



# BANGLADESH NATIONAL REFERRAL MECHANISM TO PROTECT AND ASSIST VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Public Security Division  
**Ministry of Home Affairs**

Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh





# **BANGLADESH NATIONAL REFERRAL MECHANISM TO PROTECT AND ASSIST VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

Public Security Division  
**Ministry of Home Affairs**  
Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh

BANGLADESH NATIONAL REFERRAL MECHANISM  
TO PROTECT AND ASSIST VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

**Printed by**

ASHSHASH Project, Winrock International

**Supported by**

Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh

**Printed on:** February 2024

**Design and Print:** Arka



## Message of the **Honourable Home Minister**



The Ministry of Home Affairs is leading the implementation of the National Plan of Action (NPA) to Prevent and Suppress Human Trafficking, 2023-2025. The National Plan includes five key objectives, among which the protection of the victims of human trafficking is one of the key focuses. According to the guidelines of the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act (2012), the Government has also established the National Anti-Human Trafficking Authority and National Fund. These entities are aimed at ensuring greater coordination and sustained support towards the implementation of the country's legal obligations and fulfilling the goals and objectives set in the NPA.

I am pleased to launch the Guideline for National Referral Mechanism (NRM), which will ensure a systemic approach to protect and assist the victims of human trafficking through a coordinated multi-stakeholder and multi-agency framework.

Under the exemplary leadership of the Honourable Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, the country has reached the middle-income status in terms of its economic achievements. Now we are focusing on further improving on the human-indicators of development. I believe, the guideline for NRM will enable the Public Security Division of Ministry of Home Affairs, to contribute in the efforts of the government to build a humane society. I firmly believe that the economic progress of the country is continually decreasing the rate of human trafficking by neutralizing the push factors. However, the pull factor of alleged “better life abroad” is still provoking the youth, fortune-seekers and adventurous to fell victim of trafficking. While the government is combatting the crime of human trafficking together with its global partners, the government is firm of its commitment to stand by the victims of human trafficking who are enduring unimaginable mental, physical, and economic exploitation. The NRM guideline will pave the way towards a better coordinate and standardized protection services through GO, NGO, and private sector cooperation.

I highly appreciate the role of our national and international civil society and bi-lateral partners for their contribution in the process.

Joy Bangla!!

**Mr. Asaduzzaman Khan, M.P.**  
Honourable Minister  
Ministry of Home Affairs  
Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh



## Message of the Honourable Senior Secretary



I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to the Honourable Minister of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Mr. Asaduzzaman Khan, M.P., for his forward-thinking approach in establishing a National Referral Mechanism (NRM) designed to Protect and Assist Victims of Human Trafficking. The introduction of these guidelines for the NRM represents an important moment in organizing and coordinating protection services. Consequently, upon the establishment of the NRM, no victim of human trafficking will be denied access to quality care and support for rebuilding their lives. This objective will be accomplished by integrating all available services under a unified umbrella overseen by the National Anti-Human Trafficking Authority. Operationalizing the NRM will follow a Standard Operating Procedure, ensuring that each participant is cognizant of their specific role and knows where to refer a victim in the event that the victim falls beyond the scope of a particular service.

The National Referral Mechanism needs to be built step by step. We have completed only the first step in which we learnt about the service needs and acknowledged the role of different government, non-government and private actors in delivering these services in a victim-centric manner – following a life-cycle approach of the victimhood. This ensures effective delivery of services and proper utilization of existing resources. The document has noted that the National Anti-Human Trafficking Fund, needs to be the financial backbone of the NRM. I am happy to inform you that, already the Public Security Division of the Ministry of Home Affairs has formed this National Fund as per the directives of the Rule (2017) of the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act 2012.

The process of developing the Guideline for NRM has been a multi-stakeholder engagement in which the Ministry of Home Affairs has enjoyed the partnership with relevant ministries, government agencies, survivors' organizations, NGOs, INGOs and UN agencies. Through the District and Divisional level consultations, the Ministry further assessed needs of the victims of human trafficking and mapped the service providers – as such the NRM is demand driven. We appreciate the support of Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh, which enabled Winrock International and INCIDIN Bangladesh to extend technical support to the process under the Ashshash project.

I invite the partners to continue the collective journey till we reach our desired goal of setting up an effective, accessible and victim centric technology based NRM system to protect and assist the victims of human trafficking.

**Md. Mostafizur Rahman, BPAA**

Senior Secretary

Public Security Division, Ministry of Home Affairs  
Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh



## Message of the **Honorable Additional Secretary**



Public Security Division of the Ministry of Home affairs has been assisting the victims of human trafficking through different agencies to help rebuild life and reintegrate with the society. Government of Bangladesh has been implementing a wide range of social safety net programs for ensuring social and economic safety of the vulnerable and victim of human trafficking. The Counter Trafficking Committees from Union to District level have created a bottom-up structure of identification, rescue, recover and integrate the victims of human trafficking. Public Security Division of Ministry of Home Affairs from the very onset, under the NPA has been coordinating with relevant ministries, GOs, NGOs, INGOs and UN agencies to ensure that the victims of human trafficking have access to required care and services.

The PSHT Act (2012) has provided a directive to make these services well-coordinated, standardized and accessible to the victims of human trafficking. To meet this goal there is no other way but to establish a formal mechanism of cooperation among and across different service providers – as no single actor can meet all the needs of a victim of this crime. The Guideline for the National Referral Mechanism to Protect and Assist the victims of human trafficking is set to meet this goal. Public Security Division of the Ministry of Home Affairs has opted to digitize the NRM system, establishing a smart and coordinated platform.

We need to continue the journey as a collective approach to assist the victims of human trafficking. The NRM guideline has provided us a way forward to do so.

### **A K M Tipu Sultan**

Additional Secretary (Political and ICT Wing)  
Public Security Division  
Ministry of Home Affairs  
Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh

## FOREWORDS



The Public Security Division of Ministry of Home affairs led the process of developing a Roadmap on National Referral Mechanism to protect and assist the victims of human trafficking. Through a multi-stakeholder consultative process, the road map has been gradually transformed into the current document capturing the salient features of NRM in Bangladesh. The victims of human trafficking go through multiple phases of recovery before reaching the stage of successful social integration. It starts with “Identification and Rescue of a victim” both inside and outside the country. For international trafficking repatriation is the next step. This brings us to the phase of social integration which calls for psychosocial care, economic assistance, capability strengthening support and life-skill building efforts to empower the victim with a new outlook on life and livelihood. In other words, the Ministry of Home Affairs applies a “Life-Cycle Approach to Victim Protection and Assistance” in which, the leading role is played by the PSD, MoHA, in partnership with a wide range of GOs, NGOs, INGOs and UN actors.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the Honourable Minister of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Mr. Asaduzzaman Khan, MP, and the respected Md Mustafizur Rahman, BPAA Senior Secretary of Public Security Division, Ministry of Home Affairs, for their invaluable advice and guidance on the process of NRM development. Additionally, I want to acknowledge the significant role played by Mr. A.K.M. Tipu Sultan, the Additional Secretary (Political and ICT Wing), in steering the entire process. We appreciate the support of Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh, which enabled Winrock International and INCIDIN Bangladesh to extend technical support to the process under the Ashshash project. We further acknowledge the contributions of all the stakeholders, inclusive of government actors, NGOs, INGOs and UN agencies, involved in the process. We look forward to developing a software based NRM and its Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for establishing a smart, inclusive National Referral Mechanism to protect and assist the victims of human trafficking.

### **Abu Hena Mostofa Zaman**

Joint Secretary (Political-1 Branch)  
Ministry of Home Affairs,  
Public Security Division  
Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh

# Contents

	<b>ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS</b>	<b>08</b>
	<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>	<b>09</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>11</b>
	1.1 Defining National Referral Mechanism (NRM)	11
	1.2 Meaning of Human Trafficking	11
	1.3 Situation Analysis	14
	1.4 Legal and Planning basis of NRM	14
<b>2</b>	<b>Victim's Life-Cycle Based Approach to NRM</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Pre-NRM Phase</b>	<b>21</b>
	STEP 1. Identification	22
	STEP 2. Rescue	22
	STEP 3. Repatriation and Return	22
<b>4</b>	<b>NRM Phase</b>	<b>23</b>
	STEP 4. Report to NRM	24
	STEP 5. Victim Confirmation	24
	STEP 6. Need Assessment	24
	STEP 7. Request Verification	25
	STEP 8. Need Classification	25
	STEP 9. Final Approval	25
	STEP 10. Referral to the Service Provider	26
	STEP 11. Implementation of the Service Request	26
	STEP 12. Follow-Up	26
<b>5</b>	<b>Post NRM Phase</b>	<b>27</b>
	STEP 13. Monitoring	28
	STEP 14. Evaluation	28
	Documentation and Reporting	28
	STEP 15. Future Action	29
	Development of the NRM Software	29
	Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for NRM	29
	Resource for NRM Implementation	29
	Training on NRM Operation	29
	Annual review and further improvement	29
<b>6</b>	<b>Annexes</b>	<b>31</b>
	List of Data Collection Forms	29



## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CRC	Convention on Rights of the Child
GCM	Global Compact for Migration
INGO	International Non-governmental Organization
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NPA	National Plan of Action
NRM	National Referral Mechanism
PSD	Public Security Division
PSHT	Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act 2012
SAARC	South Asian Alliance for Regional Cooperation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
TiP	Trafficking in Persons
UN	United Nations
VoTs	Victims of Trafficking

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS



### Care Plan

Work plan jointly developed with the VoT to address specific and distinctive needs of a VoT.



### Victim of Trafficking (VoT)

An individual who has been victimized under section- 3 of the PSHTA 2012, and confirmed by the competent authority.



### Partners

Partners shall include formal and informal. All recognized institutions with specialized competency and skills to support victims of trafficking (VoT). Individuals and interested parties to support VoTs

## Government Partners

The Government at national and local level (Local Government) organizations engage in support services including rescue, referral, provision of security, legal, awareness raising, advocacy, provision of micro-credit, family tracing and reunion, victim referral, psycho-social support, rehabilitation, sheltering, health care, literacy and education, vocational and economic skills building. At the national level, government shall be involved in policy formulation and making budgetary provisions that will enable national and local government offices to implement their designated roles in the NRM.

## Non Government Partners

These include NGOs working with NRM under PSD, MoHA and other CSOs at the grassroots relevant to providing assistance to the victims of Trafficking (VoTs). These partners shall inform and refer VoTs to NRM and other Service Providers at national, Divisional, District, Upazila and Union levels. They provide services which include rescue, referral, legal support, awareness raising, advocacy, provision of micro credit, family tracing and reunion, victim referral, psycho-social support, rehabilitation, prevention, sheltering, health care, literacy and education, vocational and economic skills building.

## Individual Partner

Any public-spirited person who calls the attention of service providers to the plight of a VoT and/or provides basic emergency care in the protection of a Trafficked Person.

- **Service Provider** - Stakeholders offering specialized service for victims of trafficking.
- **NRM Focal Point:** NRM Focal point is Officer/Person designated by the Public Security Division of the Ministry of Home Affairs and managed by the National Anti-Human Trafficking Authority. NRM Focal point will be to ensure that all TIP activities are coordinated in an orderly,

effective and efficient manner within the NRM. The NRM Focal Point will undertake, amongst others, the following tasks:

- Facilitating the coordination of the implementation of this NRM following the SOP.
- The NRM Focal Point under the PSD, MoHA, shall be responsible for the smooth operation of the NRM on a daily basis, by responding to inquiries from service providers and facilitating effective collaboration among all members of the NRM
- Establishing and implementing a monitoring and evaluation framework while NRM is operational as a digital case referral management system.
- The NRM Focal point will be working under the guidance of the National Anti -Human Trafficking Authority. The Focal Point will sit with the National Authority at regular intervals to discuss the operations of the NRM.
- This National Authority shall provide technical support, monitoring, evaluation and guidance for NRM operation.
- The PSD, MoHA is the lead Ministry to coordinate national anti-trafficking programs and strategies.

### **The Needs Assessment Pool of service providers:**

- i. The National Anti-Human Trafficking Authority will establish a pool of service providers assigned to conduct needs assessments for victims of human trafficking referred by the NRM Focal Point.
- ii. The service providers under the Needs Assessment pool will be selected based on the organizations' expertise and experience in providing aftercare services to the VoTS (Victims of Trafficking). This pool could be a combination of governmental and non-governmental service providers, subject to the approval of the National Anti-Human Trafficking Authority.
- iii. At the national level, the overall coordination of the NRM is the responsibility of the National Anti-Human Trafficking Authority under the PSD of Ministry of Home Affairs. The National Authority is the Agency of Government with the mandate to oversee and coordinate all efforts to combat TIP in Bangladesh.
- iv. Registered Service Providers will have designated focal persons in their respective organizations.
- v. The Chairperson (or designated representative of the Chair) of District/ Upazila CTC will be the district level Focal point for providing the coordination support at the local Level.

# 1

## Introduction

- Defining National Referral Mechanism (NRM)
- Meaning of Human Trafficking
- Situation Analysis
- Legal and Planning basis of NRM

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Defining National Referral Mechanism (NRM)

National Referral Mechanism (NRM) to protect and assist Victims of Human Trafficking (VoTs) is a cooperative framework that involves government, civil society, and international organizations collaborating to establish a standard approach to proactively identify, refer, protect, and support victims of human trafficking. Countries may design NRMs differently to be responsive to local contexts, but to be effective, an NRM should incorporate a victim-centered and trauma-informed approach. NRMs are living frameworks that relevant anti-trafficking stakeholders may update over time in response to findings from regular monitoring and evaluation.

Bangladesh's National Referral Mechanism to Protect and Assist Victims of Human Trafficking follows a lifecycle-based approach and includes tools to support monitoring and evaluation in accordance with international promising practices. It engages a multi-disciplinary set of government and non-governmental actors within a system guided by a set of protocols, forms/tools, guidelines and principles. The NRM, as a whole, is under the direct management of the National Anti-Human Trafficking Authority with the leadership of the Public Security Division of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

## 1.2 Meaning of Human Trafficking

The NRM addresses the concerns of individuals who are victims of human trafficking or at risk of being trafficked. It uses the term 'human trafficking' interchangeably with 'trafficking in human beings' or 'trafficking in persons,' and it is used in the sense of the comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation of 2012 and the current NPA to Prevent and Suppress Human Trafficking 2018-2022(Extended up to 2025). "The Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act 2012" defines "human trafficking" as:

"The selling, buying, recruitment, receipt, transportation, transfer, or harbouring of any person for the purpose of sexual-exploitation, labour-exploitation or any other form of exploitation whether in or outside of Bangladesh by means of (a) threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, or (b) abduction, fraud or deception, or of the abuse of any person's socio- economic, environmental or other types of vulnerability, or (c) of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person".<sup>1</sup>

Victims can be located both within or outside of the territory of Bangladesh<sup>2</sup> - persons can be victims of both internal and international or cross-border trafficking. "Victim of human trafficking" or "Victims" means "a person against whom the offence of human trafficking has been committed." The Act also includes "the legal guardians and heirs of the person" as "victims".<sup>3</sup> According to the first National Study on Human Trafficking conducted by the Ministry of Home Affairs, victims of human trafficking may be adults (men and women), and children (girls and boys).<sup>4</sup>

---

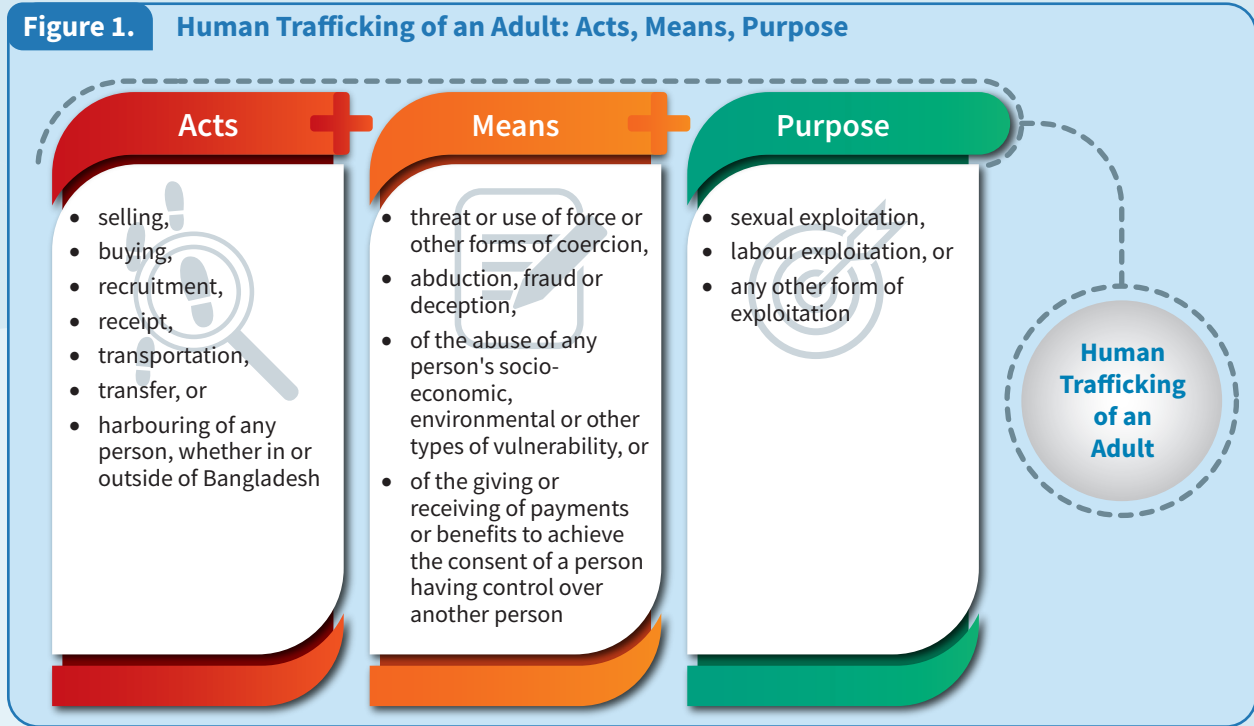
1 Official translation of s. 3(1) of the Human Trafficking Deterrence and Suppression Act 2012. This definition is in line with the definition of human trafficking provided in the most significant international treaty on human trafficking, the UN Anti-Trafficking Protocol 2000 (rt 3).

2 Chapter-I, Preliminary; (3), PSHT Act 2012

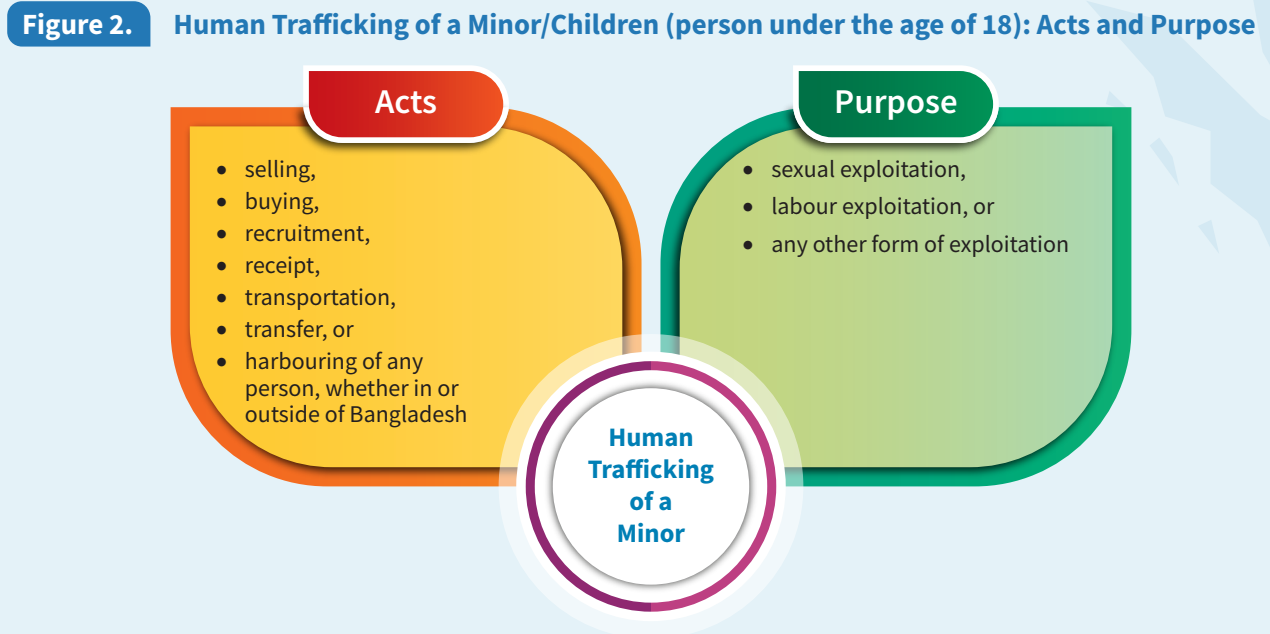
3 Chapter-I, Preliminary; (2)/10, PSHT Act 2012

4 MoHA; First National Study on Trafficking in Persons in Bangladesh, study conducted under technical assistance of UNODC, GLOWACT Project, Vienna 2022

There are important legal distinctions based on the age of the victim. Human trafficking of an adult consists of three elements: the act, the means and the purpose; illustrated in **Figure 1**, below.



The law outlines a notable exception with respect to the definition of human trafficking of children (also referred to as human trafficking of a minor), where a minor is a person under the age of 18. In accordance with international laws, human trafficking of a minor, as defined through The Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act 2012, consists only of two elements: the acts and the purpose; illustrated in **Figure 2**, below.



## 1.3 Situation Analysis

Human trafficking has emerged as a great challenge for the entire world. The situation of human trafficking in Bangladesh is no different from the other countries of Asia. Although chiefly a source country for human trafficking, Bangladesh in recent years has turned out to be a country of both transit and destination. There is both internal and international human trafficking in Bangladesh. In case of internal trafficking, usually women and children are trapped by the trafficking through false promises of a better life and work or marriage. The traffickers enslave them and engage them in such crude sectors as sexual exploitation or forced labour in sectors which demand hard labour. Usually, the marginalized households and households affected by natural disasters or seasonal unemployment in rural Bangladesh become easy targets of the traffickers. At the face of economic, social and gender discrimination, in these households, the women and children are under critical livelihood crisis along with high level of social insecurity. Usually, international trafficking takes place in the guise of labour migration. As such, people are falling victims of human trafficking for multiple causes.

The Constitution of Bangladesh denounces all forms of discrimination based on nationality, religion, cast and gender. It also bans forced and bonded labour (art. 34) and imposes a duty on the state to prevent and suppress prostitution of human beings (art. 18), and guarantees a number of fundamental human rights (see arts. 27-44). Bangladesh has assumed specific obligations under certain international instruments to combat human trafficking through legal, judicial, legislative and social measures. Particularly, Bangladesh has assumed obligations to effectively prevent and prosecute the offence of trafficking in children and women under the “SAARC Anti-trafficking Convention-2000” and certain other international instruments. For example, the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (CRC) and Global Compact for Migration (GCM). Bangladesh, as a state ratifying the CEDAW 1979, has an obligation to “take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women” (art. 6). Bangladesh is also a party to the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children 2000 (known as the Palermo Protocol). Also the framework of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) holds few specific goals, targets and indicators to combat human trafficking. Among these, three of its goals (goal 5, 8 and 16) are directly related with prevention and suppression of human trafficking. The government of Bangladesh is implementing the NPA 2018-2022 (updated and extended to 2025) to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking in line with both SDGs and the Five Year Plan.

## 1.4 Legal and Planning basis of NRM

The Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act, 2012 has provided clear guidelines for different government and non-government bodies with respect to identification and delivery of standardized services to the victims of human trafficking. These guidelines are clearly mentioned in the Rule of the PSHT Act, 2017. The rule came into force in 2017<sup>5</sup>. In the Rule (2017), there are also prescribed forms and formats for different actions and for specific actors. The prescribed forms and formats, along with the roles of different actors starts with “victim identification and registration” and ends with “assessment of quality of services by the victim”.<sup>6</sup> This reveals a very comprehensive and inherently a victim-centric-approach. The Rule identifies the need of multi-stakeholder cooperation in ensuring delivery of services to the victims of human trafficking within an accountable structure. This

5 The Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Rules, 2017; বাংলাদেশ গেজেট, অতিরিক্ত, জানুয়ারি ১৬, ২০১৭

6 Please see Annexure.

accountable and standardized structure can only perform when a set of protocols and procedures are introduced in the form of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Chapter-II of the Rule (2017) elaborates on Provisions Relating to the Prevention of Human Trafficking. Among others, it stresses on the following aspects of care structure.<sup>7</sup>

The National Referral Mechanism is directly linked with the Objective-4 of NPA which calls for promotion of multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement in combatting human trafficking. At the same time, it contributes to achievement of expected output: 2.4; “Strengthening the coordinated protection system”, under the Objective-2 of the NPA calls for protection of the victims of human trafficking. In the SDG plus section of the project matrix, under Objective-2 (Activity-5) is all about facilitation of coordination between and among different agencies; along with, effective sharing of information and expanding the capacities of the existing counter trafficking database.<sup>8</sup> The expected outputs 3.5, “Enhanced access of the victims of human trafficking to social services” – can only be achieved through coordination among judiciary, law-enforcing agencies and protection service providers. Which once again highlights the need of cross-sectoral coordination / referral structures to protect and assist victims of human trafficking. Objective-3 (Prosecution) also requires strengthened system of “victim-witness protection”. This can also be achieved through the implementation of the provisions of the PSHT Act 2012 as narrated in its Rule (2013). Which once again justifies the NRM.

The lead Ministry, with the overall responsibility of overseeing the implementation of the NPA 2018-2022 (Extended to 2025) is the Ministry of Home Affairs. As per the roles assigned in SDG implementation plan, each of the ministries takes lead and cooperate with relevant ministries to achieve the assigned Goals and Expected Outputs by meeting the Development Targets. As such, multi-stakeholder coordination is a key feature of NPA implementation.

The NPA 2018-2022 (Extended to 2025) has six guiding principles among these four (namely B, C, D and E) matches the rationale of formation of a National Referral Mechanism to protect and assist victims of human trafficking.<sup>9</sup> The guiding principles of NPA implementation highlights on coordination among different actors and a bottom-up structure, namely, Counter Trafficking Committees under the supervision of the National Authority. This provides the essential structure of a national referral mechanism which can be made operational as per the guidelines provided by the Rule of PSHT Act 2012.

In brief, the National Referral Mechanism will contribute in achieving the Objective-2 (Protection), Objective-3 and Objective-4 of NPA 2018-2022 (Extended to 2025). At the same time, the organizational structure of NPA implementation (from centre to periphery) makes room the for National Referral Mechanism.

---

7 The Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Rules, 2017, Chapter-II, Provisions Relating to the Prevention of Human Trafficking, Article-3 to Article-5

8 National Plan of Action to Suppress and Prevent Human Trafficking 2018-2022 SDG Plus Actions, Activity-5.

9 Guideline for implementation of NPA 2018-2022(Extended to 2025).



# 2

Victim's Life-Cycle  
Based Approach  
to NRM



## 2 Victim's Life-Cycle Based Approach to NRM

### National Referral Mechanism (NRM)

#### to protect and assist the Victims Of Human Trafficking(VOTS)

#### A Lifecycle-based Approach to Protect and Assist Victims of Human Trafficking

<b>PRE-NRM PHASE</b> [IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL VOT]	IDENTIFICATION, RESCUE REPATRIATION & RETURN	<b>STEP 1: IDENTIFICATION</b> Potential VOT identified by multiple actors: local, national, international government agencies, NGOs, INGOs, CTCs, private sector, VOT statement, media, helplines, etc.	<b>STEP 2: RESCUE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducted by law enforcing border authorities, agencies, VOTS(self-rescue), individuals.</li> <li>Can be facilitated by NGOs, CTCs, other actors.</li> </ul>	<b>STEP 3: REPATRIATION &amp; RETURN</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MOFA facilitates the repatriation process after receiving the confirmation of nationality from MOHA. The process can be facilitated by NGOs/ INGOs.</li> <li>Reception of VOT in Bangladesh by Government, NGOs, family.</li> </ul>		
		<b>NRM PHASE</b> [CONFIRMATION OF VOT AND ACCESS TO SERVICES]	REPORTING, IDENTIFICATION & NEED ASSESSMENT	<b>STEP 4: REPORT TO NRM</b> Frontline Institutions and Professionals who initiate rescue or repatriation of the victim or the victim himself/ herself can report to the NRM System.	<b>STEP 5: VICTIM IDENTIFICATION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Filling out the Human Trafficking Crime &amp; Victim Identification Questionnaire.</li> <li>Using the Act, Means &amp; Purpose Model.</li> <li>Frontline Institutions and the Professionals will identify concerned individual as victim or not.</li> </ul>	<b>STEP 6: NEED ASSESSMENT</b> Frontline Institutions and Professionals will identify risk and assistance needs of the victims.
			REQUEST & NEED APPROVAL	<b>STEP 7: REQUEST VERIFICATION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Designate a Senior official as the Focal Point for NRM.</li> <li>The Focal Point will decide the request as approved, rejected or sent for rectification.</li> </ul>	<b>STEP 8: NEED CLASSIFICATION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For the approved requests, the Focal Point will categorize the needs as-             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Immediate/Short term</li> <li>(ii) Midterm</li> <li>(iii) Long term</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>STEP 9: FINAL APPROVAL</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The request for Immediate/ Short term need approved by the Focal Point.</li> <li>The Mid term and Long term need request will be approved by the Anti Human Trafficking Authority.</li> </ul>
REFERRAL	<b>STEP 10: REFERRAL TO THE SERVICE PROVIDER</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focal Point for NRM, in approved cases, will send it to the relevant Service Provider recognized under NRM without further delay.</li> <li>The NRM does not guarantee any support seeker with assurance of partial or full support as requested.</li> </ul>		<b>STEP 11: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SERVICE REQUEST</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service Provider will without delay create a support plan for the victim and implement it.</li> <li>In case of additional support needed, the Service Provider will submit another service request to the NRM Focal Point.</li> </ul>	<b>STEP 12: FOLLOW UP</b> Designated NRM Focal point in coordination with the National Anti-Human Trafficking Authority to monitor the actions taken against the approved service requests. If needed the focal person will be assisted by a multi-stakeholder committee with approval of the National Authority.		
<b>POST NRM PHASE</b> [NRM REVIEW]	MONITORING, EVALUATION & FUTURE ACTION	<b>STEP 13: MONITORING</b> The Anti Human Trafficking Authority will meet on every third month to monitor the actions taken under National Referral Mechanism.	<b>STEP 14: EVALUATION</b> A Mid-term evaluation in every FY will be done. Yearly evaluation will be done on July.	<b>STEP 15: FUTURE ACTION</b> Future work plan action will be taken/done on the basis of Mid term and Yearly evaluation for further improvement of NRM.		





## Pre-NRM Phase

- STEP 1. Identification
- STEP 2. Rescue
- STEP 3. Repatriation and Return

## 3 Pre-NRM Phase

### STEP 1.

**Identification:** Identification means identification of a presumed or potential victim of human trafficking. Potential VoTs can be identified both within the country or outside the country. They can be identified by multiple actors – local, national, foreign government agencies, NGOs, INGOs, CTCs, private sector, VoT statement, media, helplines, etc. These actors may be NRM competent authorities or non-NRM authorities. Individuals can identify themselves as VoTs or any of these actors can identify a person as a potential VoT. The Identifying Officer (government or NGO) collects and records initial information to suggest means of rescue, if needed.

### STEP 2.

**Rescue:** Rescue means removal of a presumed VoT from the harm situation and/or trafficking/traffickers. This is conducted by law enforcing agencies, border authorities, individuals or VoTs. A victim can also be self-rescued, meaning the VoT escapes from being trafficked on her/his own. The process can be facilitated by NGOs, CTCs, other actors. The process of rescue under the PSHT Act 2012 is rights-based in which the victim is not treated as an “offender” and follows a “do no harm” approach. The rescuing authority should inform potential VoTs of their rights. No interrogations should occur during the first meeting. With consent of the potential VoT, secure access to a health checkup and psychosocial counselling will be provided.

If the Rescuing Officer is not of law enforcement, she/he must refer the potential VoT to the police station within 12 hours (with the consent of the potential VoT).

If the Rescuing Officer is of law enforcement, they must produce the potential VoT before the court within 24 hours of rescue (or referral), and record and share information with the appropriate authorities. They may apply for a protection order for the potential VoT, if needed.

### STEP 3.

**Repatriation and Return:** This step is applicable for victims of international/cross border trafficking, i.e., Bangladeshi citizens trafficked abroad. The embassy or Bangladeshi mission abroad can organize such repatriation once a victim is rescued or a self-rescued-VoT or family member of the VoT seeks such support. The government of destination countries can also directly inform Bangladesh missions abroad or MoFA to organize such repatriation or return. Once informed, the missions also send information about VoT to MoFA so that through MoHA the nationality of the victim can be traced and confirmed by the police station. MoFA facilitates the repatriation process after receiving the confirmation of nationality from MoHA. The process can be facilitated by NGOs/INGOs and UN actors. Once repatriation is completed, the VoT is received in Bangladesh by government, NGOs and family.

# 4

## NRM Phase

- STEP 4. Report to NRM
- STEP 5. Victim Confirmation
- STEP 6. Need Assessment
- STEP 7. Request Verification
- STEP 8. Need Classification
- STEP 9. Final Approval
- Step 10: Referral to the Service Provider
- STEP 11. Implementation of the Service Request
- STEP 12. Follow-Up

## 4 NRM PHASE

### STEP 4.

**Report to NRM:** Following the identification, rescue, repatriation and return of a potential or presumed VoT (either international or cross-border human trafficking or internal trafficking), a potential VoT consents to reporting which leads to confirmation as a VoT. The request for service and assistance through the NRM is initiated through a process which is termed as “report to NRM.” Frontline institutions and professionals who initiate rescue or repatriation of the potential victim or the victim himself/herself can report to the NRM System. There will be designated focal point for the NRM would receive and respond to such requests. The NRM as a whole is under direct management of the National Anti-Human Trafficking Authority with the leadership of the Public Security Division of Ministry of Home Affairs.

### STEP 5.

**Victim Confirmation:** Rescued and repatriated potential victims reporting to NRM for confirmation as VoTs. Upon receipt of the request, the designated NRM focal point will refer the request to the respective local police station to confirm whether the victim was subjected to human trafficking, in accordance with the Human Trafficking Crime and Victim Identification guidelines adopted by MoHA. The Human Trafficking Crime & Victim Identification questionnaire will be embedded within the digitized NRM system.

Before, any step towards extending services to VOTs, NRM requires the phase of confirmation of an individual as a victim of trafficking. Frontline agencies identifying potential victims of trafficking need to conclude the process of victim confirmation through NRM-competent authorities/designated NRM focal point even when a victim is self-rescued.

As such, a victim of trafficking or any person or an agency can seek support on behalf of a VoT from NRM with or without reporting to police station or Court. However, once applied for any such support, the assessment process may involve a police case.

Using the **Act, Means & Purpose Model**, NRM-competent authorities/designated NRM focal point will identify the concerned individual as victim or not (**Figures 1 and 2**). Important to note that as per the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act (PSHTA), 2012, there is no room for “consent” in case of child trafficking. As such, it is not necessary to prove that any means were used in a case of child trafficking (**Figure 2**).

### STEP 6.

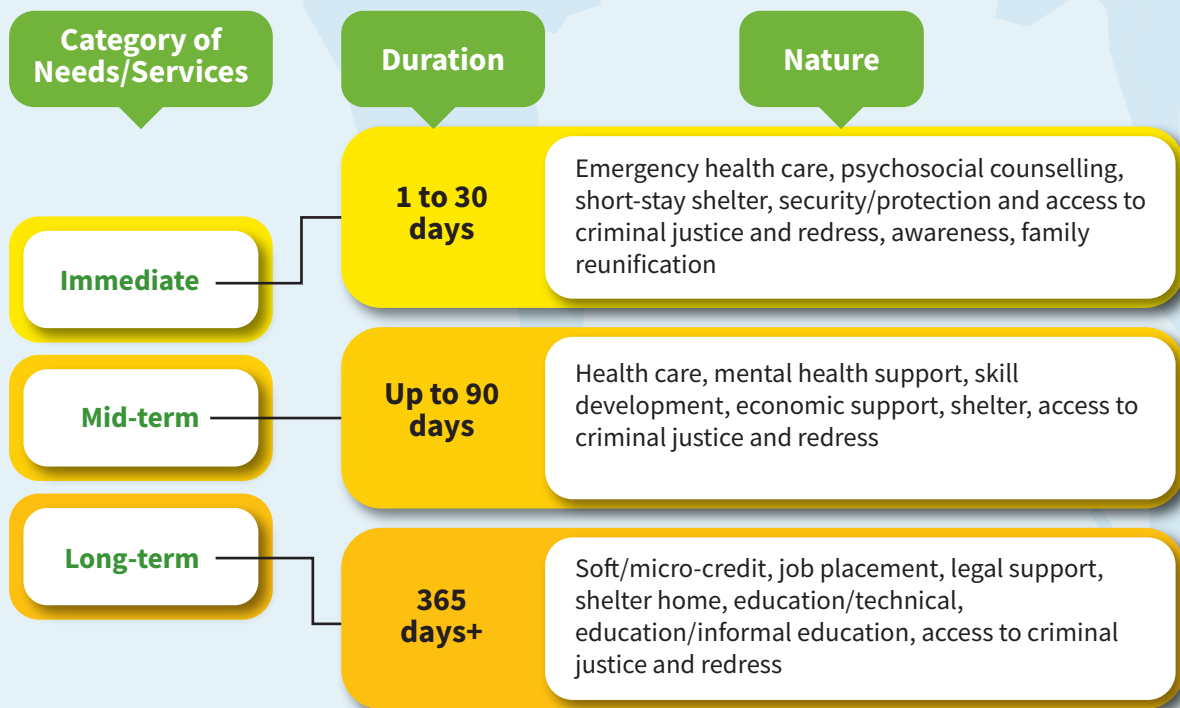
**Need Assessment:** NRM is a mechanism which is victim centric as it upholds the entitlements of the VoTs under PSHTA, 2012. It is victim-cantered – i.e., it revolves arounds priorities/needs of the VoTs rather than any other priorities. As such, a pool of frontline institutions and professionals will identify risk and assistance needs of the victims of human trafficking to facilitate support and services through NRM. The assessment process will require consent of the victim and will be guided by the modality of “do no harm.”

## STEP 7.

**Request Verification:** The frontline institutions and professionals assisting the VoT within the NRM, will place a request of service to the designated NRM Focal Point. All such victims are already positively identified as VoT (as described in step-5). On receiving requests of service/supports based on the needs assessment, the Focal Point will decide the request as “approved,” “rejected,” or “sent for rectification”.

## STEP 8.

**Need Classification:** The needs of the VoTs and accordingly the services delivered within the NRM can be broadly categorized into following 12 types: (1) Economic Support (asset transfer/seed money etc.); (2) Soft/Micro-Credit; (3) Skills Development; (4) Job Placement; (5) Legal Support; (6) Health care; (7) Psychosocial counselling and mental health support; (8) Shelter Home; (9) Security/Protection and Access to Criminal Justice and Redress; (10) Information support/Awareness; (11) Education/Technical Education/Informal Education and (12) Family reunion. All of these will not be required or relevant for each of the VoTs and not every type of service will be required at once. Rather, based on the needs of the VoTs, for the approved requests, the Focal Point will re-categorize the needs as: 1) immediate/short-term, 2) mid-term, or 3) long-term/social inclusion. According to this classification, the 12 needs of VoTs and subsequent services for them can be presented as follows:



It is important to note that one type of service can be short-term for one type of VoT while it can also be for long-term for another. This variation is linked with difference of age, family status, nature of harm experienced by the VoT and education level etc. among the VoTs. As for example, for an orphaned minor or a minor who could not be placed for family reunion, the stay at shelter can be for a long-term need. While for an adult VoT or for a minor with prospect of family reunion, the shelter can be an immediate/short-term or mid-term need. Access to criminal justice remedies may be immediate (in the case of a protection order) or long-term in the case of cooperating in the prosecution of a trafficker/s.

## STEP 9.

**Final Approval:** Once the classification of needs of a VoT is completed under NRM, the request will receive final approval. The request for immediate/ short-term needs requests will be approved by the NRM focal point and the mid-term and long-term needs request will be approved by the National Anti-Human Trafficking Authority.

## Step 10.

**Referral to the Service Provider:** The approved needs will be met through services delivered by one or multiple actors who are registered as “authorized service providers” within the NRM. The process of linking a VoT with appropriate service provider(s) is called referral to service provider(s). Through a digital system, the focal Point for NRM, in approved cases, will send the VoT to the relevant Service Provider recognized under NRM at the earliest. The referral takes place based on an updatable list of registered service providers.” All the services will be standardized based on “minimum standards of services.” However, the NRM does not guarantee any support seeker with assurance of full delivery of support as requested.

## STEP 11.

**Implementation of the Service Request:** This implies delivery of services to the VoT referred within the NRM. Through a manual and/or digital referral format NRM will provide referral slip (with a unique ID) and inform respective service provider(s) about the needs of the referred VoTs. The service provider will, without delay, create a support plan (based on a case management approach) for the victim and implement it. If a VoT is referred to multiple service providers, the support plan will be shared between/among these actors and coordinated by a case manager. All such service plans will be developed and implemented with the informed consent of the VoT and in maintaining full privacy and confidentiality under a victim-centric case management approach. In case of additional support needed, the Service Provider(s) or the VoT will submit another service request to the NRM Focal Point. As outlined in Step 8, short-term, mid-term and long-term/social inclusion services will be provided to VoTs, including access to criminal justice and redress, if the VoT chooses.

## STEP 12.

**Follow-Up:** Follow-up has two broad objectives -- firstly, to check effectiveness of the services delivered and secondly to accompany the VoT in her or his process of recovery and sustainable integration/social inclusion. The assigned service providers in coordination with the NRM Focal Point to monitor the progress of implementation of the approved service requests. The NRM Focal point in coordination with the National Anti Human Trafficking Authority will monitor and assess the quality and efficacy of the services implemented under the approved service-plan (case management) at regular intervals.



# Post NRM Phase

- STEP 13. Monitoring
- STEP 14. Evaluation
- STEP 15. Future Action

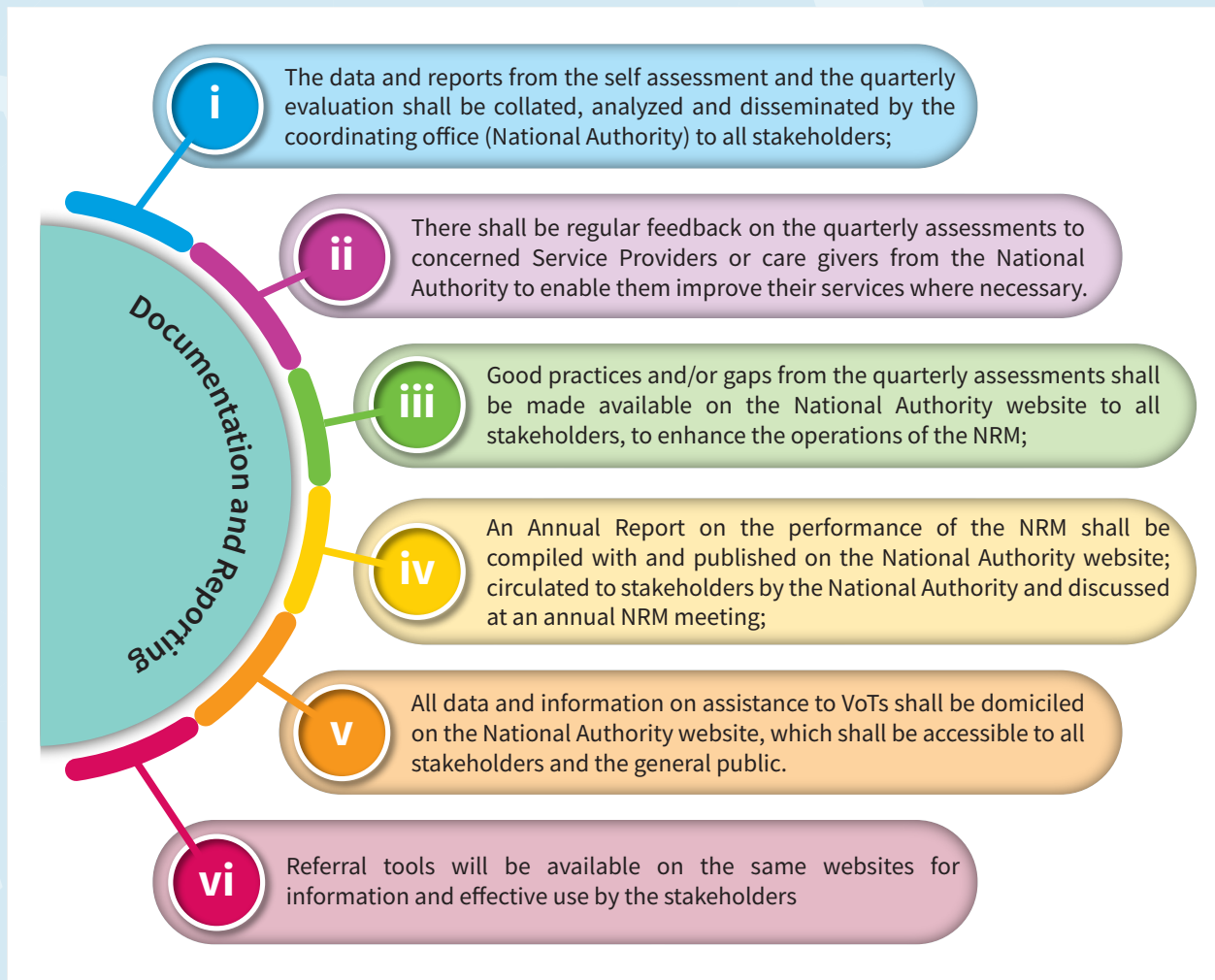
## 5 Post NRM Phase

### STEP 13.

**Monitoring:** The implementation of the NRM shall be monitored at all levels through a continual flow of data generated by the NRM system and feedback from the stakeholders. The key objective of monitoring system built within the NRM, is to ensure effective functioning of all the actors and procedures within the NRM at every step of the way towards effective recovery and sustainable integration of the VoTs. The monitoring database will be developed through a bottom-up flow of reports, information and structured data inputs by relevant frontline actors recognized by the NRM, service providers and focal point. Based on this database, the Anti Human Trafficking Authority will meet on every third month to monitor the actions taken within National Referral Mechanism.

### STEP 14.

**Evaluation:** The Rule of PSHT Act provides opportunity of the VoTs to assess quality of services – as such the NRM is held accountable to its service recipients. All service providers and other care-givers shall participate in self-assessment process tied with their respective care plans. These reports and inputs will feed a national database which will be assessed annually.



The major objectives of built-in Annual Evaluation of NRM are to assess overall effectiveness of the NRM structure and to capture the key lessons learnt for improving the functioning of NRM as a victim centric learning system of delivery of support and assistance to the VoTs. An annual evaluation in every fiscal year will be carried out right before the end of the fiscal year to aid planning for the next fiscal year. The evaluation process will ensure effective participation of the survivors and victims receiving services through the NRM along with the frontline actors and the service providers catering such supports and services.

## STEP 15. FUTURE ACTION.

**Development of the NRM Software:** The Public Security Division of the Ministry of Home Affairs will develop NRM (National Referral Mechanism) software to digitize the national referral mechanism. The software will be coordinated by the NRM focal point and overseen by the National Anti-Human Trafficking Authority. The software will serve as an integrated case referral management system with regulated access. The software is anticipated to populate information for the National Anti-Human Trafficking Authority to help monitor the services provided through the system. The digitized NRM will bring all relevant stakeholders to a single platform and improve the scope and quality of service delivery to the Victims of Trafficking (VoTs).

**Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for NRM:** A comprehensive SOP will be developed to provide users with a user manual detailing the operational aspects of the NRM. This procedural document will establish the terms of the NRMs, outlining the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders to prevent overlaps and streamline the use of time and resources.

**Resource for NRM Implementation:** Registered service providers within the NRM will be committed to offering required services to the VOTs at their own expense. The government will not reimburse any expenses for the services provided by registered non-government service providers. However, to enhance capacity and quality of care, these non-government service providers can be supported by government both technically and financially as per the need and availability of resources. Additionally, resources from the Human Trafficking Prevention Fund formed by the Public Security Division of the Ministry of Home Affairs will be allocated to provide services to the VOTs when and as applicable.

**Training on NRM Operation:** The Public Security Division of the Ministry of Home Affairs will undertake, in partnership with appropriate organizations, to provide training for relevant officials, service providers, and case managers in NRM operation. This aims to establish NRM as a functional system for Victims of Trafficking (VoTs) in a meaningful and effective manner.

**Annual review and further improvement:** The NRM is intended to be updated and refined over time, with additional development of policies, improvement of Standard Operating Procedures, and changes in the composition of collaborating partners. The monitoring and evaluation structure outlined in Steps 13-14 helps to guide and inform the implementation and further refinement of the NRM. These activities can be informed by international promising practices for NRMs and tools.



# 6

## Annexes

## Annex-1

### LIST OF DATA COLLECTION FORMS

According to Rule (SRO No-90/2021) of PSHT Act 2021, Subsection 7 the National Authority shall “to maintain a large database containing the information relating to the rescue, repatriation, rehabilitation and protection of the victims of human-trafficking including information about trail of cases related to human-trafficking and to establish coordination between the said databale and other databses victims of human-trafficking.”

To help inform the database, Schedule A of the Rule (2017) annexed a set of forms and formats to facilitate actions and procedures<sup>10</sup>-

- Human Trafficking Crime and Victim Identification Guideline
- Form 1 of Schedule A or PERSONAL DATA FORM [see rule 8(1)] to be submitted at police station.
- Form 2 of Schedule A or INFORMATION FOR FAMILY TRACING [see rule 11(2)] to be submitted to the National Authority or for foreign victims to appropriate authorities.
- Form 3 of Schedule A or UP-TO-DATE REPORT OF THE MEASURES TAKEN AGAINST THE TRAFFICKER [see Rule 14(1) and 14(1)] to be used for informing the victim.
- Form 4 of Schedule A or APPLICATION FOR SECURITY MEASURES [see Rule 14(4)] to be submitted by victims /family to the police station.
- Form 5 of Schedule A or NOTICE OF ASSISTANCE/COOPERATION OBTAINABLE BY VICTIMS [see Rule 15(a)] to be used by the rescuing officer or the investigating officer or the non-government organization involved with the rescue to inform the victim.
- Form 5 of Schedule A or CASE MANAGEMENT INTAKE FORM [see rule 15(c)] be completed by the Rescue Officer, Investigating Officer and Private Agency for a victim if protection needed (to be submitted to the National Authority).

---

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.mole.gov.bd/>



# BANGLADESH NATIONAL REFERRAL MECHANISM TO PROTECT AND ASSIST VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Supported By

---



*Ashshash : For Men and Women Who Have Escaped Trafficking*

## **Disclaimer**

“This Publication is made possible with support from the Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh. The content present are under the jurisdiction of the Government of Bangladesh and do not necessarily reflect the viewpoints or positions of any entity represented by the Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh and/or Winrock International.”