

IFRC Global Health Meeting

10th of December 2020

RCRC Partnership on Substance Abuse statement and historic commitment

Thank you for this opportunity.

In this time of global pandemic it is not easy to raise awareness on substance abuse problems and I'm happy that IFRC decided to dedicate a space on this common humanitarian emergency, confirming its strategic commitment in protecting one of the most marginalized and stigmatized groups of our society: people with drug disorders.

Maybe not everybody here knows that Institutional Commitment from RC and RC on drugs already started at the beginning of 20th century, during the Conference of Asian Societies, in Bangkok 1922 - where a first Resolution on substance abuse consequences was taken to request the League to intervene on this issue with the States.

In 1968 during the International Conference was decided (with a Resolution) to nominate a group of experts with the mission to study the human consequences caused by the use of drugs and alcohol.

During the 70' and 80' many meetings were dedicated to this health topic among the Youth Commission, NSs, group of experts that led the entire Movement to draw a comprehensive Resolution on drug problems focused on the importance of providing access to treatments for people with drug disorders. This was made in 1986, during the International Conference.

Other recommendations and decisions were taken after, with the disruption of Hiv/Aids pandemic and the firm will of the Governing Board to follow the "light of science" and officially recognize the key role of the Harm Reduction in 2003, by publishing a very actual report that I recommend you to read.

A scoping paper of Recommendations, was approved in 2007 in order to generate a new commitment on humanitarian drug policy based on reason and compassion that generates action - free from ideology, violence and discrimination in which was clearly recommended to NS to include harm reduction in their health programmes.

In the same period, it was launched the Rome Consensus Manifesto, signed by 121 NSs, committed to make efforts on a national level to take advocacy initiatives with governments: in order to decriminalize

people with drug disorders and facilitate their access to health services and harm reduction.

This advocacy tool has just been re-launched this year at the UN, with the formal support of WHO and UNODC, and now signed by more than 80 NGOs from all around the world.

This new global call to action, is a step forward that aims to enlarge the Consensus also to the Civil Society Organizations, and spread the humanitarian drug policy, under the protective Emblem of RC.

A bottom-up statement that can be read and signed on *RomeConsensus Dot Com* (<https://romeconsensus.com/>), by volunteers, health workers, beneficiaries, activists, that can promote pragmatic, evidence-based solutions on local and national level.

In 2011 the Governing Board asked the SG how to better support NS in their humanitarian response to vulnerabilities caused by drug addiction.

After this input, it was decided to establish in 2012 the RCRC

Partnership on Substance Abuse I here represent.

It's a task force between the *IFRC, Italian Red Cross and Villa Maraini* rehab centre born to serve all the Movement on drug addiction issues.

Our goal is to spread the knowledge and long experience of [Villa Maraini Foundation](#) in treating people with addiction, among NSs who've got the will to implement harm reduction programmes or start a dialogue with public authorities on humanitarian drug policy.

The Partnership is now a reference training and programme centre for IFRC¹ that since 8 years, met, trained and worked with hundreds of volunteers from more than 50 National Societies, implementing international projects and training funded by Italian RC, UN, EU Commission.

Due to this Covid-19 pandemic, this year we decided to reach volunteers in their home by creating the [the first online training course on substance abuse](#)², on the IFRC learning platform. A modern tool that provides replicable skills on every level.

For this reason I'd like to share here with you a short presentation video that hopefully will catch your attention and find your interest in making substance abuse a strategic priority also on your health and social agenda.

¹ Email address: partnership@villamaraini.it

² Video presentation (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D_ExBT469vQ)

Thank you very much.

Massimo Barra

Chairman of the RCRC

Partnership on Substance Abuse