



# NEXT STEPS

ANNUAL REPORT 2022



INTO THE GREEN LIGHT

# ELENA'S STORY

Elena\*, a 34 years old Romanian woman, has recently exited sexual exploitation. Elena was exploited since the age of 15 when she was manipulated and coerced by her partner and his parents to practice forced prostitution in Romania and abroad. For years Elena tried to escape this abusive relationship and create a safer environment for her and her daughters, but was unsuccessful as the trafficker leveraged control of their children in order to manipulate her to stay. After finally managing to escape the trafficker and his family, Elena called the police to report the abuse. Partners in the police reached out to IJM and asked for support with the case. **Elena and her daughters were provided secure shelter** in one of the projects of Next Steps, away from the abuser and his family. Next Steps collaborated with law enforcement in order to ensure Elena that evidence was heard and an investigation was started, also to secure potential future arrests of perpetrators.

Since May 2022, **Elena has received social assistance, psychological counselling, legal assistance and is developing sewing skills with the purpose of finding a workplace.** In October 2022 Elena was employed as social worker at the project of Next Steps helping with offering assistance to the other victims, and she is now involved in a sewing project. The Next Steps project is proven beneficiary for Elena and her daughters.

\*Elena is not her real name

# Main Achievements

## Challenges & Learnings

### Prevention activities

We organized prevention activities that reached more people than targeted for 2022. Through the 25 Awareness and Prevention Campaigns 1.010 people were reached. We developed creative prevention materials that can be used for future Awareness Raising Campaigns.

### Next Steps presented among professionals

More than 100 care professionals from various chain partners in the Netherlands have been informed about the existence and offer of Next Steps. The possibility of referrals was used several times by these organisations: several women have been referred to us for help. Next Steps also received several requests for advice.

### The conferences

The five conferences helped to develop a strong network that is needed for case referrals. Professionals from law enforcement, prosecutors, judicial officials, embassy representatives and professionals and students from Law, Social Sciences and Political Sciences were trained in subjects related to fighting human trafficking.

### The number of cases that received support

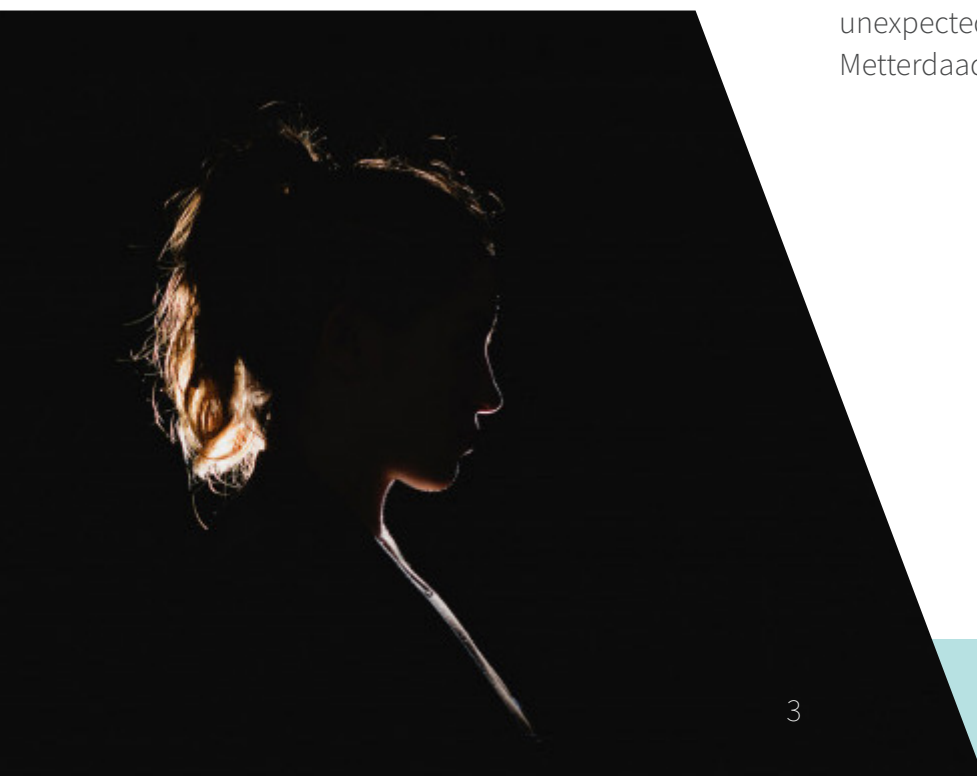
The number of supported cases at Betania, Salvation Army or through referrals of IJM to partners is higher than indicators set for 2022. This is probably because the strong networks developed through this Next Steps program.

### Start of sewing atelier

Next Steps started a sewing atelier in Oradea to offer alternative work also to women who want to get out of prostitution. The Salvation Army has several Second-hand shops (Reshare) in the Netherlands. It was agreed that we offer the sewing products from the sewing atelier in the Reshare shops. Sample products have also been sent from the Netherlands to Romania, so that the products match the demand in the Netherlands. The ultimate goal of the sewing workshop is, that the women who participate can get a salary, by selling the products at Reshare. Meanwhile, the first products have been sold in the Netherlands.

### Refugees could be supported immediately

As funds were made available to support Next Steps, refugees could be supported immediately in this unexpected/new intervention. In the summer EO Metterdaad portrayed Next Steps coordinator Cristina on TV; this increased the funding.



# Main Achievements Challenges & Learnings

## Covid-19 related challenges for staff and beneficiaries

Several people from the staff were on sick leave because of Covid-19, which delayed activities. Many of the beneficiaries were infected with Covid-19, those were offered food packages at the door and counseling by phone. Covid-19 affected the number of participants at activities and group meetings in especially the first part of 2022.

## War between Russia and Ukraine

With Russia's Invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and the subsequent high flow of refugees transiting or settling in Romania, Next Steps adapted an implementation plan and activities.

As of beginning 2023, 14 million Ukrainians have been displaced from their homes. Of these, 7,9 million have left Ukraine for destinations other than Russia, primarily Poland, Romania, and Moldova. This group is comprised of 90% women and children. Many of these are hoping to obtain protected refugee status in Western European countries. Unfortunately, the countries along Ukraine's western borders, through which they must transit, are known hubs for criminal trafficking networks. These women and children represent vulnerable victims for the criminal enterprises which have redoubled their recruitment efforts to prey on distressed migrant populations. Hence, Trafficking in Human Beings (THB) and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) have been identified as two of the most important protection and safeguarding risks associated with the Ukraine Refugee Crisis. Therefore, we have been in dialogue with authorities to develop a model of protection to support increasingly vulnerable populations. Early-stage interventions included:

## Staff capacity

It is challenging to find competent staff, and to invest in development of staff to prepare them to work with victims of human trafficking.

**Emergency Aid** – we respond to needs identified by partners to provide food, medicine, financial support, beds, washing machines, and SIM cards. Protection Officers also intervene to resolve critical cases requiring specialized social and/or medical services.

**Transport** – we have transported and facilitated safe transport for refugees traveling from inside Ukraine to initial safe partner organizations. We implemented safety measures and supported onward journeys for refugees to western destinations. Guidance and implementation has also included safe travel preparation for backup of traveling documents, safe numbers and support persons in final destinations.

**Safeguarding** – we have guided partner organizations in developing their own safeguarding protocols, to ensure staff and volunteers do not represent a potential threat to the refugee populations.

**Trafficking Awareness** – In collaboration with the Government of Romania, we have developed materials highlighting the signs of trafficking, and disseminated this information at the border, in shelters and churches and through the community.

**Training** – we have delivered and sponsored training on trauma-informed care for partner organizations and local churches.

1. UN statistics

# Progress & Achievements

The Next Steps project is built on three major pillars. In the following pages, we explain our progress on each pillar within the project.

## PILLARS

1

### Offering perspective to recovery & access to aftercare

*The expertise to implement and develop step-out programs for victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation, and reduce vulnerability through access to **economic opportunities** such as **skills development, vocational training, employment or entrepreneurship** that would help to build a new future and access to an improved financial situation.*

2

### Justice System Transformation

*We want to work with law enforcement through building capacity within the government to be able to address human trafficking in a sustainable way and working towards structural and sustainable approaches to prevent human trafficking and sexual exploitation.*

3

### Addressing root causes via prevention and reducing vulnerability

*Expertise in prevention programming and targeting self-esteem and building empowerment among vulnerable groups. Raising awareness on human trafficking and sexual exploitation among vulnerable groups and professionals.*



# 1

**Offering direct assistance to victims of human trafficking we, alongside partners, have offered support to twelve victims of trafficking.** Victims that were supported are young women residing in the north and east side of Romania, who were recruited in Romania and trafficked both internally and to other countries of destination such as Italy and the UK. We had the opportunity to support survivors of cross-border trafficking and accompany them through the criminal justice process, while using casework as a diagnostic tool to identify gaps in prosecution and victim support. These learnings will, in turn, inform capacity building initiatives.

**Participating in the conference “Inter-institutional collaboration in the fight against human trafficking”** organized by Next Steps in Oradea. The event took 3 days, and it had different targeted audience from students and specialists in the field of Law, Public Administration to policemen from different departments. The topics covered were: “the approach based on the understanding of trauma” and “Physical protection of the victim of human trafficking”.

**New beneficiaries joined through outreach in Bucharest and referrals.** Since April, the shelter in Oradea offers housing for both victims of human trafficking and refugees.

During the past year, we have made significant progress towards project activities of engaging law enforcement and understanding the training needs of criminal justice system actors, supporting victims of trafficking and promoting collaborative casework. The progress that was achieved was done through the following:

**The “Building a Collaborative Criminal Justice Response to Trafficking in Persons in Romania” Conference.** We organized this National Conference, in collaboration with Government of Romania partners. The conference brought together law enforcement, prosecution and judicial officials, practitioners and embassy representatives with the purpose of showcasing good practice models and strengthening collaboration among criminal justice systems actors in Romania and abroad.

The two-day conference hosted speakers from national and international criminal justice system entities. The focus was on sharing best practices and identifying key areas for improvements in collaborative casework, including

cross-border issues. Professional security representatives gave presentations on the importance of financial investigations and accountability and victim-centered response in cases of trafficking in persons. The conference also included a dedicated session on good practice models of Romanian-Dutch cross-border collaboration with Romanian and Dutch prosecutors presenting together.

**Working collaboratively with partners and law enforcement.** We have supported law enforcement and partner NGOs in multiple cases. The support stemmed from legal services, to safeguarding of victims and mentorship on collaborative casework. This is significant as it allows for trauma-informed approach to be applied and survivors to be protected against re-traumatization.

# 2



**The conference entitled “Responding to The Ukrainian Refugee Crisis with A Safe And Educated Approach That Helps Prevent Human Trafficking”** took place in November. The aim of the conference was to facilitate communication between state institutions and NGOs, as well as spreading information related to the prevention of human trafficking among Ukrainian citizens. During the meeting, various topics were addressed around prevention and psychological effects of human trafficking. At the end of the conference, new connections between the organizations were successfully established, as well as opening up and discussing legal and assistance issues for Ukrainian refugees.

### 3

Time and energy has been invested several activities organised in Romania for training and courses on various subjects.

1. **Training on developing safety nets during one of the activities for women and teenagers for a group of refugees.** During this training, the refugees discussed safety related issues and integration in Romania.
2. **Vocational training courses** as a prevention activity.
3. **‘Life Skills trainings’** were given at Youth Camps and Youth programs.

4. **Sewing courses and developing additional life skills** were organised for teenagers from a vulnerable community.

5. **Workshops on awareness and prevention** were given by one of our teams.

6. **Performing and presenting sketches on the subject of human trafficking** on high schools and the local conference. Students and teachers were involved in preparing the play.

*“I don’t know who I am, I don’t know what my talents are, and I don’t know what I want.”*

*- a women we spoke to at one of our Next Steps projects*

# Results 2022

## Pillar 1

	Target	Results	Remarks
<b>People who have access to a Step Out program</b>	15	36	New beneficiaries joined through outreach in Bucharest and referrals. Since April, the shelter in Oradea offers housing for both victims of human trafficking and refugees
<b>Volunteers motivated and involved in activities (Oradea &amp; Bucharest)</b>	20	25	Volunteers are involved in safety net building through spending time together with beneficiaries for study, free time and parenting activities.
<b>Outreach in Oradea</b>	25	0	Because of safety questions for staff and beneficiaries the outreach is delayed. A security officer and measures are in place.
<b>Outreach in Bucharest</b>	150	62	A total of 62 people was reached through our organised activities. At Christmas, 156 gifts were distributed to women exploited through prostitution
<b>Conferences for capacity building for local staff and others</b>	2	2	Two conferences were organized (May and November). Reaching a total of 250 students and professionals. Topics covered were: 'trauma informed care', 'early identification of human trafficking' and 'prevention of human trafficking among refugees'.
<b>People involved in Vocational Training Course</b>	12	7	An opportunity for vocational training was offered to all the beneficiaries. Not all were ready to start a vocational training course.



## Pillar 2

	Target	Results	Remarks
<b>Conference conducted on Legal support for local authorities</b>	2	2	New beneficiaries joined through outreach in Bucharest and referrals. Since April, the shelter in Oradea offers housing for both victims of human trafficking and refugees.
<b>Participants at conference</b>	80	113	There were 80 participants at the conference “Building a Collaborative Criminal Justice Response to Trafficking Persons in Romania” and 33 at the Multidisciplinary training organized for the Bucharest region.
<b>Conferences conducted on local authorities (refugee project)</b>	1	1	The aim of the conference was to facilitate communication between state institutions and non-governmental organizations, as well as spreading information related to the prevention of human trafficking among Ukrainian citizens.
<b>Participants Refugee project</b>	10	24	24 participants at the conference.
<b>Refugees supported</b>	250	1500	The project offered humanitarian aid with food, transport, bedding, sim cards, etc. Protection officers referred to social/medical services. We offered transport and safety measures for refugees to Western Europe.
<b>Referral cases</b>	12	17	Victims that were supported are young women residing in the north and east side of Romania, who were recruited in Romania and trafficked both internally and to other countries of destination.

## Pillar 3

	Target	Results	Remarks
<b>People targeted for awareness raising and prevention activities</b>			
<i>Bucharest</i>	250	1010	We organized 25 workshops on awareness and prevention.
<i>Oradea</i>	250	320	Sketches developed and presented at highschoools and at the local conference.
<i>Oradea Refugee Project</i>	100	21	Prevention activities were launched and continue in 2023.
<b>Teenagers involved in Life Skills development</b>			Teenagers from vulnurable communities participate in sewing courses and develop additional lifeskills.
<i>Oradea</i>	15	6	
<i>Bucharest</i>	0	194	We Life Skills trainings at Youth Camps and during visits at Youth Programs.
<b>Caretakers involved in parenting classes</b>	15	15	Volunteers were involved in holding parenting classes for the mothers that are beneficiaries in the project.
<b>Active safety nets</b>	1	1	A safety net is developed by organising activities for women and teenagers.
<i>refugee project</i>	1	1	In this the refugees also discuss safety related issues and integration in Romania.
<b>People involved in Vocational Training Course</b>	25	22	Beneficiaries participated at vocational training courses as a prevention activity.
<i>refugee project</i>	5	9	Refugees participated at sewing courses to develop new skills towards social reintegration.

# Next Steps in the Netherlands



We visited 21 partner NGOs, the police in three regions and nine care coordinators in nine regions. In these visits the work of Next Steps was explained, and collaboration was promoted. We received 5 requests for advice from those different partners and attended 6 network meetings where we were asked to share about the work of Next Steps. Currently there are three Romanian, two Hungarian and one Bulgarian in the Next Steps caseload.

Next Steps was able to meet with police officers and other experts in the Netherlands to discuss the trafficking situation. We organised a joint workshop to IJM staff; this strengthened the collaboration of Next Steps.

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In Romania and the Netherlands coordination meetings took place. A new coordinator was appointed, she was able to visit one of our partners in Oradea in June and December. They were supported in the start of the emergency response for Ukrainian refugees.

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# Looking into 2023

## Evaluation

Next Steps will conduct an evaluation to validate the impact of this project and collaboration. As well as looking into future perspective: “what would Next Steps look like after 2023?”. Because of the lower expenditures (explained in ‘Main Achievements, Challenges & Learnings’) it is possible to extend the project till December ’23, this will give time to work out the findings of the evaluation.

## Writing

We aim to use the expertise from the Next Steps partners and the network of professionals and professors from local universities in printing a book on the topic of fighting against human trafficking. Such a book could be shared later at conferences and courses as training material for (future) professionals involved in social work, law, or law enforcement.

## Develop

We aim to use and develop the Prevention Tools developed in 2022, to reach more people through Raising Awareness, both in offline and online campaigns.

## Quality

We aim to help even more victims of human trafficking, women who are exploited through prostitution through referrals. We aim to develop the quality of our assistance and the level of security for both beneficiaries and staff.



“The partnership through Next Steps has already had a lot of impact so far. We assist women in shelter, provide aftercare and help with reporting perpetrators. Together, you can do much more than alone, such as helping a woman! After 3 years, I hope we will look where we can expand to other countries”

**“Together you can do so much more than alone”**

- Cristina, Coordinator Next Steps Romania

“What gives me hope is that there are many success stories. I am confident that it works. There are driven and capable people working every day. Romania has one of the highest numbers in Europe. The government is very willing to work with us which allows us to really make a systematic difference. This partnership between NGO’s , police and judiciary is essential to end modern slavery. The number of victims is still very high, so there is still a lot of work to do.”



**“Everyone deserves a life free of violence and exploitation.”**

- Shawn Kohl, Director IJM Romania

# Together we can do more

Next Steps is a joint effort of four organizations



Often times, women we work with come from poor countries. There is a lack of perspective and basic needs. We provide aid for people in need and hopeless situations.



In our work we meet many Romanian women who work in prostitution in Amsterdam. We see their struggle and help them in personal situations. We stand by them every day. We assist in exit-programs and help them to dream again.

## We are Next Steps



In our work within prostitution we meet many Romanian women that are trapped in prostitution in our special livingrooms. We are an international organisation, we activate our network in order to help people in need.



## IJM

To report against your trafficker is not easy and asks for long-term investment. We are an international organisation and we partner with authorities to combat trafficking, slavery, and violence against women and children.