Meeting the humanitarian needs of vulnerable migrants
Focus on the Mediterranean and neighbouring regions

Background

International migration looks set to continue to increase in the short- and medium-term. It is a truly global phenomenon. In the new wave of global migration, the great majority of migrants are showing extraordinary resilience and courage as they make dangerous and difficult journeys to reach safety and adapt to new environments. In the last decades, faced with limited opportunities for safe and regular migration, migrants often rely on the services of smugglers and embark on dangerous sea and land voyages to make unauthorized border crossings. Equally, many host communities show great tolerance and are accommodating as they cope with considerable change.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) has a long standing commitment to work with governments, host populations and migrant communities to meet the humanitarian needs of vulnerable migrants. This commitment was formally elaborated in the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies’ (IFRC) Migration Policy in 2009 and recalled by States in Resolution 3 adopted at the 31st
International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in 2011. This Resolution in turn responded to an earlier Declaration adopted by the 30th Conference, Together for Humanity, which noted “the importance of examining ways and means to reinforce international cooperation at all levels to address the humanitarian concerns generated by international migration.”

In recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of casualties of migrants moving from Africa and the Middle East as they attempt to reach and cross the Mediterranean. In 2014, more than 3,400 people are estimated to have died attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea. During the first seven months of 2015, more than 2,000 people have lost their lives in the Mediterranean Basin trying to reach Europe from North Africa and Turkey. This situation has led the IFRC to mobilize a Migration Coordination Cell to develop a new Response Plan, with the contribution of the ICRC, which adapts existing instruments and operational capacities towards a global coordinated approach.
A response plan with a global call

This Response Plan, with its initial emphasis on the Mediterranean region, outlines concrete measures being undertaken to respond to current migration challenges while adhering to the aforementioned Declaration and Resolution on migration. This new Response Plan identifies specific humanitarian strategies, activities and partnerships that are being developed across the Movement and which will form the basis of a common and coordinated Movement approach to the protection and assistance of vulnerable migrants in the years ahead, while equally taking into account the roles and mandates of other institutions and organizations assisting and protecting migrants.

The overall goal is to enhance the Movement’s response in terms of assistance, protection, non-discrimination and public awareness and promotion of respect for diversity, non-violence and social cohesion. The overarching approach will aim to reduce the vulnerability of migrants through a coordinated and trans-regional support to migrants along the length of their migratory routes. It also aims to strengthen and better coordinate advocacy efforts towards governments, corporate sector, partners and other organizations to engage with the Red Cross Red Crescent network and deploy all efforts in the protection of migrants.

The scope of this Plan is to respond to the humanitarian and protection needs of migrants and their families around and en route to the Mediterranean, with the aim of replicating this approach globally.

While each region and country will identify and develop a modified approach that reflects their specific social, policy and humanitarian context, the Movement will work with decision-makers, in accordance with its Fundamental Principles, to ensure an increased understanding of the drivers and vulnerability of migrants and urges a set of actions amongst all appropriate government institutions and origin, transit and host communities.

At this time of demographic change and policy uncertainty around migration, the Movement seeks to reaffirm the Fundamental Principle of humanity as it works with vulnerable migrants of all kinds. In doing so, we seek the support of States and the general public to ensure that vulnerable migrants are given assistance and protection so they can live in dignity while their future is determined by their own initiative, by law and by States. 

Definition of migrants

According to the IFRC Migration Policy, “in order to capture the full extent of humanitarian concerns related to migration, our description of migrants is deliberately broad: migrants are persons who leave or flee their habitual residence to go to new places – usually abroad – to seek opportunities or safer and better prospects. Migration can be voluntary or involuntary, but most of the time a combination of choices and constraints are involved. Thus, this policy includes, among others, labour migrants, stateless migrants, and migrants deemed irregular by public authorities. It also concerns refugees and asylum seekers, notwithstanding the fact that they constitute a special category under international law.”

IFRC Migration Policy

Principle 1: Focus on the needs and vulnerabilities of migrants
Principle 2: Include migrants in humanitarian programming
Principle 3: Support the aspirations of migrants
Principle 4: Recognize the rights of migrants
Principle 5: Link assistance, protection and humanitarian advocacy for migrants
Principle 6: Build partnerships for migrants
Principle 7: Work along the migratory trails
Principle 8: Assist migrants in return
Principle 9: Respond to the displacement of populations
Principle 10: Alleviate the migratory pressures on communities of origin
Working together with governments and the public

The Movement and its new Response Plan cannot succeed without the support and participation of concerned States and the general public. This is the purpose of the Global Call that we are launching alongside this Plan.

The Movement will need to work with national and local decision-makers, in accordance with its Fundamental Principles, to ensure increased understanding of migrant vulnerability and migrant value, and to gather support for the Movement’s humanitarian role.

To this end, we have a number of more specific “asks” which make up our Global Call. These more detailed asks are for governments and communities. If they are answered positively, the Movement will be able to meet the humanitarian needs of vulnerable migrants all around the world much more easily.

We are asking governments

• To review policy, legal frameworks and services to ensure the rights and dignity of all migrants irrespective of their legal status are protected.
• To communicate publicly the government’s commitment to ensure the dignity and rights of all migrants.
• To develop a plan with civil society actors, such as the Red Cross or Red Crescent in respective countries, to protect the dignity and ensure the safety of all migrants irrespective of their legal status.
• To promote respect for diversity, non-violence and social inclusion through public campaigns and local services.
• To ensure appropriate laws and procedures are in place for National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to have unfettered access to all migrants irrespective of their legal status.

• To ensure that opportunities for legal and safe migration that preserve the dignity and rights of all migrants entering a given country are identified. These may include opportunities for employment, support for family reunification and access to international protection.
• To provide support for programmes that deliver assistance, protection and raise awareness among migrants of their options and services.
• To avoid labelling migrants as ‘illegal.’

We are asking host communities

• To participate in the Red Cross Red Crescent global campaign to raise awareness and sensitivity toward migrants.
• To engage in a global call to stop indifference about the plight of people on the move, recognizing a universal responsibility to protect humanity.
• To develop local services and programmes that promote inclusion and respect for migrants.
• To promote tolerance, diversity and integration in particular by exploring possibilities to support more migrant friendly public perceptions and media reporting in countries of transit and destination in particular.
The following provides an overview of the Movement’s response to the increasing vulnerabilities of migrants. This Plan will be extended to include the analysis of other regional contexts and will, as such, guide the development of a future global strategy aimed at enhancing a coordinated Movement approach. The global and trans-regional approach takes into consideration countries of departure, transit and destination.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IFRC coordination</th>
<th>Public awareness and promotion of respect for diversity, non-violence and social cohesion</th>
<th>Assistance</th>
<th>Protection</th>
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<tr>
<td>Improve coordination among partners, particularly National Societies in countries of departure, transit and destination.</td>
<td>Promote integration of migrants, including returnees.</td>
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<td>Support National Societies in influenza and other health incidents.</td>
<td>Facilitate application of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants’ rights.</td>
<td>Provide services to unaccompanied minors.</td>
<td>Monitor and provide family links services to migrants and their families, most notably by adapting to the challenge of restoring family links across numerous borders.</td>
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<td>Facilitate exchange of best practices and communication.</td>
<td>Support National Societies in identifying opportunities for peer-to-peer support within the same region and across regions.</td>
<td>Provide shelter and accommodation services.</td>
<td>Protect at-risk migrants on land and sea.</td>
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<td>Improve the plight and rights of rejected asylum seekers and migrants.</td>
<td>Scale up emergency humanitarian assistance when situations of crisis occur (contingency planning).</td>
<td>Monitor and provide medical, health and safety services at reception centers and refugee camps.</td>
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<td>Work in immigration detention (ICRC alone or in collaboration with National Societies).</td>
<td>Support National Societies in training volunteers with the Youth As Agents of Behavioral Change tool.</td>
<td>Promote the role of youth and volunteers in disaster risk management.</td>
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<td>Promote respect of diversity, non-violence and social cohesion (tolerance and non-discrimination).</td>
<td>Promote legal and safe migration, while respecting dignity of migrants, to countries of destination.</td>
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<td>Monitor respect of human rights of all migrants at international borders.</td>
<td>Promote respect of diversity, non-violence and social cohesion (tolerance and non-discrimination).</td>
<td>Continue to bring attention to the suffering of people on the move and their situations of high risk and vulnerability, as well as to the positive aspects of migration and its economic and social contributions.</td>
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<td>Provide orientation, social, legal and psychological support.</td>
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<td>Provide assistance at land and sea borders as well as airports and hazardous crossing points.</td>
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The Red Cross of Serbia has been providing assistance to the country’s southern borders and with mobile teams in the north since the onset of the emergency. Stephen Ryan/IFRC

Stop indifference
#ProtectHumanity
www.ifrc.org/protecthumanity

For more information on this publication, please contact:

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Tiziana Bonzon

E-mail: tiziana.bonzon@ifrc.org
Tel: +41 22 730 44 47
Fax: +41 22 733 03 95