



**International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement Statement**  
at the  
**Asia-Pacific Regional Review of Implementation**  
**of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration**

***Bangkok, Thailand, 10- 12 March 2021***

*Delivered by Helen Brunt, IFRC Regional Migration and Displacement Coordinator*

Chairs, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

I am pleased to speak on behalf of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, consisting of the world's 192 National Societies who work through their 14 million community-based volunteers; the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies; and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

As neutral humanitarian actors, our Movement neither encourages nor discourages migration. However, we do insist that all migrants - irrespective of their legal status - are treated with dignity and in accordance with their human rights, including having effective access to essential services.

For the Compact to successfully foster "safe, orderly and regular migration", we have consistently called upon States to respect their obligations under international and domestic law, with our advocacy focusing on four humanitarian priorities:

- First, that all migrants be protected from **going missing, death, family separation and violations** of their rights throughout their migration experience
- Second, that all migrants - irrespective of legal status - have **effective access to essential services and humanitarian assistance**

- Third, that **the rights and needs of the most vulnerable, especially children, be prioritised**
- And finally, that **detention of migrants be used only as a measure of last resort.**

In the face of the climate crisis, we also urge states to **act immediately to address the adverse effects of climate change, as a driver of migration and displacement.**

We commend the progress made by several States towards achieving the objectives of the Global Compact on Migration, particularly amidst the challenges of COVID-19.

However, more must be done.

Yesterday, we launched a new global report called '[Locked Down and Left Out](#)', examining impacts of COVID-19 on migrants' access to essential services, and based on research by eight National Societies, including the Australian Red Cross and Philippine Red Cross.

While recognising good practices by States, we also found that migrants have faced impossible choices, including whether to buy food or seek medical assistance.

We call upon States to ensure that all people in their territories, irrespective of legal status, can meet their basic needs, are included in COVID-19 vaccination plans, and have safe access to humanitarian assistance without fear of arrest, detention or deportation.

Migrants are playing a critical role in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts, yet their specific vulnerabilities and needs have often been overlooked. Many are ostracized, excluded from national social protection schemes, and face barriers to accessing life-saving health services.

Meanwhile humanitarian actors cannot reach people in need, including those detained or in camps, to provide vital protection and assistance services.

We now call upon States to:

- Ensure that all people within their jurisdiction, irrespective of legal status, can meet their basic needs, are included in COVID-19 vaccination plans, and have safe access to humanitarian assistance without fear of arrest, detention or deportation.
- Enable the restoration of family links. If anything, COVID-19 reminds us how essential maintaining contact with loved ones is, more so for migrants (including children) in vulnerable situations.
- Uphold human rights and other legal obligations, including the principle of *non-refoulement*, in all circumstances. People in immediate danger should be able to move to safety and avenues for asylum seekers to access international protection should be safeguarded.

Movement components are implementing various context-specific activities with and for migrants and host communities. National Societies are working in partnership with their public authorities to reduce vulnerabilities and enhance resilience including equal access to COVID-19 vaccines, and are playing a vital role in providing easily accessible, timely and accurate information to migrants, in their own languages.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, the ICRC has adapted its programmes to support national authorities and Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies to respond to the pandemic.

Respected Chairs, we must all go further. Governments need not act alone. As auxiliaries to their public authorities, National Societies are present at the local level across the region and along migratory routes. Our whole Movement stands ready to support States to uphold a 'whole-of-society' approach to ensure that people can migrate in safety and in dignity, and that the most vulnerable are protected.

We ask States to do their utmost to make this a reality.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has compiled an open access [Global Online Library](#) of COVID-19 risk communication audio and visual materials covering a wide variety of topics.