Humanitarian Assistance to Migrants

Working with and for vulnerable migrants is one of the long standing traditions of the International Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. It is rooted in its universal character as well as its volunteer and community basis. It is also in a unique position to help bridge the gaps of assistance and protection for migrants all along their journey.

Many migrants succeed in establishing and integrating themselves in their new communities, but others – those of primary concern to the Red Cross Red Crescent – face difficulties. They find themselves outside their traditional support systems, and often are unable to access basic health and human service supports. They may lose links with their families and communities, they may be subject to people smuggling and trafficking, or exploited in informal labour arrangements. They may be deprived of their freedom and detained, as part of the migration process. They also often face cultural and language barriers, discrimination and exclusion, or even violence. Women, children and unaccompanied minors among migrant populations are particularly vulnerable to these risks.

The Red Cross Red Crescent is committed to addressing the needs and vulnerability of migrants in order to provide protection and assistance. We advocate to have access to vulnerable migrants, regardless of their legal status, to offer them humanitarian assistance and we urge governments to respect their rights.

The approach of the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement to migrants is strictly humanitarian, focusing on the needs, vulnerabilities and potentials of migrants in their host communities, irrespective of legal status, type, or category. In order to capture the full extent of humanitarian concern related to migration, the term “migrant” is deliberately broad, and includes labour migrants, stateless migrants, and migrants deemed irregular by public authorities. It also concerns refugees and asylum seekers, notwithstanding the fact that they flee for fear of persecution and constitute a special category under international law.

In contexts where migration is an important subject of domestic politics, National Societies maintain their autonomy, independence, and distinct identity, even when acting in their institutional role as auxiliaries to public authorities. The work of National Societies is always based on an independent understanding of the needs and best interest of migrants, and is rooted in the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement.