



150 years of humanitarian action
**Council of Delegates of the International
Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement**
Sydney, Australia, November 2013



Council of Delegates 2013

REPORT ON THE WORKSHOP

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

Chair: Werner Kerschbaum, Secretary-General, Austrian Red Cross

Rapporteur: Budi A. Adiputro, Secretary-General, Indonesian Red Cross Society

(A) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In consultations relating to the draft agenda for the Council of Delegates, several National Societies brought up issues that might collectively be described as “external shocks”. These are incidents or events in their countries that create new or increased needs among vulnerable groups (both host populations and migrants seeking protection and humanitarian support), while at the same time affecting the ability of National Societies to mobilize resources to respond. Such external shocks include, for example, the global financial crisis and ongoing economic, social and political pressures as a result of increasing urbanization, climate change and environmental degradation. It is estimated that by 2030, two thirds of the world’s population (five billion people) will be concentrated in urban areas, creating new pressures and increasing levels of xenophobia and violence. The aim of the workshop was to gain a better understanding of migration and the Movement’s response in the context of “external shocks”. The workshop considered current and anticipated challenges and whether, in the light of these, the Movement required further guidance on specific migration issues. It also reviewed our framework for action, including the International Federation’s Policy on Migration, Resolution 3 of the 31st International Conference (2011) and the International Federation’s Migration Strategy.

(B) GENERAL OBSERVATIONS:

DAY 1

First speaker: Phil Glendenning, Director of the Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education and President of the Refugee Council of Australia

Mr Glendenning gave an overview of the current dialogue on migration, with a focus on the situation in Australia and surrounding region. In particular, he voiced his concerns about the negative perception of asylum seekers; it was worrying that certain States seemed to be adopting a policy platform based on the principle of deterrence.

He said that the Australian government had launched a campaign to deter people from migrating, though the sad reality was that some people had no choice but to migrate. States need to share the burden of migration issues rather than expecting neighbouring States to

do more than they are prepared to do themselves.

He drew attention to the stark difference between the Australian Government's response to migrants and that of the Italian authorities, who called for a national day of mourning for migrants who lost their lives off the coast of Lampedusa.

Second speaker: José Juan Castro, President of the Honduran Red Cross

Mr Castro gave a broad outline of the situation of migration in the Americas region, from the perspective of Honduras as a source, transit and destination country. He said that migratory patterns were changing over time and that this posed enormous challenges for National Societies, especially those based in the Americas.

The endorsement of the International Federation's Migration Policy by its General Assembly in 2009, in Nairobi, was a step forward in addressing these issues. However, more needed to be done from both an assistance and human rights perspective. Honduras had recognized migration as a human right. Migrants must be treated with respect and dignity. He highlighted the need for National Societies to integrate their work with the activities of the rest of the Movement, with a focus on implementing the Migration Policy.

DAY 2

First speaker: Richard Towle, Regional Representative of the UNHCR Regional Office for Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and the Pacific.

Mr Towle opened his remarks by congratulating the Movement for identifying migration as a theme of huge global importance. He stated that the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) was a true partner of the Movement.

He highlighted the need to recognize that the global forces of movement are contained in developing countries. The industrialized world had far greater assets and resources at its disposal and yet was becoming more adept at deterring asylum seekers, which had resulted in uneven burden-sharing between the developing world and industrialized States.

Recent "external shocks", including the financial crisis, had effectively doubled the negative impact on those who were already vulnerable. The combination of external shocks (environmental, political and climate-related issues) had had a profound and corrosive effect on people's ability to move forward with their lives.

Across the world, States and governments were seen to be reinforcing border controls, bolstering national security and deterring irregular movements of people. Therefore, we must encourage governments to protect not only borders but also the human rights and dignity of people crossing borders. This was particularly relevant in the Australian context, where there was a strong focus on deterrence and the use of language such as "illegals".

Mr Towle noted that migration was extremely complex and that it was important to avoid clichés and simplistic explanations of what motivates migration. It was therefore important to have a nuanced and empirically based understanding of migration and how it relates to the notion of sovereign borders. At the same time, our joint solutions to all of these issues should be based on a multidimensional and partnership approach.

To conclude his presentation, Mr Towle listed six challenges, including: negotiating with States; increasing cooperation with other organizations; engaging in grassroots advocacy; focusing on the rule of law; and keeping human rights at the heart of our responses, given

that behind each statistic there is a human face and story.

Second speaker: Ulrika Årehed Kågström, Secretary-General of the Swedish Red Cross

Ms Kågström said that migrants were typically vulnerable to situations such as job loss, poverty, illness, lack of training and qualifications, as a result of being outside of their own networks and communities. Migrants were subject to systematic discrimination and xenophobia.

She noted that through the experiences of the Swedish Red Cross, she had seen how advocacy could effect policy change and increase the National Society's ability to deliver services and support for migrants.

In the European context, there was a growing trend of stricter asylum policies as a result of the financial crisis, including tighter border control, more extensive use of detention, a lack of legal aid for those detained, inhuman living conditions and limited possibilities for detainees to reunite with their family members. This had further underscored the need to continuously re-think our priorities in service delivery, in order to address the needs of the most vulnerable. We must at all times act to prevent asylum and refugee policies from having negative humanitarian consequences. The issue of migration was often highly politicized by different actors.

The logic of the Migration Policy was based on the global presence of National Societies along migratory trails. We must do more to coordinate our efforts to address people's vulnerabilities along that trail, through sharing experiences and identifying ways to collaborate.

When "external shocks" hit, the quality of services may change owing to funding cuts. A worrying trend in the wake of the financial crisis was increasing discrimination and xenophobia. The Swedish Red Cross had taken measures to address that, in line with the principle of humanity. The Movement, guided by the principles of impartiality and humanity, must stand up for humanitarian values as the driving force for its action.

(C) **KEY POINTS RAISED:**

Guiding question 1:

What is the current situation regarding vulnerable migrants in your country, from the perspective of both the National Society and the government?

- National Societies are actively working to coordinate activities designed to strengthen links between source, transit and destination countries.
- "External shocks" have played out and impacted on National Societies in a variety of ways, whether they be related to conflict, climate change or economic upheaval. National Societies stated that these shocks not only spurred migration but also restricted their ability to respond. This was especially the case in small island developing States.
- The commitment of volunteers and youth to working with migrants sends a clear message to public authorities about the importance of the issue. Their work is effective in raising public awareness and advocating the cause of migrants.
- A number of National Societies discussed the inequality of burden-sharing between destination and source countries. It was clear that, if not well-managed, tensions could arise within host communities when migrants were perceived to receive services above and beyond those available to

vulnerable community members.

- Concerns were raised about increasing xenophobia in host communities, where there was already a high level of vulnerability among their members. It was proposed that better coordination of the Movement response along migratory pathways, and between other actors involved, could help to tackle this problem.

Guiding question 2:

What actions are governments and National Societies undertaking in response to migration challenges? Identify examples of good practice.

- National Societies noted that although it was positive that we had a Migration Policy, there was a need for better and more consistent implementation of that policy across the Movement.
- A great variety of experiences were brought to the table in the course of the discussions and amongst them were the following examples:
 - Several National Societies were successfully engaged in restoring family links programmes, including “Trace the Face” and country-of-origin research.
 - Vulnerability and capacity assessments of asylum seekers.
 - Psychosocial support for refugee children.
 - Humanitarian Education programme to change attitudes towards migrants.
 - Advocacy in favour of shortening the length of asylum procedures.
 - Work with host communities.
- There are significant programmes in place across the Movement that are designed to respond to the needs of vulnerable migrants. These include support for asylum seekers and victims of trafficking, visits to detention centres, services to restore family links, food and clothing distributions, help with housing, and legal, psychosocial and medical support.
- National Societies recognized that certain regions shouldered the burden of forced migration more than others. As such, it was important for the Movement as a whole to consider the global impact of migration in countries of origin, transit, destination and return.
- Transit countries are faced with a unique set of challenges, especially in cases where they are also significantly affected by “external shocks”, such as strict migration policies. This is being addressed through improved advocacy.
- National Societies suggested that efforts to alleviate the plight of migrants could be stepped up and that governments should be encouraged to improve laws in a bid to control rather than prevent migration. They stated that migrants should have access to training and programmes that allow them to engage meaningfully with their communities and that reduce xenophobia and social exclusion in the community.

Guiding question 3:

What is required now and in the future to increase the impact of our work on behalf of vulnerable migrants and host communities in crisis situations, from both a Movement and a government perspective?

- The Movement must advocate at all times for migrants to be seen not as a burden but as a positive contribution to society.
- There are many issues affecting migrants and no single organization can address all their needs alone, hence the value of the Movement’s worldwide network and its relationship with governments.

- ICRC welcomed the International Federation's Migration Strategy and has confidence that it will enhance Movement cooperation and therefore the protection of vulnerable migrants and the response to their humanitarian needs.
- The Movement has a role to play in advocating for common regional approaches and policies on access to protection and asylum.
- The Movement must do more to enhance dialogue between National Societies along migratory trails and to influence policy, from a human rights perspective, to include humanitarian concerns.
- Better resourcing from the International Federation is critical for improving Movement-wide efforts to address the issues surrounding migration.
- It is vitally important for the International Federation, the ICRC and United Nations agencies to coordinate their responses in order to meet the complex challenges posed by mixed migration.
- National Societies in the Pacific Islands highlighted the issue of rising sea levels around the world, which would have a serious impact on low-lying islands. This should be a priority for the Movement to address, as climate-related, environmental and urbanization challenges will almost certainly result in increased displacement. A rights-based approach must be adopted to addressing migration induced by climate change.

(D) **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The workshop delivered the following conclusions and recommendations, which were formulated in line with the three strategic objectives of the International Federation's three-year Migration Strategy.

DAY 1

- Migration is a global issue and no single organization can address it without cooperating with other actors.
- Participants agreed that the Movement must engage with the issue more proactively, from both a humanitarian and a human rights perspective. For this to happen, we need to work collaboratively as a global Movement along the migratory routes. Stepped-up efforts are required to improve information-sharing, capacity-building and partnerships both within and beyond the Movement.
- A key theme of the discussions concerned youth volunteers, migrants and host communities working together to raise awareness and serve as proactive agents of change in the dialogue on migration. National Societies saw this collaboration as a valuable contribution to humanitarian diplomacy, especially where platforms were created for migrants' voices to be heard. It is important to remember that the language used by the Movement must always reflect the rights of migrants. Participants asserted that respectful and culturally appropriate dialogue with governments and the use of communication and education tools would help to combat any negative attitudes about migrants and promote diversity and social inclusion.
- Furthermore, these efforts tie in with the International Federation's "Strategy 2020" and our joint focus on saving lives and changing minds. As a global Movement, many National Societies are responding to the specific needs of migrants as well as advocating for dignity, respect for diversity and social inclusion.

- National Societies pointed to a need for appropriate resources to undertake this work. There was a clear consensus that further International Federation resources would be essential for supporting the work of National Societies. National Societies called for the International Federation's Migration Unit in Geneva to be strengthened.
- The Movement should work more closely with governments to address the root causes of migration, taking into account the complex nature of "push" and "pull" factors.
- Lastly, National Societies should engage in effective lobbying, in their auxiliary role, with a view to reinforcing positive government dialogue and changes to migration policies and legislation.

DAY 2

- The cross-border approach of National Societies in countries of origin, transit and destination is fundamental to the Movement's response to migration issues.
- The universal implementation of the Movement's Migration Policy requires more human and financial resources in Geneva and at the regional level.
- Advocacy and humanitarian diplomacy based on empirical evidence, experience and cooperation with other actors are essential for encouraging the government to take responsibility in this matter.
- Participants highlighted the need for universal legal provision for all migrants, irrespective of their legal status, noting that there was currently no single legal framework in place to protect them. Furthermore, all National Societies present and the ICRC were strongly supportive of the International Federation's Migration Strategy.
- Lastly, there are no quick fixes for an issue as complex as migration; rather, it requires a consistent and sustained Movement response.