



## SAVE LIVES AND ESTABLISH COORDINATED INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS ON MISSING MIGRANTS



### Associated actions

- a. **Develop procedures and agreements on search and rescue of migrants**, with the primary objective to protect migrants' right to life that uphold the prohibition of collective expulsion, guarantee due process and individual assessments, enhance reception and assistance capacities, and ensure that the provision of assistance of an exclusively humanitarian nature for migrants is not considered unlawful
- b. **Review the impacts of migration-related policies and laws to ensure that these do not raise or create the risk of migrants going missing**, including by identifying dangerous transit routes used by migrants, by working with other States as well as relevant stakeholders and international organizations to identify contextual risks and establishing mechanisms for preventing and responding to such situations, with particular attention to migrant children, especially those unaccompanied or separated
- c. **Enable migrants to communicate with their families without delay to inform them that they are alive** by facilitating access to means of communication along

routes and at their destination, including in places of detention, as well as access to consular missions, local authorities and organizations that can provide assistance with family contacts, especially in cases of unaccompanied or separated migrant children, as well as adolescents

- d. **Establish transnational coordination channels**, including through consular cooperation, and designate contact points for families looking for missing migrants, through which families can be kept informed on the status of the search and obtain other relevant information, while respecting the right to privacy and protecting personal data
- e. **Collect, centralize and systematize data regarding corpses and ensure traceability after burial**, in accordance with internationally accepted forensic standards, and establish coordination channels at transnational level to facilitate identification and the provision of information to families
- f. **Make all efforts, including through international cooperation, to recover, identify and repatriate the remains of deceased migrants** to their countries of origin, respecting the wishes of grieving families, and, in the case of unidentified individuals, facilitate the identification and subsequent recovery of the mortal remains, ensuring that the remains of deceased migrants are treated in a dignified, respectful and proper manner



## Example practices

For more practices, visit the Migration Network Hub's **Repository of Practices**

### Proyecto Frontera (Border Project)

In 2009, the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team (EAAF), working with committees of families of missing migrants, NGOs and governmental institutions from the countries that sit along the migrant corridor connecting Central America, Mexico and the USA, launched the Proyecto Frontera (Border Project) in an effort to identify migrants who have gone missing in Central America, Mexico or at the border between Mexico and the USA. The main objective of this project is to help set up a regional mechanism to improve the exchange of information on missing migrants and unidentified remains along this corridor. Data on missing migrants are collected, verified and catalogued so that they can be cross-referenced with forensic data on unidentified remains recovered by forensic institutions in both transit and destination countries. This led to the creation of forensic databases in Central America and Mexico, with the participation of the respective ministries of foreign affairs, civil society organizations, forensic institutions and committees of families of missing migrants (ICRC, 2020).

### Identifying missing migrants in Italy

In 2007, the Government of Italy established an office dedicated to dealing with missing persons within its Ministry of Interior. The main tasks of the Special Commissioner for Missing Persons include coordinating between different State actors, supervising the activities of other actors and

institutions, managing and updating the national register of unidentified bodies, facilitating the cross-checking of information on unidentified bodies and missing persons, and liaising with international institutions, NGO representatives, and the families of the disappeared. The Office of the Special Commissioner has handled various significant shipwrecks. In the context of these tragedies, the Commissioner's office lay out guidelines on how to manage situations of migration-related shipwrecks (IOM, 2019).

### International Committee of the Red Cross

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has established an approach to tracing the families of missing migrants through using an algorithmic method and contextual ante-mortem data. The ICRC combines this method of using ante-mortem data with traditional tracing methods, and its approach is being piloted in Mauritania and Senegal (Robins, 2018).



## Relevant sustainable development goals



### SDG 10: Reduced inequalities

▪**10.7:** Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies



### SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions

- 16.1:** Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere
- 16.2:** End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children
- 16.3:** Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all
- 16.7:** Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels



### SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals

▪**17.18:** By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national context