

Joint Pledge: Responding to Human Trafficking across all our operational activity

October 2024

Background:

For this past decade the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement) has been responding to significant increases in the humanitarian consequences of conflict, disaster, emergencies, inequality, climate change and poverty. Globally, people are seeking safety, protection and improved opportunities within their own countries (internally) and outside of their countries.

Human trafficking is a serious human rights violation that threatens people's security, dignity and wellbeing, and does not only impact crisis-affected areas. Trafficking is both a domestic and international issue, impacting local populations as well as people who are migrating. Adults and children are being trafficked for the purpose of labour exploitation or to provide sexual services, for forced marriage, forced criminality or domestic servitude. The scale and impact of this humanitarian issue is increasingly being acknowledged.

Domestic humanitarian crises, as well as large-scale cross-border and internal movements are factors that heighten people's risk of being trafficked. While domestic trafficking continues to occur, in recent years migrants have become increasingly at risk. States have prioritised reducing migrants' irregular entry and stay through the reinforcement of external border controls and the intensification of detention and return measures. Such a limited legal and policy framework is a factor that drives migrants, including people in need of international protection, to resort to means of travel that expose them to multiple risks, including human trafficking, and other violations of their rights.

The reach and access of National Societies to domestic and migrant populations in vulnerable situations means that they are highly likely to be already encountering a large number of people who have experienced human trafficking, and it is imperative that they have this consideration built into their operational plans and activities.

Objectives of the pledge:

Many National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies across all regions have been responding to the humanitarian needs resulting from human trafficking through awareness raising, response programs and humanitarian diplomacy. Increasingly, more National Societies are starting to incorporate trafficking-considerations as cross-cutting issues within broader programmes of activity (mainstreaming), so that trafficking is one of the protection concerns being addressed through broader operational activity.

National Societies are well placed to address these needs because of their strategic role as auxiliaries to their public authorities in the humanitarian field, and because of their Independence and Neutrality. The role of the Movement is distinct from the authorities and other actors, and hence we have an important role to play in identification and access to protection.

This pledge proposes 12 potential actions that can enable National Societies to incorporate human trafficking-considerations (mainstream) into broader operational activities.

With reference to/considering:

Current Movement guiding documents

- The "Strategy 2030) - 2020-2030 [IFRC Global Strategy](#), which identifies human trafficking as one of the core humanitarian concerns in the context of migration and identity;
- the 2015 International Conference Resolution on [Sexual and gender-based violence: joint action on prevention and response](#); which consolidates efforts to address sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in armed conflict, disasters and other emergencies.

- the 2018 [RCRCM Bangkok call for action on Labour Migration](#), which commits Asia-Pacific National Societies to reduce risks of trafficking and develop a response to assist those affected in the context of labour migration and trafficking.

Resolutions submitted to the 2024 Council of Delegates

- The new [Movement Migration Strategy 2024-2030](#) is tabled for endorsement at the 2024 Council of Delegates. The first-ever Movement wide Migration Strategy reflects the Movement's inclusive and distinct humanitarian approach to working with and for migrants, which is focused first and foremost on needs and vulnerabilities, including considerations related to human trafficking,
- the [2024 Protection in the Movement Resolution](#) including the annexed Movement Protection Framework which is also being submitted for endorsement at the 2024 Council of Delegates. The Protection in the Movement Resolution sets out a movement-wide definition and understanding of protection, including the three types of protective action that Movement components can engage in according to their context including addressing the protection risks related to human trafficking.

Previous pledges

The 2015 and 2019 pledges, which are the precursors to this pledge outlining foundational work National Societies can engage in, in order to address trafficking risks in their migration and wider programmes. Namely;

- the Joint pledge: [responding to human trafficking of migrants in Europe](#). December 11, 2015, number: OP320006, signed by 14 National Societies and,
- the Joint Pledge: [Responding to humanitarian needs resulting from human trafficking](#), December 9, 2019, number: OP330059 signed by 7 National Societies.

The signing partners pledge to, in accordance with their capacities and national context, incorporate human-trafficking considerations across wider operational activity.

The signing parties pledge to:

incorporate human-trafficking considerations across wider operational activity, by committing to the following;

Improve training and awareness across the organisation:

1. strengthen capacities of staff and volunteers to recognise signs of human trafficking and safely refer or assist potential trafficked persons across all National Society programmes, in line with a minimum protection approach or do no harm practice, by using existing tools such as the [Global e-module](#), the IFRC Trainer Toolkit '[Human Trafficking in the context of migration](#)', the IFRC [Action to Protect and Assist Trafficked Persons Guidance document](#) and the IFRC [Labour Migration and Trafficking Guidance for Asia Pacific National Societies](#), where appropriate;

Strengthen efforts to respond to trafficking:

2. map out the needs, gaps and possible referral pathways in the humanitarian response to human trafficking in their national context and consider supporting any partner-National Societies to do this also;
3. explore strategies to reduce the risks of human trafficking in, and improve their response to the humanitarian consequences of human trafficking among all Red Cross and Red Crescent programmes (domestic and overseas), in accordance with the RC/RC mandate, auxiliary role to States, and the Fundamental Principles;
4. explore strategies to raise awareness about human trafficking among at-risk groups, such as youth, marginalized groups including women and the LGBTIQ+ community, people living in poverty, people experiencing health inequalities, people experiencing natural or manmade disasters or conflict, migrants in irregular situation, asylum seekers, and labour migrants;
5. continue to explore the intersectionality of human trafficking across other issues such as climate, health, conflict, natural disasters as both drivers of human trafficking and situations where survivors of human trafficking require targeted responses;
6. if setting up support programmes where data on survivors will be stored, consider sufficient data protection mechanisms to minimise the risks associated with the storing of this sensitive data;

Collaboration with the wider RCRC Movement:

7. establish a human trafficking focal point within the National Society as the main point of contact for human-trafficking related matters;
8. share best practices on responding to human trafficking bilaterally and/or through the European Action for Trafficked Persons Network (ATN), the Asia-Pacific Migration Network or other networks; and by utilising the [Red Cross Trafficking Response Hub](#) and the [ICRC Protection Community of Practice](#); This could include awareness-raising, assistance to and protection of survivors, humanitarian diplomacy, and training of relevant staff and volunteers on recognising human trafficking;
9. recognising the transnational dimension of human trafficking, explore possibilities for jointly developing guidance for National Societies on working collaboratively to protect survivors of trafficking in countries of origin, transit and destination. This may include cross-border cooperation and joint action between National Societies, such as referral pathways and awareness materials for people who are at-risk of trafficking with the contact details of National Societies in neighbouring countries.

Stakeholder engagement:

10. engage in dialogue with state and civil society organisations working in the field of human trafficking and strengthen cooperation with stakeholders that assist and/or protect (possible) trafficked persons;

Commitments about advocacy/humanitarian diplomacy (where this is possible):

The signatories to this pledge acknowledge the challenge in carrying out humanitarian diplomacy, so these commitments apply to National Societies that have the capacity and ability to engage in these activities.

11. consider measures or engage in humanitarian diplomacy to strengthen the protection of people at risk of trafficking, such as the groups already mentioned above, from falling into the hands of traffickers.
12. where relevant, and in accordance with the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement mandate and the Fundamental Principles, develop advocacy strategies to discuss with authorities and civil society organisations which emphasise:
 - a) that survivors must be provided with appropriate support and protection, including actions to regularise their legal status when undocumented. This should be unconditional and irrespective of their cooperation in criminal procedures and legal status;
 - b) that migrants who have experienced, or are at risk of, human trafficking can seek help from the authorities without fear of being criminalised, detained or deported.

Indicators for measuring progress:

- Percentage of staff and volunteers who are trained on recognising the signs of human trafficking.
- Number and type of practical measures to mainstream (include) trafficking within existing or new programmes.
- Number and type of practical measures strengthening the response to address the humanitarian needs resulting from human trafficking.
- Number and type of actions taken to cooperate through bilateral peer support and/or sharing good practice through networks and online platforms.

Resource implications:

The National Societies will determine the resources that may be required to carry out this pledge based on the objectives and actions they choose to take in their specific context.