

# Addressing Trafficking in Human Beings Related to the Humanitarian Crisis Stemming from the War against Ukraine

## Code of conduct for first line responders

**As in any major crisis or humanitarian emergency, the war against Ukraine and the subsequent massive displacement require the mobilization of governments, civil society, business and other organizations and individuals in an effort to support and assist vulnerable people. While driven by good intentions, some, particularly new, civil society organizations, volunteers and other supporters might lack knowledge and experience in the context, including as it relates to the risks of trafficking in human beings (THB). This brief suggests some key steps to be undertaken by first line responders to ensure that their staff is sensitized to THB risks and does not unintendedly contribute to endanger the beneficiaries or colleagues.**

### Understanding the risks

In order to be able to plan for and prepare the response, it is crucial that the management of an organization as well as its staff are aware about the issue of human trafficking, its manifestations in the area of their operations and the national/local anti-trafficking response and respective stakeholders, including a National Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinator, Rapporteur or an equivalent mechanisms, specialized police units as well as dedicated civil society organizations and hotlines.

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### Establishing contacts and collaboration with anti-trafficking stakeholders

Providing humanitarian support is a challenging task requiring substantial resources as the issues faced by the people fleeing crises and conflicts vary from emergency to longer-term integration. While first line responders are in a position to see and recognize presumed THB situations or victims, they cannot be expected to provide comprehensive care for such people or respond to the suspicious situations in isolation. Given the complexity of the human trafficking crime and its impact on mental and physical wellbeing of the victims, it is key for the first line responders to get in contact and establish collaboration with other actors, such as law enforcement, statutory/public social service providers, and specialized anti-trafficking NGOs. The management of an organization should seek to inform themselves about the roles and responsibilities of different agencies and service providers and strive to maintain open communication channels, always ensuring confidentiality and personal data protection in any interaction.

## Developing policies and procedures

While humanitarian actors might not encounter presumed victims of trafficking or observe a situation on a daily basis, it is important to avoid ad-hoc actions that might be harmful for a presumed victim, other beneficiaries or the staff or that might jeopardize the targeted work of specialized anti-trafficking stakeholders. To avoid such unfavorable developments, it is strongly advised that an organization elaborates as early as possible a policy on human trafficking and standard operating procedures (SOPs) to be followed by its staff in respective situations. Such policy and SOPs documents should cover the following issues and possible scenarios:

- Stating zero tolerance to human trafficking in all operations of an organization and actions of its staff and affiliated individuals;
- Outlining the code of conduct for the staff of an organization and affiliated individuals, highlighting the need for compliance with human rights standards and explicitly prohibiting connection with any person who could reasonably be suspected of engaging in trafficking in human beings as well as the use of services of a person suspected of being a victim of trafficking. The staff of an organization and affiliated individuals shall adopt exemplary standards of personal behaviour to ensure they contribute to combating trafficking in human beings, and not exacerbate the problem. As trafficking in human beings thrives on demand, including the demand for sexual services or cheap/unpaid labour, it should be prohibited for the staff of an organization and affiliated individuals to pay for sex or request sex, labour or other services in exchange of a favor, regardless of the legal status of prostitution under local law. Furthermore, given particular vulnerability of children to human trafficking, the staff of an organization and affiliated individuals must never have sexual encounters with anyone under 18 years old.
- Ensuring accountability of the staff of an organization and affiliated individuals to the appropriate authorities for any illegal activities inciting trafficking in human beings or for behaving in contravention of the above-mentioned standards.
- Providing safe and accessible mechanisms and procedures to report trafficking in human beings and related abuse to encourage victims to come forward.

## Raising awareness and training the staff

A mandatory anti-trafficking training is crucial to ensure that the staff of an organization and affiliated individuals, e.g. volunteers, have an understanding of what constitutes human trafficking and how it manifests nowadays, including in crisis and conflict settings, as well as to familiarize themselves with the anti-trafficking legislation, stakeholders and mechanisms existing in the country of operation. Such trainings are available both online and offline, often conducted by international organizations or specialized anti-trafficking NGOs free of charge. More detailed information about the anti-trafficking trainings available in the context of humanitarian crisis related to the war against Ukraine, can be found here: <https://www.osce.org/cthb/562572>. Furthermore, as migration and humanitarian crises always demonstrate, first line responses are the first point of contact and information for people requiring assistance, and thus should be familiar with the information on THB signs and indicators and on how to address presumed cases in gender-sensitive, age-appropriate and trauma-informed manner. The publication “Identification of trafficking in human beings related to the humanitarian crisis stemming from the war against Ukraine: Brief for first line responders” (<https://www.osce.org/cthb/561466>) could be a helpful initial source of information as well as a reminder in this regard.

## Monitoring and adjusting

Regular monitoring of the adopted anti-trafficking mechanisms and measures by the management of an organization is required to ensure timely identification of possible gaps or lack of functionality and to introduce adjustments needed. Well-experienced anti-trafficking stakeholders, e.g. specialized NGOs working in the same area of operations, could be helpful in conducting such monitoring and discussing possible improvements.