

Policy Statement on Migration

The *Board Policy on Migration* outlines the Australian Red Cross position in relation to people made vulnerable through the process of migration. The Policy Statement addresses key recommendations contained in the International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Societies (Federation) *Policy on Migration* (2009).

Australian Red Cross is a humanitarian organisation guided by the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement (the International Movement), and is committed to improving the lives of vulnerable people in Australia and internationally by mobilising the power of humanity. The International Movement is the largest humanitarian network in the world with over 100 million members and volunteers operating in over 187 countries.

Australian Red Cross assists people who are made vulnerable through the process of migration and whose survival, dignity, physical or mental health is under threat, irrespective of their legal status. While recognising the rights of different categories of migrants under international law, Red Cross works with vulnerable people including, but not limited to, migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, immigration detainees, stateless persons, people who are trafficked and irregular migrants, according to their needs.

Australian Red Cross works to prevent and reduce the vulnerability of migrants and to protect them against abuses, exploitation and denial of their rights. Australian Red Cross supports and assists vulnerable people who have been impacted by migration, to gain opportunities and to access sustainable solutions for themselves and their families.



Approved by the Board of Australian Red Cross (October 2012)

1: Restoration of family links

Australian Red Cross recognises the right of people to have their family links restored when they are separated from, or are without news of their loved ones as a result of armed conflict, persecution, violence, natural disaster or other situations requiring a humanitarian response. Australian Red Cross therefore helps families restore and maintain contact between family members and to clarify the fate of those who have been reported as missing. Australian Red Cross believes that family reunion is an important humanitarian outcome for those made vulnerable through the process of migration.

2: Humanitarian support while immigration status is being resolved

Australian Red Cross believes that people who are made vulnerable through the process of migration, whose survival, dignity, physical or mental health is under threat, should receive the humanitarian supports they need while their immigration status is being resolved.

Assistance should be based on need regardless of where they are processed, their mode of arrival or their stage in visa determination processes. In no circumstances should vulnerable people be left destitute. Australian Red Cross believes that the provision of appropriate humanitarian support at the earliest possible point and throughout the process assists in resolving the immigration status of vulnerable people.

3: Upholding the dignity, health and wellbeing of people in immigration detention

While governments may determine that immigration detention is necessary for initial health and security checks, Australian Red Cross believes that it should otherwise only be used as a last resort and always for the shortest practicable time. We believe that families with children and unaccompanied minors should not be held in immigration detention facilities.

All people in immigration detention are entitled to the maintenance of good health and wellbeing and to be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of the reason for their detention or the location of their detention. All efforts must be made to avoid and mitigate the negative impacts of immigration detention.

4. Upholding Red Cross Principles

While Red Cross may provide humanitarian support for people in immigration detention and other vulnerable migrants in the community, it will not take responsibility for security monitoring, surveillance or other immigration compliance related activities in order to fully preserve its Principles and capacity to monitor the treatment of people in detention.

5: Protection Visa Processing and Independent Legal Advice

Australian Red Cross recognises the right of people seeking asylum to access independent legal advice and have their claims for protection properly processed, regardless of the means by which they arrive in Australia, or where they are processed or detained.

6: Support and capacity building for migrants

Despite the many hardships and barriers they have experienced Australian Red Cross believes that individuals and communities made vulnerable through the process of migration generally retain the strength, skills and capacity they need to re-establish their lives so long as they are provided with support and are given access to the services and programs they need. Australian Red Cross works to support individuals and communities to shape their own futures.

7: Support for trafficked people

People who have been trafficked are among the most vulnerable of migrant populations. Australian Red Cross recognised that they have unique experiences and responses to trauma and also acknowledges their resilience in the recovery process. Their vulnerabilities are compounded by systemic barriers in accessing support such as narrow eligibility requirements, language, a fear of authority and a lack of awareness of Australian norms. Support should be provided to people who have been trafficked based solely on their needs rather than their ability to participate in judicial processes.

8: Working in partnership along migratory trails

As a member of the International Movement, Australian Red Cross commits to working in partnership with Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies located along migratory trails including sharing information and expertise, providing support and building capacity. This is reflective of our approach to partnership with civil society organisations and community groups in Australia. Australian Red Cross believes that regional agreements and approaches are essential in reducing the vulnerabilities and humanitarian abuses suffered by people along migratory trails.

9: Advocating for people made vulnerable through the process of migration

Australian Red Cross believes that advocacy is required in order to persuade and remind decision makers and opinion leaders of the need to ensure and maintain a humanitarian approach to people made vulnerable by the process of migration, to protect them from abuses, exploitation and denial of rights, to reduce discrimination against them, and to increase awareness, sensitivity and understanding of their situation and backgrounds with the general population.