

## Migration

# Global Perspectives

## Examples of current National Society Initiatives



Medical screening at a Red Cross Asylum Centre in Denmark. The Danish Red Cross is one of 26 National Societies involved in the PERCO platform.

## Introduction

Migration and more generally, population movement, remains one of the biggest global challenges facing States and the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement today. Without sufficient legal protection, migrants are often “living at the margins of conventional health, social and legal systems”<sup>1</sup>, more likely to face increased vulnerability and subject to abuse and exploitation.

A large majority of National Red Cross Red Crescent Societies provide some form of humanitarian service to migrants today. The Red Cross Red Crescent Movement supports migrants irrespective of their legal status, and at all stages of the migration process— asylum seekers and boat arrivals in reception centres, returnees before and after return, resettled refugees, undocumented migrants in need, unaccompanied and separated minors, disaster victims, trafficking victims, and others. Help ranges from emergency basic needs assistance (food, shelter, non-food items) to health

and mental health services, as well as support and counselling for voluntary return and re-integration, and legal counselling and referral. Another key programme is Restoring Family Links, which assists displaced individuals in reconnecting with family members.

The following document aims to provide a global overview on some of the initiatives by National Societies as they provide humanitarian service to migrants.

## Regional initiatives

### Central Asian Red Crescent Labor Migration Network

The Central Asian Red Crescent Labor Migration Network includes the Red Crescent Societies in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Supported by the IFRC since 2008, it focuses on improving the situation of labor migrants, regardless of their legal status, by developing a regional network and strengthening cooperation between Red Crescent Societies. The project provides needs-based services and assistance to migrants through information and education centers, and advocates for the basic rights of foreign workers in the prevention of discrimination, xenophobia and social exclusion.

### PERCO platform

PERCO is the Platform for European Red Cross Cooperation on Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants. It was launched in Copenhagen in August 1997. PERCO aims to develop and

<sup>1</sup> IFRC Policy on Migration 2009

strengthen the Red Cross activities for and with refugees and migrants regardless of their status on a national and international level, and promote cooperation among European National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in order to improve the situation of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in Europe. Among its objectives, PERCO aims to strengthen the advocacy role of European National Societies in order to influence European policies and developments in the field of asylum and migration.

### North African Red Crescent Societies

National Societies of North Africa are committed to improving the living conditions of migrants through social services, operations support and advocacy. Activities with the Red Crescent Societies of Morocco, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt aim to improve and protect the lives of international migrants as well as migrants repressed or in transit and those made vulnerable by migration in North Africa.

### Regional networking for migrants in the Americas

In Central America and Mexico, National Societies run projects with the support of the ICRC to ensure that sick, injured or disabled migrants have access to appropriate care, and they maintain or restore contact with their

**A Tunisian Red Crescent volunteer provides first aid assistance to migrants fleeing Libya at the border of Tunisia and Libya.**



families. The National Societies also run a “humanitarian chain”, an ambulance service run by Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador Red Cross Societies, for the transport home of sick or injured migrants stranded at border regions.

## The Swedish Red Cross Network on Return with Iraq, Serbia and Kosovo National Societies

The SRC Network on Return project started in 2010 (funded under European Return Fund). The project targets rejected asylum seekers and provides general and specific information to all nationalities. Some basic support is provided in Sweden to individuals from Afghanistan, Armenia, Lebanon, Macedonia, Russia and Syria. Extended support and reintegration assistance are provided to individuals in Iraq, Serbia and Kosovo. The aim of the programme is to contribute to a return in safety and dignity for rejected asylum seekers. The SRC facilitate the return, by means of extended support and improving conditions for the social reintegration of asylum seekers in the three targeted countries. For six other countries the SRC provides basic support, and raises awareness about return, and potential obstacles and opportunities.

## Ubuntu Initiative in southern Africa

The Ubuntu concept represents the core values of African culture, such as respect for human dignity and human life. The Red Cross’ Ubuntu initiative for southern Africa aims to address the humanitarian needs of vulnerable migrants. It promotes respect for diversity and social inclusion between host communities and migrants through programmes in health, first aid, disaster management and organizational capacity development. It is coordinated by National Societies in Lesotho, Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland and Zimbabwe with support from the regional offices of the IFRC and the ICRC.

## West African National Societies

Many National Societies cope with internal and international human movement elicited by environmental disasters and internal conflict or instability. In West Africa, the Red Cross Societies of Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea-Conakry and Mali, have continuously worked together in 2011 to assist fleeing Ivoirians into Liberia.

## National Red Cross Red Crescent Society initiatives

### Austrian Red Cross

For over 10 years, the Austrian Red Cross has been operating ACCORD, the Movement’s only Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Information Service. The purpose of this activity is to provide all parties of the asylum procedure with relevant and independently-researched information about the countries-of-origin of asylum seekers. The goal is to improve the quality and efficiency of the asylum procedure and the decisions. In addition to answering individual requests from asylum authorities, asylum seekers, their representatives and NGOs, ACCORD also operates [www.ecoi.net](http://www.ecoi.net), an internet platform which currently contains detailed country-of-origin information for more than 160 countries.

### Restoring Family Links

#### Activities linked to migration include:

- Enabling contact between family members (telephones, Red Cross Messages (RCM), providing internet access);
- Tracing relatives;
- Facilitating family reunifications;
- Issuing travel documents;
- Facilitating proper management of migrants’ remains;
- Establishing identities of migrants who died along the migratory route.





Melania and Helena are reunited in Melbourne, Australia. The two sisters hadn't seen each other since they were separated in the civil war that tore through Burundi in 1993. Melania spent 11 years in a Tanzanian refugee camp, before migrating to Australia in 2005. Through the Red Cross tracing service, Melania recently found her mother, three brothers and two sisters.

### Australian Red Cross

The Australian Red Cross provides support to refugees, victims of human trafficking, asylum seekers, immigration detainees and other people who are vulnerable as a result of migration. The National Society runs a range of services and programmes that protect and uphold the health, dignity and well-being of vulnerable migrants including restoring family links, legal advice and support for basic health and accommodation.

### Belize Red Cross Society

The Belize Red Cross Society actively protects vulnerable migrants in detention. Along with UNHCR, the National Society supports the protection rights for Cuban families being held by Belize police forces by visiting the detention centre, and ensuring that migrants are given adequate medical attention, food, water, and contact with family.

### British Red Cross

The British Red Cross current leads the "Positive Images" project, which aims to promote positive attitudes towards vulnerable migrants, and raise awareness on humanitarian issues relating to migration among young people across European Union member States. A toolkit adaptable to different local contexts has been developed, and the project has been run in various EU countries by National Societies.



**A British Red Cross volunteer listens to the needs of a migrant. The BRC is supporting an increasing number of refused asylum seekers who find themselves destitute.**

### Colombian Red Cross Society and Croatia Red Cross

The Colombian Red Cross Society provides humanitarian and reintegration assistance to refugees and displaced persons, as does the Croatia Red Cross, which has run programming since 2000 to cope with post-Dayton Accords returnees. Their efforts provide humanitarian assistance and community services to vulnerable returnees in Croatia during their reintegration process. The project is focused on creating basic conditions for sustainable return as well as increasing the capacity of local communities to reintegrate the most vulnerable returnee families.

### South African Red Cross Society

Prior to and throughout the 2010 FIFA World Cup, rumours and reports suggesting an increase in civil unrest and urban violence resulted in South African Red Cross Society volunteers conducting a social mobilisation campaign that carried anti-discrimination messages. The campaign was initiated with the objective of promoting respect for diversity and human dignity, and reducing intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion between host and migrant communities.

### Italian Red Cross

From the beginning of 2011 more than 50000 migrants have landed in southern Italy. The IRC has been the primary point of contact providing humanitarian assistance during landings and in the IRC Migrants Centres. The IRC assists migrants during their transfer from Sicily and Lampedusa to reception centres run by the authorities in other regions. In Sicily and Lampedusa, the IRC has engaged in rescue operations during landings of vessels carrying migrants fleeing Libya or coming from Tunisia. The IRC





**Italian Red Cross assisting a migrant in Hypothermia in Lampedusa, Italy.**

was during the peak of the crisis providing 24 hours emergency humanitarian assistance with volunteers, doctors, nurses, logisticians, rescuers and ambulances on the wharf and delivered care at the Advanced Medical Post (PMA) set up the maritime station. The main activities consist of providing information, health care and socio-legal assistance to newcomers.



For further information,  
please contact:

**Migration and Social Services Department**  
**International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**  
Case postale 372, CH-1211 Geneva 19, Switzerland  
Tel. : +41 (22) 730 4369  
Fax : +41 (22) 733 0395  
Email : [sue.lemesurier@ifrc.org](mailto:sue.lemesurier@ifrc.org)

[www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)  
Saving lives, changing minds.

