



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies  
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge  
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja  
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

***Written Contribution of  
the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies***

*Thematic consultation on the Global Compact on Migration:  
International cooperation and governance of migration in all its dimensions, including at borders,  
on transit, entry, return, readmission, integration and reintegration*

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The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies sees the possibility of a strengthened global governance framework for migration as a great opportunity to improve the protection of vulnerable migrants around the world – but there is also a risk that it could have the opposite result, if not designed with care.

A key trigger for the Summit for refugees and migrants last year was the global sense of dismay at the shocking numbers of migrants finding death, abuse, exploitation and privation on their way to a better life. It is critical that this not be forgotten as efforts are made to render migration “safer” and more “orderly and regular”. Since 2014, more than 21,000 migrants have lost their lives or gone missing and countless more have been raped, robbed and abused along their journeys. We are particularly alarmed at the situation of migrant children who are unaccompanied or separated from their families. At least 300,000 of these were registered in 2015-16 around the world, and a recent survey of children arriving in Italy found that three-quarters reported being held against their will or work without pay.

A global governance framework could go a long way toward connecting the dots when it comes to the assumption of responsibility for the safety and well-being of migrants -- from their countries of origin, to places of transit and destination. This is particularly urgent for persons with irregular status, who are most vulnerable to violence, abuse and other dangers.

Eliminating avoidable human tragedies could be set out as the first principle of cooperation in controlling borders. It has been suggested that this can be achieved by making it more difficult to migrate irregularly. On the contrary, increasing controls are likely to lead migrants to take increasing risks to circumvent them and smugglers networks will just become more powerful as well as more violent. Thus, the responsibility to take remedial steps becomes even greater if controls mount.

The Global Compact could set the basis for collecting and sharing more precise data and information on migratory movements to design more effective protection strategies. It could encourage bilateral agreements among States that clearly set out activities and responsibility for protecting vulnerable migrants travelling between them. It could also encourage the many

existing regional consultative processes that have been established, many of them around border control and law enforcement issues, to extend their mandate to also cover issues related to the protection of migrants and refugees.

Likewise, the Global Compact could ensure that all arrangements to facilitate inter-state cooperation on returns of any migrants respect the principle of *non-refoulement* under international refugee and international human rights law, which provides that returns will never be made to locations where there are substantial grounds to believe that persons would be in danger of violations of fundamental rights. Even where there are no such dangers, the Global Migration Compact could establish that arrangements for return will ensure that necessary support for reception and reintegration will be made available to returnees upon arrival.

When given access to the right enabling environment, migrants can play an enormously positive role in the economies and culture of their countries of destination. To do so, however, some require initial support with integration to their new surroundings. In doing so, it is also necessary to take into consideration the situation and needs of the local communities - the return of migrants in large number may indeed exert additional pressure on already limited resources, thus compounding the situation of already vulnerable people.

While National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are not associated with immigration law enforcement efforts, we recognize that deported migrants may be in need of protection and assistance both before and after their return. Our support includes humanitarian assistance, first aid, psychosocial support, and efforts to reconnect with their relatives through the Restoring Family Link Programme.

We recognize that, for inclusion efforts to be successful, strong partnerships are needed between

national and local government structures, community based organisations and the private sector. National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are already engaging in such partnerships, and are ready to do more - drawing on their collective experience conducting a wide range of activities to foster the integration of migrants into local communities. These include language courses, support to access housing and the labour market, and the provision of vocational training or educational support for children and youth.

Building on the work already carried out by many National Societies, we commit to continue to work with all stakeholders concerned to address the humanitarian concerns of migrants in need throughout their journey; to provide protection and assistance to them; to uphold their rights and dignity; and to empower them in their search for opportunities and sustainable solutions.

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