

VENEZUELAN MIGRATION MOVEMENT RESPONSE

NARRATIVE & APPROACHES

MAY 2021



GENERAL OVERVIEW

As of March 2021, over 5.5 million Venezuelans have left their country. These migrants face significant challenges in meeting basic needs and accessing essential services in their country of origin, in transit and at their final destination. Social and cultural barriers, coupled with limited support networks, limit their access to reliable information resources, and contact with their families. This also exposes them to xenophobia and discrimination, especially harmful for those who do not have a regular migration status.

These risk factors are exacerbated in the current COVID-19 context, where migrants face barriers which prevent them from receiving the support they need. COVID-19-related lockdown measures and border closures in some countries have also prevented migrants from accessing essential services; COVID-19 has also generated stigma and discrimination towards migrants.

But migrants have also been critical to COVID-19 pandemic responses, often playing a large role in essential response sectors. They constitute a significant share of key workers in healthcare, formal and informal care economy, food supply chains, transportation and personal protective equipment production and are also overrepresented in sectors most affected by the pandemic, including food, hospitality, accommodation, retail, administration and manufacturing.

Migrants - and the host communities which welcome them - need access to essential services, such as health care - including emergency and maternal healthcare, as well as COVID-19 prevention, treatment and vaccination-, shelter, food, education, psychosocial support, income generation activities, integration, maintaining and restoring family link and accessible and trustworthy information about their rights and legal processes.

The Red Cross Red Crescent Movement

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), is at the forefront of the efforts to provide critical humanitarian assistance and services to migrants regardless of their immigration 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.

Movement support to migrants from Venezuela

Operating as one Movement, the Red Cross has more than 14,000 volunteers and hundreds of staff in the 17 countries where the Movement is supporting the needs of Venezuelan migrants. Our work is guided by the Fundamental Principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we have worked toward maintaining a comprehensive response across 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 governments and with the support of the IFRC and ICRC, provide an essential complement to government plans and strategies (a second line of defense), supporting their health authorities and overall systems by cooperating with them in pandemic prevention and COVID-19 control, as well as coordinating with the United Nations and local organizations.

The International Red Cross and Crescent Movement uses a deliberately broad description of "migrants" to include all people who leave or flee their home to seek safety or better prospects, and who may be in distress and need protection or humanitarian assistance. Migrants may be workers, students and/or foreigners deemed irregular by public authorities. They can also be refugees, asylum seekers and/or stateless persons.

The Movement strives to:

- provide assistance and protection to vulnerable migrants all along their journey, from their origin to their country of destination
- 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

Our approach towards supporting migrants is strictly humanitarian driven. It is focused on addressing their humanitarian needs and protecting them during their journey to ensure that migrants are treated with dignity, regardless of their immigration status, while ensuring their sustainable and safe inclusion into society.

To help promote this sustainable safe inclusion, our approach focuses on the multiple opportunities that migration can create, both for migrants and host communities. This approach acknowledges the barriers and constraints for both groups in the integration process, as well as in the community.

Migrants contribute positively to local economies through several means, including joining the workforce, creating jobs, and contributing through paying taxes and social security. These contributions are only possible, though, if migrants are properly included within the countries' legal frameworks.

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

1. Protection and “do no harm”: A basic requirement of humanitarian programmes is to ensure that assistance to migrants ensures protection against stigmatization, abuse, exploitation, and denial of their rights and is based on an assessment of needs taking into consideration diversity, age and gender. Our approach as a Movement tries to understand the issues faced by different groups of migrants and to respond with actions that, at a minimum, do not increase the risks to which they are already exposed. Our programmes also 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. In addition, since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, our programmes help ensure testing, tracing, education, information, treatment and vaccines are available and accessible to everyone to contribute to protecting the migrants and host communities.

2. Advocacy and humanitarian diplomacy: It is, above all, the responsibility of the government 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 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, including COVID-19. The detention of migrants must be an exceptional measure. Freedom and alternatives to detention must always be considered first, meaning 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 basic needs, COVID-19 prevention, treatment and vaccination, shelter, health care, education, 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.

3. Inclusion of migrant population in humanitarian programmes: In our strategies, we go beyond designing specific programmes for migrants. We integrate migration – and the needs of migrants – into our emergency preparedness and response programmes and plans, as well as in plans addressing violence or armed conflict; this has allowed us to broaden our scope of action and increase our impact on migrants 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 immigration status.

In the context of COVID-19 pandemic, the Movement's approach on Migration has proved its relevance and is more operationalized than ever.

TARGET COUNTRIES



INNOVATIVE MEASURES

The Movement is implementing a number of innovations in relation to support for migrant populations. Some of the main innovations include:

- **The Global Migration Lab** focuses on research on how to improve the quality of life of migrant groups in countries of origin, transit and destination, as well as on their return.
- **Providing Cash and Voucher assistance without contact.** The Movement is using the delivery of Cash and Vouchers as a fundamental tool for the attention of the migrant population and host communities. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Movement developed specific mechanisms to deliver Cash & Vouchers interventions without any contact to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.
- **Online feedback mechanism and information channel (including chatbots to answer frequently asked questions).** Through the WhatsApp for business App, the Movement informs and receives feedback from the migrant and host communities. This mechanism allows the Movement to provide remote assistance to migrants affected by the COVID-19 crisis, by answering questions or doubts about the pandemic, providing key information and receiving feedback from the Communities.



PROGRAMME SPECIFICS

Our programmes and actions that contribute to assist migrants and protect their rights are focused on the areas below. The estimated resources needed to mobilize this support in the community for 36 months is 236 Million CHF¹:

Humanitarian Assistance

Objective	To contribute to saving and sustaining lives and improving conditions along migration routes, ensuring that all migrants and vulnerable host community residents have access to critical humanitarian assistance, with specific considerations applied for age, gender, and diversity.
Key Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing humanitarian assistance to the migrant and host communities. • Providing reliable information to the migrant and host communities. • Referring the migrant and host communities to other services, if necessary. <p>The Movement provides humanitarian assistance to migrants mainly through the Humanitarian Service Points (HSPs), static or mobile humanitarian staging points along the migration route.</p>
HSPs	<p>HSPs are strategically located along the migration routes providing assistance where public services might otherwise be unavailable or inaccessible. This assistance is provided through adapted kits with basic necessities, multipurpose cash and vouchers or in-kind aid to support migrants to meet their basic needs in a first emergency response (road-based approach).</p> <p>Additionally, the Movement provides at the HSPs some or all of the following services: 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. The HSPs also provide a space to collect feedback that serves to identify information needs, gaps in intervention or complex situations that may be occurring on the ground. This information is analysed and integrated into the intervention to improve it.</p> <p>Humanitarian assistance continues during the COVID-19 pandemic and modalities have been adapted at the HSPs. The Movement is carrying out specific health activities to respond to, prevent and mitigate the effects of the pandemic preventive actions are combining 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.</p> <p>Protection of staff, volunteers, migrants, and host communities from COVID-19 is a priority for the Movement in all activities, by providing personal protective equipment and ensuring protocols to ensure their safety.</p>

¹ The ICRC 12-month budget to respond to the needs of Venezuelan migrants in the region is 15 million CHF and for the response inside Venezuela is 36.8 million CHF.

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

Objective	To improve health conditions of the most vulnerable migrant population, including mental health and psychosocial support, and the access to water and sanitation services and hygiene facilities.
Key Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing healthcare and medical advice to reduce or keep stable the incidence of major communicable diseases. • Providing health services and expanding access to and quality of medical care and other health services. • Providing access to sanitation, hygiene facilities and safe drinking water to the migrants on their journey. • Providing mental health support to the most vulnerable groups of migrants to improve 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. <p>The Movement is implementing innovation mechanisms to ensure an appropriate response: remote support where possible (hotline and online services and distance learning for education and training PSS courses), provision of protective equipment and implementation of protocols to ensure the safety of migrants, volunteers and staff, and provision of COVID-19 adapted hygiene kits (for individuals and at the household level).</p>

COVID-19 prevention, treatment and vaccination

Objective	To support COVID-19 vaccines roll out, ensuring migrants are not left behind, advocating for equitable access, creating community acceptance, and supporting the supply chain.
Key Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying out advocacy activities to ensure equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines. • Providing information to the community to increase trust and acceptance of COVID-19 vaccines. • Strengthening the immunisation services, including routine immunisation and vaccination campaigns for other diseases, with a special focus on zero-dose and under-immunised communities. • Supporting the provision of COVID-19 vaccines at health centres and outreach activities, if necessary.



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' rights.
Key Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing support and/or carrying out advocacy activities to update the regional and national laws and policies so that they protect and guarantee the rights of migrants and people living in host communities. • Providing support and/or carrying out advocacy activities to ensure the 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. • Strengthening the legal advocacy capacities of National Societies and the participation in national advocacy platforms. • Carrying out activities that help formalise and recognise the auxiliary role of National Societies in the development of key sectoral laws and policies. <p>The Movement contributes to ensuring access for migrants and host communities to essential services, including food, COVID-19 prevention, treatment and vaccine, shelter, health care, access to justice, psychosocial support and information about relevant rights, by the recognition of the neutral and impartial auxiliary role of the Red Cross services with its government.</p>

Livelihoods & Income Generation Initiatives

Objective	Migrant populations and host communities access essential resources and services to meet their basic needs (food, basic shelter and housing utilities, life savings drugs and health services) and improve their livelihoods and/or their employability, and are therefore enabled to generate an income and experience higher social inclusion.
Key Actions	<p>Providing assistance to migrants, and vulnerable groups of the host communities, to cover their basic needs while supporting them to increase their employability, so they can generate income to cover their needs and those of their families and feel a sense of social inclusion. Each case is assessed in order to design an individual employability itinerary which might include support by means of key information about labour markets, training activities (soft and hard skills), cash and vouchers assistance (seed capital and/or productive assets), orientation, guidance and mentoring, and access to social support networks, among others.</p> <p>During the COVID-19 pandemic, Governments have implemented measures to reduce the spread of COVID19, such as social distancing, movement restrictions and markets, and border closures that have a major impact on migrant livelihoods. The direct effect of these measures on migrants and host communities reduces their capacity to satisfy daily needs, food, health, and carry on their livelihoods activities. The Movement is implementing specific actions such as the provision of multipurpose cash transfers and/or cash, vouchers or in-kind aid to cover basic needs and prevent assets depletion and negative coping mechanisms; provision of cash-based assistance for housing-related needs -including essential services and utilities such as electricity, gas, water, internet, communication, etc.-, and maintenance of home-based-operated livelihoods; provision of cash-based assistance to cover the cost of transportation and/or child/elderly/sick care services to increase capacity to engage into livelihoods activities, access to formal and informal credit; orientation to facilitate adaptation of skills, knowledge and competencies to the current labour and market needs; provision of cash grants or in-kind assistance to access productive inputs to restart livelihoods activities and business, access to social support networks.</p>

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.
Key Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting Venezuelan population to settle safely in suitable and less vulnerable urban areas. • Supporting migrants to access basic services such as formal education and health care. • Carrying out activities for both the migrant population and the residents of host communities that helps the integration of the migrant into the host community. • Providing financial support for rent. <p>Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Movement is implementing additional activities contributing to safe and dignified settlements, expanding shelters for vulnerable households to reduce overcrowding and mitigate the spread of the virus, such as the construction of isolation areas and medical facilities or the financial support for rent, among others.</p>

Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI)

Objective	Improvement of inclusion of migrant population, 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.
Key Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening National Societies' capacities to develop PGI related policies and strategies such as child protection and Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA). • Having in place mechanisms for the Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) of the migrants and host communities. • Working through regional and national, culturally, and gender-sensitive approaches to ensure social inclusion among migrants and host communities. • Mainstreaming PGI considerations into the services to migrants, with a gender and diversity sensitivity approach, considering protection and exclusion risks from the consequences of COVID-19. • Reinforcing the referral mechanisms (per country) at institutional and community levels to address protection issues such as trafficking, sexual and gender-based violence, and child protection. • Mapping referral mechanisms and protection services 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. <p>During the COVID-19 Pandemic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Movement has adapted the PGI Minimum Standards to provide recommendations for each sector of intervention to mainstream PGI, efforts to reduce stigma and discrimination, and development of key guidance on topics such as child protection, gender-based violence, trafficking, and inclusion of people with disabilities. • The Movement is taking a specific approach to child protection and education by adapting remote support services for home-schooling, psychosocial support for children, and guidance for parents and/or caregivers.

Restoring Family Links (RFL)

Objective	Migrants are able to restore and maintain links with their family and are protected from separation and going missing. Migrants and their families who do not have news of their family members receive answers about the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones
Key Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying out activities to prevent family separation by restoring and maintaining family links along migratory routes, including the transmission of identification documents. • Providing support to unaccompanied children to re-establish contact with their families and where possible and in their best interests, reunified with their families. • Supporting Governments to 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. • Facilitating communication between families and authorities so that they receive information about the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones opportunistically. Thus, throughout the period of separation and search, supporting the families of missing migrants and separated families to ensure their dignity and well-being and, as much as possible, to restore family unity. • Facilitating the contact between migrants in detention with their families.
<p>During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Movement is adapting 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.</p>	



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

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.
Key Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting Governments to ensure the proper understanding of 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. • Ensuring that Governments provide avenues for people seeking asylum and establish mechanisms to ensure the protection that migrants are entitled to under national and international law. • Engaging authorities to understand and respect the principle of non-refoulement. • Advocating the Government to ensure that migrants have access to alternatives to detention. • Ensuring that 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. <p>During the COVID-19 pandemic, the activities are adjusted 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, sensitization and training. The Movement continues advocating 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, the Movement is providing support to detention facilities to facilitate the transmission of health and hygiene messaging to support detaining authorities' training and raise awareness to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in detention facilities.</p>

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.

Gender and diversity inclusion is an essential part of ensuring people are safe from harm and in any action that aims at ensuring the protection of people; gender and diversity must be at the core and must guide the work of the Red Cross in the region.

b. Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA)

The Community Engagement and Accountability approach is implemented transversally within the Red Cross multi sectoral programmes. 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, and host communities, have access to crucial information and that their needs, priorities, complaints and feedback are used to make operational decisions and shape activities at any given stage of the programme cycle. The provision of reliable, trustworthy and accessible information for migrants is also a key activity to reduce the risks of COVID-19, information that is provided taking into account different needs of vulnerable groups (in terms of age, gender, people living with disabilities) and targets all groups in an inclusive manner. In this context, the information and the establishment of inclusive feedback mechanisms are key 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 through two-way channels with the local branches of the National Societies to ensure a permanent and effective dialogue. 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.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Movement has focused on implementing risk communication strategies specifically designed for migrants and refugees in transit, returnees, and transit and host communities. In addition, frequent monitoring of perceptions about the disease has been maintained by conducting surveys with migrants and communities, analysing the information and adjusting messages and interventions based on this data. National Societies have been constantly monitoring rumours and misinformation in order to develop strategies to address these two life-threatening phenomena.

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 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.