

## 34<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Open pledge

**Pledge title:** **Strengthening the protection of children in and through education**

**Type of pledge:** Open

**Submitters:** International Committee of the Red Cross, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

**Possible signatories:** National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Member States, any other interested organizations

**International Conference themes related to this pledge:**

- Building a Global Culture of Respect for International Humanitarian Law
- Standing by our Fundamental Principles in responding to humanitarian needs and risks
- Enabling sustainable, locally-led action

### Information about signing up to and reporting on this pledge

This pledge is a voluntary (not legally binding) humanitarian commitment that show a willingness and readiness to undertake measurable action to strengthen the protection of children in and through education at local, national, regional or global level.

You will be notified once it will have been submitted online and is ready for signature - most likely during the first half of October. This pledge is to be signed online on the [rcrcconference.org](https://rcrcconference.org) website, using your organization's unique user account and log-in details (for more information, please contact [conferences@rcrcconference.org](mailto:conferences@rcrcconference.org)). This pledge will remain open for signature until 31 December 2025.

All members and observers of the 34<sup>th</sup> International Conference (i.e., governments, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, IFRC, ICRC and other organizations) are invited to support this pledge either in its entirety or partly (e.g., the main objectives, some of the action points, some indicators) based on their priorities, capacities and context.

Reporting on achievements and progress made through the implementation of this pledge is to be done online, by mid-2028, either individually by each signatory, or jointly by several pledging parties.

## Pledge for the period 2025–2028

### 1) Rationale of the pledge

Despite the magnitude of the challenge and the persuasive call of communities for education and protection of children<sup>1</sup> in emergencies<sup>2</sup>, efforts to respond to those needs are consistently underprioritized and underfunded<sup>3</sup>. This severely impacts their development, physical and psychological well-being and life prospects, and leaves them vulnerable to violence, abuse and exploitation. Much more is to be done to fulfil children's and young people's right to education, especially in emergencies, which includes that they must be able to meaningfully (and in age-appropriate ways) participate in decisions affecting them.<sup>4</sup>

National Red Cross or Red Crescent Societies are local organizations embedded in communities, that act as auxiliaries to their public authorities in the humanitarian field, often including education. Thanks to their organizational branch system and network of community volunteers, they play an essential role in identifying and addressing local communities' needs and in strengthening their resilience<sup>5</sup>. It is therefore of paramount importance to guarantee that National Societies, as well as other principled local and national actors, have the appropriate prevention and preparedness, anticipatory and response capacity to meet ever-increasing child-focused protection and education-related humanitarian needs. This comprises safeguarding their capacity to act at all times in respect of the Movement's Fundamental Principles.

### 2) Objectives of the pledge

We hereby pledge to step up our respective and collaborative localization efforts<sup>6</sup>, across sectors<sup>7</sup> and the resilience continuum<sup>8</sup>, to ensure that all children and young people, without any adverse distinction<sup>9</sup> and especially those affected by emergencies:

- A. can safely and uninterruptedly access inclusive, quality education by doing our utmost to ensure the protection of education facilities<sup>10</sup> and taking anticipatory action before emergencies occur,
- B. are protected from any type of violence, abuse, and exploitation, with a particular focus on education,
- C. can actively and meaningfully engage in decisions affecting their lives and future, with a particular focus on education.

<sup>1</sup> Child refers to a human being under the age of 18 years regardless of the applicable legal definition of the term in the relevant country.

<sup>2</sup> Including armed conflicts and other situations of violence, migration and displacement, disasters and climate/environmental related change, health crisis and other emergencies.

<sup>3</sup> See *Unprotected - Special Edition: Analysis of funding for child protection in armed conflict in 2021 and 2022*. The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, the Child protection Area of Responsibility, Humanitarian Funding Forecast, and Save the Children, June 2023

<sup>4</sup> Child participation refers to the manifestation of the right of every child to express his/her view and to have that view given due weight in accordance with the age and maturing of the child. It is the informed and willing involvement of children in any matter of direct concern to them.

<sup>5</sup> Resilience refers to the ability of individuals, communities, organizations or countries exposed to disasters, crises and underlying vulnerabilities to anticipate, prepare for, reduce, cope with and recover from the effects of shocks and stresses without compromising their long-term prospects.

<sup>6</sup> This includes programmatic response, advocacy and resource allocation.

<sup>7</sup> This includes development aid, peace-building and humanitarian areas of work (e.g. child protection, gender and inclusion, migration, climate change, health, water, sanitation and hygiene, food security and livelihoods, cash and voucher assistance, disaster risk management, shelter, etc.).

<sup>8</sup> This includes the emergency management cycle (i.e., preparedness, anticipatory action, response, recovery) and long-term development.

<sup>9</sup> This means without any discrimination on the basis of their citizenship, migration status, disability status, culture, ethnicity/racialized identity, gender, sexual orientation, religious or political beliefs, socio-economic status, family background, language, age, criminal record, physical or mental health, or any other similar criteria.

<sup>10</sup> Including from attacks on and from the military use of education facilities.

### 3) Action plan

In the years 2025-2028, in accordance with our respective mandates, institutional objectives, areas of work and capacities, we will increase our support and/or participation in localized, coordinated and integrated actions, based on an understanding of communities' needs, to:

- A. remove the barriers to education access and continuity faced by children and young people, especially in situations of emergencies, with a particular focus on those who are often marginalized,
- B. ensure the protection and safety of education communities<sup>11</sup> and facilities<sup>12</sup>, and provide communities with related assistance services,
- C. strengthen the capacities of local education communities and systems to prevent, cope with, adapt to and recover from the effects of hazards, shocks and stresses of any kind<sup>13</sup>,
- D. enhance the implementation of education activities addressing children's mental health and psychosocial wellbeing, as well as of child protection activities, with a particular focus on educational settings, to create safe learning environments and reduce the risk of violence, abuse and exploitation,
- E. provide children and young people of different genders, ages, disability status, migration status, and other distinctive criteria<sup>14</sup>, with meaningful and age-appropriate opportunities to participate in decisions that affect them, including during the emergency management cycle,
- F. step up advocacy efforts on education needs in emergencies and funding to national and local actors (and/or support them in accessing additional alternative/new funding sources).

### 4) Indicators for measuring progress<sup>15</sup>

- A. Adoption of a resolution on education and the protection of children in emergencies at the 35<sup>th</sup> International Conference in 2028.
- B. Number of children and young people supported to access education and protection services.
- C. Number of new States endorsing and implementing the Safe Schools Declaration and/or the Comprehensive School Safety Framework.
- D. Number of local actors and community members<sup>16</sup> trained on education in emergencies, international humanitarian law, humanitarian principles and values, and/or child safeguarding and protection.
- E. Percentage of funding allocated to strengthen national and local actors' capacities, including National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, in education and/or child protection fields.
- F. Number of children and young people meaningfully engaged, in age-appropriate ways, in decisions affecting them, during the emergency management cycle.

### 5) Resource implications

Adequate human and financial resources built into programming and monitoring, including for national and local actors' capacities, such as National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

<sup>11</sup> This includes learners, teachers and other education personnel, education authorities, parents and caregivers.

<sup>12</sup> Including, as appropriate, through the signing, ratification, as well as implementation and dissemination of relevant international humanitarian law and human rights provisions. This includes the *Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols*, as well as the endorsement, implementation and dissemination of soft law commitments enshrined in the *Safe Schools Declaration* and the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*.

<sup>13</sup> Including through, but not limited to, the dissemination and/or implementation of the *Comprehensive School Safety Framework*.

<sup>14</sup> See footnote 9.

<sup>15</sup> Collected data should be disaggregated by age group and gender as a minimum.

<sup>16</sup> especially children and young people, teachers and other education personnel, education authorities, parents and caregivers.