

Population movement

There are over 175 million people living outside their country of birth. Of these, approximately 12 million are refugees within the definition of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention. An alarming trend is the increasing internal displacement of 27 to 30 million people within the borders of their own country.

Recent examples of Red Cross and Red Crescent response to population movement

2002	Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali: population movement
2002	Iran drought: support for Afghan refugees
2001/2002	Afghanistan: humanitarian assistance
2000	Guinea: population movement
2000	Iran drought: support for Afghan refugees
1999	Balkans humanitarian crisis operation
1999	Angolan refugees
1999	Influx of Eritrean refugees
1999	Kosovo refugees
1998	Population movement from Guinea Bissau

As well as these specific and international interventions by the Federation, national societies provide considerable assistance within their own countries and work hard to include those affected by movement and displacement in their regular programming

Population movement encompasses forced displacement because of conflict, breaches of human rights and persecution, as well as voluntary movement for economic and social reasons.

The role of National Societies, the International Federation and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is best described as holistic. Intervention on behalf of people affected by movement and displacement is prioritized and addressed solely on vulnerability and humanitarian needs of people and not on their status.

However, when population movement occurs, it is crucial to immediately distinguish whether those moving are asylum seekers, refugees, migrants or internally displaced persons (IDP). The distinction is important since different international support mechanisms are based on the legal status of the people and this can affect response to their needs.

Moving and displaced people often have similar needs to other vulnerable people but the loss of one's home or country is always traumatic and this additional layer of vulnerability and protection needs must be taken into account.

During the emergency phase of a disaster, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies prioritize provision of safe water and basic sanitation, emergency medical care and basic health services, temporary shelter and organization of food distribution and other urgently needed items. These interventions change over the lifetime of a crisis to include long-term actions that work towards lasting solutions and support for the dignity of affected populations.

The role of the population movement desk within the disaster management and coordination division (DMC)

- To provide **information, advice** and raise **awareness** amongst National Societies, the International Federation secretariat and its field offices on population movement issues, including human rights.
- To identify and develop improved programmatic interventions that aim to protect and address the specific vulnerabilities of displaced populations.
- To highlight the **profile** of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies as principal actors in refugee and population movement matters.
- To work towards the **improvement** of the Red Cross Red Crescent's collective efforts on behalf of moving and displaced people by establishing policies and guidelines, training, and access to information.