



150 years of humanitarian action
Council of Delegates of the International
Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement
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OUTLINE OF WORKSHOP 7

ADDRESSING THE HUMANITARIAN IMPACT OF 'EXTERNAL SHOCKS' ON VULNERABLE MIGRANTS, HOST POPULATIONS AND NATIONAL SOCIETIES

Organising – co-sponsoring NSs: Australian Red Cross

Chair : tbc

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Speakers/presenters : TBC (Mexico and Australia)

Background

In consultations related to the Council of Delegates' draft agenda, several National Societies brought up issues that might be collectively described as "external shocks" that affect them, by creating new or increased needs among vulnerable groups in their countries while at the same time affecting their ability to mobilize resources for the most vulnerable in their communities, including migrant populations seeking protection and humanitarian support. External shocks affecting National Societies' ability to respond to increasing needs of both migrants and host populations include, for example, the global financial crisis and on-going economic, social and political pressures as a result of increasing urbanisation, climate change and environmental degradation. It is estimated that by 2030, five billion or two thirds of the world population - will be concentrated in urban areas with resulting pressures and increased levels of xenophobia and violence.

The 31st International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in 2011 underscored in Resolution 3 ('Migration') the important contribution made by migrants in countries of origin, transit and destination¹. The Resolution recognises the challenges associated with migration and the increasingly difficult access to protection. This discussion paper highlights the commitment and the responsibility of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement)² to promoting protection, access, dignity, respect for diversity and social inclusion of all migrants regardless of legal status. Furthermore, the International Conference stressed the need for greater collaboration and more innovative approaches in responding to the needs of vulnerable migrants, as well as the increasing needs of the host population, in the context of current situations of humanitarian concern.

¹ 31st International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, 2011

<http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/resolution/31-international-conference-resolution-3-2011.htm>

² The Movement comprises three main components: 186 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

The inclusion of this topic in the agenda of the Council of Delegates gives the Movement an opportunity to review RCRC humanitarian responses to date. The workshop will discuss the major effects these crisis-related ‘shocks’ have had on the capacity of countries to assist migrants and migrant populations (in countries of origin, transit and destination) as well as the local communities that host them, exchange experiences on coping with such events; and consider options for humanitarian action available to National Societies faced with crises of this nature, which ensure greater social integration of migrants, and propose tools for mobilizing international solidarity among affected National Societies.

Rationale

The Global Financial Crisis (GFC) is an example of an ‘external shock’ and can be used to explore the impact and implications of external shocks. The GFC poses complex challenges for migrants and countries of origin, transit and destination, as well as challenges and opportunities for National Societies. In 2013, five years after the onset of the GFC, many economies still have not fully recovered. While the World Bank states that the global economy appears to now be ‘transitioning towards a period of more stable but slower growth’³ major developed economies, particularly in Europe, are continuing to experience the effects of high unemployment, weak aggregate demand, high public debt, fiscal austerity and a fragile banking and fiscal sector. Adverse spill-over effects are experienced in low-income countries, through weaker demand for exports and increased capital flow and commodity price volatility⁴.

Migrants’ choices become more limited and they cannot readily ‘switch’ from one destination to another (Castles, 2010)⁵. Migrants face a raft of challenges and obstacles, including decreasing solidarity in countries of transit and destination, increasing difficulties with regard to accessing international protection, increasing vulnerabilities, especially with regard to access to basic services, increasing risks of exploitation, more and more of them living below the poverty line or in destitution, especially undocumented migrants, minors (including unaccompanied and separated) and women.⁶ “We know the crisis and austerity measures are having a devastating effect on children and families. Children with a migrant background are among the most vulnerable, especially when parents are in precarious employment or they are undocumented” (PICUM, 2012)⁷. In addition, many migratory routes pose a number of dangers which can place migrants at significant risk, including possible loss of life in transit, detention/arrest and vulnerability to smuggling, trafficking and all kinds of exploitation.

³ World Bank (2013) ‘Global Economic Prospects June 2013: Less volatile, but slower growth’.

http://econ.worldbank.org/external/default/main?pagePK=64165259&piPK=64165421&theSitePK=469372&menuPK=64216926&entityID=000442464_20130617125608

⁴ United Nations (2013) ‘World Economic Situation and Prospects 2013: Global outlook’.

<http://www.un.org/ru/publications/pdfs/2013%20world%20economic%20situation%20and%20prospects.pdf>

⁵ Castles, S and Miller, M (2010). ‘Migration and the Global Economic Crisis: One Year On’ Update 1L: April 2010

http://www.age-of-migration.com/uk/financialcrisis/updates/migration_crisis_april2010.pdf

See IOM. 2009. The Impact of Financial Crises on International Migration: Lessons learned. IOM Migration Research Series, No. 37

⁶ UNAIDS (2012). ‘Impact of the Global Economic Crisis on women, girls and gender equality.’

http://www.unaids.org/en/media/unaids/contentassets/documents/document/2012/discussionpapers/JC2368_impact-economic-crisis-women_en.pdf. See Oxfam (2010). ‘The Global Economic Crisis and Developing Countries’. <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/the-global-economic-crisis-and-developing-countries-112461>

⁷ PICUM (2012) “Child poverty and well-being: Spotlight on the situation of migrant children in Cyprus and the EU” expert roundtable meeting organized by The Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM), in partnership with the Commissioner for Children’s Rights in Cyprus, the Office of the European Parliament in Cyprus, Eurochild, and KISA, Action for Equality Support and Antiracism.

In many origin, transit and host countries, external shocks such as the global financial crisis have impacted severely on labour markets, with destitution, unemployment and homelessness acutely experienced within both migrant and the local populations. The increase of social exclusion, xenophobia and discrimination which is typically experienced by migrants in such situations, and tensions between migrant population and host community may result in widespread social crisis and sometimes even violence. Decreasing remittances increase the vulnerabilities of families left behind in countries of origin. Furthermore, countries of origin may experience an increased burden on informal and formal social welfare systems due to the voluntary return of labour migrants and the frequent action by countries of destination to undertake forced returns or repatriations.

The impact, challenges and opportunities are also different in urban and rural environments, with high levels of forced migration towards urban centers potentially increasing the vulnerability of both migrants and local populations due to risks of violence, strained public services and exacerbated scarcity of accommodation.⁸

National Societies have identified key humanitarian challenges related to the onset of external shocks and on-going pressures such as economic and financial crises. National Society assistance, including food aid, support to the homeless, and psychosocial activities, has increased, as have the needs of migrants regarding legal advice, health care and other services for undocumented migrants, counseling, shelter, psychosocial support and restoring family links (RFL) support. However, despite facing new and increased needs, some NSs are simultaneously facing high competition for limited government and local community resources among humanitarian actors, a reduction in government funding to RCRC/NGOs and in international support. This has impeded NSs ability (e.g. National Societies in Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries) to respond to needs due to a lack of resources or capacities and occasionally a scaling down or suspension of existing programmes because of insufficient funds or re-orientation of programmes from advanced assistance to urgent basic assistance.

Responding to these challenges and obstacles, and developing the Movement's capacity to address the humanitarian needs of migrants in the context of, and as a result of, external shocks and on-going pressures requires innovative, and coordinated approaches.

Evidence based responses with genuine dialogue in affected communities need to be developed, in particular dialogue on the impact of external shocks and on-going pressures on delivery of essential humanitarian services and protection to vulnerable groups including migrants and internally displaced people (IDPs). In urban contexts, vulnerable populations, among them migrants and IDPs, face increasing poverty, youth unemployment, violence and lack of adequate shelter. It is anticipated that with increasing population displacement and migration internally and internationally two thirds of the world's population will be living in cities by 2050, with the accompanying stresses and challenges this will present.

Integration and social inclusion of migrants and enhanced dialogue with host populations are approaches which may be appropriate. National Societies could actively promote and facilitate opportunities for cross cultural dialogue and encourage migrants and migrant organisations to be more actively engaged in identifying responses to the needs of migrants even when impacted by external shocks.

Education, humanitarian diplomacy and advocacy are essential when addressing issues

⁸ International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, World Disaster Report 2012, Focus on forced migration and displacement, 2012.

of discrimination, xenophobia and promoting respect for diversity and social inclusion. National Societies can through **on-going dialogue** with their governments seek to ensure commitment as well as to reinforce and strongly support integration measures.

Opportunities for **collaboration** and **partnerships** with Governments, International Organisations, NGOs and community based organisations need to be further explored to increase the Movement's possibility and capacity to reach vulnerable migrants, according to our Fundamental Principles, in times of crisis, and extend our reach and impact.⁹

New approaches to emerging situations are being developed by Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies in spite of limited resources. These include innovative ways of fundraising (National Foundations, national appeals, new agreements with corporate sector, social media and diaspora). Some National Societies are extending psychosocial support programmes, originally developed for victims of disasters, to those migrant and host communities affected by the economic and other crisis situations.

Objectives

The workshop aims to:

1. Create awareness through the exchange of practical experiences on the situation of migrants who are usually among the first to be affected by crises and among those hit hardest by its consequences.
2. Identify and discuss reasons for this and identify appropriate priorities for National Societies' action on behalf of vulnerable migrants and host communities in order to have the best possible impact.
3. Identify challenges that National Societies face while providing services and protection to vulnerable migrants in the context of the crisis situations including the specific needs of women, unaccompanied children, and disabled when considering impact and responses.
4. Explore how to devise RCRC strategies and improve programming for addressing the humanitarian impact of crisis-related 'shocks' on vulnerable migrants, on the host societies and on RC/RC National Societies.

To this effect, the following guiding questions have been devised to promote reflection on the objectives, with the aim of drafting a resolution for the 32nd International Conference in 2015.

Guiding questions:

The workshop will identify, in light of current and future challenges, whether the Movement needs further guidance on specific Migration issues and review our framework for action including the IFRC Policy on Migration, 2011 International Conference Resolution and IFRC Migration Strategy. The following guiding questions will assist in defining next steps.

1. How are crisis-situations (economic, social, and political,) typically impacting on vulnerable migrants in countries of origin, transit and destination as well as their host communities?
2. How are governments and RCRC National Societies responding to migration-related challenges in the context of external shocks? How could the responses be improved? What kinds of strategies are being or should be implemented at global, regional and national level¹⁰?
3. Should we explore innovative ways of fundraising for migration activities which address negative perceptions and captivate corporate and individual's solidarity toward our humanitarian work, particularly in regard to migrants?

⁹ An example has been provided of NS partnership with utility (gas and electric) companies to help vulnerable people stay connected in the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies publication 'The economic crisis and its humanitarian impact on Europe', October 2009

¹⁰ For example refer to Draft Migration Unit Strategic Five Year Action Plan

4. How can partnerships with governments, International Organisations, NGOs and community based organisations be enhanced?
5. How can we engage migrant and host communities in NSs responses to better ensure protection, access, dignity, respect and social inclusion of vulnerable migrants?
6. How can we improve our HD and advocacy efforts despite the often politically sensitive nature of migration issues and speak out more effectively on behalf of vulnerable migrants in situations of crisis?

The Link between the Workshop and the Changing Face of Humanitarian Action

The challenges posed by external shocks, such as the current global financial and economic crisis on vulnerable migrants, host communities and NSs epitomise the evolving global environment in which humanitarian action now occurs. These external shocks, subsequent pressures, and impact on affected people are global, complex and interdependent, as is the action required by the humanitarian sector.

In commenting on the economic crisis, IFRC Secretary General Bekele Geleta stated “we [the Movement] liken the economic crisis to a slow on-set disaster, and we now see the same signs displayed as in a sudden natural disaster: the bewilderment of those affected, the best of human nature with increased solidarity and willingness to help or share, and the worst of human nature with increased selfishness and xenophobia”¹¹. At the same time, the Secretary General encouraged the Movement to evolve beyond ‘drastic, reactive and arbitrary’ responses to solutions that are evidence based, cooperative, holistic, and innovative¹².

Addressing crisis situations, such as the global financial crisis, highlights the need for the Movement to promote greater social integration of migrants through the means of education, solidarity, new partnerships and collaboration, local capacity building, and innovative approaches to fundraising, whilst remaining committed to the Fundamental Principles.

Expected outcome

Through this workshop, participants could make recommendations in line with the guiding questions which contributed to a better understanding of the following issues:

- Identification of good practices when responding to the needs of vulnerable migrants particularly in light of current and future ‘external shocks’.
- Review the Movements position with regard to global humanitarian challenges and associated increasing risks for migrants as a result of economic crisis, climate change, environmental degradation and urbanization. Include a focus on increasing violence and xenophobia and demographic ageing; and recommend development of guidelines for such responses.
- Review implementation of the 2011 International Conference Resolution No. 3, Migration: Ensuring Access, Dignity, Respect for Diversity and Social Inclusion and recommend future work and priorities of the Movement in view of 2015 Council of Delegates and 32nd International Conference.
- Recommend that the draft Migration Unit Strategic Five Year Action Plan be endorsed and identify mechanisms for longer-term predictable funding.

¹¹ ‘Economic Crisis: Let us think differently.’ Bekele Geleta, IFRC Secretary General. June 2013.

¹² Ibid