimbursement process in detail. This includes which expenses qualify; what documentation is required; how reimbursement will be processed; and the expected timeline for payment.

Administrative requirements must be proportionate and minimally burdensome. Repeated follow-ups, complex forms, or technical compliance procedures can create stress and undermine trust. Financial processes should be designed to reduce administrative burden on survivors while remaining compliant with organisational and donor requirements.

Anticipate expenses where receipts may not be available. In some contexts, transport or small services may only be paid in cash or may not generate receipts. In such cases, consult trusted local partners and/or the survivor to establish reasonable cost estimates in advance. Inform the finance team ahead of time of anticipated documentation limitations and use alternative mechanisms, such as signed declarations detailing the expense, date, purpose, and amount, where compliant and appropriate.

Protect survivors from financial disadvantage in international money transfers. Where payments involve currency exchange or cross-border transfers, organisations must

ensure that survivors do not bear exchange rate losses, transfer fees, or withdrawal charges associated with participation.

Resolve outstanding financial matters promptly after the event. Any pending reimbursements, clarifications, or adjustments must be addressed without delay, and completed within clearly communicated timeframes. Survivors must be informed proactively if delays occur.

E. Remuneration and Compensation Guidelines

Recognise survivors as rights-holders whose time, expertise, emotional and professional labour must be valued and compensated. Remuneration is not a gesture of goodwill, but an acknowledgment of contribution. Survivors should not be expected to contribute expertise, testimony, or labour to advance organisational objectives without appropriate compensation, recognition, and follow-up.

Distinguish clearly between reimbursement and compensation. Compensation for expertise and labour is separate from reimbursement of participation-related expenses, which must be fully covered in advance or promptly reimbursed in accordance with section D of this Protocol. Both must be addressed independently, transparently, and in advance of engagement.

Compensation may include:

***Financial remuneration:** Honoraria, speaker fees, consultancy fees, or stipends at a rate that reflects both the survivor's contribution and relevant local and/or international standards.*

***Non-financial recognition:** Certificates of participation, letters of appreciation, or opportunities for capacity-building. Such recognition may complement, but must not substitute for, fair financial remuneration where expertise or labour is provided.*

Agree on compensation terms before engagement begins. No participation should take place without a clear agreement, written where possible, or verbally agreed and internally documented where literacy or accessibility considerations apply. Compensation terms should be discussed openly and negotiated in good faith. Survivors must have the opportunity to ask questions, propose adjustments, and decline terms without negative consequences.

Commit to parity and fairness. Survivors engaged as speakers, trainers, facilitators, or expert contributors should be compensated at the same rate as other professionals performing equivalent roles with a similar level of experience within the same event or organisational framework. Survivors participating in consultations, interviews, advisory roles, or focus groups should be compensated at a fair hourly or per diem rate adjusted to context.

Compensation must reflect the full scope of contribution. This includes preparation time, coordination meetings, follow-up engagement, and emotional labour, not only the time physically present at an event.

Ensure that compensation practices do not incentivize traumatic disclosure. Remuneration must not reward increased visibility or the sharing of painful personal details. Payment should reflect preparation time, expertise, emotional labour, and the agreed scope of contribution, not the intensity of disclosure. Survivors must never feel pressured to share beyond their comfort level due to financial arrangements.

Adapt remuneration practices to context. In some settings, receiving financial compensation may expose survivors to stigma, suspicion, unwanted scrutiny, or security risks upon return to their communities. Before determining payment modalities and amounts, conduct a contextual analysis in consultation with the survivor and, where appropriate, trusted local partners. Assess how compensation is perceived locally and whether visibility of payment could generate harm.

Assess legal and status-related risks. Survivors undergoing asylum procedures or seeking refugee recognition may face restrictions on employment or income generation. Receiving remuneration could be misinterpreted as formal employment and jeopardise legal status. Assess whether compensation could create legal risks and seek appropriate legal guidance where necessary. Alternative lawful and safe arrangements should be explored in consultation with the survivor to ensure they are neither placed at risk nor financially disadvantaged.

Flexibility: Safe and accessible payment methods must be provided, particularly where banking infrastructure is limited or where certain modalities may create safety or reputational risks. Options may include smaller instalment payments, discreet payment mechanisms (including through trusted partners with consent), mobile money systems, prepaid cards, or other context-appropriate tools.

Support measures: Survivors must be informed of available psychosocial support, content warnings, and their right to pause or withdraw during the engagement without financial penalty. Withdrawal due to distress or safety concerns must not result in loss of agreed compensation for work already undertaken.

Feedback and review: Survivors should have the opportunity to provide feedback on remuneration processes. Organisational policies should be reviewed regularly to ensure fairness, consistency, and responsiveness to evolving contexts.

Document remuneration arrangements. Organisations should document remuneration decisions, agreements, and payment arrangements to ensure transparency, accountability, and consistency across engagements.

F. Accountability and care: owning mistakes and preventing harm

Reflect on positionality and institutional power before and during engagement. Organisations should assess internally how their position, resources, decision-making

structures, and communication practices may create blind spots or unintended harm. Potential shortcomings and power imbalances should be discussed proactively and checked against existing safeguarding and survivor engagement policies.

Create safe and accessible channels for raising concerns at any stage. Feedback mechanisms must not be limited to post-event debrief sessions. Survivors should be able and encouraged to raise concerns through multiple avenues, including private conversations, secure messaging channels, anonymous mechanisms where feasible, or through trusted intermediaries. These channels should remain available before, during, and after engagement and clearly communicated.

Ensure that raising concerns carries no negative consequences. Survivors must not face retaliation, exclusion from future engagement, reputational harm, or financial disadvantage for expressing concerns or complaints. Organizations should communicate clearly how concerns will be handled and reassure survivors that compensation and future opportunities will not be affected.

Acknowledge concerns promptly and without defensiveness. When concerns are raised, listen actively and avoid minimizing impact or shifting responsibility. The immediate priority should be the survivor's safety and wellbeing. Where appropriate, offer psychosocial support or referrals.

Pause or adjust engagement if necessary. If a concern indicates risk of ongoing harm, participation should be paused, modified, or discontinued in consultation with the survivor.

Review what occurred in a structured manner. This includes examining internal processes, communication breakdowns, unclear expectations, and power dynamics that may have contributed. Relevant staff, consultants, or partners involved in the planning and implementation should be included in this reflection.

Document incidents and response steps while protecting confidentiality. Internal documentation should record what occurred, what measures were taken, and what lessons were identified. Confidentiality must be preserved at all times.

Escalate serious concerns to senior leadership. Incidents involving legal, safety, ethical, or reputational risks must be brought to senior leadership promptly to ensure appropriate oversight and institutional accountability.

Involve trusted partners or external advisors where impartiality or cultural sensitivity is required. Where necessary, external input may support fair assessment and appropriate response.

Offer appropriate steps for repair where harm is identified. This may include a formal apology, correction of public record, adjustment of engagement terms, additional support, clarification of misrepresentation, or other survivor-informed remedies. Repair measures should be discussed with the survivor and tailored to the specific harm experienced.

Communicate clearly the measures taken to prevent recurrence. Where appropriate, survivors should be informed of institutional changes or corrective steps adopted as a result of their feedback.

Institutionalise learning and review practices regularly. Lessons identified through feedback or incidents must be integrated into staff training, policy revision, and future engagement practices. This Protocol should be reviewed and updated periodically in light of survivor feedback and evolving best practices.

Support staff to prevent secondary and vicarious trauma. Recognise that repeated exposure to traumatic accounts can affect staff, consultants, interpreters, and partners. Provide supervision, peer support, or access to professional psychosocial resources where feasible. Encourage boundary-setting and workload management to prevent burn-out, as staff wellbeing directly affects the quality and safety of survivor engagement.

Annex 1: Survivor Engagement Risk Assessment Tool

To be completed in consultation with survivor and, where relevant, with trusted local partners, and monitored and updated throughout the engagement.

1. Contextual Risks

- Is the survivor located in an active conflict, post-conflict, high-surveillance, or politically sensitive environment?
- Is there a risk of retaliation, stigma, or community backlash if participation becomes known?
- Could engagement increase visibility in ways that expose the survivor to harm (online or offline)?
- Does the survivor experience economic precarity or reliance on daily income?
- Does the survivor have caregiving or dependent-care responsibilities that are not easily transferable?
- Could participation affect migration status, asylum procedures, or legal standing?

2. Safety and Mobility Risks

- Is travel to and from the event location safe?
- Are there risks at border crossings (e.g. interrogation, document scrutiny, visa implications)?

- Could participation affect the survivor's ability to return to their country of residence?
- Are communication channels (WhatsApp, Signal, email, Zoom) secure in the survivor's context?
- Are there digital surveillance risks or online harassment risks associated with participation?

3. Health-Related Risks

- Does the survivor have medical conditions that may make travel unsafe or physically demanding?
- Are accessibility accommodations required (mobility access, interpretation, dietary needs, medication storage, rest periods)?
- Is appropriate travel insurance in place, including coverage of pre-existing conditions?
- Is adequate medical care available at the event location in case of emergency?

4. Psychological and Emotional Risks

- Could participation trigger distress or re-traumatisation?
- Does the survivor have access to psychosocial or community-based support?
- Are referral pathways available if distress arises before, during, or after the engagement?

- Has the survivor been informed that they may pause, decline to answer, or withdraw at any time without negative consequences?

5. Confidentiality and Data Protection Risks

- Is there a risk of data leakage (contact details, travel documentation, personal information)?
- Is public identification necessary?
- Has pseudonym use been considered?
- Are photo, video, livestreaming, and social media tagging protocols agreed in advance?

6. Cultural and Identity-Related Risks

- Could engagement trigger stigma based on gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, religion, or other identity markers?
- Is the outreach approach culturally appropriate and respectful of local norms?
- Would the survivor prefer engagement through a trusted intermediary rather than direct contact?

7. Practical and Financial Risks

- Could the survivor incur communication costs (airtime, internet, transport) simply to participate?
- Would advance payments be required to prevent financial strain?
- Are banking or payment mechanisms safe and accessible in the survivor's context?

8. Mitigation Measures

Where risks are identified, document mitigation steps:

- Context-specific safety plan (emergency contacts, contingency plans).
- Alternative participation options (remote, anonymised, pre-recorded, closed-door).
- Secure communication and data storage measures.
- Psychosocial support or referral pathways.
- Health and accessibility accommodations, including language accessibility.
- Legal consultation where immigration or employment status may be affected.
- Financial safeguards (advance payments, discreet payment mechanisms, no out-of-pocket costs).
- Media and digital risk management plan.
- Continuous monitoring plan (designated focal point; regular check-ins).

Tool II: Survivor Engagement Practical Checklist

To be adjusted as appropriate depending on event engagement and the assessed risks to the survivor.

A. Initial Contact and Outreach

- Purpose clearly defined: participation is necessary and not tokenistic
 - Organisational policies, staffing, and budget in place
 - Single focal point designated
 - Focal point suitability confirmed
 - Internal supervision and referral pathways in place
 - Trusted local partners or networks identified
 - Joint risk assessment completed and documented
 - Clear early information provided (purpose, format, audience, risks, visibility, finances, autonomy)

- Care responsibilities and income implications discussed
- Participation budget confirmed
- Informed consent to participate obtained
- Safe communication channels agreed (no cost burden)
- Roles clarified for joint sponsorship

B. Survivor Participation in Events and Activities

B1. Before the Event

- Survivor input sought on format and scope of engagement
- Language and interpretation arrangements confirmed
- Psychosocial needs assessed
- Agenda and logistical details shared in advance
- Preparation support provided (briefing, technical guidance, content expectations)
- Internet/data support arranged where required

B2. During the Event

- Focal point is present and accessible throughout
- Practical orientation is provided
- Right to pause or withdraw is respected
- Media and recording protocols are enforced
- Wellbeing and security is monitored (discreetly)

B3. After the Event

- Decompression where appropriate is provided
- Safe transport and return confirmed
- Monitor for online harassment or misrepresentation
- Follow-up check-in is conducted
- Internal structured debrief for institutional learning
- Confirm use/or prohibition of recordings, images, and quotes; allow consent review or revision.
- Explain if and how input concretely influences advocacy, avoid creating unrealistic expectations
- Financial matters addressed promptly

C. Travel Arrangements and Logistics

C1. Pre-Travel Consultation

- Travel preferences and trauma triggers discussed
- Valid travel documentation assessed early
- Visa requirements assessed early
- Dietary, medical, accessibility needs identified
- Travel insurance is arranged
- Confirm access to a functioning and reliable payment mechanisms
- Personal documents copies stored safely
- Clear written travel information provided

C2. Visa Process

- Invitation letter issued
- Visa fees budgeted and covered
- Survivor supported throughout application process
- Contingency planning in case of delay or denial

C3. Travel Booking

- Direct flights prioritised

- Guidance about airport procedures provided
- Door-to-door transport arranged where feasible
- Safe, private accommodation secured
- No unexpected payment, credit card deposit, or financial hold by accommodation is checked
- Rest period included where appropriate

C4. Before Travel Day

- All documentation provided (tickets, itinerary, emergency contacts)
- Step-by-step travel day guidance shared

C5. Emergency Support Plan

- Emergency response plan prepared prior travel
- Primary and secondary 24-hours emergency contacts designated
- Rapid-response procedures established (flight delays, illness, lost documents)

D. Per Diem and Reimbursement

- All financial arrangements are explained
- Advance payments provided where needed

- Direct payment of major costs prioritized

Per diem coverage is clear

- No out-of-pocket expenses required
- Clear reimbursement process communicated
- Administrative burden is reduced
- Alternative documentation procedures agreed where receipts unavailable
- No exchange-rate losses borne by survivor
- Outstanding financial matters resolved promptly

E. Remuneration and Compensation

- Compensation terms agreed in advance (written or documented)
 - Rate comparable to professionals performing similar roles
 - Full scope of work compensated (preparation, coordination, follow-up, emotional labour)
 - Compensation clearly separate from expense reimbursement
 - Payment does not incentivise traumatic disclosure

- Survivor able to ask questions, negotiate terms, or decline participation
- Contextual risks of payment assessed (stigma, scrutiny, security)
- Legal or status-related risks considered (e.g. asylum or work restrictions)
- Safe and lawful payment method identified
- Discreet payment used where necessary

F. Accountability and Care

- Positionality and institutional power dynamics reflected on internally
- Safe feedback channels available
- Survivor informed of non-retaliation policy
- Concerns documented internally
- Senior leadership notified where appropriate
- Corrective measures implemented where harm identified
- Lessons integrated into future planning

G. Attending ICC and Other Court Hearings

To be completed specifically for attendance at ICC and other Court hearings, in compliment with the other checklists in these annexes.

G1. Pre-Visit Coordination with the Court

- Interpretation into applicable local language of a given case/situation request to the Court
- Availability of any security precautions by the Court identified in advance
- Availability of any psychosocial support to be provided by the Court identified in advance (alternatives arranged, if possible)
- Sensitisation of Court staff on appropriate interaction with survivors coordinated with the Court
- Court representatives for meetings during the hearing identified in consultation with survivors, and meetings scheduled (note: at ICC via protocol)
- Pre-hearing meetings between host and relevant Court staff arranged where necessary (eg. where survivors have had no prior contact with specific representatives, departments, or organs, to align expectations)

G2. Survivor Preparation

- Pre-hearing briefing provided (including information on the Court, procedures, courtroom etiquette, expected content, potential exposure to graphic material, and rights of attendees)
- Host focal point identified and introduced
- Practical orientation provided (including registration, badging, and security procedures)
- Possession of personal identification documents for entry at Court ensured

G3. At the Court Premises

- Focal point is present
- Communication maintained via secure channels
- On-call emotional and psychosocial supports (by Court or otherwise) identified
- Low profile at Court premises maintained where necessary
- Meetings with relevant Court representatives facilitated
- Structured debrief meeting conducted to obtain feedback and align on follow-ups

G4. Post-Visit Follow-up

Travel procedures discussed and planned (including customs processes, handling of physical

and electronic materials relating to proceeding, and secure communication during return)

Follow-up check-ins conducted to monitor safe return using secure communication channels

Conduct a follow-up meeting to confirm reflections and next steps