

## Migration

# IFRC policy on migration

## The 10 migration principles



## Why?

### Migrants face many risks

Many migrants succeed in establishing themselves in their new communities, but others – those at the centre of our attention – face difficulties. They may lose the links with their families and communities. Outside their traditional support systems, they often are unable to access health and social services that respect their basic needs and dignity. They may be subject to human trafficking, sexual or labour exploitation. They may be deprived of their liberty and detained, as part of the migration process. Some risk persecution if they return to their countries of origin. Migrants also often face cultural and language barriers, discrimination and exclusion, or even violence. Women and children – especially unaccompanied and separated minors – traumatised persons, people with physical and mental disabilities, and elderly persons are particularly vulnerable.



## What?

### A living policy

Working with and for vulnerable migrants is one of the long standing traditions of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It is rooted in its Fundamental Principles and universal character as well as in its volunteer and community basis. However, patterns and issues associated with migration change over time.

We should, therefore, continually examine our ways of working with and for migrants to ensure that our action remains strong, coherent, and mindful of crosscutting issues. Our policy on migration is a living policy: It will be reviewed and, if necessary, revised as we evaluate its implementation.

## How?

### Policy principles

Each National Society and the International Federation shall take into account and adopt the following approach on migration.

#### 1. Focus on the needs and vulnerabilities of migrants

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement strives to adopt an integrated and impartial approach, combining immediate action for migrants in urgent need with longer-term assistance and empowerment. It is therefore important that National Societies be permitted to work with and for all migrants, without discrimination and irrespective of their legal status.

#### 2. Include migrants in humanitarian programming

National Societies can opt for different approaches in assisting and protecting migrants. Some focus on migrants through special, targeted programmes or projects; others include migrants in their general humanitarian action, addressing the needs and vulnerabilities of the population in its diversity. Both approaches require sustained efforts by National Societies to guarantee impartiality and non-discrimination, taking into account the humanitarian needs of the host population.

#### 3. Support the aspirations of migrants

Migrants have a legitimate claim to hope and opportunities to achieve their potential. They are also an important social, economic and cultural factor. Their skills, experience, and resilience can be a valuable contribution to their host communities. National Societies will consider migrants' own needs and interests, and support their social inclusion, integration, and their aspirations.

#### 4. Recognize the rights of migrants

National Societies provide assistance and protection to migrants, irrespective of their legal status. Yet, the degree to which migrants are able to enjoy their rights is an important factor in assessing their



vulnerability. By working with migrants to ensure that their rights are respected – including the right to the determination of their legal status – National Societies will also promote their social inclusion and their aspirations.

### **5. Link assistance, protection and humanitarian advocacy for migrants**

Assistance to migrants goes hand in hand with efforts to protect them against abuse, exploitation, and the denial of rights. In making these efforts National Societies will respect the migrants' own interest, and the imperative of doing them no harm. To enable migrants to overcome abuses and pressures, National Societies can provide legal advice, refer them to other relevant and competent organisations or entities, or undertake discreet or public forms of humanitarian advocacy.



### **6. Build partnerships for migrants**

The humanitarian challenges of migration reach across borders, regions, and cultures. There is a Movement-wide responsibility for capacity-building, mutual support and coordination. Regional cooperation among National Societies is equally essential. In working with external partners on migration, a common and principled approach of the Movement is indispensable.

### **7. Work along the migratory trails**

The Movement is in a unique position to help bridge the gaps of assistance and protection for migrants. National Societies in countries along the migratory trails will work together to optimise their humanitarian action, including the restoration of family links. This requires a focus on situations and conditions in which migrants all along their journey are especially susceptible to risks. National Societies may sensitize potential migrants about risks of migration, but must not seek to encourage, prevent or dissuade migration.



## 8. Assist migrants in return

Return to the place of origin is not the necessary end or solution of migration. Migrants may prefer to stay where they are, for an extended period or permanently. While providing counselling and informing migrants about their options, National Societies cannot and shall not decide what solution is the best, and must at all times maintain their impartiality, neutrality and independence. When migrants do return they face particular challenges; to assist and protect them, cooperation and agreement between National Societies in countries of destination and return is essential.

## 9. Respond to the displacement of populations

Armed conflicts and violence, natural or man-made disasters, but also development or relocation schemes can force populations to leave their homes, leading to accelerated and collective, even massive movements. The displaced populations might seek assistance and protection within their own country, or might find refuge across international borders. Displacement of populations and migration of individuals and groups are distinct but often interrelated phenomena; where they are interrelated, National Societies will strive for a coordinated action that covers both, the displaced and the migrants.

## 10. Alleviate migratory pressures on communities of origin

Migratory pressures on communities of origin can be related to social and economic distress; they can be linked to environmental degradation as well as natural or man-made hazards; and they can be due to persecution, armed conflict, and violence. By supporting disaster preparedness and building resilience at community level, National Societies contribute to alleviating pressures that can induce people to migrate against their will and desire.



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