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31st International Conference of the Red Cross Red Crescent
Geneva, 28 November–1 December – **For humanity**



31st International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent

Geneva, Switzerland: 28 November – 1 December 2011

REPORT ON THE WORK OF COMMISSION A

(Tuesday 29 November – 09:00 a.m to 11:30 a.m)

**Migration: Ensuring access, dignity,
respect for diversity and social inclusion**

Chair: Dr Muctarr Jalloh

Secretary: Alasan Senghore

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Key themes discussed:

I. National Society experience around migration

1. Operationally:

- a. National Societies support migrants through general programmes and humanitarian assistance;
- b. Increasingly, a number of National Societies are establishing dedicated migration support programmes.

2. Humanitarian diplomacy:

- a. Persuading decision makers to ensure the legal environment allows National Societies to access vulnerable migrants. Similarly, decision makers should be encouraged to establish a legal environment where migrants are able to access assistance free from fear;
- b. Education role played by NS in informing future migrants of the challenges and risks involved both in crossing the migratory trail and upon reaching their country of destination;
- c. The important role played by National Societies in raising awareness of the many benefits of migration in order to reduce stigmatisation and discrimination and encourage a culture of social inclusion, non violence and peace.

II. Increased cooperation within the Movement

Need for collaboration between National Societies that operate in countries of origin, and National Societies that operate in countries of destination. Most participants acknowledged the simplification of migration being a linear phenomenon and emphasised the reality of migration being a much more complex and sometime circular process.

Need for strengthened collaboration and support from all components of the Movement, including a continuation of the important role played by the Migration Reference Group, as well as defining steps to further implement the 2009 Migration Policy.

III. Increased cooperation with external actors (Governments, IO and NGOs)

The value of supporting migrants in collaboration with other partners was emphasised. In this context, the role of National Societies as auxiliaries to their Public authorities was underlined.

The role of key partners in the migration field, such as IOM and UNHCR, was recognised and stronger partnerships were encouraged.

General Observations:

- Keynote speaker: Susan Martin, Georgetown University

Susan Martin presented the findings of the survey of National Societies on their migration related activities, outlining recent global trends in migration. She underlined that international migration will continue to grow. She presented the challenges, gaps and successes on migration issues today. She noted the constraints many National Societies operate under in terms of their ability to respond to migrants' needs, including resource constraints (financial or otherwise).

- Presenter 1: Rafael Schiffino, Vice-Minister for Public Health of the Dominican Republic

Dr. Schiffino presented the difficulty in responding to migrants needs in emergency situations, such as the Haiti earthquake. The challenges faced by countries receiving an influx of migrants across the border were underlined, especially from the perspective of providing health services. In an environment of limited resources, the need to draw upon the support of partners both internal and external to the Movement was deemed of paramount importance.

- Presenter 2: Tatyana Lineva, Vice-President of the Russian Red Cross

Tatyana Lineva presented the issues relating to labour migration in Russia and the way in which the Russian Red Cross is responding through essential services. Such services include an advisory center and hotline.

- Presenter 3: Richard J. Gordon, Chairman of the Philippines Red Cross

Richard J. Gordon noted that by nature, migrants are vulnerable because they are going to a country which is foreign to them. Mr. Gordon emphasised that National Societies across the migratory trail need to better communicate and share information. Mr. Gordon also emphasised the importance of providing information to migrants before they leave on the risks associated with the journey and of the conditions that await them in the country of destination. In this regard collaboration between National Societies in countries of origin and destination was considered especially important.

To the extent possible, please structure the report around the Guiding Questions provided.

KEY POINTS RAISED for guiding question 1 :

- Some National Societies discussed legal and administrative impediments to their capacity to respond to the needs of vulnerable migrants.
- Concerns about the ability of migrants to access basic services, such as health, education and housing were raised.

KEY POINTS RAISED for guiding question 2 :

- It was underlined that the human rights and dignity of migrants are not negotiable. Governments need to ensure that the laws and procedures relating to migrants are consistent with relevant international legal conventions.
- In light of the discussion surrounding the difficulties faced by migrant workers, several national societies and governments stressed the importance of the ratification of the *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families*.

KEY POINTS RAISED for guiding question 3:

- Lack of factual information (including on rights of migrants) creates misconceptions and assumptions, which fuel hatred and intolerance. This is of particular relevance in the context of the current economic crisis, characterised by increasing xenophobia and racism. A change of attitudes and mindsets is required, including through awareness raising campaigns, and we need to demonstrate, with figures and facts, the value and positive contributions of migrants to the development of a society.
- The IFRC initiative *Youth as Agents of Behavioural Change* (YABC) was identified by National Society as a powerful tool in fostering a greater understanding of the role played by migrants in society leading to a lasting change in attitudes. Similarly, including migrants in volunteering programmes was emphasised by National Societies as a way of fostering dialogue, understanding and social inclusion.
- Importance of values and skills-based education to build a culture of nonviolence and peace.
 - a. *Non-formal education*: role of RCRC to bring respect for diversity, mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue into schools.
 - b. *Formal education*, i.e. into the school curricula, need to include skills-building to communicate non-violently and respectfully.
- Participants were encouraged to sign the open pledge on skills and values based education, co-signed yesterday by the IFRC and the International Olympic Committee.

KEY POINTS RAISED for guiding question 4:

- The importance of States and National Societies working together was reaffirmed and it was underlined that where the programmes were supported by Governments, they were stronger and more targeted.
- Participants also commented on the value of partnerships with institutions such as IOM and UNHCR. These partnerships provided not only valuable resources for addressing the needs of vulnerable migrants but also strengthened the ability of National Societies to respond.
- There was a particular reference from a number of participants and presenters of the importance of dialogue at an international level, through forums, such as the Global Forum on Migration and Development.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Together with Governments, we need to reinforce the many benefits of migration. We need to lower the temperature of the dialogue by rooting our discussions in facts and evidence. In addressing the challenges of migration, we wish to emphasise the human aspect of migration.
- It is our hope that this Conference will provide a platform for improving the dialogue on Migration and ensuring that migrants have a voice.
- Youth have a key role in shaping the world of today and tomorrow and to build a culture of non violence and peace and influence in a positive way the current dialogue on migration. The IFRC initiative *Youth as Agents of Behavioural Change* (YABC) was highlighted as a powerful tool in this regard.
- It is key that migrants are enabled to play an active role in volunteering programmes, as volunteering is also an important tool to build social cohesion and integration.
- The Federation is encouraged to provide an ongoing mandate to the Migration Reference Group to continue its work in monitoring and supporting the implementation of the 2009 Migration Policy.
- The 2011 International Conference Resolution on Migration will be an important platform for addressing migrants' needs in terms of access, dignity, social inclusion and partnerships.