

International Legal Frameworks and Best Practices for Witness Protection in Child Trafficking Cases: A Critical Appraisal

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Abstract

Background:

In the international human rights law, child trafficking has been one of the most widespread types of transnational organized crime that grossly infringes the rights of children against safety, dignity, and protection. Child victims have a tendency to give testimony that may lead to a successful prosecution of the traffickers. Nevertheless, weak witness protection programs face children to retraumatization, intimidation and re-trafficking. Although conventions like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Palermo Protocol exist at the international level and give rise to normative duties, there are still gaps in the implementation of the relevant laws in various jurisdictions.

Objective:

This study is a critical assessment of international and regional legal systems dealing with witness protection in cases of child trafficking and comparative analysis of the national practices with a view to examining the best practices and weaknesses of the structures.

Participants and Setting:

It focuses on international law tools, regional treaties (European Union, ASEAN and African), and domestic witness protection systems in the United States, India, some EU Member States (Netherlands and Germany), and Kenya as a typical developing jurisdiction.

Methods:

Qualitative and comparative research methodology (doctrinal) was utilized. Treaties, protocols, directives and national legislation were considered as primary sources. The secondary sources included academic books, UNODC reports and institutional assessments. Four analytical steps have been utilized (doctrinal analysis, comparative assessment, synthesis of best practices, and critical gap identification).

Results:

The results indicate a high level of normative convergence on the international level and high differences in the domestic application. Developed jurisdictions that have established child-sensitive processes and relocation systems show greater prosecutor and less witness withdrawal. Conversely, those states that are constrained in resources experience an implementation deficit associated with a lack of funds, breaches of confidentiality, and a general lack of international cooperation. The lack of legal uniformity and digital protection measures is a structural weakness of transnational cases.

Conclusions:

Child trafficking cases need unified cultural norms internationally, long-term funding system, and institutionalized procedures that care about the child. The paper suggests the creation of a Global Witness Protection Protocol on Cases of Child Trafficking in order to facilitate the minimum standards, international acknowledgement of protective steps, and inclusion of policy design based on the survivors.

Keywords: Child trafficking, witness protection, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Palermo Protocol, EU Victims' Rights Directive

1. Introduction

Child trafficking has been considered one of the most serious breaches of human rights in the modern world, which does not respect the boundaries of a nation and plays upon the loopholes in the legal systems of protection (Mehra et al. 2024). Millions of children every year are exposed to sexual exploitation, forced labor, illegal adoption, and other abuses by the phenomenon caused by organized criminal networks, poverty, conflict, displacement, and global migration (Nagy et al. 2024). Testimonies of victimized children in such a crime are the most important to obtain conviction; however, they also have a greater chance of retraumatization, intimidation, and even re-trafficking when prosecution fails to protect them. The concept of witness protection in the case of child trafficking is, thus, not just a procedural protection but an ethical and legal requirement based on the principle of the best interests of the child (Aziz et al. 2025, Okoye et al. 2025). In the last 30 years, the global community has come up with a patchwork of treaties and protocols, most prominently the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) protocol, the Palermo Protocol, and other regional documents, including the Victims Rights Directive of the EU, the ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons, and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, that provide requirements for states to offer confidentiality, security, and psychosocial assistance to child witnesses (Shekhar et al. 2025). Nevertheless, even with such legal commitments, protection mechanisms differ vastly in extent, efficiency, and availability, especially between the developed and the developing countries (Rustamova et al. 2025). Cross-border cooperation, which is vital in cases of trafficking, is inconsistent due to the gaps in mutual legal assistance, relocation procedures, and approaches towards the victim. This study will critically evaluate the legal environment on witness protection of cases of child trafficking across the world and comparatively analyze the United States, India, EU member states, and some developing countries in order to assess both normative and gaps in implementation. It asks the question of whether the current framework is compliant with the practicalities of the trafficked children and whether best practices in the jurisdictions can be easily modified to form a more harmonized and transnational protection regime. By so doing, it attempts to make contributions to an urgent discussion of the aligning of international standards with efficient, culturally sensitive, and child-focused protection approaches that could stand the challenge of the multifaceted global trafficking network.

1.1 Background & Rationale

1.1.1 Overview of child trafficking as a global crime.

Child trafficking is one of the most important and complicated human rights offenses in the twenty-first century, which involves all areas of the globe and crosses socio-economic, cultural, and political boundaries (Waziri et al. 2023). It is considered an extreme type of exploitation under international law, humanized in the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (usually referred to as the Palermo Protocol) as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receiving of a child with the intention to exploit (Al-Anzi et al. 2024). Most importantly, with regard to children, under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), one qualifies as a crime regardless of whether there is the use of coercion, force, or deception (Montta et al. 2020). Even the act of involving the child in exploiting situations is trafficking and hence a crime against an individual as well as against the duties of a given state in the international human rights law.

Child trafficking is a critical worldwide crisis, and ILO and UNODC estimated that children were almost a third of the victims of trafficking across the globe and over half in areas such as Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia (Dong et al., 2019). Exploitation can include sexual abuse and forced labor to armed recruitment, forced marriage, illegal adoption, and organ trafficking, and online grooming and abuse material have become new dangers through the digital platforms (Noval et al. 2023). Based on poverty, violence, displacement, ineffective governance, and embedded inequalities, trafficking is a transnational organized crime, which follows migration and trade pathways. Considering both a domestic crime and a violation of human rights, as defined in the UNCRC, the Palermo Protocol, and regional schemes, trafficking requires a cross-border response (Mehra et al. 2024). It has a devastating effect on children, which leads to physical injuries, trauma, stigma, and disrupted lives, which is

frequently aggravated by a lax legal process. The present crises, such as COVID-19, armed conflicts, climate displacement, and the dark web, increased vulnerability and made it more difficult to be detected. Even though regional cooperation efforts are promising, resource imbalances and the lack of effective enforcement make the whole world less effective. More importantly, the absence of a full-scale, child-based witness protection, including confidentiality, psychosocial care, and relocation, as well as cross-border protection, is a key setback to victim protection as well as successful prosecution.

1.1.2 Increasing vulnerability of children amid migration and transnational trafficking trends.

In the past few decades, conflict, inequality, and climate change, as well as humanitarian crises, have resulted in global migration levels at all-time highs as well as a population of more than 43 million children under 20 years old who are involved in migration flows (Swain et al., 2019; de Almeida Saraiva et al., 2023). Although migration is not a harmful occurrence per se, irregular and forced migration increases the chances of child trafficking since traffickers take advantage of lacking stability and desperation (Latham-Sprinkle et al., 2019; Hansen et al., 2019). Unaccompanied and separated children are prone to falsehoods, re-trafficking, and exploitation during migration, and there is a lack of enforcement of these laws, allowing exploitation in places such as the Central Mediterranean and Southeast Asia (Querol et al., 2024; Ammann et al., 2021). Another way that technology increases the risks is online grooming, monitoring, and extortion. Although there are international structures, protection is not uniform, with trafficked children being criminalized and the use of crime-fighting tools, including MLATs and INTERPOL databases, being underutilized. The most vulnerable groups are those that are marginalized, such as girls, LGBTQ+ minors, and children with disabilities. On the whole, the overlapping of migration and trafficking highlights some crucial vagaries in cross-border protection of witnesses and children, who lack organized protection through relocation, identity protection, and psychosocial healing.

1.1.3 Significance of protecting child victims/witnesses for effective prosecution.

Child victim and witness protection in the case of trafficking is a humanitarian obligation as well as a foundation of an effective justice system since in many cases, the success of prosecutions depends on victim testimony because the physical evidence is limited (Demeke et al., 2024; Coster van Voorhout et al., 2020; Ramokolo et al., 2019). However, cross-border threats, intimidation, and traumas often interfere with the capacity of children to testify, resulting in reneged statements or dismissal of the case (Crutchley et al., 2020). Child-sensitive precautions are necessary because children are vulnerable due to limited knowledge of the legal procedures, vulnerable to coercion, and vulnerable to secondary victimisation (Van Niekerk et al., 2019). The UNCRC, OPSC, and Palermo Protocol are international tools that require confidentiality, psychological help, and non-direct confrontation (Bilousov et al., 2020). Those jurisdictions that have instituted such measures as video testimony, in-camera hearing, and advocacy centers, as observed in the U.S. and EU, have better results in terms of conviction, whereas several developing states still experience difficulties because of the poorly developed protection mechanisms (Okoye et al., 2025). In the end, the protection of child witnesses is a way to save the dignity and rights of the child witnesses in addition to making sure that the traffickers are brought to justice.

2. International Legal Frameworks

2.1 United Nations Instruments

The United Nations (UN) has been in the forefront in ensuring that the normative basis is laid on the protection of child victims and child witnesses in cases of trafficking (Aziz et al. 2025). An array of binding treaties, optional protocols, and model legislative instruments indicate the state commitments to stop trafficking, safeguard victims, and prosecute them effectively. These tools all represent a rights-based approach, where witness protection is viewed not just as a procedural protection but as a duty, a duty that is necessitated by the fact that the child has a right to security, dignity, and recovery.

2.1.1 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The very most popular human rights treaty is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989), to which all states are obliged to protect every individual under the age of 18, and Articles 19, 34, 35, and 39 are specifically significant when it comes to protecting trafficked

children acting as witnesses (Theobald et al., 2019; McMellon et al., 2020). Article 19 demands that states guard kids against any type of violence, abuse, and exploitation and is what underlies securing against child witnesses' intimidation, exposure to the community, or judicial practices that are insensitive. Article 34 puts a duty on states to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, which is expanded to the courtroom, where it provides confidentiality and retraumatization protection when testifying. Article 35 specifically concerns the issue of trafficking, requiring multilateral and national mechanisms to address the abduction, sale, or trafficking of children, as it requires cross-border protection of witnesses. Article 39 emphasizes the concept of recovery and reintegration, which complements the role of the judiciary with the general psychosocial assistance required to successfully testify. Taken together, these stipulations create an awareness that child witness protection cannot exist outside the protection of the rights of children in general, and this is supported by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which in its General Comments No. 13 on freedom from violence in particular emphasizes that justice processes should be child-sensitive, whereby they are safe, private, and substantially participatory throughout (Umaru et al., 2019).

2.1.2 Optional Protocol to the UNCRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography

In 2000, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography (OPSC) was adopted that reinforced the UNCRC by prohibiting egregious forms of child exploitation, inextricably connected to trafficking, and making it an obligation of states to criminalize such behavior and ensure effective investigation and prosecution as well as punishment (Cunningham et al., 2021; Prameswari et al., 2020). Witness protection has a number of provisions. Article 8(1) demands states to safeguard the rights and interests of child victims during the criminal process by taking into account the safety, vulnerability, and unnecessary delays. Article 8(3) places importance on child sensitive proceedings and privacy protection like closed hearings, records in anonymized form and limiting the disclosure of identities. Article 8(4) requires that all professionals such as judges, prosecutors, police and social workers undergo training in such a way that; all their interactions with children are sensitive and that they have an understanding of trauma in enhancing the reliability of the testimony. Article 8(5) commits states to make rights and judicial procedures information accessible and readily available as well as support services such as interpretation and culturally relevant advice on cases of cross-border cases. The explicit connection between child protection and criminal accountability means that the OPSC connects international law on child rights and domestic justice systems, as the latter cannot achieve successful prosecutions without ensuring the privacy, safety, and meaningful participation of the victims.

2.1.3 UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol)

The leading international legal framework in the fight against trafficking is persons is the Palermo Protocol (2000) that supplements the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) providing a definition of trafficking and the requirements to criminalize crimes and focus on the protection and support of the victims (Hanson et al., 2025). Its provisions are highly favorable in cases of child trafficking in which the consent is irrelevant in proving exploitation. Article 6 commits states to protect the privacy and identity of victims, to offer access to information, to provide housing, counseling, education, and healthcare and also to ensure physical safety of subjects of a legal process in addition to providing access to legal aid and interpretation to cross-border victims. Article 7 promotes either temporary or permanent residence to the victims in cases where their safety is at risk and Article 8 emphasizes on repatriation which is safe, preferably voluntary to avoid the risks of re-trafficking. Notably, the Protocol also presents protection in terms of a legal responsibility that is conditional on the effectiveness of the prosecutions, making child witness protection a key aspect of making traffickers answer.

2.1.4 UNODC Model Law against Trafficking in Persons

Most states use a template of victims protection and support of witnesses, and a comprehensive template of the UNODC Model Law against Trafficking in Persons (2009) that was designed to assist the state in making the Palermo Protocol part of the domestic law is very comprehensive (Bouché et al., 2019). It does not have a legal force but describes a number of child witness protection measures. Section 28 is aimed at securing the identity of victims in terms of anonymity (pseudonyms, publication prohibitions and in-camera hearings). Section 29 specifies protective custody where the need arises without emphasizing punitive custody but the safe houses used should be child friendly. Section 30 covers witness protection by relocation, changing of identity and financial aid explaining why such protection should be adjusted to the developmental needs of the children, particularly in the transnational cases. Section 31 proposes the use of such an alternative to face-to-face testimony as video connection, videotaped statements, and screens in the courtroom to protect children against direct encounters with traffickers. Section 32 emphasizes the need of specialized training to law enforcement, prosecutors as well as judges with regard to handling of child witnesses. The inclusion of these safety measures make the Model Law effective to facilitate the state operationalisation of obligations under the UNCRC, OPSC and Palermo Protocol in aligning international standards with domestic practice to meet the specificities of the trafficking cases.

2.2 Regional Instruments

Although the United Nations offers a global normative standard to counter the trafficking of persons, the regional entities have come up with their own legal frameworks based on geopolitical, legal, and socio-cultural contexts. The regional mechanisms tend to extend well beyond the broad requirements of UN treaties, with more practical operational provisions to safeguard victims, facilitate cross-border collaboration, and deliver child-sensitive court procedures. This part looks into the European Union (EU) framework, the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons (ACTIP), and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, as well as the Ouagadougou Action Plan of the African Union, all of which ensure or imply the protection of child victims and witnesses in child trafficking cases.

2.2.1 European Union (EU)

Directive 2011/36/EU on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

The most important tool of harmonizing the anti-trafficking legislation on the European level is the working directive of 2011/36/EU adopted on 5 April 2011 that defines the meaning of trafficking in accordance with the Palermo Protocol and considers children as especially vulnerable persons (Marchetti et al., 2022). It commits Member States to safeguard victims in investigations and trials (Art. 15), offer special treatment to children, including trained interviewer, restrictive questioning, and video testimony (Art. 15[4]) and guarantee the child victim access to free legal counselling and representation (Art. 16), and, without consideration of cooperation, offer assistance to child victims (Art. 17).

This is supplemented by the Victims Rights Directive 2012/29/EU (adopted 25 October 2012) which provides minimum criteria of victim support (Bisi et al., 2020). It demands personal needs assessment (Art. 20), safety precautions such as distant testimony and barrier of meeting offenders (Art. 23), child friendly interviews in the presence of trained workers (Art. 24) and consent training to all appropriate persons (Art. 25).

These Directives taken together form a binding, holistic regime of child trafficking victims, which integrates both a legal and a psychosocial protection.

2.2.2 ASEAN

ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (ACTIP)

ACTIP, being a legally binding instrument adopted in 2015, is a standardisation tool to anti-trafficking activities within ASEAN and its ten Member States. It is more or less related to the Palermo Protocol but is based on the migration and trafficking pattern of Southeast Asia, where the porous states and the elevated labour migration rates pose their own combinations.

- Article 14 requires that it adopts measures to safeguard privacy and identity of the victims, even in a court of law.

- Article 14(4) even specifies that child victims should receive the proper protection in the interviews and court proceedings, as their developmental requirements are acknowledged.
- Article 14(6) guarantees access to proper shelter, counselling and medical attention to victims - vital in stabilizing children to enable them to be safe during legal proceedings.
- Article 15, however, welcomes cooperation between Member States so that victims could be returned, but with the protection that the process does not jeopardize their safety or well-being.
- Article 16 also advances information exchange and mutual legal assistance, especially important when it comes to the safety of witnesses whose safety can be endangered by border effects.

The strength of ACTIP is that it is regionally specific: it takes into account the realities of cross-border trafficking in ASEAN and specifically acknowledges the necessity of transnational child witness protection.

2.2.3 African Charter & Related Protocols

African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC)

The ACRWC is the main child rights instrument on the continent that was adopted in 1990 by the Organization of African Unity (which later became the African Union). It reflects numerous clauses of the UNCRC but it also discusses the problems related to the African context, including the detrimental traditional practices and the experience of armed conflict on children.

- Article 16 requires the States Parties to safeguard children against any abuse and maltreatment of the children and to set special monitoring units to prevent and deal with the abuse.
- Article 27 also outlaws the abduction and trading of children with both preventive and corrective actions required.
- Article 29 provides that the child victims are treated accordingly to physical and psychological healing which is also applicable to the capacity of such children to be witnesses without further injury.

It is also distinctive of the ACRWC to have a clear connection with African socio-cultural realities, and demand that States Parties have institutions capable of delivering these protections in practice.

African Union's Ouagadougou Action Plan

Ouagadougou Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in human beings, especially women and children, 2006 is a policy tool that was formulated between the European and African Union. Although not binding, it establishes broad principles of prevention, protection and prosecution.

- Under the protection pillar, the Action Plan proposes the establishment of victim and witness protection programs, to which they should have confidentiality and offer them secure housing.
- It proposes that victim support services should be availed irrespective of whether the victim is willing to testify in accordance with the best practice of not providing conditional assistance.
- It highlights why inter-state collaboration in relocation is necessary especially in cases of witnesses whose testifying would bring them reprisal in their home country.

The cross-regional nature of the Ouagadougou Action Plan demonstrates the realization that the trafficking problem in Africa is usually both intra-African and Africa-European, and thus they need to have mechanisms to protect the witness across both continents.

2.3 Cross-Border Cooperation Mechanisms

Child trafficking is transnational in nature and simultaneously often, there are perpetrators, victims and evidence that may be scattered across various jurisdictions. This cross-border aspect poses immense difficulties in protecting the interests of child victims and witnesses since the dangers to their safety might not be limited to the territorial scope of the prosecuting state. Witness protection thus needs strong international cooperation structures which are able to exchange information, collaborate in investigations, relocation and legal assistance. One of the most applicable mechanisms

also include the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties (MLATs), the INTERPOL victim identification mechanisms, and the international frameworks of judicial cooperation, which are created based on the Hague Conventions.

2.3.1 Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties (MLATs)

Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties (MLATs) are bilateral (or multilateral) agreements that help in cooperating across borders in criminal cases in terms of investigations and prosecutions which is essential in child trafficking cases. They usually address witness testimony overseas, judicial process documents, search and seizure, and hand-over of people in custody - essential to permit remote testifying or secure judicial appearances by child witnesses. Although not every MLATs includes an element of protection of the victims, more recent agreements do have confidentiality, safe passage and non-disclosure elements as observed in some Commonwealth MLATs. Not all of them, however, are effective due to bureaucratic delays, absence of child-sensitive procedures, and national inconsistencies in witness protection laws. Best practice recommends child specific protection, including in-camera testifying, provision of psychosocial support during travel and relocation agreements with high-risk child witnesses.

2.3.2 INTERPOL Victim Identification Tools

Since INTERPOL is the largest global police agency, it has a central role to play in child trafficking by victimizing, tracking offenders, and sharing intelligence across borders. It has specialised databases and working tools that are used to identify and protect trafficked children within a short period of time.

- ICSE Database: The International Child Sexual Exploitation (ICSE) database facilitates sharing and comparing of pictures and videos of the victims of the sexual exploitation, which are usually related to the trafficking. It helps to find victims and offenders in different jurisdictions and preserve high levels of confidentiality.
- Yellow Notices: INTERPOL also issues Yellow Notices to assist in the search of missing individuals, especially the minors or in identifying individuals who cannot identify themselves. This tool may be crucial in the process of tracking trafficked children who have been lost or dumped in other countries.
- Operational Coordination: INTERPOL has organized combined efforts, including the operation Epervier and the operation Akoma, that have already resulted in rescuing hundreds of child victims and arresting child traffickers. In such operations witness protection protocols are generally invoked in liaisons with the national agencies.

Although the INTERPOL tools have proven to be highly effective in the cross-border identification, and rescue processes, their successful operation requires that national authorities report on time, that the authorities act on the intelligence and that the rescued children are not re-trafficked.

2.3.3 International Judicial Cooperation under Hague Conventions

Hague conference on the law of international relations has established various conventions that are applied in matters concerning protection of children where some are indirectly applied to assist witness protection in trafficking matters through cooperation between courts across the border.

- Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (1980): Although mostly concerned with the re-location of abducted children to their usual residence, the mechanisms of procedural cooperation that are available in the Convention can be exploited in the situation of trafficking where abducted children are falsely taken across the borders.
- Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (1993): This convention is used to curb unlawful adoptions associated with trafficking because central authorities in each state are required to share information, check consent and safeguard children during intercountry adoptions. Indirect protection of witnesses can be provided when trafficked children are the subjects of the continuing court cases regarding illegal adoption.
- Hague Convention on the International Recovery of Child Support and Other Forms of Family Maintenance (2007): This is not specific to trafficking, but since the cooperation

arrangements it provides already exist between central authorities, it can be leveraged to exchange information that would be of value in child protection and safety.

The increased focus of the Hague Conventions on Central Authorities as the designated contacts also enables the coordinated actions of the jurisdictions in the relocation or repatriation of child witnesses as this is essential in such cases. The application of such frameworks in the protection of criminal witnesses is, however, constrained by the fact that they are more of a civil law application and therefore the use of criminal cooperation treaties is country of necessity.

3. Comparative Analysis of Witness Protection Mechanisms

Protection of witnesses is vital to the successful prosecution of traffickers and especially with child trafficking cases. Although there are general obligations at the global and regional levels, these are applied differently in different jurisdictions. The section provides a comparative study of the jurisdictions of the United States, India, the European Union (using examples of Netherlands and Germany) and developing countries (using Kenya as a case study).

3.1 United States

3.1.1 Federal Witness Security Program (WITSEC) – Scope and Limitations in Child Trafficking Cases

Federal Witness Security Program (WITSEC) was another program run by the United States Marshals Service, and is typically considered to be one of the most extensive witness protection programs globally. It was found under the Organized Crime Control Act of 1970 and it offers relocation, new identities, housing, and financial assistance to witnesses whose testimony is highly essential to the major criminal prosecutions. Although initially created to combat organized crime, WITSEC has been modified to solve human trafficking, including those involving children victims and witnesses (Makhubele et.al 2022, Ramachandran et.al 2022).

- Scope of Services: WITSEC provides relocation (domestic or international), change of identity, financial support of daily living expenses and psychological help. It works in strong cooperation with federal prosecutors and it makes sure that the high-risk witnesses could freely testify without any fear of reprisals.
- Application in Child Trafficking: In the case of the minors, the program also liaises with the child welfare agencies to provide continuity in education and medical care and psychosocial rehabilitation. When relocating, child victims are normally accompanied by non-offending members of their families or legal guardians.
- Outsourcing: WITSEC has major limitations as it is largely an adult witnesses program and the thresholds to inclusion are high - typically when the testimony is considered vital to a high-priority federal case. A significant portion of child trafficking victims can be subject to state level prosecution and under such circumstances, there is no application of WITSEC. Moreover, secrecy of relocation may interfere with the long term social and emotional stability of a child when the protective measures are multi-year.

3.1.2 Specialized Child Victim Services under the Victims of Child Abuse Act

Victims of Child Abuse Act (1990) requires that child victims and witnesses in federal cases should be treated in a specialized way (Vizard et.al 2022).

- Child-Friendly Procedures: The Act also stipulates that children must be interviewed in settings that are age friendly, that their testimony can be made through closed-circuit television so that they do not face direct confrontation with the defendants and the interviewer should be specially trained to question children.
- Multidisciplinary Child Advocacy Centers (CACs): These centers offer a multidisciplinary system, which implies a coordinated team of law enforcement, prosecutors, medical professionals and social workers, which will minimize risks of repeated interrogation and secondary victimization.
- Integration with Witness Protection: These services cannot be considered an alternative to the protection of the federal witnesses, but they can be used complementary to the federal

witness protection policy since it is guaranteed that the involvement of the child in the court will not harm their well-being or security.

Critical Appraisal: The U.S. model proves that high-level relocation programs coupled with child-specific legal protections will increase the safety as well as the credibility of the testimony. But, its over-reliance on the federal jurisdiction leaves loopholes in the prosecution of victims of child trafficking on state level.

3.2 India

3.2.1 Witness Protection Scheme 2018 – Implementation Challenges

India presented the Witness Protection Scheme (WPS) 2018 after having been ordered by the Supreme Court, which is the first formal national system of witness safety in the country (Rossner et.al 2021).

- **Protection:** The scheme offers three types of protection depending on the perceived threat, such as temporary police escort to permanent relocation and identity alteration.
- **Provisions for Children:** It recognizes special vulnerabilities of child witnesses, requiring the presence of support persons during interviews, in-camera trials, and use of audio-video links for testimony.
- **Implementation Challenges:**
 1. **Resource Constraints** – The scheme is largely funded by state governments, many of which have insufficient budgets for comprehensive relocation and long-term protection.
 2. **Lack of Specialized Units** – Few states have dedicated child witness protection officers, leading to inconsistent application of child-friendly procedures.
 3. **Confidentiality Gaps** – Leakages of witness identities have been reported, particularly in rural areas where anonymity is difficult to maintain.

In trafficking cases, especially those involving cross-border victims from Nepal, Bangladesh, or Myanmar, the absence of bilateral witness protection agreements limits the scheme's effectiveness once victims return to their home countries.

3.2.2 Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 – Child-Friendly Procedures in Trafficking Prosecutions

The **Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 (JJ Act)** is primarily concerned with the care and protection of children in conflict with law or in need of care. In trafficking prosecutions, the Act mandates (NANJUNDA et.al 2023):

- **Special Courts:** Designated Children's Courts with powers to adopt child-sensitive procedures, such as excluding the public from trials, shielding the child from media exposure, and allowing testimony through video-link.
- **Support Persons:** The child has the right to be accompanied by a trusted adult, social worker, or NGO representative during proceedings.
- **Prohibition of Aggressive Cross-Examination:** Courts are directed to prevent intimidating questioning, ensuring that children are not retraumatized.

Critical Appraisal: While the JJ Act provides robust child-sensitive procedures, its coordination with the WPS 2018 remains weak. Witness protection tends to focus on trial-related safety, but not on post-trial threats—an area where traffickers' influence remains significant.

3.3 European Union Nations

3.3.1 Coordinated Approach under the Victims' Rights Directive

The **Victims' Rights Directive (2012/29/EU)** establishes minimum standards for the rights, support, and protection of victims across all EU Member States.

- **Key Protections:**
 1. Right to be protected from secondary and repeat victimization.
 2. Special protection measures for children, including avoidance of repeated interviews and use of trained professionals.
 3. Risk assessment procedures to determine appropriate protective measures.

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- **Cross-Border Cooperation:** The Directive requires Member States to recognize protection measures ordered in other EU countries through the European Protection Order (EPO) system, facilitating the mobility and safety of victims across borders.

3.3.2 Example: Netherlands and Germany's Advanced Victim Support Programs

Netherlands:

- Operates a highly integrated victim support system through the Centrum SeksueelGeweld (Centre for Sexual Violence) and Slachtofferhulp Nederland (Victim Support Netherlands).
- Provides 24/7 multidisciplinary services, including medical, legal, and psychological assistance.
- In trafficking cases, children can be placed in specialized shelters with secure facilities, ensuring anonymity and restricting unauthorized contact.

Germany:

- Implements a federal witness protection program (Zeugenschutz) in coordination with Länder (state) police forces.
- Offers relocation, identity change, and financial support, with special child psychologists assigned to cases involving minors.
- Legal provisions under the Gesetz zur Verbesserung der Rechte von Verletzten im Strafverfahren (Act to Improve the Rights of Injured Parties in Criminal Proceedings) mandate video testimony and non-disclosure of victims' addresses in court records.

Critical Appraisal: EU nations with advanced systems demonstrate how integration of legal, social, and psychological support significantly enhances witness cooperation. However, disparities between Member States remain—some countries have highly developed protection units, while others rely primarily on NGO support due to resource constraints.

3.4 Developing Countries

3.4.1 Case Study: Kenya's Witness Protection Agency

Kenya established its **Witness Protection Agency (WPA)** in 2008 under the Witness Protection Act, later amended in 2010 to make it independent of the police.

- **Mandate:** Provides relocation, change of identity, and financial assistance.
- **Child Victim Focus:** In trafficking cases, the WPA works with child protection officers and NGOs to ensure minors receive counseling, education continuity, and family tracing where appropriate.
- **Achievements:** The WPA has successfully protected witnesses in organized crime and terrorism cases, some of which involved trafficked minors.

3.4.2 Challenges in Resource Allocation, Confidentiality, and Relocation Support

Despite its legal framework, Kenya's witness protection system faces major challenges:

1. **Resource Allocation** – Limited funding restricts the number of witnesses who can be admitted into the program. Relocation, particularly outside Kenya, is rarely possible for high-risk child witnesses.
2. **Confidentiality Risks** – Leaks of protected identities have been reported, partly due to inadequate information management systems.
3. **Relocation Support** – For children, relocation often entails separation from extended family or disruption of schooling, creating emotional strain that may affect testimony reliability.

Many developing countries share similar problems—laws may exist on paper, but lack of infrastructure, trained personnel, and interagency coordination severely undermine their implementation.

4. Best Practices in Witness Protection for Child Victims

Child protection in trafficked cases needs a multi-layered and child-centered approach that balances between legal goals and psychosocial needs. Law on the subject at the international and regional level, including the United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the Palermo Protocol, and the Victims Directive on rights in the EU, underscores the need to promote special

protective actions of children. The realisation of these rights, however, is operationalized to the application of the best practices that combine both legal protection and psychological support and cross-border collaboration. In this chapter, the author describes five best practice areas that are important in witness protection in child trafficking cases.

4.1 Child-Sensitive Interviewing Techniques

Child sensitive interviewing understands that children are not the same as adults in terms of cognition, memory and emotional strength and thus the conventional questioning is inappropriate. Following the models such as the Lundy Model of Child Participation and the NICHD Protocol, the main principles involve rapport building, the developmentally appropriate language, non-suggestive open-ended questioning, and a reduced repetition of interviews to minimize the presence of secondary trauma. The use of technological solutions like video-recorded testimony and live video connection, which are permitted under legislation as the U.S. Victims of Child Abuse Act and EU Directive 2012/29/EU, enables children to testify without having to face traffickers face-to-face, maintain testimony and reduce logistical issues; as an example, the Netherlands offers child-friendly testimony suites that replicate home conditions. Special interview officers with training in child psychology, trauma care and cultural sensitivity are also a best practice, as the UK guidance on best evidence Achieving Best Evidence, states that interviews should be conducted by trained officers or intermediaries in order to protect and get the best results. Although these methods enhance quality of evidence, minimize harm they also require a lot of resources and inter-agency coordination.

4.2 Psychological Support and Trauma-Informed Care

Child trafficking victims also experience complicated trauma due to repeated cases of abuse, displacement, and exploitation and need trauma-sensitive witness protection that keeps them safe, empowers them, fosters trust, and coordinates services such as therapy and education. CBT, EMDR, and play therapy are specialized interventions that will be important in the recovery but will require long-term resources. Confidentiality is also crucial, and violations could result in retaliation or re-trafficking; therefore, they need legal protection as well as operational mechanisms such as shelters and digital privacy, and inter-agency guidelines with encrypted databases as observed in Canada and the Philippines. Relocation and identity change programs including education-based placements in the U.S. under the program called WITSEC or identity change in Australia offer protection against traffickers; however, they lead to cultural, educational, and emotional stress, which must be thoroughly prepared and counseled. Since trafficking has a transnational character, international collaboration by means of MLATs, INTERPol databases, and Hague Conventions plays a crucial role, whereas safe repatriation entails a comprehensive risk analysis, family screening, and reintegration assistance, based on such packages as Bali Process. In general, these actions improve defense and rehabilitation but also demand great resources, organization, and care about the rights of children and their welfare in the long-term perspective.

5. Literature Review

According to Aziz et al. (2025), the criminal protections that can be provided to the witnesses, victims, informants, and experts by international and regional conventions, or by international criminal courts, are crucial, and there is a fragile balance between the protective measures and the right to a fair trial of the defendants. Their comparative law on this matter reveals that the following mechanisms are extensively used: anonymous testimonies, relocation, masking of identity, and such technological tools as video conferencing, however, the difficulties are still observed in making sure proper application in transnational crimes cases. On the same note, Demeke et al. (2024) claim that although criminal justice tools have traditionally been based on prosecution, more complex and multi-layered strategies are needed based on human rights safeguards and addressing other root causes of human trafficking, including labor exploitation, migration, and sexual exploitation. This is complemented by Khan et al. (2024) who pinpoint that the international law, especially the use of instruments like the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) is a key tool of fighting the transnational organized crime but remains challenged by issues such as jurisdiction and differences between the legal frameworks of different nations. Dhakal Adhikari et al.

(2023) at the national level show the diffusion of policy in Nepal has not always been effective in terms of anti-child trafficking practice, and the global frameworks have not been able to take into consideration the socio-cultural realities. Similarly, Rahman et al. (2022) indicate that the anti-trafficking response of Pakistan is marked by serious legal and institutional loopholes that need to be remedied according to the reforms that will synchronize competing laws and provide stronger protection to victims in accordance with the international human rights norms. Meanwhile, Monterosso et al. (2022) mention systemic discrepancies in the fragmented witness protection programs in Australia, which requires a reform of the programs in order to enhance their coordination and effectiveness. In the U.S. setting, Middleton et al. (2021) indicate that in spite of a general implementation of child trafficking screening practices, the absence of effective training, non-inclusive language, and standard evidence-based instruments are the shortcomings that impede identifying and protecting victims. Put together, these researches highlight the fact that despite the progressive steps implemented by international and national legal systems to establish protective measures to the witnesses and the victims of trafficking, there are still gaps in implementation, coordination and integration with the principles of human rights which require more robust international collaboration, common norms, and stable financial flows.

6. Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative, doctrinal, and comparative approach to examine international legal frameworks and best practices in witness protection for child trafficking cases. The methodology was designed to capture both the normative content of global and regional instruments and the practical experiences of selected jurisdictions.

6.1. Research Design

The study is structured as a critical legal appraisal, focusing on how international standards are translated into domestic witness protection measures. It combines *doctrinal legal analysis* (review of treaties, conventions, and regional instruments) with a *comparative case study method* (evaluation of practices in the United States, India, European Union states, and Kenya as a representative developing country).

6.2. Data Sources

- **Primary Sources:** International treaties (UNCRC, Palermo Protocol, OPSC), regional conventions (EU Directives, ACTIP, ACRWC), and national legal frameworks (India's Witness Protection Scheme 2018, U.S. WITSEC, Kenya's WPA, etc.).
- **Secondary Sources:** Scholarly articles, UNODC and IOM reports, case law, government documents, and NGO publications focusing on trafficking, child protection, and witness protection.
- **Comparative Materials:** Case examples and evaluations of witness protection practices in both developed and developing jurisdictions.

6.3. Selection Criteria

Jurisdictions and instruments were selected on the basis of:

- Relevance to child trafficking and witness protection.
- Regional diversity (covering Global North and Global South).
- Availability of documented practices and evaluations.
- Representation of both advanced and resource-constrained systems.

6.4. Analytical Framework

The analysis proceeded in four stages:

1. **Doctrinal Analysis:** Identification of key obligations under international and regional instruments.
2. **Comparative Review:** Examination of how selected jurisdictions implement witness protection frameworks for children.
3. **Synthesis of Best Practices:** Collation of strategies shown to enhance child witness protection and prosecutorial outcomes.

4. **Critical Appraisal:** Identification of gaps, challenges, and areas where international harmonization is lacking.

6.5. Limitations

The study is limited by reliance on publicly available documents, which may not fully capture confidential aspects of witness protection programs. In addition, variations in reporting standards across jurisdictions create challenges for direct comparison. Despite these constraints, triangulation of sources from international organizations, national laws, and academic commentary ensures the robustness of findings.

7. Results

The review of international frameworks, regional instruments, and national witness protection mechanisms highlights both strengths and shortcomings in addressing the protection of child victims and witnesses in trafficking cases. The findings can be grouped into six major areas:

7.1. Global recognition of child witness protection as a legal obligation

Almost universal ratification of the UNCRC and wide acceptance of the Palermo Protocol demonstrate a strong normative foundation. Articles 19, 34, 35, and 39 of the UNCRC, together with Article 6 of the Palermo Protocol, explicitly obligate states to provide confidentiality, psychological recovery, and protection from retaliation. However, despite these commitments, only a minority of states have developed child-specific witness protection programs. According to UNODC's 2022 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, fewer than 35% of surveyed countries reported having specialized procedures for child witnesses, showing a gap between ratification and practical enforcement.

7.2. Regional variations in protection standards

- **European Union (EU):** EU directives mandate audio-visual testimony, child-sensitive interviews, and cross-border recognition of protection orders. Nations such as the Netherlands and Germany have integrated shelters, legal support, and psychological services, resulting in higher conviction rates.
- **ASEAN:** ACTIP has formalized obligations, but resource disparities among member states mean implementation is uneven. For instance, Thailand operates child-friendly shelters with integrated legal support, while Cambodia relies heavily on NGO assistance.
- **Africa:** The African Charter and Ouagadougou Action Plan emphasize witness confidentiality, but implementation is hampered by limited funding. In Kenya, the Witness Protection Agency has achieved modest successes, but relocation outside national borders remains rare due to financial constraints.

7.3. Developed vs. developing country approaches

- **United States (WITSEC and CACs):** Provides relocation, new identities, and multidisciplinary care. Data from the U.S. Marshals Service show that over 90% of relocated witnesses under WITSEC have not suffered reprisals. Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) reduce repeated questioning by 36% and improve testimonial consistency.
- **India (Witness Protection Scheme 2018 & JJ Act):** Offers three levels of protection, including relocation, in-camera trials, and video-link testimony. However, a 2021 NALSA report found that fewer than 20% of eligible witnesses were granted protection due to financial and administrative hurdles.
- **Kenya:** Since 2010, the Witness Protection Agency has enrolled over 1,000 witnesses, including minors in trafficking cases. Yet its budgetary allocations cover fewer than 5% of identified high-risk cases annually, revealing capacity constraints.

7.4. Impact of child-sensitive practices on prosecution success

Evidence across jurisdictions shows that child-sensitive procedures—such as trauma-informed interviewing, closed-circuit testimony, and support persons—significantly improve both child well-being and prosecutorial outcomes. For instance:

- In Germany, the introduction of video-link testimony increased cooperation of child victims by 40% and reduced trial withdrawals.

- In the U.S., use of forensic interview protocols in trafficking cases has improved admissibility of testimony and reduced acquittals based on “hostile cross-examination tactics.”
- In India, states with operational Child Welfare Committees and trained child interview officers report higher conviction rates in trafficking cases compared to states lacking such mechanisms.

7.5. Cross-border cooperation remains inadequate

Although trafficking is transnational, most protection measures remain domestic in scope. Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties (MLATs) are rarely used for child witness relocation. INTERPOL’s ICSE database has aided identification of over 30,000 victims globally, but few states link this with protective relocation measures. Migrant child victims remain especially vulnerable: IOM reports show that fewer than 10% of trafficked migrant children in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa received formal legal or protective assistance in cross-border prosecutions.

7.6. Confidentiality and digital threats are critical gaps

Protection efforts are undermined in most nations by leaks of victim identity. Indicatively, in South Asia, research indicates that 2530 percent of successfully rescued trafficking victims are intimidated by the information leaked by the local police or the court system. Digital threats add to this threat: traffickers resort more and more to social media monitoring, GPS positioning, and cyberbullying. Not many national protection schemes of witnesses deal with cybersecurity. There are exceptions such as in Canada an encrypted victim database and digital safety training on survivors, and the U.S., which incorporates cyber-monitoring in some high-risk situations.

8. Challenges & Gaps in Current Frameworks

Child victims of trafficking are also provided with witness protection which is challenged by a variety of issues which intersect in a complicated web and undercut both victim safety and prosecutions. A significant challenge is the absence of legal standards between jurisdictions which generates cracks in protection where the cases cut across countries with divergent definitions, procedures, and rules of evidence. Underdeveloped countries also exacerbate such inconsistencies through the lack of funding and infrastructure that limit access to safe housing, specialized facilities in the form of interviewing, as well as trained child protection professionals. In superiorly-equipped systems, courts frequently find themselves with the quandary of whether to offer greater defendant due process, or the safety of not revealing that the victims have been victimized, leading to retraumatization of children, or prosecution being too vulnerable to legal challenges. Cross-border cooperation agreements are also numerous but are not well enforced because of political, legal, and bureaucratic obstacles, and child victims are not provided protection when they are moved across the borders. The digital aspect makes it even more complicated since criminals are becoming more and more reliant on internet resources to threaten or find their victims, revealing weaknesses in cybersecurity policies and cross-jurisdictional jurisdiction. All these factors combine to produce a disjointed and inefficient protection sphere, through which traffickers are able to play on multiple vulnerabilities and continue the exploitation cycles.

❖ Lack of harmonized legal standards across jurisdictions.

Lack of harmonized legal standards between the various national and regional jurisdictions is also one of the greatest hindrances to providing a high effectiveness of witness protection in cases of child trafficking. Although the international documents like the Palermo Protocol and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) provide general guidelines, their interpretation and application differ significantly. The example of the countries where child victims may give anonymous testimony and those where they have to appear in the court, exposing children to retraumatization. This contradiction in the definition of the child, victim and witness protection also makes it hard to cooperate, not to mention the fact that the victim rights also differ in coverage. The lack of standardized legal protections provides traffickers loopholes to operate in the jurisdictions, and a victim transferred across borders might not receive any protection as legal standards change or the procedures change.

❖ Limited funding and infrastructure in developing nations.

One of the most urgent problems that developing countries have to deal with is the lack of sufficient witness protection of the child victims, which can be explained by limited budgets and the lack of well-developed infrastructure. The development of safe houses, special interview rooms and relocation programs are expensive processes which may not be possible in settings with limited resources. In most instances, even those agencies tasked with the protection of the victims are overworked, with other public safety responsibilities, and hence, create service delivery gaps. In addition, there is also lack of trained child protection officers, psychologists and legal aid providers, which are conditions that deteriorate the quality of provided support. Such inability does not only impact the situation with immediate safety but also reduces the chances of successful prosecutions because poorly secured witnesses can pull out cooperation due to fear or distrust.

❖ **Difficulty in balancing due process with victim confidentiality.**

The right to undergo due process that involves a defendant being able to face the accusers usually clashes with the necessity to ensure the anonymity and psychological health of child victims. In certain jurisdiction, the courts are reluctant to allow anonymous testifying or restrict cross-examination, as they are concerned that such limitations would violate the rights of the accused and may even reverse the convictions of the accused. Simultaneously, the process of identity disclosure puts a child at risk of being intimidated, retaliated, or socially stigmatized. It is essential to strike the right balance by using a complex set of procedural protection measures, including the use of intermediaries or video link testimony, that would take into account the rights of the defendant and the interests of the child, who must be safeguarded. Nevertheless, this equilibrium is not accomplished in many legal systems, which do not have the technological infrastructure or statutory framework to accomplish it.

❖ **Weak enforcement of cross-border cooperation agreements.**

Despite the existence of many bilateral and multilateral treaties aimed at helping with the protection of victims on cross-border issues, including Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties (MLATs) and victim identification programs at INTERPOL, such agreements are not always followed consistently, and their use is limited by political, logistical, or bureaucratic challenges. Practically, the agencies might not be willing to disclose sensitive information as a result of mistrust, data confidentiality, and corruption fears in the partner jurisdictions. Also, various legal systems, evidence provisions, and the eligibility of victims may slow down or even halt cooperation. This means that children in one country moved to another country to be trafficked can discover that by crossing a border, they are open to re-trafficking or retaliation by law enforcement agencies.

❖ **Digital privacy risks in an era of online trafficking networks.**

The emergence of digital platforms as the means of recruiting, controlling and exploiting victims of trafficking presents an additional risk to witness protection. Child victims can be found even after being moved to secure conditions in the form of social media activity, geotagging and hacked personal data. In other instances, traffickers employ online harshing campaigns or published images to scare victims into silence. Although some jurisdictions have implemented cyber-safety measures, including limiting access to the internet in shelters or digital literacy training these are not common. In addition, the transnational character of online forums makes legislation hard, because dangerous documents may be stored in a single nation, viewed in a different, and managed by the legislations of neither side in a suitable or successful way.

9. Policy Recommendations

A transnational and complex problem such as child trafficking needs to be tackled through a synchronized global system that will guarantee uniform protection to child victims and witnesses because individual measures are not enough. Although the current mechanisms, including the Palermo Protocol and UN guidelines, can offer a reasonable course of action, the continuing loopholes in terms of its implementation, resources, and intercountry collaboration demonstrate that specific changes are required. Some of the recommendations include adoption of a Global Witness Protection Protocol on Cases of Child Trafficking under the UN to streamline definitions, minimum standards and operational processes so as to minimize legal loopholes and maintenance of protection measures

and protection through jurisdictional influences. This should be met with capacity-building and funding processes to the developing countries so that safe shelters, child sensitive interview rooms, relocation, and professional training in the field of trauma-informed care can be established. Simultaneously, it is essential to utilize secure technology to exchange the evidence across countries to provide the victim statements and the forensic evidence in time and in confidence, without resorting to repetitive interviews and retraumatization. Protection systems should also be victim-centered and culturally sensitive, must also be adjusted to the needs of each child in terms of age, gender, language and psychological needs and incorporate interpreters, support persons as well as child-friendly procedures into the process. Lastly, the involvement of the survivors in policy-making and monitoring should be encouraged so that previous victims can offer their own experience to create more humane, realistic, and efficient strategies related to witness protection. Together, these would not only protect the rights and dignity of child witnesses but also enhance prosecutions and break trafficking networks as well as promote global justice.

Conclusion

The problem of child witnesses' protection in trafficking cases is not only a procedural problem, but also the core of the issue provided by the international human rights law and the principle of the best interest of the child. It has been indicated in this paper that the international and regional legal frameworks such as the UNCRC, the Palermo Protocol, EU Victims Rights Directive, ACTIP and the African Charter have expressed good commitments at the normative level but have not been incorporated into effective domestic systems. As the comparison of the United States, India, EU member states, and Kenya demonstrates, the scales of the strengths and weaknesses are continuum, on the one hand, there exist highly institutionalized programs, like the WITSEC and integrated victim services of the EU; and on the other hand, there are under-resourced and inconsistently implemented in the developing countries. Financing and infrastructure deficiency, disparity in the scope of application of legal standards across jurisdictions, and insufficiency in the execution of cross-border cooperation, the increasing possibility of digital surveillance and cyber-harassment are all important challenges in the Global South. The presence of such systemic gaps is not only endangering the safety and recovery of child witnesses but also prosecutions are destroyed, so the prosecutors fail to bring the perpetrators to justice. Things that are more child aware such as sensitive interviewing and multidisciplinary advocacy center, the provision of safe relocation, and the policy-making designed by survivors are showing that not only is it possible to have a more child aware approach to protection but it is also effective. The findings underscore the acuity of harmonization in the form of creating a Global Witness Protection Protocol on Child Trafficking Cases, and long-term funding sources and capacity-building of developing states. The standards that should be included in this kind of protocols are; minimum standards that are child sensitive, security standards on cross border protection of measures and technological protection against the digital threats. Interestingly, the role of the survivors must be viewed as one of the pillars of the policy-making process, which implies that the protection mechanisms should be attentive to the life reality and have the capacity to introduce resilience. In the long run, the safety and dignity of the child witnesses improves not only the psychological recovery, but also the capability of the justice systems to eliminate trafficking networks. The international community can be able to have a more coordinated and operational global system that moves the witness protection beyond the national transactions into a more transnational system that safeguards the children against one of the most pernicious crimes of the day through trying to bring into harmony legal requirements and culturally sensitive and victim-focused practices.

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