



## Migration

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# IFRC policy on migration

## Fact sheet

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### Humanitarian Concerns

IFRC developed its Policy on Migration in 2009 after the adoption in 2007 by the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent of its Declaration “Together for Humanity” which included a section on humanitarian concerns generated by international migration. This action took into account the concerns of the ICRC, especially as they related to internally displaced persons, persons in detention and people seeking to restore family links as a consequence of armed conflict.

The Resolution tabled at the 30<sup>th</sup> International Conference recognised the many opportunities which migration generates and the importance which Governments attach to the experience of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in addressing the special vulnerability of people along the migratory trails and within their borders.

Migration itself is seen by the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement as much more than the journey from the place of origin to the destination. Humanitarian concerns are relevant long after people arrive at their destinations and settled in their new homes as well as at all stages of the journey, including in countries of transit and can be accompanied by extreme vulnerability. Particular cases of concern include unaccompanied children, victims of human trafficking or other forms of exploitation or slavery, migrants who are forced to use dangerous and often illegal smuggling routes which pose severe dangers for their health, freedom, dignity and even to their lives, migrants with disabilities and other factors which increase their vulnerability even further. Situations of hunger, ill-health, trauma, detention, poverty, destitution and exposure to criminal elements are common.

Government agencies are in some cases constrained in their delivery of services by laws which deny migrants who lack legal documentation to have access to the most basic necessities of life including essential public health care. There are also cases when people who have legal entitlements are unable to access them because of language or cultural barriers, or because of their own innate fear and distrust of authorities.

Migrants may continue to face a myriad of problems upon arrival in the country of destination. The widespread prevalence of discrimination, exclusion and violence increases the vulnerability of migrants and thus calls for more intensified and innovative action. As these challenges are often based upon ignorance and fear of the unknown it is essential to involve both migrant and local communities. in order

to foster dialogue, mutual understanding and respect for diversity in order to achieve social inclusion.

Clear evidence of these vulnerabilities and needs, and of the place of National Societies in helping to meet them, led to International Conference consensus for the Migration segment of the Declaration in 2007. This laid the basis for extensive consultations among National Societies, with partner organisations, Governments and NGOs before the adoption of the IFRC Policy on Migration in 2009.

### Migration Policy

The Policy was framed against the background of Government acceptance of the role of National Societies in addressing the vulnerabilities and meeting the needs of persons negatively impacted by migration, irrespective of their legal status. It aims at addressing the humanitarian needs and alleviation of vulnerability of all migrants.

The essential principles of the Policy are:

1. Focus on the needs and vulnerabilities of migrants.
2. Include migrants in humanitarian programming.
3. Support the aspirations of migrants, particularly as in social, economic and cultural fields.
4. Recognise the rights of migrants, irrespective of their legal status.
5. Link assistance, protection and humanitarian advocacy.
6. Build partnerships. Between National Societies and with external actors.
7. Work along migratory trails. Sensitising potential migrants about risks must not include seeking to encourage, dissuade or prevent migration.
8. Assist migrants in return. National Societies often provide advice of options to migrants, but cannot be part of decisions about return to the country of origin. They may, however, be able to help address challenges which arise once migrants return.
9. Respond to the displacement of populations.
10. Alleviate migratory pressures on countries of origin.

These principles are the basis for policy guidance contained in the Migration policy which clarifies the role of National Societies when addressing issues which are often complicated by the debate in the domestic political environments in which they work.

## International Conference 2011

Migration related projects undertaken by National Societies, IFRC and ICRC since the adoption of the Policy in 2009 has confirmed the relevance of priorities established and identified areas which require clearer commitments to action on the part of Governments and National Societies. This forms the basis for a draft resolution which aims to address four elements:

- There is still a need for all States which have not yet done so to adopt measures which ensure that National Societies have the access necessary to provide humanitarian assistance and protection to migrants in need, irrespective of their legal status.
- States and National Societies should once again affirm their commitment to upholding the fundamental rights of migrants and asylum seekers, including at national borders.
- Governments and National Societies should intensify their work to build partnerships to strengthen humanitarian and protection services for migrants, including national and international organisations in the partnerships when relevant.
- Governments and National Societies should work together to address increasing social tension, xenophobia and stigmatization which increase vulnerability of migrants. This could, for instance, be done through promotion of respect for diversity, non-violence and social inclusion of migrants and between migrant and host communities.<sup>1</sup>

The 31<sup>st</sup> International Conference in 2011 provides a timely opportunity to build practical action onto the principles agreed in 2007 and developed as IFRC policy in 2009. The planned draft resolution will consolidate relationships already in place and create a platform for many new and necessary arrangements and partnerships at national, regional and global levels.

## 2011 Facts and Figures<sup>2</sup>

- Estimated number of international migrants worldwide – 215 million
- Percentage of migrants worldwide who are women – 49%
- Estimated value of remittances sent by migrants (2009) - \$414 billion

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1 A second approach would be incorporation of values and skills based education in formal educational curricula and in non-formal education. This could also be accomplished by promoting the engagement of local and migrant populations (especially youth) in voluntary service or community programmes aimed at increasing community cohesion, in order to promote social inclusion.

2 Drawn from figures published by the International Organisation for Migration and UNHCR.

- Internally displaced persons (2009) – 27.1 million
- Number of refugees – 15.2 million (7.6% of migrant stock)
- (Refugee numbers have fallen slightly since 2000. IDP numbers have grown.)
- Adults and children in “modern-day slavery” as victims of trafficking – 12.3 million<sup>3</sup>

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3 US State Department Trafficking in Persons Report 2010 (<http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2010/>)