

VENEZUELAN MIGRATION MOVEMENT RESPONSE

NARRATIVE & APPROACHES

JULY 2020



GENERAL OVERVIEW

The number of Venezuelan migrants, including refugees, is expected to exceed 5.5 million by the end of 2020. Many of them face significant challenges in meeting basic needs and accessing essential services in their country of origin, in transit and in the destination countries. Social and cultural barriers coupled with limited support networks limit their access to reliable information resources, impede contact with their families, and expose them to xenophobia and discrimination, especially critical for those who do not have legal migration status. These risk factors are exacerbated in the current context of COVID-19. They – and the vulnerable host communities which welcome them – need access to essential services, such as health services, emergency and maternal healthcare, shelter, food, psychosocial support, income generation activities, accessible and trustworthy information about their rights and legal processes, and/or services that support them to maintain and restore family links.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement), comprising the National Societies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), has more than 14,000 volunteers and hundreds of staff in the 17 countries primarily affected by this critical situation. Operating as one Movement, our work is founded upon the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. The Movement is at the forefront of the provision of critical humanitarian assistance and services to migrants regardless of their legal status; by leveraging its collective influence and complementary capacities and areas of expertise, the Movement is able to deliver a wide-ranging, multidisciplinary response that pays special attention to the needs of the most vulnerable and at-risk populations.

This approach now extends to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, both direct and long-term, on migrants in the region. The Movement's presence in local communities, coupled with dialogue with the principal actors concerned, allows us to reach those in need in a timely and effective way. National Societies, as auxiliaries to their authorities and with the support of the IFRC and ICRC, provide an essential complement to government plans and strategies (a second line of defence), supporting their health authorities and overall systems in the fight against COVID-19, as well as coordinating with the United Nations and local organizations.

The Movement strives to:

- provide assistance and protection to vulnerable migrants, including refugees,
- advocate or intervene to ensure respect for migrants' rights,
- improve their ability to seek opportunities and long-term sustainable solutions,
- promote their social inclusion, as well as their interaction with host communities

OUR APPROACH

The Movement's approach focuses on needs that migration can create, both for migrants and host communities, including addressing the barriers and constraints for both in the integration process and the pre-existing conditions at the community level, while also remembering that migrants may contribute positively to local economies if they are given the appropriate opportunities. Our approach is strictly humanitarian, aiming to address the needs of vulnerable people who have left Venezuela. We also aim to ensure the protection of migrants' rights during their journey, to ensure that they are safe and treated with dignity regardless of their immigration status, and to support their sustainable inclusion in the host countries.

Our priority is to provide support for the protection and contribute to guarantee of rights of the migrant population, regardless of their legal status or reason for migration, under the principles of Humanity and Impartiality. Migrant people in irregular situations receive special attention. While we refrain from entering the political debate, applying our principle of Neutrality, this does not mean that we are silent. Our principle of Independence ensures that we work autonomously.

We base our intervention on three aspects – protection, advocacy and inclusion:

- 1. Advocacy and humanitarian diplomacy:** It is, above all, the responsibility of the authorities to ensure, protect and defend the rights of all individuals within their jurisdiction based on a broad legal framework that includes international and regional treaties, bilateral agreements, and national laws.

As a Movement, we work to ensure that migrants, including refugees, receive the protection to which they are entitled under international and national law, including special protection granted to refugees and asylum seekers. We also advocate for policies that support social inclusion and non-discrimination, addressing xenophobia and stigma. The detention of migrants must be an exceptional measure. Freedom and alternatives to detention must always be considered first, that is, detention must be a measure of last resort. No child or adolescent should be deprived of their freedom for immigration-related reasons. We advocate ensuring that national laws and policies support migrants' effective access to essential services, including food, shelter, health care, access to justice, psychosocial support, information about relevant rights, entitlements and processes in host countries, and support in maintaining and restoring family links, with a focus on gender, age and diversity. As a Movement, we may raise situations of concern directly with the authorities or those that can influence the situation of vulnerable migrants or speak publicly when appropriate.

- 2. Inclusion of migrant population in humanitarian programs:** In our strategies, we go beyond designing specific programs for migrants. We have integrated migration – and the needs of migrants – into our emergency preparedness and response programs and plans, as well as in those addressing situations of violence or armed conflict; this has allowed us to broaden our scope of action and increase our impact on the situation of migrants, including refugees, and host communities. Needs assessments are done on the basis of a continual process of community engagement and participation. While engaging with communities holistically, we are able to identify those migrants who have settled in host communities but remain marginalized, whether due to a lack of access to basic services (e.g. health and education), or because they are caught in situations of exclusion or stigmatization due to their status.
- 3. Protection and “do no harm”:** A basic requirement of humanitarian programmes is to ensure assistance to migrants is accompanied by efforts to ensure protection against stigmatization, abuse, exploitation, and denial of their rights based on an assessment of needs taking into consideration aspects of diversity, age and gender. Our approach as a Movement is focused on trying to understand the issues faced by different groups of migrants and to respond with actions that – as a minimum – do not increase the risks to which they are already exposed. Our programs are also intended to provide support for the migrant population, whether they are in transit, newcomers to a country, adjusting to a new society or returning to their community of origin.

TARGET COUNTRIES



PROGRAMME SPECIFICS

Our programmes and actions which contribute to the protection and guaranteeing the human rights of migrations, including refugees, are focused on the areas below. The estimated resources needed to mobilize this support in the community 36 month is 80m CHF¹:

Humanitarian Assistance

Objective	To contribute to saving lives and improving conditions along migration routes, ensuring that all migrants, including refugees, have access to critical humanitarian assistance, with specific considerations applied for age, gender, and diversity.
Outcome	(n°) of Women and Men Migrants, particularly those in an irregular migratory situation - have meaningful access to critical humanitarian assistance, reliable information, and referrals to other services.
HSPs	The Movement provides humanitarian assistance to migrants mainly through the Humanitarian Service Points (HSPs), static or mobile humanitarian staging points along the migration route. Strategically located along the migration routes, they provide assistance where public services might otherwise be unavailable or inaccessible. This assistance might be provided in the form of adapted kits with basic necessities, multipurpose cash and vouchers or in-kind aid is provided to support migrants to meet their basic needs in a first emergency response. At the HSPs the Movement will provide, in addition to the humanitarian assistance, some or all of the following services, based on migrants' needs and the resources and capacity of each National Society: psychosocial support and primary health care, sanitation, hygiene services, hygiene kits and hygiene promotion activities, subscriber identification module (SIM) cards to migrants in transit, Restoring Family Links (RFL) services, safe spaces, key information, and referring cases to appropriate mechanisms for asylum seekers, child protection networks and human trafficking support centres.
COVID-19	Humanitarian assistance continues, and modalities will be adapted. Specific health activities will be carried out to respond to, prevent and mitigate the effects of the pandemic at the HSP, preventive actions will be combined with WASH activities, focusing on the provision of WASH services, as well as the dissemination of awareness, and information messages both in health centres and in community spaces. A priority in all activities is the protection of staff, volunteers, migrants and host communities in order to contain the further spread of the virus; the Movement will provide protective equipment and protocols will be implemented to ensure their safety.

1. The ICRC 12-month budget for 2020 to respond to the needs of Venezuela migrants, including refugees, in 11 countries is 17.5 million CHF



Colombian Red Cross

Health, Psychosocial Support Services & Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Objective	To improve the health condition of the most vulnerable migrant population, including mental health and psychosocial support, and the access to water and sanitation services and hygiene facilities.
Outcome	• Incidence of major communicable diseases is stable or reduced in the project areas. • Continuity of health service provision and extension of access to and quality of medical assistance and other health services by the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. • (nº) of migrants have access to sanitation, hygiene facilities and safe water on their journey. • The mental wellbeing of the most vulnerable groups of migrants is improved and adverse impacts of the migration on their mental health are reduced through focusing on strengthening mental health and ensuring the availability of capacities and resources to reach out to them.
COVID-19	The working environment in the health sector will continue to be under enormous pressure in the months to come and will have to adapt the ways of working on several levels. Working relationships between individuals and groups (especially around physical and social distancing) will be affected. Therefore, innovation must be encouraged to respond to this particular situation. Measures include the following areas of focus and example: Relying on remote support where possible (hotline and online services and distance learning for education and training courses), provision of protective equipment and implementation of protocols to ensure the safety of migrants, volunteers and staff, and provision of COVID-adapted hygiene kits (for individuals and at the household level). Support to Health facilities has increased to help address the increased influx of patients related to COVID-19.

Humanitarian Diplomacy

Objective	To provide legal and policy support to, and engage in advocacy with, national authorities and regional organizations to advance the development and implementation of adapted legal frameworks and policies ensuring the protection of migrants' and host communities' human rights.
Outcome	• Regional and national laws and policies are updated to protect and guarantee the human rights of migrants and people living in host communities. • A recognition of the existing legal framework and policies that protect migrants' rights, including the access to international protection and provision of temporary legal status is established regionally. • Legal advocacy capacities of National Societies are strengthened. • The auxiliary role of National Societies in the development of key sectoral laws and policies is formalized and recognized. • To contribute to national advocacy platforms
COVID-19	Increased reliance on remote activities such as community advocacy through radio, social media and other means, webinars instead of in-person workshops and training. Recognition of the neutral and impartial auxiliary role the Red Cross services with its government is essential in order to ensure access to migrant communities.

Livelihoods & Income Generation Initiatives

Objective	Migrant populations, including refugees, and vulnerable groups of the host communities improve their livelihoods and/or their employability, and are therefore enabled to generate an income and experience higher social inclusion.
Outcome	• Migrants, including refugees, are able to earn an income to provide the basic necessities for themselves and their families and have improved their feeling of social inclusion by the end of the intervention compared to the beginning • Migrants, including refugees, have been employed (contracted) at the end of the intervention. • Migrants, including refugees, have improved their net income. • Number of entrepreneurs' businesses created.
COVID-19	Measures taken to reduce the spread of COVID19, such as social distancing, movement restrictions and markets and border closures have a major impact on migrant livelihoods. Actions will be focused on reducing the direct impact of these measures on migrants and host communities' capacity to satisfy daily needs, food, health and continue their livelihoods activities by: provision of multipurpose cash and vouchers or in-kind aid to prevent assets depletion and negative coping mechanisms, as well as to protect livelihoods activities; provision of cash-based assistance for housing related needs, and maintenance of livelihoods; access to formal and informal credit; orientation to facilitate adaptation to current labour and market needs; provision of cash grants or in-kind inputs to restart livelihoods activities.

Urban settlement

Objective	To increase access of migrants and refugees to safe temporary and long-term accommodation and basic services and to create mechanisms to facilitate integration of the migrant population in host communities.
Outcome	• Venezuelan population settles safely in adequate and less vulnerable urban areas. • Migrants, including refugees, have further and reliable access to basic services such as formal education and health. • There is a constructive social integration with the host community.
COVID-19	Measures such as lockdowns have brought importance to the issue of shelter. Besides accommodation in overcrowded spaces, migrants, including refugees, have been affected by the inability to pay rent and evictions, exposing them to additional health and security threats. Therefore, the Movement will focus on contributing to safe and dignified settlements, expanding the shelters of vulnerable households to reduce overcrowding and mitigate the spread of the virus, and planning and building isolation areas and medical facilities according to health criteria.

Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI)

Objective	Improvement of inclusion of migrant population, including refugees, within the host communities while implementing measures to mitigate protection risks and reducing stigma, discrimination, and xenophobia against migrants. Ensuring dignity, access, participation, and safety towards the services provided to migrants while they are in transit or returning.
Outcome	• National Societies' capacities are strengthened to develop PGI related policies and strategies such as child protection and Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA). • Regional and national approaches to ensure social inclusion among migrants and host communities. • Mainstreaming of PGI considerations into the other area of focus and services to migrants (shelter, WASH, health, psychosocial support and Restoring Family Links) • Through inter-institutional coordination, reinforcement of referral mechanisms (per country) at institutional and community level to address protection issues such as trafficking, SGBV and child protection.
COVID-19	• The IFRC's PGI Minimum Standards were adapted to the COVID-19 Response in order to provide recommendations for each sector of intervention with the aim to mainstream PGI, efforts to reduce stigma and discrimination, development of key guidance on topics such as child protection, gender-based violence, trafficking, and inclusion of people with disabilities. • Specific approach to child protection and education will be taken through the adaptation of remote support services for home-schooling, psychosocial support for children, and guidance for parents and/or caregivers. • Mapping of referral mechanisms and protection services will be done together with a strong focus on the Code of Conduct, the Child Protection Policy, and the Policy on Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

Restoring Family Links (RFL)

Objective	Migrants, including refugees are able to restore and maintain links with their family and are protected from separation and going missing. Migrants and their families, without news of their family members receive answers about the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones.
Outcome	• Prevent family separation by restoring and maintaining family links along migratory routes, including the help to transmit identification documents. • Unaccompanied children are provided with support to re-establish contact with their families and where possible and in their best interests, reunified with their families. • States do a proper and dignified handling of the human remains of deceased migrants, as well as a proper documentation and identification of migrants who died during their journey and a dignified management and burial of human remains. • Families receive answers about the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones with in a timely manner. Throughout the time of separation and search, the families of missing migrants and separated families are supported by the Movement to ensure their dignity and well-being and, where possible, to restore family unity. • Migrants in detention are able to maintain contact with their families
COVID-19	The Movement has adapted its activities to guarantee the prevention and control of the COVID19 in the provision of RFL services: where possible providing telephone calls and tracing services remotely, establishing protocols to ensure the health of volunteers, staff and beneficiaries, supporting the provision of services to help those in isolation facilities and hospitals maintain contact with their families and supporting authorities to ensure the proper identification and dignified treatment of human remains.

Ensuring the Protection of detained migrants, and working to reduce the risks faced by migrants, including refugees

Objective	To guarantee a specific protection response to detained migrants, and reduce the risk of the disproportionate use of force and other protection concerns such as deportations and forced returns.
Outcome	• States understand the legal framework on the use of force in law-enforcement operations and avoid the disproportionate use of force in situations involving migrants, including crowd control and border enforcement operations. • States provide avenues for people seeking asylum, as well as establishing mechanisms to ensure the protection that migrants are entitled to under national and international law . • Authorities understand and respect the principle of non-refoulement. • Migrants have access to alternatives to detention. • Migrants in detention have access to international protection mechanisms, are afforded due process of law, are treated humanely and held in conditions that preserve their dignity.
COVID-19	Activities have been adapted to allow for the prevention and control of COVID-19. Where possible protection activities are conducted remotely, including engaging with authorities through a bilateral and confidential dialogue on main protection concerns through video conferencing and training. The Movement continues to advocate for the release of those being detained in relation to immigration related reasons to reduce the risk of the spread of COVID-19. Where necessary, support has been provided to detention facilities to facilitate the transmission of health and hygiene messaging to support the training of detaining authorities and raise awareness to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in detention facilities.



CROSS CUTTING THEMES

a. Gender and diversity

The Movement programming addresses gender and migrants' diversity (ethnicity, age, disabilities) in all our actions by responding to their differing needs and drawing on their capacities in the most non-discriminatory and effective way and by understanding how opportunities and inequalities may be affected based on a person's sex or the gender that people identify with.

The Movement programming commits actively to embrace different identities and individuals, to guard against all discrimination in all our actions, and to promote the value of a diverse society with gender equality.

b. Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA)

The Community Engagement and Accountability approach is implemented transversally within the Red Cross multi sectoral programs. It adopts a systematic method that ensures target groups become active participants in the identification and implementation of solutions that address their particular needs. This implies that migrants, including refugees, and host communities, have access to crucial information and that their needs, priorities, complaints and feedback is used to take operational decisions and shape activities at any given stage of the program cycle, towards providing successful and solution-driven interventions. In this context the information and the establishment of inclusive feedback are key mechanisms for people on the move as well as host and transit communities. To ensure accountability to the population, migrants are systematically included in all services and in constant exchange with the local branches of the National Societies to ensure that information is communicated both ways effectively. Also, the Government is involved and has continuous communication at the local level with local branches of National Societies and the national level with National Societies headquarters.

Mobilization of local community leaders to advocate for social norms and behavioural change is also included, as well as consultation among Red Cross, host communities and migrants on the design, implementation and monitoring of feedback and complaints handling processes. Provision of training to migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, and community leaders in the use of the tools and platforms designed. And granting access to migrants to reach out to National Societies, at origin country, transit and destination, to ensure knowledge and use of the platforms and mechanisms to gather and receive information relevant to their needs.

c. Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation

Incorporating environmentally responsible practices in our work contributes to reduce risk and vulnerability and improve the outcomes of our interventions for the migrant population and host communities we serve. A healthy environment can help to absorb, anticipate, and adapt to climate shocks and stresses, improving migrant population's resilience.

The Movement is committed to a Green Response, emphasizing accountability towards affected populations by actively promoting alternative, more environmentally beneficial solutions in addressing needs. In short, it is about extending the fundamental humanitarian principle of 'do no harm' to the environment and ecosystems which the people we seek to assist are reliant on, recognizing that sustainability is generated through environmentally sound actions.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For information, please contact your relevant Movement focal point.