

**ELEVENTH COORDINATION MEETING ON
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

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IFRC PERSPECTIVES ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT¹

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

¹ The views expressed in the paper do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the United Nations Secretariat.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past twelve months since the last UNDESA Coordination meeting the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies (IFRC) have been actively engaged in addressing the multidimensional nature and challenges of international migration and development along the various global migration routes in the face of increasing challenges and a fast-changing environment.

As a global network, with an estimated 80 million members and 13 million active volunteers (many of whom are themselves vulnerable) engaged in National Societies, we are focused on the humanitarian and protection needs of the many displaced individuals and migrant communities we work with, irrespective of their legal status.

Our specific contribution to the theme of the 2013 High Level Dialogue on Migration and Developmentⁱ lies in our collective capacity to bringing a ‘community perspective’ in the search for concrete measures to increase the benefits of international migration for all. We recognise that forward thinking and decisive action are needed to tackle the enormous human costs and global impacts of escalating numbers of those caught up in situations of crisis and those forced to migrate for complex reasons.

A. ROUNDTABLE ONEⁱⁱ

Migration presents important opportunities and challenges for the post 2015 agenda. It is well known that the MDGs did not address migration specifically. It is important now that the post-2015 agenda not only includes migration but in doing also gives equal attention to all three pillars of sustainable development. Migration is not only about global economic development (for countries of origin and destination), but also importantly migrant rights and respect for diversity and social inclusion (social), links between migration and climate change (including increased urbanisation), and the challenge of building resilient communities (environmental).

These issues, among others, were explored in depth by the IFRC’s World Disasters Report released in October 2012. It looks at the significant gaps in humanitarian protection for ever-increasing numbers of migrants who do not fit into conventional categories of protection, access to basic services, and the public health challenges caused by displacement, particularly for women, children and those with mental health problems. It argues for a much stronger link between humanitarian and development interventions on migration, which will be critical to addressing present and future challenges. We further need to ensure that migrant voices are included in the ongoing dialogue, and the IFRC stands ready to bring the voices of its National Societies, volunteers and migrant beneficiaries into the post-2015 discussions.

B. ROUNDTABLE TWOⁱⁱⁱ

Ensuring the respect and dignity of migrants, helping to prevent and combat human trafficking, and ensuring that migration is safe, orderly, and regular is one of the core areas of focus for our work on migration. This has been endorsed at the highest level during the 31st International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement held in Geneva in November 2011. The International Conference brought together states party to the Geneva Conventions, the IFRC, the ICRC, and all 187 Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies.

The 31st International Conference resulted in a resolution entitled *Migration: Ensuring Access, Dignity, Respect for Diversity and Social Inclusion*. This resolution enshrines the commitment of both states and the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement towards reducing the specific vulnerabilities of migrants. The migration resolution further expressed concern “about the often alarming humanitarian situation of migrants in situations of vulnerability, at all stages of their journey and ongoing risks that migrants face in regards to their dignity, safety, access to international protection as well as access to health care, shelter, food, clothing and education”.

With this Resolution, States have undertaken to ensure that national procedures at international borders include adequate safeguards to protect the dignity and the safety of all migrants. States have also agreed to ensure that, migrants are granted appropriate international protection and have access to relevant services in accordance with international law. To implement these commitments, states committed to ensuring that relevant laws and procedures are in place to enable National Societies to enjoy effective and safe access to all migrants without discrimination and irrespective of their legal status.

The IFRC wishes to highlight three other issues regarding the dignity and human rights of migrants.

- 1) The increasing frequency and intensity of disasters on population movements present new legal and protection challenges. This trend is exacerbated by other factors such as population growth, rapid urbanisation, increasing poverty and inequality, as well as increasing environmental and technical hazards. The Nansen Initiative, which the IFRC participates in, notes that persons moving across borders in the context of disasters are *protected by human rights laws, while refugee law applies to a very limited extent only*. We believe that this legal and protection gap urgently needs to be addressed.
- 2) The plight of unaccompanied children requires particular focus. The IFRC Policy on Migration has a particular focus in principle 5 on the plight of unaccompanied children. An increasing number of migrants are unaccompanied minors or minors separated from their families. Without the provision of family links through RFL or appropriate care arrangements, they are at high risk of abuse and exploitation. Their rights may be violated along the migratory trail, and their prospects for a secure and productive future are often dim. With worldwide trafficking of children on the increase these minors are of special concern to the Movement and require targeted interventions before during and after a child migrates.
- 3) Stranded migrants as “non-citizens” do not often receive the immediate assistance and protection provided by governments and other local relief agencies. The coordination and provision of relief to stranded migrants by the Haitian and Dominican Republic Red Cross Societies after the 2010 earthquake, the Thai Red Cross after 2011 floods, and Japanese Red Cross after the earthquake and tsunami of 2011 are recent examples. The Thai Red Cross specifically worked closely with local community organizations to identify irregular and undocumented migrants who were not receiving assistance distributed by Government agencies due to their ‘invisibility’ in their communities. More needs to be done by the international community to highlight the specific vulnerability and needs of this group of migrants.

C. ROUNDTABLE THREE^{iv}

The Migration Resolution, further recognised the role of the Movement in working with vulnerable migrants, and called upon states and components of the Movement to continue to collaborate and build partnerships, including international organisations such as the UN Global Migration Group (GMG) agencies, Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), non-governmental organisations and the private sector. We are committed to engage with forums such as this UN Coordination Meeting on International Migration and Development and strengthen partnerships which aim to recognise the inherent rights of migrants and ensure their respect, dignity, protection and social inclusion.

Our global partnership between IFRC and UN agencies in the area of population displacement will continue to be multi-faceted. We provide protection and humanitarian assistance to IDP’s, refugee and migrant communities through our National Societies diverse networks. We facilitate reuniting separated families, providing health and psychosocial services, and support individuals and families who are trapped, often in dire circumstances. Our support also includes promoting integration and participation of migrants at the local level. In fact, the worldwide representation of the Movement allows National Societies to be active all along the migratory trail.

D. ROUNDTABLE FOUR^v

The situation of labour migrants is an area of increasing concern for the RCRC National Societies. Migrant workers face several barriers in host societies such as language, religion, culture differences, amplifying the potential for negative experiences and exploitation. Studies reveal that migrants have less access to local health care systems due to their lack of knowledge, problems of insurance, legal status and poor education. RCRC activities currently focus on pre/departure, arrival and return of labour migrants through awareness raising campaigns, pre-departure trainings and counselling for family left behind, information centres, restoring family links service, psychosocial support, legal aid and medical assistance and eventual reintegration for migrants on return.

It is essential from both a humanitarian and development perspective that labour migrants be informed as to their labour rights (salary, housing, hours of work, insurance etc) and that integration and social inclusion services be strengthened in order for migrants to acquire competencies, skills and values necessary for an active and productive role in the life of their new host societies

E. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Empowering migrants by involving them as active participants in the Post 2015 dialogue can have important benefits not just for migrants, but for our communities more broadly. This empowerment is critical to reach our common goals for development. As long as migrants continue to face discrimination, violence and exclusion the MDGs will continue to remain out of reach.

An inclusive approach that involves all relevant stakeholders within the community is essential to fostering an enabling environment for legislation to be developed and implemented. This approach ensures community buy-in and support, which is critical in addressing long-established harmful practices and tacit social acceptance of exploitation, violence and racism towards migrants. The ability to bring together diverse stakeholders and foster positive change has been a true value added of our National Societies.

Crucial to reaching our common development goals is improving migrant's access to health and education and increasing the participation of migrant communities in health and education related initiatives. Many of our 187 member Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies are helping to bridge gaps in areas of inequity and at the same time are building knowledge, skills and leadership by centrally engaging and empowering migrants.

We are honoured to be part of this important dialogue and assure you that the IFRC will remain committed to developing and strengthening existing partnerships as well as forging new ones to strengthen our collective response to global migration and development challenges, to strengthen the link between humanitarian and development responses and allow us to jointly better harness the positive contribution of international migration to development.

ⁱ The overall theme of the high-level dialogue on international migration and development will be “Identify concrete measures to strengthen coherence and cooperation at all levels, with a view to enhancing the benefits of

international migration for migrants and countries alike and its important links to development, while reducing its negative implications” UNGA A/C.2/67/L.15/Rev.1 Dec 2012

ⁱⁱ Round table 1 will focus on assessing the effects of international migration on sustainable development and identifying relevant priorities in view of the preparation of the post-2015 development framework

ⁱⁱⁱ Round table 2 will focus on measures to ensure respect for and protection of the human rights of all migrants, with particular reference to women and children, as well as to prevent and combat smuggling of migrants and

trafficking in persons, and to ensure orderly, regular and safe migration

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- ^{iv} Round table 3 will focus on strengthening partnerships and cooperation on international migration, mechanisms to effectively integrate migration into development policies, and promote coherence at all levels
- ^v Round table 4 will focus on international and regional labour mobility and its impact on development

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