

Dialogue with Citizens: A Key Element for the Prevention, Reporting, and Reduction of Human Trafficking

Section: Society and gender

written by Lidia Puigvert Mallart | October 18, 2024



[European Anti-Trafficking Day](#)

Those of us who have spent years investigating and combating human trafficking in all its forms (sale of minors, sexual and labor exploitation, organ trafficking, forced begging) know well that citizen collaboration is crucial for its detection and prevention.

We all have fundamental rights such as life, dignity, and freedom. Many of us enjoy these rights. However, others have never known them, or if they did, they were stolen at some point in their lives. Yet, we rarely talk about this in our conversations, or if we do, we prefer to think that it happens far away to people in very different situations from those of us reading this excellent newspaper. On European Anti-Trafficking Day, we can make visible those whom we often neither hear nor see, but who are right next to us—closer than we want to admit.

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There are various ways to hear and see trafficking victims, all of which are accessible to most people. We can access, consult, and share much of the existing scientific evidence on the subject, which provides us with clues on how to look in order to see. How? For example, by proposing discussions in educational and social settings based on parts of this evidence from open-access scientific articles and/or reports from international organizations such as the UN or the EU. By opening dialogues from these readings in neighborhood settings, schools, senior homes, medical centers, leisure spaces, and so on, we will find that girls and women from environments with low expectations or in various vulnerable situations are the ones who suffer most from trafficking through exploitation, abuse, deception, coercion... Girls, young people, and minors in general who live in nearby areas of our cities and towns and who may be on the streets we walk, in the schools where we take our children, or in the medical centers where we receive healthcare.

["Petites Bonnes: Minors Sex Trafficked in Morocco and Spain"](#) explains the results of the *TRATA* research project, which analyzed life trajectories that either distance or bring individuals closer to the processes of sexual exploitation trafficking. Fieldwork conducted with social services personnel identified the presence in our territory of *petites bonnes*, Moroccan adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18 with a high probability of becoming trafficking victims—minors who start with labor exploitation, are often sexually assaulted, and then abandoned, becoming potential victims of sexual exploitation networks. The exploitation, abandonment, and sexual abuse they suffer lead to double or triple victimization, making them easy prey for recruitment.

Knowing that these minors exist helps us stay alert in our

communities and promotes non-segregating educational opportunities. It creates safe spaces.

Our role can be crucial in creating community networks that defend the rights of all people. Having access to scientific information on trafficking gives us the tools to choose, if we wish, to be part of these networks, which are both compassionate and empowering.

[Image by [Charlein Gracia](#) in [Unsplash](#)]